

T H E GEORGETOWN CYPHER

Kit McKittrick

A Reader's Guide

A Conversation with Kit McKittrick

Short Run Publishing Reader's Circle: How did the idea for *The Georgetown Cypher* originate?

Kit McKittrick: I was recuperating from surgery and was told that I couldn't work. I am "A" type personality. I needed something to do but what? I started thinking about writing a memoir. At the time, I was living in Rye, NH. I began writing from a stream of consciousness. This information came to me in a very different format and subject matter than I was used to which was writing namely business plans or technical material which had a structure, logical, direct with minimal sales hype. I rarely applied significant elaboration or eloquent wording. This story came to me in a very complicated format. It was as if it was originally told in some other language and then somehow translated in my mind to understand it. It did not flow at all so the major problem I have faced was the re-write. The reason I bring up Rye, NH was that during the same period that I am writing about Mary Magdalene and other Christian Characters, Dan Brown had finished his Da Vinci Code in Exeter, NH., just a few miles away. I went to his book signing at the River Book Store in Exeter. I could not believe the subject matter he was discussing. It started out in the same direction yet my emphasis focuses on the lost art of meditation and how that relates to the Christian Story surrounding Jesus' life..

SRPRC: How long did it take you to write this book, and what special research was involved?

Kit McKittrick: The time period to jot it down was a relatively short 3 or 4 months but the re-write has taken years. I have grown to appreciate John Irving's remark regarding how much stamina and time it takes to re write your manuscript. I have worked to craft the words into my author's voice and that has taken 9 years to complete. My research is still an on going work in progress as there are more discoveries, interpretations and actual history that is constantly being introduced.

SRPRC: Why are you drawn to historical fiction?

Kit McKittrick: The idea of identifying real historical people and places and providing alternate possibilities is fun for me to explore but what makes the exercise fascinating is when a fictional scenario could have actually happened or that the recorded history on a subject is as much a fabrication as the fictional version.

SRPRC: How do you strike a balance between history and fiction? Do you think accuracy is a primary obligation for historical fiction authors?

Kit McKittrick: For me, the balance between fact and fiction in history is a knife blade dance. I try to portray the historical time periods and technology as accurately as possible. I then try to find topics that are controversial and sometimes comparable to present day. The most important aspects of my work in fiction is to cause independent thought where the reader can take a spark of an idea and run with it to do his or her own research or just enjoy the novel as entertainment.

SRPRC: How hard was it to write a novel based on a real people?

Kit McKittrick: In doing research, I try to find out unique facts about a person or place. I want to look into a pattern or behavior that the historical person exhibited which allows me some flexibility to shape plausible scenarios based on what is known about that person. In dealing with religious or spiritual subjects there is always room for interpretation and quite often there will be many points of view as to how events unfolded. For *The Georgetown Cypher*, I found myself drawn to Christianity's unsung

characters and their impact in the aftermath of the crucifixion; the upheaval that main stream Christianity does not dwell on. I also needed to ask why and who carried this alternative message on for almost 300 years of Christianity prior to The Council of Nicaea. The most difficult psychological hurdle for me was to incorporate my personal experience into the character of Ian MacAlester.

SHPRC: *THE GEORGETOWN CYPHER* is told in the both the third person and the first person. Why did you decide to use both points of view?

Kit McKittrick: I used the point of views as buffering devices. Ian is writing a fiction story that is autobiographical of some of his exploits in life and Ian's character is loosely autobiographical of me. My first drafts were in the first person but the emotionality that I experienced really stiffened up my writing. I can't tell you how many times I edited the book to make it smoother, less choppy and not so awkward. I had to go to the third person to get a little more distance from Ian and even then I relived emotions that I thought were long since gone from my experience.

SRPRC: What do you hope readers take away from your work?

Kit McKittrick: First, I want my reader to take away the knowledge that meditation has played one of the most important roles in shaping all of the world's major religions and perhaps the reader could entertain the possibility of having meditation become part of their individual lives. Modern Science has proven a great many benefits derived from its practice and there are insights that an individual can experience that can be life changing. Meditation should not carry the negative stigma associated with its practice. Second, each person has his or her own Life Cypher. If they examine their life's milestones and the associated ripple effects, it may lead to a greater personal awareness.

SRPRC: What is your latest project?

Kit McKittrick: I am currently working on the second book of the Mediation Manuscript Trilogy. In it, I will disclose more of their contents and how they relate to every individual's unique experience and why they were stolen in 1998 from the University of Cairo. In addition, Otto Grumman, a character in the book will explain what he meant when he said "good and evil is passé." Ian and Xavier will continue to search for the remaining manuscripts with revelations of who had them and who has them, now.

Questions for Discussion

1. This novel tells a story that hints at past lives. Do you think there is such a possibility?

2. *There is no debate that Christianity experienced an evolution from the time after the crucifixion into what mainstream Christian Religions are today. The first ecumenical council (Council of Nicaea) was not convened until 325 AD. That is a lot of time for actual facts to get distorted.*

Why do you think it took so long?

3. The Roman Emperor Constantine had an Ethiopian wife that was rumored to have killed her entire village in her ambitious pursuit of power. She was said to have made sure that all references to reincarnation were taken out of the New Testament. Do you think there was a competing story that so scared Constantine's wife?

4. Ian was blessed or cursed by having a number of visions. Ian eventually achieved a vision on his own. It was very real. Would you like to experience such a vision?

5. The novel has some recurring themes in it and Ian tries to learn from them. Do you have recurring themes in your life?

6. The True Believers sect was one of the first formed after Jesus death. Many Jews converted. Could there have been other motives behind the damning of the entire Jewish population?

7. Ian and Raven had a deep love connection that was different than most. There was no jealousy, no fear, no possessiveness and no lust yet it physically hurt when they were apart. Have you ever experienced anything like that?

8. The major contributor to Christianity's mainstream message was Saul of Tarsus whose vision of Jesus converted him in the apostle known as Paul. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam was said to have been visited by the Archangel Gabriel in visions over a twenty three year period. Jesus in his vision of the dove when he was being baptized by John said that was when the Holy Spirit came into him. Many people have had visions. If you could, would you be one of them?

9. Which of the characters in this novel were your favorites? Which did you dislike the most?