Brian Hines Writer

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Baba Gurinder Singh
Radha Soami Satsang Beas
P.O. Dera Baba Jaimal Singh 143204
District Amritsar, Punjab
India

Dear Baba Ji:

Buried down at the beginning of my four-inch thick stack of Plotinus-related correspondence is a June 10, 1996 letter from you, encouraging me to write a book that could be included in RSSB's *Mystics of the West* series. I dug out that letter just now, wondering where the past seven years have gone (one answer: quickly). It has been quite a journey, this striving to complete a challenging book that would appeal to both satsangis and non-satsangis alike.

Yesterday I mailed off to Faith Singh, Frank Vogel, and Donka Markus a CD containing files of the *Return to the One* manuscript, and a revised *God's Whisper, Creation's Thunder* manuscript. I offer these both to you and RSSB as books that the Publications Department may want to consider for publication.

I won't repeat the details of what I conveyed in the cover letter that accompanied the files. My main purpose in writing you is simply to say this: I have done my best to fulfill the commitment that I took on back in 1996. And I greatly appreciate the opportunity to have learned so much about Plotinus and his teachings. My approach to spirituality has been changed in the process, hopefully for the better.

You probably will recall that, about nine months ago, the Plotinus book project was put "into cold storage" by RSSB. As I've told Faith, Frank, and Donka, I respected this decision, but felt that I couldn't similarly let *Return to the One* stay in a deep freeze state. The manuscript had been sent out for review to several scholars, and I had built up a certain momentum that I feared would be lost if I stepped away from the book for six months or more.

So, I kept plugging away on *Return to the One.* I'm happy with the result. I believe it is true both to the mystical teachings of Plotinus, and to my own self. I've seriously considered every substantive concern raised by Plotinian scholars, and every stylistic concern raised by others. I've shortened the book by about 10%, though I've kept in mind your advice to "be as extensive as possible with Plotinus" (450 pages, including notes and recommended reading, is pretty extensive).

I'm seeking a commercial publisher, because no progress was being made on this front through the auspices of RSSB. I mean, I am happy to offer the book in the spirit of seva for possible publication by RSSB. But for various professional and personal reasons, I also need to work toward the commercial publication of *Return to the One.*

The manuscript is being reviewed by a potential publisher based here in Oregon, White Cloud Press, which seemingly would be a good fit for the book. White Cloud Press also is considering the revised *God's Whisper, Creation's Thunder*—considerably shortened and simplified, with almost all of the preachiness that came to bother me taken out.

My personal opinion, which I've shared with Faith and Frank, is that it makes sense to separate the commercial and non-commercial (RSSB) publication of *Return to the One*, and also *God's Whisper, Creation's Thunder*, should RSSB be interested in publishing the revised version. Most of the unresolved problems that we were facing in the RSSB editing process revolved around making changes that I thought would be detrimental to *Return to the One*, or, at least, were unnecessary. Because the goal at that time was to have a single book that would be published both commercially and by RSSB, I felt that I couldn't compromise on certain points that seemed entirely compatible with a commercial version.

Yet, I also understood the desire of RSSB editors to have some say in a book that would be published under the auspices of a *Mystics of the West* series. Thus we were at somewhat of a standstill. If White Cloud Press chooses to publish *Return to the One*, I would feel much more comfortable making changes to the RSSB version, since the commercial version would remain intact (assuming the White Cloud Press editors agreed with my perspective). This approach makes sense to me. I hope it makes sense also to you and the RSSB Publications Department.

In closing, I will repeat my thanks for having been spurred by you to pursue this project. Hopefully without sounding too maudlin, I feel like I have made a friend in Plotinus. I've read *Return to the One* dozens of times, yet each time I feel as if I learn something new, and gain new insights into what the spiritual quest is all about. Now, to turn those insights into experience...that is a different, and much more difficult, matter. I simply continue on.

Sincerely,

Brian Hines
cc: Faith Singh