

THE TURNING POINT

A Novel

**Spanning Human History
From Ancient Times
To Present Days**

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John D. Boenke was born in 1926 in Rossford, Ohio and grew up during the Great Depression. He served in the U. S. Army in 1946 - 47 in the Medical Corps. In 1951 he received a degree of Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Michigan. After college, Mr. Boenke worked in research and engineering for the General Electric Company. Later he was the Manager of an engineering test laboratory for Lau Blower Company, then Chief Engineer for Halsey Taylor Water Cooler Corp. and Senior Design Engineer for The Werner Ladder Company. Before retiring in 1989, Mr. Boenke also owned and operated a small motel in Ashtabula, Ohio.

Since retiring, Mr. Boenke has been interested in reading and studying in the areas of Cosmology, Theoretical Physics and Philosophy. In addition, he has an interest in the origins of religions. He has privately published several short stories and some poetry.

DEDICATION

The Turning Point is dedicated to my wife, Mary.
She is my most honest critic, and it is with her
support and patience in allowing me the time to write
that this work has become a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

This novel is set in four separate time periods. It opens in the year 1635 CE in Italy. It switches to the present time, then backward to two earlier time periods and ends again in the present. The modern time period concerns the struggles of a college professor as he comes to grips with his basic beliefs. The second is in the time of Galileo Galilei, 1635 CE and concerns some of the ideas of that great man, and deals with the struggles of Religion and Science during the time. The third time period is circa 3000 BCE at the beginning of recorded history, and the fourth is set in a time indefinitely earlier than the third at the beginning of primitive human social organization.

The narrative is an examination of various turning points in the lives of the characters of those times, and how the ideas they generated have progressed down through time to the present. The events and characters are fictional except for Galileo Galilei. Some events relate to the existing conditions during the time of Galileo, and some of the dialogue consists of quotes attributed to Galileo. For further information on any of the eras described, the reader is referred to the standard historical literature and reference works.

The following is a tabulation of the various time periods and a description of the Characters who are in the stories of those periods.

FIRST PERIOD

The present time in a mid western town.

George Eshenbach, College history Professor and literary researcher

Ruth Eshenbach, George's wife

Reverend William LaMotte, Minister of a Christian Church

SECOND PERIOD

1635 CE Arcetri, Italy

Modandus Napoli, a town elder and retired merchant.

Julian, the servant of Modandus.

Markko Zenetia, vegetable farmer and merchant

Galileo Galilei, scientist who was the father of several of the sciences.

Brother Francis, Roman Catholic monk

Father Giuseppe Donati, Inquisition Officer

THIRD PERIOD

Circa 3000 BCE, somewhere in Asia Minor

Akmed Of Adama, scribe

Elda, historian

Gird, Elda's wife

Sarda, woman elder, ancient story teller

Morgal, medicine man and mystic

Estam, Morgal's wife

FOURTH PERIOD

Early in the history of modern humans. On the shore of the Indian Ocean.

Nam, the chief of council.

Nur, wise elder.

Dindan, Nur's companion and assistant.

Garn, farmer

Gorda, chief fisherwoman

Tsu, medicine man and mystic

Letta, Tsu's companion and fisherwoman

MODANDUS NAPOLI

Modandus sat at his desk fuming at the carelessness of the old Judaic writer and muttering to himself. "Translating the ancient language is difficult enough. Why must they also scribble? Did they not care whether their work would be read again?" Modandus spent his days reading and writing about old scribes and authors, and their work. History had become his passion in his later years, and he spent most of his time dealing with old documents and their content.

He heard a slight shuffling sound and turned to the doorway. "Yes, Julian, what is it?" His servant drifted into the room on silent shoes and bearing a small tray which held a small glass of wine.

"I thought the master has been working a long time and might like a little refreshing drink."

"That is very thoughtful, Julian. Yes, I shall enjoy that."

The tray was delivered to a side table and Julian stood back while Modandus had a sip. Modandus turned back to his work as Julian continued to stand nearby. After a minute Julian shifted position and cleared his throat. Modandus looked up again, and turned in his chair to face Julian. Julian was of a slight build and of some indeterminate age. He still had dark hair, but it was extremely thin and his facial features were sharp and clear. Knowing Julian's habits by a long association, Modandus smiled and spoke. "You have something on your mind do you not Julian? What is your concern?"

"The master is quite correct. I wanted to inform you that Markko Zenetia, the vegetable merchant who knows all that happens in the market, has told me a bit of news."

"News, Julian? What kind of news?"

"Markko says he knows of an ancient document for sale, if one were to go to the proper place at the proper time."

"An ancient document, Julian? I have many ancient documents. Why do I need another?"

“It is rumored that this is a very old and very interesting document.”

Modandus was always patient with Julian. “Come, my friend, tell me what you know. Why is this something I should have?”

Julian shifted on his feet again in an awkward manner. “Markko says it is from the fourth century and is the only one in existence.”

Modandus suddenly showed much more interest. “Markko Zenetia is an honest man. I would trust him. But how does he come by such an unusual treasure?”

“It is not his. He is merely trying to sell it for someone who prefers to remain unknown.”

From his years as a merchant, Modandus understood and was adept at such clandestine transactions. The document now interested him and he pursued the matter further. “How do I find out more about this document?”

“Probably Markko would be willing to tell more. He is always at his regular stand selling vegetables and fruit. If you would talk to him quietly and tell him I had talked with you, I am sure he could tell you more.”

“Very well. I shall go out shortly and see what I can discover. Thank you Julian for letting me know about this.”

Julian retired to the rear of the apartment, and Modandus went back to his translation. He fumed and fussed for a few more minutes then threw up his hands in despair. “It is no use. How can I concentrate on my work when I am tantalized by a rare treasure? I must go to the market to see Markko. Then I can settle down again.”

It took him only a minute to put on his cloak and exit his house into the busy street. Several minutes of walking found him at the public square and the market place. Following well remembered routes, he circled behind the most prominent stalls to the lesser known ones behind. A few more twists and turns brought him to a small but neat table loaded with the best appearing fruits and vegetables. Picking up an apple, he looked at it intently as if to assay its quality. As he did so, a small but muscular man approached and stood next to him. The man had rough features and dark skin. He was obviously accustomed to being outside and laboring on the land all his life. “Good Day, Signore Modandus Napoli. Are you interested in apples today?”

"I am always interested in things of value, Signore Zenetia, whether they are apples or ancient documents. But it is my experience that items have value only in their being desired by others and can thus be exchanged into other valuable material. Do you not agree?"

"Certainly, your point is well taken, Modandus."

"It has been suggested to me that there may be a document currently available. Have you heard of such a thing, Markko?"

"It is known that a document is accessible for sufficient pieces of silver. It is very ancient and is reputed to have come from the Library of Alexandria before that institution was destroyed. If one is not too concerned as to how it got to where it is now, or how it was acquired, it might be for sale."

"Of course those are reasonable conditions. I have no problem with them. It is often necessary in the conduct of the business of the world to have such conditions. However, such an item as you are describing must be seen itself to verify that it is as it is claimed to be."

Taking the apple from Modandus and returning it to the pile of apples, Markko replied, "If one were to be here again just after darkness has settled, such a possibility would exist. Of course, one must be circumspect and not bring a crowd along."

"That also is a very reasonable condition." Modandus smiled and turned to leave. "I shall return as you suggest, Markko." As Modandus wended his way back to his apartment, he mused about the possibilities of this new treasure, "I must be sure this is authentic, but I believe I have seen enough fakes and true relics to know the difference. We will see. Yes, we will see."

As the Sun settled behind the rooftops and the shadows grew long and overran the whole city, Modandus set out again. He had explored his supply of coins and selected out all that he felt would be necessary for a transaction to take place. His purse was tightly tied to his waist and his cloak covered him from head to toe. He carried a small lantern to keep from stumbling on the rough stones of the street as he retraced his steps of the afternoon.

When he approached the market, the light of his lantern cast forlorn shadows against the bare market tables. The foods had been sold or packed away and the vendors had disappeared to their own abodes for the night. A loneliness pervaded the narrow streets and alleyways behind the market, but as Modandus approached the shop of Markko Zenetia a small light glimmered in the back. Modandus perceived the form of a man sitting and waiting.

"Good evening, Signore Markko Zenetia."

“Good evening, Signore Modandus Napoli.”

“Do you have any merchandise for me to examine, Markko?”

“I will have something in a few minutes. Please wait here, Modandus.”

Markko looked out the front of his shop to make sure no one was around and then quietly slipped out into the darkness. Modandus sat motionless and silent as he awaited the return of his friend. In less than two minutes he came in by the back way with a small bundle. “Here is the item. It would be appreciated if you could look at it quickly.”

Modandus unrolled the stiff material carefully and studied it intently by the dim light. It was immediately obvious to him that the document was extremely ancient and indeed genuine. On only a cursory examination, it was easy to determine that the document was apparently of extreme significance. Modandus did not betray his excitement. He continued to view it for several minutes turning to others of the many pages. Then he spoke up. “And what was the price requested for this item?”

“I understand that 60 pieces of silver are needed to complete the transaction.”

Knowing that he was probably being overheard by the seller, Modandus sighed and replied, “Ah, that is too bad. It is a fairly nice piece, although there is much damage. It is certainly not worth that much. Still, I would like to have it. Here, let us do this. I will give you 45 pieces of silver and you may take them to the owner. I think that is proper considering the condition of the item and the clandestine nature of the sale. See whether that will be sufficient to satisfy him as I think that is all it is worth.”

Modandus counted out the money and handed it to Markko. Markko left by the back door and was gone several minutes. Modandus thought he could hear some mutterings between two voices, and eventually Markko came in again.

“The amount you gave me is disappointing to the owner and not enough, but I understand that increasing it by just 5 pieces of silver the price will be acceptable, although the owner is very reluctant.”

"Five pieces? Are you sure three would not be all right?"

"No, I am sure five was the only offer."

Normally Modandus would have been happy to play the game further, but he was uncomfortable in the darkness and wanted to get back home with his prize. He hesitated a moment then answered, "I will do that. Here are five more pieces of silver."

"Please wait here a few minutes until I return again."

Modandus again waited, but he cautiously peeked out the door. The Moon was very dim, but it gave a small amount of light to the area. He imagined he could see a hooded figure rapidly disappearing down the alley. As he watched he wondered who the seller might be. "Is he a high official or simply some scoundrel who had obtained the document by dubious means? That is something I will probably never know. It is perhaps better that I do not know. It may even be dangerous to be aware of the source of my new manuscript. That is fine. I will not worry about it."

Markko noiselessly entered the back of the stall again. "That was fine. The item is yours."

"Thank you very much Markko. I appreciate your help." Modandus knew that Markko would have been paid by the seller, but Modandus felt that to maintain his friendship with Markko a little more compensation was necessary. "Here, let me give you a piece of silver for your assistance."

Markko smiled, "That is not required, Modandus."

"But I insist."

"Well, thank you, I do find it difficult to refuse money. But hurry home now. It is a dark night."

Modandus secured the document safely under his arm and under his cloak. Picking up his lantern he made his exit. On his way home, Modandus mused, "How lucky of me to have been able to acquire this document. I am eager to see all that it says. I am sure it will be a fascinating experience to decipher and translate it. It was good of Julian to tell me about it. Perhaps he deserves a little extra compensation also."

THE TRANSLATION

Modandus was pleased with himself. It had taken many weeks, but he had finished translating and reading the historic, timeworn, parchment. It was centuries old, but it was certainly an authentic relic from the famed Library at Alexandria. The document contained stories of ancient times which had been copied and recopied over the ages. Much had been accumulated from ancient texts and clay tablets. The original tablets and texts must have been lost in the adversity and ill fortune which occurs over time. The destruction of the Library of Alexandria was their final demise. They most certainly were lost by the combination of natural and manmade disasters. However, the document derived from them had been preserved, and the precious stories still existed. Now, Modandus knew that because of his work the history of the document will be preserved again for the future.

The stories were of ancient events which Modandus had never heard related before. They concerned the earliest of civilized societies and the struggles of the people from the beginning of time. The narrations were a combination of early Myths and the description of the organization of civilizations at the very beginning of recorded times.

He muttered out loud, "What a challenge though. How can I reconstruct the story it tells with parts of it in such bad shape?" Parchment was durable, but time had taken its toll on the piece and there were missing portions. "I must mention it to Galileo the next time I see him. I think it would interest him also." Although Galileo was confined to his house by the Inquisition officers, he was permitted to have visitors. Modandus liked to spend time with Galileo and they enjoyed discussing each other's activities. They worked in different areas of study, but their interests were broad enough that they found each other's investigations mutually interesting.

Reconstructing the ancient events into a coherent story was a monumental task, Modandus set about the endeavor with much enthusiasm. There was nothing much to do during the Winter months, and with Julian to keep the fire burning and food supplied, it was an interesting chore for Modandus to pursue.

How lucky he considered himself. Since giving up his business, Modandus had lived alone except for his one servant, Julian. No longer having to work, Modandus was honored to be a town Elder and had much time to pursue other activities. He liked to roam the market even to its deepest corners and the most insignificant trader's stalls. Everyone knew him and knew of his great interest in history. He often gave away some of his writings when a friend expressed an interest in his work. Without such a wide community he may never had been made aware of such a treasure, such a historic relic. He silently thanked Julian and Markko again for bringing the knowledge of the document to him. "Ah, Julian," he mused, "A truly faithful and conscientious friend. I consider him more as

family than as an employee. What would I do without him? I thank my lucky stars for having him here. He makes my life easy indeed."

As Modandus scratched away, Julian quietly entered to draw the drapes for the night. He pursued some of his other household chores, also. He straightened up some items and collected used dishes to take to the kitchen.

"The Master seems to be writing more than usual these days," observed Julian.

"Ah, Julian, the document you helped me acquire has much old history in it. I am trying to organize it into a story that can be appreciated by everyone."

"It is well then that you have the time and knowledge to do it. I am sure it will be useful."

"Yes, that is my hope. It makes working on it much easier to do. The story is coming along very well. In a few more weeks I shall finish. Then I will take it to Galileo to see what he thinks of it."

"Signore Galileo is a very smart man. It would be well to have his thoughts of the writing."

"Yes, he is very intelligent. It is sad that the church treats him so harshly. Being confined to one's house is not fair. Although, he can still pursue his investigations."

"I am only a poor servant and not expected to be very smart, but I feel inside that I have little use for a church that does not look at new and interesting things and ideas."

"I agree with you, Julian. A lot of my friends think the same. But do not say that where the authorities can hear you. The Church has much power and they can be very unreasonable, as we both know."

"Going to church makes me feel good Master, but the actions of the priests and the monks make me feel very badly. I think there is something wrong with the whole of the ideas they teach, but I cannot tell what it is. It must be that I am just not smart enough."

"You are smart enough for me, Julian. You are a good person, but please be careful how you speak in public."

"I will, Master. I will."

The Winter storms passed. Modandus worked diligently at his task, but the first warm day found him only half done with his story of the parchment. It was difficult to reconstruct the tale and it took all of his talents to formulate the narrative.

Nevertheless he gathered together in a folio what he had completed of his own work together with a copy of the rough translation. He also took the parchment itself. He would show all of the material to his friend. He was soon out of the house and on his way to visit Signore Galileo Galilei.

A short walk brought him to an ancient unremarkable building in a quiet section of the town. It was here that the most brilliant mind of the age dwelt in solitude and sadness. Sad that his scientific discoveries were discounted; sad that the Church denounced them; and the Inquisition Officials forced him to deny the truth of his discoveries; sad that he was not free to move about unrestrained in his society; and sad for losing friends and companions because of his isolation. Signore Galileo Galilei was an old man but his mind was young and creative. He always enjoyed serious discussions of the natural world and sought enlightenment on the actions of the universe. As he opened his door to the insistent rapping, he exclaimed, "Signore Modandus, my friend! It is good to see you. It has been a long while since you have honored me with your presence. Come in! Come in!" In his long heavy cloak which was protection against the entrenched cold of the old stone house, Galileo welcomed his friend into the large room.

The room was very not light. Flickering candles provided the only light available, as the windows were heavily curtained against the outside world. A variety of instruments and papers were distributed around the on the tables in an apparent random fashion. But the atmosphere was inviting, and the walls exuded a comfortable and receptive feeling. "It is my pleasure to see you Signore Galileo Galilei. I have been busy on a most interesting project which has kept me tied to my desk. I have brought some of it to show to you."

"Fine. I would like to hear of your activity. Would your exposition be aided by a glass of wine?"

"Yes, you are most gracious. That would be pleasurable."

The two sat down in chairs with their wine glasses and settled into a friendly conversation of local affairs.

After a few moments Galileo asked, "Dear Modandus, what is this project which has kept you from me so long?"

“Ah! I must tell you, I have been fortunate enough to acquire an ancient parchment document. It evidently came from the Library of Alexandria, but it was saved at the time the Library was destroyed centuries ago. It was written by the scribes of the Library and tells a story of the earliest times of human organization. I have spent months translating it, and now I am putting together a coherent story which tells of the events it recorded.”

“That is amazing. Tell me more.”

“The manuscript was based on earlier writings including some clay tablets from Asia Minor. The clay tablets and the other manuscripts were lost with the rest of the treasures of the Library, but this document survived, and it was preserved through the ages. I feel very favored to have been able to bring it into my possession.”

Galileo looked pleased. “Mankind has made some amazing progress over the years, but of all other stupendous inventions, what sublimity of mind must have been his who conceived how to communicate his most secret thoughts to any other person, though very far distant, either in time or place? And with no greater difficulty than the various arrangement of two dozen little signs upon paper? Let this be the seal of all the admirable inventions of man.” But his mood then changed, “How distressing though to remind ourselves of the destruction of the Library at Alexandria so long ago. Foolish men have often wasted the good works of others.”

“I agree, my friend. Who knows what ancient wisdom was lost by stupid waste and destruction. What an advantage it is to be able to know in the records we do have what our noble ancestors did and thought. It makes us more aware of the value in putting our own experiences and happenings in written form to enlighten those who will come after us. Then they can know about our life, and perhaps understand a little about our culture, also.”

Galileo stared a little morosely at the floor. “Perhaps those who come after us will be more amenable to accepting the truth when it is presented to them. I have learned over the years that you cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. I hope future generations will be more open to discovering reality. But show me this document of yours.”

Modandus removed from his bag the old parchment and carefully laid it on an open space of a table. The two looked at it in awe. Galileo ran his fingers over the ancient materials and perused the inscriptions it held. “This is amazing my dear Modandus. I am impressed that you can make sense out of these faded and strange marks.”

"It is not easy, but this skill is what I have studied and learned to do during my life. After enough time and study, the meaning comes through. Here then, look at my writing. You will be able to read my own work more easily." Modandus returned the parchment to his bag and drew his translation of the parchment out of his bag. He handed the copy to Galileo.

"Yes, now this is understandable." Galileo took several minutes to begin reading the account. "Yes, this does interest me." He read further and finished a page of the material. "You write quite well my friend, but it will take some time for me to absorb this."

Modandus replied, "That is no problem, I will leave this copy with you. I have others at home. I am sorry you cannot come there to see all of my works. But I will bring you a copy of the complete story when I finish it."

"That would be most kind of you. I certainly have much time to study by myself. The Inquisition has seen to that."

"Perhaps you are better off here," consoled Modandus. "There are many stupid people out there in our world. Most do not want to learn."

"That may be so my friend, but I have never met a man so ignorant that I could not learn something from him."

"But do you think every man can understand the discoveries you have made?"

"All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them." smiled Galileo.

"You do have a most firm belief in your work. How is it that you can uncover all these things which others do not see?"

"My approach is simple, Modandus. I think doubt is the father of invention. Also I measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so."

"But what if you cannot measure something? What if there are no physical clues to the problem?"

"Ah yes, where the senses fail us, reason must step in. That takes a bit more doing. Although facts which at first seem improbable, will even on scant explanation, drop the cloak which has hidden them and stand forth in naked and simple beauty. I think that in the discussion of natural problems we ought to begin not with the Scriptures, but with experiments, and demonstrations."

"The Officers of the inquisition obviously disagree with you. They treat you reprehensively for your proclaiming these truths."

"Ah, this Inquisition business is terrible," lamented Galileo. "I must stay at home or face more oppression from the Church. Why are they so obstinate? Nothing physical which sense-experience sets before our eyes, or which necessary demonstrations prove to us, ought to be called into question, much less condemned, upon the testimony of biblical passages."

"My friend," replied Modandus, "I understand your sorrow. Would that there were something I could do to help alleviate your unhappiness."

"Ah, you have done it Modandus. By bringing me your work and listening to my lamentation, my spirits are renewed. Thank you. You make me think back on my life and that leads me to conjecture on how it might have been different."

"What would you do otherwise if you could start over?"

"If I were again beginning my studies, I would follow the advice of Plato and start with mathematics."

"Is Philosophy then so closely related to Mathematics?"

"Ah, Modandus, Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes ... We cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. The book is written in the mathematical language ... without whose help it is humanly impossible to comprehend a single word of it, and without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth."

"I must admit, there is much I do not understand, my friend. When you speak of the infinite for instance, it is beyond my understanding."

Galileo tried to explain. "The difficulties in the study of the infinite arise because we attempt, with our finite minds, to discuss the infinite, assigning to it those properties which we give to the finite and limited; but this ... is wrong, for we cannot speak of infinite quantities as being the one greater or less than or equal to another. We must say that there are as many squares as there are numbers."

"Ah, I shall never understand that. I am better at translating old documents. At least there is some consistency to the rules and meanings."

"Yes, Modandus, Infinities and Indivisibles transcend our finite understanding, the former on account of their magnitude, the latter because of their smallness; imagine what they are when combined."

Modandus laughed, "I cannot imagine Signore. I will leave that problem to you."

The two men talked for a good while longer, until Modandus felt the need to return home for the supper hour. "I will leave this partial copy of my work here for you Signore, but I will take my precious parchment with me."

"Thank you for visiting, Modandus. I hope your future work goes well. You are a true friend."

As he left, Modandus did not notice two persons standing on a nearby corner. One was Brother Francis, a local Roman Catholic Monk, and the other was Father Giuseppe Donati, an Official of the Office of the Inquisition.

"Brother Francis, who is the gentleman just now leaving the dwelling of Signore Galileo Galilei?"

"He is a local tradesman and official who is no longer actively involved in business or in government, Father. I believe he has a modest abode nearby where he lives with his servant. I believe he spends his days reading and studying."

"I think I have seen him visiting Signore Galileo on other occasions. Is that possible?"

"Signore Modandus Napoli has lived in this area all his life. He is well known in the town, and I am sure he visits many people including Signore Galileo."

"If he is friendly with Signore Galileo Galilei, is he not one to be watched also? Perhaps he is a supporter of the banned heretical views." Father Donati suddenly seemed more imposing than his medium frame usually appeared in his thick black cloak. It was as though the sudden infusion of the responsibilities of his office into his thoughts enhanced his bulk. The Father's dark mood and the cold hard ambiance put Brother Francis on guard.

Brother Francis thought quickly for a moment before speaking. He was not one to get others into trouble, especially with the Inquisition. Brother Francis mostly kept his thoughts to himself, and even though he believed there was some truth to Galileo's positions, he would never openly admit it. It does not go well with those who oppose the church, and since he was part of the church he felt exceptionally sensitive on the subject of heresy. He then replied in as benign a fashion as he could muster, "Father, Signore Modandus is all right. He is just an old man with most of his life behind him. I doubt that he has any interest in things of heretical nature."

“That may be true, Brother Francis, but he may be worth investigating. We cannot abide dissension by anyone no matter how unimportant they are.”

Modandus spent the next few weeks working assiduously on the reconstruction of the ancient story using his copy of the translation. It was going much easier since he was getting accustomed to the style and character of the parchment markings, and his total vision of the account became more clear. By the late warm days of Summer the manuscript was complete.

“Julian! I am going out. I will be visiting Signore Galileo, but I will be home by supper time.”

Julian came from out of the back of the house into Modandus’ workroom with his unsteady way of walking. He was followed by the aroma of fresh bread. “Yes, Master. All will be in readiness when you return.”

Modandus was in a good mood and walked spryly along the narrow streets and passages traveling through an occasional beam of sunshine. Two monks approached from the other direction, and he recognized one of them. “Good afternoon Brother Francis. Is it not a pleasant day though? God must be happy today.”

“Yes, it is indeed, Signore Modandus, it is certainly as beautiful as a day may be, and I pray that the good Lord is always happy.”

The two monks turned to watch the short and rotund shape of Modandus disappear around a corner. Father Donati looked displeased. “He is a strange little man, Brother Francis. Come let us see where he is going.” They retraced their steps and stayed a distance behind Modandus. “See. See where he is turning in. He is going to see Signore Galileo again. I think Signore Modandus should be watched. Something tells me he is not to be trusted.” Brother Francis said nothing, but noted the malevolence in Father Donati’s voice and manner.

Modandus found Galileo in good spirits and the two men were soon engaged in an absorbing conversation helped along by satisfying libations. “I have brought you a complete copy of the story derived from my translation as I promised. You may keep it so that you may take all the time you wish to read it and absorb it. Perhaps another time you will give me your impressions of it. I would value your comments immensely.”

“That is most kind of you. I have already been intrigued by the part you brought before. I am sure this will be equally interesting.”

“I am humbled by your curiosity into my modest efforts.”

“Do not be so modest. Making sense out of old scratching on papyrus is a talent in itself. The further fact that you can reveal the thoughts of ancient humans is very worthwhile. I am especially impressed by the revelation that the first peoples did indeed use reason over mysticism for determining their actions. This in itself is a valuable bit of information. Reason and facts are the only reliable way to determine the ways of nature. Would that the present rulers could be as wise. I am sure the world would be a better place and everyone could live better lives if we lived by fact and not by fancy.”

“But my reading of “Scratching” is simply an exercise in translation, whereas you discover new truths only by your own observations. I think your science is the more difficult to find and ultimately more useful.”

“Ah, Modandus, all science is worthwhile, and knowing what our forebears did is certainly beneficial information. I shall certainly enjoy reading the rest of your text now that you have so generously given me a copy.”

“Thank you, Galileo. You are most welcome. But what have you been doing recently?”

“I have been advancing my studies of the Sun. It is a most interesting object. Spots are on the surface of the solar body where they are produced and also dissolved, some in shorter and others in longer periods. They are carried around the Sun; an important occurrence in itself.”

“Why is that important? What does it mean?”

“I must conclude the Sun itself is rotating. That would certainly explain it.”

“It seems you find more and more complex things going on in the space you call the universe. How does the Sun do all that it does?”

“I cannot say. But the Sun, with all the planets revolving around it, and depending on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as though it had nothing else in the Universe to do.”

“I am continually amazed by the results of your investigations. I fear I shall never truly understand the Universe as you do though. The biggest mystery to me is the night sky with its display of uncountable numbers of stars. How can that be?”

"Ah, my friend, the Milky Way is nothing else but a mass of innumerable stars planted together in clusters. There is room enough in the universe for all the stars that exist."

"That seems impossible to me, but I know my understanding is limited."

"No, that is not impossible. In my opinion, nothing occurs contrary to nature except the impossible, and that never occurs."

"I am willing to take your word on that. But what else have you been doing to occupy your time?"

"During many years I exchanged letters with Signore Johannes Kepler. We liked to exchange our ideas and discoveries. I have been going over some of the old letters which traveled between us before he died. Here, let me read you a little from one of my responses to him.

"'I wish, my dear Kepler, that we could have a good laugh together at the extraordinary stupidity of the mob. What do you think of the foremost philosophers of this University? In spite of my oft-repeated efforts and invitations, they have refused, with the obstinacy of a gluttoned adder, to look at the planets or Moon or my telescope.' He responded that he appreciated the thought very much, but that we must laugh alone."

"It must be fascinating to have been able to exchange thoughts with all the great men of our age. Signore Kepler must have been a wise person also."

"Yes, he was wise, but among the great men who have philosophized about the action of the tides, the one who surprised me most is Kepler. He was a person of independent genius, but he became interested in the action of the moon on the water, and in other occult phenomena, and similar childishness."

"It is truly unfortunate that the other learned men will not observe your findings. How can they be so obstinate when what you offer is so clear and yet amazing?"

"Yes, Modandus, It vexes me when they would constrain science by the authority of the Scriptures, and yet do not consider themselves bound to answer reason and experiment."

"But do not the University Professors find themselves constrained by the words of the Bible? They have certainly learned them thoroughly, and they must have trouble with conflicting ideas."

"You are right, and it is very pious to say and prudent to affirm that the holy Bible can never speak untruth whenever its true meaning is understood. But I believe nobody will deny that it is often very abstruse, and may say things which are quite different from what its bare words signify."

"It must be difficult for you to stand alone against the opinions of so many. They have the numbers on their side."

"I feel secure. In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual. "

"I marvel at your assurance. But I do realize that you are thoroughly convinced you are right and for good reasons also."

"Thank you friend. The Divine intellect indeed knows infinitely more propositions than we can ever know. But with regard to those few which the human intellect does understand, I believe that its knowledge equals the Divine in objective certainty. I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use."

"And yet for all the reasonableness of your arguments, the Elders do not listen to you. They even condemn what you say."

"I have admonished them. Take note, theologians, that in your desire to make matters of faith out of propositions relating to the fixity of Sun and Earth you run the risk of eventually having to condemn as heretics those who would declare the earth to stand still and the sun to change position - eventually, I say, at such a time as it might be proved that the Earth moves and the Sun stands still. To command the professors of astronomy to confute their own observations is to enjoin an impossibility, for it is to command them not to see what they do see, and not to understand what they do understand, and to find what they do not discover."

"How can they continue to oppose you in the light of the reality of your findings? What is their purpose?"

"They know that it is human nature to take up causes whereby a man may oppress his neighbor, no matter how unjustly. Hence they have had no trouble finding men who would preach the damnability and heresy of the new doctrine from the very pulpit."

"But the leaders of the Church and the Office of the Inquisition have obliged you not to promote your ideas, and even to swear they are wrong. They hold that the things you have discovered are not the divine truth."

"My dear Modandus, that was the darkest day of my life. I made my denial only to avoid the terrors of the Inquisition and to be able to continue my studies, even though I am confined to this house, and I may not go abroad in the world to tell of my findings. My denials weigh heavily on me, but I had to do it. The words of my recantation seem always to be echoing in my head. I can hear them now. I said, 'Having been admonished by this Holy Office of the Inquisition entirely to abandon the false opinion that the Sun was the center of the universe and immovable, and that the Earth was not the center of the same and that it moved. I abjure with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I curse and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally all and every error and sect contrary to the Holy Catholic Church.' That was what I said to satisfy them. It is not what I believe. I am embarrassed by my action and my words, but at least my work goes on, and perhaps someday it will be recognized. That is my hope for the future."

"How can those who preach the Bible story reconcile it with the facts you have demonstrated?"

"By denying scientific principles, one may maintain any paradox."

"But it is unreasonable to maintain as true that which is not true. This will only confuse people and lead them to doubt all truths. Is that not so?"

"Yes, And who can doubt that it will lead to the worst disorders when minds created free by God are compelled to submit slavishly to an outside will? When we are told to deny our senses and subject them to the whim of others? When people devoid of whatsoever competence are made judges over experts and are granted authority to treat them as they please? These are the novelties which are apt to bring about the ruin of commonwealths and the subversion of the state."

"Is this what the church wants, Galileo? Is this what we must follow to observe God's laws, and to guarantee our place in paradise? I do not feel right about that. I do not experience serenity in falsehoods. Is that even good for us to be preached falsehoods as the truth?"

"My friend, it is surely harmful to souls to make it a heresy to believe what is proved. Mark my words; we are witnessing a turning point in the affairs of the world. Science will not be denied. Religion has its work cut out for it to suppress facts and observable information. The Church will not be able to do that forever. People will insist on looking and learning. The truth will out."

The two men continued their discussions all afternoon and darkness was falling as Modandus made his way back to his own abode. He did not notice a dark figure lingering in the shadows and observing him as he left the home of Galileo and turned homeward.

The Knock on the Door

It was some days later on a dreary night after Julian had gone to bed and Modandus was busy at his writing desk. The wind and rain continued persistently at the window as he worked, but Modandus felt warm and secure in his small apartment. He was recopying a page of his writings when suddenly there was an urgent knock at the door. "Now who can that be at this hour and in this weather? They must be brave indeed to be out this night," thought Modandus.

Hastening to the door and unlatching it, he was instantly greeted with a familiar voice. "Signore Modandus, let me in quickly. I must not be seen."

Stepping back in amazement, Modandus was abruptly confronting Brother Francis in his long dark cloak and hood. "Brother Francis! What is wrong? Why are you here?"

"Close the door quickly. I must not be seen."

The man entered and threw back his hood and wiped the water off his face. It took Modandus a minute to get him settled and to re-bolt the door. Then turning to his visitor, he asked, "Brother Francis, what brings you out on such an unpleasant night? What can I do for you?"

Breathlessly the monk blurted out, "It is I who wish to do something for you. You are in grave danger. I must tell you." His usually calm face had a touch of wildness about it. He was agitated and glanced around nervously as he spoke.

"Grave danger? What kind of danger? I have no enemies or problems with anyone. What have you to tell me?"

"Let me explain. You know I often work with Father Donati, an Inquisition officer. It is what I must do although it is unpleasant for me."

"Yes, I understand we must all do that which is necessary whether we choose to or not. But what does that have to do with me?"

"I came to warn you that Father Donati has seen you on several occasions visiting with Signore Galileo Galilei. He is suspicious that you may share Galileo's ideas and may be a heretic."

"How can he possibly know what I think? Whether I agree with Galileo or not is none of his business. I am not afraid of him."

"Ah! My dear Modandus, you must be afraid. I have reason to believe the Father is planning to investigate you and charge you with heresy."

"He cannot do that. What have I done? I mind my own business and do not disturb anyone else."

"That does not matter. The Father does not share all his thoughts with me, but I have a feeling he is planning to make a visit to you. You must be wary."

Modandus thought a moment, then replied, "I have many important friends, and I have done nothing wrong. I do not think I am in danger, but I will be careful. I thank you for your concern, but please do not worry yourself. You are a good friend. But are you in danger yourself for coming here?"

"Yes, I cannot stay at all, but I must get right back. I am afraid of being seen here."

"There is a small back way out which will lead you right to the market square. I can let you out that way."

"That would be most kind, but heed my warning. Beware of Father Donati."

After giving him directions, Modandus showed the Monk out. He scrambled through the back doorway and disappeared into the rain and gloom of the blackness.

Modandus sat at his desk again and tried to settle his whirling thoughts. "Can this be true? Is the Inquisition interested in me? I am nobody. I am just an old man who has been around for a long time. I have no enemies. Brother Francis must be mistaken. Why would they want me?" Modandus went to bed, but he did not sleep well.

Destruction of the Parchment

Several days passed, and Modandus had almost forgotten the warning of Brother Francis. He followed his usual routines. In the mornings Modandus liked to go walking in the market for exercise and to visit with his many friends and acquaintances. Afternoons and evenings were reserved for the activities of reading and writing which were his whole life. Meals happened at the appropriate times and were of the usual tasteful fare which Julian consistently provided. Modandus was pleased to have completed his translation of the ancient document and was enjoying life as well as he could. He felt very fulfilled for having done such a work and saved it for the ages.

One sunny afternoon as he sat reading some old poetry, a commotion arose outside his house. This was followed by a furious pounding at his door. Julian was busy with supper preparations in the rear of the house, so Modandus put down his reading in annoyance and went to the door.

He faced four hooded monks, who immediately pushed their way into the room. One spoke, "Signore Modandus Napoli, we have been sent by Father Giuseppe Donati with an order from the Office of the Inquisition to search your house for possible heretical material. You must let us in." They shoved Modandus aside and started to examine the room's contents.

"Where are your writings? Ah, I see. Here is your desk. Look through all these documents, brothers. Bring them outside. We will examine them there."

Modandus was helpless to stop the monks and they pawed carelessly through all his works. He watched in dismay as they bundled them up to take away.

"No! No! Do not take my papers. They are histories. Some are irreplaceable documents."

"We will take what we see fit to take. These all look suspicious to me. Father Donati will be interested in them, I am sure."

Modandus saw Julian peek out from the back room and waved him away. He did not want the old man to be harmed by these ruthless creatures. Modandus watched in horror as all his precious papers were carried out. In distress he yelled at them, "No! No! These are only old stories. There is nothing wrong with them. You cannot do this." But the monks continued their ransacking.

There was nothing Modandus could do to stop them and the monks piled the manuscripts in the street. Modandus ran after them and tried to snatch away anything he could reach, but the monks were obstinate and relentless in pursuing their purpose. With great consternation Modandus ran back and forth aimlessly watching the papers being tossed in disorderly heaps.

Father Donati arrived and began looking at the papers, also. As he went through them, he tossed them into a pile in the middle of the street. Some he saved separately. There was general chaos as the monks went about their business, Modandus tried to prevent and deter the wretches as best he could, and Father Donati continued sifting through the papers. Passing citizens turned away quickly when they saw what was going on, and left the scene of the ransacking. It was a bizarre scene of a street empty except for a gang of hooded creatures plundering the dwelling of Modandus.

Modandus implored Father Donati to spare some of his writings. "No! No! I have done nothing wrong. I write only about ancient history. It is the story of early times."

"All of the story of early times is in the scriptures. Your writing is made up of lies and it is contrary to the Church teachings. I have copies here which will convince the Inquisition Officials of that."

Modandus explained, "They are valuable writings from the Library of Alexandria. They are a wondrous history."

"So, you admit the writings are pagan. So much the better that we have your own words to convince the officials."

After a few more moments Father Donati turned to his henchmen. "I have what I need. Start burning the rest. Here burn this too. It is very dry and will burn well." He tossed the old parchment scroll to his henchmen.

Modandus screamed, "No! No! No! You cannot do that. You do not know what you are doing. Those are valuable prehistoric records of ancient civilizations. You cannot destroy them."

Father Donati turned angrily toward Modandus and shouted back. "I have the authority to destroy all that I see fit to destroy, and these are pagan works. They are an abomination to the Church and to the Lord. They will be destroyed and you will be held responsible." Modandus watched in outrage at the horrendous scene as sparks began to fly from the disappearing parchment.

Then in great dismay he rushed back into the house and slammed the door and bolted it. "Julian! Julian!" The old servant appeared from the back of the building. "Go! Quickly! Go to the house of Signore Galileo and get my manuscript. It must not be found in his possession. Take it somewhere safe and hide it. The authorities would destroy it. Hurry! Hurry!" Julian stumbled out the back door as rapidly as his old legs would take him, and disappeared into the back alley. Immediately the front door was battered upon, and it burst open again behind Modandus. There appeared Father Donati with two burly Religious Officers. "Signore Modandus Napoli, you are under arrest for suspicion of heretical activity. Come with me."

Modandus fought back, but he was no match for the guards. He was wrestled out of the house and down the street past the bright fire of his life work vanishing in a column of smoke and sparks as the dry material raced to oblivion. He wailed in pain to see the destruction of his great treasure, but he was dragged though the streets struggling and screaming until they reached the fortress walls of the Inquisition building, and he was propelled inside.

Modandus in prison

Modandus was very uncomfortable. It was a small cell, and all made of stone. There was only a straw mattress to lie on and a small square opening just under the ceiling allowed the barest of light to filter in. He had lost track of the days. The door was small with heavy bars making it a massively cold and foreboding barrier to the narrow hallway outside.

"Could it be a week now?" he wondered. They had questioned him for long periods of time, and he had been as repentant as possible, although it disturbed his conscience to have to lie and say things he did not basically believe. His mind churned with confusion. "How much longer will I be here? What more are they going to want?"

He heard a noise from the hall. "What was that? It was certainly not the guards. They made all the noise they could. This was just a whisper." He turned his head and listened closely.

"Master Modandus. Master Modandus."

He whispered back, "Julian. Is that you?"

"Yes, Master, it is I. I have brought a loaf of bread for you."

Modandus reached out in the semi-darkness and through the opening in the bars he felt the crust of a newly baked loaf. "Thank you, Julian. But how did you get in? I did not know that was possible."

"It was not too difficult. I bribed a guard. They are always looking for a little extra compensation."

"Is that not dangerous though? Might not you be caught?"

"Oh, probably not. The guard is also my brother-in-law. There are other reasons for him to keep me from discovery. But I came to tell you not to worry about your writing. It is safe, and other copies are being made also. Signore Markko Zenetia has many contacts and is quietly guiding the work. It is accomplished in safety and yet unobtrusively.

"Oh Julian, thank you. Thank you so much. That relieves my mind. I do not care what they do with me, if the writing is safe."

"I had to let you know."

"Thank you, thank you. You are a truly good person, Julian, and assure Signore Zenetia he has my utmost appreciation. I am relieved even though I may never see daylight again."

"Do not despair, Master. There is some talk among the town officials who are your friends that they are pressing for your release."

A second voice whispered in the dark void, "Julian, Julian, You must leave now it is no longer safe. Come quickly."

"I must go now. I think someone is coming." Both voices faded in to the stillness.

Modandus sat and contemplated his future in the dark and the sudden silence while he enjoyed his bread. The quietness forced his thoughts to remain in his head unspoken. "I will be all right. They have no proof of anything about what I believe. All I have done is to transcribe writings, and the important part of that is safe somewhere. If I follow Galileo's path and deny whatever they want me to deny and affirm all that they require and act quite contrite, I will be all right. I will be all right."

The days turned into weeks and the weeks became months. Modandus was periodically questioned, then for long periods just ignored. The cell was cold, damp and uncomfortable. The food was bad and scant, but Julian was occasionally able to bring him good food and news which buoyed his spirits.

He confessed to what ever the officials wanted him to confess to, but he did not have the status of Galileo, and they continued to hold him within the fortress walls. Julian also brought information of Modandus' friends trying to get him released and for a while it sounded hopeful, but gradually that too faded as his friends expended all the influence they had, and it had no effect. Many months passed. Modandus realized his strength was failing, and with it his determination to see this tribulation through to a successful conclusion. He was kept alive only by the efforts of Julian and by Julian's friendly guard.

Then one day after a year or more as best he could tell, he was taken again before the officials. He was a broken and dejected man in their presence, and they again queried him. Father Donati led the Inquisition Committee.

"Do you, Modandus Napoli now swear your loyalty to the Holy Catholic Church?"

"Father, I truly believe in the Catholic faith and wish to be a loyal subject of the Lord."

"And do you disavow the lies, falsehoods, fictions and fabrications which you so earnestly wrote about in earlier times?"

"Father, I am truly sorry for all my previous misdeeds. I detest my actions and beg forgiveness for my sins."

"Do you further repudiate your actions and history of misdeeds now in the presence of this religious body?"

"I abjure, repudiate and reject all my actions, conversations, writings and anything else which I committed in the past, and I do now proclaim my remorse and ask your pardon."

The committee conferred quietly among themselves for a few minutes, Then Father Donati turned back to Modandus. "The clerk has some papers to sign, and then you may go."

Modandus was stupefied. He mechanically followed where he was shown to go and signed everything they put in front of him. It was in a state of shock

that he emerged only a few minutes later into a bright midday Sun. He had to cover his eyes in the blinding light. Modandus slowly made his way to his old house. His body was weak, and it took some time to cover the well remember streets to the place he called his own. It seemed strange to be knocking at his own door and not be able to open it, but in a moment it swung wide and an amazed and startled Julian greeted him.

“Master! Master! How good to see you. How did you get here? How did you escape the prison? What has happened? You do not look well. Come in! Come in!”

There was a flurry of activity as Julian did his best to feed, re-clothe, and generally make Modandus comfortable. As the two men talked, the story of Modandus’ release was gradually conveyed to Julian. At the end Julian sat next to his master quietly and just smiled.

“After several moments Modandus spoke. “What is it Julian? You know you cannot hide anything from me.”

“Yes, Master, I am smiling because now it makes sense of a strange message I received last week.”

“Yes, yes, go on.”

“A messenger arrived from Signore Galileo Galilei with a sealed note for you. I was instructed to keep it for you. I was going to try to bring it to you in the prison, but a visit takes more than a little planning with my brother in law, and I have not yet been able to do that.”

“A note you say? And where is this note now?”

“It is just there on your desk.”

Modandus looked more carefully around his room. It was basically the same as he remembered it. Julian had kept it neat and clean, but there was an enormous gap on the shelves where his writings had been. A great wave of sorrow swept over him and Modandus wept. Months of anguish suddenly gushed forth, and he was uncontrolled for several minutes. His life’s work had been destroyed and he was left with empty shelves and an empty heart. He felt hollow inside and saw no further joy in life. His body almost collapsed under the pain. It took a great effort and more time, but when he had regained his composure, he slowly arose and went to the desk. A small square envelope was alone in the middle of the empty writing table. Carefully he opened it and read it.

“Listen to this, Julian, ‘My Friend, when you are able, please come to see me.’ It is signed Galileo Galilei. How could he have known I might be available to visit him again?”

“I do not know master, but you must rest yourself now, so that one day soon you may do as he asks.”

Modandus did not resist Julian’s urging. He slept long and well for the first time in many months. After several days of good food and rest, Modandus felt his strength improving. Although he was far from his usual self, he announced one morning, “Julian, this is the day. I feel strong enough to go to see Signore Galileo. I am anxious to hear what he has to say, and it will be a great joy to see him again.”

“Are you sure, master? Do you wish me to accompany you? Will you be comfortable alone? I do not want you to come to disaster.”

“Yes, my friend, I will be fine. I shall go slowly, and I do really feel much better now because of your good care of me, your fine cooking and your gracious help have strong curative powers.”

Modandus set out over the rough streets and alleys. He did go slowly. Although his spirits were high, his body was not as responsive as usual. He nodded to old friends he had not seen in a long time, but he did not take time to talk as he was most intent on his destination.

Following the old familiar routes, Modandus found his way to the house of Galileo. His knock on the door brought a loud response of a voice which was easily recognized as his old friend. “Yes, who is it at my door?”

“It is I, Modandus. You sent me a note that you desired my presence. I am here.”

There was sound of movement inside and in a moment the door burst open. “Signore Modandus, finally you have arrived. Come in! Come in! I have missed you greatly.”

The two men greeted each other joyously. “I cannot fully express my pleasure at being able to see you again, Galileo. It has been too long, and the time has been very difficult. There were times I thought this would never happen, but now I am here.”

“Yes, there were difficult times, but fate can sometimes bring about that which reason cannot. I am indeed pleased to see you also, and I am doubly

pleased that you are now released from the coils of the nefarious octopus operating as the righteous guardian of all truth. I believe we are in for better times, but they will be slow in coming and they will arrive here long after I am gone, I am sure.”

“Oh my friend, do not talk so. You are in fine health and you will be with us for many years yet.”

“You compliment me to say so, but what you do not know is that I am now rapidly going blind. I think it is only the precursor to the future. But it is a future we must all face for better or ill.”

“Yes, that is true, but enough of this dark prattle, what have you been doing since last we talked?”

“Since my activity has been limited, and it is more difficult to look at the heavens with my poor eyes, I have much time and I have turned to thinking about the physical world and the motion therein. I mentally conceive of some movable object projected on a horizontal plane with all impediments being put aside. Now it is evident that the equable motion on this plane would be perpetual if the plane were of infinite extent; but if we assume it to be ended, and situated on high, the movable object, driven to the end of the plane and going on further, adds on to its previous equable and indelible motion that downward tendency which it has from its own heaviness. Thus there emerges a certain motion, compounded from equable horizontal and from naturally accelerated downward motion, which I call projection.”

“It sounds as though you are saying the object has two motions at once. That is strange. How can it be?”

“Stop and think. It is simple enough. Consider a person pushing a chair across the room. If another person starts pushing the same chair from the side, it will take a new and unique direction which is some summation of the two directions.”

“Ah, I see what you mean now. You seem to be able to make the difficult become simple in many ways.”

“All things are simple when they are understood. I have written a book about these thoughts on mechanics and the mathematics concerning them. It is being printed now although there was doubt that it would be done.”

“Why was that? It sounds as though it will be a useful book.”

"Father Donati got word of the book and came to me to make me agree not to publish it."

"What did you do? Father Donati is a powerful figure and not one to be ignored. Why did he not want it to be printed?"

"He said it was not acceptable to the church, but I insisted it was all about facts I had discovered."

"That seems reasonable to me. Did he then allow the publication of it?"

"No, He still did not want it to be made available. I told the good Father that the manuscript was already at the printer, and was in the process of being published. He was unhappy about that and demanded I write to the publisher to stop it."

"That is outrageous. What did you do as a result of his demand? Did you write such a letter?"

Galileo smiled, "Yes, I agreed to write a letter for Father Donati to send to the publisher, but I had one condition."

"A condition? Did Father Donati accept your condition? What sort of condition could you make on him?"

"Ah, Dear Modandus," Galileo continued in a bright manner, "It concerns you. I told Father Donati that I would give him such a letter to send to the publisher if he were to release you unconditionally. He struggled with that, but finally accepted it. So now you know why I expected you to be able to come to see me. I gave him the letter after you were released."

Modandus was speechless. He looked at Galileo in disbelief. "You - You," Words did not come until there was a rush of them. Modandus poured out his thoughts and feelings in a torrent. "You wrote a letter stopping your book, so that I would be let go? But that is too much to ask. You must rescind it. I do not want to stop science progress. Science is more important than I am. You must not let this stand. I am unimportant, but new knowledge is needed to lead to the enlightenment of all. How can the Church be so stupid?" Modandus was quite agitated and paced around the room.

"Modandus, Modandus, relax. The book will be published. The publisher is far away from here and he will not listen to Father Donati. The publisher is independent minded and will know I wrote the letter under duress. He will understand that I did not intend what it said. I have heard the book is indeed in the process of creation even now."

Modandus stopped and looked intently at Galileo, "Friend, this is indeed a great gift. How can I express my gratitude to you? You understand how relieved I am to be free again"

"Ah! Modandus, they had no reason to hold you. You have done nothing wrong, and they will be unable to recharge you with anything. It makes me happy to have been able to do what I could. But here, let us pour a little wine and begin talking of more interesting things. There is much we have to discuss." The two old friends talked for a long time and enjoyed each other's company. Modandus returned home in the best of spirits.

The following morning Modandus decided to renew his habit of a refreshing walk in the market. He had a particular objective in mind, but he followed a circuitous path to get there. Along the way he stopped to talk with old friends who greeted him warmly, but who did not make mention of his long absence. It was very pleasant to hear the tumult of the market again. There was a special music in the calls of the vendors, the sounds of negotiating prices, the conversations, the arguments, the rush of people coming and going in all directions, and the smells of the produce. The confusion was normal and reassuring to Modandus. The chaos spoke to him and confirmed everything was back to normal and life continued on.

After visiting all corners of the square, he finally reached his destination. Markko Zenetia was standing in front of his fruit stand enjoying the bright Sun as Modandus approached.

"Good Day. Signore Modandus Napoli."

"Good Day. Signore Markko Zenetia. It is a privilege to see you again. I have thought of you often while I have been away. I have hoped for your good health and well being."

"That was most kind of you, Modandus, to think of me while you were otherwise occupied. I had heard you were somewhere on a long trip." A slight flicker of flippancy on his usual somber visage belied his feigned ignorance of Modandus' recent experience.

"Yes, that is so, but my vacation has been spent in a bad climate. I am still trying to recover from it." Then picking up a particularly large red apple he continued, "This is a beautiful apple Markko. You do have very good fruit."

"Thank you Modandus. I also have a beautiful possession of yours which I could return to you if you wish. It would take me a little while to find it, but I

am sure that it is possible to do so.”

“That is certainly considerate of you. It is well to know my property is in safe hands. But no, no. That would not be wise. I am sure to be searched again, and it would not go well with me if I were to have such an article in my custody. I am content that it exists and that it is in a safe place.”

“It does indeed exist, and it has six brothers which are similarly placed in secure locations, some at a great distance from here.”

“Ah! You are a good person Signore Markko Zenetia. I cherish you as my friend. I cannot say how much it means to me that my possession has been made safe and will survive the ages. In the last few months I have realized one of the most important things in Life is to preserve our knowledge for those who come after us. They will need much help.” The two men talked of daily concerns and eventually Modandus realized he was tired. He placed the apple back on the pile from which it came. “I must be getting home. I have been out long enough today, and I will sleep well tonight.”

Markko picked up the apple again and returned it to Modandus. “Here, take this with you. Julian would be disappointed if you return from the market with nothing in your hand.”

THE QUESTIONS

George Eshenbach, historian, researcher and writer was very agitated. Over the past few months new historical information had come into his hands, and it was causing him to reexamine some of his long held beliefs. He was a distinguished looking tall man with a typical academic bearded face. He tended to wear tweedy type clothing but otherwise was not unusual.

His particular interest was in an obscure writer by the name of Modandus Napoli who lived near Florence circa 1635 CE. It was a difficult time. During the excesses of the Roman Catholic Inquisition, Protestantism had been effectively eliminated from Italy. Galileo had been stirring up trouble with his new thoughts of science and the promulgation of the Copernican idea of a heliocentric Solar System. Galileo was eventually confined to his house by the church until his death.

It was known that Modandus had written extensively, but not all of his writings had survived to the present time. Modandus had fallen under suspicion by the Church Fathers, and the bulk of his writing had been burned by the Inquisition officers. However, George Eshenbach during his career had been able to discover a significant number of copies of the manuscripts and partial bits of others. Modandus evidently gave away many copies of his

work to friends and to other scholars. Some of it had survived the ravages of time. From his studies of the coexisting literature of the same era, George knew some sketchy information about Modandus, and his life, and his works.

Modandus was a minor factor in the events during the seventeenth century. He was an admirer and personal friend of Galileo Galilei and enjoyed holding discussions with the great man on some occasions. Modandus' writings reflected the thoughts of many people of the time. He also had an interest in ancient history, and he wrote extensively on that subject. By some unknown means, Modandus had acquired and had in his possession an amazing document. It was a copy of some old writings which had been in the Library at Alexandria. The copy was made on parchment, and it contained the text and commentary about fragments of ancient clay tablets from earlier than 3000 BCE.

George Eshenbach had only recently acquired access to a rare copy of Modandus' writings on this ancient document, possibly the only one still in existence. It was done on an excellent quality of paper, but was still extremely old and fragile. Because of his standing as a nationally known historian, George had been allowed to view the document at the International Antiquities Museum. He had spent all summer translating, copying and making notes about the document. Now he wanted to put the information together in a book. That was the hard part, especially since the enlightenment gleaned from the study of the document did not coincide with nor reinforce ideas he held dear.

Significantly, the old manuscript retold the events discovered on an old Egyptian parchment and it related many important incidents of much earlier times going back millennia in the past. The text discussed the way humans dealt with their problems in those early times. These stories spoke to George about his own ideas of reality and his religious beliefs. The result left him disturbed. He needed to talk with someone.

The obvious person with whom to discuss his questions was his Minister, the Rev. William LaMotte. George mused to himself, "Bill is easy to talk with, and he would probably have some good ideas."

His decision to talk took him to the phone and in a moment it was ringing and answered by a quiet but firm voice which reflected its French heritage, "Hello, Reverend LaMotte speaking."

"Hi Bill, this is George Eshenbach. How are you doing today?"

"I'm fine. Good to hear your voice George. What can I do for you?"

"You know I have been working on this old document from the seventeenth century for a long time, and I have finished translating it. Now I want to write a book about the material, but it has left me with some questions and odd feelings. I think I need to talk with you about it when you have some time."

"Certainly. When would you like to meet? Do you want me to come there, or do you want to come to the office here?"

“Why don’t you come here for dinner some night this week? I know Saturday is no good for you, but how about Friday?”

“That sounds fine with me. Have you checked that with Ruth?”

“Not yet, but I am fairly sure it will work all right. If we run into problems, I’ll let you know.”

“Okay. So I should put on my ancient history thinking cap before I come?”

George laughed, “That might help, but I depend more on your general background and experience with the religious aspects of life, Bill. I am hopeful you will help me find answers to my questions. See you Friday.”

Ruth, George’s wife, had no trouble expanding the Friday menu. Ruth was a tennis player and had the svelte body of a still young and active person, which only enhanced her natural beauty. Besides meetings and other community activities, she did enjoy cooking also. She maintained a fairly good reputation among her set as a very competent chef, and she liked exploring new menus. Bill was a frequent visitor at the Eshenbach home, and the three often had long interesting meals together.

The week ended as all weeks do with sigh of relief and a renewed interest in the weekend activities. George tossed aside his briefcase as he arrived home and sat down with a relaxing martini with Ruth. “Dinner is almost ready, and Bill will be here in about an hour, dear. He always makes good conversation. I think he is a brilliant man.”

“I certainly agree,” replied George. “He is a very thoughtful and accepting sort of person. We are lucky to have him here.”

“Yes, and he seems so well informed on many subjects, not just religion. Did you know he had studied to be a chemist before deciding to go into the ministry?”

“Somehow I recall knowing that, but I can’t say I remember hearing it from him.” The couple chatted a few more minutes, about the day’s events, then George went to shower and change as Ruth finished dinner preparations.

When the doorbell rang, all was ready. “Hello Bill.” Ruth greeted Reverend LaMotte with a restrained hug. “George will be down in just a minute. Come and sit in the living room and relax. Would you like some crackers and cheese?”

“Hi, Ruth. You know my weakness. How can I say no to crackers and cheese?”

“I think you will like this one. It’s a sharp cheddar I got at the Co-op.”

Reverend William LaMotte was a muscular man in his mid thirties. Dark hair, a pleasant face and a calm smile were his outstanding features. Not yet having time nor inclination to marry, he lived alone in the Parsonage and always seemed to be enjoying life.

George joined them, and the three began to shed the cares of the world as they enjoyed the trivia of the last week. Dinner consisted of tofu with a pungent ginger sauce, steamed vegetables, spinach salad and fresh baked whole wheat bread. It was all accompanied by a not too sweet white wine from a local vintner. There was more than enough to satiate them all.

After dinner they cooperated in cleaning the table, transferring the excess food to the kitchen to be packed away, and Bill even took over the loading the dishwasher.

Finally George and Bill retired to the living room again and found soft relaxing chairs to promote their digestion. Bill opened the conversation with a twinkle in both his voice and his eyes. “Well George, what is this serious problem you are having with your research? I would imagine a man of your experience and expertise would be able to handle most historical situations with a certain amount of aplomb. I am ready and wiling to offer my historical expertise which is practically nothing.” This was followed by his always present wide grin.

George laughed, “The history goes very well. It is my own personal outlook for which I have concern. But to give you some background, let me explain. Some thousands of years before the Common Era the Sumerians were the earliest people in the mid-eastern lands.

“Some centuries later the Hittites from the north assailed the area and over several centuries conquered the land. The Hittites prospered for two or more millennia, but then they too were overwhelmed by other invaders. During this Sumerian - Hittite time which paralleled Babylonian time multiple gods were popular. These later served as a model for the Greek and Roman gods. We have also associated these times with constant struggle and wars for land and control of people. Indeed these struggles continued during the early Christian era, down through the Middle Ages and extended to the present time. Even after the concept of only one god became customary, wars have been almost a constant event in the human world.”

Here George stopped for a moment and Bill broke in. “Yes, that is true as far as I know. Unfortunately human history has been one of conflict and disruption. It seems we have a disposition to find reasons for not getting along with other humans. In spite of the peaceful declarations of religions, wars persist.”

“Precisely. That is why you can imagine my amazement when my studies have uncovered a more peaceful era in our development. In fact it was one of the earliest times of which we have any record. There is now some new documentation of the dawn of human communities in the Middle East, and they present a different sort of picture of life at that time.”

“I have never heard that before. How are you sure this is true? It is certainly a novel position. We have always thought that the method of early

tribes and clans contending in larger or smaller conflicts was the way we progressed. The most aggressive ones survived.”

“Yes, Bill, that is the generally accepted idea, but let me explain further. My investigations have centered on a little known writer by the name of Modandus who lived in Arcetri near Florence, Italy circa 1635 CE. His writings are very unusual in that they relate some stories which had been stored at the Library at Alexandria which we know was destroyed in the late 3rd century CE. However, some of the documents from the library did survive as evidenced by their showing up in later times.

“Somehow, Modandus acquired through the underground trade routes of the day a parchment document purportedly from the library of Alexandria which tells an amazing story. This is a story which has never come to light before and it contains many interesting ideas.”

“That is fascinating. Tell me more about Modandus.”

“Modandus was a merchant and town official who lived during the time of Galileo Galilei. He was in fact a friend of Galileo and spent much time talking with that great man. As you know, Galileo was not held in a favorable opinion by the Roman Catholic Inquisition, and was confined to his house at the end of his life. The times of Galileo, Kepler and Copernicus were turning points for the development of Science. Newton followed them, and after that there was the whole explosion of scientific thought and knowledge which continues unabated today.

“Modandus spent his retirement years in studying ancient history, and by chance acquired this parchment document which had been written and held in the Library at Alexandria. As I said, the document was a translation of very early clay tablets which were in the Library. The tablets and other records were destroyed when the Library was destroyed, but this Parchment was saved by someone who kept it safe, and it survived until Modandus’ time.

“This document fascinated Modandus, and he translated it and discussed it in his writings. Because of his writing and his involvement with Galileo, Modandus came under scrutiny of the Inquisition also. He was eventually arrested and most of his works were destroyed. The exception was the document he had written about this ancient writing. Modandus’ document was preserved by a friend and over the centuries it survived and found its way eventually into the International Antiquities Museum. I had the privilege of studying Modandus’ writings last summer, and I will be writing about what I learned.”

George paused to catch his breath and to allow all he had said to be absorbed. After a few moments Bill asked, “So what does this have to do with you and why do you need to talk to me about it?”

George took a deep breathe and began again. “My involvement with this document led me to reconsider all of our religious history. Somewhere in the process it became clear to me that for early peoples who had no other sources of information religions were probably good. Perhaps religions may even have been necessary for their survival.

“However in the modern world with all that we know now about the physical universe, and with the massive growth of knowledge about every facet of human existence, religion may not be the best basis for appraisal of how we view life. Actually I think you will agree that often in the past, religion and the power of the religious leaders served as stumbling blocks, and they retarded the advance of the human race by preventing the use of scientific

knowledge.

“This led me to thinking about my own beliefs, and I now seriously question their validity and even their usefulness.” Again George paused as they both quieted reflected on what he had said.

After a moment Bill offered by way of understanding and support, “You do sound disturbed and you evidently are confused about yourself. How do you see your view of religion now?”

“Well, Bill, you know I have read extensively and studied many sources of information. The events and activities which the religious history relates and enlarges on are just not supported in major ways by the evidence which is found in the real world and reported in credible writings. I seriously question the usefulness of having beliefs which are not supportable by facts. I have found that moral and ethical behavior can be completely justified without resorting to religions, gods, or mysticism.

“Moreover, this new information suggests that the earliest civilizations may not have held religion in as high regard or as necessary as later civilizations did. Perhaps not even as in great esteem as we do today. This is what has started me thinking and having more questions about the role of religion in our lives. That is why I want your input. That is my problem.”

Bill thought a few moments, then responded, “You remember I have said in the past that the modern view is that the ancient stories in the Bible are allegorical. They are metaphors which try to highlight various ideas, and are not meant to be taken literally. They are symbolic and try to illustrate how we should think and behave for the greatest good for everyone.”

“Yes. I have understood that. But if they are just stories created to guide us, why do we still use them? We have come a long way in understanding the totality of the universe and the physical world. We know more about ourselves including what type of beings we are and how we came to be here than has ever been known before. We understand much better how brains work and how people interact on all levels than has ever been known before. There are modern approaches which generate reasonable morals and ethics without the mumbo jumbo of fictitious events. These can guide us just as well, if not better than the old stories. Why do we keep going back to ancient fables? Why should I still follow old rituals?”

“Those are indeed serious questions, George. I believe most people are comfortable with that thing called tradition. We get accustomed to the things we know and they become habit. The Bible stories are familiar and many find them reassuring.”

“Well, Bill, that brings me back to my original concern. “What if the history is wrong from the very beginning? Can you still put faith in the stories? My research has uncovered previously unreported stories about the beginning of the human race. Paraphrasing one of your own metaphors, ‘If the foundation is on sand, how secure is the building?’ ”

“Yes George, you have a point. I would be interested in seeing the results of your studies. Do you have a copy of the writings of Modandus? Would I be able to read it?”

“I do indeed have extra copies of my translation of Modandus. I would be glad to loan you one. Moreover, you may certainly have a copy of the book after I write and publish it. The writing of the book though hinges on my straightening out my own thinking before I start, and we are back to why you are here.”

“Yes, I think that is wise of you to be confident in your own outlook. Reviewing our beliefs is something we all should do regularly. Certainly in this modern day with all we are learning about the world, the universe, and even about ourselves, these complex human beings, we should be concerned about what we believe and how we live out lives.”

“I agree, Bill, and that is why I need your input. If we know the human psyche so well, and can reason on fairness and equality and all other such social issues with confidence, why do we need ancient stories made up by men much less knowledgeable than we are to guide us. If we can speed down the highway at sixty miles an hour safely, and know how to live healthy lives, and realize the real social benefits of not abusing our neighbors, and understand the importance to the community of helping those in need, why can we not determine other acceptable social positions and actions with freedom from error on the basis of facts also? Why should we cling to outmoded ways? I have a serious doubt that the ancient stories and rituals have any relevance today.”

“Well, I would be happy to read your translation. Are you sure you can spare a copy for me to peruse?”

“Certainly, I have made a half a dozen copies to work with. You can have one to keep if you wish.”

Bill laughed, “I should have known you would be well supplied. I would be happy to spend some time studying the translation now and see what happens with the book later.”

“Fine. I will give you a copy before you leave. Now tell me what you will be taking about next Sunday so I can sleep through your sermon.”

At this point Ruth joined them with a coffee tray and the talk turned to events in the community and an upcoming potluck supper.

It took Reverend LaMotte a couple of weeks to find the time to study George’s writings, but the day finally arrived when he did not have any other commitments and he found the time for reading. After an early supper he devoted himself to it entirely. He perused it carefully and intently. As he read, he realized this work was very important to George. He was fascinated by the coherence which the stories of the ancient writings came through in George’s work, and he was impressed with the professor’s abilities to clearly convey the information. George was indeed an astute historian.

**THE TEXT OF THE WRITING
OF MODANDUS NAPOLI
Translated and Organized by
George Eshenbach PhD.**

THE MAUTI FAMILY GROUP

I am Akmed of Adama. It was a great event many years ago when Mauti the Ancient devised this system by which we may put our ideas into a permanent form. I am indebted to him for the method of imprinting clay tablets with these markings. It was my good fortune to be his student and learn all the ideas he expressed. Everyone knows clay tablets will last forever and the result of our imprinting will be useful for all time. We will be able to extend our great knowledge to our children and to all the children who will come in the future.

That is why I am making the effort today of imprinting in clay tablets the events happening in our community. I wish to explain how the Main Thought arose. Perhaps this will be useful for others in the future to be aware of the eternal truths in our world. It is our privilege to be able to record these thoughts and thus be able to guide those who will come after us.

The Main Thought has several parts. Some come from early times, and some arise in what we are doing ourselves today. I shall write all of it, and I am favored just now to have an eminent guest to help me. We are being visited by Sarda, the Story Teller, who holds in her head all that can be known by any learned woman or man. She comes from the most remote area of Adama. She is old and has seen many things in her life. Sarda will contribute to this effort by relating the olden stories of our beginnings to us. I will inscribe them on clay tablets which will last for all time and guide those who come after us.

Although our families are small, and scattered over many villages, we are expanding. Every year there are more children to grow and to extend into the society and to help with the many duties of maintaining a civilization. This record I am writing will be useful to all of us in the years to come. I have decided to make several copies so it can be sent to the other communities as well.

This is especially important now as Sarda has told us of vague talk from some of the farthest villages about meeting strange people from far to the north. These strangers have not seemed friendly, so it is most serious now that we all understand how we have been able to live in peace and comfort these many years as we continue to grow in numbers. We must make these things very clear for ourselves, as it may be necessary to teach these new people of the proper methods to live and prosper in the forest. I am certain that if we present these ideas properly, the strangers will adopt them. The newcomers will see the great advantages to living according to the Main Thought.

In addition to myself; Elda our local historian; Gird, his wife; Morgal, our medicine man; Estam, the wife of Morgal; all the other elders; and most of the rest of the villagers assembled to hear Sarda's story. The first part of the Main Thought is illustrated by the following story from Sarda's mouth.

Sarda was quite elderly, but still active. Her long white hair shone in the firelight and set off the fine features of her weathered face. She was a tall woman with an elegant appearance and she dominated the assemblage in the large room. Sarda began by explaining, "When our fathers first existed many years ago, there was only a small family clan. They lived on the edge of a great water and sustained themselves on fish and fruits. They depended heavily on fishing for their food and their whole life revolved around the fish and those things related to the Great Water. The day I wish to tell you about began as any other ordinary day in the life of the clan, but momentous changes were to occur. Let me tell you about it."

The Great Wave

"Something is wrong. We are not catching all the fish we need. The fish do not seem to be there, so how can we catch them?" Gonda, the chief fisher woman was speaking with Letta. Gonda was an older woman, but she was still strong and able to do a hard days work with everyone else. Her weathered features were a result of a life lived in the open and subject to all the elements. Gonda had met Letta on the way to the shore for the day of fishing.

Letta stared at the ground and did not reply. Her small frame and long loose hair combined with her demeanor to convey a lack of confidence. Letta seemed different than the others. She kept more to herself and seemed less sure of her abilities and her status than most of the villagers. Everything took a little longer with Letta, and patience was needed to allow more time for her to grasp those things which others understood quickly.

Letta spoke silently to herself. "How could she, Letta, who was not the chief fisher, tell Gonda what to do? They were fishing in the wrong places for the season. Because it had been too hot, the fish went to the deeper cooler water, but it was not up to Letta to tell Gonda that. Gonda would not like that, and she might point her finger and laugh at Letta. The others would laugh then also, and Letta would not feel good."

"Come with me, Letta. We will talk with the others. Perhaps they have some good ideas." Letta and Gonda set off for the shore where the other villagers were waiting. As they approached, Tsu, the Old One who knew all the gods and all the medicines was speaking in his dry raspy voice, and all the fisher persons were quiet.

"It is the gods." Tsu spoke in a strident way. "They are angry with us. We have not been giving them their correct share of the fish. The great gods An and Enki are angry and we must do more for them, or we will not be able to catch any more fish."

"That is stupid," spoke Garn. "The fish do not hear An and Enki any more than you or I do. The fish are there if we are smart enough to find them."

"Oh, what do you know Garn?" Tsu was annoyed. "You know only about the plants. You are not even a good fisher."

"I can catch my share when there are fish. I think it is foolish after we catch them to throw the best ones back just to make the gods happy. We would do better to use them for food and make the people happy." Garn was large and strong and spoke with a commanding voice. When he gave his opinion, others listened and paid attention to what he said.

Letta who was Tsu's house companion now spoke up in defense of her mate, "Listen to Tsu. He knows the ways of the Gods and what we must do."

Gonda quickly broke in, "This is not a time to argue. It is a time to decide where to go for the fish today."

The group all turned toward her as though to ask silently, "You are the chief fisher. Where do you say we should go?"

"Because our canoes are not in good repair, I do not want to go too far out. I think we should go over by the reef where we were yesterday. Perhaps the fish will be there now."

Garn scowled, "Why go where we know there are no fish? I think we should go well beyond the reef, and try a new spot."

"I think we should all raise our voices to An and ask for good guidance and favorable conditions. We must promise him many fish if we catch them." chimed in Tsu.

They were interrupted by one of the men standing near the water who shouted in despair. "Look! The water is going away. How can we fish in that?" The fishers turned, and to their amazement they could see that the water was receding at a steady rate.

"It is an omen from An and Enki. We must shout to them now, and ask them for help. We must promise them the finest of the fish." Tsu's words were lost in the confusion.

Garn shouted, "We must tell Nam, our chief." He ran toward the village and Letta followed as fast as she could behind him. She wanted to help in explaining the situation to the Elders from her point of view.

Nam was at the edge of the village talking with Nur and Nur's companion, Dindan. Nur and Dindan lived alone high on the hill away from the water front. Dindan liked the higher level so she could look out over the waters. She found beauty in the vast expanses, and in the forest and all of the natural wonders that filled her world. Nur preferred to be away from the noise of the village, because he was old and the activities of the young people distracted him. He and Dindan often spent many hours in the forest studying plants and animals. Garn helped in their study. All three were quite well informed on the food plants and other kinds of plants as well. Nur also kept a record of the weather and spent time observing the stars when everyone else was asleep. He was a respected elder on the council and often had helpful suggestions for the people.

Garn shouted ahead, "Nam! Nam! The water is receding. What must we do?"

"The water is receding? What do you mean? How can that be?"

"It just started going away." chimed in Letta. "Nothing happened. It just started going away. It has now run very far from the

shore. Tsu says we must yell to the gods An and Enki and promise them fish, or the water will not come back and there will be no more fish."

Nam stood quietly a moment, and then turned to Nur. "What do you think, Nur?"

"It is very strange. I have not seen that before. Let us think this through. What is the water usually like?"

Garn offered, "It is usually flat except when the storm and wind makes it go higher and lower, but there is no wind now."

"That is right," mused Nur. "But it does usually go up and down in waves. A low point always follows a high point." After a moment of silence while the others looked at him, he added. "If now there is a great low point, I think it will be followed by a great high point in the water. It will rise high onto the shore. It might even reach the village. Such a rush of water would be very dangerous and destroy everything in its path. We must act quickly. We must move to the high ground."

Nam thought a moment. Then becoming suddenly animated he began giving instructions. "Letta, run back to the shore and tell them to run to the hill. Gather at Nur's place on top. Dindan, you go and get the children to bring embers and fuel from the fire. Garn and I will alert the village. We must tell the all the rest. Hurry, there is not much time."

Nur added to Nam's instructions, "I will help everyone to select the necessary things to bring along. We must tell them all to bring as much food as they can carry. We cannot afford to lose the food, and we do not know how long this will last or what will happen next."

"Yes, have everyone bring as much as they can, but hurry."

The village and shore quickly became alive with much activity. It seemed chaotic but gradually almost everyone was moving toward Nur's house on the hill carrying as much as they could. Nam took charge on top of the hill and directed where to start a fire and where

to stack the provisions. Nur kept the people moving to the top and encouraging them on.

Within a few minutes the clan was getting organized high on the hill next to Nur's house. There was much noise, and Nur kept yelling at everyone to hurry. Letta and a few others came from the shore. "Why are the rest not with you, Letta?" asked Nur.

"Tsu would not come, and he convinced several others to help him yell at the gods to bring the water back. I could not make them come with me. The water has gone far away. It looks as though it will never return. Why must we go to the hill?"

"You did what you could Letta," responded Nur. "The waters will surely come back. I hope those on the shore will see them coming soon enough to have time to get here. I believe it is certain the water will return. "

As the last stragglers reached the top, everyone became silent. They were hearing an unusual sound. It grew louder and louder. Facing the shore, they could see a dark form all across the horizon. It was a wall of water thrashing and churning and roaring as it pounded towards the land. The villagers stood still and stared at the strange sight as it raged at the sky and tore at the ground and shoreline in front of it. Suddenly it seemed there was water everywhere. It picked up the canoes and tossed them in the air as if they were nothing. Water rushed towards the village and the homes and buildings began to collapse. The water started climbing the hill, as if wishing to chase a few men from the shore who were running up the hill as fast as they could ahead of it. The villagers drew back in fear as the water came inexorably closer to where they were.

For a few moments it seemed the water would never stop. Then it gradually slowed and was arrested in its progress just short of where the villagers stood. It was as though a mysterious force pushed the water away from the land in just the same way it had pushed towards the land. Soon the high water was going back and picked up speed as it went, stripping the land of vegetation and anything it could break loose and float away.

Nam turned to Nur, "Thank you Nur. You have saved the village. We would all be gone now if you had not thought of what to do.

Now we must go back and start again as best we can.”

“No, not yet, Nam. As one wave follows another, the water will be back. For now we must stay here to be safe.”

During the morning the wave returned three times. Each time it was lower until by the afternoon the water was almost back to the way it always had been before.

After the waters had subsided from the Great Wave, the Elders decided all the villagers must spend the night on the hill. It was a restless and noisy crowd. Everyone talked again and again about the event. They determined that five persons were missing including Tsu. All were upset and worried about what had happened, but little by little the villagers found sleep and waited for dawn. Letta was particularly unhappy, “I should have gone back to Tsu. Perhaps I could have saved him. Oh what will I do now?” The other women tried to console her, but she could not sleep all night and was up again at first light.

A silence followed the end of Sarda’s narration. Then Elda spoke, “It was well that Nur not only had the correct idea, it was also proper that Nam accepted it and followed his advice. We are lucky to have had such wise ancestors.”

Morgal had sat quietly during the story and listened very attentively. Now he commented with great intensity, “It was unfortunate that they lost Tsu. The use of proper medicine is also necessary to preserve the clan.”

Sarda replied, “There are many activities which are essential to our survival, but we must keep them all in perspective. Survival itself is the primary objective of the clan. If we do not survive, we do not need medicines or fishing skill or gardening skill nor even the skills of our leaders.”

Morgal returned to silence.

The Wave Story was told by Sarda on the first evening of her visit. We heard that the gods did not do anything to save the people. Nur’s good idea enabled many of the first clan to avoid being washed away, and they survived to further the growth of the villages. This shows the best way to live is by using the ideas which can be shown to be true. Nur’s ability to do this was the reason our ancestors survived and it follows then that is why we are

allowed to be here today.

This then is the first part of the Main Thought. I am pleased to have the information of the event finally in a permanent form, and Sarda has been most gracious to share her knowledge.

While the mystics give us good stories, they do not necessarily show the best way to live in our real life. However, our fanciful friends are entertaining and sometimes they offer meaningful insight. We must always remember that the gods do not rule the world, but the gods are ruled by the mystics.

Elda is not only our local historian, he is the present leader of our council. Elda is the oldest and wisest man in our village. He and Sarda have much in common, and they have been talking together all of today, the second day of Sarda's visit. I have been listening intently and now will put some of the conversation into the clay.

"Sarda, you are older and have more experience than I do. What do you think is the basic quality of our people which makes the community good for everyone?" Elda was interested in getting Sarda talking so they might exchange ideas.

"Our basic quality?" Sarda thought for a few moments. "I think the most necessary quality for us all to succeed is Fairness. Everyone is important. Everyone should benefit from our life together, but of course, every person must then contribute to our success as they are able. We need fishers, hunters and farmers, people to cook and care for children and the Elders. We need others to build houses and canoes. We also need leaders who know what to do, and who can lead in doing it. Of course, anyone can do all of these if they wish, but all must contribute in one way or another."

"But what if someone leads us in the wrong way?"

"I have not seen that happen very often. Because we agree to have the Elders decide as a group when important decisions are made, bad ideas are usually balanced and eventually overcome by good ones. Good leaders have earned the respect of everyone and the people know who is most likely to be correct. As in the story I told yesterday, everyone respected Nur's judgment and did as he said. The result was that most were saved. Only four were lost because they followed an irrational leader."

"I thought you said five were lost."

Sarda smiled, "I did indeed, but wait for the story I will tell tomorrow. That may change. The point is that most people are reasonable and they will do the right thing which is ordinarily in their best interest. Those who are uncooperative often bring ruin on themselves."

Gird, Elda's wife, had come into the room bringing fresh water and fruit which was passed around to all. "I overheard what you were saying,

Sarda. You mentioned that anyone could do anything they wanted to do. Why is it then that it is normally the women who do the cooking and care for the children?”

Sarda smiled. “I meant what I said, Gird. I think we women are allowed to do anything which we can do well, just as a man must do that which he does best. There are several settlements near where I come from that have women as the chief fishers. There are many places where the chief farmer is a woman, and I know of at least three villages which have women as Chief Elders. Perhaps it is the demands of child raising that tie women closer to the home, but that is no reason that we women cannot do whatever we can do well. Look at me. I am an Elder, Historian, and Story Teller. No one has told me I cannot do these things even though I am a woman.” Sarda paused a moment, then went on. “Although, there may be other factors. For instance, I do not know of any chief hunters who are women. They may not have the strength or inclination to hunt, but that does not mean women cannot hunt if they wish to.”

“Fine,” laughed Gird. “I will also aspire to being Chief Elder someday. I do not like to fish. When I go to the water, I prefer just to swim.”

Elda went on, “So if Fairness is a basic quality of our culture, what should be done with those who may not do their share, or who may even do nothing at all to help?”

“That is a very good question, Elda. I know all villages and Chief Elders have to deal with that problem. If children are included in all activities, even at an early age, they learn that working for the good of all is best for them also. So when they become adults they do their share without any difficulty. I think that when some person does not help it is because they have not felt included with everyone else, so greater effort must be made by the rest of the community to make them feel part of the village, and important to the village. They must be given reasons to feel included.”

Elda and Sarda talked much, longer, but I, Akmed, have recorded this much to illustrate another part of the Main Thought. It is Fairness in all activities and the equal rights of all the people to do that which they want to do and can do best. Everyone should have an equal chance to do as they wish as long as it does not hurt others or the community as a whole.

The next day, Sarda told us another of the ancient stories of the first clan, and I have recorded it. It follows the first story and in Sarda’s words, it begins like this.

The Aftermath

As soon as dawn broke, Nur, Dindan, Garn and Letta started down to the shore. The water was again quiet, and gave no indication of the power and rage it had shown the day before. There was wreckage everywhere and the village buildings were completely destroyed. The shore was strewn with all kinds of materials from dead fish to tree trunks and other wood and sea weeds. The landscape was changed. The village was mostly gone except for a few stone mounds and splintered wood. Even the shore line was different where loose soil had been washed into the sea. The desolation was almost overwhelming. The group stood at the edge of the water and contemplated the scene in awe.

After looking for several minutes Nur quietly turned to the others, "Garn, you and I must go back and sit with Nam and the council to plan what to do now that all is gone. Dindan, you go up along the shore and look for anything which can be saved and used again. Letta, you go the other direction and do the same. We will send more of the villagers down to help, but you get started now. Come, Garn, we will go back and talk with Nam."

The group went their various ways and the villagers gradually awoke and started the new life they must face. Letta walked a long way down the shore without seeing anything she thought worth saving. There was much broken wood and weeds from the sea and dead fish were beginning to smell in the morning Sun. Then in the distance she saw something larger, and started to run. As she approached, she could see it was one of the canoes. It looked damaged, but probably could be fixed. When she got close, something else caught her eye. She thought, "Is it possible? Can that be? Yes! Yes! There is a person there. Someone is in the canoe."

The man was lying still, and Letta shook him to rouse him. As she did so she could see the man was Tsu. "Tsu! Tsu! Are you alright? Are you alright? Are you hurt? I am so glad to see you. How were you able to save yourself?"

Slowly Tsu came to consciousness. "Where am I? Who is that? Oh, Letta, is that you? How did you get here?" Letta could see Tsu was very confused. By now other men and women were coming along the beach. Several of them carried Tsu back up the hill to the new

village site, and there he received some food and drink and was put to bed. He had a few cuts and bruises, but was otherwise not seriously injured. He fell into a deep sleep and slept all day. Letta stayed by his side as he slept.

Altogether the villagers found three canoes which could be repaired and much usable wood which they hauled to the hilltop. The Elders had decided the high ground was the best location as they did not know whether the Great Wave would happen again, and it was best to be safe. Other items were found, and the fire rocks were brought up from the old village site. Life settled back to a bit more calm pace. The day was spent in collecting and salvaging whatever was useful. That night passed in a much better fashion than the previous night. All the villagers, even the children, were exhausted and the peaceful village slept well.

When Nur awoke, Nam was already guiding the villagers in constructing new dwellings using the salvaged wood and more new wood from the forest. The previous day the Elders had decided that the new village should be located on the hill away from the terror of the Big Wave. After observing the progress on the building, Nur approached Nam. "Nam, if you wish to have a meeting of the elders for more planning, there is room in my house for all to sit and talk."

"Yes, Nur we must do that this morning. There is more to be decided. I will tell everyone, and we can meet in just a little while."

It was not long before Nam, Nur, Garn, Gonda and several other men and women were gathered in Nur's house. It was cozy, but they were comfortable and they all could be intent on trying to decide the best course of action.

"Our main concern is having enough food for the village. All our stores are gone, and we will need to find new sources," began Nam. "Gonda, how much can you provide in fish?"

Gonda looked uneasy. "We have only three canoes that are partly usable. We will spend more time fishing, but I do not think we can supply all we need."

Nam replied, "We all can eat less for a while, and we can go farther into the forest for roots and berries. It will take more time and effort, but we can do it."

Nur broke in, "Nam, let me tell you. Garn and Dindan have been doing something with the plants we eat. They have found we can collect the food plants in the forest and bring them closer and plant them together in one spot. If we keep other plants away and protect them from the animals, we can increase the food from them without having to spend so much time searching in the forest. Now that we will have fewer fish, I think this is an important thing to do. It will provide other food, and do it quickly."

"That sounds good Nur, but why is it better than what we are doing now. Will it also not take a lot of work?" responded Nam.

Garn spoke up, "Having all the food plants in one place will mean we do not have to spend time in walking to find them and carry them back over great distance. The time we save will easily allow the work necessary to build this one spot for all of them to grow."

"Yes, that does sound reasonable." Nam thought a moment and continued. "That may be the best way to provide food now."

As they were talking, Tsu suddenly stormed into the meeting. "What are you doing here? You are wasting time. We must be calling to An and Enki for help and promise them more of what we catch. We will perish if we do not honor the gods. Come to the shore with me now and help me to gain the favor of the gods once again. Come!"

Garn jumped up in anger, "Silence you old fool. Your stories of gods are entertaining, but they produce no results. We have diligently provided the best of the catch to your gods, and what did they do for us? They almost destroyed us all. Do not talk to me of god appeasement. I do not think we should give the best of the catch to the gods anymore. The people are more important than the gods. Besides, we need all we can catch just for the village to survive. Because you know herbs and medicines is no reason that your god talk is true. Talk to me of what we can do to provide food and safety for our village. When we have done that, then we may waste time in singing to your gods!"

Nam stood up also and took control of the group. "Enough! Enough Garn! Sit down and be calm. And you also, Tsu. Arguing will not solve our problems. We have good plans already, and they will take the effort of all of us to make them work.

"Garn, take two of the villagers from the construction project to go with you and Dindan to start the growing plan you have described. The women and children are already searching for roots and berries in the forest.

"Gonda, go and fix the canoes as best you can and have your fishers begin going about their business again. Tell those who do not have canoes to start building new canoes. The rest of us will do what we can to help to build the village and to make order in our new location. We must all work together now."

The group gradually dissolved as all left and began their assignments. Tsu was left alone with Nur. Tsu was still angry and turned to Nur. "Garn must be careful. The gods will not be pleased if we do not honor them."

"You must admit Tsu, you have never been able to show us anything we can see or touch to show that the gods are there. It is difficult to believe something is real for which we have no experience."

"You are all the same. You cannot rise above what you see now to reach beyond the immediate reality. You have no faith."

"You are wrong. I have faith in the things I see and the tasks I can do which produce results. We must do them to preserve ourselves and our families. Those ideas which do not contribute to the good of the community are not worth spending time on."

Tsu grew silent and thoughtful. After a moment he began again. "Garn's idea of growing the plants is ridiculous. It will not work. Next he will be wanting to keep the wild animals nearby too. Whoever thought we would come to this?"

Nur smiled, "Keeping animals may not be such a bad idea. I think we must consider it."

Tsu glared at Nur and turned away. He stamped out of the room angrily.

Morgal was the first to speak after Sarda had finished her recitation. “I think it would be well for the leaders to pay more attention to those things which are not the everyday concerns. Everyone’s viewpoint should be considered. Tsu should not have had his thoughts dismissed simply because they were different. All viewpoints should have equal value.”

Sarda considered a moment then offered. “All viewpoints are not the same. Those ideas based on real things we can agree on from experience have more value than those which are just made up stories. The real world does not understand wishes and conjectures. We must be careful to follow those things we know work.”

“But why are some ideas better than others?” interjected Estam. “I believe Morgal has good ideas also. Do these not count for something?”

Sarda replied, “Everyone’s ideas are worth expressing, but only those which can be demonstrated to be actual solutions should be considered in decisions. Remember our First Thought is to follow facts and reason, and not the ideas which come to us from no definable source. I think Tsu did not have good evidence of the effect of the gods, and it cannot be denied that Nur was correct in deciding the best thing to do.”

Morgal then spoke up, “But why was calling to the gods not even tried by the villagers. Who can say what might have happened if they had done that?”

Remember, a few of the villagers did try that and four of them were lost. If the entire village had stood on the shore dancing and calling to the gods, they may all have been lost, and we would not be here today.”

Estam and Morgal looked at each other, but did not say anything further. Morgal remained silent, but his face showed displeasure with the words of Sarda.

The Aftermath Story demonstrates that the purposeful growing of the necessary plants we use for food was started because of the Great Wave experience. Cultivating a garden became the customary thing to do. All villages now have gardens where those who are best suited to do the jobs of growing and harvesting the food plants are the ones the village depends on for most of its food. I consider purposely growing food for the good of the village to be a part of our Main Thought also. Additionally, the Great Wave caused other changes. One was that it reminded us to care for all of our equipment not only the canoes. The necessary tools and equipment must be kept in good repair. It is even an advantage to have more than we need of many things in case some are suddenly lost.

After The Great wave, more of the members of the village began to do only one type of task. Most would gain great skill and became able to do their

special job very well. This used the time and the work of the people to the maximum. It was the most efficient way to utilize the effort of all men and women. As the villagers worked together, more would get done as each could do the job they did best. Therefore, I would list Cooperation as another part of our Main Thought. Because of these ideas and actions, we continued to prosper, and we have increased in numbers as the years go by. We have learned that we can live in individual villages, and yet we can all respect our larger family in the other villages.

Sarda had yet one more story to tell us. It is more disquieting than the others, but it is part of our history. The following day after all had gathered together, Sarda began in her quiet but musical voice to recite the following tale.

The Legacy of Tsu

As Tsu left Nur's house, the first person he met was Letta. "Letta, come with me. You must help me save our village from wrongful actions. You who saved my life and are my companion, you are duty bound to now help me with this greater mission."

"But Gonda has told me to go and help build canoes. Must I not do as she says?"

"No, this is more important. I will deal with Gonda. You come with me."

Letta hesitated, but Tsu was her mate. Also the immediate power of Tsu was greater than the remote power of Gonda, and Letta turned to follow him. Together they walked out of the village and into the forest. They walked for a great distance. It was farther than Letta had ever gone before and was well away from the rest of the villagers. They finally stopped in an open grassy area, and Tsu indicated they should sit down.

"Letta, you have more understanding than some of the others. You always listen when I talk and I know you take an interest in what I say."

"You are different than the others, Tsu. You talk about the herbs and how to cure illnesses. You also speak of gods and things which I do not understand but which sound pleasing to me. You have taught me some of the mysteries of the herbs, and I am your

companion. You make me feel good.”

“That is pleasing to hear. I Think I know more about the other world beyond that which we can see and touch. There are many things I know which the others cannot understand, nor do they wish to learn. That is why I need your help. They are ignoring the gods. If they continue angering the gods, it will mean much more trouble for us in the future. Somehow you and I must make them see the error of their ways, and we must encourage them to turn their efforts to honoring the gods.”

“How will we do that?”

“I do not yet know, but you and I must devise a way of doing it. Making a good plan is our only salvation now.” The two fell silent for a few minutes. Tsu became more and more agitated. He stood up and started walking back and forth and muttering to himself. After a few more minutes, he stopped and turned to Letta.

“You must now experience that which I have experienced to get close to the gods. Then you will be better able to talk to them. Come with me. We must look for a particular plant.” They set off again through the forest, and Tsu kept looking at the ground and the plants which grew there. Suddenly he stopped. “Ha! There it is. Here is our way to be with the gods.” He stooped down and began picking the leaves from a strange looking plant that was unknown to Letta. “Here Letta, pick some of these and then come with me.” The two rebels went on farther to a grassy knoll and sat down again. “Now Letta, we will eat our leaves and you will see for yourself the way to find the gods and to learn about them.” With that Tsu began chewing on the leaves voraciously.”

Letta was unsure. She tasted the leaves and although the taste was pleasant, they left a strange taste in her mouth. She watched Tsu consuming his leaves rapidly. Letta tried her best to eat the leaves but she held back in fear of them also. Tsu finished his eating and reclined in the grass. Letta nibbled on the leaves, but as time went on she began to feel strange and slumped to the grass before she had eaten very many of them.

The two were motionless in the grass as time passed. Life in the forest went on around them both noisily with the insects and quietly with the plants as the Sun rose higher in the sky. Later, after the Sun passed its high point, Letta stirred slightly. Her eyes opened and she tried to remember where she was. She spoke to herself softly. "Tsu. Tsu brought me here. And we ate some special plants. Oh! Oh! I remember. I had dreams. I saw many colors and I felt very pleasant. I thought there was someone talking to me with a soft voice. I cannot remember what they said, but it made me feel very nice. I still feel tired."

After a few more minutes she turned and saw that Tsu was still sleeping, so she remained quiet. She fell asleep again, and the next thing she was aware of was the beginning of night, and she did not know what to do. "I must awake Tsu. We must get back to the village. Tsu! Tsu! We must go." Tsu did not answer, and Letta went to him. Letta shook him, but Tsu did not respond. Letta faced a dilemma. They must get back to the village, but Tsu would not get up. Letta could not carry him. What must she do? She could think of nothing else except to curl up in the grass next to Tsu and wait. It grew dark. Letta slept again, but it was a fitful and uncomfortable sleep. Sometimes she was awake and listened to the darkness, and then held as still and as quiet as possible. The next she knew she was waking up again. The wearisome night gradually passed.

As the light of the Sun came again Letta stood up and looked around. This place was completely strange to her. She had no idea of where she was. She decided she must finally wake Tsu and they should return to the village. She began shaking Tsu, but Tsu did not respond. Letta looked more closely. Tsu did not feel warm. Letta realized Tsu was not breathing. He even felt stiff. Letta drew back in horror. Tsu was like a dead person. Was Tsu dead? Why was he dead? Letta became very distressed and verbalized her thoughts. "Oh! Oh! What must I do? What can I do? Oh Tsu, why have you died? I will be alone. You have left me. What will I do? What will I do?" For a long while she cried and tried to wake Tsu, but it was no use. Finally in hopelessness she thought, "I must go back to the village and get help. But which way is the village?"

Letta dashed off recklessly in the direction she thought was correct and ran until she got tired. She stopped, but nothing looked right. She sat down and wailed in despair, and she realized she was lost in the forest.

Several days later as Garn was going to the forest to collect plants for the garden, he was startled by a noise in the bushes. As he followed the sound he found Letta moaning under a bush. "Letta! Letta! What is wrong? Where have you been? We have been looking for you and Tsu."

"Oh, I am sick. I have not eaten. I could not find the roots or berries. Oh I am sick."

Garn helped Letta back to the village and there was a lot of commotion as all came running and saw that Letta had returned. The women took charge and gave her some water and fed her some soft food. Gradually, from the attention and care she received Letta calmed down, and she could speak of her experience. Slowly, painfully, the whole story came out.

Letta told how Tsu had made her go to the forest with him. She related what Tsu had said about knowing the gods. She told the Elders that Tsu had spoken of the villagers heading for trouble if they did not honor the gods. Then she explained how they had looked for a special plant, and they had eaten the leaves. She continued with the experiences of the colors, soft voices and pleasant feelings followed by the long sleep. She became agitated again as she told of discovering that Tsu was dead when she awoke in the morning., and she spoke sadly of the following days which were spent wandering in the forest and trying to get back to the village. She had been greatly relieved when Garn finally found her where she had fallen.

Nam looked down at Letta lying on her bed. "We are glad you have returned, Letta. It was a foolish thing you did, but I blame Tsu more than you. Tsu always had strange ideas, and they were usually not very helpful. We let him do as he wished since he was good at curing illnesses, but his ideas about gods were not useful in solving problems."

Garn added, "I know some plants which can cause very bad feelings. That is why we avoid using them. Tsu probably had tried some of these before, but this time he ate too much. You were fortunate Letta, that you ate fewer of the leaves. You must never eat unknown things again."

Nam continued, “This will be a lesson for all of us. We must be careful of what we eat. Unfortunately for Tsu, he was not using good sense in what he did. This even more points out that we must be careful to use what we have experienced to be true when we have problems to solve in the same manner as Nur does. Finding solutions requires truth. Trying to solve problems with made up stories only makes us feel good. It is not a practical way, and it will not result in success. Tsu was basically a good person, but he became irrational in seeking easy answers.”

Letta recovered after several days, but she thought again and again of the events with Tsu. She remembered the pleasant feeling in her stupor from eating the leaves. That was a nice memory, but then she thought of how sick and hungry she had been afterward and that was not pleasant. “But I did see the colors and I heard the soft voice and had pleasant feelings.” These conflicting thoughts troubled her many times over the rest of her life. She did not know how to make them all fit into her ideas of life. Nor did she know how the ideas were going to influence her later in her life. Tsu had left at least one lasting impression with one individual.

When Nam felt they could afford to spare the workers from rebuilding, he sent a group to find Tsu’s body. They looked often, but they were never successful. Tsu was lost for all time. In the process of searching though, they learned about more of the surrounding forest and they gradually expanded their village into greater portions of it. More food plants were found and moved to the garden. The process of farming became a very important and supplied a large part of their food supply. Plants began to be a major part of their diet.

As Sarda’s lilting voice faded over the heads of all the listening villagers and Elders, a thoughtful pause occurred in the proceedings. Elda was then the first to speak.

“It is apparent that Tsu’s ideas and actions were not helpful.” commented Elda. “He would have destroyed the village if the villagers had followed his suggestions. It was well that Letta did not die. She lived to tell of the foolish actions to which Tsu had led her. Her experience served to warn others not to do those ridiculous things.”

Morgal had become more and more restless during the story. Now he spoke up in a most agitated fashion, “None of these stories give proper respect to the thoughts of those who study the less well known aspects of our life. Where is the admiration for those things we do not understand or explain with facts? Where did we come from and who made all this land and water which gives us our living? Why are we here, and why are there such complex

and beautiful things for us to experience?”

Estam chimed in, “Yes, and who sends the Sun across the sky every day to give us light and heat? I say these things are of great importance also. And the gods may yet take offense if we do not recognize them. There are other stories to be told also. You have not mentioned the well known experiences of Letta after the village was again complacent with their world. There are alternate stories which have come from down from other sources.”

Sarda smiled. “The experiences of Letta never had any lasting effect on our life. But if you wish to tell them, that is your right. You must tell them truthfully though and let the people decide for themselves what they are worth.”

“I would like to tell the story of Letta,” replied Morgal. “It is late now, but I will tell my story tomorrow. I advise all to pay attention.” His voice momentarily sounded ominous and his expression betrayed a little hostile attitude.

Morgal and Estam lived apart from the rest of the villagers. They maintained their own garden and grew the plants which were important for curing illnesses. Morgal was always available to help those in need, but usually the two remained alone tending the plants. Some villagers were wary of going to see Morgal as they felt uncomfortable with the things he might say. He liked to talk of the ancient gods, and many people did not care to hear about them.

Estam found the god stories fascinating and she liked to tell of their deeds. She was just as good a story teller as Morgal, and the villagers decided that listening to strange stories was just part of getting treatment for illnesses from Morgal, so it was finally accepted as a necessary part of the process of visiting Estam and Morgal.

Again, the following evening all gathered to hear Morgal’s words. His voice was louder and more coarse than Sarda’s voice was. But he spoke clearly and slowly so that his ideas were understood. This is what he said.

The Legend of Letta

After the death of Tsu, Letta felt very confused. Tsu had always talked of wonderful visions of the gods and the good things they would do if they were treated correctly. In the weeks and months following the catastrophic Great Wave, Letta did her share in restoring the village and normalizing their way of life. She helped build houses and canoes. She no longer liked fishing though. Remembering

finding Tsu almost dead in the canoe and seeing in her mind the terrible force of the Great Wave again in idle moments or even sometimes in her sleep, disturbed her. She turned away from the water pursuits and fishing, and she began to work with the gardeners.

One day while working in the garden she spoke to Garn. "Garn, what can you tell me of the medicine plants? Tsu told me about some of them, but there are more I do not know. We have had no one to gather them or offer them to those who are ill since Tsu was lost. I would like to do that if I can learn enough about it all."

"That would be useful, Letta. I can show you some of them, and I am sure Nur and the others would be able to help also. It would be well for as many as practical to know the plants, so that we do not lose the information."

Gradually Letta acquired the knowledge from the rest of the villagers who could contribute. A small area away from the food plants was reserved for the special plants. It was farther into the forest and Letta took the responsibility for keeping it growing and healthy.

This led her to spend more time away from the rest because she was doing the necessary work to take care of the special garden. She also explored the forest for more and better plants, and she became very familiar with pathways and landmarks. Her knowledge of their surroundings grew as did her knowledge of plants. Gradually Letta became the person the villagers went to when they needed medicine and she was the source of the unusual plants and herbs.

One day while exploring far into the forest, she came upon an area that immediately felt familiar to her, it was more remote than she had gone alone before. Then the memory suddenly came to her, and she exclaimed out loud, "This is where Tsu brought me. This is where we found the strange plant with the power to call the gods." She began searching the ground more closely and after a few minutes she spotted a familiar shape. Stooping down, she examined it in greater detail. "Yes! This is the plant. This has strange powers and it caused my wonderful vision." She was fascinated and looked at the leaf carefully.

As she continued to stare she recalled the events of that day. "I felt so pleasant. The visions were beautiful. But I was sick

afterward. Tsu died from the effects. He ate too much though. I ate much less. There must be a safe amount to eat. How can I learn that?" As she contemplated the plant, a thought formed in her mind and gradually came into realization as a plan of action. "If I eat only one leaf or even just part of a leaf, the gods may still come, but I will not be sick." As the idea formed, she selected one good looking leaf and slowly started chewing it. When she finished, she sat a long while to await the effects. Although she felt a little strange, she did not fall asleep and no god voices came to her.

Disappointed, she realized it was getting late and she had to return to the village. Quickly she cleared a space around the plant and made note of where it was located. She could not take it back with her because someone might notice it and she did not want to have to tell what it was. She decided to have an extra a little garden out in the forest which would be known only to her.

Over the next few weeks she visited the spot often. She collected several of the plants in one space and tended them as carefully as she tended her other garden of medicines. Whenever Letta had an opportunity, she visited the garden in the forest and the plants prospered.

Letta's fascination with the plant led her to continue experimenting with it. One leaf had not produced results, so on another occasion she tried two. That felt strange also, and her mind seemed to playing tricks on her, but it was not the same as hearing the sounds and seeing the visions which she had seen before. Remembering how she had been sick the first time she tried the leaves, she was reluctant to try too many of them. Later, when she had a flourishing crop of the plants, she mustered her courage and tried eating three leaves. The result was amazing. She did not fall asleep, but when she closed her eyes she again saw beautiful visions which she could not describe. She also heard vague soothing sounds and the total experience made her feel very pleasant and peaceful.

At first, Letta did not tell anyone of this discovery. She kept it to herself and enjoyed the sounds and visions whenever she felt the need to do so. She could not keep silent forever though. Gradually she let some of her closest friends know of the effect of the leaves, and she shared the experience with a special few who were fascinated with the effects also and who pledged to keep it as their secret enjoyment. Over time it became almost a ritual to meet in their small group, eat the leaves and share their feelings.

Letta spoke to her small group on the occasions when they enjoyed the leaves. She spoke of the gods and passed on the Legends of An, Enki and the other gods which she had heard of from Tsu. This evolved into regular meetings and Letta introduced other observances such as formally burning part of their share of the food on a special fire for the gods. The village grew and prospered during this time, and Letta told her followers, "It is because we are respectful of the gods that we are having good crops and plenty of fish." This seemed reasonable to all of her friends.

As time went by Letta noticed she needed more of the leaves to have the pleasant experience, but they did not make her sick as they did the first time she ate them. As her little group sat at their meeting one morning, the sky began growing dark. The sky was clear but it was as though night was coming early. Then they heard a shouting and commotion from the village. Running to see what was wrong, the group came to find all the villagers looking up at the sky. The Sun was gradually disappearing.

Letta was highly excited and began yelling. An and Enki are angry with us. An is taking away the Sun. We will always be in darkness. We must quickly start yelling to An and Enki to make the Sun bright again. The frightened villagers all started shouting as Nam and Nur came running up also.

"Look! Look!" shouted Letta. "The gods are angry and are taking away the Sun. Quick! Quick! Call on them to stop and to make the Sun bright again."

"That is nonsense," stated Nur. "There must be a reason for this to happen."

As the terrified villagers yelled, Nam spoke to Nur. "What is going on?"

"I do not know. Let us think about it." After a moment he continued, "We know the Moon regularly goes from bright to dark and back to bright. It happens predictably and no gods are involved with that. This may be something similar. In fact, in following the Moon,

I have noticed that the path it follows across the sky and the path the Sun follows during the day seemed to be coming closer together recently. Perhaps this event is related to that. I think there is nothing to do but wait and see what happens.”

“I believe you are right Nur, but it is strange. I understand everyone being afraid though. We must calm the people. No matter what happens, we cannot let ourselves act foolishly.” Nam raised his arms and shouted at the villagers, “Quiet! Quiet!” Because Nam was their leader, most quieted down and listened. “Nur has reminded us that the Moon fades like this also. It is much more regular, but it fades and it does always come back. He thinks it is somehow similar to that, and believes the Sun will return. We must just wait and see. I advise you all to go back to your usual work. There is nothing we can do just now.”

Letta and her friends kept yelling at the gods An and Enki. A few villagers wandered back to their jobs. Most moved away from the yelling and sat together in small groups, talking among themselves. Not many went back to their work as they were all distracted by the event which was happening. Nam and Nur were joined by Garn and Dindan, and they quietly observed the unfolding of the event. After a while it grew almost as dark as night.

Garn broke their silence, “See this, I can now look directly at the Sun and it does not hurt my eyes.”

“That is still probably not a good idea.” remarked Nur. “We do not know what is happening, and we must be cautious in all that we do.” In a few moments there was a slight brightening. In a few more minutes there was a definite beginning of the return of the Sun. All heard a great shout go up from Letta and the rest of her group.

Letta came running to Nam. “See. Our yelling at the god made the Sun return. We have saved the Sun and you must pay more attention to us. The gods need to be honored and respected. We must do more for them.”

Nur retorted, “No Letta. Whatever happened was as normal as the changing Moon. It would have occurred whether you yelled or not. It is not good that you think that the gods did this thing. You are misleading the people.”

“No, I am telling the truth of the ancients. You will see what happens if we do not honor An and Enki.”

The village was unsettled for many days as the villagers tried to understand what had happened. Nur’s explanation seemed reasonable, and most readily accepted it. The followers of Letta though became more uneasy and started listening to her more carefully. The idea that the gods had somehow intervened would not go away. The idea of a god could not be disproved by all of Nur’s speculation, and no one could tell with certainty what had truly transpired.

The argument though would not go away. A divide began to grow between those who could not understand the thoughtful explanations and those who could. No matter how carefully the serious ones explained natural events, there were always a few villagers who were more comfortable with a more mystical answer to satisfy their concern for what had happened. Letta’s influence continued to grow even among some of the most serious minded of the villagers. The community did continue to grow and prosper, but no one could say with certainty whether their success was all of their own doing or whether there were perhaps other causes. Letta gave full credit to the gods for all of the favorable events. The division of thought in the minds of the villagers was firmly established.

At the end of the story, Morgal continued talking. “There is more in this world than we are able to know. The gods know all of life, and the skies, and the water and everything that exists. Because they have all the knowledge and great power, we must respect them. I think the Legend of Letta shows there is an influence on our life by the gods, and they do help us if we honor them. I know the stories of the gods. An is the god of the skies, and Enki is the god of life.

“I think it has been the influence of Letta on the people who followed her which has kept alive the ideas of honoring the gods. Enough good men and women have respected the gods since then that we have prospered. As I have told many of you, we must appreciate the gods, or they will cause us harm. Some have heard me. You know who you are, and I think you will profit from heeding my words. I do not feel I need to say more at this time.”

Estam added, “And we can always tell you of the ways of the gods when you wish to hear.”

The Elders contemplated Morgal and Estam with quiet solemnity and the entire group waited. Then Elda spoke, “You may think what you wish Morgal and Estam, but we, as a growing family group, know that we have flourished and advanced because we put our reliance in following that which

our experience has taught us. I trust that our reasoning power will continue to guide us without having to follow nebulous ideas of gods. I have never seen a god do anything either good or bad.

If the gods do anything, they seem to be arbitrary in their actions. We have done well so far by our method of following those things we know to be true from our experience. When we use these true ideas and think carefully on them, we are able to find solutions to our problems that actually work in the world we know. Let us see how we fare in the future.”

The Main Thought

Sarda’s visit has served to make us all more aware of our beginnings. We are deeply indebted to her efforts and her good counsel. Her visit to us and her story telling has been an excellent opportunity to put the Main Thought into a permanent form, and this will certainly be a benefit to those who follow us.

The several parts of the Main Thought are these;

The use of reason and actual experience in deciding problems is the most useful method.

All persons deserve equal respect and fair treatment.

Gardening and the care of the plants we need for food is a necessary activity for our survival.

Cooperation in all actions is for the benefit of all.

Care of all our tools and equipment combined with appreciation and care of our living world is of prime importance.

We must respect and learn from those who have greater experience.

The ancient stories and the recitations of how our society works comprise the Main Thought. The separate ideas are simple and clear. We do not rely on gods to guide us because they are capricious and arbitrary. It is obvious we rely on plain facts to guide our everyday life. Fairness is an important principle, and all must be treated equally. Each person is important and can specialize in a particular job which interests them the most. Everyone can feel they are important to all the rest.

The Main thought has enabled us to grow and prosper to the many villages we have now. It is obvious that we have come a great way since the time of the early stories. We now consist of many villages and we not only garden for food but we have flocks of animals and birds which supply meat and eggs for food. This is in addition to any fish and all the good fruits and vegetables we can find and eat in our world. Never have we been better off than right now. We have made significant advances in tools and the methods of building, cooking and all other aspects of our lives. This has all been accomplished by using our learned knowledge and careful thinking to solve the problems which confront us. As Elda has said, "It is the people who think about doing the necessary work that make our society grow. We do not know what gods do, if they do anything, but they do not seem to be of much help in our everyday life."

This is the end of my writing.

Akmed of Adama

REFLECTIONS OF REVEREND LAMOTTE

Reaching the end of George's document, Reverend LaMotte put the manuscript aside with a long sigh and picked up his coffee cup. George Eshenbach's translation of the writings of Modandus was an engrossing work. It truly did reveal that early cultures in many cases relied on facts for making decisions and they were not always misled by conjecture. Upon reflection he knew that obviously must have been the case. Real knowledge would be necessary to advance their cultures as well as they had. Simply following emotions and irrational ideas would not have succeeded without understanding reality also. Becoming aware of the cup in his hand, he realized the coffee was now cold, but he drank it anyway.

He felt exhausted from following the storyline of the ancient tale. "What must I make of this?" he asked himself. "I can see that these events have piqued George's interest in the whole of our history, particularly our religious history. I realize, as he does that at many points during our history Fact and Fancy have been in conflict. Certainly fact has apparently served the human race better than fancy. No one can deny we are better off for all the improvements that understanding the physical world has brought us. But does that then entirely deny the mysteries we sense in our surroundings?"

He held the document which consisted of many single sided typed pages in his hand and felt the weight of it. He toyed with the idea of the

comparison of the weight of the paper and the weight of the ideas expressed in it. “When I stop to think of what we have here, it is absolutely stupefying. It is amazing that the ideas expressed in it were thought of by people several millennia in the past. It is almost as though they are whispering down through the ages to find a voice in today’s world in an attempt to influence us and the ways of contemporary society.

“But what is their influence? What can they say to us that has any validity anymore? What did primitive humans do that is important to us today? Why should we care about what they did, or whether their gods were important to them or not?”

Bill thought a long while in this vein and finally got up and made a fresh pot of coffee to help him think. He sat again in his favorite soft chair. Time passed as his thoughts chased themselves around in his head. He found he could not come up with any conclusions for George, and that result troubled him. He went over the events in the stories again and again. He reached a mental impasse. He only sat and stared out his large front window.

He gazed out onto a fairly typical small town American residential street. Periodically all types of pedestrians and riders passed on the sidewalk and the street. There were bikers, walkers, skateboarders, strollers, and the occasional family car going to or from all the necessary little errands which the culture demanded. There were even occasional mopeds or motorcycles which had recently become popular again.

Reverend LaMotte continued to speak to himself. “George has asked some serious questions, and deserves thoughtful answers. How should we relate to ancient stories? What does it matter that all these things transpired in much earlier times? Why and how should they affect our lives now?” As he stared out the window he fell into a reverie.

Suddenly he found it was much later and the street lights were turning on. He realized he had no good answers for George, and reluctantly took himself to bed. But he did not sleep. The thoughts of George’s questions, the chronicle he had just read of early times, his own ideas and life choices all charged around in his brain and made sleep impossible.

At 2:00 AM he got up again and sat in his comfortable chair with his thoughts. “I am beginning to believe that these questions of George and this ancient story trouble me because of my own condition. At one time I was going to be a chemist, but events of the time drove me to a consideration of morality and social pressures and caused me to explore deeper meanings. I turned to Philosophy and Religion to look for answers. As I got involved with them, I became turned on to the Ministry. But is this really the right path for me?”

In the silence of the darkness, Bill reviewed his career, and as events passed through his mind’s eye he began to get an expanded overview of his situation. Gradually the tenseness eased and he felt a new sense of purpose. He relaxed and smiled. “I know what I will do. I can tell George my thoughts, and I can take a new direction myself. I have a feeling this is long overdue. Old Modandus has done us both a favor.” He laughed out loud. “Oh, what a wonderful idea. Somehow I feel so much better myself. But how can I handle this? Certainly it will require much discretion. After all, I am a minister. But Oh, what an amazing new direction. I feel very good about it.” Bed beckoned again, and Reverend LaMotte fell asleep immediately.

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH GEORGE

After church the next Sunday, George approached Reverend LaMotte. “Interesting sermon today Bill. I decided not to sleep through it this week. You do present ideas quite clearly, and it is appreciated.”

“Thank you George. You have encouraged me to do some other clear thinking recently myself, so you can take some credit for that.”

“It sounds as though you have read my little treatise. Was it coherent enough for you?”

“Yes, it was very coherent, and it triggered some new ideas in me also. I would like to discuss them with you when there is time.”

“Good, that is what I wanted to hear. Ruth is over by the coffee. Let’s go there and see when we can get together.” After church, there was always a social time for the congregation. It was an opportunity for friends to talk with others they had not seen recently and make plans for outings or other events. People were moving in all directions and at varying speeds so crossing the lobby was always a challenge. Ruth was engaged in a spirited conversation with some other ladies. When it was appropriate in a break in the conversation, George asked her. “What day this week would be a good time to have Bill over for dinner again? We have some important subjects to discuss.”

“Any night except Monday or Friday. I just made plans to go out with the girls for dinner on Friday. How about Thursday?”

“Thursday works for me,” volunteered Bill.

“Thursday it is then,” concluded George. “We’ll plan on that, and look forward to seeing you about 6:00.”

The week’s activities progressed dutifully as the days came and went. The University community provided an active social life for George and Ruth. Monday was the Symphony, Wednesday afternoon was a lecture on the problems in the environment, and the time passed rapidly. It seemed no time at all that Reverend LaMotte was again knocking at the Eshenbach’s front door on Thursday evening.

“Come on in Bill,” Ruth greeted him. “George came home early today and he is already in the Living room waiting for you.”

“Should I expect to be jumped upon, or is he in a more benign mood?” asked Bill jokingly.

“Oh, I am sure it is safe. He seems to have had a good day today.” Ruth replied with a smile.

“Greetings, friend. Have a seat and relax.” George was ensconced in a large chair and Bill sat on the couch across from him. “Thank you for taking time to deal with my questions. I appreciate your concern and I am grateful for your being willing to discuss them.”

“No trouble at all George. I will do almost anything to participate in good meal. Oops, I mean a good discussion.”

“Sometimes I do worry about your priorities, Bill.” George grinned in responding to the jest. “Although, I do believe it is better to be light hearted rather than somber all the time.”

“Well, I do agree with that George, but perhaps I carry it too far at times. I guess I do it because I get faced with many solemn situations also, and I find a release in being a bit flippant at times.”

“I understand. I imagine you found my writing a little serious overall, but that is the way it turned out. Sorry.”

“It is not light writing, George. It deals with interesting issues. It is not trivial, and it does examine important ideas.”

This prompted George to go into a long exposition. “I am fascinated with what it actually says. We have believed that humans invented gods early in their development and these gods then served as guides through their cultural growth. We believed also that rational thought came later, and scientific thought arrived later still. These stories seem to indicate that rational thought was there all the time and competing with irrational thought.

“As the store of knowledge grew, there were turning points in the direction growth took. Sometimes it was religiously driven, but other times it appeared to be rationally driven. It now seems this happened even in the earliest of times. We know that the rational approach has resulted in greater and more positive advances, not only in the sciences, but in cultural growth also. Over the years people have learned of better ways to deal with each other, even though it is difficult to consistently follow them, and wars are a constant occurrence in the modern world. During all eras from the most primitive to the Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Medieval there were critical turning points in actions and ideas. All of them were influenced by both mysticism and fact.

“Certainly the times of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were turning points in the advancement of science over religion. And it seems from these stories that the human race has faced these turning points from the beginning of modern Homo Sapiens.

“I feel this translation and this coming book is my own turning point. It is a time to rely on facts entirely in making decisions. Fantastic stories can be entertaining, but when we come to actuality; when we need to make serious, important judgments; there should be no room for the vagaries of fantasy and fiction as guidelines. This then brings me right up against my questions. Why celebrate any religion at all? What am I gaining in being a so called religious person? I apologize for my harangue, but you can see this is obviously important to me.”

Reverend LaMotte collected his thoughts for a few moments, then began, “Well, George, I do not believe anything I might say will change your opinion. And in fact, I do not want to do that. I know you to be a good person, a caring individual, and a useful member of the community. That will not change just because you have changed the basis for your outlook on life.

“In reading your manuscript, I was impressed by the consistency of all the peoples represented. There were always those who were reasonable and those who operated on some other basis. Yet all exhibited a desire to live well, and to behave properly according to community rules as best they could.

“I was also impressed how they all showed our modern defects also. There were those who were rigid and did not face reality, only so that they could feel comfortable with themselves. But most were open to trying to understand the events and get the most out of them.

“Overall though there was a cooperative nature. When decisions were made, the people worked together to make the decision work, and each helped the other in the process. I think it is most important that you have unearthed this information showing that humankind has always had a rational ingredient in its makeup. The mystical and irrational were perhaps very necessary in early times for the human Psyche to cope with happenings which were completely beyond their understanding. But as we have advanced the unknown has constantly shrunk, and today Science has answers or at least good ideas as to why things are the way they are. We must be willing to give up mysticism when it is not to our benefit, and take advantage of all that is known.

“There have been ups and downs in the process. We know in very early years mysticism triumphed, and then Religion was the guiding force for thousands of years. But beginning even in Egyptian times and continuing into the Greek Era, some humans preserved the procedure of using the ideas of facts and reason to solve problems. At the end of the middle ages we saw the rapid expansion of rational thinking until today it is widely recognized as the only valid method of considering worldly problems.

“Using their own experience rather than fantasy for the earliest people to survive a natural disaster was a turning point in their existence. But we all face turning points every day. Most are minor, and occasionally some are major. In the process, our knowledge of facts and our emotions do the processing to reach a decision. It is incumbent on us to use our intelligence while being aware of our emotions to come to reasonable conclusions.

“Religion is of value only when it is useful. Most find it easy and convenient to adhere to some sort of religion. But it is not the final answer. One must have a very broad outlook on the human race, and from what you have learned in your studies, George, I am sure you have a great perspective. Whatever you settle on as your worldview, I am sure it will be a solid foundation for the continuance of your life in all the social, professional, and ethical areas. I can understand that some persons do not need the reassurances of religion to face the exigencies of life, and that is fine. I have confidence you will continue to be the same wonderful person I have known for some time now whatever you care to believe.”

“You know Bill, that is what I like about you. You can find the positives in almost anything. You have the quality of making a person feel good about themselves which must be, you will excuse the expression, a God given gift. I consider you a reliable and worthy friend. That will not change either. And do not fear, I will not give up on my community. You will see me at church regularly because I enjoy being there and meeting with my friends. I may look a little askance at some of the sayings from the pulpit, but that can be our little personal understanding.”

Ruth came in with crackers, cheese and wine. With a twinkle in her eye she suggested, “I hope you two have settled the problems of the world by now. I want to tickle your taste buds enough to cause you to appreciate the quality of the dinner I have labored over.”

Bill was quick to respond, “Problems in the world, Ruth? Your meal smells delicious. There are certainly no troubles in the world just now.”

SUNDAY IN CHURCH

The following Sunday dawned bright and clear. George and Ruth were in their usual routine and were part of the congregation when Reverend LaMotte began the morning service. Everything seemed to be progressing normally, but the attentive assembly was surprised when the sermon turned out to be shorter than usual.

Reverend LaMotte then continued his comments on a new topic. “I have purposely given a short talk as there is another subject I wish to discuss. Actually I have two announcements I want to make, but let me give you a little background first. Recently I have had the pleasure of being able to review some work by one of our members. It dealt with the age old struggle between Religion and Reason. This has been a competition for much longer than we can imagine, and the vying for control is central to the decisions of every day actions of all of us. It is of course, even more meaningful in the major directions which the whole of the human race chooses to take. This is important to each of us whether we realize it or not. We are constantly making decisions of varying significance which can have real consequences on our lives.

“I am sure many of you have wondered why I am not yet married.” Reverend LaMotte smiled, “Some of you have been more active than others in promoting particular persons you considered suitable for me. I can only say I appreciate your concern. But there is a reason for my action. For too long, I have not admitted it openly, as I have barely admitted it to myself. But to all of you here and now I wish to announce that I am gay.”

A sudden and complete silence fell over the gathering. It seemed as though time stopped. Not only did time seem to stop, but it appeared to jam, and would never be able to start again. Then slowly there was the buzzing of many voices rising as a cloud of sound rose to a crescendo and covered the group. Bill raised his hands to quiet the congregation, and gradually order was restored.

Bill continued. “I understand this may be a shock to many of you, but I have considered it carefully, and I know this is the best thing to do. I have to be myself. I also know that this will not influence my relationship with most of you, but there are others I know will be disturbed by my announcement. I understand that also, and I assure you I do not want to be a problem for you. It is that reason which leads to my next announcement. It is that I plan to resign at the end of my present contract, and go on to another part of my life.”

Again there was an eruption of sound. Calls of, “No! No!” were heard and there was a general confusion and disorder. Bill raised his hands again and gradually the disruption subsided.

“Many of you know that I had a short career in Chemistry before going into the ministry. My first love was Chemistry, but that was during turbulent times, and I got caught up in the civil actions of the struggles for equality. This turned me towards the ministry as a way to help. I have enjoyed being a minister and I think -- I hope -- that I have done some good. Now I feel though, it is time to move on. My direction is clear to me. I have been in touch with old school friends and one has offered me a fellowship in the Chemistry department at State University beginning in the Fall term. I will be teaching while I am studying towards a Doctorate in Chemistry. So you see, my life is changing completely. This is a major turning point for me, but it makes good sense from the standpoint of what I want to do in Life. Once I made the decision it has all become very easy to do. I am sure this is correct for me.

“Turning points are important and deserve the best our minds can deliver to resolve them. I hope you all will more carefully consider your turning points in the days to come.

“I admonish you all to consider what it is that you believe to be true. I do not wish to tell you that one thing is better or more true than something else. But I do encourage you all to look at what you believe, and I ask you to consider where your belief came from. How do you know it is true? Is the source reliable and well founded? Is what you believe suitable for living the kind of life you are living? How does it compare to the real world you know?

“These are questions which we should all ask ourselves at regular intervals so that we are certain of where we stand, and why we think as we do. There may be no more important mental exercise for us than to try to really understand ourselves, and any effort we put to that task is well worth the time, attention and concern. In closing, I only wish to reiterate that I feel great peace and well being in reaching my decisions on how to pursue my future, and I wish you all well, also.”

GEORGE ESHENBACH

George was not a health “freak”, but he did like to eat healthy foods, and he did jog regularly for exercise. His jogging sorties were often with Ruth, but sometimes he went alone when Ruth had other things to do. On the Monday morning after the big Sunday furor at church, he awoke before daylight and decided to have an early run. By the time he put on his running attire, it was just light enough to see where he was going. Although he knew the route well, it was more comfortable to be able to see, at least a little. He mused to himself as he ran, sometimes silently and sometimes in a soft breath. The low speech sounds and the soft scuffing of his shoes on the ground made the normal stillness a little less foreboding and added a small element of life to the otherwise quiet surroundings.

“Well, old Bill sure dropped a couple of bombshells yesterday. They seemed to come out of the blue, but knowing Bill, I am sure they were well considered. Actually I did wonder a little why Bill had not acquired a wife. He is certainly mature enough for marriage. But then again, young people put

off such things nowadays until later for many reasons. Obviously we do not need more people in the world. That is why Ruth and decided not to have a family. But being gay is something else again. I will trust Bill to know himself and realize what he is doing. He surely has my best wishes.

“And he is going back to Chemistry and teaching. I am sure he will do well in both of those endeavors. He really is a talented young man. He is a good listener and understands others quite well. He certainly helped me to think through my questions. Perhaps he will be one to discover a great new truth or material in the chemical arena. He was being very broad minded in his message to the congregation. It is almost as though my questioning religion in general had a little effect on him also. All his advice was forward looking in encouraging others to question why they think as they do.

“I was encouraged to see so many of the congregation go up to Bill with their support after the service yesterday. Our church is made up of many good people, and they showed it by letting Bill know they still appreciate him. I guess I will continue to be a member even though I cannot believe a lot of the ideas behind the church. I think I am not alone in that position. I have a feeling that many members are as non-accepting of Dogma as I am. I wonder how I can find out without upsetting others or being too obvious. I will have to work on that.

“Perhaps we are coming up on a new era in human relations. One can only hope that we learn to deal with interpersonal and international problems on a rational level rather than on the emotional - religious - self centered levels of the past. I think it was Margaret Mead who claimed war is not an inborn trait. Education should be oriented to teaching the humane ways of problem solving and not the unreasoning, destructive and self-defeating methods of the past. Human beings should be smart enough by now to use constructive methods of dealing with problems. After all, we are really one community. As far as we know, there is nowhere else in this universe which will support life, and we should make this world comfortable for all of us.

“Personally, I believe in resisting the influences of egotism, emotionalism, and mysticism in solving problems between people and nations. And yes, I do mean Religion when I say mysticism. I have become convinced religions are not useful as guides in the modern fact based world. Fanciful ideas no longer lead to good solutions, and often lead to conflict.

“Akmed did us a great service in recording the mores and thoughts of his time. The legends of the earliest days of existence demonstrate that humans have always had a rational side. But then there have always been persons like Tsu, Letta and Morgal also. They were the ones who would prefer to go in other directions even if they are unproven. It was lucky there were wise men and women in all eras to pick the correct ways of surviving.” George laughed, “Of course, if they had not done so, we would not be here today to even contemplate the idea. This process is like an evolution of culture, just as there is evolution of organisms”

George thought through all the old stories again as he jogged along at his comfortable pace. They swirled in his head and gradually he could understand them in a new light. The early humans were no different than modern humans. The human Psyche is always struggling with what is correct and trying to discover what is the most advantageous for the individual to do. Likes and dislikes can be decided arbitrarily, but vital decisions, turning points if you will, must be guided by facts and reason combined with the intelligence to pick proper conclusions. Conclusions which will be of benefit to a person and the community and result in their best interest. George realized that over the years he had been gradually moving to that point of view. His recent studies confirmed it, and he was satisfied with it. Reason and facts would always be his guide.

“Bill said something about being comfortable with his decisions and being at peace with them. I can relate to that. I feel much more comfortable myself now that I have decided to be a person who does not have to believe ridiculous things in order to be good. I can always support good works and

good people without having a mystical approach to reality myself. Would it be wrong to encourage others who are not as far along as I am to adopt this attitude also? I will have to think about that. I know Ruth does not have feelings quite as strong as mine, but she will always be the person I love.

“And there is home. My goal is in sight. Another tenth of a mile and I will be ready for breakfast. Yes, as Bill said at our last dinner, ‘There are no troubles in the world just now.’ I am sure of my future and how I will proceed. Others may call me Atheist, Heathen, non- believer, person of no faith, unfeeling, lacking in sensitivity or whatever they wish; but I know who I am. I know I strive to be a good person in every sense of the word, and that is my outlook, and that is what is important to me.”

Addendum: Galileo Galilei quotes

The following Quotes are purported to be actual quotes of Galileo Galilei. These are all used in the story during the dialogues between Galileo and Modandus.

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But of all other stupendous inventions, what sublimity of mind must have been his who conceived how to communicate his most secret thoughts to any other person, though very far distant, either in time or place? And with no greater difficulty than the various arrangement of two dozen little signs upon paper? Let this be the seal of all the admirable inventions of man.

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.

Nothing physical which sense-experience sets before our eyes, or which necessary demonstrations prove to us, ought to be called into question (much less condemned) upon the testimony of biblical passages.

I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn't learn something from him.

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.

Where the senses fail us, reason must step in.

Doubt is the father of invention.

Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.

Facts which at first seem improbable will, even on scant explanation, drop the cloak which has hidden them and stand forth in naked and simple beauty.

I think that in the discussion of natural problems we ought to begin not with the Scriptures, but with experiments, and demonstrations.

If I were again beginning my studies, I would follow the advice of Plato and start with mathematics.

Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes ... We cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. The book is written in the mathematical language ... without whose help it is humanly impossible to comprehend a single word of it, and without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth.

We must say that there are as many squares as there are numbers.

Infinities and indivisibles transcend our finite understanding, the former on account of their magnitude, the latter because of their smallness; Imagine what they are when combined.

The difficulties in the study of the infinite arise because we attempt, with our finite minds, to discuss the infinite, assigning to it those properties which we give to the finite and limited; but this ... is wrong, for we cannot speak of infinite quantities as being the one greater or less than or equal to another.

Spots are on the surface of the solar body where they are produced and also dissolved, some in shorter and others in longer periods. They are carried around the Sun; an important occurrence in itself.

The Sun, with all the planets revolving around it, and depending on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as though it had nothing else in the Universe to do.

The Milky Way is nothing else but a mass of innumerable stars planted together in clusters.

In my opinion, nothing occurs contrary to nature except the impossible, and that never occurs.

I wish, my dear Kepler, that we could have a good laugh together at the extraordinary stupidity of the mob. What do you think of the foremost philosophers of this University? In spite of my oft-repeated efforts and invitations, they have refused, with the obstinacy of a gluttoned adder, to look at the planets or Moon or my telescope.

Among the great men who have philosophized about [the action of the tides], the one who surprised me most is Kepler. He was a person of independent

genius, [but he] became interested in the action of the moon on the water, and in other occult phenomena, and similar childishness.

It vexes me when they would constrain science by the authority of the Scriptures, and yet do not consider themselves bound to answer reason and experiment.

It is very pious to say and prudent to affirm that the holy Bible can never speak untruth -- whenever its true meaning is understood. But I believe nobody will deny that it is often very abstruse, and may say things which are quite different from what its bare words signify

In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual.

The Divine intellect indeed knows infinitely more propositions [than we can ever know]. But with regard to those few which the human intellect does understand, I believe that its knowledge equals the Divine in objective certainty.

I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.

Take note, theologians, that in your desire to make matters of faith out of propositions relating to the fixity of sun and earth you run the risk of eventually having to condemn as heretics those who would declare the earth to stand still and the sun to change position - eventually, I say, at such a time as it might be proved that the earth moves and the sun stands still.

To command the professors of astronomy to confute their own observations is to enjoin an impossibility, for it is to command them not to see what they do see, and not to understand what they do understand, and to find what they do not discover

They know that it is human nature to take up causes whereby a man may oppress his neighbor, no matter how unjustly... Hence they have had no trouble in finding men who would preach the damnability and heresy of the new doctrine from the very pulpit...

Having been admonished by this Holy Office [the Inquisition] entirely to abandon the false opinion that the Sun was the center of the universe and immovable, and that the Earth was not the center of the same and that it moved... I abjure with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I curse and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally all and every error and sect contrary to the Holy Catholic Church

By denying scientific principles, one may maintain any paradox.

And who can doubt that it will lead to the worst disorders when minds created free by God are compelled to submit slavishly to an outside will? When we are told to deny our senses and subject them to the whim of others? When people devoid of whatsoever competence are made judges over experts and are granted authority to treat them as they please? These are the novelties which are apt to bring about the ruin of commonwealths and the subversion of the state.

It is surely harmful to souls to make it a heresy to believe what is proved.

I mentally conceive of some movable projected on a horizontal plane all impediments being put aside. Now it is evident ... that the equable motion on this plane would be perpetual if the plane were of infinite extent; but if we assume it to be ended, and [situated] on high, the movable ... , driven to the end of the plane and going on further, adds on to its previous equable and indelible motion that downward tendency which it has from its own heaviness. Thus there emerges a certain motion, compounded from equable horizontal and from naturally accelerated downward [motion], which I call projection.

