

# **A Gentile's Journey**

by

**Bill Callahan**

with

**Peter Weisz**

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## A Gentile's Journey

Bill Callahan

## Dedication

*To Nancy and Joel Hart*

*without whose valued support this book could not  
have been created.*

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## Acknowledgements

Special thanks are extended to the following people without whose assistance this book could not have been produced:

Sandra Viscaya

Pastor David Wilkerson

Etc.

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# A Gentile's Journey

# Introduction

by

Susan Michael (or Jürgen Bühler?)

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Bill Callahan

# Foreword

by Peter Weisz

The first time I met Bill Callahan I was suspicious. I liked him immediately, but I could not overcome my distrust of a non-Jew claiming to be a passionate Zionist. “What’s this guy up to?” I asked myself. “Is he trying to sweet talk me into converting to Christianity?” I soon learned that the answer was no. Bill was the real deal. The genuine article with no hidden agenda. He was also smart enough, I learned, to be aware of the instinctive apprehension that we Jews harbor whenever we meet a non-Jew that is a bit too ingratiating. After centuries of being the targets of inquisitors, proselytizers, Jews for Jesus, and other endeavors intent on transforming the Children of Israel into churchgoers, Jews are naturally wary of any gentile proclaiming himself to be a Zionist.

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## Chapter One

### Ground Zero

“As for you, tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you the former dominion will come. The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.”

—*Micah 4:6-8*



It was in, of all places, a Greek restaurant during one of those light-hearted late summer Manhattan evenings, in the calming company of my future wife that my future course was set. And, as young men are often prone to do, after having fallen under the intoxicating sway of retsina and romance, I decided then and there to set my course according to the woman I loved; my very own “daughter of Jerusalem.”

As we sat at a cozy two-top at **Molyvos**, a favorite mid-town *estiatorio*, I marveled as Sandra deftly de-boned the grilled fish on her plate with surgical precision. Although I had not yet officially proposed, I had it made it clear to friends and family that I wanted this dynamic Colombian beauty to be my wife. From the

glint in her luxurious Latina eyes, I suspected that this was going to be a serious conversation. I was proven correct as Sandra, every bit as methodically as she had dealt with the fish, now directed her sharp focus on me.

“Bill, you know how I feel about you,” she began. She was right. I did. But I now felt that a “but” was on its way. I was right.

“But,” she continued, “if we are going to be together, these are the three things I need to let you know up front”

“Only three?” I thought, but I said nothing as I strained every muscle in my face and neck in order to avoid revealing my sense of apprehension. I was mentally weighing whether I should run away right now, or wait a little while before making my getaway.

“Okay,” is what I finally got out, wearing a pasted-on smile. “And what might those be?”

“Number one, no intimacy until we are married.” I nodded in agreement. This one was no problem. Sandra’s devotion to traditional values was one of the many things I loved about her.

“Number two.” She paused for effect, and then: “I want you to go to church with me every Sunday.” Now I paused and blinked a few more times than usual. My mother was a devout Christian, but as for me. I was strictly CEO — Christmas & Easter Only. Was I willing to give up my Sunday mornings to please the woman I loved? I amazed myself with how quickly I responded: “Of course. I’ll be there. For sure.”

The third item on her list threw me for a loop.

“And number three,” Sandra said, finally putting down her knife next to the skeletal remains of her *solomos*. “I’d love to go to Israel with you someday.”

“Israel?” I thought. Surprising, yet intriguing since I recalled how my mother was healed emotionally after her trip to Israel back in 1980. “Sure. Why not?” I said after a beat. I understood how important her religious heritage was to Sandra and I totally got why she would wish to visit the land where Jesus walked and preached. I thought this point was sweet and had no trouble

whatsoever agreeing to it — not for a moment imagining the important role that Israel would soon play in my life.

Fast forward a few weeks as I awoke to a cloudless blue-sky September Morn. My midtown Manhattan apartment at 53rd and 7th Avenue was only a few blocks from my office and I had beaten my alarm clock buzzer this morning. So, I had a bit of time to lie in bed and think back on all that had transpired since our dinner at the *estiatorio*.

I thought back to our first church experience together at the Upper Room Church in Dix Hills, New York. It was there that I witnessed the congregation, under the spiritual leadership of Pastor Donofrio, engaging in a type of charismatic Christianity I had heard about, but never before witnessed. Grown women, wrapped in blankets, who had been “slain in the spirit,” were falling to the floor as gospel music played and as enthused congregants laid their healing hands on the ladies while reciting prayers in a strange Pentecostal Holy Spirit language called “Tongues.” “How could grown people be behaving this way?” I thought. Dancing in the aisles, waving their hands wildly in the air, and demonstrating their devotion and love for Jesus Christ by babbling incoherently. My astonishment was accompanied by a sense of curiosity that prompted me to conduct some basic research. What I found out was fascinating. Permit me to share some of it with you.

The Upper Room Church was part of an American Christian movement known alternately as Evangelical, Charismatic, or Pentecostal. The church’s name, the Upper Room, refers to the house in Jerusalem that was the site of the Last Supper. It was also the place where Christ’s disciples had gathered seven weeks after the crucifixion. It was here, in this upper room, or Cenacle, that they encountered the Holy Ghost. Forty-nine days earlier, the disciples had joined Jesus in making pilgrimage to the Temple in order to commemorate Passover, which marks the liberation of the Children of Israel from the House of Bondage in

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Egypt. As retold in the Old Testament's Book of Exodus, the Hebrew children traveled through the desert for seven weeks until they reached Mount Sinai, where they experienced divine revelation and received the Holy Torah from God through Moses. This defining event is celebrated in Jewish tradition by the holiday of *Shavuot* (the sevens) and Judeans were required to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, just as they had done for Passover, on this day each year.

As the disciples gathered in the Upper Room at the end of the 49th day, they discussed how they should proceed in fulfilling Christ's mission on earth. Some questioned his resurrection. It was on the fiftieth day, the Pentecost, that the Holy Ghost appeared to them and demonstrated God's power by causing the disciples to begin speaking in tongues, thereby making it impossible for them to continue spreading doubt about Christ's divinity. The scene was reminiscent of the Tower of Babel story recounted in the Book of Genesis.

As I lay there, I began to wonder if I would ever genuinely experience this same feeling that I had witnessed at the Upper Room Church. A feeling that would direct me to turn my life over to Jesus Christ. As it turned out, God was lining things up in such a way that I would soon have my answer. But, at this point, I had no inkling, lying there, that what was about to happen was so spiritually powerful that it would soon drive me down to my knees and lift my spirit up towards the heavens. No one could have predicted what was about to happen. No one, with the possible exception of one person. Pastor David Wilkerson.

In addition to the Upper Room Church, I had also accompanied Sandra to the Times Square Church in mid-town Manhattan where Pastor Wilkerson held forth. His incessant words of warning were so dire and so disastrous that I was unwilling to receive them or believe them. I was blinded to the truth of his message by my own distaste for his apocalyptic message.

Pastor Wilkerson was a prolific writer who had penned countless books including a best-seller, "The Cross and the

Switchblade.” His book had been adapted into a major motion picture back in 1970 starring Pat Boone and Erik Estrada. Wilkerson had insinuated his church into the very heart of Times Square which, in those days, was overrun with porno movie houses, drug addicts, prostitutes and the city’s destitute and homeless. It was to this element of society that Pastor Wilkerson sought to spread his message of salvation through Christ.

I had listened to Pastor Wilkerson explain how God had placed a message into his heart which he was able to interpret in order to understand its prophetic meaning. He claimed to be able to see into the future and to discern coming events. What he foresaw did not sit well with me at all. I was at the height of my Wall Street career, positioned in the middle of what turned out to be the turn of the century Dot.com bubble. I was an up and coming Wall Street broker and not open to messages of doom and gloom that conflicted with the rosy retirement scenarios I was painting for my investor clients.

Specifically, Pastor Wilkerson was predicting that at the height of a euphoric and bullish time of prosperity, fires would consume Wall Street and parts of lower Manhattan. Many people in the financial industry, he foresaw, would fall or jump out of buildings in terror.

I found Paster Wilkerson’s predictions so disturbing that I was driven to tell Sandra that I no longer wished to attend his services. His was not the type of uplifting and inspiring message I had come to expect from a clergyman. Sandra and I argued about this, but I had made a commitment and continued to attend, despite my misgivings. While I was internally furious over Pastor Wilkerson’s prediction of doom for New York City, I found that I couldn’t help myself. I retained a morbid curiosity, much like someone rubbernecking at the scene of a highway accident. I simply wasn’t bold enough in my own spiritual development to contradict or confront this cataclysmic clergyman.

A few days before, Sandra had given me one of Wilkerson’s books as a gift. Written in 1998, *God’s Plan to Protect His Peo-*

*ple in the Coming Depression* (David Wilkerson Publications. ISBN 978-0883686164.) recounts the Pastor's vision regarding the future of the US economy. He depicts it as marked by "worldwide recession caused by economic confusion and a persecution madness against truly Spirit-filled Christians who love Jesus Christ."

I could not understand why my beautiful girlfriend was trying to depress me with this type of stuff by getting me to read a book about a coming economic depression. It all seemed so weird to me, but yet I did not turn and run. My love for Sandra was powerful and served to keep me by her side. I regarded her in the same way as Micah, in his messianic message, spoke of the "daughter of Jerusalem;" a place he identifies as "the tower of the flock."

As these thoughts of Torah, of towers, and of terror raced through my mind, I realized it was time to get up and face the day. A day that would turn out to be like no other before or since. A day, that before it ended, would see me wishing to God that I had listened and obeyed Pastor Wilkerson. What happened next, on that cloudless crisp fall day, was the unthinkable. His apocalyptic vision came to pass before my eyes!

I flipped on the little TV in the bathroom to catch the overnight market reports and immediately saw the news accounts of smoke coming from North Tower of the World Trade Center. Unbeknownst to all, Mohammed Atta and a group of radical Islamic terrorist hijackers aboard American Airlines flight 11 had intentionally crashed the plane into floors 93-99 of the North Tower, killing everybody on board, and hundreds inside the building including several good friends and colleagues of mine. At this early point in the disaster, news accounts were slow to speculate, and reporters were putting out a less alarming narrative suggesting that a small commuter plane might have been off course and crashed in to the tower by accident.

I decided to get to work quickly to inquire if others had more information about what was going on. As I hit the street on foot to my office on Sixth Avenue and 54th Street, I could hear in the

distance sirens coming from every conceivable direction creating a cacophony of shrill noise. Things were beginning to turn precariously close to Pastor Wilkerson's ominous vision. I had never heard so many sirens wailing at once in New York City, and never felt such a sickening sinking feeling in my gut.

I arrived to my building as the blare of emergency vehicles racing to the North World Trade Center Tower grew more incessant with each second. I got up to my office and nobody was working; everyone was either looking out their window to the downtown Tower on fire or watching simultaneous TV broadcasts of the minute-by-minute events of this epic tragedy unfolding before their eyes. A tragedy beyond words that had now set into motion events that would collide with and forever change our nation's direction irrevocably.

Then the second United Airlines plane, Flight 175, hit at 9:03 A.M. into floors 75-85 of the South Tower. The exploding fireball we saw before our eyes was so shocking and shattering that it filled the moment with complete silence — except for muffled gasps and plaintive shrieks of disbelief and horror. Without even thinking or knowing what I was saying, I mumbled: “Dear God. This looks like Jihad on America.”

People looked at me wild-eyed as if to say: “What the hell are you saying?” I felt nauseous and my head went a bit dizzy watching the conflagration roar in a massive cloud of black smoke and orange flame billowing from the two “Towering Twinfernos.” The scene before my eyes was the manifestation of the very apocalyptic image of death and darkness about which Pastor Wilkerson had preached.

My mind raced as I recalled with horror the many friends and colleagues who worked at one of the WTC towers. These included my close college buddy and fraternity brother, Cesar Augusto Murillo, who tragically perished that day (*see Chapter Four*).

In that moment, I dropped to my knees and started to recite the Lord's Prayer. With my knees hitting floor and my arms raised, it was the first time I felt all earthly power and sense of

control leave me completely. I was under the control of a spirit that I understood was God animating my body. I wasn't myself anymore. But who was I?

In that single moment of epiphany, with me on my knees with arms raised, I experienced what is known as an out-of-body experience. I felt as though I was looking down at myself, kneeling there, overcome with powerlessness over what would happen next. The Towers had been burning now for almost an hour, and the intensity of the flame and black smoke grew to blot out the entire blue sky. The ensuing darkness was of biblical proportions. It was then we began to hear live reports of people choosing to jump to their deaths from 100 stories up rather than be incinerated by 1,000 degree flames and suffocating black toxic smoke. This news was shattering. I was filled with rage, hostility, sadness and sorrow, the likes of which I've never felt before or since. Strangely, my thoughts turned to the Holocaust. I was starting to comprehend what it meant for six million Jews, including one and a half million children, to have their lives extinguished by pure evil. That day, which later became known as 9/11, changed me and drove me to become a believer.

While witnessing pure evil on a massive scale, as in the case of the Holocaust and the attacks of 9/11, can often cause people to abandon their faith in God, in my case, the effect was the opposite. I was changed by the horror before my eyes. But I was driven closer, not further from God.

My heart and soul changed that day as well. I received God in my spirit, and honored Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of my life. I understood correctly that Holy War had been declared on Western Civilization, on Christianity, on Judaism, on America and on Israel by radical Islamic terrorists. Even if others were still living naïvely with their heads in the sand, I was seeing things clearly and in sharp focus, perhaps for the first time in my life.

The Jihadists were at war with us, even if some refused to acknowledge it. I realized at that moment that I could no longer

be a passive participant sitting idly on sidelines of this battle. It was time to step up to the plate and get involved. Starting at that moment, I began to feel a strong encompassing allegiance to Israel. It was and remains based on the common Judeo-Christian ethical bedrock into which the foundation of our American republic as well as the State of Israel are both strongly founded.

We watched with gaping mouths and crimson eyes in mute horror as the buildings started to buckle and the South Tower collapsed at 9:59 am, less than 1 hour after being hit. This was followed by the collapse of the North Tower at 10:28 am. This was where some of my closest childhood friends were working. I watched dumbstruck as the building, and my childhood memories, imploded and as my friends were crushed into rubble before my eyes. The structure cascaded downward in a deadly pancaking motion, forming a twisted pile of burning debris, smoke and throwing up a dust cloud the likes of which could only be imagined coming straight out of the pit of hell.

It was soon made clear that the radical Islamic Jihadists of Al Qaeda, with Osama Bin Laden as its master architect, pulled this off. Soon news reports depicted in sickening clarity how Al Qaeda supporters in Gaza were dancing in the streets, handing candy to children, and celebrating over the death and destruction of nearly 3,000 lives.

The tragic events of 9/11 changed many lives irrevocably, and, as I said, mine was among them. I realized through my shock, my horror, my sadness and anger, that I was no longer living for myself, but that God had a specific plan and purpose for my life. I understood that I was being called into a higher service for Him, and I turned my life over in obedience to Jesus Christ — willingly and out of a sense of love and devotion. I was determined to allow His purposes to drive my life forward in whatever direction I was destined to go. I promised myself, and later to Sandra, that I would serve Him in whatever capacity He wished to call me. I would allow Him to use my life as a living sacrifice.

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I soon learned, however, that His timing doesn't necessarily allow for such service to begin instantly. It takes time to prepare a person for such an undertaking. It takes time for a follower to grow into the person He needs you to be. Often, this preparation and refinement can take years in order to shape and to mold a person for such service. I realized that I needed to be patient and that was okay. All I knew at this point — as I stood amidst the death and devastation around me— was that I was now at Ground Zero. The Ground Zero of my life. Simply put, I was now His and He was now mine. I knew for whom I was living and to whom I now belonged.

Over the coming months and years, the components of the Zionist I was to become began to form inside of me as my interest in Israel grew. I began developing a kinship with a nation that confronts the evil face of terrorism constantly. In Israel, I soon learned, every day is September the 11th.

Yes, my path to becoming a serious Zionist began that day and led me on what you might call a “Godyssey” of discovery over the ensuing two decades. It is for the purpose of chronicling that amazing adventure that I have written this book and it is the reason that I now invite you to look back and share that road with me on my Gentile's Journey to Zionism.

## Chapter Two

### Less Than Zero

“Anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days.”

— *Flannery O'Connor*



he stork delivered 326,626 babies on November 17, 1967. Two of them, my twin sister and me, were dropped off eight weeks ahead of schedule on the living room couch of my parents' home in the Dolphin Green development of Port Washington, Long Island.

It was surmised that our early debut was triggered by a fender-bender earlier on that foul weather day that saw my slightly tipsy father, William Callahan III, behind the wheel during a minor scrape that sent my mother, Christina, into premature labor.

That davenport delivery, I understand, was a chaotic affair. When it was apparent that my mother would not make it to the hospital in time, an inebriated EMT was dispatched to our home. Despite the fact that the medic was half-tanked, he managed to direct the proceedings — asking my father to boil water to steril-

ize the instruments and instructing him on how to use his own shoelaces to tie off the umbilical cords. I emerged first with my twin sister following close behind. We both weighed in at about three pounds but, as was often the case with preemies in those pre-NICU days, our birth weights both soon dropped to about one and a half pounds. We were quickly transported to the hospital maternity ward, where, because of my underdeveloped lungs, I was placed on a ventilator and struggled as I fought for my life.

The attending physician at the hospital told my parents that my survival was in jeopardy. As was the case with many such premature multiple births in those days, my parents were advised to be ready to go home with only a single baby. Evidently there was a divine force at work that day and I pulled through. This made me something of a “miracle baby” and, as such, the tale of my anguished entry into this world was often repeated during my childhood. The long-term result was that I grew into an advocate for the underdog, the runt of the litter, and the proverbial “little guy.”

Both my twin sister and I were named after our parents at the dual christening that soon followed. This provided my father with something he had devoutly desired, a namesake. Hence, I became William F. Callahan, IV. But, due to the trauma of my birth, I got off to a rather shaky start. My lungs were impaired and weakened resulting in frequent childhood bouts of pneumonia. My father, in his inimitably inappropriate way, would cruelly chide me whenever I did something wrong, with: “Part of your brain must have died when you were born.”

Little Christina and I joined the Callahan family just 11 months after the birth of our older sister, Siobhan (*pron.: sheh•VON*). The three of us were slyly dubbed “Irish Triplets” by our largely Irish-Catholic surrounding community. Siobhan, teased mercilessly as a child for her odd Gaelic name, became the more mature and spiritually-grounded of our trio. She has retained those admirable characteristics to this day and has served as my touchstone and my compass throughout my life.

We lived in Port Washington for the first two years of my life, in the shadow of the well-known **Louie's Oyster Bar & Grill** on Main Street along Manhasset Bay. The waterfront "Surf 'n Turf" restaurant was the shooting site for a scene in the 2010 hit comedy "**Meet The Fockers.**" In it, the Robert DeNiro character learns from a neighbor that his missing cat, Mr. Jinx, has returned home. I would often return home as well. A visit to the old neighborhood over the years always included a stop for a bite at **Louie's.**

Although none of us were particularly aware of it at the time, my birth fell between two highly significant events involving Israel. Events that would shape the future of not only the young nation-state of the Jewish people, but also my own approaching destiny. Five months prior to my birth, in June 1967, Israel was forced to defend itself against a combined attack by Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The conflict became known as the Six-Day War, a reference to the creation of the world as told in the Book of Genesis. The outcome saw Israel emerge victorious and in control of large expanses of previously Arab-held lands. Most significant was the holy city of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Jewish biblical kingdom and site of the first and second temples. On June 7, 1967, for the first time in two millennia, Jerusalem was unified under the sovereignty of the Jewish people, fulfilling the heartfelt dreams and prophecies of generations of Jews dispersed throughout the world.

Israel's decisive and, some would say, miraculous victory raised hopes that a resolution of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors would soon be at hand. Those hopes were dashed, however, three months before my birth, at a summit meeting of Arab League leaders held in Khartoum, Sudan. In response to, and in defiance of, the West's efforts to forge a permanent postwar peace agreement, the leaders drafted and passed the notorious Khartoum Resolution, also known as "The Three No's." It declared there will be NO negotiation with Israel, there

will be NO peace with Israel, and there will be NO recognition of Israel's right to exist.

This intransigence and unwillingness to work towards a peaceful resolution marked the Arab nations' position for many years to follow. It also led to a major move by the United Nations.

Five days after my birth, the U.N. Security Council passed S.C. Resolution 242. Introduced by the British, the resolution sought to modify the outcome of the Six-Day War. It described Israel's acquisition of territory won by war as "inadmissible" and called for the need to arrive at a "just and lasting peace." To arrive at this "just and lasting peace," the resolution called for Israel to withdraw from territories occupied in the recent conflict. It further called upon all parties to respect the "sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence" of the others. It upheld the right of all the nations involved to live in peace "within secure and recognized boundaries."

Israel responded by accepting the resolution's promotion of a just and lasting peace and expressed its willingness to seek agreements with each Arab state to withdraw from the territories in question. Not surprisingly, all the Arab states initially rejected the resolution. Some Arab countries, like Egypt and Jordan, would accept Resolution 242 years later—a move that led to lasting peace agreements. I am saddened to report, however, that the key objective of Resolution 242—the acceptance of Israel by the entire Arab world as the legitimate nation-state of the Jewish people—has yet to be fulfilled over the course of both my and the resolution's fifty-two year lifespan.

Although I was born into this time of turbulent Middle East turmoil, the situation in Israel was the furthest thing from the minds of our family members. Unlike my sister, Siobhan, who was developing intellectually, I tended toward less cerebral pursuits. Perhaps due to the trauma of my birth, I grew to be pugnacious and often combative. I went out for the wrestling team at school and did well, despite my underdog status. As our family's

fortunes rose, we soon moved into the upscale area known as Morgan's Island (as in J.P. Morgan), a swank bedroom community located in Glen Cove, Long Island.

For reasons that I will describe later, my parents separated, and later divorced, when I was five. My mother's father, S. Heagan Bayles, had served as my mentor since before the divorce, but after my father's departure, he grew into an even stronger force in my young life. "Pate" Heagan, as I called him, was a larger-than-life figure who had attained enormous success in the burgeoning post-WWII advertising industry.

Not exactly the boozing, womanizing adman, Don Draper, as depicted in the **Mad Men** TV series, Grandpa Heagan was more akin to the old school character, Bert Cooper, portrayed by Robert Morse on the same series. Samuel Bayles, son of a Jewish mother whose family had fled Germany to escape antisemitic persecution, and who had been raised as an Episcopalian, adopted the slightly pretentious moniker, Heagan Bayles after graduating from Dartmouth. Upon completion of his military service during World War II, Heagan joined one of the nation's top New York advertising agencies, Ruthrauff & Ryan, where he soon rose to the rank of Vice President. It was there that he met the man who would become known as the "Father of Modern Advertising," David Ogilvy. In his 1997 memoir, Ogilvy identifies my grandfather as his "personal mentor."

In 1946, sensing the global opportunities opening up thanks to the postwar economic boom, Heagan and three of his colleagues, founded Sullivan Stauffer Colwell and Bayles which, after acquiring another firm, became known as SSC&B-Lintas, one of Madison Avenue's major players for decades.

In 1960, my grandfather purchased a celebrated 5-acre estate at the tip of Long Island's Gold Coast. The Sands Point mansion on Middle Neck Road was built by 19th century railroad titan, E.H. Harriman for his daughter, Mary, a founder of the Junior League. He dubbed it Beacon Towers.

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The grounds encompass Execution Rocks, a tiny island that is home to a historic lighthouse built in 1849 and still functioning. According to local folklore, Execution Rocks obtained its grisly name during Colonial days because the British, who avoided public executions because they would inflame the revolutionary spirit of the American patriots, instead carried their condemned prisoners to these reefs at low tide, chain them to rings embedded in the rock, and wait for high tide to carry out the death sentence. Some say the skeletons were left on display in order to torture the minds of the newly condemned as they faced certain death.

It was reported to be the home that inspired the East Egg estate which served as the setting for F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*. It was based on this, I believe, that my grandfather, Heagan Bayles started going by S. Heagan Bayles.

Two years after the publication of *The Great Gatsby* in 1925, the estate was purchased by newspaper mogul, William Randolph Hearst as a gift for his wife who transformed it into a repository for her global art collection and re-named it Joan's Castle. Hearst sold the property in 1942 and the "castle" was demolished three years later to be replaced by the house my grandfather purchased from the Burke family in 1960.

"Pate" Heagan's expansive estate, with its panoramic view of all of Manhattan Island, stands as the venue of some of my most cherished childhood memories. I recall how my grandfather would always seek to boost my sometimes fragile self-esteem. "Billy," he would say, "I see great things in your future. I see you on a big stage when you grow up. Like in vaudeville."

"That's great, Pate Heagan," I would reply. "But I sure hope I don't lose my hair like you." At this he would laugh and remind me that grass doesn't grow on a busy street.

S. Heagan Bayles's three children each deserve to have an entire book dedicated to their incredible lives, but for this volume, I will focus on the life of my mother, Christina. Before do-

ing so, however, let me say a few words about her two older siblings.

My Aunt Elizabeth Wheeler was the oldest and most strait-laced of the trio. I always knew her as “Aunt Boot” due to her fondness for fine feminine footwear. She literally married the boy next door, Joe Wheeler, who lived across the street from the Sands Point mansion. Hers has been a life devoted to good health and clean living—almost to the point of fanaticism. This accounts for the fact that today, both she and husband Joe lead active lives in their Sarasota community. In her early eighties, Aunt Mink may still be seen running in marathons carrying her trusty atomizer bottle around her neck.

Her younger brother, my Uncle Heagan, was nicknamed “Uncle Mink” within the family. This moniker was earned, according to my mother, because of Heagan’s habit of donning his mother’s mink wraps when he was a child. As an adult, Uncle Mink was known as “The Big Guy,” and this descriptor not only referred to his physical stature, but also recognized his expansive heart and gregarious personality. I remember him as a gentle giant who taught me much about life as well as the intricacies of the stock brokerage business. By my grandfather, Uncle Heagan had been instilled with an independent and entrepreneurial spirit. Known for his wit, he had a natural gift for technology and used those skills to become a successful trader with his own seat on the New York Stock Exchange. He spent the the three decades prior to his death in 2017 in a solid loving relationship with his partner, Eileen Bernstein. But prior to settling down with his “Jewish Cookie,” as he called Eileen, Uncle Heagan, in his younger days, could easily have been the template for “The Wolf of Wall Street.”

One story will illustrate the libertine lifestyle that marked my uncle’s wayward ways. I was too young to be aware of what happened at the time, but the story has been retold so often, it’s now something of a family legend. One night my father decided to invite his single future brother-in-law out for a bar crawl to

some of his favorite watering holes. As the evening wore on, my uncle discovered that my dad was an ugly and rowdy drunk. As the liquor flowed, the insults became more offensive and eventually, both men were rip-snorting drunk. We're not sure exactly what prompted it, but at some point Heagan decided he had had enough of Bill's abuse and popped him one in the kisser. Known as a "cold cock," the blow knocked my dad unconscious. He was still knocked out cold when he was discovered at our doorstep, folded into a supermarket shopping cart with his underwear stretched over his head.

My grandfather's younger daughter, my future mother, Christina, was a gifted musical protégé. She studied at Julliard and remains a virtuoso classical concert pianist to this day. Christie met her future husband while she was attending Trinity College in Washington, D.C. William Callahan, III, a law student at Trinity's Jesuit sister school on the other side of the Potomac, Georgetown University, was the son of noted publisher, William Callahan, Jr., the president of Dell Publishing, which later became Bantam Doubleday Dell. I have few memories of my paternal grandfather since he died at age 62 just before my tenth birthday. But I understand that he, like his son (my father, William III), was a functional alcoholic.

My future parents fell in love and soon married. From all outward appearances, it seemed to be perfect union; the attorney son of a publishing mogul from Greenwich, Connecticut and the talented daughter of a Madison Avenue maven from Sands Point, Long Island. But, once the reality of my father's alcoholism set in, the match made in Heaven soon began to resemble a match made by the WWF (World Wrestling Federation).

As mentioned, my father was what is known as a functional alcoholic. This meant that he was somehow able to successfully manage his professional career while abusing and destroying his private life whenever he was not "on the job." Drinking to the point of knee-walking, commode-hugging nausea. Blackouts and stupors. Incoherent verbal and physical attacks directed at my

mother, my siblings and me. I am not proud of this fact, but I am descended from a long line of abusive alcoholics. This multi-generational curse plowed through my family like a category 5 hurricane, destroying everything in its path — including my parents' idyllic love for each other and ultimately, their marriage.

My psyche still bears the emotional scars from those horrific days. Images etched in pain and blood of my struggling mother being slapped and knocked to the ground. Visions punctuated with vile threats and depraved obscene behavior. These nightly horror shows succeeded in depriving me of what a child needs most at that age: a sense of security and safety. Instead of looking to my father as a source of protection, I instead grew to fear, and eventually despise him.

Naturally, these painful episodes resulted in a lifelong thirst for normalcy, stability, and a sense of belonging. The need to be loved and to feel affirmation and acceptance were driving forces in my childhood. My arrested emotional development took its toll on my physical as well as on my mental health. As mentioned, I struggled often with illness, coming down twice with pneumonia. Even though, prior to the separation, my dad was still living with us, I nevertheless felt fatherless. His evenings were most often spent playing backgammon and liar's poker with his drinking buddies at his favorite haunts and hangouts.

Today, my father would be viewed as something of Trumpian figure. A self-aggrandizing, narcissistic bully who boasted constantly about being a "winner." But, as is the case with such men, he actually did wind up winning rather often. When I was little, I watched as he won at Liar's Poker, won at Backgammon, and later how he won in court. But, in the end, I watched my father lose the most important things in life—more important than money and fame—the loss of his family and the love of his spouse and children.

I watched him lose it all. His family, his wealth, and finally, his self-respect.

William F. Callahan III's personality in those days can perhaps best be summed up by a description attributed to his only brother, Richard: "Bill is meaner than a junkyard dog!"

My childhood memories of my mother stand in stark contrast to those of my father. Unlike him, she did strive to set an example of faithfulness and spiritual morality. An example that I have tried to emulate over the course of my life. Despite the abuse she was forced to endure, my mother always showed a willingness to show forgiveness and constantly attempted to "work things out." Until finally she just couldn't.

It wasn't the physical or the verbal abuse that ultimately broke the back of my parents' marriage. It was my father's unfaithfulness. His philandering coupled with his complete unwillingness to undergo any sort of counseling or therapy left my mother with no choice but to call it quits.

My sister Christina and I were five and our older sister, Siobhan, was six when our parents' marriage ended. This cast my mother in the unenviable role of a single mother of three small children. Despite the fact that both of my grandparents were quite wealthy, my mother struggled financially after the divorce. She found she needed to somehow supplement the limited alimony payments and sporadic support checks she would receive from my father. She returned to school to earn a Master's Degree in music education, enabling her to earn money by working as a piano teacher. My mother relied on her often transient friends to provide child care while she was working. While posing as trustworthy custodians, these people would often betray that trust and subject my sisters and me to more nightmare scenarios of abuse and neglect.

This new reality only served to compound my nascent feelings of insecurity, helplessness, and instability. Over time, these anxieties gave way to a deep sense of anger and bitterness brought on by our exposure to adults who used their power to prey upon the vulnerable and defenseless in this world. These emotions forged a stark sense of morality in my heart. Right ver-

sus wrong; good versus evil. It was a binary view. All black or white with no shades of gray. My well-honed sense of moral clarity caused me to appear older than my years. Although some thought me overly-precocious, I believed that I was viewing the world—and the evil people in it—just as they are. Not as I might wish they were.

Our fatherless family continued to live in the affluent enclave known as Morgan's Island for as long as it was financially feasible to do so. It was a typical North Shore upscale suburb where we resided amidst a mixture of Jewish and Christian families. As I grew older, I would gravitate to the other "latchkey kids" in the neighborhood being raised by single mothers. A group of such broken home siblings lived next door, the Goldbergs. They were the first Jewish people I got to know and I recall feeling a sense of sympathy for them because, like us, they had a father who had abandoned them, leaving behind a single mother to raise his children.

By 1978, when my twin sister Christina and I were 10, my mother could no longer afford to live in the Morgan's Island home and moved us to another Glen Cove address on Buckeye Road. While still a very suitable residence, it represented a step down for our family in the social pecking order. At this point, my father had moved to Boston and so, in order to afford him his court-ordered visitation rights, it was necessary for me and my sisters to travel there every month or so. My mother would pack us off to LaGuardia on Friday after school where we would board an Eastern Airlines shuttle flight to Boston's Logan International. My father would pick us up and the criticisms would begin immediately in the car ride back to his apartment.

"When is your mother going to get you a decent haircut?" he would berate both me and my mother in a single breath. Several times he took me straight to the barbershop where he ordered a military-style buzz cut for me. In the evenings, after a few cocktails, my father would leave the three of us (aged 9, 9, and 10)

unsupervised as he took off for a night of carousing with Dar, his home-wrecker girlfriend.

Although the man regarded himself as a winner, he was an utter loser and failure as a father. He tried to be a Dad, but simply did not have the skills to show us anything but his scorn and sarcasm. He violated every basic rule of parenthood including the sacred commandment: "Thou shalt not show favoritism to one child over another" as taught in the story of Jacob and Joseph in the Book of Genesis. As recounted in the next chapter, I attended the prestigious Friends Academy in New York thanks to my father agreeing to subsidize the tuition costs. He did not provide similar private school funding for either of my sisters. The reason being that I was his namesake and they were not. It was always all about him.

Having escaped from a destructive and oppressive marriage to an abusive alcoholic, my mother embarked on a liberating journey of spiritual enlightenment that would see her searching, growing, and blossoming. Not surprisingly, given the times, what bloomed was a full-blown "flower child." Like Alice in Wonderland, her quest for her spiritual identity led her down some rather precarious rabbit holes. She trod some mighty peculiar pathways en route to her own ultimate acceptance of Jesus Christ as her personal savior.

The first stop along her spiritual "Godyssey" was a flirtation with an obscure Eastern religious movement known as Sai Babaism. Sai Baba of Shirdi was the name of an East Indian guru and spiritual master who lived in the early 20th century. He was regarded by his followers as a saint or "fakir" who preached the importance of "realization of the self" and criticized "love towards perishable things"

As a bona fide 1970s hippie musician, my mother embraced the counter-culture and the numerous mystical and esoteric philosophies that were so much in vogue. The grueling ordeal of her marriage, marked by acute physical and emotional abuse, plus her own liberal use of marijuana and alcohol, had an impact

on her thinking and judgement during those years—years filled with the pungent aroma of patchouli oil and incense, with golden calf idols, and with hours of transcendental meditation.

My mother soundly rejected the “Fire & Brimstone” doctrines of classical Christianity that she had been brought up on. It was all rooted in shame, guilt, condemnation and fear, she loudly maintained. She opted instead for the more enlightened concepts of grace and love being touted by Carly Simon, Joni Mitchell, Arlo Guthrie and other opinion influencers of the day. Lured by the seemingly peaceful serenity offered by yogis, gurus, and mystical prophets like Baba Ram Das, Timothy Leary, and Carlos Castaneda, my mother’s next stop along this wild ride towards spiritual fulfillment, took her in the direction of an established religious denomination born in central Asia.

The Baha’i Faith teaches the worthiness of all the world’s religions and stresses the unity of all people. It was established by Baha’u’llah in 1863 in what was then Persia and advanced by his successor, Abdu’l-Baha. The religion has faced persecution from Muslims since its inception. There are today about eight million Baha’i adherents spread throughout the world. I recall meeting many Persians, actually persecuted Iranian Baha’i, during this period. They had fled Iran after being branded as infidels by the ruling Islamic regime and had relocated in places like Great Neck and King’s Point. I recall hearing stories of how the Baha’i were being hunted down, tortured and killed by the intolerant Iranian mullahs, simply because their beliefs did not align with the Quran and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed.

What stands out in my memory is how kind and humble these people were. They revered my mother and offered her great affection and unconditional love. These were the exact feelings she had hungered and yearned for after emerging from the confines of her failed marriage.

One might assume that my mother’s search for spiritual solace and truth might have resulted in her becoming something less than a diligent mother. This, I’m happy to state, was not the

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case. Looking back, I today actually value and cherish her mission because it exposed all three of us to a wide swath of humanity and provided us with a respect and a heartfelt love for all peoples regardless of faith, race, or sexual orientation.

Thanks to my mother's providing us with such diverse exposure, my horizons were broadened and I became convinced that all human beings are children of a most high God, the creator of the universe, and yes, the creator of you and me. We are all made in His likeness and given the freedom to fulfill His plans and purposes. I started to understand that once we submit ourselves in humility and love to His ways, we are able to fulfill our personal destinies and come to live life to its fullest potential

I came to realize, at a surprisingly early age, that most of what is wrong with religion is due to man's distortion and manipulation of it for his own ends. I began to comprehend the value of submitting simply to the word of God, in obedience and gratitude for the life given to each one of us.

Reflecting on those years of trauma, tragedy and turmoil, it has become increasingly clear that my mother truly was an angel of compassion, love, kindness and humility in a world beset by narcissism, arrogance and indulgence. I am the product of her diverse and eclectic parenting methods and I know that I am the better because of them. She was there to embrace me and welcome me home with love and forgiveness after I had suffered the consequences of a bad decision, or after I had squandered my blessings by making poor choices.

Some might question her unorthodox methods of child-rearing, yet my mother's quiet "lead by example" approach—as opposed to the threats and hypocrisy we observed in our father—were successful in the case of all three of her children. We all ultimately came home and submitted our lives to love and obedience to Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the light.

The next stop on my mother's spiritual journey would lead her to a place that would loom greatly in my later life. A place called Israel.