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Dear Reader

This allegory was given to me one ordinary day as I was sitting at my computer, wondering what to write next for the book, 'Eagles Fly High!' The full story was revealed and recorded over the period of a fortnight. Most unusually for me, the inspiration was given while working at home. I hope you are as excited and challenged by it as I have been.

DAVID TAIT

UP THE MOUNTAIN

THE DREAM

Once upon a time, as all the best tales start, there was a man. He could have any number of names but we will call him John. John was a very ordinary man. He lived in a city on a vast plain. There were lots of cities round about similar to his, where millions of citizens got on with life, making a good living from the surrounding land and craft industries they had developed, producing the goods that go to make for a comfortable life. The people were happy with their lot. Generations came and generations went. Life began, was lived, and one day ended. That was that, and that was all. The sun rose, the birds came out to play. The sun set, the birds went back to sleep. The cycle of life rolled on and on throughout the ages.

John owned his own little house in a good area of town. Most comfortable and homely it was too. He worked hard, enjoyed kicking about an inflated sheep bladder, football they called it, with his mates after work and in the weekends. Life was good. "This is what living is all about!" or so his mates told him.

But John had a secret dream. He couldn't tell his mates about it, lest they thought him stupid. For when he was young, sitting upon his Grandma's knee, she had thrilled him with stories of a people far away, living on a mountain. A land overflowing with milk and honey, a land very different to the one he knew. John had no idea what a mountain even was, for the plain was his world, stretching as far as the eye could see.

As a special treat for his fifth birthday, Grandma had drawn, on a very expensive,

special piece of papyrus, a picture of the mountain of his and her dreams. For she had once been to the mountain, returning solely to share her discoveries with others. How sad she was, that so few were interested in hearing and even fewer in going to see for themselves. For life was pretty good, you see, right here on the plains.

But John treasured that present like no other. He knew that one day, he would search out this mountain and experience for himself, the wonders of her stories.

The inevitable happened and Grandma died. What would he do? Let his dream die with her? No. He would find the mountain! So John quickly 'rushed up' a designer sack with shoulder straps to make carrying the load easier on a long journey, good at design and stitching as he was. (men did these things in those days – women carried the burdens – still do, some say!) Named it a rucksack. After filling it with the needs of his journey, including his precious papyrus picture, off he went. Didn't tell his mates though, for they would only have laughed at him!

THE JOURNEY

He journeyed from city to city, showing people his picture, asking everyone he met if they had seen the mountain. But no one had. The cities themselves were interesting enough, for each had a different philosophy on life, but none excited him as much as his precious Grandma's stories. After several weeks of seemingly purposeless wanderings, John felt down in the dumps, wondering whether the journey was worthwhile. His rucksack seemed particularly heavy that day. "Perhaps I would have been better off staying at home, playing footbladder with my mates," he thought, in a moment of pensive reflection. But the dream he had so blissfully nurtured over the years was so strong that he convinced himself, "I must go on. I can't give up yet!"

Heading down the road, he caught up with another traveller, a kindly looking soul. As they pounded the dirtments, (for paving had not yet been thought of) passing the time of day, John, rucksack on his back, mentioned his search for the mountain. His friend's face lit up like a lantern. You want to go to the mountain, he exclaimed! I am heading that way too. And what's more, I have a map. I can show you the way. John was ecstatic! His dream was about to come true!

Together, they headed down the road at an increased pace. They were on their way to the mountain! The way John's newfound friend talked about the mountain was truly inspirational. John couldn't wait to get there! After a few more days of dirtment pounding, John's friend suddenly stopped. "Look over there", he cried. "The mountain! I can see the mountain!" John squinted. (the only treatment for short sightedness in those days.) He squinted again. Yes, there it was! As one, the two of them jogged off down the road. Running would have made the story sound a lot more impressive, but the mountain was still 30,000 paces away, their rucksacks were heavy, and we don't want them to collapse through exhaustion before they get there, do we? Would ruin a good story!

As they arrived at the foot of the mountain, John could see all the awe inspiring, craggy magnificence his grandmother had spoken about those many years ago. It was as if he was coming home. John was just so happy, he gave his friend a big hug. (men were allowed to hug then! Today too actually!) "Thankyou for showing me the way," he cried. It was a really emotional moment. He didn't care about his tears, though real men, even then, were not meant to cry!

At the foot of the mountain there was a river, deep and wide. "How do I get across?" John asked his friend. "For it is too deep to wade and the current is so strong." "There is a way" his friend replied gently. "A bridge. Come, let me show you." So he led John round a bend in the stream towards the bridge. As they got nearer, John's friend stopped. "I have to leave you here," he said with a sigh. "For we all have to make our own journey onto the mountain." As John watched with amazement, his friend was transformed. Light glowed over his whole body. A thousand candle power! Wings sprouted on his back. He rose gracefully into the sky. "Don't worry, I will be on the mountain too, keeping an eye on you," he said comfortingly, disappearing into the sunset.

John, walked towards the bridge, astounded. "What else is going to happen today! Well, I have dreamed of this moment for so long, I can't back off now," he thought

to himself.

"Can I be your guide?" asked the man at the bridge. A man like he had never seen before. So kindly and merciful, yet strong at the same time. It was impossible to explain. "I would like to go across the bridge to the mountain," John requested quietly. "My Grandma told me how wonderful it is, and I would like to experience it for myself." "Have you got your toll?" the Guide asked gently. Now John knew what he was talking about, for tolls and tax gathering are as old as history itself. "So, how much is it to get across?" "It costs nothing to cross over the bridge my son, your ticket is my free gift to you. But, be warned, to climb the mountain will cost all that you have." "That's okay with me," John said quickly, so keen to get across. "Okay, let me take you by the hand, for the bridge is narrow and I wouldn't want you to fall off, after having come all this way." "How does he know how far I have come," John thought to himself. "He seems to know me better than I know myself!"

So John held out his hand, letting the Guide take him over the narrow bridge, into the land of his dreams. Halfway across, glancing down for a quick look at the water, John gasped with amazement, for the river was flowing blood red! Surprises abound for our intrepid traveller!

Upon recovering his composure, John looked up and down the bridge itself exclaiming! "It's made like a giant cross. Criminals are normally hung on these. The Guide doesn't look like a criminal, though!" "The cross is mine, the blood in the river is mine," said the Guide gently, again reading his mind. "It is the toll I paid to get you across." "Thanks so much," John exclaimed, staggered by the ease with which the Guide understood his thoughts. As they stepped off the bridge, he turned to John saying, "I have to leave you now to go back and bring others across. But I am leaving you with another friend to 'show you the ropes' of my kingdom. You can't see him, but he is now inside you. Just ask in your mind anything you want to know, and he will tell you." Naturally, John thought this to be completely weird, but then, so was everything else about this place. The Guide obviously knew what he was talking about though, so he thought he might try it sometime. Bidding his Guide farewell, John headed off on a journey of exploration, keen to experience all that Grandma had thrilled him with, those many years ago, as he sat on her knee. "Great days, they were," he reminisced. "But now, I can experience it all for myself!"

'TWEET TWEET'

John was more excited than he had ever been in his whole life! Caused him to jump up and down with great glee! Hopped higher than he had ever managed before. That's funny he thought. Must be the adrenaline! He turned round and looked at the trees. "Boy o boy, they seem massive!" He looked and he looked and he looked again. But his focus of attention was not now on the trees but a lot closer, to his face in fact. Before his very eyes, his nose was growing longer and longer and longer and joining up with his mouth! "Must be hallucinating," he squawks to himself. "All the excitement you know." So he waved his arms round in a circle, to relax his body and brain. "Hey, something's not right here," he thought to himself. "I feel as free as a bird on the breeze. Wait a minute! I am a bird on the breeze! And I am about to hit that....." Thud! John's world suddenly went black.

Gingerly, he woke up, as if from a dream. "What's happened? Surely not! It can't be! It can't b-b-be! B-b-but it is! I am a bird! A sparrow, even! What has become of me! Grandma never told me about this!" John looked for his rucksack but it had gone. No more jellypeas he said sadly to himself. (For no one had yet had the brilliant marketing idea of trebling their size and changing them into a bean shape, selling for four times the price! An idea that turned this 'has bean' 'sweet pea', into one of the world's sweetest, succulent success stories!)

"Well, I guess I had better make the best of it," he thought sparrowfully. Flapping his new found wings he yawed his way up into the tree that had so rudely stepped out into the path of his first flight! After a perfect two foot landing on a high branch, a fine chirpiness feeling nested over him. "This is a birds eye view," he exclaimed. "Well, it is for us sparrows," said a chipper voice next to him. John looked around and there was this very nice lady sparrow, twirling her beak in a classic sparrow smile. "Welcome to the mountain," she said sweetly. "Can I take you under my wing, metaphorically

speaking of course!" she said blushing, embarrassed by her little joke. "What a good idea," John replied, "For this is all very strange to me." "By the way, my name is Jill," said Jill. "And mine is John," said John, pleased to have the introductions done with. For he wasn't too practised in introductions to beautiful 'birds' of the opposite sex!

So Jill winged John on a guided tour of the mountain. He really enjoyed the freedom of flying, being able to get from point to point, 'as the sparrow flies.' "Flying is certainly easier than climbing," he thought to himself. Jill was obviously really at home. "There are two groups of us here" she informed John tweetingly. "The Sparrowditionalists, who have been here the longest and the Sparrangelicals, real enthusiasts for the Guide and his River of Blood." Jill introduced him to many of her friends, about whom she talked freely. "Gossip, his grandmother would have called it," thought John to himself. "But they all seem happy enough playing around, twittering from tree to tree, enjoying the sunshine filtering through the trees of the foothills in which they live."

As they flew round John was feeling a little peckish but could find nothing to peck! He so wanted to try out his newfound beak too. Had noticed that all the trees were in blossom but there was no fruit anywhere to be seen. Finally, plucking up the courage, John asked Jill where they could get a bite to eat. "Oh that's simple," she tweeted, preening her feathers, "We have a field of barley over here. We can eat as much of it as we want. It's not great food but there is plenty of it and we are happy enough, although more variety would be nice for a change. My friends often complain about it, but they are not prepared to look elsewhere either. Some people are never satisfied, are they! Let me take you there." So Jill and John went to the barley field and joined thousands of other sparrows pecking their lunch. "Plenty of it," John thought to himself once again, for he didn't want to offend the beautiful Jill, "but it isn't anything like the magnificent feasts Grandma used to tell me about. And those trees are strange. Always in blossom! But never producing fruit!"

John pondered all this inside his bird brain, which being sparrow sized, took time to compute. But unlike the sparrowbrains around him, he quickly became dissatisfied with his lot. Plucking up his courage, once again, (won't have many feathers left soon!) he asked Jill if this is all there is to the mountain. Jill was not really surprised when he asked, for she was getting to know him a little by now. "I hoped you weren't going to ask," she said sadly, for she knew she was about to lose her friend. "You really do want to fly higher up the mountain, don't you. Sometimes I dream of flying higher too. To be really honest though, life is very comfortable down here in the foothills. But I have seen that dream in your wistful sparrow eyes for a while now, and know that you won't be happy until you give it a go. Remember our Guide at the gate telling you about a friend inside? Well, I have always been sceptical about him, but others say that he holds the key to flying high. So you'd better ask him. I'll say my goodbyes now, for when you go away I won't see you again." Jill cried sparrowfully, gentle sparrow tears rolling fetchingly down her delicate beak. "And I was becoming fond of you too," she twittered with a birdie blush, before disappearing into the sunset as all true jilted heroine sparrows do. John was sad to see her go, but he had a greater purpose in life – to climb the mountain.

'COO COO'

"I just don't see how I can fly high," he mused, totally bemused, "for my wings only lift me to the treetops, not the mountaintop!" For a quick lesson in sparrowdynamics, he had taken. "This will be a good test for my Friend Inside. I feel pretty stupid talking to someone I can't see, but I really do want to go higher and I have run out of ideas myself." Looking round to make sure no one else was watching, John said in his best bird thought, "Friend Inside, please tell me how I can climb further up this mountain?"

"You want to discover the wonders your Grandma told you about when you sat on her knee?" a gentle voice replied. John was so surprised he did a springsault (for summer had not yet come) right there on the spot! "You too! How is it that you know so much about me? Like my Guide!" he squeaked. "We both knew you before you were even born," his newfound friend said gently. Not wanting to get involved in a deep theological discussion about the origin of bird life, John accepted that his friend knew what he was talking about and queried again, "You know how to climb this mountain?" "Yes John, I do. If you let me, I can guide you right to the top." "Can we go now, please," John cooed in a most unsparrowlike manner. "That's a funny voice I have! I am growing too, and my feathers are turning white! What's happening? I like this! I'll hop over

to the 'looking pool' and see my reflection in the water!" "No need to, John, for I can tell you that you have been transformed into a dove. You have been prepared to trust me, so now are taking on my image. Spread your wings and enjoy yourself! Fly high, fly on up the mountain!" So John did. Now bigger and stronger, he effortlessly winged his way over the treetops, up onto the mountain itself.

Jill looked on from far below, a tear welling in her misty eye. "Farewell John, I wish I was as brave as you but I am so comfortable here. I just can't make the break. Maybe one day. Maybe....." John didn't hear for he was already flying high above the trees, delighted with the flapping power of his new wings. Up, up and away. He would get to the top of the mountain now! He climbed and climbed, so happy that he had now made it! But soon, feeling tired from exertion and excitement, he spotted a group of doves feeding. Thought he would join them for a well-earned rest and refreshments. He landed, again in a perfect two-point landing, feeling proud of himself for how far he had come. The other doves welcomed him warmly. They were so much more outgoing than the sparrows, although he soon observed that they were also expert at pecking each other too, when

one got in another's way! But there was even more food here, and it was tender wheat, rather than the tough old barley of his sparrow diet. "Jill doesn't know what she's missing," John thought fleetingly. "But it's her choice." So reinvigorated after a good feed, he decided to take a look around.

There was just a different atmosphere about this place. Not as many doves as there were sparrows but they made so much more noise! So enthusiastic they generally were about life too. Oh yes, there was the odd reclusive bird. Suffering from something called 'spiritual dovpresion' the others said. But most happily perched on the local tree branches, cooing about the good life. Noticing green fruit on the trees, John asked his dovecostal friends when the fruit ripened. "We don't know," they said in a chorus. Then each promoted a different theory in a hubbub of noise. But suddenly, there was silence. John looked skyward with the others to see why. For up there, a flock of jet black vultures wheeled around, seeking prey. Several careless doves were not quick enough at getting under cover and were caught in the vultures' trap. The vultures chased them relentlessly until their resistance caved in. They just lay down and died of fright. Dead doves - vulture food! It was so sad to see. He observed the battle of wits going on between the doves and the vultures. Like psychological warfare between two opposing armies. The doves would squawk at the vultures, most undovelike really, and the vultures would counter with their own blood curdling screeching laugh, that harbinger of death so feared by countless generations of desert dwellers. A contest of intimidation. A contest of wills. A phoney, yet ever so real war.

Now John wasn't just a lovey dovey, but really a most astute bird, for he remembered from his plains' days that vultures only fed on the dead. "Why then, did the doves fear them?" He shared his thoughts with his fellow doves, encouraging them to call the vultures' bluff! "We're going to come out of the bush and exert our authority," he cried out to his mates encouragingly. "Remember, 'a bird in the battle is worth more than two thousand in the bush!' The vultures are already defeated! We will call their bluff!" Some decided that John was right, while the majority, as usual in such matters, thought, "He doven't know what he is talking about, or, the vultures will kill us." Or again with dove-like caution, "we will wait and see how he gets on, before risking losing our beautiful white feathers in the battle." Much like the sparrows," John thought to himself. "Enjoying what they have, but not prepared to risk home comforts to fly higher up the mountain. While this place is great, I know there is more, for I haven't yet

experienced all that my Grandma told me about those many years ago, when sitting on her knee. Well padded, comfortable, 'Grandma knees' they were too! Memories, memories!"

So John took his small intrepid band of dynamic doves out to face the vociferous vultures. The vociferous vultures circled above, vigorously vociferating, then dive bombed the dynamic doves. The dynamic doves responded by flying, feathers flapping furiously, fighting fear, up in the air as one, to do battle! They were perfectly dovetailed, one to the other. The voracious, viscous, vocal voices of the villainous, verbose vultures, vaporised vacuously, as the wall of pure white, dovetailed doves rose to meet them! Then the vanquished vultures voluntarily vanished! For they knew that their bluff had been called, that their hold over the doves had been broken.

Some of the watching doves flapped their wings vigorously in appreciation before flying off to join their victorious friends. Many others however, didn't know quite what to do, now that the vultures had, temporarily at least, vacated the area. In fact, in their heart of hearts, they really yearned for the vultures' return. For they were actually more comfortable with the enemy being there! Some doves you just cannot please! John was philosophical about all this, as he used his birdbrain to mull over the day's happenings. "Didn't happen like this with the sparrows," John thought to himself. "That was because the sparrows were not large enough to interest the vultures," John heard a voice from nowhere reply. Then he realised that the pearl of wisdom had come from his Friend Inside, whom, he had to admit, he had temporarily forgotten, in the midst of the excitement. "Perhaps he can also explain this phoney war," John thought to himself. "Yes I can." John's feathers underwent a rapidly ruffling reaction, now fully understanding that his Friend Inside could hear everything he was thinking. "That's okay then," he thought with relief, preening himself back to normality. "This place is certainly different to the one I grew up in. But I wasn't a bird in those days either! This mountain is surely a world apart." Yes, John was at last starting to attain a 'bird's eye view' of the world.

'SOAR SOAR'

"You are at last starting to understand the mountain," his Friend Inside exclaimed encouragingly. "The real, eternal world, is not back down there on the plains in the cities you came from, but here, living as a bird of the Spirit, on the mountain of God. As a sparrow, you were limited to the foothills, small, one amongst millions, yet even there, you were known by name. You wanted to fly higher. This I made possible by transforming you into a beautiful dove, with the ability to soar further up the mountain. But I know your heart's desire is to fly higher still. That was proven today, when by overcoming the vultures of sin, you earned the right to move up into the very mountaintops of God. Do you want to go?"

John took just two tweetseconds to come up with his answer. "Yes, Friend Inside, you know I do. My favourite Grandma stories were those about soaring over the mountaintops, overseeing everything happening on the mountain, while fellowshiping with the Lord of the Mountain himself. But I know that I can't go any higher as a dove, for the rarefied air will not support my weight. I place myself completely in your hands, or wings, as the case may be!"

At that very tweetsecond John underwent a further miraculous transformation. His wings grew and grew and grew until he had to squint to see his wingtips! Not only had his wingspan wonderfully widened but his plumage too, glistened, the purest white reflection of the sun's supernatural glory. The doves standing nearby appeared positively dowdy by comparison! Now too, he was able to peek over that annoying rock that had previously blocked the sea views from his favourite preening perch! "A new perspective on life," he thought airily, before glancing down to find out why. Seeing his now massive masculine legs, John exclaimed, "Better than I could ever have hoped for stonelifting in the gym!" Then the 'piece de resistance', for he was a bilingual bird. His designer claws! Sensational! So beautifully, yet powerfully sculptured for maximum grip and clutching power. Their razor sharp tips would tear a vulture to shreds in an instant. Yes, John was now a fantastic, fully-fledged, flying eagle machine! He knew that at last, he was going to be able to soar to the mountaintop to experience for himself, his childhood dreams.

"Thankyou, Friend Inside, for making my dreams come true," John glowed in ecstasy. "I am eternally in your debt. Whatever your desire is for me to do, I will do." "I know," said his now, Best Friend Inside, "for obedience was the single condition necessary for your transformation. You could only call the vultures bluff by trusting me to get you through. As an eagle, you shall now soar to the very mountaintop, just as your Grandma did those many years ago, there to dwell with the Lord of the Mountain. The light now radiating from him dazzled John's dovecostal mates. Some asked how they too could become eagles. "Obey your friend inside and overcome the vultures" John stated in his newly acquired, deep and authoritative eagle voice. Some flew away eager to earn their 'eagle wings'. The not so silent majority however, were as we have come to expect by now, content to carry on in their own comfortable, established ways. Being strictly honest, they didn't really believe, in their deepest of dovehearts, that they could put the vultures to flight anyway, in spite of all their boisterous bravebeak bravado. Besides, they would quite miss them if they weren't there! Saddened by once again having to leave birdmates through their lack of desire to

seek the mountaintop, but wanting more than ever, to fulfil his dreams, John majestically flapped a fond farewell, before flying off to discover the magnificence of the mountaintop.

As he soared John made an amazing birdynamic discovery! No longer did he have to flap his wings harder to fly higher, for now he could just soar, gliding free on the gentle eddies and currents the mountain wind provided. So effortless, yet so much more effective! Flying was now so much fun! "Thankyou Best friend Inside" he yelled victoriously, "I have eagely awaited these wings for such a long time! Now I can be a soldier in the Taberneagle Army!"

Higher and higher he soared, enjoying the amazing freedom he now had, to go wherever he, or rather his Best Friend Inside, pleased. For John knew that without his friend's help and ongoing guidance, he could not possibly be flying high today. John cast his 'eagle eyes' round as he flew.

Then, as the recipient of a severe shock, he momentarily folded his wings in disbelief! But free falling like a stone towards a squelchy end rapidly revived our eager eagle! Wingly equilibrium was urgently re-established. "Phew, that was too close for comfort! I can't believe my eyes! My inherited short-sightedness has disappeared! I can now see everything! I can even recognise my old sparrow friend Jill right down there in the foothills. Brings back some memories, that does! Still down there playing with her friends, just as I left her. Oh Jill, you are missing out on so much!"

"Your 'eagle eyes' are for a purpose," reminded his Best friend Inside. "For you are to protect all my birds on the mountain from the vultures, my friend." Now not particularly being a 'culture vulture', John was delighted with this new responsibility, for he felt so protective towards his old friends, wanting to encourage them to climb and experience the freedom of the mountain top, as well. So vigilantly victimising, villainous vultures, would be his pleasure! For John could now clearly see the insidious control the vultures had over the bird life of the mountain.

Needing a bit of a break, John alighted in one of the many trees that graced the upper mountain slopes. Immediately he could see that these trees were covered with the most delicious looking, mouth watering, ready to eat fruit that he had ever seen in his life. Taking his first bite, John discovered 'eagle heaven', for he had always liked his food. This fruit was just so much better than the barley and wheat he had lived on at lower levels. "My old friends just don't know what they are missing out on!"

"That's right," confirmed his Best Friend Inside, "for this is my fruit, the fruit of the nature of the Spirit you see, available to all who commit themselves fully to me. Eating of this fruit will satisfy not just your bodily needs but your whole being. For there was a time many, many years ago when the whole earth was full of trees such as these and this fruit was available to all mankind. But man was not content to merely live in paradise. He wanted to control it, to be the master of his own destiny. As if you could improve upon perfection! The Lord of the Mountain gave him his wish and you lived the results before coming to the mountain, successfully managing to turn gardens into deserts. As you remember from your days on the plains, mankind has had to fight weeds, bugs and disease and sometimes, other people, in order to eat. So the Lord of the Mountain removed himself from this mess, requiring mankind to seek him by coming to the mountain, entering over the bridge of the Guide. To be set apart from the world, by being transformed into a bird. As you have experienced John, in your progression from the foothills to the mountain peaks, two further major transformations are required to adapt to the new conditions experienced as you fly higher. For the trees of the fruit of the Spirit will blossom in the foothills, will pollinate and grow fruit in the middle reaches but will only ripen to full maturity on the mountain tops, under the pure light of the Lord of the Mountain, in the glory of his 'Son.'

For it saddens me John, to see the blossom of the sparrows, promising so much but failing to pollinate. They accept me in their minds only, but their heart and will are far from me. But I have still provided barley for them to eat. The doves have allowed me to pollinate their fruit by accepting me in their heart as well as their mind, but sadly, their fruit will n

ever ripen. But I have provided them with wheat to eat. For you must understand, it is not until I am given mind, heart and will, as you have done, that the sunshine will ripen your fruit. Sadly, so many sparrows and doves think that if they do good works for me, they will produce ripened fruit. But ripe fruit only comes from the sunshine of submission and obedience."

It was amazing how so many of the things that John had often wondered about were being clarified. It was as if he was getting closer and closer to the origin of the voice. The more he listened and obeyed, the higher he soared. He was rapidly becoming 'in tune' with his surroundings. This both thrilled and puzzled him for something was definitely different up here. "What is it?" John asked his Best Friend Inside. "You are becoming as one with us," he replied. "With us?" John questioned. "Yes, with us. For we are three. The Guide who made the pathway for you to enter the mountain kingdom and who has been keeping his eye on you all the time you have been here, myself, your Best Friend Inside, and the Lord of the Mountain, to whose plan we operate. The higher you soar, the closer to us you get, the more like us you become."

Somehow now, it all made sense to John, for he had experienced it. He now knew though, that it was impossible to understand, before coming to the mountain. Even as a sparrow and a dove, this 'mystery' was only partially understood. But as he became more in tune with his Guide, Friend and Lord, so the unity and purpose of the intimate relationship they shared, gelled in his birdbrain. And, even more amazingly, it was a unity of purpose into which he also was now absorbed. As if they were all one! Incredible!

John, now comfortably settled high up on a rocky crag, designer claws anchored to the rock, suddenly realised that he had not seen many other eagles up there with him. In fact, if it had not been for his Best Friend Inside, he would have felt positively lonely! There had been a few off flying in the distance, but it did seem rather a solitary lifestyle he was living. Still, it was far more satisfying than his sparrow and dove days. For he now knew what his Grandma had meant when she told him how she had felt to be at one with the mountain.

The views were magnificent and flying a dream with the latest developments in advanced birdynamic eagle wing engineering. John had been able to make many 'kills' in birdfights with the black vulture squadrons whose weaponry was no match for the superb fighting machine he now was. His telescopic eyesight, speed, manoeuvrability and designer

claw armaments spelt instant destruction to the opposing vultureforce. He remembered how he had found them to be all bluff and bravado in his dove days, no match even then, for a unified, dovetailed doveforce. But getting the doveforce to fly in formation under a single dovemander was the problem! With the Taberneagles however, it was as if the vultures knew that defeat was inevitable. After an initial short show of bravado they would quickly 'turn tail', trying unsuccessfully to escape their inevitable fate. "But there are so many of them," John thought to himself, "far more than us few eagles can annihilate by ourselves." As he mused, the sun set. Now tired, John in good eagle fashion, rested his head comfortably on his left wing, ready to take his 140 nightly eaglewinks. The end of another fulfilling day. He slept soundly, for vanquishing vultures is a tiring business.

'TRUMPET CALL'

At 132_ winks John was not so rudely awakened by the blast of trumpets coming from the highest reaches of the mountain. The sound was a 100-decibel blast to him, for he was near its source. Further down the mountain in Doveland, it still registered 60 decibels, sufficient to wake all but the heaviest sleepers amongst the doves. In Sparrowland too, a more gentle 30 decibels reverberated, bringing to life many but by no means all, the residents.

"What is that sound!" John exclaimed, as he awoke. He listened more intently. The trumpet calls resounded, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of the Mountain. Prepare yourselves for the return of the Lord." "Wow!" thought John, "the day of promise is about to come, the greatest of all days when we will be able to fly to the very top of the mountain!" An air of excitement and anticipation descended upon all the eagles, many of the doves and some of the sparrows. The remaining doves and sparrows got quite angry, for all they heard was a loud noise that startled them out of their very pleasant birdreams, a mite earlier than they desired.

Amongst all those who heard the voice in the trumpet, there was an urgency to fly higher and higher, into the very presence of the Lord of the Mountain himself. John stretched out his eagle wings and took off to soar to the mountaintop. As he did so, he found the other eagles he had previously only seen from a distance, joining him. It was great to be in the company of other eagles. They immediately bonded as one.

Further down the mountain in Doveland, there was a great clamour, for many more doves now desired to scale the heights of the mountain too. The vultures wondered what had hit them, being attacked by clouds of dovetailed doves. The Friend Inside all of them, was kept working flat out as more and more doves were prepared to place themselves fully in his hands. Transformations from dove to eagle now became commonplace sights in Doveland. John's Best Friend Inside was now busier than he had ever been! He was so happy, well able to cope - no problem. In fact he had been looking forward to this time, right from the very beginning.

In Sparrowland too, there was considerable activity, as numbers of sparrows were blasted out of their complacency and sought to fly higher. John's former friend Jill, was one of the ones galvanised into action by the call of the trumpet. "Interestingly" the Best Friend Inside observed, "many sparrows are now more motivated to soar than lots of the doves. They will not need to spend too long in Doveland before becoming eagles. Will surprise and shock some of the older, more self satisfied doves, I am sure!"

With all this upward activity on the mountain, a strange phenomenon gradually started to take place. For as all these birds started to fly upwards, more and more light reflected from their transformed whiter and larger wings. This reflected light began to shine as a giant beacon over the cities of the plains, even reaching those places furthestmost from the mountain. The citizens of the plains were either attracted or repulsed by this supernatural light. Large numbers of people flocked to the mountain where they were now more than willing to accept the free toll the Guide offered to enter the mountain, to cross over the cross shaped bridge. No qualms about the 'life price' to climb the mountain either. Never in all history, had so many people crossed the bridge in so short a time. Both the Guide and the bridge were well up to coping with the influx. "Although I would have built the bridge for just one person to cross, this influx is the fulfilment of the promise made to me by the Lord of the Mountain before it all started," the Guide thought thankfully to himself.

Amongst those people who remained on the plains, lawlessness and war now broke out. They tried their hardest to stop others seeking the mountain, being possessed by the vultures of the plain, but they were not successful, for those on the journey to the mountain seemed to have a hedge of protection around them. The trumpeting from the mountaintop continued daily for six days.

BIRD CRIES

As the sound of the trumpets faded, the wind came up, a gentle zephyr at first, much loved by the doves but ignored by the sparrows. Gradually the puffs of wind increased in intensity, penetrating every nook and cranny and every bird on the mountain. There was no way to avoid its effects. All the old hiding places where smart birds would go to get out of the wind when it blew too strongly for their liking, were penetrated by this new wind. A wind of repentance from which there was no escape.

As the wind grew in intensity, so a new noise arose from the mountain. Almost imperceptible at first, the cries of the birds gathered in strength as a wave forming on the ocean, increasing in size and power before inevitably crashing on the shore in a thunderous cacophony of conviction and repentance. Plaintive sparrow cries intermingled with the louder grief of the doves. There were even a few screams from the eagles, as all remaining impurities were expelled from their bodies. For the eagles had already partially experienced this phenomenon, before being awarded their eaglewings. As the wind penetrated feathers, right into the very bodies and hearts of the mountain's birdlife, multitudes of bird tears flooded to the ground and streams of repentance flowed down the mountain into the Blood Red River of Sacrifice that the cross-shaped bridge spanned. A more powerful intermingling of the blood of sacrifice with the water of sanctification had never been witnessed throughout all history. The birds were being purified, as was required by the Lord of the Mountain.

However this cleansing windstorm was not welcomed by many of the sparrows and doves. The wind was too strong and there was no longer anywhere to hide. Large numbers now looked longingly back to the plains from whence they had come, for they had had enough of this strange land. The pleasures of the plains now seemed so much more attractive. So these birdsliders flew back over the river, upon landing on the plains, to become humans once again. The Guide was very sad to see this exodus, for he had given his very life for each one of them. But he also realised that the sounding of the trumpet heralded a time of great upheaval, a time when the strength and penetration of the wind would cause many doves and sparrows to leave the mountain. Returning to the cities from whence they had originally come, many became the bitterest critics of the ever-increasing birdlife on the mountain.

And as usual, there were those who toughed it out, digging in their claws, determined not to lose that which they had, but too fearful to let the wind change them. What a sorry sight they made, indeed.

At the mountaintop however, the scenario was completely the opposite. For John and the other eagles, having adapted to the new intensity of the wind, were perfectly equipped to take advantage of these new conditions. For they were able to go with the flow, joyfully taking advantage of all the many eddies and currents, making use of the wind rather than being blown round by it, as were the other birds. John too, quickly observed that the air was now becoming thick with 'Taberneagle Squadrons,' for the windstorm had caused many sparrows and doves to desire eaglehood, to join the Taberneagle Army and fly high in the sky.

The power of the wind removed all the remaining weaknesses and impurities from John's eagle body, so he and his eagle mates could now soar to the very mountaintop, into the presence of the Lord of the Mountain himself. It was a place that until now, no bird had been able to reach, for the uplifting wind of the Spirit had not blown to these heights before. Yet, as he reached the summit, John saw that one had been there before him and was now waiting for him to land on the mountain peak. Yes, it was the Guide who welcomed John as he landed. He was the one who made this journey possible, who had pioneered the way. "Well done, my good and faithful eagleservant," the Guide said lovingly, "for you have made my return journey to be with the Lord of the Mountain worthwhile." And he revealed his name as being 'Jesus'. John's white eagle body glistened, a heavenly, perfected, pure white, for he was now one with the Lord of the Mountain. His life dream had been fulfilled.

But there was still work to be done! For the wind so enraged the black vultures that they all took to the air in furious frenzy. They knew that this was their last chance to do battle with the doves and even the sparrows. The Guide saw all that was happening and ordered his Taberneagle Force into action. With a mighty roar, the eagles descended to take on the vultures one last time. The vultures concentrated their attacks on the doves and fought the sparrows too, for they knew they could not defeat the eagles. The battle raged over the entire mountain, claiming many sparrow and dove casualties. The eagles spearheaded the fight. Inevitably though, through the preparation the Guide had done on their behalf, turning them into lean, mean, eagle machines, every last vulture was either slaughtered or captured, including the Field Marshal of the vulture forces himself, one Satan by name. Satan's forces were an-eagle-ated. There was a huge victory party on the mountaintop as the wind stilled, having fulfilled its task. The Taberneagle Army finally reigned supreme on the mountain.

THE LAST TRUMPET

On the seventh day there was a new trumpet call – the trumpet call of victory, blown by the Guide - by Jesus himself! The sound of the victory trumpet resounded throughout all the land, from the top of the mountain to the furthest reaches of the plains. Doves, sparrows and plain dwellers alike - all were stopped in their tracks, mesmerised by the incredible sound. Their attention was drawn to the top of the mountain from where there was a mighty reverberation of wings as the victorious Taberneagle Army, John and Jill amongst them, took to the air with their Supreme Commander, the Guide Jesus at their head. As one, the Taberneagle Army flew off the mountain, spreading out over the plains below. A mixture of fear and wonder overcame the plain dwellers as the eagle army approached.

Passing over the river of blood and water called Salvation, the eagles underwent a

bodily transformation. John saw that his body had once again taken on human form. He could still recognise himself, even though he now radiated the glory of God. Looking around, he saw that his body was perfect in every detail. He couldn't believe it. Yes, this body would never again get sick or grow old. It was his, perfect and unchangeable, forever. And what is more he realised with a start, he was still up in the air, flying without wings! Around him too, he saw that the army was now surrounded by hosts of angels, who did need wings to fly! Among them he spotted his angelic friend, the one who had originally guided him to the mountain. John waved out to him vigorously, doing a summersault (for summer had now arrived) in the air, not quite yet having refined the piloting skills necessary for human flight! His angel friend arrived in a flash, to steady him. Yes, his Guardian Angel was still there. John now understood that he too, had been with him all the time he had been on the mountain, keeping him out of trouble when he flew faster than his wings had been designed for. For John had always been a speedfreak, pushing his wings beyond their birdynamic limits! But he was healed of that now!

Yet, the most exciting thing about his body was the glory of the light that shone out of it. Enough to turn night into day! The glory of the Lord of the Mountain was his forever!

Looking down, he could see the people running for cover, for the light was too bright to bear. Jesus gave the order and the victorious army landed on their feet, right through the land. The people now came out of cover, attracted to the light of the individual overcomer arriving to govern their area. The whole Taberneagle Army moved about the land seemingly as one, with automatic communications. No radio transmitters or receivers required here!

Taking a moment or two to get his bearings, John looked out into the distance, momentarily blinking, unable to believe what he saw! For he was still getting used to his new 20/20 vision. He remembered his earlier short-sightedness and could hardly believe the difference! But it was what he saw that truly amazed him. For the fields and deserts that he had remembered were now beautiful gardens, as they had been at the very beginning of time. One vast Garden of Eden! As the people realised what had happened, they too were delighted, for living in a garden paradise is attractive to all.

Equally surprising to the people of the plains was how they all now started to get along well together, no longer having the desire to fight one another. While the people themselves did not understand this new phenomenon, John knew that it was because Satan and his vultures had been defeated, the survivors having been bound and thrown into a bottomless pit from which there was no escape. The ultimate black hole!

Some of the people came to John wanting to know about Jesus and the army, before setting off on their own journey to climb the mountain. But, as usual, most were quite happy to enjoy the gardens and their new, harmonious environment, carrying on with their lives, just as they had always done. Some things, some people, never change! After a few days had passed, John heard a great groaning and gnashing of beaks coming from the direction of the mountain. For the remaining sparrows and the doves had finally comprehended what was happening. The eagles had flown! The vultures had gone! All was peaceful and pleasant on the mountain. While enjoyable for a few days, this relaxed state of affairs had soon got pretty boring really! In desperation, the doves and even some of the sparrows that normally enjoyed the quiet life, asked their Friend

Inside what had happened. They were told, "The eagles have flown to the top of the mountain where you all were encouraged to go. But you did not choose to leave your home comforts to fly high. The eagles have now attained their reward. To rule and reign on the earth with Jesus for 1000 years. Your reward will come too, but you will have to wait until the end of that time."

The enormity of the situation hit them squarely in the eyes. For they had missed out on the very best that the Lord of the Mountain had to offer. They would live most pleasantly, for the vultures had been defeated, but would have to make do with barley or wheat until the end. Their reward was delayed because of their own actions. "Why didn't we climb the mountain while we had the opportunity" they cried out to each other. For this was the weeping and gnashing of beaks that John heard, as he reigned and ruled with Jesus in the cities far away.

And so John lived happily ever after, as his Grandma had promised all those years ago, when he sat upon her knee.

INTERPRETATION

Given by the Lord after the 'fairy tale' was completed!

The Dream: The witness of others into our life.

The Journey: Making the decision for Christ.

'Tweet Tweet': Fulfilment of the Feast of Passover, as reflected in the Traditional/Evangelical Church.

'Coo Coo': Fulfilment of the Feast of Pentecost, as reflected in the Pentecostal/Charismatic Church.

'Soar Soar': Individuals throughout history, living their lives in full submission to the Father's will.

Trumpet Call: Symbolising the Feast of Trumpets, now in progress.

Bird Cries: Symbolising the Day of Atonement. Now starting to be fulfilled by the growing Tabernacle Army.

Last Trumpet: Symbolising the Feast of Tabernacles itself. To be fulfilled in the 1000 year reign of Christ.

David Tait: 4 May 2000