

THE SANCTIFIED LIFE



A HANDBOOK FOR LIVING LIFE IN GOD

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“The aim and purpose of human life is the unitive knowledge of God.”

-- Aldous Huxley

“A life is either all spiritual, or not spiritual at all.”

--Thomas Merton, “Thoughts in Solitude”

INTRODUCTION

Sanctify -fied, -fying. 1. To make Holy or sacred; to consecrate. 2. To purify or free from sin.

It is the objective of this little book to bring to light the various qualities one committed to the Sanctified Life should endeavor to possess in facilitating the understanding they seek, as well as to examine the nature and degree of that commitment. It claims no greater purpose than to serve as a “handbook” of sorts—a field guide, something to tuck away in a purse or coat pocket. It pretends to nothing more. The intent is not to present a theological or metaphysical argument, to proselytize or preach, or to unveil any new or radical spiritual revelations or doctrines. It seeks only to define, within its limited framework, a particular way of life. Those called to this life will, hopefully, find it of some value.

It should be noted that a certain degree of familiarity with the subject matter is assumed. One called to the Life recognizes the Voice. However, for those desiring exposition on some points, a reading list has been included to facilitate the search for any answers absent here.

The Sanctified Life is about *union*—union with God, the Tao, Brahman, the Absolute. Whatever the name, it is the One, the common ground of all great spiritual traditions, the Source, and it can be known. And that knowledge comes through a direct experience of it. Call it Enlightenment, Satori, Moksha, the Awakening, Rapture, call it whatever you like. It smells just as sweet.

Those who are drawn to this life hold in their hearts, in their minds and souls, these simple truths: that God is all, and all is God—that all sin (however that concept is filtered through the lenses of the various spiritual traditions) is the self-will. And that only at such time that we completely surrender our individual wills to God, and allow God’s will alone to define and direct us—our lives, our very being in its totality—can the unitive knowledge and understanding we seek be made known to us. How one might go about accomplishing this is what concerns these pages.

Those endeavoring to live the Sanctified Life are students of all faiths and philosophies, of all religious cultures, of all that is truly spiritual, good, and of God. They are not Black, they are not White, they are not Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Polynesian, Inuit, or Aborigine. They are not Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Jain, Shinto, Sikh, or *any-thing* else. They are all of these and none of these. They wave no flag, sing no anthem, recognize no borders. They travel in the realm of the spirit and live by its laws, working tirelessly, endlessly, to realize its truth on earth. They have transcended the excess baggage and trappings, the burdens we labor under when we are *of* this world as well as in it, and stopped posing as this or that. They simply *are*.

I. REVERSING THE POLARITY

Premise: God is all, and all is God and this, in fact, is reality. Consequently, anything that claims to be other than or contrary to God, must be unreal. To accept this premise, then, is to accept one of its unavoidable corollaries: the illusory nature of our individuality (i.e. what we define as our individuality, and how it is subsequently perceived), the innate falsity of our “identity”—the “I”, the “me”, the “mine”, the fuel which powers the self-will and sets up the individual against, and in opposition to, anything other than itself. In other words, in opposition to God.

This concept would, quite understandably, represent to most, particularly from the Occidental point of view, a form of psychological suicide. It would be seen as the death of who and what we believe ourselves to be. When the personality is all we know, the personality rules. Sensations, physical and emotional, all relate directly and specifically to it. We observe, analyze, and conclude as that entity. Everything is personal, and that person is the center of everything.

That there could be something other than our individual persona that defines us is hard to comprehend, particularly without some direct experience of it. That what actually defines us is God, immanent in our souls—within as well as without—is harder still to comprehend beyond the strictly theoretical. Yet that fundamental truth, while differing to a certain extent as to nature and degree, is the foundation of both the Eastern and Western traditions of intuitive spiritual insight (mysticism).

To better understand this, it helps to trace briefly the course of our mental development as human beings from the time of birth through our relative maturity—to visualize it as an unfolding process.

Taking ourselves back to infancy, we find there that all stimuli, the totality of what we gather through the senses, register simply as non-biased impressions, perceived as favorable or unfavorable. A thing is either pleasant or it is unpleasant. Any suggestion of good or bad, right or wrong is non-existent. The mind at this stage does not yet make a distinction between itself and the source of what stimulates it. As a result, it remains uncontaminated by any subjective, personalized view. Life is experienced, sensed, rather than intellectualized. It is lived in a state of pure objective receptivity. In spiritual terms, it is the Tao at work, Atman and Brahman in union, the Absolute relating to Itself in a state of total inclusivity: the True Self in relation to the Absolute in its primordial state.

The mind, however, no less than life itself or the universe that supports it, is dynamic, not static. Inevitably, a point of reference is sought, a mental mooring of some kind. Over time we have become repositories for a staggering amount of impressions. Gradually, primitively, we begin to process these impressions into bits of information, data. Comparisons slowly form from which conclusions are drawn. This, in turn, leads to the emergence of a rudimentary system of preference and prioritizing, etc. And so, reason is born.

As this mental evolution progresses, the mind slowly becomes cognizant of itself, of its relation to the physical body and of the subsequent relation of the body to the rest of the environment. A sense of *separateness* takes possession—the observer versus the observed. We begin to relate to everything from the perspective of the “I”, in opposition to the “other-than-I”. The *ego-self* (in opposition to the True Self) is now manifest in this realm of duality. As more and more information is received and stored, this ego-self is reinforced again and again. The pure, undivided state we were born into becomes buried progressively deeper in the

subconscious, and the conscious mind, then, takes up residence almost entirely on the plane of subjectivity, effectively removed from any recollection of its original locus.

Again in spiritual terms, this process is what is known as the “Fall”: the shift from an objective, undifferentiated identification with the Godhead, with All that Is, into an exclusive, conscious identification with the subjective self separate from, and in conflict with, everything other than that self. From this point on, throughout life, the condition is fostered and buttressed by everything and everyone we come in contact with, directly or indirectly.

For some individuals, however, the memory of that once undivided state resurfaces at a certain point in their lives, and to the extent that it demands recognition and reflection. It may begin as an inkling, an unsettling mood, a vague sense of dissatisfaction or frustration, a quiet protest against a life lived solely in subjective orientation, a life lacking underlying purpose, wanting in substance. Or perhaps as just a sense of something missing, something out of place. However it manifests itself, this feeling grows in a few of these individuals until it becomes all-consuming. For those of religious or spiritual orientation, a total commitment to the spiritual life comes to be seen as the only possible course, a life that reconciles the subjective with the objective, the relative with the Absolute. A life that must be lived wholly, i.e. “Holy”.

It must be understood that the *ego-self* is a natural product of our development psychologically. It exists by design and there is nothing at all unnatural about it. If we were incapable of relating to our environment subjectively, we could not function in it. It is the coinciding obscuration of the *True Self* that occurs as a result of the now exclusive perspective of the subjective, rather, that constitutes the problem. When we conceive of ourselves as strictly ego, strictly separate and in opposition to all that is other than the ego, pursuing only the needs of that relative entity, we inadvertently conceal the True Self in its harmony and union with God, the Tao present in and flowing through us—our “Buddha Nature”—by shrouding it in ignorance.

We are “individuals” because we are intended to be. That is how we have been designed to function on the physical, material plane, but it is in comprehending the nature of our individuality, confusing relative with Absolute, that we find ourselves at cross-purpose with our true nature.

We must seek to understand, both intellectually and intuitively, that we are, in actuality and in truth, *individual parts* of a single Whole, possessing the innate ability to simultaneously relate, subjectively and objectively, to everything that is, within and without, in union with the One, with God, through the awareness and practiced mindfulness of that true condition.

It is the sole purpose of the Sanctified Life to bring us back to that state of awareness (this time consciously) and to make it possible for us to remain there forever.

A STATE OF MIND

The Sanctified Life is devoted to the illumination of the spirit, to experiencing, or seeking to experience, union with the One, union with God. To prepare for this, it is necessary to make of our lives a constant and continuous meditation. A level of contemplation must be reached where we remain perpetually focused on, in, and through God, supplanting our wills with the will of the Divine regardless of where we are, who we are with, or what we are involved in, and yet fully free and able to function in and with the world.

Innumerable books have been written on the subject of meditative techniques and the various schools and disciplines that encompass them. This has created for many some measure of confusion when attempting to select the appropriate course to follow. When considering one method or another, we need to exercise a certain amount of caution mixed with the insight of self-knowledge. The degree of complexity does not always equal the value of the results. The best path is usually the one most level, the one least cluttered, the one we feel most compelled through Divine guidance to follow.

In yoga, for example, Jnana is the way of the introspective and the scholar—seeking illumination through the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and wisdom; Bhakti is seeking illumination through the expression of love for, and complete devotion to, the Divine, for Brahman; Karma yoga strives towards illumination through action, deeds, and works, all offered in perfect humility and simplicity to God—practicing goodness for the sake of goodness without expectation of, or desire for, reward.

Similarly, in Zen Buddhism there are two main schools or sects: the Rinzai (active), with its use of the koan and mondo to bring the monk or nun to direct, spontaneous enlightenment; and the Soto (passive), which stresses gradual illumination through the discipline of seated meditation. Likewise, in Tibetan Buddhism the practice of the Dharma in every aspect of one's life, living and embodying the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples, is taught as the surest way to understanding. This particular practice has its direct correlation in Christianity with the Imitation of Christ.

Regardless of which path is ultimately settled upon, we must keep it in its proper perspective. It is only a tool, a vehicle—that ubiquitous finger always pointing at the moon. Its only purpose is to bring us to the unitive knowledge of God. The boat is not the other shore. It is by learning to control the unruly nature of the mind that we clear the way for the receptivity of the spirit—still the cacophony so the voice of God can be heard. This is what the Buddha referred to as the practice of mindfulness. In Christian mysticism it is the act of making one's entire life, in essence, a prayer—the “prayer of the heart” as described in the *Philokalia*.

To facilitate this, begin by directing unceasing efforts to keeping the mind free of attachment to any specific idea, concept, or exercise, even while actively engaged in its practice. Strive to exist solely in the moment, in God—every act, every thought, an offering *to* God—letting the past, the future, the “10,000 things” take care of themselves. Endeavor to maintain as pure a state of objectivity as possible, observe each and every thing around and within, tangible and intangible, animate and inanimate, with equal care and thoroughness, yet cling to nothing. As various thoughts, emotions, and sensations manifest themselves, examine them, trace each to its source, but allow no opinion, no prejudice, no preference to take root. As in the popular Zen analogy, they are like leaves that have fallen on the surface of a stream, acknowledge them and let them float by, undisturbed. Gradually the mind and the passions will be stilled. Distractions will cease to distract and we at last will reside alone and unencumbered in the presence of God.

This is the state of true spiritual poverty, the soul completely detached from all things material, all things other than the will and grace of God.

It is through this constant mindfulness, this endless prayer, that we eliminate the self-will and allow God's will to act unfettered—to be. And it is God's will that we and God be one. To fill the cup, however, it must first be emptied.

III. DISCIPLINE: the rule of intent

There is an almost martial quality about certain aspects of the Sanctified Life that is no more evident than in the degree of self-discipline with which we must commit ourselves to living that life. Consider the routine discipline of such things as personal hygiene; the daily obligation of chores; preparing meals; of making a living; raising a family or being a contributing, loving member of one; and so forth. We must, through mindfulness, approach them all, even the most innocuous and mundane, with a genuine enthusiasm that celebrates the joy of simple, every-day life, and yet with an unwavering sense of duty to God and all that is of God. We must approach them with an attitude of reverence, humility, and respect. God is to be experienced in all we do—and all we do, we do for God.

The specifically spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation, and the various devotional exercises that we choose to practice, these must be attended to with unwavering dedication and an unfaltering sense of purpose: we are spiritual creatures, our purpose is spirituality. Life is sacred. All things come from, and are of, the One. A sense of the sacred must be allowed to permeate every facet of our lives. Not as an act of endowment, but as one of recognition, acceptance, and commitment.

Then there is the discipline of resisting temptations, negative impulses, compulsions, destructive emotions, etc. Here, in particular, we confront a “choice”: the law of the spirit versus the law of the flesh. At times it seems akin to a battle in which we must pick sides. Very often the choice is an easy one, the alternative being unworthy of serious consideration. For example, we experience an emotion that allows the image of a violent or destructive act to become an idea in our minds. At the very same time we recognize its nature and from where it originates, which in turn precludes its becoming a reality because we have learned to understand the mechanics of the emotion—we are *in* control rather than under it. At other times we find that certain choices are dictated by a consensus of which we are willingly a part, our response then the result of what we have determined collectively, as a society, for example, to be acceptable and appropriate. In either case, discipline in this sense is not a matter of trying to do the right thing, but, conversely, of refusing to do the wrong. Truth is never compromised, only people.

But there are situations, however, when the choice is not as clear, not as easily made. Situations when the choice might appear right for one, but not for another. Situations when, outwardly, one’s choice would seem admirable, but inwardly less so. And that is because, in essence, the value or worth of any act is dependent entirely upon what has motivated it. It is the *Rule of Intent*, and those who have been called to the Sanctified Life must apply it to everything. If, for example, the primary motivating factor behind an act of charity (here used in the contemporary sense of that word) is the personal gratification or benefit to the giver and not the good it does, then the act is, as it relates spiritually to the philanthropist, of little value. As we live on that plane, so must we live by that rule. “There is no greater injury to one’s character than practicing virtue without motivation.”

Discipline is adhering to that which is truly good, truly right, without reservation, differentiation, hesitation, or ulterior motive of any kind. It is learning to distinguish between self-will and God’s will and choosing the latter. Discipline is learning to first recognize, and then comprehend, what it is that motivates us, from the inconsequential to the paramount, and then applying it as a standard of measure to everything we do. If it comes up short, we must make the necessary adjustments.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna to offer every act, every thought, every reward to God, to Brahman. This is the Sanctified Life, a life lived in and for God. This is the discipline of the soul.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

Those called to the Sanctified Life accept complete responsibility for their lives, for being here, unconditionally. In a world where shirking that responsibility has become not only tolerated, but actively promoted, we must refuse membership in the “victim culture”, and, as well, in the culture of the entitled and the privileged, i.e. those convinced of their status as exceptions, excused somehow from accountability.

We must come to understand the true nature of our existence, our place in the scheme of things. That in one form or another, we are, have been, and will always be a part of the Whole to which we all belong, each one of us without exception. It is the Universal Theme of which we are all variations, notes played in endless arrangements and infinite combinations. There truly is nothing new under the sun. If we are here, it is our purpose to be here, and we must accept that fact with boundless gratitude. We are here because it is God’s will that we should be.

We must understand that to *be* is to *participate*. “It’s not my fault!”, “I didn’t ask to be born!”, “Why is this happening to me?”, “What did I do to deserve this?”, and the like. These are common refrains among those who will not participate, like the child who stomps his feet, crosses his arms in defiance, and refuses to join in the game with his playmates.

Those called to the Sanctified Life know that by accepting life, we must accept all that comes with it. We are not here to take up space, we are not here to be entertained. We are not here to see how much we can accumulate, how much we can acquire, how many “toys” we can die with. We are not here to worship the gods of litigation. We are not here to be coddled, excused, or indulged. What we are here for is to take part fully, and it’s a mixed bag. Joy or sorrow, good or bad, we must play the cards as they are dealt and be grateful for our place at the table.

If our lives are less than we want them to be, less than we know they should be, then we must work to improve them. If we suffer hardship, let it strengthen us by opening our hearts and minds to the hardships of others. If all we have known is failure, then let us learn the lessons it has to teach—that is the purpose of failing. If we have experienced loss, we must accept it. What is lost is lost. We must learn to bear it, and value what remains. If we are knocked down, let us get up, brush off the dust, rub the bruise, and get on with it. If we have trashed our lives, so be it. Don’t wallow in the debris. Dispose of it and rebuild.

Make living an art, treat it as a challenge, see it as friend, as teacher, as undeniable—as wondrous. Experience fully everything it offers, both good and bad, uncomplaining. Take complete responsibility for participating. Live by the law of the spirit, live in God. That is living responsibly.

V. COMPASSION

When we consider the virtue of compassion in the light of the Sanctified Life, among the first things to come to mind are the genuine qualities of sympathy, empathy, and commiseration. We think of the ability to take pity on someone less fortunate without patronizing or chastising them. We think of showing mercy and concern sincerely, giving comfort freely, in anonymity, without thought of recompense, gratitude, much less celebrity. Compassion is all that, of course, but for a life lived in God and for the sake of God and all that is of God, it must be much more.

A prime and very practical example serves us in Buddhism: the concept or ideal of the Bodhisattva—the enlightened individual, the saint, who refuses to enter Nirvana until all beings have attained perfect spiritual illumination, to which cause he or she is utterly devoted. This is true compassion.

Those who have answered the call to the Sanctified Life must use the Bodhisattva as model and guide in their search for understanding. While spiritual perfection through union with God can be said to be their ultimate goal, it can not be considered in terms of personal achievement. It is simply the only way they can truly follow the Tao, serve God and humanity and all things sentient and insentient, and realize their purpose as spiritual creatures at one in the Absolute.

To serve God and humanity and all things sentient and insentient in the spirit and emulation of the Bodhisattva, those drawn to this life are drawn as well to share what understanding, through the Grace of God (and only such understanding as has been bestowed by that Grace), they have been blessed with. But how, it necessarily follows, should this sharing of spiritual blessings be approached? Not by screaming from soap-box or pulpit; not by seduction, pandering, coercion, or manipulation; not by edict or legislation; not through some fabricated mandate. But by simply leading an exemplary life: teaching by example. The Sanctified Life is an unfolding lesson, offered without condition to any and to all. Spread the table, open the door, and back off quietly, in humility.

In this, as in all things, it is a matter of taking responsibility for accepting the challenge of the Sanctified Life. There is no room for a less than total commitment to the Bodhisattva ideal. There are no vacations, no time off, no “casual days”, no such thing as sick-leave or retirement. Only ceaseless effort. If we are tempted at times to conceive of it, in some sense, as a burden, then it is one we bear joyfully, selflessly. “The yoke is easy, and the burden light”. The reward—Infinite and eternal—is in the doing, in the offering of our lives to God and all that is of God.

Those vowed to the sacred existence gladly, gratefully live their lives, revolution after revolution of the Cosmic Wheel, solely for others, for all things sentient and insentient, in the name of God. Living for others who, in reality, are not “other”, but are of them, in them, and with them in That of which we are all a part. This is true compassion.

VI. LOVE

Certainly one of the most frequently misused and misunderstood words or concepts in any human language is *Love*. The ideal comes in all shapes and sizes. There is, first and foremost, Divine love. And parental love, filial love, romantic love, physical love, the love of one friend for another, the love of nature, beauty, art, knowledge, etc., to mention but a few of its innumerable applications. It is of great importance to apprehend a true and correct understanding of what love really is, because the expression of our spirituality is, in fact, an expression of True Love.

Love is easier to fathom if we learn to appreciate first what it is not. This is easily accomplished: if it is selfishly motivated, it is not love. The desire to possess, dominate, control, or manipulate is not love. It is self-aggrandizement. The longing for gratification, physical, emotional, or otherwise, is not love. It is self-affirmation. Seeking assurance, comfort, acceptance, understanding, kindness, sympathy, etc., is not seeking love. It is seeking self-reinforcement. The worship of a god created in our own image is not love. It is self-projection, i.e. narcissism.

What love *is*, however, is a total sacrifice of the self. The self is completely transcended, becomes lost in—absorbed into—that which is loved: “And the two shall become one (One)”. It is what makes it possible for a person to give up their life for another, both literally and figuratively. It is what makes it possible to continue giving and giving when nothing is received, because nothing is expected, nothing is desired, only what is best for the other, no longer “other”. This is how we must love.

But it is a correct understanding of *God’s* love that is of critical importance, because it is God’s love that is most misunderstood. Here again, the key is in identifying what it is not, because so much of what we attribute to God’s love is simply our self-indulgent, and self-deluding, declaration of an entitlement to that love.

God’s love is not the answer to a prayer. It is not a tragedy averted. It is not a lucky break when all seems lost. It is not wonderful children, a beautiful wife, or a great job. It is not winning the lottery, finding buried treasure, or striking oil in the backyard. It is not fame, it is not power. It is not good health or nice teeth. It is not a winning team. It is not an end to pestilence, disease, or hunger. It is not world peace. It is not a miracle. These are blessings, to be sure, but they are not what God’s love is ultimately about.

What God’s love is, is life—regardless of its nature or duration. It is consciousness, cognition, sensitivity, emotion. It is what allows us to appreciate the beauty and, yes, the ugliness, of all that surrounds us. All that surrounds us is God’s love. God’s love is the ability—the opportunity—to meet challenges and overcome obstacles, to participate in life. To grow in suffering as well as in joy. God’s love is the ability to recognize and commit to our spirituality, to *experience* God’s love. God’s love is eternity and our place in it. God’s love is our understanding, our insight, it is Enlightenment. God’s love is the freedom to seek that illumination or to embrace ignorance. God’s love is the freedom, ultimately, to accept or to reject that love. God’s love is all there is. God’s love is love itself.

TRANSCENDENCE: Illumination and the common ground

The primary objective in the true study of comparative religion is to find not where the doctrines of the various faiths differ, but where they agree, and to proceed from there. Not with a goal of syncretism in mind, but in the spirit and realization of humankind as one blessed family in God. This is, and must always be, the point of embarkation on our journey through the realm of the spirit.

Our individual concepts of God, of Brahman, of the Tao, the Absolute, and so on, must be transcended, however, before the journey can truly begin in earnest. Our personal faith-tradition must be gone beyond, as our “idea” of God, of the Absolute, is inextricably bound to it. We must move on to that place where we begin to experience Truth as it is in essence: Universal. We must seek out the common ground and take up residence. It has been the objective of the preceding chapters to help prepare the way for gaining this insight.

In reaching this level of understanding and proceeding in all things from that point, we then begin to illuminate the great truths of the various spiritual doctrines in the freedom of total objectivity, not to mention receptivity. We begin to perceive clearly, and without obstruction, the beauty and truth of the wisdom teachings of Jesus, and of the Buddha, of the Vedas, Mohammed, and of the Prophets, of Dream Time, the Great Spirit, etc. We begin to see them in the purity of their essence, unadulterated by interpretations, misinterpretations, or the calculated delivery of those with specific agendas. They unfold before us free of all prejudice—cultural, political, or otherwise.

And this is possible because in transcending, our focus has changed. Through meditation and prayer, intellectual apprehension has been superseded by intuitive apprehension as the purpose and driving force of the journey. An empirical, unitive understanding of the Absolute that does not replace doctrine or scripture, but explains and clarifies them, justifies them. Should we desire to remain firmly rooted in our own tradition, we strengthen and purify it by penetrating, piercing to the heart, the source, of that tradition. The place where all great faiths begin is the place to which they all return. Beginning and end are One.

It is through perseverance, determination, and mindfulness that we gain awareness, increase our understanding, progress towards the defining experience of illumination, of union with God. It can take a life-time, or a multitude of life-times. There is no sure-fire prescription for enlightenment. No “get hip quick” scheme exists to facilitate or expedite the endeavor. Spiritual illumination, the jumping-off point for the union of the soul with God, can come at the beginning of one’s journey, or after countless years of struggle. It can come after one has given up in frustration, reconciled to defeat. But at whatever point, it always and only comes to us through the Grace of God. Through a life lived in, of, and through God—for, about, and because of, God. “God cloaks in mercy those He would not see destroyed”. God’s mercy is made manifest to us through Grace, and it is through that Grace alone that we are made to see, to understand.

Only when the journey is all that matters can the destination be reached. Whichever road we choose to travel, it is how we proceed on that road that determines our arrival. The various doctrines must be transcended, if only temporarily, so the path can be clearly discerned, free of obstacles.

“The Truth is but One, the sages know it by many names.”

VIII. CIRCUMSPECTION

Unless one called to this life should pursue the security and structure of a formal monastic vocation, the Sanctified Life offers no walls to retreat behind, no physical sanctuary, no refuge save the love of God. We are out there in the world, and our challenge is to meet it and deal with it honestly and effectively, at its source—*the Source*. We must listen to the law of the spirit and respond accordingly.

Where social interaction is concerned it is prudent to approach everything with a degree of caution, whether dealing with an individual or with an institution. Particularly if that individual or institution is considered to be in a position of “power”. The admonition “Question Authority” must become more character trait than slogan.

No authority, church, state, or private, should be acquiesced to unthinkingly or automatically. The conscience is the soul’s guide. Any agency, entity, or organization that demands unquestioned conformity and compliance, or attempts to dictate behavior, thought, or lifestyle, or extols its virtues while belittling or attacking those of others, is to be resisted. And, likewise, any individual or institution that supports a policy or campaign with the aim of controlling, dominating, or subjugating—to whatever degree—any group, class, or race. No cause or its champions, however seemingly noble, that incite or promote an atmosphere conducive to violence can be allied with.

It must be remembered, as well, that inaction in the face of any wrong is, in effect, complicity, and through complicity we share in the guilt. We must take responsibility for our lives, for being here. If we have committed to the Sanctified Life, there is only one course we can take. It is not always a smooth one. Such is the nature of integrity. There are certain times and certain situations when avoidance, or a strictly passive resistance alone is insufficient. If some form of defiance should be required, look to such examples of souls devoted to God as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. And to the ultimate example of Jesus. Evil is never overcome by evil.

Trust, respect, and cooperation are conditional. They are valid only insofar as they are earned and deserved, and only so long as they continue to be. Worthiness is their sole justification. If allegiance is required—in any form or for any purpose—first require cause, and be certain that the cause is a worthy and just one. Willing participation or support based upon an informed choice, free of coercion and manipulation, free of deceit, or the refusal to participate or support based upon the same, is the playing field of the Sanctified Life, and it must be kept level.

IX. IT'S ONLY NATURAL

We are each one part of the Whole, a piece of the “machinery”, so to speak. No one piece, no one part, is any more or less important than another. When one part presumes to expand upon its role, it can only be at the expense of all the others. It may be terribly deflating to the collective human ego to equate itself with the so-called least as well as with the great, but don't blame the mirror for the reflection. “Great are those who are small in their own eyes”. When broken down we find, with scientific certainty and accord, that we, together with all things animate and inanimate, are comprised of the same basic elements, the very same elements that make up everything that is in and of this universe. We differ only in quantity and arrangement.

Are we, as a species, unique? Yes, in the sense that every species is unique in its way. We, as human beings, possess certain characteristics and attributes that distinguish us from other species, other parts of the Whole, but those characteristics and attributes do not elevate us above the rest. Rather, they bestow upon us the very great responsibility of stewardship. We must care for this world that is our home in the spirit of love and humility. It was given to us by God. But the gift is conditional. If we doubt this, we need only consider what happens—what *is* happening—when we abuse or neglect it. We must serve nature, because in so doing, we serve God. And we must respond to any threat or attempt to impose what is *unnatural*.

Those who quote scripture to support their policies and programs of exploitation and destruction, or champion economic and business concerns over the concerns of our planet and its inhabitants—all of its inhabitants, human or otherwise—do so out of ignorance, avarice, or stupidity, pursuing their own interests and agendas, and those of the masters they serve, to the detriment of all else.

The human species is natural. Evolution is natural. Extinction is natural, provided the cause is not unnatural. But much of what humans do in the name of their evolution as a species, however, is not in the least bit natural, and we are thereby precipitating our unnatural extinction, as well as that of manifold other species, if not the entire planet. Progress is only progress when each and every part of the Whole is a beneficiary. It is a matter of perspective, of getting a sense of place and a sense of purpose.

The purpose of life is our spirituality. It is the Essence of all that is, it is what we are. We are of God, and God does not make a distinction between what is spiritual and what is secular. The secular is an illusion, an invention of our species to allow for the expression of, and indulgence in, every base impulse and inclination we are too weak, or too indifferent, to resist. But when we live spiritually, we live in a harmonious, symbiotic relationship with everything around us. We take and use only what we need. Not as *we* might be tempted to define “need”, but as God defines it. We take only what we are entitled to. And what we take, we replace or replenish. Life is a gift. This world we have been born into is a gift, but again, one given (both in the context of Karmic law and as the bestowal of Divine Grace) conditionally. We have a right to be here, in this sense, only inasmuch as we cherish this place we call our home. Only inasmuch as we strive to deserve our place here.

X. A SENSE OF BELONGING

The idea of “the group”, the community, the faction, the denomination, the race, etc. must be transcended if one is to live a truly spiritual life. Concepts such as multiculturalism, ethnic pride, and so forth, while admirable in themselves as concepts, have all too often come to serve as foundations for an ethic of exclusivity, and the intolerance and bigotry that such attitudes breed. In application they have had the unfortunate result of fortifying the conviction of the superiority of the group—pride has become prejudice. We are not satisfied with being unique, much less equal. We have to be “better”.

We are constantly looking outside ourselves for and to others who are either like-minded or simply like us. We look to them for justification, for confirmation, for affirmation, for support, and strength. We look to others for our very identity. Nothing is more frightening than the idea of being “alone”, i.e. disconnected. It is this very fear that is the life-blood of every cult and “hate group”. It is what they thrive on, what keeps them in business.

We all have the need to belong. But the key is to understand, to *experience*, what it is we actually belong to. And in reality we belong only to God, to Brahman, the Tao. The only thing we are a part of is the Whole. Once we are aware of that—once we have experienced our part in it and taken it into our hearts, minds, and souls—it is then possible to return to the group (provided the group is a just and worthy one) with the proper perspective, the correct understanding of our place in it and, more importantly, its place in relation to every other “group”.

It can not be stressed enough how very essential it is that we seek this level of awareness. If anything threatens the ultimate survival of our species, it is our inability to co-exist, be it with each other or with the environment. Ignorance is the father of all our evils: hate, stupidity, war, etc. And what is Evil? Self-will—individual and, in this sense, collective.

Those sworn to the Sanctified Life must endeavor, whenever and however possible, to make this not only a priority for themselves, but an imperative for all. It is a matter that must be addressed on every front, at every juncture, from the local neighborhood to the global arena. And in light of our history as a species, especially in the global arena.

Nationalism is the unfortunate mutation of patriotism and of regional, and in many cases religious, pride. It is a cancer—a refuge of racists, xenophobes, and self-serving fundamentalists, and the all-too fertile breeding ground for their most virulent manifestations. It is the attitude that can turn its back on the torment and suffering of other nations and whole peoples with that most despicable of positions: “It’s not my problem.” It is the attitude that defines “other” as lesser, and “different” as inferior. It is the attitude that can pay lip-service, strike a pose, preen and primp before the mirror of International Opinion, and in the end do absolutely nothing but champion indifference in the face of abject brutality and wanton aggression. Or worse yet, jettison principles to support or make compromise with what is patently evil, all in the “National Interest”. It is also the attitude of self-righteous arrogance that perverts or destroys cultures to build empires; the militant zeal of political missionaries whose “hallowed” way can be the only way. It is the attitude, as well, of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the “holy” war.

Well, it *is* our problem. “Business! Mankind is my business.” Indeed. We are *all* of the One, each and every one of us. Period. An offense against another is an offense against ourselves. An offense, ultimately, against God.

XII. THE COMPOSITE

Mysticism. 1. The doctrine of an immediate spiritual intuition of truths which transcend ordinary understanding. 2. A direct, intimate union of the soul with God through contemplation and love.

Like Diogenes with his lantern searching for Truth and a good and honest man, the purpose of this work is to help light, however dimly, the path to understanding. Nothing is more abstract than the concept of God. But nothing is more concrete than God's reality. Attempting to directly apprehend it through the intellect, however, is impossible. To the aggravation of many it is described by the various traditions and their schools of mysticism and the esoteric as "indescribable", expressed as "inexpressible". The only way to begin to grasp it through the limitations of reason is to first experience it. The Sanctified Life is a way to that experience—a way that encompasses *all* ways.

In working to cultivate the proper state of mind, we make it possible to perceive the immanence of That which Is, the One that is all things. We create an environment of spiritual receptivity. Our minds open and respond to the mind of God. God's thoughts become our thoughts. The Way, the Tao, becomes our way, the only possible way.

When we discipline ourselves to live decent, caring lives, spontaneously motivated by what is good and right, good for the sake of goodness alone, free of self-interest, we build our inner strength, firming the resolve to live by the law of the spirit by letting the spirit rule from within.

When we take responsibility for our own lives, we can fully enjoy them. They become ours in the truest sense. We no longer carry about the burden of self-pity, of self-indulgence, or the burden of others' malice or neglect, etc. We are no longer victims, but now victors—over ourselves. Our True Self, finally, defines who we really are.

Through compassion and the Bodhisattva ideal, and the ideal of charity and humility that defined the lives of all the saints who lived in loving imitation of the life and sacrifice of Jesus, we allow God's compassion to manifest itself in us. To flow out undiluted to others whose pain we have made our own. We learn the true meaning of sacrifice and that none is too great. That we give up or lose nothing by giving up everything, but gain all that is worth having. "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

By realizing that God's love simply *is*, we begin to learn love free of design, free of expectation. We learn to love as God loves—and to receive God's love as it is truly given.

Through transcendence we remove the veil of doctrine, and the colorings of interpretation, and let the light of Truth guide us. We step out of the shadows and into the light of objectivity and clarity of understanding.

When we journey circumspectly, we journey safely and with integrity.

When we see and understand clearly our true place in the natural world, we begin to bear witness for the first time to its unadulterated beauty, to see it as it is in reality. We see it as something we are a part of, and not just something to take apart. We then begin to comprehend the Natural Order, the Way of things, and that anything contrary is *disorder*.

When we finally begin to understand the true nature of who and what we are, when we look at others and see ourselves, when we begin to sense where and to what we, in actuality, belong, we then stand on the threshold.

When the invented and the imagined, the distractions, seductions, and delusions have all disintegrated and collapsed of their own weight, have blown away with the dust and debris of

everything that is unnecessary and unreal, then we find God. We open ourselves to the experience of God, and allow the light, at last, to shine from within as well as without. Then, truly, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

When, through humility, patience, and love, we live a life pure in heart and poor in spirit, we make a testament of that life, lived and realized in God. When at last we truly understand that all sin is self-will, and the only hell is an existence absent of God, then and only then can God’s will be done in our lives.

We will, as Eckhart said, “See God through the eyes He sees us”, only when we stop looking: looking for something “other”, looking *to* something “other”, something outside ourselves, searching endlessly for something missing. There is nothing missing. What we are seeking is not, in reality, union with God, but *re*-union with God. Or, better put, a *re-awakening* to the state of union that has never been otherwise. We were never cast out, never forsaken. We simply chose to ignore That—tat tvam asi—which has always been there, with and within us.

Self-will over God’s will: that alone is the Original Sin. Through the goodness, grace, and mercy of the Holy Spirit, may God’s will be done in and through all things. Amen....

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