

Chapter 1 Who's in Control?

From the time of birth, our character and personality are influenced and altered by the people we live with, those we meet as friends and those with whom we make permanent attachments. Life is a series of events which accumulate into a collection of experiences. These experiences combine to influence our personality. We are formed by what happens to us and what we cause to happen to others. When we leave this existence, we are quite a bit different from when we came in. What we were when we came in was the real us at that time in our lifetime. What we are when we leave is the new and hopefully improved version of the same person.

The growth we bring about in ourselves and in others is the result of a cooperative effort. We grow through our interaction with others who have agreed, at some level of our beings, to cooperate with us in creating situations that foster spiritual growth. There are two aspects to cooperative creation. The first is the individual soul. We will examine the soul's purpose within physical creation, its ability to plan and create, and its efforts to improve its position on the spiritual ladder. The second working unit in creation is the group. This group could consist of any number of souls from two to all the souls in creation, depending upon the situation. A unit could be a social club, a group organized to promote a project or a team of office workers in a sales department. The SOL organization is an example of a group working to increase spiritual awareness for themselves and others. The efforts of a group of souls can be looked upon as an entity in its own right. That entity has a construction. It also has the ability as a unit to plan and improve spiritually.

Who determines how we will change and what experiences are necessary to effect those changes? In other words, who makes the decisions about what goes on in our lives? Is there any rational thinking at all to life beyond the activity of the consciousness? Are we marionettes on a stage, controlled by a being far greater than ourselves? Are the great and small events of our lives all preplanned eons before they occur? Is our life similar to a locomotive, forced to go wherever the track leads? Or, is life a series of random, haphazard occurrences? Did that seemingly chance meeting of the person you married occur purely through good fortune, or was it part of a carefully orchestrated plan? Who directed the orchestra, and did we help write the musical score?

All of us have had situations occur or have met people who have changed the course of our lives. Sometimes the change is obvious, such as a change of job, an illness or a death in the family. Other significant changes may not be realized until long after they happen, but in retrospect it is clear we encountered a crossroads in our existence. An example: in idle conversation we overhear someone say a factory is hiring. We follow it up and are hired. It turns out to be the beginning of a lifelong career. We encounter a whole new group of people. They become our friends and acquaintances. The possibilities are endless. Was that conversation a random occurrence, or was it planned? If it was planned, who did the planning? When was it planned? To what degree and for what purpose?

If we believe everything that occurs in life has been planned by a being far greater and wiser than ourselves, then we believe in predestination. If the concept of man as a being who is in complete control of his destiny is appealing, then the concept of free will should be easy to accept. Some of the greatest minds of recorded history have been fascinated by predestination

and free will. They have caused debate among all levels of society from theologians to the common man.

Let's begin our search with some definitions. Predestination, according to the dictionary, is the doctrine that the salvation or damnation of individuals has been foreordained by God, and that all events have been foreordained by Divine decree.

The theory of predestination is strongly represented in the teachings of John Calvin, a 16th century French theologian and reformer. Calvinist doctrine centered on the sovereignty of God and the divine predestination of every human being to either an eternal state of bliss with God or to a state of misery in alienation from Him. If we accept this idea, then heaven or hell has been determined for us before birth, and there is nothing we can do in this existence to change our fate. A similar doctrine is found in the Islamic faith, whose philosophic thought had considerable influence during the Middle Ages. It is one of the six articles of faith. This concept has also been mentioned in the Quran as Allah's "Decree." The Arabic word for destiny and divine foreordination is Qadar. The Crusades to the Middle East and the subsequent invasion of Europe by the followers of Islam caused a rapid spread of their teachings.

A simplified definition of predestination is that all major and minor events of a person's life are planned out for him before he is born. He is locked into the fates. In other words, God has planned all events throughout history. He has decided the final outcome of everything from the disposition of mankind to the meal we will eat this evening.

If people believe strongly in predestination, they can take that philosophy to the extreme. They could say, "What's the use of trying? Everything has already been decided. Whether we go to heaven or hell is out of our hands." If a tragedy occurs or we encounter some good fortune, it's all the "will of God" and not our doing. A concept such as this permits us to rationalize, "It wasn't our fault" or "It was meant to be." It also allows man to believe in a Divine Being who is vengeful and judgmental. It is difficult to place that philosophy in accordance with the teachings of Christ and the belief in a loving Creator.

What if we prefer the principle of free will? *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* says that free will is the ability to choose between alternative possibilities in such a way that the choice is to some extent determined by the conscious subject. Another definition that would be a bit broader is that the choice may be influenced by previous experiences or may be dependent almost totally on the situation as it occurs. The main point of the free-will side is that the consciousness makes the decisions.

Some people have taken this philosophy to such an extreme that it places all the responsibility directly on the individual. When a terrible situation occurs, people could say, "It was his free-will choice to become involved. Let him get himself out of the problem." This line of thinking doesn't allow for situations that may be beyond a person's control such as being involved in a war or an epidemic. Sometimes events occur that don't offer us as much freedom of choice as we would like. The more global an episode is or the more encompassing a situation, the more we may be influenced to become involved. When something good happens to us, then we may be tempted into an attitude of self-glorification, "I did it all by myself, without the help of anyone." This attitude allows the self-serving ego an opportunity to influence our perspective. Thoughts like this might cause some to believe they can create whatever they wish, without regard to the rights of anyone else. We, as spirit beings, do have complete free will. Our souls could allow us to do whatever we wish, but the soul is far too wise to allow the consciousness that degree of freedom. The soul is working with the consciousness to teach the consciousness

how to exercise control and good judgment. The soul isn't going to give the consciousness free reign.

St. Augustine, a fourth century Christian bishop, theologian and philosopher, gave us an interesting perspective on free will when he wrote, "Every man has the will to be happy, but not every man wills those things which are necessary for true happiness in the world to come. Every sin is a turning away from eternal things and an acceptance of something temporal. Within the individual man there are two warring loves, the love of God and the love of the world." As we will discover when we read further, there is a desire to place decisions before the conscious mind that will give the consciousness an opportunity to demonstrate which love it prefers.

One of the strongest arguments in the controversy between predestination and free will centers on the principle of God being omniscient. If God knows everything there is to know, then how can He allow man free will? St. Augustine maintained that God's foreknowledge constitutes no threat whatever to man's free will. God, according to St. Augustine, foresees all events because they are going to occur; they do not occur just because He has foreseen them. St. Augustine states, "Many of the events God foreknows are things which, as God knows, depend upon our wills for their happening, from which it follows that they are both foreknown and willed, that is voluntarily." Because God is so powerful and all-knowing, then certainly it is not difficult to imagine that God would know our tendencies. Taking it one step further, we could say that God has a good idea of what our decision will be before we make it. In actuality He knows exactly what our decision will be. It may appear we have a choice, and in fact we do, but God knows us so well that from His perspective He's certain of our decision. This line of thinking was carried on by St. Thomas Aquinas who emphasized the eternity of God's vision and argued God's knowledge is not by itself the cause of anything. He just simply knows.

A point that is critical in understanding free will and life planning is the aspect of time. Even though we appear to be living second by second and minute by minute, we have, in fact, already left the material existence and are living in our reward. This is because in actuality we are all living in the now. A further explanation of this concept would only lead to more confusion. We do not have the vocabulary to accurately describe a truly spiritual existence to the finite mind. Since we live in a three-dimensional world, grasping the infinite is simply beyond our capabilities. The ever-present now is one of those concepts. For our comprehension, events must appear to be in a linear progression. The linear aspect of time is necessary for our conscious mind. This allows souls the opportunity to mesh their life patterns, to work in parallel for a brief period, and to get into position for the next event.

To The Council, William Allen LePar's spiritual source, time is simply this:

"Time is nothing more than a signpost on a corner of nothing where you have agreed to meet."

It's an activity of the mind, an agreed upon reference point for us to meet and cooperate for each event in the physical existence. It could be a conscious meeting such as, "I'll be meeting you at 5:30," or "The game starts at seven." It could also be an event scheduled by two people at a soul level. The scenario could go something like this: Let's say that your consciousness wishes to revive a relationship. On a soul level the one soul communicates its desire to meet the other. "How about meeting me at the local drugstore?" the first soul says. The second replies, "That's not good for me. I don't get along with the druggist." The first says, "Well, how about the grocery store? I'll be in the produce section looking at carrots, and you can be there to pick up some lettuce." "Fine, that's fine," says the second. "I didn't have anything planned for the day." So the souls arrange a "chance" meeting at the grocery store on Saturday morning. While

renewing acquaintance, they discover a similar interest in something that renews their friendship, thereby bringing them closer together. An agreed upon time and place was necessary. Any time would do just as long as both agreed. This should help explain how lives may mesh. Of course, souls would not really find it necessary to communicate this plan verbally. Soul activity spans time and space.

There's a third element that The Council introduced us to a few years ago, and that is predetermination. What does predetermination mean? It simply means the ground rules are set for an event or group of events to occur. The basic, general rules are set for something to occur. Let me give you an example. Suppose you are an author, and you decide you are going to write a play. A play has a beginning, middle, and an end. After you write it, you have a read through and you say, "I don't like the middle, so I am going to change it." You keep the beginning and end the same, but you change the middle. You read through that and you say, "I don't even like that, so I am going to change the end." You read that and don't like it, so you decide to change the beginning, keep the middle as it was, and keep the end as it was. You are the author of your own life, your own life plan. You determine what your life is going to be. Predetermination is not the same as predestination. With predetermination you want to experience something, so with those souls you set certain ground rules. But you always have the freedom to modify those rules.

If we have the freedom to make choices within an environment of cooperation with others, how can events be known before they occur and yet not be predestined? Here is an analogy which might help us understand how future events develop and how they become more clearly defined as time moves closer to the actual occurrence of the event. Suppose we are on the top of a snow-covered hill. We make a snowball and start rolling the snowball down the hill. The snowball is very small and therefore has very little force of its own. The direction of travel is easily changed as our will determines. As the snowball goes down the hill, it gathers more snow and grows larger, therefore it gains momentum. Now it is becoming far more difficult to change the snowball's course. Eventually, if it becomes large enough, the snowball will be impossible to control. As it gains momentum, it becomes much easier to predict the snowball's final destination. Similarly, an event about to occur is much easier to predict than one many years in the future. The impending event has gained momentum, and there is less chance its path will be influenced by variables. Its destiny is probably set. A war situation is an example of an event gaining momentum. We realize wars don't randomly occur. History has taught us they grow from small incidents. Hatred builds, and people do things and say things that cause tension. Momentum increases. After a point it may become impossible for any one person or group of persons to prevent the war. It becomes inevitable that one side must overpower the other. Whether it is a snowball rolling down a hill or the hatred of a few people, once out of control, its course may not be altered. Thus, one could say the future is predictable or predetermined but only predetermined in the sense that the influencing conditions have now created what is the most probable, natural and obvious conclusion.

God's all-knowing is totally independent of time. St. Augustine, placing time in its proper relationship to God, says, "His eternity is not an everlastingness but, rather, an existence that is altogether independent of time. God therefore sees the whole of history in a manner similar to that in which we view the present, and from this point of view, one is not easily tempted to suppose that God's knowledge imposes any determination on things to come." God's perspective on time versus ours can also be demonstrated. From the top of our snow-covered hill, we have a panoramic view of the surrounding area. We can't see everything, but we can get a good look around. God, on the other hand, when viewing the world, is capable of climbing the very highest

mountain that exists. From there His view is infinitely better than ours. Similarly, God views all of history as a single, complete thought. Man's awareness by comparison is very, very limited.

If God allows us to plan our lives, how do we accomplish such a feat? Let's study some examples of conscious planning in our daily lives. We all have routines we perform regularly. These have either been consciously planned or planned because of other influences of which we may or may not be aware. One example might be grocery shopping every Saturday morning. What influences us to choose Saturday morning? Perhaps Saturday is the only time in the busy week when we can get to the store, or our favorite grocery may offer double coupons on Saturdays. It may be the best time because the man of the house is busy with yard work. Basically we follow this type of routine because it serves our needs. We can, however, change the schedule whenever we choose. This type of change will have little influence on other people within our sphere. Another form of conscious planning for which we do not have as much control is sending our children to school. The law says a child will start kindergarten in his fifth year. The rules are in place, and there is very little we can do to change them. Of course, if enough people were interested in changing the law, it could be done, but not as easily as changing our shopping day. This example doesn't allow us as much freedom of choice as grocery shopping. Next is an example of a situation we can't control. Many people enjoy baseball. The major league teams have promotions to entice families to come to the ball parks. Let's assume we have planned a big outing with the family for the next bat give-away day. The tickets are purchased and the whole family is excited about the outing. The weatherman is predicting a beautiful day for the game. When we get up that morning, it's overcast and raining. The game is called off. Everyone's plans are spoiled, not just ours. We just can't fight the weather! Sometimes things go as planned. At other times, circumstances beyond our control force us to modify our desired activities.

Chapter 2 Spiritual Planning

There is another type of planning that is not as easily defined. It is not as observable as consciously planning our lives, but its implication on our lives is far greater than any form of conscious planning we mortals can perform. This is spiritual planning. Spiritual planning concerns the episodes of our lives over which we apparently have no control. The events either appear to be random occurrences such as meeting people, becoming ill or being involved in accidents, or they are events which can be viewed as milestones like birth, choice of parents and death. Before we can discuss spiritual planning and its relationship to the concepts of free will and a creative cooperation, we will need a few more definitions.

The first thing we need to define is us. What are we? All of us in the material world (Earth) have a physical body, but more importantly, we also possess a spiritual body. The physical body is the dwelling place for our spiritual body while we are in the material world. The brain is the link between our physical and spiritual bodies. The physical body transmits the activities of the world through the five senses to the brain. What is the spiritual body? The spirit is energy. It is an energy that has a consciousness. We can consider it a kind of thinking electricity. The two facets that compose a spiritual body or spiritual electricity are personality and character. Our personality and character are what we use to express our conscious awareness — they are the essence of us. Character can be defined as the sum total of our virtues, while personality is the way we utilize and present those virtues. We draw upon those virtues every second of our

existence. The degree to which we draw upon each of our virtues when a given situation occurs is what makes each of us different from anyone else in the world. *Random House Dictionary* defines character as follows, "Character is the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of a person. One feature or trait is a characteristic." Honesty, courage, integrity, jealousy and envy are all characteristics. We can be humorous or sober, optimistic, pessimistic or many levels in between. All the different characteristics of an individual are summarized into a personality. Again from Random House, "Personality is the visible aspect of one's character as it impresses others. A person is the embodiment of a collection of qualities." How one utilizes his characteristics is what makes him unique.

Character and personality are the principal elements of spiritual electricity. The two combine to form a unique vibration, the auric fingerprint of the soul. Let's learn what The Council has to say about virtues and personality, how they are developed and why our personality differs from that of everyone else.

The Council, "In your many experiences those virtues, your attitudes, have been tempered this way or that way, to this degree or that degree, according to the experiences that you [have] had. You realize that there are individual virtues and that the merging or the mellowing and the expression of those virtues, the out-going action of those virtues, is the personality. It is how you utilize what you are, how you relate to others, whether you are speaking of the soul or whether you are speaking of the material body. Develop character and the personality grows. The quality of you as a soul or the true spirit or spiritual content of your being is determined by the character that you develop in your life now."

The spiritual body is composed of character and personality. The spiritual body will exist for eternity and will evolve continuously. We cannot see or touch the spiritual body. However, it is truly more real than the physical body could ever be. The material world exists within the greater world, which is the spiritual plane of existence. The spiritual state is the natural state of our being. The physical state is a temporary involvement for our spirit, so it can experience situations that are necessary to increase its awareness.

The Council discusses the physical body and life in the physical, indicating this is not our primary state of existence, "You must remember that the physical container, the tool, is not a natural existence for you, but comes from the separation from the Divine Source and your at-onement with God; it is a foreign element to your actual being or existence; not that it is separate from you, you understand, but that it is not your natural mode of existence."

If it is true that the spiritual body is the real us, then why do we need a physical body? How can we use it to grow? The physical body is actually a tool of the spirit. A carpenter builds a house with hammers and saws. Those are the tools he uses to construct a new building or to repair an old one. We as spiritual beings construct our spiritual houses through experiences in the physical existence. The working of the spirit through the physical involves many forms of activity. These activities include mental and spiritual activities as well as physical. A great deal of the activity of our physical lives begins in the spiritual realms. That is where the master plan is formulated. The purpose of the master plan is to arrange avenues for growth.

The physical body becomes the dwelling place of our spirit so we can attend this school or learning place called Earth. That is the purpose for coming into the material world, to learn and, hopefully, to grow.

Chapter 3 The Process of Growing

The Council on growth, “Growth is what is expected out of your efforts in the physical form. Growth is the healing factor in all things. Now, healing factor, not necessarily healing a sickness, but healing you or a soul.”

The soul is a creature of habit. Some of those habits are not healthy for the soul. We all have weaknesses or tendencies for things we know aren't good for us. We know they aren't, but we can't help ourselves. We've all heard the phrase, “I have a weakness for sweets” or “I just can't resist temptation.” Why can't we resist? What happens when we are tempted? When we see or think of something that has given us pleasure in the past, our subconscious stimulates the senses. The consciousness realizes that re-experiencing the sensations will again bring us pleasure. We know in our hearts the experience is not good for us, but we receive a pleasing mental image which becomes difficult to resist. That image comes from the subconscious mind. It comes from past experiences of this life, and it can be supported by experiences from our previous lifetimes. The reason why these experiences reappear is because the soul places them before our consciousness so, it has an opportunity to replace our faults with virtues. The soul wants to repair the weaknesses we have created. We've done a lot of things we should not have done, and we've done them so often they are now ingrained in our character. Remember, our character goes far deeper than what we've created in this lifetime. The soul has the task of perfecting our character and personality. It's a job the soul takes very seriously. We can help by always seeking what's good for the soul.

The subject of previous physical existences brings us to the concept of reincarnation. The Council explains that after death the soul goes to a holding area where it reviews its previous life, plans its next life and waits for a new opportunity to be born. Belief or disbelief in reincarnation should not affect a person's spiritual growth, but accepting it will help explain the necessity for some aspects of spiritual life planning.

Growth takes place through the contacts we make with others in this existence, through relationships and bonds we develop with other souls. If we have virtues that need improvement, we will find there are individuals close to us who are strong in those virtues. We may have purposely planned our existence around those souls. Hopefully, their strengths will encourage us to improve our weaknesses. Secondly, we learn from the situations we place ourselves in as we go about our daily lives. We will plan events that will offer us the opportunity to demonstrate our strengths. By repeating positive actions, we cause those actions to become a part of our being, therefore reinforcing those virtues we wish to strengthen. Our lives are a constant attempt by the soul to place opportunities before our consciousness. What we do with those opportunities determines whether we wilt or grow.

We may ask, “Why can't the soul just tell the consciousness what to do? Isn't the soul powerful enough to override the consciousness's desires?” That's a tough question, and the answer is quite involved, so let's give this one to The Council.

“At times the physical is quite shrewd. It has a way of clouding over what the spirit or soul is attempting to inform the physical mind. So, then the physical moves from place to place searching only the physical desires and not the spiritual gifts.”

There is a subtle mode of operation that develops between the spirit and the physical. The soul, in its wisdom, looks at the long-term benefits of an action, while the consciousness is more interested in the immediate rewards of life. Our soul looks inwardly. It views life from the eternal existence of the spirit. Our consciousness focuses on the sensory aspects and looks outwardly to the short term. Between the soul and the consciousness are the layers of the

subconscious the soul must work through. The subconscious, in many cases, will cause the final result to differ from the original plan of the soul. We know when any thought or concept has to be passed through a chain of people, the final result is invariably changed from the original. It's the same with communications between the spirit and the physical. They can be altered radically by the many layers of consciousness that exist between the spirit and the physical.

The subconscious has an opinion or attitude about every aspect of life. The subconscious layer closest to the consciousness is the area of current input, that is, input received from this lifetime. The next layer is the area where all past-life experiences reside. We can consider these areas as our personal reference library. When something occurs in our life, it is registered in the subconscious. The event is instantaneously compared with other experiences from this life. It may also be compared with similar events of past lives. For example, some people like thunderstorms, others are terrified. Why? Recall from past experiences. We check our layers of the subconscious, look through our reference library and form an opinion. Perhaps in a previous life or earlier in this lifetime, lightning set our house on fire. The experience was so traumatic that we remain fearful. The experiences with thunderstorms in this life will be used to update our reference library with new input. It is possible for the consciousness to place enough new input into the subconscious during the course of our lives that it will greatly alter the content of our library. In fact, that is the purpose for a physical existence, to alter the reference library to a more spiritual outlook. The soul attempts to manipulate the physical in an effort to provide better quality input to our library.

One of the problems of a physical existence is rationalization. When presented with a problem or difficulty where the best choice goes against our personal desires, we may find ourselves choosing what pleases us instead of what is best for all concerned. We justify our choice based less on the truth of the situation and more on a view that is slanted towards our preference. Rationalization allows the physical to override the desires of the spirit. It permits a lack of discipline because we allow ourselves the luxury of modifying situations to suit our physical desires or the self-serving ego. It weakens our resolve to do what is right. When we do something wrong because of a lack of control, whether it is something simple like gossiping or telling a lie or something extreme such as killing someone out of anger, we will again face an equivalent situation sometime during our travels through creation.

The Council tells us how weaknesses develop and how the soul interacts with the physical to offer opportunities to correct the flaws.

“Now because of your lack of control over a period of time, certain weaknesses or flaws have been allowed to develop in the spiritual aspects of yourself, and those that are the weakest then are brought closest to the physical so that the spirit then may learn through necessity to control by creating a more perfect physical condition in which to work.”

The soul, through spiritual life planning, offers the consciousness opportunities to correct improper attitudes. For example, suppose we have a problem with gossiping. The soul could arrange a situation where an opportunity to gossip comes along. But, with that opportunity comes a potential to avoid the temptation. The potential for correction may take the form of a godly example set by another soul or in the form of a sentence or two of wisdom from a friend. That wisdom creates a thought which causes the person to hesitate before acting. Even with all the planning and effort by the soul, the consciousness may not accept the hint. Why doesn't it? The Council tells us, “When one sees a conflict ... between the physical and the spiritual, especially when ... consciously you know that something is so, an attitude [that] is spiritual as opposed to an attitude that is not, and yet you find yourself constantly going in the attitude that is not

spiritual, you can look upon it as a rut that has been formed through past expressions by that segment of the subconscious that controls all the karmic debt.”

The Council frequently explains the connection between karma and the material world. Karma is defined as cause and effect. If we cause enough force to be applied to an object, the effect will be that the object moves. The speed at which it moves is proportional to the force applied. Damage can be done to an object if force of sufficient intensity is applied. An example of karma in action: When we say something to a person, the effect will be that thoughts and emotions are created. Words spoken forcefully and with anger can create a great deal of unproductive emotions such as fear, hate and tension. On the other hand, words of kindness and understanding can create emotions of a positive nature such as security, warmth and love. To carry this further, if one does good deeds, he generally creates a loving and joyful atmosphere. When actions create an atmosphere that is not so pleasant, then those responsible are held accountable for that situation. The responsibility or debt may be in the form of obligations to an individual or group of individuals. For example, if a person becomes angry with a fellow worker, he will, at some point, have to apologize for his actions. If the one doing the apologizing doesn't like the other person, he may find it quite painful to make amends. If debts are incurred, they must be repaid. Souls work together in an effort to fulfill obligations and repay debts to one another. They also hope to train the physical aspect of their beings by showing it the proper way to live. Here is an analogy of how the conversion process occurs. Everyone has a water heater, but few of us know how it works. A water heater brings in cold water and converts it to hot. It has a pipe which runs from the outside of the heater, through the top, inside and down to the bottom of the tank. The cold water comes in, down to the bottom and forces the hot water to the top where it can be siphoned off. The cold water, resting on the bottom, is easily heated and then available for use. The soul, likewise, attempts to force out bad habits by replacing them with good ones.

The Council gives us a new perspective concerning the power of habits.

“One could compare the actions of the physical as almost habitual or habit. Habits, as you know, are extremely hard to break, and they would appear to control you, where in fact it is not a controlling of you, but a lack of control of yourself. Again the conflict between the physical and the spiritual comes only because of the habit instigated by a segment of your own being.”

A man who has the habit of smoking finds it extremely difficult to stop smoking, and in many cases he will use the excuse that he is hooked, that he cannot control it, his habit has a hold on him. In his perspective of the situation, to him, yes, he is hooked, the habit does have him, but to look at it a little deeper, the habit itself does not have any life or any force; what gives it the appearance of life or force or controlling influence over the man is that the man himself deep down does not have the desire to wipe away the habit, so he moves within an established pattern and in most cases allows that pattern then to influence him constantly.

Whether it is an overindulgence with sweets, the need to tell your friends about your neighbor's latest problem or something as unimportant as a bad golf swing, habits are difficult to break. They require a determined effort if we are to be successful. The Council has given us a step-by-step method of breaking habits. It's not easy, but it is certain to work if the effort is made. The following advice from The Council can help us overcome bad habits.

“Knowing that there are areas that you can improve in is the first step to breaking the control of the physical over yourself. Thinking on it and concentrating on it, involving yourself with more ideas and attitudes along with spiritual development begins very slowly but surely to undermine the physical hold or physical habit. The spirit ... will influence the physical from

exterior sources by bringing the physical in contact with the right individuals, the proper individuals, who have a godly attitude, thus you consciously gain knowledge and experiences, while the spirit itself manipulates through this area of the subconscious that carries the karmic debt, and so you work with yourself, influencing from both ends.”

Change requires concentration, determination and effort by the consciousness. The soul will do all that it can. However, only with the aid of the consciousness can it be successful. With effort the changes become second nature, and continued improvement is much easier because we have created a new, more positive habit for ourselves. The Council continues, “Using the term ‘soul’ as the pure spark or breath of God, yes, it is perfect, but it must work through those layers of consciousness or the soul layers to manifest more perfectly. The soul must exercise its perfection through all these layers of existence into the physical form. It must be determined. So its determination is shown by its willingness to constantly work at the outer layers. It is a honing, a perfection, a constant grinding away.”

The process of growth is a constant chipping away of false attitudes and concepts which have become a part of our various levels of consciousness. Levels of consciousness are mental states that exist between the soul, which knows the absolute truth, and our conscious state, which thinks it knows what is best for us. All attitudes and knowledge, whether they were obtained in this life or from past lives, are processed and maintained in various levels of our being. Here is an example of what occurs during the growth process. The soul sets up an event to teach a lesson. The conscious mind experiences the event and passes the results on to a higher level of consciousness. This higher level examines the results and compares them to what it already believes. If the higher level of consciousness finds that the event offers a truth which it did not accept before, then this level might say, “That’s interesting. I’ll ponder that concept.” Now, the soul may attempt to prod this level a little more. So, the soul sets up a new event for the conscious mind. The soul will make agreements with other souls to cooperate in this new event. The new experience occurs, and the results are again passed on to the higher level. This experience reinforces the new concept. The pondering level of consciousness now accepts the concept as a truth. The concept is then passed on to a still higher level of consciousness. That higher level may say, “That’s interesting. I should give this concept some serious thought.” The process starts over again until all levels accept the truth. This is a “process of growth.” We can also see from this example what is meant by the idea of continuous evolution.

The following quote from The Council describes this process of interaction and explains that all events are not of equal importance, but all have their purpose.

“You must remember that all of your lives, every moment of your life, every second of your life, is for a purpose. Every point of contact that you have with other individuals, whether they be your ... children or your mates or your relatives or friends, every point of contact with those individuals is for a purpose. Now, it does not mean that every point of contact, every word exchanged, has an immense effect on your life or a very important effect on your life. No, this is not the situation, but each exchange, each meeting, each relationship builds towards something; it is there for a purpose, and that is to correct whatever karmic situation may exist, either with yourselves or the other individual. You come together to serve each other, to help each other ahead.”

We don’t have to worry about every word said or every corner turned, but the overall concept that we have about life and our attitudes about each other are important. These attitudes are formed from a number of momentary experiences and exchanges. Each exchange or apparently insignificant incident in life is tiny when compared with major events such as birth

and death. Yet, just as a snowflake is tiny and insignificant, when enough of them fall from the sky, the total accumulation can be overwhelming.