

Green Book of Meditations Volume 4

The ill A.D. and the Odd Essay

Introduction

Of what purpose is another book of meditations? Indeed, the primary source of inspiration for Druids is thought to be Nature, so why do I collect secondary tales? The Order of Worship has long since past away at Carleton, so the use of meditations at those services has also departed from general custom for many of us (at Carleton.) Well, I guess a sub-goal of the Druids has always been to reflect on life and consider the myriad of systems that also look on life; be they religions, philosophies or intellectual studies. A natural result of the search is to share some of your findings, right? I think these readings will spark an interesting thought or that might encourage Druids to widen their search parameters. I think group discussion of these volumes (and other sources of their own finding) would be fruitful. I hope these selections and advice from diverse sources may whet the appetite for the Search for Awareness and Truth.

I'm sure that the first three Green Books are more than sufficient for many Druids, but I just can't stop collecting stories. My motivation is part pack-rat and partly to provide as much "Druidic material" (in my opinion) for training future Druids, who have little time for personal research. It is also a portable set of notes for my own study. I merely hope that none mistake this book as a substitute for going outside for a walk or planting a garden or raiding a library or talking to a stranger.

By the time of this re-publication, the Green Books will have become 1/5 of the total volume of the ARDA. I certainly can't put an entire library in here. So, I'll have to probably call this the last collection, at least by my hand, for awhile.

Be careful reading this, for you are entering the life and culture of the authors. You cannot borrow the wisdom of a people, without repaying them in some way, perhaps through your life-style. As always, I've swiped these selections without permission, so don't go doing it yourself, right? Two wrongs don't make a right. I've listed the books, where possible to enable you to order them. Please enjoy.

-Michael Scharding
September 1st, 2002
Washington D.C.

Drynemetum Press



Table of Contents

Introductory Materials - 85

Introduction
Table of Contents

Part One: American Sources

Native American Thoughts - 90

Chief Seattle's Treaty Oration 1854
A Tribal Attorney
His Answer was "Maybe"
The Sick Buzzard
Bilingual Education
Words and Writing
Talk To God
Where is the Eagle's Seat?
Earth Teach me to Remember
Behold Our Mother Earth
Prayer for the Great Family
The Buffalo
My Journey Home
Prayer to my Brother
I Would Cry
The End
Go Forth
This is My Land
Lonely Warriors
The Wanderer's Prayer

Native American Proverbs - 96

Community and Communication
Death
Ecology
God
Grief
Knowledge
Justice and Law
Leadership
Religion
Silence
Truth
Wisdom
War and Peace
Miscellaneous

Spanish American Thoughts - 99

Wise Stones
Meadowlark
Universal Mother
On Being Alone: Berkeley 1969
Delicious Death
Day of the Dead
Finding Home
Post-Colonial Contemplations

Aztec Thoughts - 102

Heaven
Land of the Dead
Land of Mystery
Dreams and Flowers
Seeking
Flowers
The Wise Man
Why Do We Live?

American Wisdom: What Do We Mean When We Say God? - 103

Hey!
Back to the Basics
Our Own God
Where is God?
Problems with God
Islam's Attractiveness
A Glass of Water's Travels
Sleeping Watchman
Lesson from Bali
Aka-ba-da-dia
Together in Church
Women and God
Difficulties with God
A Hard Job
Consider Allah
The Hidden Sun
Convenient Invention
Grammatical God
Questioning
A Sine Wave
God the Creator
True Friend
Serving
Life is an Offering -----105
No Church Can
YHWH
Towards What?
In Each Other
In the Flowers
God is Living
God is Potential
The Deer God
Face of God
Hindu Ritualism
Carpentry
A Map
A Hologram
John Barleycorn
One Size Fits All
Where is the Water?
A Fish out of Water
Unlisted Phone Number
The Creator
God's Ways
There is a God
Short Thoughts

African-American Proverbs - 108

Tales from the South - 109

Uncle Remus Teaches a Child
The Wonderful Tar Baby Story

Part Two: African/European Sources

African Proverbs - 110

African Stories - 111

The Skull
Two Roads Overcame the Hyena
The Giraffe and the Monkey
The Two Cold Porcupines
How the Monkeys Saved the Fish
The Leopard and the Rabbit

The Lion's Share
 The Community of Rats
 The Man and Elephant
 The Chameleon and the Lizard
 The Old Woman Who Hid Death
 The Sacrifice of the White Hen
 The Monster Shing'weng'we
 The Story of Gumha & the Large Rooster
 King Leopard and the Spear Contest

Aphoristic Advice - 115

Atheism and Agnostics
 Death and Aging
 Dogmatism
 Education and Knowledge
 Freedom
 God
 Grief
 Justice, Law & Government
 Leadership
 Man
 Morality
 Nature
 Poverty and Hard Times
 Priests
 Religion and Philosophy
 Ritual and Prayer
 Silence and Tact
 Superstition
 Syncretism
 Toleration
 Truth
 Wisdom

Wisdom of Aesop's Fables - 125

Aesop Saves his Master, Xanthus
 A Cat and a Cock
 A Countryman and a Snake
 A Lion and an Ass
 A Fox and a Raven
 Wolf and the Shepherd
 The Rabbits and the Frogs
 The Lion and the Mouse
 The Ox and the Frog
 The Mole and Her Child
 The Snake and Zeus
 The One-Eyed Deer
 The Proud Deer
 The Martin and the Mistletoe
 The Stork and the Fox
 The Horse and the Ass
 The Cat and Venus
 The New and Old Goats -----127
 The Ass and the Statue
 The Dog and the River
 The Dog and the Hare
 The Beetle and the Eagle
 The Reed and the Olive Tree
 The Fir and the Thorn Bush
 Springtime and Wintertime
 The Merchant and the Statue
 The Cowherd and Zeus
 The Fool and Fortune
 The Cobbler and the King
 Hercules and the Apple
 Two Travelers and a Bear
 A Sick Kite and her Daughter
 An Ass, an Ape and a Mole
 A Dog, a Sheep and a Wolf

An Ant and a Fly
 The Ax and the Forest
 The Sick Lion and the Fox
 A Boar and a Horse
 A Fowler and a Pigeon -----129
 A Camel
 A Dog in the Manger
 An Old Tree Transplanted
 A Camel and Zeus
 A Fox and a Goat
 An Imposter at the Oracle
 An Astrologer and a Ditch Digger
 Hermes and a Traveler
 A Doctor and an Eye Patient
 A Lioness and a Fox
 Two Cocks Fighting
 A Fox that Lost its Tail
 Death and an Old Man
 An Old Man and a Lion
 A Flea and Hercules
 Two Travelers and a Bag of Money
 A Wolf and a Goat
 A Musician
 A Crow and Pigeons
 A Wolf and a Sheep
 Travelers by the Seaside
 An Ass and the Frogs
 A Gnat Challenges a Lion
 The Traveler and Athena
 Fundamentalist Aesopian Article

Wit and Wisdom of Women - 133

Change
 Death
 Education
 Fame and Fortune
 Leadership
 Love and Justice
 Nature
 Philosophy & Religion
 Time
 Truth
 War
 Wit and Wisdom
 Women

Welsh Proverbs - 136

Akkadian Proverbs - 137

Part Three: The Monotheistic Faiths

The Way of the Sufis - 137

Shah on Sufism
 Attraction of Celebrities
 The Dance
 The Words of Omar Kayyam
 Seeds like These
 Under the Earth
 I am
 The Words of Attar of Nishapur
 The Heart
 The Madman and the Muezzin
 The Test
 The Unaware Tree
 Unaware
 The King who Divine his Future

The Words of Ibn El-Arabi	
Whence Came the Title?	
The Words of Saadi of Shiraz	
Notable Quotes	
The Pearl	
Scholars and Recluses	
The Fox and the Camels	
Ambition	
The Words of Hakim Jaami	
Notable Quotes	
The Beggar	
What Shall We Do?	
The Words of Jalaludin Rumi -----139	
The Way	
I am the Life of My Beloved	
No Other Place	
Two Reeds	
Actions and Words	
Efforts	
This Task	
The Teachings of the Chikistri Order	
The Gardens	
Continuity	
When Death is not Death	
The Seven Brothers	
The Oath	
The Sufi Missionary	
The Teachings of the Quadri Order	
The Rogue, the Sheep and the Villagers	
The Teachings of the Naqshbandi Order	
The Host and the Guests	
The Three Candidates	
Three Visits to a Sage	
One Way of Teaching	
Cherished Notions	
Falsity	
Sentences of the Kajagan	
Sayings of the Masters	
The Magian and the Muslim	
Names	
Prayers	
What the Devil Said	
Thauri on Contemplation	
The Idol	
The Candle's Duty	
Three Stages of Worship	
Seeing	
On Your Religion	
Among the Masters -----145	
To a Believer	
Eat No Stones	
Why the Dog Could Not Drink	
Man Believes What He Thinks is True	
Time for Learning	
Four Teaching Stories	
The Watermelon Hunter	
Nasrudin's Ambassadorial Trip	
The Fool, Salt and Flour	
The Indian Bird	
Solitary Contemplation Themes	
To Be a Sufi	
Teachers, Teachings, Taught	
Perception and Explanation	
Sufi Literature	
Becoming One Who Becomes	
Where it Went	
Affinities	
Various Stories to Teach With	

Who's in Charge?	
No Boat?	
How?	
The World	
When to Teach?	
The True Pilgrimage	
The Proper Task	
The Noble Thief	
The Test of the Birds	
The Test of the Camel	
The Walnut's Lesson	
Kindness to Animals	
Wear Yourself	
Sleep No More	
Group Recitals -----151	
The Caravansary	
Religion	
The Meaning of Culture	
The Aim	
Wild Utterances	
To Reach the Degree of Truth	
Death Visiting	
Thou Art There	
What to Do and What to Have Done	
Mean and Knowledge	
What is Identity?	
The Answer	
We are Alive	
Final Essays	
Sufi Lectures	
What is Sufism?	
Knowledge	
Seven Thoughts on Famous Teachers	
Teaching of the Sufis	
How Strange a Thing is Man	
The Study Group	
Advice to the Vigiler	

Jewish Thoughts - 154

Parables	
Hide and Seek	
Differences of Customs	
Publishing Advice	
Papa's Gift	
Contributions	
Hasty Prayers	
Where is God?	
The Disbeliever	
Tradition	
The Unpopular Rabbi	
The Accused Maid	
The Disbeliever and God	
Postponement	
Abandonment	
Philanthropy	
Fresh Bread	
One's Worth	
Two Thoughts from David	
Gardening and Tax-Collectors	
A Fair Exchange	
On One Foot	
The Jewish Jeweler	
Beggars	
Two Ideas from Singer	
A Poor Jew -----158	
The Doctor Doesn't Worry	
Qualification of an Expert	

Nature and Poets
To Tide Him Over
Deferred Judgment
The Long and Short of It.
He Did All He Could
Increased Horse Power
Some Jewish Proverbs
The Considerate Beggar
Advice
Late
No Peace for a Rabbi
De Profundis
The Philosopher
Popularity
God's Garden
Why the Sixth Day?
Growing Roots
Wearisome Things
Sacrifices
Water and Stones

Christian Thoughts - 160

I am There
Inside You
Washing the Feet
In All Things
God is Mother
A Prayer for the Frightened
The Dark Night
The Serenity Prayer
Birmingham Jail Letter
The Canticle of Brother Sun

Part Four: The Indian Sub-continent

Hindu Thoughts - 162

Isa Upanishad: All Beings in Your Self
Chandogya Upanishad: Thou Art That
Two Quotes

Jain Thoughts - 163

What is Ritual and Religion?
What is Religion?
What is Truth and Knowledge?
How Should We Live?
What are the Different Jain Fundamentals?
The Problem?
The Butcher and Papanubandhu Pap
The Immortal Song
Fight Against Desires
Virtuous Prayer
The Doctrine of Maybe
Nonviolence Prayer
Creator? Creation?

Buddhist Thoughts - 166

See For Yourselves
Carrying a Girl
Sand Castles
Flapping Things
The Water Jar
What is Zen?
On Trust in the Heart
Loving Kindness
Truth
Must I Now Preach?

Sikh Thoughts - 167

Basic Sikh Philosophy and Beliefs
Women in Sikhism: 3 Quotes
What is Truth and Knowledge?
Letter to the Ascetic
All Religions are Alike to Me

Tibetan Thoughts - 168

With Impurity
Of What Use if Meditation?
Tolerance
Change
Teachers and Students
The Tibetan Path

Part Five: The Far East

Chinese Proverbs - 171

Chinese Stories - 172

Moderation in Harvest
Discretion
The Bell Stand

The Roots of Wisdom - 173

Mountain and Forest
Form and Spirit
On Giving Advice
Balance in Vocation
Sky Lessons
Where They Belong
On Education
How to Advise
Simply Natural
Be Yourself
Why be Upset?
Where to Look

Taoist Thoughts - 174

Truth
Balance
Knowledge

Mongolian Proverbs - 174

Korean Proverbs - 175

Korean Stories - 175

The Land where you Live is Your Native Country
The Teacher's Poison
The Tiger in the Trap
Miraculous Awakening of Zen

Japanese Proverbs - 177

Japanese Lessons - 178

Basho's Poems
Ikkyu's Poems
Thoughts of Ryokan
Rinzai's Quote
The Book of Haiku
The Path and the Pith
Parable of the Raft
About Death
Sun and Moon
Two Shinto Quotes
Mountain Tasting: Weeds and Rain

Zen Stories -----184

The Holy Demon
The Earnest Acolyte
A Singular Animal

Five Shinto Selections

The Way of Shinto
Hello? Can Anyone Hear Me?
The Creation of the World
A Blade of Grass
What is Shinto?

A Shinto Priest's Life -----188

#1 What is Shinto
#2 Kannagara: Rhythm of the Gods
#3 Shinto & Western Religions
#4 Shinto & Other Religions
#5 Shinto & Buddhism in Japan
#6 What is the Model Life of a Priest?

Part Six: Down Under and Beyond

Australian Thoughts - 192

Dreamtime Stories and Dignity
The Church and Me
The Now
A Simple Request
The Developers
Red
The Unhappy Race
The Past
Mary's Plea
Soul Music
Tree
A Letter to My Mother

Conclusion - 195

Part One: American Sources

Native American Thoughts

As you may know, many people turn to Native Americans for inspiration from an ecologically-based belief system. To borrow some wisdom, of course, requires some type of compensation, to live wisely. Repay your debts accordingly. This selection is taken from "Native American Reader: Stories, Speeches and Poems," edited and commentary by Jerry D. Blance, PhD, published by The Denali Press, PO BOX 021535 Juneau Alaska 99802-1535, USA. ISBN 0-938737-20-1. Please seek more from this book of modern Indian thoughts and don't forget that there are living Indians, with modern problems, who might welcome some help.

Chief Seattle's Treaty

Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion upon my people for centuries untold, and which to us appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never change. Whatever Seattle says, the great chief at Washington can rely upon with as much certainty as he can upon the return of the sun or the seasons. The white chief says that Big Chief at Washington sends us greetings of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him for we know he has little need of our friendship in return. His people are many. They are like the grass that covers vast prairies. My people are few. They resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain. The great, and I presume -- good, White Chief sends us word that he wishes to buy our land but is willing to allow us enough to live comfortably. This indeed appears just, even generous, for the Red Man no longer has rights that he need respect, and the offer may be wise, also, as we are no longer in need of an extensive country.

There was a time when our people covered the land as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor, but that time long since passed away with the greatness of tribes that are now but a mournful memory. I will not dwell on, nor mourn over, our untimely decay, nor reproach my paleface brothers with hastening it, as we too may have been somewhat to blame.

Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, it denotes that their hearts are black, and that they are often cruel and relentless, and our old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it has ever been. Thus it was when the white man began to push our forefathers ever westward. But let us hope that the hostilities between us may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Revenge by young men is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and mothers who have sons to lose, know better.

Our good father in Washington--for I presume he is now our father as well as yours, since King George has moved his boundaries further north--our great and good father, I say, sends us word that if we do as he desires he will protect us. His brave warriors will be to us a bristling wall of strength, and his wonderful ships of war will fill our harbors, so that our ancient enemies far to the northward -- the Haidas and Tsimshians -- will cease to frighten our women, children, and old men. Then in reality he will be our father and we his children. But can that ever

be? Your God is not our God! Your God loves your people and hates mine! He folds his strong protecting arms lovingly about the paleface and leads him by the hand as a father leads an infant son. But, He has forsaken His Red children, if they really are His. Our God, the Great Spirit, seems also to have forsaken us. Your God makes your people wax stronger every day. Soon they will fill all the land. Our people are ebbing away like a rapidly receding tide that will never return. The white man's God cannot love our people or He would protect them. They seem to be orphans who can look nowhere for help. How then can we be brothers? How can your God become our God and renew our prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness? If we have a common Heavenly Father He must be partial, for He came to His paleface children. We never saw Him. He gave you laws but had no word for His red children whose teeming multitudes once filled this vast continent as stars fill the firmament. No; we are two distinct races with separate origins and separate destinies. There is little in common between us.

To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret. Your religion was written upon tablets of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you could not forget. The Red Man could never comprehend or remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors -- the dreams of our old men, given them in solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit; and the visions of our sachems, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander away beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its verdant valleys, its murmuring rivers, its magnificent mountains, sequestered vales and verdant lined lakes and bays, and ever yearn in tender fond affection over the lonely hearted living, and often return from the happy hunting ground to visit, guide, console, and comfort them.

Day and night cannot dwell together. The Red Man has ever fled the approach of the White Man, as the morning mist flees before the morning sun. However, your proposition seems fair and I think that my people will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them. Then we will dwell apart in peace, for the words of the Great White Chief seem to be the words of nature speaking to my people out of dense darkness.

It matters little where we pass the remnant of our days. They will not be many. The Indian's night promises to be dark. Not a single star of hope hovers above his horizon. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance. Grim fate seems to be on the Red Man's trail, and wherever he will hear the approaching footsteps of his fell destroyer and prepare stolidly to meet his doom, as does the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter.

A few more moons, a few more winters, and not one of the descendants of the mighty hosts that once moved over this broad land or lived in happy homes, protected by the Great Spirit, will remain to mourn over the graves of a people once more powerful and hopeful than yours. But why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come, for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We will see.

We will ponder your proposition and when we decide we will let you know. But should we accept it, I here and now make this condition that we will not be denied the privilege without molestation of visiting at any time the tombs of our ancestors, friends, and children. Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days

long vanished. Even the rocks, which seem to be dumb and dead as the swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people, and the very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. Our departed braves, fond mothers, glad, happy hearted maidens, and even the little children who lived here and rejoiced here for a brief season, will love these somber solitudes and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits. And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

A Tribal Attorney

A Tribal Attorney on an Indian reservation asked the Chief to show him around. Two horses were saddled and the Chief and the Attorney started out into the country. Soon they came to a cave where the Chief dismounted from his horse, went to the cave entrance and yelled, "Wooo, Wooo." The Chief stood for a moment cocking his head and listening for a reply. When no sound came out of the cave, the Chief mounted up and rode on with the Attorney. In a short time, the two came to a tunnel entrance and the Chief again got off his horse, went to the entrance of the tunnel and yelled, "Wooo, Wooo." When no response came from the tunnel, the Chief again mounted and rode on through the reservation with the Attorney. After approximately a half hour the pair came to still another cave and the Chief did the same thing as before. Still no answer came from the cave and the Chief mounted again and rode on.

As it was getting late, the Chief told the Attorney that if he would ride his horse straight over the hill, he would come out in the parking lot where his car had been left but that the Chief wanted to continue riding for awhile. The Attorney, curious to know why the Chief was yelling into the cave, questioned the Chief about his behavior. He was told by the Chief that there was an old legend about a beautiful girl who lived in one of the caves on the reservation and that the Chief hoped to be the first person to find her.

The Attorney left the Chief and rode back towards his car. On the way back to his car, he passed a tunnel. "Ah!" said the Attorney to himself, "I'll give this cave a try." The Attorney dismounted and went to the mouth of the tunnel and yelled, "Wooo, Wooo." The Attorney stood listening for a few moments and heard from the tunnel a faint sound of "Wooo, Wooo." "Wow, this is my lucky day!" said the Attorney, and he ran into the cave.

The next day the headlines of the tribal paper read, "Tribal Attorney Run Over By Train."

-Colville

His Answer was "Maybe"

Once there was an elder who was very poor but was content and happy. All he had in the world were a small parcel of land, his humble lodge, an old horse and strong, young warrior grandson. One night, the horse ran away. When the elder's neighbors heard of this, they came as a group to give their condolences and said to him, "This is indeed a great misfortune." But the elder only replied, "Maybe," and smiled. The neighbors were surprised and thought him to be a bit strange as they departed for home.

The next night, the elder heard a great racket outside his lodge. His horse had returned, but not alone. It had returned with several other young wild horses and let them straight into the old man's corral. The next day, the neighbors returned. This time, they were very joyous and said to the old man, "Surely good fortune shines upon you and the Creator has truly blessed your family." The elder smiled as before and again replied, "Maybe." The reservation community thought him ungrateful and perhaps a bit disturbed and muttered among themselves.

Soon it became time to tame the wild horses and the elder's grandson tried to mount one to begin the process. He was immediately thrown and he broke his leg. The neighbors, upon hearing of this and being a genuinely concerned tribal group, once again returned to the grandfather's house to offer their condolences. Once again, in spite of the hardship this would undoubtedly bear upon the old man, he merely smiled and said, "Maybe."

This time the neighbors left in disgust, thinking the grandfather to be a fool, or perhaps insane. The next day, however, a group of experienced warriors poured through the village, forcing all the young men to join them. The tribal chief was going off to war and these young men were to be his pawns. When these warriors came to the grandfather's lodge, they found the grandson to be unable to walk and therefore of no use as a warrior. They left him behind.

Soon the neighbors came to the elder again, some weeping because their sons had been taken, perhaps never to return. They saw that the elder's grandson was still in his bed, his leg with a splint and bandaged. They said to the old man, "You are indeed a lucky man." The grandfather smiled gently and said only, "Maybe." The neighbors stood quietly for some time. Gradually, they, too, began to smile and nod their heads. And as they departed slowly, they, too, could be heard saying to one another, "Maybe."

-Raymond F. Reyes, Hopi

The Sick Buzzard

A long, long time ago, Buzzard traveled all over the world. He was constantly eating. Sometimes he ate so much he got too fat to fly, so he would just sit around on the tree branches and sleep with his head hanging down. The other birds would never visit with Buzzard because they thought he was too mean and grouchy; and sometimes he stunk too much. That is also why they never invited him to sing and dance in their ceremonies either.

Buzzard used to brag a lot, too. He told the other birds, "I can eat anything in the world. You other birds can only eat certain things. Some of you can only eat seeds, berries, fish, or fresh-killed meat. Not me. I can eat anything at anytime, and I can eat more than any of you."

Bluejay got tired of hearing Buzzard brag so much. One day she told the other birds, "He thinks he's so great just because he is bigger than us, can fly higher, and eat more. But I think he is ugly and stinks. I am going to make a curse on him to teach him a lesson. I wish he would get fat, bald headed, old and wrinkly looking; and I hope he gets bad belly aches from eating too much. Besides, he never shares, either."

One day Buzzard was flying around eating everything in sight. He ate dead animals whenever he saw one. He ate poisonous snakes, scratchy bugs, smelly dead fish, and even a dead human if he found one. NO other bird would dare eat a human!

Buzzard ate so much that he didn't even bother to clean his head. He just kept flying around in circles looking, watching, and waiting for something else to eat, dead or alive. It was really hot that day and he got sick. He got so sick that all he could do was sit on the side of the riverbank, on an old log, and moan. He was stuffed, too fat to fly, too sick to holler for help, and too weak to clean himself. All the dead meat left on his head began to rot in the hot sun; he stunk so bad that nobody in Nature would help him. Within a few days his feathers fell out and the hot sun burned his scalp red all the way down to his neck.

Buzzard was so sick he started to die. All he could do was moan and cry, and still nobody came to help him. But on the fourth day he heard someone trying to talk. He looked all around and saw this little plant below him. The little green, happy plant was singing and swaying in the warm summer breeze. She said, "Hey, you sick bird. I can help you. I can heal anybody. Just reach down here and take a few bites of my leaves, chew them up real good, then swallow my power into your rotten belly."

It was all Buzzard could do to bend over, but that is what he did. And he said, "I don't have much to offer but a few of my feathers. Maybe they can keep you warm from the morning dew. Here, I'll trade you for your medicine." So he reached down and took the herb. After awhile he got well again. Before leaving he said, "Thank you, for helping me. I will never forget you because your medicine is strong and you smell so good." Then he took off flying. As he left he sang this song: "Round and round the Buzzard goes. Where he will land nobody knows!"

-Medicine Grizzlybear Lake, Seneca/Konawa/Cherokee

Bilingual Education

I've always said that the language is the heart of the culture. If you don't know the language, you'll only see the surface of the culture. It is our responsibility, those of us that can still speak our languages. My biggest regret is that I didn't pass the language to my four children; they tell me today, "You cheated me." I think that is the reason why I am in this program... The language is the heart of the culture, and you cannot separate it.

- Elaine Ramos, Tlingit 11/13/1974

Words and Writing

I have visited the great Father in Washington. I have attended dinners among white people. Their ways are not our ways. We eat in silence, quietly smoke a pipe and depart. Thus is our host honored.

This is not the way of the white man. After his food has been eaten, one is expected to say foolish things. Here the host feels honored. Many of the white man's ways are past understanding, but now that we have eaten at the white man's table, it is fitting that we honor our host according to the ways of his people.

Our host has filled many notebooks with the sayings of our fathers as they came down to us. This is the way of his people; they set great store upon writing; always there is a paper.

But we have learned that though there are many papers in Washington upon which are written promises to pay us for our land, no white man seems to remember them.

However, we know our host will not forget what he has written down, and we hope that the white people will read it.

But we are puzzled as to what useful service all this writing serves. Whenever white people come together, there is

writing. When we go to buy some sugar or tea, we see the white trader busy writing in a book. Even the white doctor, as he sits beside his patient, writes on a piece of paper.

The white people must think paper has some mysterious power to help them on in the world.

The Indian needs no writing. Words that are true sink deep into his heart where they remain. He never forgets them. On the other hand, if the white man loses his paper, he is helpless.

I once heard one of their preachers say that no white man was admitted to heaven, unless there were writings about him in a great book.

(After-dinner speaking was a strange phenomenon to Four Guns, Oglala Sioux, but he delivered this speech at a dinner given by anthropologist Clark Wissler in 1891)

Talk To God

When we want wisdom we go up the hill and talk to God. Four days and four nights, without food and water. Yes, you can talk to God up on a hill by yourself. You can say anything you want. Nobody's there to listen to you. That's between you and God and nobody else. It's a great feeling to be talking to God. I know. I did it way up on the mountain. The wind was blowing. It was dark. It was cold. And I stood there and I talked to God.

-Mathew King, Lakota Chief

Where is the Eagle's Seat?

To the people of Geneva, the people, the Ojibwans, the Six Nations, the Chiefs, the Clan Mothers, the warriors, the men, the women, the children, send our greetings, and our good wishes of health and friendship to all of you. Of the Red brothers of the Western Hemisphere, of the two great turtle islands a certain few of us have been given a short time and a great task to convince you that we too are human. And have rights. Our nations who have principles of justice and equality, who have respect for the natural world, on behalf of our mother the Earth and all the great elements we come here and we say they too have rights. The future generations, our children, our grandchildren, and their grandchildren are our concern. That they may have clean water to drink that they may observe our four-footed brothers before they are extinct, that they may enjoy the elements that we are so fortunate to have and that serves us as human beings. The President of the USA has brought forth into the forum, of the international world, the issue of human rights. It affords us the opportunity at this time to present our position on the issue of human rights. It is strange indeed that we have to travel this far to the east, to the European continent to turn and speak to the President of the US and ask him about our human rights. We are concerned. It is the future of not only our people, the Red people of the Western Hemisphere, but it is the future of yourselves that is at stake. We have been given principles by which to live, mutual respect, the understanding of creation.

Power is not manifesting in the human being. True power is in the Creator. If we continue to ignore the message by which we exist and we continue to destroy the source of our lives then our children will suffer. Whose responsibility then, who are we speaking to and who is listening? We would be remiss in our duty if we did not bring this in front of you. We apologize if it hurts. But the truth must be spoken. We were told in the beginning that we were not human. There are great arguments in the histories of many countries as to the humanness of the Red people of the Western Hemisphere. I must warn you that the Creator made us all equal with one another. And not only human beings, but all life is equal. The equality of our life is what you must understand and the principle by which you must continue on behalf of the future of this world. Economics and technology may assist you, but they will also destroy you if you do not use

the principles of equality. Profit and loss will mean nothing to your future generations.

We are here for a very short time and we have been given a very short time upon that clock of the wall to convince you, to make you listen, to understand, that we are concerned for you as well as for us. Our grandfather from the Hopi Nation this morning spoke a prayer on behalf of all the world, of your future and of ours. And it is with this spirit that we come here and we hope that the people and the nations from which we come and to which we will have to return and which we will have to face, whatever they may have in store for our speaking the truth on behalf of people, of the world, of the four-footed, of the winged, of the fish that swim. Someone must speak for them. I do not see a delegation for the four-footed. I see no seat for the eagles. We forget and we consider ourselves superior, but we are after all a mere part of the Creation. And we must continue to understand where we are. And we stand between the mountain and the ant, somewhere and only there, as part and parcel of the Creation. It is our responsibility, since we have been given the minds to take care of these things. The elements and the animals, and the birds, they live in a state of grace. They are absolute, they can do no wrong. It is only we, the two-leggeds, that can do this. And when we do this to our brothers, our own brothers, then we do the worst in the eyes of the Creator. There should be brotherhood, and the Haudenosaunee, Six Nations, the Iroquois, who were here fifty-three years ago to say the very same thing, the unity of spirit, of brotherhood. United Nations is nothing new to us. Our Confederacy is a thousand years old. The representation of the people is nothing new to us because that is whom we represent. And so for this short time I would ask that you open your ears, that you open your hearts, that you open your minds and that you consider very seriously the future of the generations, of our children to come.

- Oren Lyons, Iroquois

Given to the NGO of the UN, "Discrimination against the indigenous Populations of the Americas," Geneva Switzerland, Sept. 20-23, 1977.

Earth Teach me to Remember

(Ute, North America)

Earth teach me stillness
as the grasses are stilled with light.
Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.
Earth teach me humility
as blossoms are humble with beginning.
Earth teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.
Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands all alone.
Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.
Earth teach me resignation
as the leaves which die in the fall.
Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.

Behold Our Mother Earth (Pawnee, North America)

Behold! Our Mother Earth is lying here.
Behold! She gives of her fruitfulness.
Truly, her power she gives us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.
Behold on Mother Earth the growing fields!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power she gives us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.
Behold on Mother Earth the spreading trees!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power she gives us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.
Behold on Mother Earth the running streams!
We see the promise of her fruitfulness.
Truly, her power she gives us.
Our thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.

Prayer for the Great Family (Gary Snyder, Mohawk)

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day-
and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf and fine
root-hairs; standing still through wind and rain; their dance
is in the flowing spiral grain
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Air, bearing the soaring Swift and the silent Owl at
dawn. Breath of our song clear spirit breeze
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brothers, teaching secrets,
freedoms, and ways; who share with us their milk; self-
complete, brave, and aware
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers; holding or
releasing, streaming through all our bodies salty seas
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Sun: blinding pulsing light through trunks of trees,
through mists, warming caves where bears and snakes sleep
-he who wakes us-
in our minds so be it.
Gratitude to Great Sky who holds billions of stars - and goes yet
beyond that - beyond all powers, and thoughts and yet is
within us - Grandfather space- The mind is his Wife.
so be it.

The Buffalo

Your spirit
Still lives in my
Heart,
Keeping me alive
As you always did.
Gabrial Dumont was the last
To call you from the plains.
Now,
I must call you from the East,
I must call you from the South,
I must call you from the West,
I must call you from the North,
I must call you from below,
I must call you from above.

In this same way
I must call
All those who have
Gone before.
The dust in Montana
Will always be red
With your blood
And ours,
The mixture inseparable,
Settling on everything,
Our secret claim.
The night sky is ours
To gather strength
You
And me
on sweet grass
- Russel V. Boham, Little Shell Band, Chippewa

My Journey Home (Caddo Burial Rites)

Moccasin my feet
clothe me in ribbon and cloth
my journey home has come
Sing to me of peace
and bid me farewell, talk to me
as you usher me homeward
Cover me with mother earth
hand full by hand full
your farewells are accepted
As you wash your grief away
the gentle rain removes my
traces upon the earth
Stand not to the East
bar not my journey home
my riverward path
The river I must cross
is dark and rough
prepare my moccasin feet
that I might cross swiftly
Light the way for me
with torch of fire
for six days and nights
light my journey home
- Guyneth Bedoka Cardwell, Caddo

Prayer to my Brother

Oh, My Brother,
How Great you are in all your splendor.
Eternally watchful of us,
So that we may not fall so often.
Soaring above us,
Gliding in a circular motion,
In that watchful way.
I beg you,
Have Pity upon me,
For today, I am lost.
Open my eyes,
So that I may see,
What it is I am to see.
Open my ears,
So that I may hear,
What it is I am to hear.
Enter into my head,
Allow me to understand
The Mystery before me.
Come into my heart, so that I
May know all,

But still love.
Wrap my Being... In the vast wings... So Strong
Suspend me there,
Forever to stand beside you.
That I may never make a mistake,
One threatening the lives of Indian People.
Of this, My Brother,
With your help,
I will be allowed to love...
Understand... help,
The Indian People,
The Ones who need me at this time.
- Sheilah Eagle Bear, Colville (lake tribe)

I Would Cry

Grieving, I greet my kinsmen.
Descendants of once proud people,
I would cry for them:
For cradle-tending grandmothers,
Carrying comfort in gnarled hands;
For listless, caught-place children
Knowing-eyed, without birthdays old;
For jobless, blank, self-lost men,
Dreamless drifters, homeless at home;
For questioning, questing, angry youth
Biting bitter fruit of disinheritance;
For these, all these, would I cry,
Stream of unending sorrow,
Had I time.
- Pearl (Tommy) Goodson Goodbear, Choctaw

The End

Bring desecration to my reservation
Destroy my native way
Appoint a thief to be my chief
Force me to obey
Drive me insane with prison and chain
Ruin my life and name
Take my bride from my side
bring her disgrace and shame
Teach me to lie be afraid to die
To follow a coward's lead
Encourage me to steal and double deal
To worship violence and greed
When you're done have had your fun
And I finally become like you
Remember the man with whom you stand
Can do the same thing too
There'll be a day we have our way
Your rule will reach an end
Then I'll be your worst enemy
Tho I used to be a friend.
- "Sonny" Louis J. M. Ives

Go Forth

I go forth to move about the earth.
I go forth as the owl, wise and knowing.
I go forth as the eagle, powerful and bold.
I go forth as the dove, powerful and gentle.
I go forth to move about the earth in
Wisdom, courage, and peace.
- Alonzo Lopez, Papago

This Is My Land

This is my land
From the time of the first moon
Till the time of the last sun
It was given to my people
Wha-neh Wah-neh, the great giver of life
Made me out of the earth of this land
He said, "you are the land, and the land is you."
I take good care of this land,
For I am part of it.
I take good care of the animals,
For they are my brothers and sisters.
I take good care of the animals,
For they are my brothers and sisters.
I take care of the streams and rivers,
For they clean my land,
I honor Ocean as my father,
For he gives me food and a means of travel.
Ocean knows everything, for he is everywhere.
Ocean is wise, for he is old.
Listen to Ocean, for he speaks wisdom
He sees much, and knows more.
He say, "take care of my sister, Earth,
She is young and has little wisdom, but much kindness."
"When she smiles, it is springtime."
"Scar not her beauty, for she is beautiful beyond all things."
"Her face looks eternally upward to the beauty of sky and stars."
"Where once she lived with her father, Sky."
I am forever grateful for this beautiful and bountiful earth.
God gave it to me
This is my land.
- Clarence Pickernell

Lonely Warriors

Distant drums call from the mountain tops
Deep in the concrete canyons of Seattle
and Tacoma lonely ears are straining
to hear the songs of their childhood.
On the main streets and first streets
of Los Angeles and Spokane homeless
warriors walk the night to look and
listen for some trace of other tribesmen.
- Robert A. Swanson, Chippewa

The Wanderer's Prayer

mother of the mountains
father of the skies
guide me in my travels
be with me when I die
brother of the forests
sisters of the streams
protect me in my travels
be with me in my dreams
- Robert A. Swanson, Chippewa

Native American Proverbs

These selections are taken from "The Soul Would Have No Rainbow If the Eyes Had No Tears [and other Native American Proverbs]" by Guy A. Zona. As always, remember that part of the wisdom of the Native Americans is not what they say, but how they live. Those are things that can not be read, but must be experienced with them in a real relationship of some type.

Community & Communication

All children of Earth will be welcome at our council fires. - Seneca

The more you give, the more good things come to you. -Hopi

Give your host a little something when you leave; little presents are little courtesies and never offend. -Seneca

Always assume your guest is tired, cold, and hungry, and act accordingly. -Navaho

Never help a person who doesn't help anybody else. -Hopi

The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well. -Ojibway

The bird who has eaten cannot fly with the bird that is hungry. - Omaha

One finger cannot lift a pebble. -Hopi

What should it matter that one bowl is dark and the other pale, if each is of good design and serves its purpose well? -Hopi

A people without a history is like the wind over buffalo grass. - Sioux

A people without faith in themselves cannot survive. -Hopi

Be satisfied with needs instead of wants. -Tenton Sioux

You are never justified in arguing. -Hopi

An angry word is like striking with a knife. -Hopi

If I am in harmony with my family, that's success. -Ute

It is good to tell one's heart. -Chippewa

Remember that your children are not your own, but are lent to you by the Creator. -Mohawk

It takes a whole village to raise a child. -Omaha

You can't get rich if you look after your relatives properly. - Navajo

One foe is too many and a hundred friends too few. -Hopi

A man or woman with many children has many homes. -Lakota

Never see an old person going to carry water without getting a bucket and going in their stead. -Twanas

Do not wrong or hate your neighbor, for it is not he that you wrong but yourself. -Pima

I have been to the end of the earth. I have been to the end of the waters. I have been to the end of the sky. I have been to the end of the mountains. I have found none that are not my friends. - Navajo

Death

There is no death, only a change of worlds. -Duwamish

A brave man dies but once -a coward many times. -Iowa

In death I am born. -Hopi

They are not dead who live in the hearts they leave behind. - Tuscarora

All who have died are equal. -Comanche

Sing your death song and die like a hero going home. -Shawnee.

Death always comes out of season. -Pawnee

Life is not separate from death, it only looks that way. - Blackfoot

The Dead add their strength and counsel to the living. -Hopi

Ecology

With all things and in all things, we are relatives. -Sioux

Before eating, always take a little time to thank the food. - Arapaho

When we show our respect for other living things, they respond with respect for us. -Arapaho

Creation is ongoing. -Lakota

Be kind to everything that lives. -Omaha

We will be known forever by the tracks we leave. -Dakota

To touch the earth is to have harmony with nature. -Oglala Sioux

We are made from Mother Earth and we go back to Mother Earth. -Shenandoah

All plants are our brothers and sister. They talk to us and if we listen, we can hear them. -Arapaho

Listen to the voice of nature, for it holds treasures for you. - Huron

Mother Nature is always there to watch and care for her own. - Kiowa

When man moves away from nature his heart becomes hard. - Lakota

Everything has a beginning. -Kiowa

Every animal knows far more than you do. -Nez Perce

We stand somewhere between the mountain and the ant. - Onondaga

The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives. -Sioux

Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it. - Arapaho

God

The Great Spirit is not perfect: It has a good side and a bad side. Sometimes the bad side gives us more knowledge than the good side. -Lakota

The words of God are not like the oak leaf which dies and falls to the earth, but like the pine tree which stays green forever. - Mohawk

It makes no difference as to the name of the God, since love is the real God of all this world. -Apache

Everything the Power does, it does in a circle. -Lakota
God gives us each a song. -Ute
The rainbow is a sign from Him who is in all things. -Hopi
Inner peace and love are the greatest of God's gifts. -Tenton
Sioux

Grief

Our pleasures are shallow, our sorrows are deep. -Cheyenne
The Soul would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears. -
Minguass
Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. -Cherokee
What is past and cannot be prevented should not be grieved for. -
Pawnee
Don't be afraid to cry. It will free your mind of sorrowful
thoughts. -Hopi
The old days will never be again, even as a man will never again
be a child. -Dakota

Knowledge

Knowledge that is not used is abused. -Cree
The smarter a man is the more he needs God to protect him from
thinking he knows everything. -Pima
Our first teacher is our own heart. -Cheyenne
Teaching should come from within instead of without. -Hopi

Justice and Law

He who is present at a wrongdoing and does not lift a hand to
prevent it is as guilty as the wrongdoers. -Omaha
It is less of a problem to be poor than to be dishonest. -
Anishinabe
The rain falls on the just and unjust. -Hopi
Never sit while your seniors stand. -Cree
Even animals have their taboos. -Northern Plains Indian
Each person is his own judge. -Pima
Man's law changes with his understanding of man. Only the laws
of the spirit remain always the same. -Crow

Leadership

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my
greatest enemy-myself. -Unknown
Who serves his fellows is greatest of all. -Dakota.
Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me;
I may not follow. Walk beside me that we may be as one. -Ute
When the legends die, the dreams end; there is no more
greatness. -Shawnee
Talk to your children while they are eating; what you say will
stay even after you are gone. -Nez Perce
The greatest strength is gentleness. -Iroquois
Show respect for all men, but grovel to none. -Shawnee
A good soldier is a poor scout. -Cheyenne

Do not only point out the way, but lead the way. -Sioux
In twenty-four hours, a louse can become a patriarch. -Seneca
Everyone who is successful must have dreamed of something. -
Maricopa
The one who tells the stories rules the world. -Hopi
Force, no matter how concealed, begets resistance. -Lakota
When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, strike first. -Navaho
White men have too many chiefs. -Nez Perce
It is easy to be brave from a safe distance. -Omaha
Never part from the Chief's path, no matter how short or beautiful
the byway may be. -Seneca
A good chief gives, he does not take. -Mohawk
Before you choose a counselor, watch him with his neighbor's
children. -Sioux
He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.
-Seneca
Man has responsibility, not power. -Tuscarora
You already possess everything necessary to become great. -
Crow

Religion

a man prays one day and steals six, the Great Spirit thunders and
the Evil one laughs. -Oklahoma.
What the people believe is true. -Anishinabe
Rituals must be performed with good and pure hearts. -Hopi
To go on a vision quest is to go into the presence of the great
mystery. -Lakota
God teaches the birds to make nests, yet the nests of all birds are
not alike. -Duwamish
The only things that need the protection of men are the things of
men, not the things of the spirit. -Crow
All religions are but stepping stones back to God. -Pawnee
Men in search of a myth will usually find one. -Pueblo
Pray to understand what man has forgotten. -Lumbee
Trouble no man about his religion-- respect him in his views and
demand that he respect yours. -Shawnee
A hungry stomach makes a short prayer. -Paiute
When you lose the rhythm of the drumbeat of God, you are lost
from the peace and rhythm of life. -Cheyenne

Silence

When a favor is shown to a white man, he feels it in his head and
the tongue speaks out; when a kindness is shown to an Indian, he
feels it in his heart and the heart has no tongue. -Shoshone
When an elder speaks, be silent and listen.
Even your silence holds a sort of prayer. -Apache
When there is true hospitality, not many words are needed. -
Arapaho
The more you ask how far you have to go, the longer your
journey seems. -Seneca

Beware of the man who does not talk and the dog that does not bark. -Cheyenne

No answer is also an answer. -Hopi

Every bird loves to hear himself sing. -Arapaho

The man who freely gives his opinion should be ready to fight fiercely. -Iowa

Eating little and speaking little can hurt no man. -Hopi

When the wisdom keepers speak, all should listen. -Seneca

The moon is not shamed by the barking of dogs. -Southwest.

Truth

Speak the truth in humility to all people. Only then can you be a true man. -Sioux

Truth doesn't happen, it just is. -Hopi

Lying is a great shame. -Sioux

Ask questions from your heart and you will be answered from the heart. -Omaha

Let your eyes be offended by the sight of lying and deceitful men. -Hopi

No one else can represent your conscience. -Anishinabe

To gossip is like playing checkers with an evil spirit; you win occasionally but are more often trapped at your own game. -Hopi

Let no one speak ill of the absent. -Hopi

If you dig a pit for me, you dig one for yourself. -Creole

Wisdom

Those who have one foot in the canoe and one foot in the boat are going to fall into the river. Tuscarora

Not westward, but eastward seek the coming of the light. - Dakota

Wisdom comes only when you stop looking for it and start living the life the Creator intended for you. -Hopi.

Dreams are wiser than men. -Omaha

Life is as the flash of the firefly in the night, the breath of the buffalo in the wintertime. -Blackfoot.

If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come. -Arapaho

There are no secrets. There is no mystery. There is only common sense. -Onondaga

Hold fast to the words of your ancestors. -Hopi

Every fire is the same size when it starts. -Seneca

If a man is as wise as a serpent he can afford to be as harmless as a dove. -Cheyenne

Seek wisdom, not knowledge. Knowledge is of the past, wisdom is of the future. -Lumbee

War and Peace

It is no longer good enough to cry peace, we must act peace, live peace, and live in peace. -Shenandoah

Make my enemy brave and strong, so that if defeated, I will not be ashamed. -Plains Indian

The weakness of the enemy makes our strength. -Cherokee

It is senseless to fight when you cannot hope to win. -Apachee

There can never be peace between nations until it is first known that true peace is within the souls of men. -Oglala Sioux

Even a small mouse has anger. -Unknown

After dark all cats are leopards. -Zuni

Only two relationships are possible- to be a friend or an enemy. - Cree

Miscellaneous

The lazy man is apt to be envious. -Omaha

If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies in yourself. - Minquass

Spanish-American Thoughts

This section has so far proven to be a difficult area for me to locate materials, because I do not know Spanish, but I hope that this selection is a good start or a pleasant continuation for you. These first stories were presented by Teresa Pijoan Van Etten in "Spanish-American Folktales" 1990, Augush House, Inc. PO Box 3223, Little Rock, Ark., 72203, 503-372-5450. ISBN: 0-87483-155-5 (\$9.95.) I've also included some poetry taken from: "Paperdance: 55 Latino poets." edited by Victor Hernandez Cruz, Leroy V. Quintana and Virgil Suarez by Persea Books, Inc.. 60 Madison Ave., NYC 10010. ISBN 0-89255-201-8.

Wise Stones

A father had three daughters who were very beautiful, very strong, and very clever. When the father fell ill, he got up from his bed and prayed before la Virgen de Guadalupe.

"What my daughters desire of life," he asked, "please give them. They are deserving of what they wish."

The father died.

The land was divided among the three daughters. The youngest thanked God for her gift. The middle one thanked God for her gift. The oldest said, "How awful! Now I must work my land alone, and I am not a slave!"

She was filled with anger.

One day, a stranger walked across their lands. She carried herself in the manner of a wise woman. She asked the youngest daughter why she was clearing the field.

"I am clearing my field so that I can grow chilies to share with my sisters and to sell to my neighbors."

The wise woman walked to the second daughter. "What are you clearing your fields for?"

The second daughter replied, "Alfalfa for my horses and my sister's horses - and also to sell in town, for I will grow the best alfalfa in all the valley."

The wise woman walked to the oldest daughter. "My daughter, why are you clearing your fields?"

This was not a good time to ask the oldest daughter, for she was angry. She had come across a whole part of the field that was packed with stones. She had hurt her back pulling them up, only to find more and more. "I am growing stones," she replied angrily. "They come up one after another." The oldest daughter bent again over her work.

The fall came, and the sister went out to harvest their crops.

The youngest sister had big, fat, ripe red chilies. They were better than any she had ever tasted.

The second sister harvested fields of green, thick-leafed alfalfa, lush and green.

The third sister sat in her field in tears of sadness. Her field was filled with stones. The more she tried to clear the stones, the more would appear. Her two sisters came up and comforted her. They could not understand her hardship

Meadowlark

A young boy raced out of the house early in the morning. He ran down the path to the forest. There he sat, still and listening. Wings rustled nearby, and then the meadowlark sang.

Everyday the song would pierce the air, lifting the animals of the forest out of their hiding places. They would all listen. The

boy felt honored and special, for it was as if each morning the meadowlark waited for him to arrive before she sang.

The boy ran home. He raced into his mother's kitchen, grabbing at her skirt and calling out, "Mother, mother, you should have heard the meadowlark today. Oh, mother, it sang so beautifully and it waited, it waited for me. Oh, mother, come hear the song of the meadowlark."

The mother stood watching her son. She pulled her skirt out of his hands. "You who listen to birds, go, get out of here. Go down to the field and help your father with the work. Go!"

The boy then raced to his father. "Father, father, you should have been there! The meadowlark sang, again she sang, and the song this morning was more beautiful than the last. Oh, father, come with me to the forest, and let's listen to the meadowlark."

The father shook his head, but with a smile he said, "You come here and take this shovel. We have much work to do."

The two of them worked. The boy talked on and on about the meadowlark, and the father thought his own thoughts.

Men from other places were moving onto adjoining lands and taking over his water from the ditch. They were putting up fences and bringing in cattle that knocked down the fences and ate his crops.

The winter was poor. They hardly had any food. He watched their life grow poor.

One morning, the boy got up early and raced out to the forest. The meadowlark sang her bird could bring them some happiness. he came up with an idea.

He could trap the meadowlark and bring her home. He could feed her, and she would sing, bringing joy to the hearts of his hard-working parents.

The first day, the boy made a cage.

The second day, he took it to the forest and placed it in a tree.

The third day, he put food in the cage and waited.

The fourth day, he trapped the meadowlark.

He carried her home. He showed her to his mother who was busy. She put the cage up high, hanging from a wooden beam in the ceiling.

Every morning the boy ran to the forest and gathered berries and bugs to feed the meadowlark.

The meadowlark sang and sang.

The brutal cold winds that sting the soul blew from the north. The food was gone. Mother was up every day trying to fix something that would keep them alive. Father stoked the fire, hoping the wood would hold, and knowing it wouldn't. The boy went to the forest to gather what food he could find to feed the meadowlark.

The meadowlark sang, and whether they knew it or not, the song kept the family fed in spirit.

One morning as the boy raced for the door, his father scooped him up in his arms. "Where are you going in such a hurry every morning?"

The boy wriggled for his freedom. "I go to the forest to get food for the meadowlark."

The father dropped the boy on his feet. "What? You race through the cold snow, letting heat out of the house, to gather food for the bird?"

"The bird sings beautiful songs," said the boy.

The father reached up to the cage. He opened the cage and pulled out the meadowlark. He took the meadowlark in his

strong hands, and with one swift gesture, he broke her neck. The bird dropped from his hands to the clean dirt floor.

The boy stared at the dead bird in disbelief. Then, all at once, the father's eyes rolled back, his face went white, his hands started to shake, and the father fell to the floor, dead, next to the beautiful meadowlark.

Mother walked into the room. She gasped, and reached for her son. "What... what has happened?"

The boy turned to her. "Mother, my mother, we can live without food for a time, we can live without heat for a time, but we cannot live without the spirit of song."

Universal Mother (Kagaba, South America)

The mother of our songs, the mother of all our seed, bore us in the beginning of things and so she is the mother of all types of men, the mother of all nations. She is the mother of the thunder, the mother of the streams, the mother of the trees and all things. She is the mother of the world and of the older brothers, the stone-people. She is the mother of the fruits of the earth and of all things. She is the mother of our youngest brothers, the French and the strangers. She is the mother of our dance paraphernalia, of all our temples and she is the only mother we possess. She is alone the mother of the fire and the Sun and the Milky Way... She is the mother of the rain and the only mother we possess. And she has left us a token in all temples... a token in the form of songs and dances.

She has no cult, and no prayers are really directed to her, but when the fields are sown and the priests chant their incantations the Kagaba say, "And then we think of the one and the only mother of the growing things, of the mother of all things." One prayer was recorded. "Our mother of the growing fields, our mother of the streams, will you have pity upon us? For to whom do we belong? Whose seeds are we? To our mother alone do we belong."

One Being Alone: Berkeley, 1969

Between my eyes and the moon
there were
365 nights on insomnia,
a small crack in my stomach,
the pain of knowing he was not mine,
the ray of light from a star,
a band of wakeful raccoons

looting the garbage cans of their treasure,
and my neighbor
who ran
crazed
at midnight
with nothing
to shelter him
from the full moon
but a pair of torn socks
and a straight jacket.

Lucha Corpi of Veracruz Mexico, tran. by Catherine Rodriguez-Nieto

Delicious Death

Memory: You were fifteen in the mountains,
your friends were going hunting,
you wanted to go.

Cold, autumn day-sky of steel and rifles, the shade of bullets.
We fought. I didn't want to let you go. And you stood up to me,
"My friends are going, their parents let them hunt, like am I some
kind of wimp or what, Mom..."
We walked into Thrifty's to buy the bullets,
you would use one of their rifles - I imagined
you being shot or shooting another eager boy/man.
"What you kill you eat, do you understand?"
I stared each word into your eyes. As you
walked away, I said to the Spirits, "Guard
this human who goes in search of
lives."

* * * * *

You brought home four small quail.
I took them saying "Dinner." I stuffed
them with rice, apples, baked them in garlic,
onions, wine. "Tonight, Mom?" "Yes, tonight."
I plucked the softest tail feathers and as you
showered, I placed them in your pillow case:
"May the thunder and the prey be one.
May the hunter eat and be eaten in time.
May the boy always be alive in the man."

* * * * *

We ate, mostly, in silence -
I felt you thinking, I just
killed this, what I'm chewing...
On the highest peaks the first
powder shines like the moon -
winter comes so quickly.
On your face soft, blonde hair (yes, this
son is a gringo) shines like manhood -
childhood leaves so quickly.
The wonder of the hunt is on my tongue,
I taste it - wild, tangy, reluctant -
this flesh feeds me well.
I light the candles and thank the quail
in a clear voice - I thank them for their
small bodies, their immense, winged souls.
"God, Mom, you're making me feel like a killer."
"Well, you are and so am I."
Swallowing, swallowing this delicious death.
-Alma Luz Villanueva

Day of the Dead

In the keen obsidian night, lost
On a lightless street in a nameless town
We ask directions in splintered Spanish
As a white dog howls and seems to vanish.

Cameras, tapes and pens in hand, blindly
We've come to see to hear and know
What's in our blood but not our head
The dance of ghosts that's never dead.

Across a ditch and mounds of earth, seething
Between the graves and flowering trees
The crowd reflects its buried past
In a riot of masks and stamping feet.

At the molten core of the shouting throng, twirling
To the eternal tattoo of the fleeting song,

Witches, demons and holy ghouls
Lean and lurch with laughing fools.

I ask the man beside me, reeling
What the mirrored masks are hiding
And feel the air outside my skin
Tug at something deep within.

You want to understand? he say, smiling
And offers me a drink as a grinning devil
Snags my eye, daring me to follow

I lift the cup of dreams and swallow.

-Guy Garcia (born in L.A.)

Finding Home

I have traveled north again,
to these gray skies
and empty doorways.
Fall, and I recognize
the rusted leaves descending
near the silence of your home.
You, a part of this strange
American landscape with its
cold dry winds,
the honks of geese and
the hardwood floors. It's more
familiar now than
the fluorescent rainbow on the overpass,
or the clatter of politicos in the corners,
or the palm fronds falling by the highway.
I must travel again, soon.

-Carolina Hospital (Cuban-American)

Post-Colonial Contemplations

1
The world grows smaller
and our faces larger
this strange proximity
makes us uneasy neighbors.
The centuries have held
like walls around us
the oceans -wet borderlands
have floated dark diseases
in the veins of confused decades.
Iron fists have punched holes
into the stunned face
of each bruised epoch.
Now we must face the other
now we must face ourselves.
The days like anger have disappeared
into the vanity of each second,
our time has been enslaved like this
for 500 years of alternating servitudes.
We have bowed before too many false gods
and our prayers have made slaves of us.

2
I have a thousand gods
inside me dancing
a goddess in every room,
I am a born again pagan
whirling the sins of the world

on my nose.
Jester, fool, mad victim
of inappropriate appropriations.
My acrobatic karmas bounce
like noisy children
off the walls of my inner cities
I run with echoes
that call me many names
I call my gods many names
we remain anonymous - however-
on a stage called the universe
and not even 500 can steal that away.
Not even 500 years can erode that spirit
or extinguish the namelessness
of each face that has faced the uncertainty of namelessness.
-by Naomi Quinonez (born in L.A.)

Aztec Thoughts

Although the reputation of the Aztecs is a little bit bloodthirsty, they did have a philosophy and poets. The image of flowers, death and song were among the most popular themes for them to contemplate, apparently songs constituted the medium of their education. I got these from a few books on Aztec philosophy a few years ago. These are all of pre-Spanish origin, recorded from tribal elders by a few monks.

Heaven

Where is the land?
The more I weep, the more I am afflicted,
the more my heart may not desire it,
have I not, when all is said, to go to the Land of the Mystery?

The Land of the Dead

Here on earth our hearts say:
Oh my friends, would that we were immortal,
Oh friends, where is the land in which one does not die?
Shall it be that I go?
Does my mother live there? Does my father live there?

Land of Mystery

In the Land of the Mystery... my heart shudders:
If only I had not to die, had not to perish....
I suffer and feel pain.

Dreams and Flowers

We come only to sleep,
We come only to dream:
It is not true, not true we come to live on the earth:
Spring grass are we become;
It comes, gloriously trailing, it puts out buds, our heart,
The flower of our bodies opens a few petals and withers!

Seeking

What do you Seek?
What does your mind seek?
Where is your heart?
If you give your heart to each and everything,
you lead it nowhere: you destroy your heart.
Can anything be found on earth?

Flowers

Every man on earth
carries with him some conviction;
but it is for a brief period only
that flowers of happiness pass before our eyes.

The Wise Man

A stout torch that does not smoke.
A perforated mirror.
He studies the black and red manuscripts,
He himself is writing and wisdom.
He is the path, the true way for others.
He directs people and things.
He is a guide in human affairs.
The wise man is careful like a physician.
He preserves tradition.
He follows the path of truth.
Teacher of the truth, he never ceases to admonish.
He makes wise the countenances of others,
To them he gives a face;
He leads them to develop it.
He opens their ears and enlightens them.
He shows them their path.
One depends on him.
He puts a mirror before others;
He makes them prudent, cautious;

He causes a face to appear in them.
He attends to things;
He regulates their path,
He arranges and commands.
He applies his light to the world.
He knows what is above us,
And in the region of the dead.
He is a serious man.
Everyone is comforted by him, corrected, taught.
Thanks to him people humanize their will.
He comforts the heart,
He comforts the people,
He helps, gives remedies, heals everyone.

Why Do We Live?

Is it true that on earth one lives?
Not forever on earth, only a little while.
Though jade it may be, it breaks;
Though gold it may be, it is crushed;
Though it be quetzal plumes, it shall not last.
Not forever on earth, only a little while.

American Wisdom: What Do We Mean When You Say God?

We've already heard from many countries and famous writers about what religion and God is, but now let's look at what the average American says about God. Perhaps as Druids, this is a question that we should be asking our neighbors and friends more often. These quotes are taken from a lovely little book called, "What Do We Mean When We Say God?" compiled by Deidre Sullivan, of Cader Books/ Doubleday, 1990. ISBN 0-385-41132-4. Ms. Sullivan surveyed a random portion of the population, by inviting requests in a survey, and by actually talking to people on her travels. Here are her results.

Hey!

God created us in his image. Since the, human beings have been trying to create God in their image. The word 'god' comes from the Anglo-Saxon. It means 'one who is greeted.' God is the mystery of life we greet. Experiencing God is like saying 'Hey!' Sometimes we experience the mystery of God in a flower, in another person, in ourselves. The mystery expresses itself in everything. When we recognize it and try to put a word on it, it's 'Hey.' -Daniel Martin, 42, Catholic Priest, Rye, New York

Back to the Basics

Physics doesn't leave any room for magic- there can't be an omnipotent being pulling our strings and determining our future. Any activity that is designed to appease (or beg favors) from this mythical being is probably not productive. Instead of using religion as an excuse for not going to a friend's wedding, declaring a war, or persecuting someone, let's concentrate on what God really is: doing something nice for another person with no hope of being repaid. Taking care of nature. Being nice for no good reason. Never rationalizing behavior that hurts another. Always giving more than you get. That's my God. -Seth Godin, 30, Video Producer, Mt. Vernon, New York.

Our Own God

My opinion of God is that everyone sees God in their own way. I see God as being black because I'm black. In the same breath, a white person might see God as being white. I have no objection because we both have the same God, we just see him differently. -Vernon Hodge, 15, Bronx, New York

Where is God? Go and Look!

I believe that you can call God by any name because we firmly believe that there is no name which is not God's name. All sounds have been created by God. So any sound which is created should name Him, should address Him, should be His name. The rustling of the leaves, the sound of the ocean and singing of the birds, all glorify God.

God has given us freedom to do our own thinking and to ask our own questions. He in effect says listen to all that I have said, but make your own decision. He encourages us to ask questions. That's why there are so many branches of Hinduism. We are allowed to choose our own path and there is so much we can choose from. I look at the whole world of scripture, not just

Hindu or Muslim or Christian ones. I believe God is in everything. There are many instances of where God has spoken. -Gopeenath Galagali, 29, Hindu Preacher, Nashville TN

Problems with God

There's a polluted aspect to the word 'God.' In our culture, we're surrounded by either a self-centered secularism or just crazy religion. You've either got the secular humanists who think God talk is garbage and that it's silly to raise the issue. Or you get the crazy people who think they've got God in their hip pocket and that God is going to do people in. So there are a lot of reasons why the word 'God' has a brutalizing effect on people. And here I try and talk about God as that boundless mystery and words like 'lover' and 'friend' and 'mercy' come to mind. Most people don't want to believe in God at all. They don't want faith. They want certainty. -Alan Jones, 50, Dean, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, CA

Islam's Attractiveness

My goal in life is to worship Allah. That is my reason for being. Muslims believe that God is actively involved in the world; therefore, Muslims should be actively involved in the world as a reflection of that worship. Everything I do has to connote worship: my marriage, my conduct, my work - even talking on the phone is part of worship. Islam really expands the notion of worship. It's not just ritual or prayer - although rituals are important (praying five times a day, fasting, etc..) But every act you do should connote worship because you should always be in remembrance of Allah. I think this simplicity and holism is what attracts people to Islam. -Amer Haleem, 32, Editor of Islamic Horizons, Oak Lawn, IL

A Glass of Water's Travels

My Church is the church of the eternally fascinated. Because the way it looks to me is that God is infinite. Religions don't hold up under the light of scrutiny so I try to be like the swan who separates milk from water. I just chuck the rest. It is all really one. You take a glass of water, that water has passed through Abraham Lincoln's body, Hitler's body, a gazelle in Africa's body. We're all one. Past, present, and future exist simultaneously; if I didn't blow my nose this morning, then Jesus couldn't have been crucified. It's all inextricably bound. -Anthony Adams, 37, Screenwriter, Sherman Oaks, CA

Sleeping Watchman

I have an image of god as a guy in high top sneakers with his feet up on a desk with his head turned away from the monitor that's keeping track of our universe -it does seem that he has his attention elsewhere. -Fred Navarro, 24, Student, Washington D.C.

Lesson from Bali

Because our prayers before dinner were silent, I thought, for the longest time, that silence was God and God was silence. When I sat there with my head bowed in silence, I felt like I was sitting in God.

As I grew up, I got a lot more talkative and longed for a spoken dialogue with God, but I had this deep feeling that there was no language powerful enough to penetrate God's great, silent, timeless indifference.

That's when I began to think of God in terms of lesser local gods or guardians. They are beings slightly more powerful

than us that try their imperfect best when asked in a heartfelt and sincere way, at divine intervention. Now when I pray, I pray to a small Balinese icon that was blessed and given to me in Bali by a Balinese shaman. I always speak out loud and begin by asking for the easement of world pain, then zero in on the more personal, particular needs. When I pray, I have a clear image of that jolly, laughing shaman who gave the icon. He had a wonderful gold-toothed laugh and the memory of his laughter is as healing for me as the touch of any lesser god could be.

It's like what Martin Dysart, the psychiatrist in *Equus*, meant when he said, 'Look. Life is only comprehensible through a thousand local Gods.' -Spalding Gray, 48, writer/performer, NYC

Aka-Ba-Da-Dia

We believe in one Supreme Being, Aka-Ba-Da-Dia, the first maker, the creator of all thing. The Creator is kind of a mystical being who works through animals or plants, through nature, the wind, the air, fire, water, and the earth. When we seek a vision, we go on a vision quest. We'll fast for maybe three or four days and pray for guidance at night. This is how we get close to the Creator. By meditating we listen to what He has to give us. His interpreter comes in the form of an animal or in the form of wind or rain, thunder, or even a bird. This personal messenger talks to you and guides you. We never see the Creator Himself, but we learn His wishes. This is the way that the Medicine Man reaches spirituality, by communicating with the messenger. -Dan Old Elk, 50, Crow Sundance Chief, Harden, Montana

Together in Church

I think God is spirit, and part of the message of Jesus that's really appealing to me is that spirit lives both outside of us and inside of us and unites us to other people. I think the reason I go to church Sunday after Sunday is that is compelling and moving to be with a group of people in that way. We have something in common - that we really want to learn how to love each other better. There is something useful about having a common framework of prayer. It seems to sometimes help smooth over life's bumps. -Ellen Schell, 37, Nurse, San Francisco, CA

Women and God

As a woman, I'm aware of the specific and special ways women have an opportunity to know God. In a unique way, we as women come closer to the creative process in childbirth than any other species. As a woman, carrying another human life and nurturing that life for nine months in my body and literally putting my life on the line in the delivery process - as only women do - is an experience that is closer to God than any one I know. -May Cunningham-Agee, 38, Exec. Dir., The Nurturing Network, Boise, ID

Difficulties with God

For me, growing up in a Hasidic family, the central question was the Holocaust. My family - my aunts, uncles, parents - were survivors. For me, talking about God was always a problem because I not only had to accept a God, but I had to accept a God that let my cousins get gassed to death. I found this extremely difficult. I'd go to synagogue and sit next to one person who didn't believe in God because he'd lost his family in the concentration camps. When I go older, he told me, 'Look, I come here because this is what I'm familiar with, but I cannot believe in a God that let my children be gassed.' And the other man tells me

that after losing his children he has to believe in God - otherwise life would be pointless. So any discussion of theology is a discussion about a God that was able to stand by while His people were tortured. I stopped having an easy time praying and believing in any kind of traditional God when I was eighteen. While there might not be a God now, perhaps there will be one in the future. -Joshua Halberstam, 43, Philosophy Prof. NYU, NYC.

A Hard Job

I think God does love us and I think He or She has a great compassion, but I believe that God has some faults just like everybody else. If He were all-loving and all-forgiving, we wouldn't be living in the world we live in right now and there would be peace. There wouldn't be fighting. There wouldn't be hunger or anything like that. I think God is overwhelmed by what's going on. -Jacki Maher, 20, Student, Univ of Mont., Missoula

Consider Allah

I have to ask then 'Who's Allah?' It's easier for me to understand more about Allah when I contemplate his 99 attributes. First, He is the 'Source of Mercy.' So I think of the most merciful, kind, and considerate people I can possibly think of. I know that their mercy is just a fraction of what Allah has. Allah is also the Compassionate One, the Holy One, The Ruler.... Again, what I can imagine is only a fraction of His Essence. -Jeanette Hablallah, 40, Teacher, Lombard, Ill

The Hidden Sun

I believe in the sun even when it isn't shining. I believe in love even when I am alone. I believe in God even when He is silent. - Jewish refugee, WW2, Poland

Convenient Invention

It seems to me that God is a convenient invention of the human mind. We are aware of our own ignorance and so we find refuge in a hypothetical being who knows everything. We are aware of our own weakness and so we find refuge in a hypothetical being who is all-powerful and who will take care of us out of a generalized benevolence. By imagining a God, then, human beings avoid having to do anything about their own ignorance and helplessness and this saves a lot of trouble. -Isaac Asimov, 70, Writer, NYC

Grammatical God

In linguistic terms, I think of God as a verb, not a noun. I think of Jesus as a metaphor, a mythic image, as well as an historical person who had profound inner experiences. For me, worship of Jesus as God is a form of idolatry. It's getting stuck on the image, instead of what lie beyond. And though images stir the memory of God, God, to me, is a mystery that is unspeakable and beyond image. -Joe Wakefield, 45, Jungian Analyst, Austin, TX

Questioning

When people say not to question God because it's wrong, they're wrong. It never hurts to question something we don't know. All you are doing is wanting to know God in your heart. -Eva Frances Santos, 15, NYC

A Sine Wave

Once I dreamt what it must feel like to be God. At the time, I had been doing a lot of work with electronic music. That night I dreamt that I was a sine wave. I actually felt what it was like to be this rather abstract energy. It later occurred to me that I could have just as easily become a daisy or a door or a rock or a cat. I realized that being unencumbered by a human body, you have a whole different perception of things. This is where I muck it up a bit because now when I talk about it I'm interpreting the experience as 'Brian' would. When I was that sine wave, I was not tied to a 'body consciousness.' I was just a sine wave, pure and simple. That's what I think God is. Energy that is totally conscious of being everything - a sine wave, a speck of dust, a thought, you, me, whatever -but all at the same time. -Brian Mitchell, 32, Actor and musician, Sherman Oaks, Ca

God the Creator

God, the creator of all. The One who listens and responds to our every request, but does not receive the same courtesy from us. He must be merciful because this world still survives... in spite of itself. -Margaret Bradley, 39, Contract Admin., Greenbelt, Maryland

A word talking about God is very much like a finger pointing at the moon. It's not he moon; it's just a finger. A 1000 names exist in Vishnu Hinduism, and 99 in Islam and all of them are the names of the unnamable. Each name represents a different facet of God and when you put them all together they still don't represent the totality.. It is not something that can be conceptualized. God is not a concept. It is beyond concept. Concepts just point in the direction. Like a diving board - you walk to the end of it then you dive in. In that sense you can't know God. You can be one with God or merge with God or know facets of God. It's the edge - where the form and the formless meet. -Ram Dass, 59, Spiritual Teacher, San Anselmo, CA

True Friend

I'm not a person who reads the Bible day and night. I don't go to church every Sunday. To some people that means my faith is not strong, but it is. I love God. People think to have a strong faith you have to worship God. Sure, I worship God, but not in the way you think. He is a friend who I tell things to, like things I won't tell anyone else. I feel He is the best pal someone could have. When I move, He is always there to talk to. If all my other friends I like are mad at me, He won't be. He's a true friend who I love. -Shannon Person, 13, Woodstock, Ill

Serving

You know, I hear so many people pray that we need to serve the poor and serve the hungry and serve the lonely and serve the depressed. But we can't do that until we love the poor, and love the depressed, and love the lonely. We need to love. Christ came to Earth and who did He work with? He worked with the poor and the lepers. I'm not Christ but I have Christ in my heart. People ask me how I can work with AIDS patients. Who did Christ work with? -Jim Sichko, 22, Student, Orange, TX

Life is an Offering

Living is knowing God. I can only conclude that all life and death is miraculous. I am awed by it. I feel humbled by it. Everything I do in life is an offering. An essential awareness of

one's life process is the worship of God - because that means giving up concern about what other people have thought, are thinking, or will think. The elimination of fear is a process that takes place with the growth and awareness of the miraculous nature of life and death. And so, minding your own business as intensely as possible is an act of worship. -Olga Bloom, 70, Barge Music, Brooklyn, NY

No Church Can

We are missing the boat if we think Jesus took away our sins or can single-handedly save us. The world seems to be full of people who are like ships without rudders. The orthodox churches (I was a member for over fifty years, with strict attendance at Mass) have missed what Jesus taught. We are responsible for our own salvation. No church can save or condemn us. -John A. Devine, 58, retired cartographer, St. Louis, MO

YHWH

The traditional Hebrew word 'YHWH' has no vowels and is conventionally translated as 'Lord' in Jewish prayer books. IN Hebrew, people usually- in order to avoid pronouncing these letters - use the euphemism 'Adonai.' We felt very uncomfortable with that understanding of how to deal with those four letters. In translation, 'Adonai' is transcendent, 'up there', domination-oriented- rather than immanent, community -focused, and androgynous. One day I discovered a powerful and authentic way of dealing with the four letters and that was to pronounce it without any vowel sounds. The word came out like Yyyyhhhhwwwwhhh - just like a breathing sound - which I realized was of course authentically and correctly the 'real' name of God. Breathing is a powerful metaphor for God. God is truly the breath of life. -Arthur Waskow, 56, Shalom Center, Philadelphia, Penn

Towards What?

I'm struggling with what God means to me and I've never felt so alone. Sometimes I wish that everything would just resolve itself or dissolve. My confidence in everything goes down. I feel a lot less supported. Some people ask me, 'Are you religious?' and I say, 'No, but I'm spiritual.' But then when I'm alone, I wonder, 'Spiritual towards what?' -Margaret Kim, 20 Clark Univ., Worcester, MA

In Each Other

In the craft, one of the most important things we do is see God in each other. It's a very difficult task. But I think that is one of the most extraordinary things a human being can do, to see God and Goddess in other human beings and to form partnerships and relationships based on that vision. Deb. Lipp, 28, Wiccan Priestess, Dumont, NJ, RDNA member

In the Flowers

When we see the perfection in a child or lover or friend and when we let all the barriers and all the walls down, we're there in God together. Go is the flowers, the trees, everything. It's all creation - as the Native Americans would say, 'the winged, the four-legged, all that flies, and all that swims.' God is completely forgiving and completely accepting, never ever judging. I sometimes have this feeling of God waiting in joyful anticipation of what we're going to do next on this journey back home into

that place of truth- which is God. -Karla LaVoie, 44, Educator, Asbury Park, NJ

God is Living

A long time ago, when I was a nurse, I would see God in other people through their bravery, their suffering, and through their determination to live, -knowing that they had a fatal disease or knowing that their child had a fatal disease. Also, I often see God when families interact with each other - when they are forgiving and loving and good to each other. That's God. -Joan Stiff, 58, Mayor, Woodside, CA

God is Potential

God is potential - if I want to draw on it. God works through an urge to grow, an urge toward perfection. I see what I call God working in people. When someone thinks something through and says, 'I've just got to do that better,' or 'This is what I need to look at,' that the growth principle in people, being the best you can be. That's God at work... The spirit of God embodied in a human being is full of compassion; its vulnerable to hurt, any way, any where. What does it mean to be close to God in the way that Jesus was close to God? What is the Christ spirit I personally experience? The spirit of God moves me, touches me. It's the spirit at the growing edge of my life. This has to do with being utterly true to yourself, with being human and not trying to 'be holy.' To use words as a litmus test was not what Jesus had in mind. To say that you have to believe in Christ in order to get to heaven is another crucifixion of what Christ was all about. - Marty Walton, 53, General Secretary, Friend General Conference, Philadelphia, Penn

The Deer God

When I was younger, I had a strong aversion to the use of the word 'God.' In fact I avoided it and I avoided people who spoke about God. I attended a powerful workshop with a Huichol Indian shaman who was 104 years old. He introduced me to his culture's Deer God. I got really intrigued with this Deer God and it sort of got to me on a personal level. After the workshop, I bought a bag from the shaman which had been used to gather peyote and this bag had deer woven into it. At home alone, I began getting image of the deer, and at the same time, live deer started wandering into my back yard. I meditated every day and began talking to the Deer God. Very slowly, over time, I found myself talking to the Deer God, saying "Deer God' this and 'Deer God' that. One day I noticed that I was saying 'Dear God.' It was so powerful that I had to laugh. It was like I tricked myself into the use of that 'word.' It snuck it the back door. I've been in love with God ever since. -Martha Powers, Librarian, Sherwood, OR

Face of God

It seems to me that our understanding of what or who God is proceeds or happens simultaneously as we understand who we are. I don't think we learn one without the other. So as our own selves begin to emerge and we begin to understand the self in all it's parameters - as deeply as that means - then the 'face of God' is likely to emerge. -Laurie Sackler, 39, Housewife, Brooklyn, NY

Hindu Ritualism

Hinduism, the way I perceived it to be when I was a little girl growing up in India, involved a lot of ritualism. I had no patience with it, and it had no meaning for me since I did not understand the meaning of and the reasoning behind all the ritual.

In our house, half the day was spent on rituals - God this and God that. So I sort of got turned off. Years later, after I got married and had children, I realized that there is a God. The beauty and mystery of Nature opened my eyes to this. Then away from the din of my family and all the rituals, the gurus started to make some sense. They are superior human beings who have attained levels of perfection which I certainly haven't or will not attain for a while. They are God's messengers, here to teach us how to achieve oneness with God and overcome the cycle of rebirth. - Uma K. Desai, 49, Financial consultant, Lawrenceville, NJ

Carpentry

God teaches me lessons during the workday. Being in construction, I've cleared lots, done electrical work, built roofs, painted. Clearing the lot can be boring and time-consuming. But all that foundation work was to be done, not only on the job but in our hearts. I've worked on projects where the foundation wasn't level. And once you get to the second story, you've got to go back and make all these adjustments. I really see that God wants me to take the time to build a strong foundation for Him in my heart. -Jim Ryan, 24, Carpenter, Panama City, FL

A Map

I think that we've all been given a sort of map to a city. One person lives to the north. One person live to the east. Nobody lives in exactly the same place. Well, if everyone was given the exact same map to get to that same point everyone but one person would be extremely lost. As we get closer to a sort of universal harmony and as we get more in tune, I think the squabbling stops, because then everybody agrees, 'Oh yeah, I understand your map.' -Kort Falkenberg iii, 37, Film and Video Director, North Hollywood, CA

A Hologram

It's like a hologram. God is the spirit behind every one of us - although we think of ourselves as separate beings. Like a hologram, His total image is in each of us. Each fractionated part still shows a picture of the whole. -John Gale, 44, Mechanical Engineer, Columbia, SC

John Barleycorn

When I talk about God, I'm usually talking about John Barleycorn, the Green God, the spirit of all vegetation. He's the Jack in the Green. He comes up in the springtime and grows wise in the summer. He's reaped in the fall and we bake His body into bread and eat it and this is the origin of the Christian Eucharist as well as many Pagan festivals and even the song "John Barleycorn." When I speak of the Goddess, I don't mean it in the monotheistic sense. I realize that a lot of women's spirituality groups have basically just simply used the word 'Goddess' to replace 'God.' To me, that kind of Goddess is just God in drag. -Morning Glory Zell, 41, Histologist, Ukiah, CA

One Size Fits All

The marvelous thing for me about God is that the God concept is something that works for people regardless of what stage of spiritual development or inner knowing they are at. The simplest person with very little capabilities or intelligence can have a concept of God and can the person who is as enlightened as we can imagine. The God concept is as multilevel as you can imagine. This is not true of other notions in our world.

God is a very personal thing- which does not mean He is a person. It means that each person has the opportunity to devise his own notion of what is God to him. That's sacred. None of us has the right to take that away from anyone else - which is to say that if we do, we are transgressing on something pretty heavy. -William Kautz, 65, Exec. Dir. Center for Applied Intuition, Fairfax, CA

Where is the Water?

The Jewish notion of God is not really explicit, perhaps because we do not believe that God ever took human form or walked the earth. When I try to speak about God, I think it is often to share my perplexity. I often cite the parable from a children's textbook about a little fish. One day he is swimming close to the surface when he hears somebody talking about the water - only he doesn't know what is meant by water. He wonders: 'Where is the water?' So he swims around and asks all the different fish, 'Where is the water?' but they don't know. Finally he finds the wisest fish in the ocean, who says, 'The water is all around you. The water is inside you. The water travels through you.' But the little fish just laughs and swims off. To this day he is still asking, 'Where is the water?' -Robert Kirschner, 39, Rabbi, San Francisco, CA

A Fish out of Water

Fish in the ocean don't doubt its existence; they live in it. God is like that, the ground of all beings, being itself. A fish out of water dies. A man apart from God ceases to be man. He may continue to breathe but he is dead. -William Graham Cole, 72, Educator, Chicago, Ill

Unlisted Phone Number

Trying to find God is like looking for an unlisted phone number - only much worse. People who aren't insiders don't have his number. They feel he is inaccessible. At least with the telephone company, you can call and rant and rave and invent a family emergency and they might give you the number. But no one can tell you how to find God. There is definitely a greater force that can screw people over, a main guy who controls the time clock. Also, God is certainly a man. It's a man's world. He's set it up so maleness controls. Don't misunderstand me. There's an advantage to being female. Females can see through maleness. But nature is wild and dangerous. It's very male to be aggressive and make people feel threatened. Human interaction is what softens and smoothes and that comes from women. -Marian Salzman, 31, Media Executive, NYC

The Creator

We greet the sun because the sun gives us warmth and life. Somebody along the way said, 'These guys are worshipping the sun.' But we're not worshipping the sun, we just honor the sun by greeting it in the morning and we pray to the Creator. The Creator created the sun, the moon, the stars, Mother Earth. We have just one Creator. Though the Creator has no gender, we often refer to him as Great Spirit God or Grandfather.

The Creator put things here for a purpose and that is why we respect the plants, the trees, and even the rock that's lying on the ground. Our forefathers don't teach us that the tree is there for the leaves to give off oxygen. It is up to us to see why the tree is there. In our teachings, they simply teach us to respect these things and to respect other people and other people's space. The Creator cannot judge you. The Creator is there to guide you. But we have the 'other place' and that's where your spirit goes when your body is returned to the earth. And you don't have to

be good to get there. It's just a place you are going to go. - Larson Medicine Horse, 50, Chief Deputy Sheriff and Crow Sundance Chief, Hardin, Montana

God's Ways

I know little about His or Her form, but a great deal about God's ways. God reveals Himself or Herself through laws of physics, chemistry, and medicine. These are mysterious forces on which people can depend. As there are physical law, there are moral laws too. God is revealed in this sphere as well. When one finds peace by making a commitment to the eternal values of peace, justice, and love, one understands a second dimension of God. - Heshlip Lee, 68, American Baptist Minister, Cedartown, GA

There is a God

When I think of God, I look at living things. My idea of God has grown as I have grown and each experience brings new insight. Seeing the immensity and awe-inspiring power of nature itself always forces me to reconsider the origins and meaning of 'existence.' Thunder and lightning, wind, earthquakes, and turbulent waters instantly evoke a sense of unfathomable power. But sometimes the simplest 'little' things contain equal amounts of God. Babies' fingernails, bugs, popsicle sticks, smiles, tears... it's all how you look at it. 'God' is a way of seeing. God is the way you live your life and the realization that you are living. - Keith Haring, 31, Artist, NYC

Short Thoughts

The power to accept what God means for me is recognizing that God is the Lord of time when my idea of timing doesn't agree with his. -Lillian Dvorak, 55, Secretary, Berwyn, Ill

God is from whom we may not get what we want, but do find peace with what we get. -Marilyn D. White, 58, Jeweler, Chicago, Ill

God is a psychological phenomenon. It doesn't make any difference whether or not God exists because the effect of belief on people's minds is the same. -Kendra Wilson, 17, Student, Harvard, Cambridge, MA

God is caring like a mother and strong and strict like a father. So God is both mother and father. -Jason Hernandez, 17, Bronx, NY

God is all that is god. I don't find God in a church any more than in a restaurant or shopping center. God is a kind word, a helping hand, forgiveness. -Joanne Stevenson, 56, Salesperson, La Grange, Ill.

If I am the sail, God is the wind. If I am the cloud, God is the sky. If I am the roots, God is the tree. If I am the thought, God is the manifestation. If I am the sound, God is the word. -Bryce Bond, 61, TV Host, NYC

Nobody talks as constantly about God as those who insist that there is no God. -Heywood Broun

God is like the light I turn on in my room. He lets me see what's there. -8 year old girl, Princeton, NJ

God is sometimes forgotten in man's conquest for fortune and fame, ignored as another human or drug is relied on, often blamed for man's frailties, denied as man worships himself. In a moment of darkness, man cries out for help and comfort - 'Oh God!' and in that moment, man acknowledges that presence of one more powerful than he. -Geri Guiney, 47, Nurse, Chicago IL

African American Proverbs

Most of these will be pretty familiar to many Americans, but as a collection they may remind you of what you already know, perhaps seen in a new light. Taken from an interesting folk archive on the meaning and situational usage of proverbs, "African-American Proverbs in Context" by Swami Anand Prahlad, ISBN 0-87805-890-7.

One monkey don't stop no circus.

In hard times, a monkey will eat red pepper, when he don't care for black.

Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.

God takes care of drunk, fools and children.

A cow that's black and ugly, often has the sweetest milk.

I may be getting old, but I've got young-fashioned ways.

You mix ink with water and it's bound to turn black.

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Only a squeaking wheel gets the grease.

You never miss the water 'til your well runs dry.

Still waters run deep.

It'll all come out in the wash.

An empty wagon rattles.

Let every tub sit on its bottom. (don't help the lazy)

Don't trouble trouble 'til trouble troubles you.

If you fool with trash, it'll get in your eyes.

As the tree falls, there it must lay.

Talk is cheap.

Different strokes for different folks.

The straw that broke the camel's back.

Rolling stones gather no moss.

A stitch in time saves nine.

What you sow you must reap.

If the shoe fits, wear it.

Nothing comes to a sleeper, but a dream.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Seeing is believing.

A watched pot never boils.

The pot calling the kettle black.

Don't buy a pig in a bag.

A thin pan heats faster than a thick one.

Don't cast pearls before swine.

Don't write a check with your mouth that your behind can't cash.

Money talks.

Look before you leap.

Study long, study wrong.

A leopard doesn't change his spots.

People in glass house shouldn't throw stones.

Don't change horses in midstream.

You can send a fool to college, but you can't make him think.

You catch more bees with honey than vinegar.

Two heads are better than one.

Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

All that glitters is not gold.

The grass is always greener on the other side.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Every shut eye ain't sleep, and every grinning mouth ain't happy.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

If you lie down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

You've got to crawl before you walk.

Every crow thinks her crow is the blackest.

Why buy a cow when you can get the milk for free?

Too many cooks spoil the pot.

The bigger they come, the harder they fall.

Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

Charity begins at home.

There's more than one way to skin a cat.

You can't have your pie and eat it too.

New brooms sweep clean, but old ones know where the dirt is.

Never burn your bridges behind you.

Don't cross the bridge before you get to it.

Can't get blood out of a turnip.

Don't judge a book by its cover.

Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly is to the bone.

Early bird catches the worm.

The blind leading the blind.

Blood is thicker than water.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

But even if a bird fly up in the sky, it must come down sometime.

Birds of a feather flock together.

You made your bed hard, now you have to sleep in it.

What goes around comes around.

Actions speak louder than words.

Bury the hatchet and unearth friendship.

Tales from the South

Uncle Remus Teaches a Child

One evening recently, the lady whom Uncle Remus calls "Miss Sally" missed her little seven-year-old. Making search for him through the house and through the yard, she heard the sound of voices in the old man's cabin, and, looking through the window, saw the child sitting by Uncle Remus. His head rested against the old man's arm, and he was gazing with an expression of the most intense interest into the rough, weather-beaten face, that beamed so kindly upon him. This is what "Miss Sally" heard:

"Bimeby, one day, atter Brer Fox bin doin' all dat he could fer ter ketch Brer Rabbit, en Brer Rabbit bein doin' all he could fer ter keep 'im fum it, Brer Fox say to hisse'f dat he'd put up a game on Brer Rabbit, en he ain't mo'n got de wuds out'n his mouf tewl Brer Rabbit came a lopin' up de big road, lookin' des ez plump, en ez fat, en ez sassy ez a Moggin hoss in a barley-patch.

"Hol' on dar, Brer Rabbit," sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"I ain't got time, Ber Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, sorter mendin' his licks.

"I wanter have some confab wid you, Brer Rabbit," sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"All right, Brer Fox, but you better holler fum whar you stan.' I'm monstus full er fleas dis mawnin'," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"I seed Brer B'ar yistdiddy, 'sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en he sorter rake me over de coals kaze you en me ain't make frens en live naberly, en I tole 'im dat I'd see you.'

"Den Brer Rabbit scratch one year wid his off hinefoot sorter jub'usly, en den he ups en sez, sezee:

"All a settin', Brer Fox. Spose'n you drap roun' ter-morrer en take dinner wid me. We ain't got no great doin's at our house, but I speck de ole 'oman en de chilluns kin sorter scarmble roun' en git up sump'n fer ter stay yo' stummick.'

"I'm 'gree'ble, Brer Rabbit," sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den I'll 'pen' on you," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Nex' day, Mr. Rabbit an' Miss Rabbit got up soom, 'fo' day, en raided on a gyarden like Miss Sally's out dar, en got some cabbiges, en some roas'n years, en some sparrer-grass, en dey fix up a smashin' dinner. Bimeby one er de little Rabbits, playin' ou t in de back-yard, come runnin' in hollerin', 'Oh, ma! oh, ma! I seed Mr. Fox a comin'!"

En den Brer Rabbit he tuck de chilluns by der years en make um set down, en den him and Miss Rabbit sorter dally roun' waitin' for Brer Fox. En dey keep on waitin' for Brer Fox. En dey keep on waitin', but no Brer Fox ain't come. Atter 'while Brer Rabbit goes to de do', easy like, en peep out, en dar, stickin' fum behime de cornder, wuz de tip-eeen' er Brer Fox tail. Den Brer Rabbit shot de do' en sot down, en put his paws behime his years en begin fer ter sing:

"De place wharbouts you spill de grease,

Right dar you er boun' ter slide,

An' whar you fin' a bunch er ha'r,

You'll sholy fine de hide.'

"Nex' day, Brer Fox sont word by Mr. Mink, en skuze hisse'f kaze he wuz too sick fer ter come, en he ax Brer Rabbit fer ter come en take dinner wid him, en Brer Rabbit say he wuz 'gree'ble.

Bimeby, w'en de shadders wuz at der shortes', Brer Rabbit he sorter brush up en sa'nter down ter Brer Fox's house, en w'en he got dar, he haer somebody groanin', en he look in de do' an dar he see Brer Fox settin' up in a rockin'-cheer all wrop up wid flannil,

en he look mighty weak. Brer Rabbit look all roun', he did, but he ain't see no dinner. De dish-pan wuz settin' on de table, en close by wuz a kyarvin' knife.

"Look like you gwintee have chicken fer dinner, Brer Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Yes, Brer Rabbit, deyer nice, en fresh, en tender, 'sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit sorter pull hiss mustarsh, en say: 'You ain't got no calamus root, is you, Brer Fox? I done got so now dat I can't eat no chicken 'ceppin' she's seasoned up wid calamus root.'

En wid dat Brer Rabbit lipt out er de do' and dodge 'mong the bushes, en sot dar watchin' for Brer Fox; en he ain't watch long, nudder, kaze Brer Fox flung off de flannil en crope out er de house en got whar he could cloze in on Brer Rabbit, en bimeby Brer Rabbit holler out: 'Oh, Brer Fox! I'll des put yo' calamus root out yer on dish yer stump. Better come git it while hit's fresh,' and wid dat Brer Rabbit gallop off home. En Brer Fox ain't never kotch 'im yit, en w'at's mo', honey, he ain't gwintee."

The Wonderful Tar Baby Story

"Didn't the fox never catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy the next evening.

"He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you born--Brer Fox did. One day atter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentime, en fix up a contrapshun w'at he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer to see what de news wuz gwine ter be. En he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road--lippity-clippity, clippity -lippity--dez ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox, he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch up on his behime legs like he wuz 'stonished. De Tar Baby, she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Mawnin'!" sez Brer Rabbit, sezee - 'nice wedder dis mawnin'!' sezee.

"Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin', en Brer Fox he lay low.

"How duz yo' sym'tums seem ter segashuate?" sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Brer Fox, he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin.'

"How you come on, den? Is you deaf?" sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Kaze if you is, I kin holler louder,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"You er stuck up, dat's w'at you is,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'en I;m gwine ter kyore you, dat's w'at I'm a gwine ter do,' sezee.

"Brer Fox, he sorter chuckle in his stummick, he did, but Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nothin.'

"I'm gwine ter larn you how ter talk ter 'spectubble folks ef hit's de las' ack,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwine ter bus' you wide open,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby, she keep on sayin' nothin', twel present'y Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck 'er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt 'im. But Tar-Baby, she stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you agin,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid de udder han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby, she ain'y sayin' nuthin', en Brer Fox, he lay low.

Part Two: African and European Sources

African Proverbs

"'Tu'n me loose, fo' I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, but de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin.' She des hilt on, en de Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox, he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he butt 'er cranksided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox, he sa'ntered fort', lookin' dez ez innercent ez wunner yo' mammy's mockin'-birds.

"'Howdy, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'You look sorter stuck up dis mawnin',' sezee, en den he rolled on de groun', en laft en laft twel he couldn't laff no mo.' 'I speck you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

"Did the fox eat the rabbit?" asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

"Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man."He mout, an den agin he moutent. Some say Judge B'ar come 'long en loosed 'im - some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin.' You better run 'long."

No matter how dark, the hand always knows the way to the mouth. -Idoma, Nigeria

They gave the sacrifice to the East.
the East said, "Give it to the West,"
the West said, "Give it to God,"
God said, "Give it to Earth, for it is my elder Brother."

Tradition endures. -Akan, Ghana

Without proverbs, the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without a soul. -Zulu, South Africa

If you pray to God (Imana) for blessing while sitting on a hearth he anoints you with ashes. -Hutu, Rwanda and Burundi

Before you climb a tree you must start at the bottom. -Buji, Nigeria

Check the edge of the axe before splitting wood. -Njak, Nigeria

One must pour cold water on the ground before he can tread on soft soil. -Yoruba, Nigeria

A man holding a basket of eggs does not dance on stones. -Buji, Nigeria

When a blacksmith dies, his hand hangs in the world. -Idoma, Nigeria

Weeping is not the answer to poverty; a lazy man who is hungry has no one to blame but himself. -Yoruba, Nigeria

He who wishes to eat the honey which is under the rock should not be unduly worried about the edge of the shovel. -Yoruba, Nigeria

If a lie runs for twenty years, it takes truth one day to catch up with it. -Yoruba, Nigeria

Where there is peace, a billhook (sickle) can be used to shave your beard or cut your hair. -Rundi

The tears of the orphan run inside. -Nigeria

You cannot use a wild banana leaf to shield yourself from the rains and then tear it to pieces later when the rains come to an end. -Nandi, Kenya

No matter how long a log stays in the water, it doesn't become a crocodile. -Bambra, Mali

A cockroach knows how to sing and dance, but it is the hen who prevents it from performing its art during the day. -Edo, Nigeria

If an arrow has not entered deeply, then its removal is not hard. -Buli, Ghana

How easy it is to defeat people who do not kindle fire for themselves. -Tugen, Kenya

African Stories

The Skull

A Tale from West Africa

A hunter came upon a huge tree with a whitened skull at its base. The skull spoke and said, "Beyond a certain hill is a field of calabashes. Take them to your hungry village, but do not tell anyone how you obtained them."

"How did you come to be here?" asked the hunter.

"My mouth killed me," said the skull.

The hunter returned to the village with the calabashes and immediately told everyone, "A talking skull showed me a field of food!" The Chief called him a liar.

"Then come with me! I'll prove what I say is true. When they arrived at the tree, the hunter spoke to the skull but it remained silent. The hunter was put to death on the spot for lying.

In time, two whitened skulls sat beneath the tree. The first turned to the second and said, "See, in death we meet again, my kin. It's true a mouth can do you in!"

Two Roads Overcame the Hyena

A very hungry hyena went out on the Tanzanian plains to hunt for food. He came to a branch in the bush road where the two paths veered off in different directions. He saw two goats caught in the thickets at the far end of the two different paths. With his mouth watering in anticipation, he decided that his left leg would follow the left path and his right leg the right path. As the two paths continued to veer in different directions he tried to follow them both at once. Finally he split in two. As the well-known African proverb says: Two roads overcame the hyena. (Story and proverb found in many African languages)

The Giraffe and the Monkey

The giraffe is an animal with a very long neck and legs and with dark patches on his coat. His legs and neck are so long that when he stands by a tree he can stretch his neck and eat the leaves on top of the tree. One day, he was standing in a pond, a monkey a tree nearby asked him whether the pond was deep. The giraffe said that the water level was only up to his knees.

The monkey felt that since the water level was only up to the knees of the giraffe, then perhaps the pond was not deep. But soon he realized he had made a mistake because the pond was deep. He was drowning and started shouting for help. The giraffe quickly went to rescue him and took him out of the pond. Then the monkey became angry and blamed the giraffe for throwing dust into his eyes.

The Two Cold Porcupines

One cold night two porcupines found themselves alone out on the plains. There was no shelter or place to keep warm. They only had their body heat. But they were scared that if they stood too close together during the night one could prick and even kill the other by mistake. After experimenting they found the right distance to stand next to each other. They were close enough together that their bodies gave heat to each other, but far enough apart that they would not prick each other during the night. (Folktale told by Bernard Joinet, M.Afr.)

How the Monkeys Saved the Fish

The rainy season that year had been the strongest ever and the river had broken its banks. There were floods everywhere and the animals were all running up into the hills. The floods came so fast that many drowned except the lucky monkeys who used their proverbial agility to climb up into the treetops. They looked down on the surface of the water where the fish were swimming and gracefully jumping out of the water as if they were the only ones enjoying the devastating flood.

One of the monkeys saw the fish and shouted to his companion: "Look down, my friend, look at those poor creatures. They are going to drown. Do you see how they struggle in the water?" "Yes," said the other monkey. "What a pity! Probably they were late in escaping to the hills because they seem to have no legs. How can we save them?" "I think we must do something. Let's go close to the edge of the flood where the water is not deep enough to cover us, and we can help them to get out."

So the monkeys did just that. They started catching the fish, but not without difficulty. One by one, they brought them out of the water and put them carefully on the dry land. After a short time there was a pile of fish lying on the grass motionless. One of the monkeys said, "Do you see? They were tired, but now they are just sleeping and resting. Had it not been for us, my friend, all these poor people without legs would have drowned."

The other monkey said: "They were trying to escape from us because they could not understand our good intentions. But when they wake up they will be very grateful because we have brought them salvation." (Traditional Tanzanian Folktale)

The Leopard and the Rabbit

Once upon a time the Leopard lived in a small house far way in the bush. After thinking for a long time he decided to look for a better place. After a short time he found a suitable place nearer the other animals. The Leopard began to cut sticks for building a house. After collecting a big bundle he carried it to the new building site. While the Leopard was doing all these things the Rabbit was nearby watching. He also cut a bundle of sticks and put them near the Leopard's bundle. But the Rabbit did not tell the Leopard.

The next day the Leopard brought another bundle. He was surprised to find a second bundle already there, but didn't know who had brought it. However he put down his own second bundle. Meanwhile the Rabbit was hiding and watching the Leopard's work. Then the Rabbit cut a second bundle and brought it to the site, making a total of four. The Leopard continued to bring bundles of sticks and the Rabbit did likewise.

When the Leopard saw that the sticks for building were enough, he began digging the foundation for his house. When he got tired he went away. The Rabbit also came and dug the foundation for the second wall and put in poles. He got tired and went to sleep.

Day after day the Leopard and the Rabbit were building the same house without meeting or talking together. Soon the house was finished, the first side having been built by the Leopard and the second side having been built by the Rabbit.

The Rabbit was the first to move into the side of the house he had built. Then the Leopard moved into his side. Then the problems began. The Rabbit lit a fire on his side of the house and the Leopard on his side. The Leopard was surprised to see a fire lit in his house without his knowledge. He shouted, "Who is that mad person lighting a fire in my house?" Then the Leopard and the Rabbit began to quarrel without solving the problem.

The Rabbit thought of a way to make the Leopard leave the house to him. He told his wife to pinch the children to make them cry loudly. When the children began to cry the rabbit asked his wife in an angry voice: "Why are the children crying?" Mrs. Rabbit answered, "They are crying for the Elephant's liver." The Rabbit answered boastfully in a loud voice so the Leopard and his wife could hear. "Tell them to stop crying. Finding an Elephant's liver is no problem for me. Tomorrow I will kill an Elephant and give its liver to my children." When the Leopard heard these words he became terrified. He thought that the Rabbit was a very dangerous person. If he could kill an Elephant for sure he could kill him also.

After a few days another quarrel erupted between the Leopard and the Rabbit. Then the Rabbit thought of another way to terrify the Leopard and drive him away. Again he told his wife to pinch the children to make them cry loudly. When the children began to cry, the rabbit asked his wife in an angry voice: "Why are the children crying?" Mrs. Rabbit answered, "They are crying for the Leopard's liver." Meanwhile the Leopard and his wife were listening very carefully to this conversation. The Rabbit answered boastfully in a loud voice so the Leopard and his wife could hear. "Tell them to stop crying. Finding a Leopard's liver is no problem for me. There is a Leopard right here in this house with us. I will kill him easily and give his liver to my children. I don't want my children to be deprived of anything."

The Leopard was terrified and told his wife: "Dear, we must move away from here immediately. Otherwise we will all be killed by the Rabbit." Early the next morning before the Rabbit family got up, the Leopards moved out. On the road they met the Baboon who asked, "Why are you sweating so much and in such a big hurry this early in the morning? Why are you carrying all your belongings? Where are you going?" The Leopard replied, "We are running away from the Rabbit who plans to kill us and feed us to his children. I have been thrown out by the Rabbit from the house I built with my own hands." The Baboon answered: "Oh, I know the Rabbit. That's one of his tricks. Let me take you back to your house. But we must tie our tails in order to go together."

So the Leopard and the Baboon tied their tails together and went to where the Rabbit was. When he saw them the Rabbit began to rebuke them. He told his wife to pinch the children to make them cry loudly. Then the Rabbit asked his wife in a voice that could be heard by everyone: "Dear, why are the children crying?" Mrs. Rabbit answered, "They are crying for the Leopard's liver." The Rabbit said in a loud voice, "I planned with the Baboon that he would bring the Leopard here and so he has. Keep calm, my children. You are going to get the Leopard's liver right now."

When the Leopard heard this he became very angry and began to insult the Baboon saying, "Is this your plan, Mr. Baboon? You deceived me. Do you want me to be killed by the Rabbit?" He became terrified and tried to run away. But since his tail was tied to the Baboon's he could not. They ran in opposite directions and their tails were badly bruised. In this way the Rabbit took over the whole house. (Traditional Sukuma, Tanzania Folktale told by Sukuma Research Committee)

The Lion's Share

One day the lion, the wolf and the fox went out hunting together. They caught a wild ass, a gazelle and a hare. The lion spoke to the wolf, "Mr. Wolf, you may divide the venison for us today." The wolf said, "I would have thought it best, Sire, that you should have the ass and my friend the fox should take the hare; as for me, I shall be content to take only the gazelle." On hearing this the lion was furious. He raised his mighty paw and

struck the wolf on the head. The wolf's skull was cracked, so he died.

Whereupon the lion spoke to the fox, "Now you may try and divide our meal better." The fox spoke solemnly, "The ass will be your dinner, Sire, the gazelle will be your Majesty's supper and the hare will be your breakfast for tomorrow morning." Surprised, the lion asked him, "When did you learn so much wisdom?" Said the fox, "When I heard the wolf's skull cracking." (Nubian, Sudan Fable)

The Community of Rats

Once upon a time there was a community of rats in a certain African village. In one particular house a big and mean cat terrorized the rats. They decided to work together and build a small but strong hole that they could easily enter, but the bigger cat couldn't. After finishing and testing the hole the rats were very pleased by their teamwork and cooperation together. But then at a community meeting one rat said: "The cat himself can't go into the hole but he can still catch us as we enter and leave the hole. Who is going to tie a bell around the cat's neck to warn us when he is approaching?" Everyone was silent. All were afraid. While they succeeded in building the hole together, no one was ready to sacrifice himself or herself to tie the bell. (Folktale told by different storytellers in Eastern Africa)

The Man and the Elephant

God created man and an elephant. These he put in a beautiful garden, and he walked with them every day. There was pure drinking water in a flowing river. But the elephant started muddying the waters. He would listen to neither God nor man who told him not to. In the end, man killed the elephant. God, though, was upset at this act and drove man out of the garden. Hence the Borana now live in a ceaseless search for water in drought-stricken lands, semi-nomads in a semi-desert. (Borana-Oromo, Ethiopia/ Kenya Myth)

The Chameleon and the Lizard

When God had finished creation he wanted to send people an important message. He called the chameleon to go and tell them that after death they will return to life. The lizard had eavesdropped. However, she had misunderstood what the chameleon was told. She ran quickly to tell people what she thought she had heard God say: "After death there is no return." The agile lizard had long reached the people when the chameleon was still on his way. People thought the lizard's message natural and a matter of fact. When at last the chameleon arrived and delivered God's message, people ridiculed him and said: "You stupid chameleon, we already know that we are all going to die and that death is the end of everything." (Yao, Malawi/Mozambique/Tanzania Myth)

The Old Woman Who Hid Death

In the beginning times people lived happily without any fear of death. Now it happened one morning that God (Imana) was chasing death to exterminate it from the land of people. When God drew near to arrest (catch) death, death ran into a dog and possessed him. Then the dog quickly ran and entered into the small hut of an old woman who happened to be sitting near the fireplace warming herself.

Then death spoke through the dog saying, "Hide me. If God comes inquiring about me, tell him that death is not here." The

old woman, being surprised to see the dog and hear him speak, hid the dog under her bed. Then she went out and sat in front of her house.

Suddenly God appeared with great speed. Seeing the woman, he halted and asked: "Lady, have you seen death?" "No, Sir," replied the old woman. "I am rather blind and death is not here. Maybe he passed by running." But because he knows everything, God said: "You have hidden death. So from now on you will die, just like death." (Hangaza, Tanzania Myth)

The Sacrifice of the White Hen

There was a young Nigerian boy named Olu who had a pet white chicken. They became great friends and inseparable companions. One day the hen disappeared and Olu cried and cried. Then after three weeks the white hen returned to the compound with seven beautiful white chicks. The Nigerian boy was overjoyed. The mother took very good care of her chicks.

One day late in the dry season the older boys set a ring of fire to the bush area outside the village. Everyone stood outside the ring as the fire burned toward the center. The purpose was to drive little animals such as rabbits and small antelopes out of the circle. Then the waiting cutlasses claimed their prey. When the slaughter and the fire were over, Olu and his friends walked through the smoldering embers. The boy noticed a heap of charred feathers and smelled burned flesh. It looked like the remains of a bird that had not escaped from the fire. Then Olu realized in horror. It was his beloved friend the white hen all black and burned to death. But then came the sounds of chicks. The mother hen had covered them with her body and they were still alive and well. The mother had given her life for her children. She died that they may live." (Yoruba, Nigeria Story told by Denis O'Sullivan, S.M.A.)

The Monster Shing'weng'we

Once upon a time in East Africa the monster or ogre Shing'weng'we swallowed all the people in the world together with all the domestic animals except one pregnant woman who hid in a pile of chaff. Later this woman gave birth to a boy named Masala Kulangwa (whose name means "the smart or clever person who understands quickly".) When he grew up he asked: "Mother, why are there only the two of us? Where are the other people?" She answered: "My dear one, everyone else was swallowed by Shing'weng'we. We two are the only ones left."

From that day on the young man started looking for the monster. One day he killed a grasshopper and arrived home singing: "Mother, Mother, I have killed Shing'weng'we. Rejoice and shout for joy." But his Mother answered: "My dear one, this is only a grasshopper, not the monster. Let's roast him and eat him."

Another day he killed a bird and arrived home singing: "Mother, Mother, I have killed Shing'weng'we up in the hills. Rejoice and shout for joy." But his Mother answered: "My dear one, this is only a bird, not the monster. Let's roast it and eat it."

Another day he killed a small gazelle and arrived home singing: "Mother, Mother, I have killed Shing'weng'we up in the hills. Rejoice and shout for joy." But his Mother answered: "My dear one, this is only a small gazelle, not the monster. Let's roast it and eat it."

Another day he killed an antelope and arrived home singing: "Mother, Mother, I have killed Shing'weng'we up in the hills. Rejoice and shout for joy." But his Mother answered: "My dear one, this is only an antelope, not the monster. Let's roast it and eat it."

Finally the clever young man Masala Kulangwa found Shing'weng'we, overcame him and cut open the monster's back. Out came his father along with his relatives and all the other people. By bad luck when he split open the monster's back Masala Kulangwa cut off the ear of an old woman. This woman became very angry and insulted the young man. She tried to bewitch him. But Masala Kulangwa found medicine and healed the old woman. Then all the people declared the young man chief and raised him up in the Chief's Chair. Masala Kulangwa became the chief of the whole world and his mother became the Queen Mother. (Summary of the Sukuma, Tanzania Song Version of a Traditional Myth in many African Languages)

The Story of Gumha and the Large Rooster

Gumha was a famous and powerful leader of the Bagalu Dance Society that used to compete with the Bagika, the other well-known dance group in Sukumaland. They contested with each other on a regular basis and depended on special magical medicine to ensure success in their dance competitions. Because of his powerful medicine, Gumha was responsible for the success of the Bagalu dancers. This made the Bagika dancers extremely jealous, and they did everything possible to bewitch Gumha.

As it happened Gumha had an extraordinary rooster who used to perch on the roof of his house. When the witches approached the home of Gumha in order to harm him, the rooster would start to crow. On hearing the rooster, the witches would become frightened and say: "What is this? The rooster is crowing. It must be getting light. Let us run for it or we will all be killed." Then the witches would run away without doing any harm to Gumha. The followers of Gumha would say in a boastful way: "Gumha has such powerful medicine that none can harm him not even the witches."

When Gumha finally died his disciples said: "Our master was not bewitched, but God himself has taken him. Truly there is nobody as powerful as God. There is no one like him. He is the one who gives us our life and he is the one who takes our life away."

From this story comes the proverb There is only one bull in the world (that is, God is all powerful.) (Traditional Sukuma, Tanzania Folktale told by the Sukuma Research Committee)

King Leopard and the Spear Contest

A long time ago, deep in the forests of Liberia, King [Leopard](#) began to think about the future. He thought, "I'm getting old and one day when I get real old, I'm going to get sick and die." Now a wise king would not wait until he was old to pick a successor, someone who could take his place as king after he died. No, a wise king would pick his successor while still young and healthy. But how could King Leopard choose when he loved all the members of the animal kingdom the same? How could he choose one over the other?

King Leopard sat beneath a tree and started to think. After a while, he came up with a plan. He summoned his messengers and sent them out into the forests of Liberia. He told them to ask all of the animals of the animal kingdom to come to his palace. He was going to throw a big party and at this party, he was going to make an important announcement. So away the messengers ran, to all four corners of the forest.

On the night of the party, the forest came alive with excitement. It seemed like all the animals were at King Leopard's palace. They sang and they danced and had a great time. Then, after the moon had risen above the trees, King Leopard came and

stood in the middle of the clearing. The animals looked up and saw the king. They stopped their singing and dancing and showed their respect for the king by listening quietly as he began to speak.

"I've been thinking that it's time for me to pick a successor. But because I love all of you equally, I can't decide who among you is most worthy. I have decided to let a contest decide for me."

King Leopard walked a short way into the trees and came back carrying a spear. He said, "The first one among you who can take this spear and throw it into the sky and count all the way to ten before it touches the ground will be my successor."

As soon as King Leopard finished making this announcement, the animals began to talk excitedly among themselves. But suddenly they were disturbed by a loud noise from the rear. The animals looked around to see what was going on, and had to quickly move out of the way for Elephant was stomping through the crowd to the front. Elephant was going to participate in the contest. As he came forward, he said "Move out of my way. Move out of my way. I'm gonna be king. I'm gonna be king. I'm the biggest, I oughta be king."

"All right," said King Leopard "you can be the first. But before you throw the spear you must first do a dance of victory."

Elephant lumbered around the clearing, stomping his legs and trumpeting with his trunk. After a few minutes, Elephant took the spear and curled it up in his long trunk. Then he thrust his head way back and threw the spear into the sky.

"One! Two! Three!" Elephant cried.

The spear hit the ground on the count of four.

Elephant did not win the contest. He was so angry that he started stomping and blowing his trumpet. King Leopard told him "Elephant, you only get one chance and you've had your chance." And so Elephant had to leave.

After Elephant left, the animals started to talk excitedly amongst themselves again, but as before, they were disturbed by a loud noise coming from the rear.

Boar came charging through the crowd saying "Get outa my way. Get outa my way. I'm gonna be king. I'm gonna be king. I've got the biggest muscles, I oughta be king."

"All right, alright" said King Leopard. "You know the rules. Before you throw the spear, you must first do a dance of victory."

And so the boar did his dance of victory. He dropped to the ground and lifted his entire weight on one foot, then he jumped up and down and all around.

Finally, with his sharp claws, Boar began to dig a hole in the ground. He made the hole deeper and deeper until all you could see was the top of his head. Then he took the spear, clenched it in his teeth, threw his head back and cast the spear into the sky.

"One! Two! Three! Four! Five!" he shouted.

The spear hit the ground on the count of six.

Boar did not win the contest. He was so angry that he started blowing and fuming and tossing clods of dirt into the air. King Leopard told him "Boar, you only get one chance and you've had your chance." And so Boar had to leave.

After that, the animals started to express. They said things like, "Goodness! This contest is hard. Elephant couldn't do it, and he's real big. Boar couldn't do it either, and he's real strong. I don't think any body's gonna win this contest!"

Right about then, they heard another sound coming from the rear and when the animals looked around, they couldn't believe their eyes. They saw Monkey coming through the crowd. As Monkey came forward, he chanted "I can do it. I can do it. I know I can do it. I can do it, nothing to it. I can do it. I know I can do it."

"All right" said Leopard, "Go ahead with your dance of victory."

"Sure thing king," said Monkey, "I love to dance. Stand back and give me room."

And so Monkey did his dance of victory. He leapt up and down and all around. He grabbed up a branch from the ground and shook it and danced around and around.

"All right Monkey," said Leopard. "Here's your spear."

Monkey took the spear and he backed way up. Then he pulled his arm back, charged forward, leapt into the air and threw the spear into the sky.

"One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven!" cried Monkey.

The spear hit the ground on the count of eight. Monkey did not win the contest. Monkey was upset. He was so angry that he started turning flips, complaining and making all sorts of excuses and begging for a second chance. But King Leopard told him "No Monkey, you only get one chance." And so Monkey had to leave.

After that happened, the animals really began to doubt that any animal could win the contest. They said things like "My goodness. This contest is so hard! I thought our king was wise and smart, but maybe he's finally decided to use his smarts against us! Maybe he knows that nobody can take that spear and throw it into the sky and count all the way to ten before it hits the ground! Why King Leopard might be making fools out of us all! I for one am not going to stand around here and be made a fool of." And so some of the animals turned and started to head for home, but as they were leaving, they heard yet another sound coming from the rear.

When they animals looked around this time, they saw an unbelievable sight. They saw a tiny, tiny antelope coming through the crowd. As the antelope came forward, he said, "Wait, wait. Let me try. Let me try. I can do it. I can do it. Let me try."

When the animals heard that, they all burst out laughing. Elephant rumbled up to Antelope and said "What do you mean, you can do it? Why if I can't do it, you certainly can't. Go home you little runt."

At this, the animals really started to laugh. King Leopard jumped up and shouted angrily, "Stop it! Stop it! I will not have you making fun of antelope like that! Who is to say that small animals can't do things that big animals can do? If antelope wants to have a chance, he's going to be given the same chance that all the other animals had. So stand back and let Antelope do his dance of victory."

On that long ago night, deep in the forests of Liberia little antelope did dance, but his dance was real different from the dances of the other animals. Antelope slowly moved around in a circle, extending his legs gracefully while lifting his head towards the sky almost as if he were thanking the heavens for being alive. Then Antelope turned towards the animals and it was as if he was saying that he loved all the animals and was happy and proud to be part of such a beautiful and diverse animal kingdom. Finally, Antelope turned and looked towards the king and it was as if he was saying that he loved the king, who was so wise and yet so kind. Antelope bowed down to his king, turned and took the spear in his mouth. He backed up, clenched the spear hard between his teeth and with every ounce of strength in his tiny body he started running. When he reached the center of the clearing, he leapt upwards and released the spear.

"Five plus five equals ten" he shouted.

All the animals were quiet. "What is this?" Asked Elephant. "Five plus five equals ten?" Monkey scratched his head in confusion.

King Leopard came forward and explained everything. He said "Yes Antelope! Yes, you're absolutely right. Five plus five does equal ten and so does three plus seven and lots of other

combinations! Five plus five is another way to get to ten! This contest was not a contest to find out who was the biggest or who was the strongest. It was a contest to see who is the smartest!"

And that's how Antelope, the smallest animal of the forest became king after Leopard stepped down. Not because he was the biggest or the strongest, but because he was the smartest.

Aphoristic Advice

I don't know why I enjoy quotes so much. They are like condensed essays and are easily categorized for easy reference by a Druid looking for advice on a specific topic, fleshing out an essay or just passing a lazy afternoon in meditation. This collection should be a starting point for further study of these authors, not a stopping point. I'm sure that other good collections exist.

This is a collection of two books. Some 150 are from "A Dictionary of Religious & Spiritual Quotations," compiled by Geoffrey Parrinder, Simon & Schuster Publishers. 1989 ISBN 0-13-210121-1. Added to this good religious diverse source book, I choose another 100 pithy sayings about life and Druidism from the collection; "Webster's New World Best Book of Aphorisms" 1989 ISBN 0-13-947128-6. Others were donated by some friends.

Atheism and Agnostics

God is dead; but considering the state the species Man is in, there will perhaps be caves, for ages yet, in which his shadow will be shown. -Friedrich Nietzsche

If primitive religion could be explained away as an intellectual aberration, as a mirage induced by emotional stress, or by its social function, it was implied that the higher religions could be discredited and disposed of in the same way. -E.E. Evans-Pritchard

The agnostics were criticized in the Buddhist sources as 'eel-wrigglers' because they wriggled out of every question that was put to them and refused to give any firm answer. -Trevor Ling

Death and Aging

A man's dying is more the survivors' affair than his own. - Thomas Mann

Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain. -William Hazlitt

Days and months are travelers of eternity. So are the years that pass by... I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud-moving wind - filled with a strong desire to wander. - Basho

Tzu-Lu asked how one should serve ghosts and spirits. The Master said, How can there be any proper service of spirits until living men have been properly served? Tzu-lu then ventured upon a question about the dead [whether they are conscious]. The Master said, Until a man knows about the living, how can he know about the dead? -Confucius, Analects, 11,11

Excess of grief for the deceased is madness, for it is an injury to the living, and the dead know it not. -Xenophanes

It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens. -Woody Allen

The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it. - Elbert Hubbard

The youth get together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a place or temple on the earth, and at length, the middle aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them. - Henry David Thoreau

For the unlearned, old age is winter; for the learned it is the season of the harvest. -Talmud

The idea wants changelessness and eternity. Whoever lives under the supremacy of the idea strives for permanence; hence, everything that pushes toward change must be against it. -Carl Jung

Folly is our constant companion throughout life, if someone appears wise, it is only because his follies are suited to his age and station. -Francois de La Rochefoucauld

You can not step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on. -Heraclitus

For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been!" -John Greenleaf Whittier

Perhaps in time the so-called dark ages will be thought of as including our own. -George Christoph Lichtenburg

If you were to destroy the belief in immortality in mankind, not only love but every living force on which the continuation of all life in the world depended, would dry up at once. Moreover, there would be nothing immoral then, everything would be permitted. -Fyodor Dostoyevsky

There is no cure for birth and death save to enjoy the interval. -George Santayana

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. -Henry David Thoreau

You live and learn, or you don't live long. -Robert Heinlein

Youth is wasted on the young. -George Burns

When the waitress puts the dinner on the table, the old men look at the dinner. The young men look at the waitress. -Gelett Burgess

The king asked: 'When someone is reborn, is he the same as the one who has just died, or is he another?'

The Elder replied: 'He is neither the same nor another.'

'Give me an illustration.'

'What do you think, great king; when you were a tiny infant, newly born and quite soft, were you then the same as the one who is now grown up?'

'No, that infant was one, I now grown up am another.'

'If that is so then, great king, you have had no mother, no father, no teaching, and no schooling!... We must understand it as the collocation of a series of successive conditions. At rebirth one condition arises, while another stops.' -Milanda's Questions, 40

Dogmatism

However strong and confident may be my conviction that my own approach to the mystery is a right one, I ought to be aware that my field of spiritual vision is so narrow that I cannot know that there is no virtue in other approaches. -Arnold Toynbee

Education and Knowledge

Solomon made a book of proverbs, but a book of proverbs never made a Solomon. -Anon

From the moment I picked your book up, to the moment I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter; some day I intend to read it. -Goucho Marx

The Skeptics that affirmed they knew nothing, even in that opinion confused themselves and thought they knew more than all the world beside. -Sir Thomas Browne

I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar and often convincing. -Oscar Wilde

It now costs more to amuse a child than it once did to educate his father. -Vaughan Monroe

The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow. -William Blake

Stand firm in your refusal to remain conscious during algebra. In real life, I assure you there is no such thing as algebra. -Fran Lebowitz

How is it possible to expect that mankind will take advice when they will not so much as take warning. -Johnathan Swift

He does not believe that does not live according to his belief. -Thomas Fuller

The Earth is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking. -Kahlil Gibran

Faith: is belief without evidence to what is told by he who speaks without knowledge of things without parallel. -Ambrose Bierce

Real books should be offspring not of daylight and casual talk but of darkness and silence. -Marcel Proust

A book is a mirror; if an ass peers into it you can't expect an apostle to peer out. -George Christoph Lichtenberg

It is better to speak wisdom foolishly like the saints than to speak folly wisely like the deans. -G.K. Chesterton

The more intelligent one is, the more men of originality one finds. Ordinary people find no difference between men. -Blaise Pascal

Neither Christ nor Buddha nor Socrates wrote a book, for to do that is to exchange life for a logical process. -William Butler Yeats

To expect a man to retain everything that he has ever read is like expecting him to carry about in his body everything he has ever eaten. -Arthur Schopenhauer

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become. -Buddha

The chief knowledge that a man gets from reading books is the knowledge that very few of them are worth reading. -H.L. Mencken

When they come downstairs from their Ivory Tower, idealists are apt to walk straight into the gutter. -Logan Pearsall Smith

A man is not necessarily intelligent because he has plenty of ideas any more than he is a good general because he has plenty of soldiers. -Nicolas Chamfort.

Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it's the only one we have. -Alain

A little learning is a dangerous thing. -Alexander Pope

If a little knowledge is dangerous, where is the man who has so much as to be out of danger? -Thomas Henry Huxley

I pay the schoolmaster but tis the schoolboys that educate my son. -Ralph Waldo Emerson

The learned fool writes his nonsense in better language than the unlearned, but it is still nonsense. -Benjamin Franklin

Originality does not consist in saying what no one ever said before, but in saying exactly what you think yourself. -J.F. Stephen

Know thyself? If I knew myself, I'd run away. -Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Just as philosophy is the study of other people's misconceptions, so history is the study of other people's mistakes. -Phillip Guedalla

Enlightenment is the movement of man out of his minority state, which was brought about by his own fault. The minority state means the incapacity to make use of one's understanding without the guidance of another... Have the encouragement to make use of your own understanding is thus the motto of Enlightenment. -Immanuel Kant

Sometimes men come by the name of genius in the same way that certain insects come by the name of centipede- not because they have a hundred feet, but because most people can't count above fourteen. -George Lichtenberg

A definition is the enclosing of a wilderness of ideas within a wall of words. -Samuel Butler

Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. -The Book of Common Prayer

The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside. -Dag Hammarskjold

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart... and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house. -Deuteronomy 11,18

A good word is like a good tree whose root is firmly fixed, and whose top is in the sky; which produces its edible fruit every season. -Koran 14, 30

If I were to teach the Doctrine, and other did not understand it, it would be a weariness to me, a vexation... Then Brahma, knowing the deliberation of my mind... said, 'May the reverend Lord teach the Doctrine.' -Majjihima Nikaya, i, 240

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all." -Lewis Carroll

Everywhere is nowhere. When a person spends all his life in foreign travel, he ends by having many acquaintances, but no friends. -Seneca

Freedom

Loyalty to a petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul. -Mark Twain

Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say, "Why not?" -John F. Kennedy

Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err. -Mahatma Gandhi

God

I can believe anything, but the justice of this world does not give me a very reassuring idea of the justice in the next. I am very much afraid that God will go on blundering; he will receive the wicked in paradise and hurl the good into hell. -Jules Renard

If Jesus Christ were to come today, people would not even crucify him. They would ask him to dinner and hear what he had to say and make fun of it. -Thomas Carlyle

A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word "darkness" on the walls of his cell. -C.S. Lewis

It would be useful to devise a term which would denote religions that have a supreme God, but also worship other gods. -Geoffrey Parrinder

He who knows about depth, knows about God. -Paul Tillich

The energy of atheists, their tireless propaganda, their spirited discourses, testify to a belief in God which puts to shame mere lip worshipers. They are always thinking of God. -Fulton J. Sheen

Is man one of God's blunders? Or is God one of man's blunders? -Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

God dwells wherever man lets him in. -Mendel of Kotzk

Either God exists or he does not. But to which side shall we lean? Reason can decide nothing, there is an infinite chaos which separates us. A game is being played, at the extremity of this infinite distance, where heads or tails will fall. What will you bet? If you win, you win everything. If you lose, you lose nothing. Bet then that he exists, without hesitating. -Blaise Pascal

If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. -Voltaire

Things are to be used and God is to be loved. We get into trouble when we begin to use God and love things. -Jay Kesler

All night long we have not stirred,

And yet God has not said a word! - Robert Browning

How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews. -W.N. Ewer

But no so odd
As those who choose
A Jewish God
But spurn the Jews. -Cecil Browne

The gods of most nations claim to have created the world. The Olympians make no such claim. The most they ever did was to conquer it... And when they have conquered their kingdoms, what do they do? Do they attend to the government? Do they promote agriculture? Do they practice trades and industries? Not a bit of it. Why should they do any honest work? -Gilbert Murray

Man is quite insane. He would not know how to create a maggot, and he creates gods by the dozen. -Michel de Montaigne

Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them? -William Shakespeare Henry IV, part 1, 3 i, 53-55

We may not pay Satan reverence, for that would be indiscreet, but we can at least respect his talents. -Mark Twain

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. -John, 4, 24

God's contempt for human minds is evidenced by miracles. He judges them unworthy of being drawn to Him by other means than those of stupefaction and the crudest modes of sensibility. -Paul Valery

Grief

If we only wanted to be happy, it would be easy; But we want to be happier than other people, and that is almost always difficult, since we think them happier than they are. -Baron de Montesquieu

One may not reach the dawn save by the path of night. -Kahlil Gibran

Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship, and is far the best ending for one. -Oscar Wilde

The art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure much. -William Hazlitt

If life is a grind, use it to sharpen your wits. -Anon.

Justice, Law & Government

Acquit me, or do not acquit me, but be sure that I shall not alter my way of life, no, not if I have to die for it many times. -Socrates

Between midnight and dawn when sleep will not come and all the old wounds begin to ache, I often have a nightmare vision of the future world in which there are billions of people, all numbered and registered, with not a gleam of genius anywhere, not an original mind, a rich personality, on the whole packed globe. The twin ideas of our time, organization and quantity, will have won forever. -J.B. Priestely

Justice is always violent to the party offending, for every man is innocent in his own eyes. -Daniel Defoe

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. -Luke 6, 37

Justice is like a train that's nearly always late. -Yevgeny Yevtushenko

The law is fair to all. In its fairness for equality, it forbids the rich as well as the poor to beg in the streets and to steal bread. -Anatole France

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by an endless series of hobgoblins. -H.L. Mencken

Politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians. -Charles de Gaulle

Government can easily exist without laws, but laws cannot exist without government. -Bertrand Russell

If we were to wake up some morning and find that everyone was the same race, creed and color, we would find some other causes for prejudice by noon. -Senator George Aiken

Prejudice is a raft onto which the shipwrecked mind clammers and paddles to safety. -Ben Hecht

Most men, when they think they are thinking, are merely rearranging their prejudices. -Knut Roche

Leadership

Committee: a group of the unfit appointed by the unwilling to do the unnecessary. -Stewart Harrot

The main thing is to make history, not to write it. -Otto von Bismarck

Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old, seek what they sought. -Matsuo Basho

They who are in highest places, and have the most power, have the least liberty, because they are most observed. -John Tillotson

The lust for power, for dominating others, inflames the heart more than any other passion. -Tacitus

Throughout history the world has been laid waste to ensure the triumph of conceptions that are now as dead as the men that died for them. -Henry De Montherlant

Words divide us; action unites us. -Tupamaros

Success- "the bitch-goddess," in William Jame's phrase- demands strange sacrifices from those who worship her. -Aldous Huxley

Our heartiest praise is usually reserved for our admirers. -Francois de La Rochefoucauld

Man

I am man, I count nothing human foreign to me. -Terence

Know thyself. -Delphi Oracle

We have created man, and we know what his soul whispers within him, for we are nearer to him than his jugular vein. -Koran 50,15

It is said, there came a voice from heaven, saying, 'Man know thyself.' Thus that proverb is still true, 'Going out were never so good, but staying at home were much better.' -Theologia Germanica

Morality

None of us can boast about the morality of our ancestors. The records do not show that Adam and Eve were married. -E.W. Howe

It is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and happier to be sometimes cheated than no to trust. -Samuel Johnson

On Karma alone be your interest, never on its fruits; let not the results of Karma be your motive, nor be your attachment to inaction. -Bhagavad Gita, 2, 47

I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed. -Jonathan Swift

It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend. -William Blake

A virtue to be serviceable must, like gold, be alloyed with some commoner but more durable metal. -Samuel Butler

There are seven marks of a wise man. The wise man does not speak before him who is greater than he in wisdom; and does not break in upon the speech of his fellow; he is not hasty to answer; he questions according to the subject matter; and answers to the point; he speaks upon the first thing first, and the first last; regarding that which he has not understood he say, I do not understand it, and he acknowledges the truth. -Mishnah

A man should be of good cheer about his soul... if he has earnestly pursued the pleasure of learning, and adorned his soul with the adornment of temperance, and justice, and courage, and freedom, and truth. -Plato

The highest good is like that of water. The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain. It is this that makes water so near to the Way. -Tao Te Ching 8

The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried. -G.K. Chesteron

Islam is built upon five things: on confessing that there is no god but God, performing prayers, giving the legal alms, going on pilgrimage to the House, and fasting during the month of Ramadan. -Al-Malati

Serve God, and do not associate anything with him; show parents kindness; also to relatives, and the poor, and the person under your protection be he relative or not, to the companion by your side, to the follower of the way, and to what your right hand possess. -Koran 4, 40

'Do the duty which lies nearest thee', which thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty will already have become clearer..-Thomas Carlyle

Do not wait for extraordinary circumstances to do good; try to use ordinary situations. -Jean Paul Richter

Men show their characters in nothing more than in what they think laughable. -Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Your destiny shall not be allotted to you, but you shall choose it for yourselves. Let him who draws the first lot be the first to choose a life, which shall be his irrevocably. Virtue owns no master: he who honors her shall have more of her, and he who slights her, less. -Plato

What is morality in any given time or place? It is what the majority then and there happen to like, and immorality is what they dislike. -Alfred North Whitehead

Moral indignation is jealousy with a halo. -H.G. Wells

Greater is he who performs the commandments from love than he who performs them from fear. -Mishnah, Sotah, 31

Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor's noisy party than being there. -Franklin P. Jones

Christ could not imagine people believing in his teaching of humility, love and universal brotherhood, quietly and deliberately organizing the murder of their brother men. -Leo Tolstoy

If a man own land, the land owns him. Now let him leave home, if he dare. -R.W. Emerson

There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice. -Mark Twain

I can resist everything except temptation. -Oscar Wilde

The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. -Oscar Wilde

Lord, give me chastity, but not right now. -Ambrosius

I can sympathize with people's pains but not with their pleasures. There is something curiously boring about somebody else's happiness. -Aldous Huxley

Nature

All animals except man know that the ultimate in life is to enjoy it. -Samuel Butler

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour... -William Blake

The Dew is on the lotus! -Rise Great Sun!
And lift my leaf, and mix me with the wave.
OM MANI PADME HUM, the Sunrise comes!
The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea. -Edwin Arnold

I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose as animal,
I died as animal and I was Man...
Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
With Angels blest; but even from angelhood
I shall pass on: all except God doth perish. -Jalalu'l-Din Rumi

All of us are pilgrims on this earth, I have even heard people say that the earth itself is pilgrim in the heavens. -Maxim Gorky

For I will consider my Cat, Jeoffry. For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving Him. -Christopher Smart

We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation, and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feathers so badly that without doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the Devil in human form. -W.R. Inge

No great works and wonder God has ever wrought or shall ever do in or through this created world, not even God himself in his goodness, will make me blessed if they remain outside of me. -Theologia Germanica, 9

God does not play dice. -Albert Einstein

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee! He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stone... Meet him and stand by him in toil and sweat of thy brow. -Rabindranath Tagore

Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forest keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life's become extinct, the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day. -Anton Chekhov (1900 C.E.)

Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,
But looks through Nature, up to Nature's God. -Alexander Pope

Among other things, there is a drying up of great oceans, the falling away of mountain peaks, the deviation of the fixed polestar, the cutting of the cords of the winds, the submergence of the earth, the retreat of the celestials from their stations. In this sort of cycle of existence, what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when after a man has fed on them there is seen repeatedly his return here to earth? Please deliver me. In this cycle of existence I am like a frog in a waterless well. -Maitri Upanishad 1,4

By all these I prayed, by the rolling sun, bursting through untrodden space, a new ocean of ether every day unveiled. By the fresh and wandering air encompassing the world; by the sea sounding on the shore - the green sea, white-flecked at the margin, and the deep ocean; by the strong earth under me. -Richard Jeffries

You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars; and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. -Thomas Traherne

Even if they did happen to believe the divinity to be totally present in some stone or wood, it may be they were sometimes right. Do we not believe God is present in some bread and wine? Perhaps God was actually present in statues fashioned and consecrated according to certain rites. -Simone Weil.

Whatever is well-fitting in you, O Universe, is fitting to me. Nothing can be early or late to me, which is seasonable to you. Whatever your seasons bring shall be happy fruit and increase to

me. O Nature, all things come from you, all things exist in you.
-Marcus Aurelius

Some kill animals for sacrificial purposes, some kill for the sake of their skin, some kill for the sake of their blood...He who injures these animals does not comprehend and renounced the sinful acts; he who does not injure these, comprehends and renounces the sinful acts. Knowing them, a wise man should not act sinfully toward animals, nor cause others to act so, nor allow others to act so. -Acharanga Sutra 1,1,6

Theology at 120F in the shade seems, after all, different from theology at 70F... The theologian at 70F in a good position presumes God to be happy and contented, well-fed and rested, without needs of any kind. The theologian at 120F tries to imagine a God who is hungry and thirsty, who suffers and is sad, who sheds perspiration and knows despair. -Klaus Lostermaier

Tao gave them birth; the power of Tao reared them, shaped them according to their kinds, perfected them, giving to each its strength.

Therefore of the ten thousand things there is not one that does not worship Tao and do homage to its power. -Tao Te Ching, 51

The One who, himself with colour, by the manifold application of his power
Distributes many colours in his hidden purpose,
And into whom, its end and its beginning, the whole world dissolves -
He is God. -Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 4,1

Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless: peacocks and lilies for instance. -John Ruskin

What is beneath the earth is quite as natural as what is above ground, and he who cannot summon spirits in the daytime under the open sky will not evoke them at midnight in a vault. -Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

I never thought much of the courage of a lion tamer. Inside the cage, he is at least safe from people. -George Bernard Shaw

These rivers, my dear, flow, the eastern toward the east, the western toward the west. They go just from the ocean to the ocean. They become the ocean itself. As there they know not 'I am this one,' 'I am that one' -even so, indeed, my dear, all creatures here, though they have come forth from Being, know not 'We have come forth from Being.' Whatever they are in this world, whether tiger, or lion, or wolf, or boar, or worm, or fly, or gnat, or mosquito, that they become.

That which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is Soul. That art thou. -Chandogya Upanishad 6, 10

God is present in Nature, but nature is not God; there is a nature in God, but it is not God himself. -Henri-Frederic Amiel

If we believe our logicians, man is distinguished from all other creatures by the faculty of laughter. -Joseph Addison

For everything is holy, life delights in life. -William Blake

Poverty and Hard Times

You are indeed charitable when you give, and, while giving, turn your face away so that you may not see the shyness of the receiver. -Kahlil Gibran

Help people in distress as you would help a fish in a dried-up rut... Respect the aged and have pity on the poor. Collect food

and clothing and relieve those who are cold and hungry along the road. -Yin-chih Wen

He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? -1 John, 4, 20

Honor begets honor; trust begets trust; faith begets faith, and hope is the mainspring of life. -Henry L. Simson

I am an elementary teacher, and I instruct the children of the poor exactly the same as I teach the children of the rich. If any one is unable to pay me a fee I forgo it. -Mishnah, taanith, 24

Prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue. -Francis Bacon

So that's what Hell is. I'd never have believed it... Do you remember, brimstone, the stake, the gridiron?... What a joke! No need of a gridiron. Hell, it's other people. -Jean Paul Sartre.

How can great wisdom care so little about the torments of innocent creatures? This question, which began to agonize when I was six or seven years old, still haunts me today. I still cannot accept the ruthlessness of Nature, God, the Absolute... How can a merciful God allow all this to happen and keep silent? -Isaac B. Singer

Let us a little permit Nature to take her own way; She better understand her own ways than we. -Michel de Montaigne

The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity. The Word manifests itself in every creature. - Hildegard of Bingen

If a man be gracious, and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world... -Francis Bacon

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms- to choose one's attitude in any given circumstances, to choose one's own way. - Viktor Frankel

You know the alternative: either we are not free and God the all-powerful is responsible for evil. Or we are free and responsible but God is not all-powerful. All the scholastic subtleties have neither added anything to nor subtracted anything from the acuteness of this paradox. -Albert Camus

The rich who are unhappy are worse off than the poor who are unhappy; for the poor, at least, cling to the hopeful delusion that more money would solve their problems- but the rich know better. -Sydney J. Harris

By suffering comes wisdom. -Aeschylus

It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the most part, makes men petty and vindictive. -W. Somerset Maugham

No man ever had enough money. -Gypsy proverb

There are two ways to handle a woman, and nobody knows either of them. -Kim Hubbard

That which is bitter to endure may be sweet to remember. - Thomas Fuller

Poverty is not a shame, but the being ashamed of it is. -Thomas Fuller

The seven deadly sins... Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven

millstones from man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. -George Bernard Shaw

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. -Matthew 19:24

He is a poor creature who does not believe himself to be better than the world. No matter how ill we may be, or how low we have fallen, we would not change identity with any other person. Hence our self-conceit sustains and always must sustain us till death takes us and our conceit together so that we need no more sustaining. -Samuel Butler

Priests

He with his powerful knowledge beholds all creatures who are beset with many hundreds of troubles and afflicted by many sorrows, and thereby is a Savior in the world. -Lotus of the True Law, 24, 17

What is the use of preaching sermons, if one does not put into practice? It is like the framework for a building, which crumbles before our eyes. -Sakhi

O priests, that despise my name. AN y say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. -Malachi 1, 6

The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended. -Wordsworth

He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches. -George Bernard Shaw

When traveling priests arrive, the old resident priests go out to welcome them and carry for them their clothes and alms-bowls, giving them water for washing and oil for anointing their feet, as well as the liquid food allowed out of hours. -Travel of Fa-hsien

I am the son of a midwife... My art of midwifery is in general like theirs, the only difference is that my patients are men, not women, and my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is in travail of birth. -Socrates

Tzu-kung asked about the true gentleman. The Master said, He does not preach what he practices till he has practiced what he preaches. -Confucius, Analects 2, 13

He is the one man who will always be the most surprised, the most affected, the most apprehensive and the most joyful in the face of events. He will not be like an ant which has foreseen everything in advance, but like a child in a forest, or on Christmas Eve: one who is always rightly astonished by events, by the encounters and experiences which overtake him. -Karl Barth

The philosophers, cloaked and bearded to command respect, insist that they alone have wisdom and all other mortals are but fleeting shadows. Theirs is certainly a pleasant form of madness, which sets them building countless universes. -Desiderius Erasmus

As I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest. -Oliver Goldsmith

Many people genuinely do not wish to be saints, and it is probable that some who achieve or aspire to sainthood have never felt much temptation to be human beings. -George Orwell

Religion and Philosophy

Scriptures are the sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based. -Ambrose Pierce

Adversity reminds men of religion. -Livy

Sermons remain one of the last forms of public discourse where it is culturally forbidden to talk back. -Harvey Cox

I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. -Hosea 6,6

The inspiration of the Bible depends on the ignorance of the gentlemen who reads it. -Robert Ingersoll

The dogma of the infallibility of the Bible is no more self-evident than in the infallibility of the Pope. -Thomas Henry Huxley

There is nothing so strange and so unbelievable that it has not been said by one philosopher or another. -Rene Descartes

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. -Shakespeare, Hamlet 1,v,166-7

Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is another man's doxy. -William Waburton

Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development. -A.N. Whitehead

They that approve a private opinion, call it opinion; but they that dislike it, heresy: and yet heresy signifies no more than private opinion. -Thomas Hobbes

It is not permissible to designate as 'unchurched' those who have become alienated from organized denomination and traditional creeds. In living among these group for half a generation I learned how much of the latent Church there is within them. -Paul Tillich

Do you believe in a future life? asked Pierre... If I see, and see clearly, the ladder rising from plant to man, why should I suppose that it breaks off with me, and does not lead further and further?

If you cry, "Forward," you must be sure to make clear the direction in which to go. Don't you see that if you fail to do that and simply call out the word to a monk and a revolutionary, they will go in precisely opposite directions. -Anton Chekhov

Men have torn up the roads which led to heaven, and which all the world followed; now we have to make our own ladders. -Joseph Joubert

Wandering in a forest late at night, I have only a faint light to guide me. A stranger appears and says to me, "My friend, you should blow out your candle in order to find your way more clearly." This stranger is a theologian. --Denis Diderot

Many a long dispute among divines may be thus abridged: it is so. It is not so. It is so. It is not so. -Benjamin Franklin

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, under running laughter. -Francis Thompson

When a person has true spiritual experience, he may boldly drop external discipline, even those to which he is bound by vows. -Meister Eckhart

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. -Universal Declaration of Human Rights, General Assembly of the United Nations, Article 18, (1948)

Useful as a tank of water when all round the water lies,

there's no more in all the Vedas for a Brahmin who is wise. -Bhagavad Gita, 2, 46

Teaching a Christian how he ought to live does not call so much for words as for daily example. -Basil of Caesarea

Both read the Bible day and night,

But thou read'st black where I read white. -William Blake

Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. -Mark 9, 24

My Lord, I do not believe. Help thou mine unbelief. -Samuel Butler

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread... and the feast of harvest, the first fruits of thy labours and the feast of in gathering. -Exodus 23, 14-16

What do I believe? I am accused of not making it explicit. How to be explicit about a grandeur too overwhelming to express, a daily wrestling match with an opponent whose limbs never become material, a struggle from which the sweat and blood are scattered on the pages of anything the serious writer writes? A belief contained less in what is said than in the silences. IN patterns on water. A gust of wind. A flower opening. -Patrick White

The worship of God is not a rule of safety- it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable. -A.N. Whitehead

To what excesses will men not go for the sake of a religion in which they believe so little and which they practice so imperfectly! -Jean de la Bruyere

All religions will pass, but this will remain: simply sitting in a chair and looking in the distance. -V.V. Razanov.

The trees reflected in the river-they are unconscious of a spiritual world so near them. So are we. -Nathaniel Hawthorne

A pious man is one who would be an atheist if the king were. -Jean de La Bruyere

A religion, even if it calls itself the religion of love, must be hard and unloving to those who do not belong to it. -Sigmund Freud

A man is accepted into a church for what he believes and he is turned out for what he knows. -Mark Twain

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness. -Joseph Conrad

As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys. -William Blake

When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land, and the missionaries had the Bible; they taught us to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land, and we had the Bible. -Jomo Kenyatta

Fanaticism consists in redoubling your efforts when you have forgotten your aim. -George Santayana

A fanatic is one who sticks to his guns, whether they're loaded or not. -Franklin Jones

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. -Romans 14,1

Religion either makes men wise and virtuous, or it makes them set up false pretenses to both. -William Hazlitt,

Even the weakest disputant is made so conceited by what he calls religion, as to think himself wiser than the wisest who think differently from him. -Walter Savage Landor,

One man finds in religion his literature and his science, another finds in it his joy and his duty. -Joseph Joubert

Religion is the sob of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the Opium of the people. -Karl Marx

If religion is essentially of the inner life, it follows that it can be truly grasped only from within. But beyond a doubt, this can be better done by one in whose inward consciousness an experience of religion plays a part. There is but too much danger that the other [non-believer] will talk of religion as a blind man might of colours, or one totally devoid of ear, of a beautiful musical composition. -Wilhelm Schmidt

Western scholarship spent almost a century in working out a number of hypothetical reconstructions of the 'origin and development' of primitive religions. Sooner or later all these labors became obsolete, and today they are relevant only for the history of the Western Mind. -Mircea Eliade

With all due diffidence, then, I would suggest that a tardy recognition of the inherent falsehood and abhorrence of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind to cast about for a truer theory of nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account... In this, or some such way as this, the deeper minds may be conceived to have made the great transition from magic to religion. -J.G. Frazer

The religions we call false were once true. -Ralph Waldo Emerson

The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenement halls. -Paul Simon

It is remarkable fact that none of the anthropologists whose theories about primitive religion have been the most influential had ever been near a primitive people. It is as though a chemist had never thought it necessary to enter a laboratory. They had consequently to rely for their information on what European explorers, missionaries, administrators, and traders told them. -E.E. Evans-Pritchard

Victorian and Edwardian scholars were intensely interested in religions of rude people, largely, I suppose, because they faced a crisis in their own... Laymen may not be aware that most of what has been written in the past, and with some assurance, and is still trotted out in colleges and universities, about animism, totemism, magic, etc., has been shown to be erroneous or at least dubious. E.E. Evans-Pritchard

One's religion is whatever he is most interested in. -J.M.. Barrie

Ritual and Prayer

If you keep your gaze fixed upon the Light you will be delivered from dualism and plurality of the finite body. -Jalalu'l-Din Rumi

Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one that offers it. -Soren Kierkegaard

Your cravings as a human animal do not become a prayer just because it is God you ask to attend them. -Dag Hammarskjold

Every ritual has the character of happening now, at this very moment. The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made present, 're-presented' so to speak, however far back it may have been in ordinary reckoning. -Mircea Eliade

It was long ago observed that 'rites of passage' play a considerable part in the life of religious man. Certainly, the outstanding passage rite is represented by the puberty initiation, passage from one age group to another (from childhood or adolescence to youth.) But there is also a passage rite at birth, at marriage, at death, and it could be said that each of these cases always involves an initiation, for each of them represents a radical change in ontological and social status. -Mircea Eliade

We can build churches in native architecture, introduce African melodies into the liturgy, use styles of vestments borrowed from Mandarins or Bedouins, but real adaptation consists in the adaptation of our spirits to the spirits of these people. -Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy

If any devout soul offers me with devotion, a leaf or flower or fruit or water, I enjoy that offering of devotion. -Bhagavad Gita 9, 26

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet;
praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance;
praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals;
praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. -Psalm 150, 3-5

Jalalu'l-Din was asked, 'Is there any way to God nearer than the ritual prayer?' 'No', he replied; 'but prayer has a beginning and an end, like all forms and bodies and everything that partakes of speech and sound; but the soul is unconditioned and infinite... Absorption in the Divine Unity is the soul of prayer.' -Fihri ma fihri

You ought to say fewer fixed prayers so that you may do more reading. Reading is good prayer. Reading teaches us how to pray, and what to pray for, and then prayer achieves it. In the course of reading, when the heart is pleased, there arises a spirit of devotion which is worth many prayers. -The Ancient Riwle

Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action. -M.K. Gandhi

Cultivating solitude, eating lightly, restraining speech, body and mind, constantly devoted to the discipline of meditation. - Bhagavad Gita 18,52

I believe that the best manner of meditating is as follows: When, by an act of living faith, you are placed in the Presence of God, recollect some truth wherein there is substance and food. Pause sweetly and gently on it, not to employ the reason, but merely to calm and fix the mind. For you must observe, that your principal exercise should always be the Presence of God. -Madame Guyon

My austerities, fastings, and prayers are, I know, of no value if I rely upon them for reforming me. But they have an inestimable value if they represent, as I hope they do, the yearnings of a soul striving to lay his weary head in the lap of his maker. M.K. Gandhi

Silence and Tact

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt. -Abraham Lincoln

There are things which it is not only impossible to discuss intelligently, but which it is not even intelligent to discuss. - Feodor Dostoevsky

A diplomat is a man who always remembers a woman's birthday but never remembers her age. -Robert Frost

There is a point when patience ceases to be a virtue. -Thomas Morton

A gossip is one who talks to you about others: a bore is one who talks to you about himself: a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself. -Lisa Kirk

Lord, grant me patience, and I want it right now. -Anon

Quiet minds cannot be perplexed or frightened but go on in fortune or misfortune at their own private pace like a clock in a thunderstorm. -Robert Louis Stevenson

"Speech is silver, Silence is golden"; or as I might rather express it, speech is of time, silence is of eternity. -Thomas Carlyle

Man cannot long survive without air, water, and sleep. Next in importance comes food. And close on its heels, solitude. - Thomas Szasz

Solitude: a good place to visit, but a poor place to stay. -Josh Billings

Solitude: a luxury of the rich. -Albert Camus

Superstition

There is a superstition in avoiding superstition. -Francis Bacon

To become a religion, it is only necessary for a superstition to enslave a philosophy. -William Ralph Inge

Syncretism

I am a sort of collector of religions: and the curious thing is that I find I can believe in them all. -George Bernard Shaw.

I never could understand how a man could be of two religions at once. -John Henry Newman

There can be no dialogue between 'religions', between Christianity and Hinduism, between on 'belief' and another. Dialogue can only take place between people. -Samuel J. Smartha

Not only does commitment to Jesus not exclude openness to others, but the greater the commitment to him, the greater will be one's openness to others. -Paul Knitter

Toleration

It were better to be of no Church, than to be bitter for any. - William Penn

If outsiders should speak against me, or against the Doctrine, or against the Order, you should not on that account bear malice, or suffer heart-burning, or feel ill-will. If you are angry or hurt on that account, that will stand in the way of your own self-conquest. -Digha Nikaya, 3

In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity. -Richard Baxter

Everyone was free to practice what religion he like, and to try and convert other people to his faith, provided he did quietly, politely, by rational argument. -Thomas More, Utopia

At least two thirds of our miseries spring from human stupidity, human malice, and those great motivators and justifiers of malice and stupidity, idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal on behalf of religious or political ideals. -Aldous Huxley

From ancient times down to the present day there is found in various peoples a certain recognition of that hidden power which is present in history and human affairs... The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions.... She therefore urges her sons, using prudence and charity, to join members of other religions in discussions and collaboration. - Second Vatican Council

Plurality which is not reduced to unity is confusion. Unity which does not depend on plurality is tyranny. -Blaise Pascal

Letting a hundred flowers blossom, and a hundred schools of thought contend, is the policy for promoting the progress of the arts and sciences. -Mao Zedong

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. -John Stuart Mill

Truth

Irrationally held truths may be more harmful than reasoned errors. -Thomas Henry Huxley

The river of truth is always splitting up into arms which reunite. Islanded between them, the inhabitants argue for a life time as to which is the mainstream. -Cyril Connolly

Seeking to know is only too often learning to doubt. -Deshoulieres

A man had rather have a hundred lies told of him than one truth which he does not wish should be told. -Samuel Johnson

If a man will begin in certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties. -Francis Bacon

One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives. -Finley Peter Dunne

There are times when lying is the most sacred of duties. -Eugene Marian LaBiche

Opinion is something wherein I go about to give reasons why all the world should think as I think. -John Selden

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. -John 8:32

When I tell any Truth it is not for the sake of convincing those who do not know it, but for the sake of defending those who do. -William Blake

The public buys its opinions as it buys its meat, or takes in its milk, on the principle that it is cheaper to do this than to keep a cow. So it is, but the milk is more likely to be watered. -Samuel Butler

The great masses of the people... will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one. -Adolf Hitler

Man... will debauch himself with ideas, he will reduce himself to a shadow if for only one second of his life he can close his eyes to the hideousness of reality. -Henry Miller

The test which the mind applies to every question must be the test of reality; of validity measured through reason by reality. And yet the dogmatists call those weak who choose the harder, the more rigorous way. -Dorothy Thompson

Wisdom

A man should never be ashamed to own that he has been in the wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday. -Alexander Pope

The unexamined life is not worth living. -Plato

Once upon a time, Buddha relates, a certain king of Benares, desiring to divert himself, gathered together a number of beggars blind from birth and offered a prize to the one who should give the best account of an elephant. The first beggar who examined the elephant chanced to lay hold of a leg, and reported that an elephant was a tree-trunk; the second, laying hold of the tail, declared an elephant was like a rope; another, who seized an ear, insisted that an elephant was like a palm-leaf; and so on. The beggars fell to quarreling with one another, and the king was greatly amused. Ordinary teachers who have grasped this or that aspect of truth quarrel with one another, while only a Buddha knows the whole. -Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds. -Francis Bacon

Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? -Job 28,12

Wise sayings often fall on barren ground, but a kind word is never thrown away. -Sir Arthur Hope

The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise. -Ecclesiaticus 38:24

I have always observed that to succeed in the world one should seem a fool, but be wise. -Baron de Montesquieu

One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. -Henry David Thoreau

Work

So long as we love we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I would almost say that we are indispensable, and no man is useless while he has a friend. -Robert Louis Stevenson

The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves. -Anon.

I must be used, built into the solid fabric of life as far as there is any usable brick in me, and thrown aside when I am used up. It is only when I am being used that I can feel my own existence, enjoy my own life. -George Bernard Shaw

Wisdom of Aesop's Fables

Once again, we look to the Greeks for some inspiration on the actions of people. I heartily recommend further studies of other collections of fables. They represent what I call common wisdom. Aesop was historically a slave on the island of Samos, who gained his freedom by his wit. Many Greeks later used Aesop as a pen-name for their own rhetorical exercises. The majority of the selections come from "Aesop's Fables" translated by Sir Roger L'Estrange into English in 1692, republished in 1992 by Everyman's Library Collection of Random House. ISBN 0-679-41790-7. I've since adapted them into modern English, as well as I could, and adding the original illustrations. Other stories were taken from "Fables of Aesop," Penguin Classics, translated by S.A. Handford, 1964. Some others were added by memory or invented by me.

Aesop Saves his Master, Xanthus

There was a great convention of philosophers, and Xanthus (owner of Aesop) joined their company. Xanthus soon became drunk, and Aesop warned him that Bacchus first makes men cheerful, then makes them drunk and finally makes them crazy. Xanthus ignored Aesop's warning, as a lesson for children.

The cups continued to be passed around, and Xanthus was deep in his cup, and said whatever came to his mind. One of the philosophers noticed this and asked him several questions. Finally he says, 'Xanthus, I hear that it is possible for a man to drink the sea dry, but I can hardly believe it.' 'Why,' says Xanthus, 'I bet my house and land, that I can do it myself.' The agreed on the wager, and used their rings to seal the contract. The next morning Xanthus noticed his ring was missing and asked Aesop about it.

'Why truly,' says Aesop, 'I don't know anything about losing the ring, but I can tell you that you lost your house and land last night.' And so Aesop told him the story about the last night, and Xanthus began to chew upon his hat and couldn't think of what to do, without breaking his word of honor. He turned to Aesop and asked his advice. 'If you help me,' said Xanthus, 'I will release you from your servitude.'

'It's impossible to do the thing,' said Aesop, 'but I can think of a way to nullify the bargain. At the time of the bargain, go to the sea side with your servant and wearing your trinkets, and show the world a confident face as if you are about to do this great feat. You will have thousands of spectators there, so say to them these conditions of the contract: That you will drink up the sea by such a certain time, or forfeit you house and land, upon certain conditions. When they agree to this, call for a large cup, and let it be filled with sea-water, in the sight of everybody. Hold it up in your hand and say: "You have heard, good people, what I have promised to do, and under what penalty, if I should fail. I agree to this, but I have only agreed to drink up the sea, not the rivers that run into it. So therefore let all the inlets be stopped up, so that there be nothing but pure sea left for me to drink, that being done, I will perform my part of the agreement. But of drinking the rivers, there is nothing in the contract."'

The people were so impressed by the reason and justice of Xanthus' words that they hissed his opponent out of the field, who afterwards nullified the contract against Xanthus. The two buried any disagreements between them, and rejoined in the warmth of philosophical brotherhood. And Aesop was well rewarded, but not freed. The story would soon unfold, however, of how Aesop would later win his freedom.

A Cat and a Cock

It was bad luck that brought a cock into the clutches of a cat. The cat wanted to gobble him up there and then, but wanted a plausible excuse. Tell me, she says, why you bawl and scream all night, waking up people? Oh that, says the cock, I only wake up people when it's time to rise and go to work. That might be, says the cat, but you are an incestuous rascal, for you lie with your mother and sisters. Ah, says the cock, but I only do that to provide eggs for my master and mistress! Well, enough of this argument, says the cat, it's my breakfast time and cats don't live on words. At this, the cat bit him, and so made an end to the cock and the story.

Moral: Innocence is no protection against arbitrary cruelty of a tyrant. But reason and justice are so sacred, that the greatest villainies are still countenanced under its auspices.

A Countryman and A Snake

A countryman was trudging through a forest during a hard winter and spied a snake under a hedge, half-frozen to death. The kind man picked it up and stuffed it in his coat. Soon the snake revived from the warmth, and soon as it was able, he bit the very man who had saved his life. 'Ah, ungrateful wretch!' says the man, 'are you so venomous that you are satisfied with nothing less than the ruin of your preserver?'

Moral: Some people are like some snakes; they naturally do mischief. The greater the benefit they receive, the greater the malice they return.

A Lion and an Ass

A cocky ass once began braying and hee-hawing at a lion. The lion began to grow angry and was about to pounce on the ass, when he had second thoughts.

'Well' says the lion, 'Jeer on, and be an ass. Note, that it is only because of the baseness of your character that I'll ignore you this time.'

Moral: It is beneath the dignity of a great mind to engage in contests with people who have no worth or wits; indeed to contend with such wretches is to promote scandal, not gain.

A Fox and A Raven

A certain fox saw a raven high up in a tree with a piece of meat in its mouth, and the fox grew hungry at the sight of the food. The fox trots up to the base of the tree and shouts, 'O thou blessed bird! Delight of the Gods and men!' and so he continued on, complimenting him on his gracefulness, the beauty of his plumes, his gift of augury, etc. The fox then put forth, 'If only you had but a beautiful voice equal to these other wonderful qualities, the sun itself could not shine upon a greater creature.' This nauseous flattery caused the raven's mouth to gape wide and he began to prepare a special ballad, when the piece of meat fell to the ground and the fox grabbed it. 'Remember' said the fox, 'I only commented upon your beauty and said nothing about your brains.'

Wolf and the Shepherd

A wolf thought that by disguising himself he could get plenty to eat. Putting on a sheepskin to trick the shepherd, he joined the flock at grass without being discovered. At nightfall the shepherd shut him with the sheep in the fold and made it fast all

round by blocking the entrance. Then, feeling hungry, he picked up his knife and slaughtered an animal for his supper. It happened to be the wolf.

Moral: Assuming a character that does not belong to one can involve one in serious trouble. Such playacting has cost many a life.

The Rabbits and the Frogs

Once upon a time the hares held a meeting and bewailed the insecurity and fear in which they lived- the prey of men, dogs, eagles, and many other animals. It was better, they said, to die and have done with it than to live all their lives in terror and trembling. Thus resolved, they ran all together to a pool with the intention of jumping in and drowning themselves. Some frogs which were squatting round the pool, the moment they heard the patter of running feet, scuttled into the water. At this, one of the hares, who evidently had his wits about him more than the rest, said: 'Stop, all of you, don't do anything rash. For you see now that there are creatures even more tormented by fear than we are.'

Moral: It is comforting to the wretched to see others in worse case than they are themselves.

The Lion and the Mouse

A mouse ran over the body of a sleeping lion. Waking up, the lion seized it and was minded to eat it. But when the mouse begged to be released, promising to repay him if he would spare it, he laughed and let it go. Not long afterwards its gratitude was the means of saving his life. Being captured by hunters, he was tied by a rope to a tree. The mouse heard his groans, and running to the spot freed him by gnawing through the rope. 'You laughed at me the other day,' it said, 'because you did not expect me to repay your kindness. Now you see that even mice are grateful.'

Moral: A change of fortune can make the strongest man need a weaker man's help.

The Ox and the Frog

Once upon a time a frog saw an ox in a meadow and was envious of its huge bulk. So she swelled out her body till all the wrinkles disappeared and then asked her children if she was now fatter than the ox. 'No,' they said. With a still greater effort she stretched her skin tight, and asked which was the bigger now. 'The ox,' they answered. At last she got cross, and making frantic efforts to blow herself out still more, she burst herself and died.

Moral: For the weak to try to imitate the strong is courting destruction.

The Mole and Her Child

A mole declared to his mother that he could see - a thing moles cannot do. To try him, his mother gave him a lump of frankincense and asked him what it was. 'A pebble,' he replied. 'My child,' she said 'you not only cannot see: you have lost your sense of smell as well.'

Moral: When people profess to do what is impossible, the simplest test will often show them up for the impostors they are.

The Snake and Zeus

A snake was trodden on by so many people that it went and complained to Zeus. 'If you had bitten the first man who trod on you,' said Zeus, 'the next one would have thought twice about doing it.'

Moral: Those who stand up to a first assailant make others afraid of them.

The One Eyed Deer

A deer which was blind in one eye went to graze on the seashore, turning its good eye landwards, on the watch for the approach of hunters, and the injured eye to the sea, from which it did not expect any danger. But some men who came coasting inshore saw it and shot it down. As it was dying it thought: 'Unlucky that I am! I was on my guard against the attack which I knew might come from the land, but the sea, from which I thought no danger threatened, has proved yet more deadly.'

Moral: Our expectations are often deceived. Things which we feared might do us hurt turn out to our advantage, and what we thought would save us proves our ruin.

The Proud Deer

A thirsty stag came to a spring, and after drinking noticed his own reflection in the water. He felt proud of his great and curiously fashioned antlers, but was very dissatisfied with his slender weak-looking legs. While he was still lost in thought a lion appeared and ran to him. He fled and easily outdistanced it - for the deer's strength is in his legs, the lion's in his courageous heart. As long as the ground was open, the stag kept safely in front; but when they reached wooded country his antlers got entangled in the branches of a tree, so that he could not run farther and was caught by the lion. As he was about to be killed, 'Alas!' he thought, 'my legs, which I feared would fail me, were my preservation, and the antlers that filled me with such confidence are destroying me.'

Moral: It often happens, when we are in danger, that the friends whose loyalty we doubted prove our saviors, while those in whom we put implicit trust betray us.

The Martin and the Mistletoe

When the mistletoe first came into existence, the martin realized the danger that threatened the birds, and assembling them all together she advised them to tear it off, if possible, from the oaks on which it grew; if they could not manage this, they had best throw themselves on man's mercy and beg him not to use mistletoe glue to trap them. Since the other birds ridiculed the martin as a vain babbler, she went as a suppliant to mankind. They welcomed her for her prudence and took her to live with them. So, while other birds are caught and eaten by men, the martin is regarded as having taken sanctuary with them and nests without fear even in the house of people.

Moral: Those who foresee a danger naturally have a chance of avoiding it.

The Stork and the Fox

The story is that a stork which had arrived from foreign parts received an invitation to dinner from a fox, who served her with a clear soup on a smooth slab of marble, so that the hungry bird could not taste a drop of it. Returning the invitation, the stork produced a flagon filled with pap, into which she stuck her bill and had a good meal, while her guest was tormented with hunger. 'You set the example,' she said, 'and you must not complain at my following it.'

Moral: Do not do an ill turn to anyone. But if someone injures you, she deserves, according to this fable, to be paid back in her own coin.

The Horse and the Ass

A horse and an ass were on a journey with their master. 'Take a share of my load,' said the ass to the horse, 'if you want to save my life.' But the horse would not, and the ass, worn out with fatigue, fell down and died. The master then put the whole load on the horse's back, and the ass's hide into the bargain. The horse began to groan and set up a piteous lament. 'Alas,' he cried, 'what misery have I let myself in for! I would not take a light load, and now look at me: I have to carry everything, hide and all!'

Moral: The strong should help the weak; so shall the lives of both be preserved.

The Cat and Venus

A cat was enamoured of a handsome youth and begged Aphrodite to change her into a woman. The goddess, pitying her sad state, transformed her into a beautiful girl, and when the young man saw her he fell in love with her and took her home to be his wife. While they were resting in their bedroom, Aphrodite, who was curious, let a mouse loose in front of her. She at once forgot where she was, leapt up from the bed, and ran after the mouse to eat it. The indignant goddess then restored her to her original form.

Moral: In the same way a bad man retains his character even if his outward appearance is altered.

The New and Old Goats

After driving his flock to pasture one day a goatherd noticed that it was joined by some wild goats. In the evening he drove them all to his cave. The next day he was prevented by foul weather from taking them to the usual pasture and had to attend to them indoors. He gave his own animals a ration that was just enough to save them from being famished, but he heaped the fodder generously before the newcomers in the hope of increasing his flock by domesticating them. When the weather cleared he took them all out to pasture, and as soon as they set foot on the mountains the wild goats took to their heels. The herdsman charged them with ingratitude for deserting him after the special attention he had shown them. They turned round and told him that this was precisely what had put them on their guard against him. 'We came to you only yesterday,' they said, 'and yet you treated us better than your old charges. Obviously, therefore, if others join your flock later on, you will make much of them at our expense.'

Moral: We should be chary of accepting the friendly offers of people who prefer us to their old friends when we are new acquaintances. We must remember that when we become old

friend they will find other new ones, and then it will be our turn to take a back seat.

The Ass and the Statue

As ass was being driven into town with a statue of a god mounted on his back. When the passers-by did obeisance to the statue, the ass imagined that it was he to whom they showed this respect, and he was so elated that he started to bray and refused to budge a step farther. His driver, taking in the situation, laid on with his stick. 'Wretch!' he cried, 'that would be the last straw, for men to bow down to an ass.'

Moral: When people boast of honors that do not rightfully belong to them, they make themselves a laughing-stock to those who know them.

The Dog and the River

A dog was crossing over a river with a piece of meat in her mouth. Seeing her own reflection in the water she thought it was another dog with a bigger piece of meat. So she dropped her own piece and made a spring to snatch the piece that the other dog had. The result was that she had neither. She could not get the other piece because it did not exist, and her own was swept down by the current.

Moral: This shows what happens to people who always want more than they have.

The Dog and the Hare

A dog started a hare out of a bush, but, practiced game dog that he was, found himself left behind by the scampering of its hairy feet. A goat-herd laughed at him: "Fancy a little creature like that being faster than you!" 'Its one thing,' answered the dog, 'running because you want to catch something, and quite another thing running to save your own skin.'

The Beetle and the Eagle

A hare pursued by an eagle was in sore need of succor. It happened that the only creature in sight was a beetle, to which he appealed for help. The beetle bade him take courage, and on seeing the eagle approach called upon her to spare the suppliant who had sought its protection. But the eagle, despising so tiny a creature, devoured the hare before its eyes. The beetle bore her a grudge for this, and was continually on the watch to see where she made her nest. Every time she laid eggs, it flew up to the nest, rolled the eggs out, and broke them. Driven from pillar to post, the eagle at last took refuge with Zeus and begged him to give her -his own sacred bird - a safe place to hatch her chick. Zeus allowed her to lay her eggs in his lap. But the beetle saw her; so it made a ball of dung, and flying high above Zeus dropped it into his lap. Without stopping to think, Zeus got up to shake it off, and tipped out the eggs. Ever since that time, they say eagles do not nest during the season that beetles are about.

Moral: Do not hold anyone in contempt. You must remember that even the feeblest man, if you trample him in the mud, can find a way some day to pay you out.

The Reed and the Olive Tree

A reed and an olive tree were disputing about their strength and their powers of quiet endurance. When the reed was reproached by the olive with being weak and easily bent by every wind, it answered not a word. Soon afterwards a strong wind began to blow. The reed, by letting itself be tossed about and bent by the gusts, weathered the storm without difficulty; but the olive, which resisted it, was broken by its violence.

Moral: People should accept the situation in which they find themselves and yield to superior force. This is better than kicking against the pricks.

The Fir and the Thorn Bush

A fir tree and a thorn bush were arguing with each other, and the fir was singing its own praises. 'I am beautiful and tall,' it said to the thorn, 'and useful for making temple roofs and ships. How can you compare yourself with me?' 'But remember the axes and saws which cut you,' was the reply, 'and then you will wish you were a thorn-bush.'

Moral: No one should be vainglorious in this life; for it is insignificant people who live most safely.

Springtime and Wintertime

Winter scoffed tauntingly at Spring. 'When you appear,' he said, 'no one stays still a moment longer. Some are off to meadows or woods: they must needs be picking lilies and other flowers, twiddling rose round their fingers to examine them, or sticking them in their hair. Other go on board ship and cross the wide ocean, maybe, to visit men of other lands; and not a man troubles himself anymore about gales or downpours of rain. Now I am like a rule or dictator. I bid men look not up to the sky but down to the earth with fear and trembling, and sometime they have to resign themselves to staying indoors all day.' 'Yes,' replied Spring, 'and therefore men would gladly be rid of you. But with me it is different. They think my name very lovely - yes, by Zeus, the loveliest name of all names. When I am absent they cherish my memory, and when I reappear they are full of rejoicing.'

The Merchant and the Statue

A merchant once made a wooden statue of Hermes and took it to market to sell. As no buyer came forward, he tried to attract one by shouting aloud that he was offering for sale a god who would confer blessings on a man and make him prosper. 'Oh, are you?' said a bystander. 'If he is all you say he is, why do you want to sell him? You would show more sense if you kept him and profited by his help.' 'But it's ready money I need,' the merchant replied, 'and it generally takes him a long time to put anything into one's pocket.'

Moral: The man in this story was one of those who will stoop to anything in their greed for gain and never give a thought to the gods.

The Cowherd and Zeus

A Cowherd missed a calf from the herd that he was pasturing and could not find it anywhere. He vowed to sacrifice a kid to Zeus if he caught the thief. On going into a wood he saw a lion devouring the calf, and, lifting his hands to heaven in terror, cried

out: 'Lord Zeus, I promised before to offer up a kid on your altar if I discovered the thief; now, I will sacrifice a bull to get out of reach of his claws.'

Moral: People who are in trouble will often pray for things, when they get them, they want to be rid of.

The Fool and Fortune

A man who was tired after a long journey threw himself down on the edge of a well and went to sleep. He was in imminent danger of tumbling in, when fortune appeared and woke him. 'If you had fallen in, my friend,' she said, 'instead of blaming your own imprudence you would have blamed me.'

Moral: Many people who meet with misfortune through their own fault put the blame on the gods.

The Cobbler and the King

A cobbler, who was such a bad workman that he was almost starving, went to a place where he was not known and set up as a doctor. He sold some stuff which he pretended was an antidote against poison, and he was such a ready-tongued trickster that he made quite a reputation for himself. One day, when a favorite servant of the king's was lying seriously ill, the king sent for the quack and decided to test his skill. Calling for a cup, he poured out some water, told the quack to put in his antidote, and then pretended to add some poison to it. 'Now drink it,' he said, 'and I will pay you well.' The fear of death made the man confess the truth - that he knew nothing of medicine and owed his fame to the stupidity of the mob. The king assembled his people and told them the whole story. 'Do you think madness could go further?' he asked. 'You do not hesitate to entrust your lives to a man whom nobody trusted to make shoes for his feet.'

Moral: Am I not right in thinking that there are many whom the cap fits - people whose folly enables impudent impostors to make money.

Hercules and the Apple

Traveling along a narrow path, Heracles saw something on the ground that looked like an apple, and put his foot on it to crush it. But it became twice as large as it had been; whereupon he stamped on it still harder and hit it with his club. It expanded to such a size that it blocked the path. Heracles threw away his club and stood still in amazement. Then Athena appeared before him. 'That will do, brother,' she said. 'This thing is the spirit of strife and discord. So long as no one provokes it, it stays as it was at first; but if you fight it, look how it swells.'

Moral: It is plain for all to see that fighting and quarreling are the cause of untold harm.

Two Travelers and a Bear

Two friends were traveling together when a bear suddenly appeared. One of them climbed up a tree in time and remained there hidden. The other, seeing that he would be caught in another moment, lay down on the ground and pretended to be dead. When the bear put its muzzle to him and smelt him all over, he led his breath - for it is said that a bear will not touch a corpse. After it had gone away, the other man came down from his tree and asked his friend what the bear had whispered in his ear. 'It

told me,' he replied, 'not to travel in future with friends who do not stand by one in peril.'

Moral: Genuine friends are proved by adversity.

A Sick Kite and her Daughter

'Please Mother', said a sick Kite, 'stop lamenting your sickness and instead pray for your recovery.' 'Alas my child', says the Mother, 'To which of the Gods shall I go to, for I have stolen from all the altars?!'

Moral: Nothing but the conscience of a virtuous life can make death easy for us. Death-bed repentance is not a solution.

An Ass, an Ape and A Mole

An Ass and an Ape were comparing their problems. The Ass complained that he had no horns, and the ape wished he had a tail. 'Silence!', cried the mole, 'both of you! Be thankful for what you have, for the eyes of all moles are blind, and we suffer more than you.'

Moral: Providence has fitted us for our own best interest and every man's lot (well understood and managed) is undoubtedly the best.

A Dog, A Sheep and A Wolf

A Dog sued a sheep for eating some of the wheat he had loaned it. The plaintiff denied the charge before three jurors, the Wolf, the Kite and the Vultures. He was found guilty and had to sell the wool off his back to pay back the dog.

Moral: It is not important whether the charge is true or false when the Bench, Jury and Witnesses are in conspiracy against the prisoner.

An Ant and A Fly

One day an ant and a fly were arguing. 'Don't I partake of all the pleasures or privileges in the world?' boasted the fly, 'Can't I go to all the Temples or richest palaces? Am I not the taster to Gods and princes when they make sacrifice or hold a party? Do I not get the best food? And yet I do not pay for this! I trample upon crowns, and kiss any lady's lips that I please. And what do you have to compare with my life?' 'Why,' says the ant, 'You pride yourself on the access to the altars of the Gods, the Cabinets of the Princes, and all the public feasts: but you do this as an intruder, not as a guest. Far from liking you, people will kill you as fast as they are able. You are a plague to them everywhere that you go. Your breath has maggots in them and your kiss has the perfume of your last dunghill. For my part, I like upon what's my own, and work honestly in the summer to maintain my self in the winter; whereas the whole course of your scandalous life is only cheating half the year and starving the other half!'

Moral: Industry has its merits over luxury.

The Ax and the Forest

A Carpenter with a sharp piece of metal, went to the forest to beg only enough wood to make a handle for it. A tree quickly granted the modest request, but soon the trees found that the whole was to be cut down with the help of this handle.

Moral: We are often undone by our own deeds, good or otherwise.

The Sick Lion and the Fox

The lion, king of the beasts, got sick one day and was holed up in this cave suffering greatly. He came up with a trick to provide his dinner and called all the animals of the forest to loyally pay a visit to his deathbed. When they came to visit him, he would grab them and devour them. This went on for several weeks without anyone noticing it. Finally, the fox, an ancient friend of the lion went to console the patient. From the entrance of the cave, the fox wished the lion a thousand prayers for his rapid recovery, but refused to come inside and talk further. When asked why, he replied, "I find the traces of abundant feet leading into your majesty's palace, and not one comes out again."

Moral: Think carefully on the friendly requests of ill-natured and cunning people before believing them.

A Boar and A Horse

A Boar happened to be wallowing in the water where a horse wished to drink, and they began to fight. The horse went to a man to ask him to help him against the boar. They made an alliance and the man armed himself, and mounted the horse, who carried him to the boar, and the horse soon saw his enemy killed. The horse thanked the cavalier, and was about to leave when the man said he might have further use of the horse and tied him to his stable. The horse realized that he had paid with his liberty for his taste of revenge.

A Fowler and A Pigeon

A fowler was about to shoot at a pigeon, when he trod upon a snake that bit him on his leg. The pain caused him to miss the bird, which flew away.

Moral: Was it bad fortune? Not from the bird's perspective!

A Camel

Upon the first sight of a camel, all the people ran away, so scared they were by its monstrous bulk. However on its second sighting, finding it did them no harm, they became braver and watched it carefully. But when they found how stupid it was, they tied it up, bridled it, loaded it with packs and burdens, set boys upon its back, and treated it with the last degree of contempt.

Moral: Novelty surprises us, and we have a horror for misshapen monsters, but it is only our ignorance that scares us, for upon experience all these wonders grow familiar and comfortable.

A Dog in the Manger

An ill-tempered, envious cur climbed into a manger, and stood there growling and snarling to keep the horses away from their oats and hay. The dog ate nothing himself, but wouldn't go away, preferring to starve himself rather than let someone else enjoy it.

Moral: Envy derives no greater happiness than to see the misery of other people, and would rather starve itself than to allow others to escape starvation.

An Old Tree Transplanted

A certain farmer had a favorite apple-tree in her orchard, which she valued above all the rest, and gave a present of its fruit to the landlord every year. The landlord liked the fruit very much and demanded that the tree be transplanted onto his own grounds. The tree withered soon afterwards and that was the end of the fruit and the tree, together. When the landlord heard the news, he reflected upon it; 'This comes of transplanting an old tree, to gratify an extravagant appetite. If I was satisfied with the fruit and left my tenant the tree, all would still be well.'

Moral: Nature has her methods and seasons for doing everything, and these should not be tampered with lightly.

A Camel and Zeus

It really bothered the Camel that bulls, stags, lions, bears and the like, should be armed with horns, teeth and claws, but that a creature of his size should be left naked and defenseless. Upon this thought, he knelt and begged Zeus to give him a pair of horns, but the request was so ridiculous to Zeus, that instead of honoring him, he ordered the camel's ears to be cropt.

Moral: The bounties of heaven are distributed in such a manner, that every living creature has its share. To desire other things against that pattern, is to insult their own creator of nature.

A Fox and A Goat

One day, a fox fell into a well and couldn't get out. Presently, a goat came by and asked how the water tasted it. The fox said it tasted very good and invited the goat to come down and taste it. The goat jumped in, tasted the water and noticed that he couldn't get out. 'Don't worry,' said the fox, 'leave it to me. Just raise yourself on your hind legs with your fore legs against the wall, and I can easily climb up your horns, get out of the well, and I'll pull you out.' The goat assumed this posture and the fox sprang out of the well. The goat complained when the fox didn't help him. Instead, the fox only laughed mockingly at the goat, 'If you had half as much brains as beard, you would have thought how to get up before you went down.'

Moral: A wise person will debate everything pro and con before he decides to do something. Don't leave anything to chance.

An Imposter at the Oracle

There was a jolly prankster who took a trip to Delphos to see if he could fool Apollo. He carried a sparrow in his hand, under his coat, and told the God, 'I have something in my hand,' says he, 'Is it dead or living?' If the oracle should say it was dead, he could show it was alive; if the oracle said it was living, he would squeeze the bird and show it was dead. Apollo say the malice in his heart and gave this answer: 'It shall be whichever you please; for it is your choice to have it one way or the other.'

Moral: It is presumption that lead people by steps to atheism; for when Men have once cast off a reverence for religion, they are within a step of laughing at it.

An Astrologer and a Ditch Digger

A certain star-gazer had the misfortune, during his celestial observations, to stumble into a ditch. A sober fellow passing by him, gave him a piece of advice, 'Friend, learn from your mistake

and, for the future, let the stars go on quietly in their courses, and pay more attention to the ditches.'

Hermes and a Traveler

One woman who was about to start a long journey, decide to play a trick upon Hermes. She said a short prayer to him for a good trip, and promised that she would give the god half of all her fortune. Somebody had lost a bag of dates and almonds, and she was lucky to find it. She quickly ate all that was good of them and laid the stones and shells upon an altar and called for Hermes to notice that she had fulfilled her vow. She said, 'Here are the outsides of one and the insides of the other, and that's your half of the bargain.'

Moral: People talk as if they believed in God, but they live as if they thought there were none, but their very prayers are mockeries, which they never intended to make good.

A Doctor and An Eye Patient

A crooked physician undertook the treatment of a woman with sore eyes, vowing a contract of "No cure, no money." His trick was to dab their eyes with ointments, and then carry off a spoon or bowl, or something valuable, at the end of each visit. The woman's eyes mended, and everyday she was able to see more and more clearly, but everyday there was less to be seen. The doctor came to her at last, and told her, 'Mistress, I have discharged my duty, and your eyes are perfectly well again, so please pay me according to our agreement.' 'Alas, Sir,' says the woman, 'I'm a great deal worse than I was the first time you helped me; for I could see plate, hangings, paintings, and other goods of value about my house, and now I can see nothing at all.'

Moral: There are few good deeds done for other people, except that the benefactor expects some reward for himself.

A Lioness and A Fox

A fox once bragged to a lioness that she, a vixen, produced a great many children, whereas the lioness only produced one whelp at a time. 'Yes,' said the lioness, 'but that one is a lion.'

Moral: Many a fool believes quantity is always better than quality.

Two Cocks Fighting

Two cocks fought a duel for the mastery of a dunghill. The loser slunk away into a corner and hid himself; the victor flew to the top of the house and crowed forth his victory and flapped his wings. An eagle swooped down during his exultation and carried him away. By this accident, the other cock rid himself of his rival, claimed the territory, and reclaimed the affections of his mistresses.

Moral: A wise and generous enemy will make a modest use of a victory; for Fortune is fickle.

A Fox that Lost its Tail

A fox got caught in a trap and saved its neck by leaving his tail behind him. However, his resulting image was not pleasing to the sight, a fox without his big bushy tail, so that he became weary of his life. But to make himself feel better, he called a congress of foxes to discourse to them on the trouble, uselessness

and indecency of foxes wearing tails. But, no sooner than he had finished his say, but another cunning fox rises up and question whether the speaker was arguing against wearing the tails for the advantage of those who had tails, or to placate the deformity and disgrace of those that had none.

Moral: When a person has any notable defect or infirmity, whether by nature or accident, he often tries to pretend that the result is better than being whole.

Death and the Old Man

An old man that had traveled a long way under a huge burden of sticks found himself so weary that he threw it down, and called to Death to deliver him from such a miserable life. Death quickly came at his call, and asked what he could do for him. 'Oh, good sir,' says the old man, 'please help me stand up and carry my burden again.'

Moral: Men call upon Death, as they do for the Devil, but when he comes they're afraid of him.

An Old Man and A Lion

A rich man dreamed one night that he saw a lion kill his only son, who was a generous horseman and a great hunter. This obsession controlled the father's mind so greatly, that he build a house of pleasure for his son, to keep him out of danger; scrimping not a penny to make it a wonderful secluded place. The house, in a nutshell, was the young man's prison, and the father made himself the keeper. There were a great many painting throughout the house, but the one of a lion, stirred the anger of the young man. For the sake of a dream about this beast, he was forever a slave and prisoner. In his anger, the young man punched the painting; but his fist hit the point of a nail in the wall, his hand cancerated, he fell into a fever, and soon thereafter he died.

Moral: There is no way to avoid one's fate.

A Flea and Hercules

There was a fellow who was bit by a flea. He called out to Hercules to help him in his distress. The flea got away and the man continued to gripe about it. 'Oh Hercules,' he says, 'if you would help me against a flea, you will never do many any good in a time of need, against a more powerful enemy!'

Moral: We neglect god in greater matters, and petition him for trifles; getting angry if cannot have all our cravings.

Two Travelers and A Bag of Money

As two travelers were going down the highway, one of them bends down and picks up something. 'Look,' he says, 'I have found a bag of money.' 'No,' says the other, 'When two friends are together, you must not say "I" found it, but "we" found it.' Not long after that a posse pursuing a famous gang of bank-robbers, came down that highway and spied the two travelers. 'Lord! Brother!', says the man with the bag, 'We're in big trouble now!' 'Incorrect again,' says his friend, 'You must not say "We" are in trouble, but "I" am in trouble, because if I had no share in the finding, I'll sure not go halves in the hanging.'

Moral: If you enter into a partnership, you must take the good and the bad, one with the other.

A Wolf and A Goat

A wolf spotted a stragglng young kid, and pursued him. The kid found out that the wolf was too fast for him, so he turned and told the wolf, 'I know that you are going to eat me, but I would die happily if you would please play your bagpipe before you gobble me up.' The wolf played, and the kid danced, and the noise of the pipes brought a pack of dogs to him. 'Well,' said the wolf, 'just goes to show that you shouldn't meddle in other professions. I was trained as a butcher, not as a bagpiper.'

Moral: When a fool is infatuated, any idiot can play tricks on him.

A Musician

A man with a terrible voice, but an excellent conservatory, often practiced in that room, because of the complimentary echo of that room. He became so conceited that he felt he must perform in a public theatre, but he did such a poor job that he was hissed off the stage and pelted.

Moral: A man might like his face in a mirror, but that won't make him a model.

A Crow and Pigeons

A crow noticed of some pigeons in a dove house. The pigeons were well fed and protected, so he painted himself dove-colour, and moved in with the pigeons. As long as he kept silent, he passed for one of those bird, but one day he blurted out 'KAH!' and they discovered his intrusion. They beat him out of the house and the crow returned to his old companions, the crows, but they also would have nothing to do with him, so he lost both world by his disguise.

Moral: He who pretends to be two people, is liked by neither circle.

A Wolf and A Sheep

A wolf was liking his wounds after a near-fatal defeat from a dog. He called out to a passing sheep, 'Hark, friend, please be so kind as to bring me a drink of water from that river, so that I can rise again to get something to eat.' 'Oh sure,' says the sheep, 'I have no doubt that if I bring your something to drink, I'll also bring you myself to eat.'

Moral: It is a kind and Christian thing to relieve the poor and distressed, but this duty does not extend to the aid of sturdy beggars, who would receive alms in one hand and club out a man's brains with the other hand.

Travelers by the Seaside

A small group of people were walking along the sea-shore, when the saw something come toward them from a great distance on the sea. They sat down and waited for a long time. At first they took it to be a ship, and as it came nearer, perhaps it was a small boat; but at last it proved to be only a mat of weeds and bulrushes. One of them said, 'We have been waiting here for some great event, and now it turns out to be nothing.'

An Ass and the Frogs

An ass sank down deep into a bog, because of the great burden of wood on its back, and many frogs came and gathered around it. The ass sighed and groaned as if its heart would break, but one of the frogs came up and said to it; 'Dear friend, why do you complain so much about the bog when you just fell into it. What would you do if you'd been here as long as we have been?'

Moral: People often get used to the defects and negative aspects of the world in which they live, but it is difficult for them to appreciate the newcomer's distaste for their surroundings.

A Gnat Challenges a Lion

A lion was crashing and prancing through a forest, when up comes a gnat before his nose and challenges the lion to a duel. 'I am not afraid of your teeth and claws.' cried the gnat, 'Try and hurt me.' With that a trumpet sounded, and the two combatants charged each other, and the gnat slipped into the nostrils of the lion. There, he stung the lion repeatedly. The lion clawed at his own face and soon surrendered. The gnat flew away, bursting with pride. On his way home, he flew into a cobweb and fell prey to a spider. This disgrace crushed his pride; after having gotten the better of a lion, he had been worsted by an insect.

Moral: Fortune is capricious, and great victories can soon be followed by great defeats.

The Traveler and Athena

A rich Athenian was on a voyage with other passengers, when a violent storm blew up and capsized the ship. All the rest tried to swim ashore, but the Athenian kept calling on Athena and promising her lavish offerings if he escaped. One of his shipwrecked companions, as he swam past, shouted to him: 'Don't leave it all to Athena; use your arms as well.'

Moral: God helps those who help themselves. Before invoking the aid of heaven we must think and act for ourselves.

Fundamentalist Aesopians Interpret

Fox-Grapes Parable Literally

from [The Onion](#)

MONTGOMERY, AL--A controversial new bill pending before the Alabama Legislature has deeply divided the state along theological lines, sending right-wing fundamentalist Aesopians into an uproar. HR 1604, if passed, would broaden nutritional guidelines used in the state's school-lunch program, permitting a wider variety of fruits and vegetables to be served, including grapes, the consumption of which is a sin according to Aesopian doctrine.

"The state of Alabama is trying to bully us into submission," said Herman Bray, Pastor of the First Universal Church Of Aesop in Huntsville. "They're trying to rob us of our most cherished beliefs and send our children the message that grapes are acceptable for eating."

Clutching a worn, leather-bound copy of Aesop's Parables, Bray explained his congregation's strict opposition to the law.

"The Holy Writ of Aesop makes it plain that the fox, in his anger at the unreachable grapes, cursed the offending fruit and

made all grapes sour forever," Bray said. "It is common sense--and a core belief of the Church Of Aesop--that this is a directive from Aesop Himself against grape consumption. Grapes are plainly exposed as a foul, sour-tasting fruit which dirties both body and soul, and this is a strict tenet of our dietary code." Alabama Aesopians are threatening to take their children out of school if the bill becomes law.

"Our beliefs and history have been laughed off by the secular media as fiction, as 'fables,'" Bray continued. "But the fox-and-the-grapes incident is not just some fantasy concocted by the Aesopian Right. Our research has determined that it most likely occurred between 605 and 602 B.C.E. in the province of Phrygia, was witnessed by a young Aesop and ultimately recorded in what became the Holy Book of Aesopians. Our church's archaeological and historical data all confirm the details recorded in the Aesop account."

The Aesopians' claims have provoked strong reaction among academics. "They think what? That this is a directive not to eat grapes?" asked Darrin Schmidt, professor of folklore and mythology at NYU. "The whole point of the story is that the grapes aren't sour at all. I think that's pretty unambiguous." Bray dismissed Schmidt's comments as "heretical anti-Aesopian hate speech."

Curtis Milner, president of the Birmingham-based Aesopian Coalition, said his organization is prepared to go all the way to the Supreme Court if Alabama passes what he calls "an openly hostile, blatantly anti-Aesopian piece of legislation."

"These lawmakers are attacking our most closely held beliefs," Milner said. "Not only is it disrespectful; it is a clear violation of the Constitution of this land."

According to Milner, the beliefs of the Aesopians are simple and direct. "We honor the courage and the noble sacrifice of Aesop, who gave His life to educate the world, not backing down even to the day of His execution by the wicked Athenian despot Peisistratus," Milner said. "That event, though tragic on the surface, was actually a day of exhilarating triumph over evil, for as a result of it, the histories painstakingly recorded by Aesop gained immortality."

"He died for us all," Milner added

The Wit and Wisdom of Women

Many a quote has been borrowed from famous male writers, but how about some thoughts from female writers, often ignored and unfamous. Here is a collection taken from two delightful collections titled, "Write to the heart: Wit and Wisdom of Women Writers," edited by Amber Coverdale Sumrall, The Crossing Press. Freedom, California 95019. ISBN 0-89594-550-9 and "The Last Word: A Treasury of Women's Quotes" by Carolyn Warner, published by Prentice Hall, 1992, ISBN 0-13-524372-6.

Change

Creativity is really the structuring of magic. -Anne Kent Rush

Poetry has its own laws speaking for the life of the planet. It is a language that wants to bring back together what the other words have torn apart. -Linda Hogan

Even St. Teresa said, "I can pray better when I'm comfortable," and she refused to wear her hair cloth shirt or starve herself. I don't think living in cellars and starving is better for an artist than it is for anybody else. -Katherine Anne Porter

I was not looking for my dreams to interpret my life, but rather for my life to interpret my dreams. -Susan Sontag

You do not create a style. you work and develop yourself; your style is an emanation from your own being. -Katherine Anne Porter

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us. -Helen Keller

I know I walk in and out of several worlds every day. -Joy Harjo

Survival is a form of resistance. -Meridel Le Sueur

We women have lived too much with closure: If he notices me, if I marry him, if I get into college, if I get this work accepted, if I get that job - there always seems to loom the possibility of something being over, settled, sweeping clear the way for contentment. This is the delusion of a passive life. -Carolyn G. Heilbrun

Pain is important: how we evade it, how we succumb to it, how we deal with it, how we transcend it. -Audre Lorde

The hardest thing we are asked to do in this world is to remain aware of suffering, suffering about which we can do nothing. -Mary Sarton

Originality does demand courage, the courage to become a person who is able to know his or her experience deeply, who is willing to feel and to question feeling, to dig for what the truth of a moment is, including the truth that may contradict external fact. -Jane Hirschfield

The road was new to me, as roads always are going back. -Sarah Orne Jewett

The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution. -Hannah Arendt

Death

I once wrote that the best way to write was to do so as if one were already dead: afraid of no one's reactions, answerable to no one for one's views. I still think that is the way to write. -Nadine Gordimer

People living deeply have no fear of death. -Anais Nin

Education

Having been unpopular in high school is not just cause for book publication. -Fran Lebowitz

Pay attention to what they tell you to forget. -Muriel Ruckeyser

I think the one lesson I have learned is that there is no substitute for paying attention. -Diane Sawyer

Readers, after all, are making the world with you. You give them the materials, but it's the readers who build that world in their own minds. -Ursula K. LeGuin

The true order of learning should be: first, what is necessary; second, what is useful; and third, what is ornamental. To reverse this arrangement is like beginning to build at the top of the edifice. -Lydia H. Sigourney

Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there, firm as weeds among stones. -Charlotte Bronte

A good teacher can save you ten years. You can't teach creativity, you can't infuse people with psychic energy, and you certainly can't give them a good ear, which is a gift of God, but you can teach people critical distance, how to look at their own work objectively as if it had been written by somebody else. -Carolyn Kizer

I didn't miss a beat turning down a scholarship at a Catholic college where I had been assured I would get more "individual attention." Who wanted individual attention? I wanted to be left alone to lose my soul. -Patricia Hampl

The final lesson a writer learns is that everything can nourish the writer. The dictionary, a new word, a voyage, an encounter, a talk on the street, a book, a phrase learned. -Anais Nin

Men writers aren't thought of as "men writers;" they are thought of as great writers. It would be fine if the men writers would be called "men writers." It just never comes up - "Updike or Bellow, he's a really great man writer." But we frequently hear, "Margaret Atwood is a really incredible woman writer." I say what a crock of shit. -Anne Lamont

When we take an author seriously, we prefer to believe that her vision derives from her individual and subjective and neurotic, tortured soul - we like artists to have tortured souls - not from the world she is looking at. -Margaret Atwood

When I couldn't find the poems to express the things I was feeling, I started writing poetry. -Audre Lorde

He knows so little and knows it so fluently. -Ellen Glasgow

Interpretation is the revenge of the intellectual upon art. -Susan Sontag

The most moving form of praise I receive from readers can be summed up in three words: I never knew. Meaning, I see these people (call them Indians, Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese) all around me all the time and I never knew they had an inner life. -Bharati Mukherjee

The misery of seeing the horrible chaos that actually precedes the creation of really first-rate work is so unnerving that most teachers of workshops would rather see the neat imitative poems. -Diane Wakoski

I think the battle that one always has is the battle between inspiration and form. -Deena Metzger

Nighttime is really the best time to work. All the ideas are there to be yours because everyone is asleep. -Catherine O'Hara

A gossip is someone who talks to you about others, a bore is one who talks to you about himself, and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself. -Lisa Kirk

Fame and Fortune

It is amazing how much people can get done if they do not worry about who gets the credit. -Sandra Swinney

Fame means millions of people have a wrong idea of who you are. -Erica Jong

Every society honors its live conformists and its dead troublemakers. -Mignon McLaughlin

It's not so much how busy you are, but why you are busy. The bee is praised; the mosquito is swatted. -Marie O' Connor

Human successes, like human failures, are composed of one action at a time and achieved by one person at a time. -Patsy H. Sampson

Tough a tree grow ever so high, the falling leaves return to the ground. -Malay

Leadership

None who have always been free can understand the terrible fascinating power of the hope of freedom to those who are not free. -Pearl S. Buck

The real menace in dealing with a five-year old is that in no time at all you begin to sound like a five-year old. -Jean Kerr

The feeble tremble before opinion, the foolish defy it, the wise judge it, the skillful direct it. -Jeanne de la Platiere

Moses dragged us for 40 years through the desert to bring us to the one place in the Middle East where there was no oil. -Golda Meir

There is no king who has not a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his. -Helen Keller

If I had to name one quality as the genius of patriarchy, it would be compartmentalization, the capacity for institutionalizing disconnection. Intellect severed from emotion. Thought separated from action. Science split from art. The earth itself divided; national borders. Human beings categorized: by sex, age, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, height, weight, class, religion, physical ability, ad nauseam. The person isolated from the political. Sex divorced from love. The material ruptured from the spiritual. Law detached from justice. Vision disassociated from reality. -Robin Morgan

The best thing you can have in life is to have someone tell you a story. -Leslie Marmon Silko

There is nothing in the universe that I fear, but that I shall not know all my duty, or shall fail to do it. -Mary Lyon

If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it. -Anon.

The first duty of a human being is to assume the right relationship to society, more briefly, to find your real job, and do it. -Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Figure out what your most magnificent qualities are and make them indispensable to the people you want to work with. Notice that I didn't say "work for." Linda Bloodworth-Thomason.

Don't identify too strongly with your work. Stay fluid behind those black and white words. They are not you. They were a great moment going through you. A moment you were awake enough to write down and capture. -Natalie Goldberg

Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. -Adrienne Rich

Failing to plan is a plan to fail. -Effie Jones

I fell strongly that I have a responsibility to all the sources that I am: to all past and future ancestors, to my home country, to all places that I touch down on, and that are myself, to all voices, all women, all of my tribe, all people, all earth, and beyond that to all beginnings and endings. -Joy Harjo

Love and Justice

What a minority group want is not the right to have geniuses among them, but the right to have fools and scoundrels without being condemned as a group. -Agnes Elizabeth Benedict

The Eskimos had fifty-two names for snow because it was important to them: there ought to be as many for love. -Margaret Atwood

On the road between the homes of friends, grass does not grow. -Norwegian

Shared joy is double joy, and shared sorrow is half-sorrow. -Swedish

Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small. He haven't time, and to see takes time -like to have a friend takes time. -Georgia O'Keeffe

What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other? -George Eliot

Nature

Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know it so it goes on flying anyway. -Mary Kay Ash

And then it just seems preposterous. There I am, choosing my words so carefully, trying to build this pure, unanalyzable, transparent, honest thing in this dim room with the shades drawn and out there is the world, indecent, cruel, apathetic, a world where the sea are being trashed, the desert bladed, the wolves shot, the eagles poisoned, where people show up at planning and zoning meetings waving signs that say "My family Can't Eat the Environment." That sentence is ill, it is a virus of a sentence, and as a writer, I should be able to defeat it and its defenders handily. With the perfect words I should be able to point out, reasonably, that in fact the individual's family is eating the environment, that they are consuming it with sprawl and greed and materialistic hungers and turning it into - shit. But perfect words fail me. I

don't want my words. I want to throttle this person, beat him over the head with his stupid sign. -Joy Williams

For me writing is an incredible privilege. When I sit down at the desk, there are other women who are hungry, homeless. I don't want to forget that, that the world of matter is still there to be reckoned with. I feel a responsibility to other humans, and to the animal and plant communities as well. -Linda Hogan

I'm not a naturalist in the activist sense of the word, though perhaps writing with a feeling of the sacred about a place is a kind of activism. Part of what you're doing as a writer is to make that silent language of mountains and trees and water part of your language. It's speaking all the time and I hear it speaking. -Tess Gallagher

Spirituality necessitates certain kinds of political action. If you believe that the earth, and all living things, and all the stones are sacred, your responsibility really is to protect those things. -Linda Hogan

Philosophy and Religion

When we talk to God, we're praying. When God talks to us we're schizophrenic. -Lily Tomlin

A self-righteous preacher reprimanded a farmer because he cussed and drank. "I'm over 60 years old and I've never cussed or drunk." Farmer: "Yeah and you've never farmed either." -Anon.

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within where hidden and growing our true spirit rises. -Audre Lorde

It is good for a philosopher should remind himself, now and then, that he is a particle pontificating on infinity. -Ariel and Will Dumant

People see God every day, they just don't recognize Him. -Pearl Bailey

I would no more quarrel with a man because of his religion than I would because of his art. -Mary Baker Eddy

As a girl my temper often got out of bounds. But one day when I became angry at a friend over some trivial matter, my mother said to me, "Elizabeth, anyone who angers you conquers you." -Sister Elizabeth Kenny

Think wrongly, if you please, but in all cases think for yourself. -Doris Lessing.

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms. -Muriel Rukeyser

What would have been the effect upon religion if it had come to us through the minds of women? -Charlotte Perkins Gilman

The heresy of one age becomes the orthodoxy of the next. -Helen Keller

It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God. -Mary Daly

A preacher who was popular with his congregation explained his success as the result of a silent prayer which he offered each time he took the pulpit. It ran thus: "Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, and nudge me when I've said enough." -Anon.

Too much rigidity on the part of the teachers should be followed by a brisk spirit of insubordination on the part of the taught. -Agnes Repplier

Put your ear down close to your soul and listen hard. -Anne Sexton

Religion and art spring from the same root and are close kin. -Willia Cather

Time

This has been a most wonderful evening. Gertrude has said thing tonight it'll take her ten years to understand. -Alice B. Toklas

How slowly one comes to understand anything! -May Sarton

Don't be afraid your life will end; be afraid that it will never begin. -Grace Hansen

Words are more powerful than perhaps anyone suspects, and once deeply engraved in a child's mind, they are not easily eradicated. -May Sarton

What we remember is only a ripple in a pond. -Nikki Giovanni

Life can only be understood backwards but it must be lived forward. -Susan Kierkegaard

As you grow older, you'll find that you enjoy talking to strangers far more than to your friends. -Joy Williams

One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade. -Chinese

Neither for men nor for women do we anywhere find initiation ceremonies that confirm the status of being an elder. -Simone de Beauvoir

It doesn't matter who my father was; it matters who I remember he was. -Anne Sexton

It is never too late to be what you might have been. -Georgie Eliot

If you don't keep and mature your force and above all have the time and quiet to perfect your work, you will be writing things not much better than you did five years ago. -Tillie Olson

One hears one's childhood and it is ancient. -Kathleen Fraser

Truth

Only friends will tell you the truths you need to hear to make your life bearable. -Francine Du Plessix Gray

I've done more harm by the falseness of trying to please than by the honesty of trying to hurt. -Jessamyn West

Simply to speak the truth heals. The blood of the wound heals the wound. -Susan Griffin

Eighty percent of the language lies to us... the language of diplomacy, politics, advertising... all the language or persuasion. -Deena Metzger

War

It is not so much a question of whether the lion will one day lie down with the lamb, but whether human beings will ever be able to lie down with any other creature or being at all. -Alice Walker

You cannot shake hands with a closed fist. -Indira Gandhi

It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees. -Delores IBarruri

Wit and Wisdom

I've always felt that a person's intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic. -Lisa Ather

If thine enemy wrong thee, buy each of his children a drum. -Chinese

The bread of life is love, the salt of life is work, the sweetness of life is poesy, and the water of life is faith. -Anna Jameson

I believe talent is like electricity. We don't understand electricity. We use it. You can plug into it and light up a lamp, keep a heart pump going, light a cathedral, or you can electrocute a person with it. Electricity will do all that. It makes no judgment. I think talent is like that. I believe every person is born with talent. - Maya Angelou

All of writing is a huge lake. There are great rivers that feed the lake, like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. And there are mere trickles, like Jean Rhys. All that matters is feeding the lake. I don't matter. The lake matters. -Jean Rhys

There ain't no answer. There ain't going to be any answer. There never has been an answer. That's the answer. -Gertrude Stein

Expecting Life to treat you well because you are a good person is like expecting an angry bull not to charge because you are a vegetarian. -Shari R. Barr

Change is an easy panacea. It takes character to stay in one place and be happy there. -Elizabeth Clarke Dunn

Women

Any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. -Virginia Woolf

Women have been called queens for a long time, but the kingdom given them isn't worth ruling. -Louisa May Alcott

Men have always been afraid that women could get along without them. -Margarat Mead

Macho doesn't prove mucho. -Zsa Zsa Gabor

I've been called a Medusa, an Octopus, etc. The attack being: here is a woman who doesn't use words in a soft, compliant way; therefore, she is an evil witch. -Margaret Atwood

There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. Might as well speak of a female liver. -Charlotte Perkins Gilman

People call me feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute. -Dame Rebecca West

One is not born a woman, one becomes one. -Simone de Beauvoir

Welsh Proverbs

Henaint ni ddaw ei hunan.
Old age comes not on its own.

Nerth hen, ei gyngor parad.
The strength of the old is their ready counsel.

Bum gall unwaith-hynny oedd, llefain pan ym ganed.
I was wise once, when I was born I cried.

Nerth hen, ei gyngor parad.
The strength of the old is their ready counsel.

Po hynaf for'r dyn, gadwaethaf fydd ei bwyll.
The older the man, the weaker his mind.

Tyfid maban, ni thyf a gadachan.
The child will grow, his diaper will not.

Unwaith yn ddyn, dwywiaith yn blentyn.
One time a man, two times a child.

Hen y teimllir ergyndion a gaed yn ifanc.
Old feel the blows suffered when young.

Am gwypm hen y chwardd ieuanc.
The young laugh when the old fall.

Ni edrych angau pwy decaf ei dalcen.
Death considers not the fairest forehead.

Haws twyllo maban na gwrachan.
A boy is easier cheated than an old lady.

O bob trwm, trymaf henaint.
Of all weights, old age is the heaviest.

Adversity brings knowledge, and knowledge wisdom.

Have a horse of your own and then you may borrow another's.

If every man would sweep his own door-step the city would soon be clean.

If you would get ahead, be a bridge.

Three things it is best to avoid: a strange dog, a flood, and a man who thinks he is wise.

Your hand is never the worse for doing its own work.

A bad farmer's hedge is full of gaps.

If every fool wore a crown, we should all be kings.

Akkadian Proverbs

Let your mouth be restrained and your speech guarded;
That is a man's pride - let what you say be very precious.

Let insolence and blasphemy be an abomination for you; a talebearer is looked down upon....

Do not return evil to your adversary; requite with kindness the one who does evil to you; maintain justice for your enemy; be friendly to your enemy....

Give food to eat, beer to drink;

Grant what is requested; provide for and treat with honor.

At this one's god takes pleasure.

It is pleasing to Shamash, who will repay him with favor.

Do good things; be kind all your days.

Does a marsh receive the price of its reeds, or fields the price of their vegetation?

The strong live by their own wages; the weak by the wages of their children.

Friendship is for the day of trouble, posterity for the future.

An ass in another city becomes its head.

Writing is the mother of eloquence and the father of artists.

Do not cut off the neck of that which has had its neck cut off.

Wealth is hard to come by, but poverty is always at hand.

The fox, having urinated into the sea, said that the whole of the sea is my urine

Part Three:

Monotheistic Faiths

The Way of the Sufis

Once again I present another collection of materials gathered by the great Idries Shah's above titled selection of advice and wisdom of the greatest Sufi saints. I only present a 15% selection, for I do not have time for all, and I do not understand many of them, and may never reach that point of enlightenment. (See the works of Nasruddin in the Green Books)

Idries Shah was born in 1924, and is famous for books on nearly all subjects. He is most prominent for writings on Sufi thought as it applies to cultures in the East and West. His books, "thinkers of the East" and "Learning how to Learn" are also published by Penguin's Arkana label. The bulk of the following selections are by Idries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi*, by Arkana, 1968 (1990) ISBN 0-14-019252. Others were taken from "Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya ('Memorial of the Saints')" by Farid al-Din Attar. Translated by A.J. Arberry. Published by Arkana label of Penguin Books 1966/1990. ISBN 0-14-019264-6 A 13th century collection of Sufi stories primarily of 8th/9th century saints.

These authors' works have come closest to my model of good Druidic anthology of readings; short, pithy and full of amazing insights from many sources on many subjects. Because the Sufi dervish goals of mysticism are similar to that of Druidism, as I see it, I highly recommend all of his works to young aspiring Druids, as especially Arch Druids trying to figure out their focus for their Grove. You will find further study enlightening, but Shah has a warning for those interested only in the written records:

Shah on Sufism

Sufi's contend, far from this lore being available in books, a great part of it must be personally communicated by means of an interaction between the teacher and the learner. Too much attention to the written page, they insist, can even be harmful. Here is a further problem; for it appears to oppose the scholar no less than the member of the vast modern literate community who feels, if at times only subconsciously, that all knowledge must surely be available in books. -Shah pg. 29

The Sufi must act and speak in a manner which takes into consideration the understanding, limitations and dominant concealed prejudices of his audience." -Shah pg. 36

What is the good of a wonderful milk yield from a cow which kicks the pail over? -Risalat (Epistles to Disciples)

One of the most striking peculiarities of contemporary man is that while he now has abundant scientific evidence to the contrary, he finds it intensely difficult to understand that his beliefs are by no means always linked with either his intelligence, his culture or his values. He is therefore almost unreasonably prone to indoctrination. Shah pg. 55

"Mysticism" having been given a bad name like the dog in the proverb, if it cannot be hanged, can at least be ignored. This is a measure of scholastic psychology: accept the man's discoveries if you cannot deny them, but ignore his method if it does not follow your beliefs about methods. -Shah pg. 56

Attraction of Celebrities

A man who is being delivered from the danger of a fierce lion does not object, whether this service is performed by an unknown or an illustrious individual. Why, therefore, do people seek knowledge from celebrities? -El Ghazali

The Dance

A disciple had asked permission to take part in the "dance" of the Sufis. The Sheikh said: "Fast completely for three days. Then have luscious dishes cooked. If you then prefer the "dance," you may take part in it. -El Ghazali

The Words of Omar Kayyam

Seeds like These

In cell and cloister, in monastery and synagogue:
Some fear hell and others dream of Paradise.
But no man who really knows the secrets of his God
Has planted seeds like this within his heart.

Under the Earth

You are not gold, ignorantly heedless one:
That, once put in the earth, anyone
Will bring you out again.

I am

Every clique has a theory about me -
I am mine; what I am, I am.

The Words of Attar Nishapur

The Heart

Someone went up to a madman who was weeping in the bitterest possible way. He said, "Why do you cry?"

The madman answered, "I am crying to attract the pity of His heart."

The other told him: "Your words are nonsense, for He has no physical heart."

The Madman answered, "It is you who are wrong, for He is the owner of all the hearts which exist. Through the heart you can make your connection with God."

The Madman and the Muezzin

A muezzin in Isafahan had climbed to the top of a minaret and was giving the call to prayer.

Meanwhile, a madman was passing by, and someone asked him, "What is he doing there, in that minaret?"

The madman said, "That man up there is in fact shaking a nutshell which has nothing within it."

When you speak the ninety-nine Names of God, you are, similarly, playing with a hollow nutshell. How can God be understood through names?

Since you cannot speak in words about the essence of God, best of all speak about nobody at all.

-Kitab Ilahi

The Test

It is related of Shaqiq of Balkh that he once said to his disciples: "I put my confidence in God and went through the wilderness with only a small coin in my pocket. I went on the Pilgrimage and came back, and the coin is still with me."

One of the youth stood up and said to Shaqiq: "If you had a coin in your pocket, how could you say that you relied upon anything higher?"

Shaqiq answered: "There is nothing for me to say, for this young man is right. When you rely upon the invisible world there is no place for anything, however small, as a provision!"

-Kitab-Ilahi

The Unaware Tree

A man cut down a tree one day.

A Sufi who was this taking place said, "Look at this branch which is full of sap, happy because it does not yet know that it has been cut off. Ignorant of the damage which it has suffered it may be- but it will know it due time. ,Meanwhile you cannot reason with it."

This severance, this ignorance, these are the state of man.

Unaware

You know nothing of yourself here and in this state.

You are like the wax in the honeycomb: what does it know of fire or guttering?

When it gets to the stage of the waxen candle and when light is emitted, then it knows.

Similarly, you will know that when you were alive you were dead, and only thought yourself alive.

The King Who Divined His Future

A king who was also an astrologer read in his stars that on a certain day and at a particular hour a calamity would overtake him. He therefore built a house of solid rock and posted numerous guardians outside.

One day, when he was within, he realized that he could still see daylight. He found an opening into which he shoved a rock, to prevent misfortune entering. In blocking his door he made himself a prisoner with his own hands.

And because of this the King died.

The Words of Ibn El-Arabi

Whence Came the Title?

Jafar the son of Yahya of Lisbon determined to find the Sufi 'Teacher of the Age', and he traveled to Mecca as a young man to seek him. There he met a mysterious stranger, a man in a green robe, who said to him before any word had been spoken:

'You seek the Greatest Sheikh, the Teacher of the Age. But you seek him in the East, when he is in the West. And there is another thing which is incorrect in your seeking.'

He sent Jafar back to Andalusia, to find the man he named - Mohiudin, son of El Arabi, of the tribe of Hatim-Tai. 'He is the Greatest Sheikh.'

Telling nobody why he sought him, Jafar found the Tai family in Murcia and inquired for their son. He found that he had actually been in Lisbon when Jafar had set off on his travels. Finally he traced him to Seville.

'There,' said a cleric, 'is Mohiudin.' He pointed to a mere schoolboy, carrying a book on the Traditions, who was at that moment hurrying from a lecture-hall.

Jafar was confused, but stopped the boy and said:

'Who is the Greatest Teacher?'

'I need time to answer that question,' said the boy.

'Art thou the only Mohiudin, so of El-Arabi, of the Tribe of Tai?' asked Jafar.

'I am he.'

'Then I have no need of thee.'

Thirty years later in Aleppo, he found himself entering the lecture-hall of the Greatest Sheikh, Mohiudin Ibn El-Arabi, of the tribe of Tai. Mohiudin saw him as he entered, and spoke:

'Now that I am ready to answer the question you put to me, there is no need to put it at all. Thirty years ago, Jafar, thou hadst no need of me. Hast thou still no need of me? The Green One spoke of something wrong in thy seeking. It was time and place.'

Jafar son of Yahya became one of the foremost disciples of El-Arabi.

The Words of Saadi of Shiraz

Notable Quotes

If a gem falls into the mud it is still valuable. If dust ascends to heaven, it remains valueless.

The alchemist dies in pain and frustration - while the fool finds treasure in a ruin.

Green wood can be bent; When it is dry, it is only straightened by fire.

That building without a firm base: do not build it high; or, if you do -be afraid.

A tree, freshly rooted, may be pulled up by one man on his own. Give it time, and it will not be moved, even with a crane.

Make no friendship with an elephant-keeper if you have no room to entertain an elephant.

The Arab horse speeds fast. The camel plods slowly, but it goes by day and night.

What can the tiger catch in the dark recesses of his own lair?

The Pearl

A raindrop, dripping from a cloud,
Was ashamed when it saw the sea.
'Who am I where there is a sea?' it said.
When it saw itself with the eye of humility,
A shell nurtured it in its embrace.

Scholars and Recluses

Give money to the scholars, so that they can study more.
Give nothing to the recluses, that they may remain recluses.

The Fox and The Camels

A fox was seen running away in terror. Someone asked what was troubling it. The fox answered: 'They are taking camels for forced labour. "Fool!" he was told, 'the fate of camels has nothing to do with you, who do not even look like one.' 'Silence!' said the fox, 'for if an intriguer were to state that I was a camel, who would work for my release?'

Ambition

Ten dervishes can sleep beneath one blanket; but two kings cannot reign in one land. A devoted man will eat half his bread, and give the other half to dervishes. A ruler may have a realm, but yet plot to overcome the world.

The Words of Hakim Jaami

Notable Quotes

The essence of truth is superior to the terminology of 'How?' or 'Why?'

Justice and fairness, not religion or atheism, are needful for the protection of the State.

The Beggar

A beggar went to a door, asking for something to be given to him. The owner answered, and said: 'I am sorry, but there is nobody in.'

'I don't want anybody,' said the beggar, 'I want food.'

What Shall We Do?

The rose has gone from the garden; what shall we do with the thorns?

The Shah is not in the city; what shall we do with his court?

The fair are cages, beauty and goodness the bird;

When the bird has flown, what shall we do with the cage?

The Words of Jalaludin Rumi

The Way

The Way has been marked out.

If you depart from it, you will perish.

If you try to interfere with the signs on the road,

You will surely be an evil-doer.

I am the Life of My Beloved

What can I do, Muslims? I do not know myself.
I am no Christian, no Jew, no Magian, no Musulman.
Not of the East, not of the West. Not of the land, not of the sea.
Not of the Mine of Nature, not of the circling heavens,
Not of earth, not of water, not of air, not of fire;
Not of the throne, not of the ground, of existence, of being;
Not of India, China, Bulgaria, Saqseen;
Not of the kingdom of Iraqs, or of Khorasan;
Not of this world or the next: of heaven or hell;
Not of Adam, Eve, the gardens of Paradise or Eden;
My place placeless, my trace traceless.
Neither body nor soul: all is the life of my Beloved...

No Other Place

Cross and Christians, end to end, I examined. He was not on the Cross. I went to the Hindu temple, to the ancient pagoda. In none of them was there any sign. To the uplands of Herat I went, and to Kandahar. I looked. He was not on the heights or in the lowlands. Resolutely, I went to the summit of the fabulous mountain of kaf. There only was the dwelling of the legendary Anqa bird. I went to Kaaba of Mecca. He was not there. I asked about him from Avicenna the philosopher. He was beyond the range of Avicenna... I looked into my heart. In that, his place, I saw him. He was in no other place.

Two Reeds

Two reeds drink from one stream. One is hollow, the other sugarcane.

Actions and Words

I am giving people what they want. I am reciting poetry because people desire it as an entertainment. In my own country, people do not like poetry. I have long searched for people who want action, but all they want is words. I am ready to show you action; but none will patronize this action. So I present you with - words.

Efforts

Tie two birds together.
They will not be able to fly, even though they now have four wings.

This Task

You have a duty to perform. Do anything else, do any number of things, occupy your time fully, and yet, if you do not do this task, all your time will have been wasted.

Teachings of the Chikistri Order

The Gardens

Once upon a time, when the science and art of gardening was not yet well established among men, there was a master-gardener. In addition to knowing all the qualities of plants, their nutritious, medicinal and aesthetic values, he had been granted a knowledge of the Herb of Longevity, and he lived for many hundreds of years.

In successive generations, he visited gardens and cultivated places throughout the world. In one place he planted a wonderful garden, and instructed the people in its upkeep and even in the theory of gardening. But, becoming accustomed to seeing some of the plants come up and flower every year, they soon forgot that others had to have their seeds collected, that some were propagated from cuttings, that some needed extra watering, and so on. The result was that the garden eventually became wild, and people started to regard this as the best garden that there could be.

After giving these people many chances to learn, the gardener expelled them and recruited another whole band of workers. He warned them that if they did not keep the garden in order, and study his methods, they would suffer for it. They, in turn, forgot - and, since they were lazy, tended only those fruits and flowers which were easily reared and allowed the others to die. Some of the first trainees came back to them from time to time, saying: 'You should do this and that,' but they drove them away, shouting: 'You are the ones who are departing from truth in this matter.'

But the master-gardener persisted. He made other gardens, wherever he could, and yet none was ever perfect except the one which he himself tended with his chief assistants. As it became known that there were many gardens and even many methods of gardening, people from one garden would visit those of another, to approve, to criticize, or to argue. Books were written, assemblies of gardeners were held, gardeners arranged themselves in grades according to what they thought to be the right order of precedence.

As is the way of men the difficulty of the gardeners remains that they are too easily attracted by the superficial. They say: 'I like this flower,' and they want everyone else to like it as well. It may, in spite of its attraction or abundance, be a weed which is choking other plants which could provide medicines or food which the people and the garden need for their sustenance and permanency.

Among these gardeners are those who prefer plants of one single colour. These they may describe as 'good.' There are others who will only tend the plants, while refusing to care about the paths or the gates, or even the fences.

When, at length, the ancient gardener died, he left as his endowment the whole knowledge of gardening, distributing it among the people who would understand in accordance with their capacities. So the science as well as the art of gardening remained as a scattered heritage in many gardens and also in some records of them.

People who are brought up in one garden or another generally have been so powerfully instructed as to the merits or demerits of how the inhabitants see things that they are almost incapable - though they make the effort - of realizing that they have to return to the concept of 'garden.' At the best, they generally only accept, reject, suspend judgment or look what they imagine are the common factors.

From time to time true gardeners do arise. Such is the abundance of semi-gardens that when they hear of real ones people say: 'Oh, yes. You are talking about a garden such as we already have, or we imagine.' What they have and what they imagine are both defective.

The real experts, who cannot reason with the quasi-gardeners, associate for the most part among themselves, putting into this or that garden something from the total stock which will enable it to maintain its vitality to some extent.

They are often forced to masquerade, because the people who want to learn from them seldom know about the fact of gardening as an art or science underlying everything that they have heard

before. So they ask questions like: 'How can I get a more beautiful flower on these onions?'

The real gardeners may work with them because true gardeners can sometimes be brought into being, for the benefit of all mankind. They do not last long, but it is only through them that the knowledge can be truly learnt and people can come to see what a garden really is.

Continuity

A group of Sufis, sent by their preceptor to a certain district, settled themselves in a house.

In order to avoid undesirable attention, only the man in charge - the Chief Deputy - taught in public. The rest of the community assumed the supposed functions of the servants of his household.

When this teacher died, the community rearranged their functions, revealing themselves as advanced mystics.

But the inhabitants of the country not only shunned them as imitators, but actually said: 'For shame! See how they have usurped and shared out the patrimony of the Great Teacher. Why, these miserable servants now even behave as if they were themselves Sufis!'

Commentary: Ordinary people, only through lack of experience in reflection, are without the means to judge such situations as these. They therefore tend to accept mere imitators who step into the shoes of a teacher and reject those who are indeed carrying on his work.

When a teacher leaves a community, by dying or otherwise, it may be intended for his activity to be continued - or it may not. Such is the greed of ordinary people that they always assume that this continuity is desirable. Such is their relative stupidity that they cannot see the continuity if it takes a form other than the crudest possible one.

When Death is not Death

A certain man was believed to have died, and was being prepared for burial, when he revived. He sat up, but was so shocked at the scene surrounding him that he fainted. He was put in a coffin, and the funeral party set off for the cemetery.

Just as they arrived at the grave, he gained consciousness, lifted the coffin lid, and cried out for help.

'It is not possible that he has revived,' said the mourners, 'because he has been certified dead by competent experts.'

'But I am alive!' shouted the man.

He appealed to a well-known and impartial scientist and jurisprudence who was present.

'Just a moment.' said the expert.

He then turned to the mourners, counting them. 'Now, we have heard what the alleged deceased has had to say. You fifty witnesses tell me what you regard as the truth.'

'He is dead,' said the witnesses.

'Bury him!' said the expert.

And so he was buried.

The Seven Brothers

Once upon a time there was a wise father who had seven sons. While they were growing up, he taught them as much as he could, but before he could complete their education he perceived something which made their safety more important. He realized that a catastrophe was going to overwhelm their country. The

young men were foolhardy and he could not confide completely in them. He knew that if he said: 'A catastrophe threatens,' they would say: 'We will stay here with you and face it.'

So he told each son that he must undertake a mission, and that he was to leave for that mission forthwith. He sent the first to the north, the second to the south, the third to the west and the fourth to the east. The three other sons he sent to unknown destinations.

As soon as they had gone, the father, using his special knowledge, made his way to a distant country to carry on some work which had been interrupted by the need to educate his sons.

When they had completed their missions, the first four sons returned to their country. The father had so timed the duration of their tasks that they would be safely and remotely engaged upon them until it was possible to return home.

In accordance with their instructions the sons went back to the place which they had known in their youth. But now they did not know one another. Each claimed that he was the son of his father, each one refused to believe the others. Time and climate, sorrow and indulgence, had done their work, and the appearance of the men was changed.

Because they were so bitterly opposed to one another and each determined to assess the other by his stature, his beard, the colour of his skin, and his manner of speech - all of which had changed - no brother would for months allow another to open the letter from their common father which contained the answer to their problem and the remainder of the education.

The father had foreseen this, such was his wisdom. He knew that until they were able to understand that they had changed very much they would not be able to learn any more. The situation at the present is that two of the sons have recognized one another, but only tentatively. They have opened the letter. They are trying to adjust themselves to the fact that what they took to be fundamentals are really - in the form in which they use them - worthless externals; what they have for many years prized at the very roots of their importance may in reality be vain and now useless dreams.

The other two brothers, watching them, are not satisfied that they are being improved by their experience, and do not want to emulate them. The three brothers who went in the other directions have not yet arrived at the rendezvous.

As to the four, it will be some time before they truly realize that the only means of their survival in their exiles - the superficials which they think important - are the very barriers to their understanding.

All are still far from knowledge.

The Oath

A man who was troubled in mind once swore that if his problems were solved he would sell his house and give all the money gained from it to the poor.

The time came when he realized that he must redeem his oath. But he did not want to give away so much money. So he thought of a way out.

He put the house on sale at one silver piece. Included with the house, however, was a cat. The price asked for this animal was ten thousand pieces of silver.

Another man bought the house and cat. The first man gave the single piece of silver to the poor, and pocketed the ten thousand for himself.

Many people's minds work like this. They resolve to follow a teaching; but they interpret their relationship with it to their own advantage.

The Sufi Missionary

The Sufi is in the position of a stranger in a country, of a guest in a house. Anyone in either capacity must think of the local mentality.

The real Sufi is a 'changed' man (abdal), change being an essential part of Sufism. The ordinary man is not changed; hence a need for dissimulation.

A man goes into a country where nakedness is honourable, and wearing clothes is considered dishonourable. In order to exist in that country, he must shed his clothes. If he says merely: 'Wearing clothes is best, nakedness is dishonourable,' he puts himself outside the range of the people of the country which he is visiting.

Therefore he will either quit the country or- if he has functions to perform there - he will accept or temporize. If the subject of the excellence or otherwise of wearing clothes comes up in discussion, he will probably have to dissimulate. There is a clash of habits here.

There is an even greater clash between habit thought and non-habit thought. The Sufi, because he has experienced, in common with others, so many things, knows a range of existence which he cannot justify by argument, even if only because all arguments have already been tried by someone at one time or another, and certain ones have prevailed and are considered 'good sense.'

His activity, like that of an artist, is reduced to that of illustration.

The Teaching of the Quadri Order

The Rogue, the Sheep and the Villagers

Once there was a rogue who was caught by the people of a village. They tied him to a tree to contemplate the suffering which they were going to inflict on him; and went away, having decided to throw him into the sea that evening, after they had finished their day's work.

But a shepherd, who was not very intelligent, came along and asked the clever rogue why he was tied up like that.

'Ah,' said the rogue, 'some men have put me here because I will not accept their money.'

'Why do they want to give it to you and why will you not take it?' asked the astonished shepherd.

'Because I am a contemplative, and they want to corrupt me,' said the rogue; 'they are godless men.'

The shepherd suggested that he should take the rogue's place, and advised the rogue to run away and put himself out of the reach of the godless ones.

So they changed places.

The citizens returned after nightfall, put a sack over the shepherd's head, tied him up, and threw him into the sea.

The next morning they were amazed to see the rogue coming into the village with a flock of sheep.

'Where have you been, and where did you get those animals?' they asked him.

'In the sea there are kindly spirits who reward all who jump in and "drown" in this manner,' said the rogue.

In almost less time than it takes to tell, the people rushed to the seashore and jumped in.

That was how the rogue took over the village.

Teachings of the Naqshbandi Order

The Host and the Guests

The teacher is like a host in his own house. His guests are those who are trying to study the Way. These are people who have never been in a house before, and they only have vague ideas as to what a house may be like. It exists, nonetheless.

When the guests enter the house and see the place set aside for sitting in, they ask: 'What is this?' they are told: 'This is a place where we sit.' So they sit down on chairs, only dimly conscious of the function of the chair.

The host entertains them, but they continue to ask questions, some irrelevant. Like a good host, he does not blame them for this. They want to know, for instance, where and when they are going to eat. They do not know that nobody is alone, and that at that very moment there are other people who are cooking the food, and that there is another room in which they will sit down and have a meal. Because they cannot see the meal or its preparations, they are confused, perhaps doubtful, sometimes ill at ease.

The good host, knowing the problems of the guests, has to put them at their ease, so that they will be able to enjoy the food when it comes. At the outset they are in no state to approach the food.

Some of the guests are quicker to understand and relate one thing about the house to another. These are the ones who can communicate to their slower friends. The host, meanwhile, gives each guest an answer in accordance with his capacity to perceive the unity and function of the house.

It is not enough for a house to exist - for it to be made ready to receive guests - for the host to be present. Someone must actively exercise the function of the host, in order that the strangers who are guests, and for whom the host has responsibility, may become accustomed to the house. At the beginning, many of them are not aware that they are guests, or rather exactly what guest hood means: what they can bring to it, what it can give them.

The experienced guest, who has learned about houses and hospitality, is at length at ease in his guest hood, and he is then in a position to understand more about houses and about the facets of living in them. While he is still trying to understand what a house is, or trying to remember the rules of etiquette, his attention is too much taken up by these factors to be able to observe, say, the beauty, value or function of the furniture.

The Three Candidates

Three men made their way to the circle of a Sufi, seeking admission to his teachings.

One of them almost at once detached himself, angered by the erratic behavior of the master.

The second was told by another disciple (on the master's instructions) that the sage was a fraud. He withdrew very soon afterwards.

The Third was allowed to talk, but was offered no teaching for so long that he lost interest and left the circle.

When they had all gone away, the teacher instructed his circle thus:

The first man was an illustration of the principle: "Do not judge fundamental things by sight." The second was an illustration of the injunction: "Do not judge things of deep importance by hearing." The third was an example of the dictum: "Never judge by speech, or the lack of it."

Asked by a disciple why the applicants could not have been instructed in this matter, the sage retorted: 'I am here to give higher knowledge; not to teach what people pretend that they already know at their mothers' knees.'

Three Visits to a Sage

Bahaudin Naqshband was visited by a group of seekers.

They found him in his courtyard, surrounded by disciples, in the midst of what seemed obviously to be revels.

Some of the newcomers said: 'How obnoxious - this is no way to behave, whatever the pretext.' They tried to remonstrate with the master.

Others said: 'This seems to us excellent - we like this kind of teaching, and wish to take part in it.'

Yet others said: 'We are partly perplexed and wish to know more about this puzzle.'

The remainder said to one another: 'There may be some wisdom in this, but whether we should ask about it or not we do not know.'

The teacher sent them all away.

And all these people spread, in conversation and in writing, their opinions of the occasion. Even those who did not allude to their experience directly were affected by it, and their speech and works reflected their beliefs about it.

Some time later certain members of this party again passed that way and they called upon the teacher.

Standing at his door, they noticed that within the courtyard he and his disciples now sat, decorously, deep in contemplation.

'This is better,' said some of the visitors, 'for he as evidently learned from our protests.'

'This is excellent,' said others, 'for last time he was undoubtedly only testing us.'

'This is too somber,' said others, 'for we could have found long faces anywhere.'

And there were other opinions, voiced and otherwise.

The sage, when the time of reflection was over, sent all these visitors away.

Much later, a small number returned and sought his interpretation of what they had experienced.

They presented themselves at the gateway, and looked into the courtyard. The teacher sat there, alone, neither reveling nor in meditation. His disciples were now nowhere to be seen.

'You may at last hear the whole story,' he said, 'for I have been able to dismiss my pupils, since the task is done.'

'When you first came, that class of mine had been too serious - I was in process of applying the corrective. The second time you came, they had been too gay - I was applying the corrective.'

'When a man is working, he does not always explain himself to casual visitors, however interested the visitors may think themselves to be. When an action is in progress, what counts is the correct operation of that action. Under these circumstances, external evaluation becomes a secondary concern.'

One Way of Teaching

Bahaudin was sitting with some disciples when a number of followers came into the meeting-hall.

El-Shah asked them, one by one, to say why he was there.

The first said: 'You are the greatest man on earth.'

'I gave him a potion when he was ill, and so he thinks I am the greatest man on earth,' said El-Shah.

The second said: 'My spiritual life has opened up since I have been allowed to visit you.'

'He was uncertain and ill at ease, and none would listen to him. I sat with him, and the resultant serenity is called by him his spiritual life,' said El-Shah.

The third said: 'You understand me, and all I ask is that you allow me to hear your discourses, for the good of my soul.'

'He needs attention and wishes to have notice paid to him, even if it is in criticism,' said El-Shah. This he calls the "good of his soul."

The fourth said: 'I went from one to another, practicing what they taught. It was not until you gave me a wazifa (exercise) that I truly felt the illumination of contact with you.'

'The exercise which I gave to this man,' said El-Shah, 'was a concocted one, not related to his "spiritual" life at all. I had to demonstrate his illusion of spirituality before I could arrive at the part of this man which is really spiritual, not sentimental.'

Cherished Notions

Sadik Hamzawi was asked:

'How do you come to succeed, by his own wish, the sage of Samarkand, when you were only a servant in his house?'

He said: 'He taught me what he wanted to teach me, and I learned it. He said once: "I cannot teach the others, the disciples, to the same degree, because they want to ask the questions, they demand the meetings, they impose the framework, they therefore only teach themselves what they already know."

'I said to him: "Teach me what you can and tell me how to learn." This is how I became his successor. People have cherished notions about how teaching and learning should take place. They cannot have the notions and also the learning.'

Falsity

One day a man went to a Sufi master and described how a certain false teacher was prescribing exercises for his followers.

'The man is obviously a fraud. He asks his disciples to "think of nothing." It is easy enough to say that, because it impresses some people. But it is impossible to think of nothing.'

The master asked him: 'Why have you come to see me?'

'To point out the absurdity of this man, and also to discuss mysticism.'

'Not just to gain support for your decision that this man is an impostor?'

'No, I know that already.'

'Not to show those of us who are sitting here that you know more than the ordinary, gullible man?'

'No. In fact, I want you to give me guidance.'

'Very well. The best guidance I can give you is to advise you to - think of nothing.'

This man immediately withdrew from the company, convinced that the master was also a fraud.

But a stranger, who had missed the beginning of these events, and had entered the assembly at the exact moment when the sage was saying, 'The best guidance I can give you is to advise you to - think of nothing.', was profoundly impressed.

'To think of nothing: what a sublime conception!' he said to himself.

And he went away after that day's session, having heard nothing to contradict the idea of thinking of nothing.

The following day one of the students asked the master which of them had been correct.

'Neither,' he said. 'They still have to learn that their greed is a veil, a barrier. Their answer is not in one word, one visit, one easy solution. Only by continuous contact with a teaching does the pupil absorb, little by little, that which gradually accumulates into an understanding of truth. Thus does the seeker become a finder.'

'The Master Rumi said: "Two men come to you, one having dreamt of heaven, the other of hell. They ask which is reality. What is the answer?" The answer is to attend the discourses of a master until you are in harmony.'

Sentences of the Khajagan

Heart to heart is an essential means of passing on the secrets of the Path. -Rudbari

Learning is in activity. Learning through words alone is minor activity. -Maghribi

At a certain time, more can be conveyed by distracting useless attention than by attracting it. -Khurqani

Experience of extremes is the only way towards the proper working of the mean in study. -Farmadhi

Service of humanity is not only helpful to correct living. By its means the inner knowledge can be preserved, concentrated and transmitted. -Hamadani

Local activity is the keynote of the Dervish Path. -Yasavi

Effort is not effort without right time, right place and right people. -Andaki

We work in all places and at all times. People believe that a man is important if he is famous. The converse may equally well be true. -Ghajdawani

The mark of the Man who has Attained is when he does not mistake figurative for specific, or literal for symbolic. -Ahmad Sadiq

Stupidity is to look for something in a place where untutored imagination expects to find it. It is, in fact, everywhere that you can extract it. -Rewgari

Information becomes fragmented, knowledge does not. What causes fragmentation in information is scholasticism. -Ramitani

Man think many things. He thinks he is One. He is usually several. Until he becomes One, he cannot have a fair idea of what he is at all. -Samasi

We send a thought to China and it becomes Chinese, they say, because they cannot see the man who sent it. We send a man to India, and they say that he is only a Turkestani. -Sokhari

When people say 'weep', they do not mean 'weep always.' When they say 'do not cry', they do not mean you to be a permanent buffoon. -Naqshband

A true document may contain seven layers of truth. A writing or speech which appears to have no significance may have as many layers of truth. -Attar.

It is not a matter of whether you can learn by silence, by speech, by effort, by submission. It is a matter of how this is done, not 'that it is done.' -Khamosh

If you still ask: 'Why did such-and-such a person teach in this or that manner, and how does it apply to me?' -you are incapable of understanding the answer deeply enough. -Kashgari

No matter where the truth is in your case, your teacher can help you find it. If she applies only one series of method to everyone, she is not a teacher, let alone yours. -Charkhi

For every trick or imagination there is a reality of which it is a counterfeit. -Samarqandi

We do not live in the East or West; we do not study in the North, nor do we teach in the South. We are not bound in this way, but we may be compelled to talk in this way. -Al-Lahi

The Way may be through a drop of water. It may, equally, be through a complex prescription. -Al-Bokhari

When you see a Sufi studying or teaching something which seems to belong to a field other than spirituality you should know that there is the spirituality of the age. -Zahid

When it is time for stillness, stillness; in the time of companionship, companionship; at the place of effort, effort. In the time and place of anything, anything. -Dervish

Do not talk of the Four Ways, or of the Seventy-two Paths, or of "Paths as numerous as the souls of Men." Talk instead of the Path and the attaining. All is subordinated to that. -Sirhindi

You cannot destroy us if you are against us. But you can make things difficult for us even if you think you are helping. -Badauni

We spend a space in a place. Do not put up a sign to mark the place. Take rather of the material which adheres to the place, while it is still there. -Dehlavi

You hear my words. Hear, too, that there are words other than mine. These are not meant for hearing with the physical ear. Because you see only me, you think there is no Sufism apart from me. You are here to learn, not to collect historical information. -Qandahari

You may follow one stream. Realize that it leads to the Ocean. Do not mistake the stream for the Ocean. -Jan-fishan

Sayings of the Masters

The Magian and the Muslim

A fire-worshipping Magian was asked why he did not become a Muslim. He answered: 'If you mean that I should be as good a man as Bayazid, I lack the courage. If, however, you mean that I should be as bad a man as you, I would detest it.' - Bayazid Bistami

Names

You call me a Christian, to make me angry and to make yourself feel happy. Others call themselves Christians, to make themselves feel other emotions. Very well, if we are dealing in exciting words, I will call you a devil-worshipper. That should give you an agitation which will please you for some time. - Zabardast Khan

Prayers

A devoutly religious man, who was a disciple of Bayazid, said to him one day: 'I am surprised that anyone who accepts God should not attend the mosque for worship.'

Bayazid answered: 'I, on the other hand, am surprised that anyone who knows God can worship him and not lose his sense, rendering his ritual prayer invalid.'

What the Devil Said

Once upon a time there was a dervish. As he was sitting in contemplation, he noticed that there was a sort of devil near him.

The dervish said: 'Why are you sitting there, making no mischief?'

The demon raised his head wearily. 'Since the theoreticians and would-be teachers of the Path have appeared in such numbers, there is nothing left for me to do.'

Thauri on Contemplation

The great Shibli went to visit the illustrious Thauri. The master was sitting so still that not a hair of him moved in any way.

Shibli asked: 'Where did you learn such stillness?'

Thauri replied: 'From a cat. He was watching a mousehole with even greater concentration than you have seen in me.'

The Idol

Someone told Uwais El-Qarni that a certain dervish sat on a tomb, dressed in a shroud and weeping.

Qarni said: 'Tell him that the method has become an idol; he must transcend the practice, for it is an obstacle.'

The Candle's Duty

The Candle is not there to illuminate itself. -Nawab Jan-Fishan Khan

Three Stages of Worship

Mankind passes through three stages.

First he worships anything: man, woman, money, children, earth and stones. Then, when he has progressed a little further, he worships God. Finally he does not say: 'I worship God'; nor: 'I do not worship God.'

He has passed from the first two stages into the last. -Rumi

Seeing

Halls and theological colleges and learned lectures, circles and cloisters - What use are they when there is no knowledge and there is no eye that sees? -Hafiz

On Your Religion

Throughout the dervish literature you will find us saying repeatedly that we are not concerned with your religion or even with the lack of it. How can this be reconciled with the fact that believers consider themselves the elect?

Man's refinement is the goal, and the inner teaching of all the faiths aims at this. In order to accomplish it, there is always a

tradition handed down by a living chain of adepts, who select candidates to whom to impart this knowledge.

Among men of all kinds this teaching has been handed down. Because of our dedication to the essence, we have, in the Dervish Path, collected those people who are less concerned about externals, and thus kept pure, in secret, our capacity to continue the succession. In the dogmatic religions of the Jews, the Christians, the Zoroastrians, the Hindus and literalist Islam this precious thing has been lost.

We return this vital principle to all these religions and this is why you will see so many Jews, Christians and others among my followers. The Jews say that we are the real Jews, the Christians, Christians.

It is only when you know the Higher Factor that you will know the true situation of the present religions and of unbelief itself. And unbelief itself is a religion with its own form of belief. -Ahmad Yasavi

Among the Masters

To a Believer

You probably seem to yourself to be a believer, even if you a believer in disbelief.

But you cannot really believe in anything until you are aware of the process by which you arrived at your position.

Before you do this you must be ready to postulate that all your beliefs may be wrong, that what you think to be belief may only be a variety of prejudice caused by your surroundings - including the bequest of your ancestors for whom you may have a sentiment.

True belief belongs to the realm of real knowledge.

Until you have knowledge, belief is mere coalesced opinions, however it may seem to you.

Coalesced opinions serve for ordinary living. Real belief enables higher studies to be made. -Attributed to Ali

Eat No Stones

A hunter, walking through some woods, came upon a notice. He read the words: "Stone Eating is Forbidden."

His curiosity was stimulated, and he followed a track which led past the sign until he came to a cave at the entrance to which a Sufi was sitting.

The Sufi said to him: 'The answer to your question is that you have never seen a notice prohibiting the eating of stones because there is no need for one. Not to eat stones may be called a common habit. Only when the human being is able similarly to avoid other habits, even more destructive than eating stones, will he be able to get beyond his present pitiful state.'

Why the Dog Could Not Drink

Shibli was asked: 'Who guided you in the Path?'

He said: 'A dog. One day I saw him, almost dead with thirst, standing by the water's edge.'

'Every time he look at his reflection in the water he was frightened, and withdrew, because he thought it was another dog.'

'Finally, such was his necessity, he cast away fear and leapt into the water; at which the "other dog" vanished.'

The dog found that the obstacle, which was himself, the barrier between him and what he sought, melted away.

In this same way, my own obstacle vanished, when I knew that it was what I took to be my own self. And my Way was first shown to me by the behavior of - a dog.'

Man Believes What He Thinks is True

Teaching, as was his custom, during the ordinary business of life, Sheikh Abul Tahir Harami rode his donkey one day into a market-place, a disciple following behind.

At the sight of him, a man called out: 'Look, here come the ancient unbeliever!'

Harami's pupil, his wrath aroused, shouted at the defamer. Before long there was a fierce altercation in progress.

The Sufi calmed his disciple, saying: 'If you will only cease this tumult, I will show you how you can escape this kind of trouble.'

They went together to the old man's house. The sheikh told his follower to bring him a box of letters. 'Look at these. They are all letters addressed to me. But they are couched in different terms. Here someone calls me "sheikh of Islam"; there, "Sublime Teacher." Another say I am the "Wise One of the Twin Sanctuaries." And there are others.

'Observe how each styles me in accordance with what he considers me to be. But I am none of these things. Each man calls another just what he thinks him to be. This is what the unfortunate one in the market-place has just done. And yet you take exception to it. Why do you do so -since it is the general rule of life?'

Time for Learning

The Sage of Ascalon would only speak to his disciples rarely. When he did, they were overcome by his ideas.

'May we have lectures at times when we can conveniently attend?' they asked, 'because when you speak some of us have family duties and cannot always be there.'

'You will have to find someone else to do that,' he said, 'because whereas I only teach when I do not feel the urge to teach, there do exist some who can teach in accordance with who is present at a fixed time. It is they who feel the urge to teach and consequently only need to adapt what they say to the audiences.'

Four Teaching Stories

The Watermelon Hunter

Once upon a time there was a man who strayed, from his own country, into the world known as the Land of Fools.

He soon saw a number of people flying in terror from a field where they had been trying to reap wheat. 'There is a monster in that field,' they told him. He looked, and saw that it was a watermelon.

He offered to kill the 'monster' for them. When he had cut the melon from its stalk, he took a slice and began to eat it. The people became even more terrified of him than they had been of the melon. They drove him away with pitchforks, crying: 'He will kill us next, unless we get rid of him.'

It so happened that at another time another man also strayed into the Land of Fools, and the same thing started to happen to

him. But, instead of offering to help them with the 'monster', he agreed with them that it must be dangerous, and by tiptoeing away from it with them he gained their confidence. He spent a long time with them in their houses until he could teach them, little by little, the basic facts which would enable them not only to lose their fear of melons, but even to cultivate them themselves.

Nasrudin's Ambassadorial Trip

By a series of misunderstanding and coincidences, Mulla Nasrudin found himself one day in the audience-hall of the Emperor of Persia.

The Shahinshah was surrounded by self-seeking nobles, governors of provinces, courtiers and sycophants of all kinds. Each was pressing his own claim to be appointed head of the embassy which was soon to set out for India.

The emperor's patience was at an end, and he raised his head from the importunate mass, mentally invoking the aid of Heaven in his problem as to who to choose. His eyes lighted upon Mulla Nasrudin.

'This man is to be the ambassador,' he announced; 'so now leave me in peace.'

Nasrudin was given rich clothes, and an enormous chest of rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and priceless works of art was entrusted to him, the gift of the Shahinshah to the great Mogul.

The courtiers, however, were not finished. United for once by this affront to their claims, they decided to encompass the downfall of the mulla. First they broke into his quarters and stole the jewels, which they divided among themselves, replacing them with earth to make up the weight. Then they called upon Nasrudin, determined to ruin his embassy, to get him into trouble, and in the process to discredit their master as well.

'Congratulations, great Nasrudin,' they said. 'What the Fountain of Wisdom, Peacock of the World, has ordered must be the essence of all wisdom. We therefore hail you. But there are just a couple of points upon which we may be able to advise you, accustomed as we are to the behavior of diplomatic emissaries.'

'I should be obliged if you would tell me,' said Nasrudin.

'Very well,' said the chief of the intriguers. 'The first thing is that you must be humble. In order to prove how modest you are, therefore, you should not show any sign of self-importance. When you reach India you must enter as many mosques as you can, and make collections for yourself. The second thing is that you must observe court etiquette in the country to which you are accredited. This will mean that you will refer to the Great Mogul as 'the Full Moon.'

'But is that not the title of the Persian emperor?'

'Not in India.'

So Nasrudin set out. The Persian emperor told him as they took leave: 'Be careful, Nasrudin. Adhere to etiquette, for the Mogul is a mighty emperor and we must impress him while not affronting him in any way.'

'I am well prepared, Majesty,' said Nasrudin.

As soon as he entered the territory of India, Nasrudin went into a mosque and mounted the pulpit: 'O people!' he cried, 'see in me the representative of the Shadow of Allah upon Earth! The Axis of the Globe! Bring out your money, for I am making a collection.'

This he repeated in every mosque he could find, all the way from Baluchistan to Imperial Delhi.

He collected a great deal of money. 'Do with it,' the counselors had said, 'what you will. For it is the product of intuitive growth and bestowal, and as such its use will create its own demand.' All that they wanted to happen was for the mulla

to be exposed to ridicule for collecting money in this 'shameless' manner. 'The holy must live from their holiness,' roared Nasrudin at mosque after mosque. 'I give no account nor do I expect any. To you, money is something to be hoarded, after being sought. You can exchange it for material things. To me, it is part of a mechanism. I am the representative of a natural force of intuitive growth, bestowal and disbursement.'

Now, as we all know, good often proceeds from apparent evil, and the reverse. Those who thought that Nasrudin was lining his own pockets did not contribute. For some reason, their affairs did not prosper. Those who were considered credulous and gave their money became in a mysterious way enriched. But to return to our story.

Sitting on the Peacock Throne, the emperor at Delhi studied the reports which courtiers were daily bringing him, describing the progress of the Persian ambassador. At first he could make no sense out of them. Then he called his council together.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'this Nasrudin must indeed be a saint or a divinely guided one. Who ever heard of anyone else violating the principle that one does not seek money without a plausible reason, lest a wrong interpretation be placed upon one's motives?'

'May your shadow never grow less,' they replied, 'O infinite extension of all-Wisdom; we agree. If there are men like this in Persia, we must beware, for their moral ascendancy over our materialistic outlook is plain.'

Then a runner arrived from Persia, with a secret letter in which the Mogul's spies at the imperial court reported: 'Mulla Nasrudin is a man of no consequence in Persia. He was chosen absolutely at random to be ambassador. We cannot fathom the reason for the Shahinshah's not being more selective.'

The Mogul called his council together. 'Incomparable Birds of Paradise!' he told them, 'a thought has manifested itself in me. The Persian emperor has chosen a man at random to represent his whole nation. This may mean that he is confident of the consistent quality of his people that, for him anyone at all is qualified to undertake the delicate task of ambassador to the sublime court of Delhi! This indicates the degree of perfection attained, the amazingly infallible intuitive powers cultivated among them. We must reconsider our desire to invade Persia; for such a people could easily engulf our arms. Their society is organized on a different basis from our own.'

'You are right - Superlative Warrior of the Frontiers!' cried the Indian nobles.

At length, Nasrudin arrived in Delhi. He was riding his old donkey, and was followed by his escort, weighed down by sacks of money which he had collected in the mosques. The treasure-chest was mounted on an elephant, such was its size and weight.

Nasrudin was met by the master of ceremonies at the gate of Delhi. The emperor was seated with his nobles in an immense courtyard, the reception Hall of the Ambassadors. This had been so arranged that the entrance was low. As a consequence, ambassadors were always obliged to dismount from their horses and enter the Supreme Presence on foot, giving the impression of supplicants. Only an equal could ride into the presence of an emperor.

No ambassador had ever arrived astride a donkey, however, and thus there was nothing to stop Nasrudin trotting straight through the door, and up to the Imperial Dais.

The Indian king and his courtiers exchanged meaningful glances at this act.

Nasrudin blithely dismounted, addressed the king as 'the Full Moon', and called for his treasure-chest to be brought. When it was opened, and the earth revealed, there was a moment of consternation.

'I had better say nothing,' thought Nasrudin, 'for there is nothing to say which could mitigate this.' So he remained silent.

The Mogul whispered to his vizier, 'What does this mean? Is this an insult to the Highest Eminence?'

Incapable of believing this, the vizier thought furiously. Then he provided the interpretation.

'It is a symbolic act, Presence,' he murmured. 'The ambassador means that he acknowledges you as the Master of the Earth. Did he not call you the Full Moon?'

The Mogul relaxed. 'We are content with the offering of the Persian Shahinshah; for we have no need of wealth; and we appreciate the metaphysical subtlety of the message.'

'I have often been told to say,' said Nasrudin, remembering the 'essential gift-offering phrase' given him by the intriguers in Persia, 'that this is all we have for your Majesty.'

'That means that Persia will not yield one further ounce of her soil to us,' whispered the interpreter of omens to the king.

'Tell your master that we understand,' smiled the Mogul. 'But there is one other point: If I am the Full Moon - what is the Persian Emperor?'

'He is the New Moon,' said Nasrudin, automatically.

'The Full Moon is more mature and gives more light than the New Moon, which is its junior,' whispered the court astrologer to the Mogul.

'We are content,' said the delighted Indian. 'You may return to Persia and tell the New Moon that the Full Moon salutes him.'

The Persian spies at the court of Delhi immediately sent a complete account of this interchange to the Shahinshah. They added that it was known that the Mogul emperor had been impressed, and feared to plan war against the Persians because of the activities of Nasrudin.

When he returned home, the Shahinshah received the mulla in full audience. 'I am more than pleased, friend Nasrudin,' he said, 'at the result of your unorthodox methods. Our country is saved, and this means that there will be no attempt at accounting for the jewels or the collecting in mosques. You are henceforth to be known by the special title of Safir - Emissary.'

'But, your Majesty,' hissed his vizier, 'this man is guilty of high treason, if not more! we have perfect evidence that he applied one of your titles to the emperor of India, thus changing his allegiance and bringing one of your magnificent attributes into disrepute.'

'Yes,' thundered the Shahinshah, 'the sages have said wisely that "to every perfection there is an imperfection." Nasrudin! Why did you call me the New Moon?'

'I don't know about protocol,' said Nasrudin; 'but I do know that the Full Moon is about to wane, and the New Moon is still growing, with its greatest glories ahead of it.'

The emperor's mood changed. 'Seize Anwar, the Grand Vizier,' he roared. 'Mulla! I offer you the position of Grand Vizier!'

'What?' said Nasrudin. 'Could I accept after seeing with my own eyes what happened to my predecessor?'

And what happened to the jewels and treasures which the evil courtiers had usurped from the treasure-chest? That is another story. As the incomparable Nasrudin said: 'Only children and the stupid seek cause and effect in the same story.'

The Fool, Salt and Flour

Once upon a time there was a fool who was sent to buy flour and salt. He took a dish to carry his purchases.

'Make sure,' said the man who sent him, 'not to mix the two things - I want them separate.'

When the shopkeeper had filled the dish with flour and was measuring out the salt, the fool said: 'Do not mix it with the flour; here, I will show you where to put it.'

And he inverted the dish, to provide, from its upturned bottom, a surface upon which the salt could be laid.

The flour, of course, fell on the floor.

But the salt was safe.

When the fool got back to the man who had sent him he said: 'Here is the salt.'

'Very well,' said the other man, 'but where is the flour?'

'It should be here,' said the fool, turning the dish over.

As soon as he did that, the salt fell to the ground, and the flour of course was seen to be gone.

So it is with human beings. Doing one thing which they think to be right, they may undo another which is equally right. When this happens with thoughts instead of actions, man himself is lost, no matter how, upon reflection, he regards his thinking to have been logical.

You have laughed at the joke of the fool. Now, will you do more, and think about your own thoughts as if they were the salt and the flour?

The Indian Bird

A merchant had a bird in a cage. He was going to India, the land from which the bird came, and asked him whether he could bring anything back for him. The bird asked for his freedom, but was refused. So he asked the merchant to visit a jungle in India and announce his captivity to the free birds who were there.

The merchant did so, and no sooner had he spoken than a wild bird, just like his own, fell senseless out of a tree on to the ground. The merchant thought that this must be a relative of his own bird, and felt sad that he should have caused this death.

When he got home, the bird asked him whether he had brought news from India. 'No,' said the merchant, 'I fear that my news is bad. One of your relations collapsed and fell at my feet as soon as I mentioned your captivity.'

As soon as these words were spoken the merchant's bird collapsed and fell to the bottom of the cage.

'The news of his kinsman's death has killed him too,' thought the merchant. Sorrowfully he picked up the bird and put it on the window-sill. At once the bird revived and flew to a near-by tree. 'Now you know,' he said, 'that what you thought was disaster was in fact good news for me. And how the message, the suggestion how to behave in order to free myself, was transmitted to me through you, my captor.' And he flew away, free at last. -Rumi

Solitary Contemplation

To Be a Sufi

Being a Sufi is to put away what is in your head - imagined truth, preconceptions, conditioning - and to face what my happen to you. -Abu Said

Teachers, Teachings, Taught

Teachers talk about teachings.

Real teachers study their pupils as well.

Most of all, teachers should be studied. -Musa Kazim

Perception and Explanation

For him who has perception, a mere sign is enough.

For him who does not really heed, a thousand explanations are not enough. -Haji Bektash

Sufi Literature

There are three ways of presenting anything.

The first is to present everything.

The second is to present what people want.

The third is to present what will serve them best.

If you present everything, the result may be surfeit.

If you present what people want, it may choke them.

If you present what will serve them best, the worst is that, misunderstanding, they may oppose you. But if you have served them thus, whatever the appearances, you have served them and you, too, must benefit, whatever the appearances. -Ajmal of Badakhshan

Becoming One Who Can Become

You come closer to being a Sufi through realizing that habit and preconception are essentials only in some studies; not by forming habits and judging by means of unsuitable preconceptions.

You must become as aware of insignificance as you think you are of significance; not seek feelings of significance alone.

The humble are so because they must be so; and worst of all men or women are those who practice humility for the purpose of pride, not as a means of travel.

The method of Sufism is as it always has been, to adopt that which is of value, when and where it is of value, and with whom it is of value; not to imitate because of awe, or to copy because of imitativeness.

The success of man in raising himself higher comes through right effort and the right method, not merely by concentration upon the right aspiration or upon the words of others directed to yet others.

It is as it were a trap laid for the ignoble element in you when a man, a book, a ceremonial, an organization, a method, appears, directly or by recommendation, to have something which is applicable to all, or attracts you strongly though incorrectly. -Sayed Imam Ali Shah

Where it Went

I saw a child carrying a light.

I asked him where he had brought it from.

He put it out, and said:

'Now you tell me where it is gone.' -Hasan of Basra

Affinities

People who are alike feel an affinity. The attraction of opposites is a different case. But people who are alike are often mistaken by superficialists for people who are unlike. As an example, one is greedy for love, another is greedy to love. The uniformed or outward thinker will immediately imagine and proclaim that these are opposites. The converse, of course, is the truth. The common factor is greed. They are both greedy people.

The famous man and his follower are sometimes the same. One wants to give his attention, the other to attract attention. Both being chained by an obsession with attention, they fly together, 'pigeon with pigeon, hawk with hawk.' -Simabi

Various Stories to Teach With

Who's in Charge?

Habib had a house in Basra on the crossroads. He also had a fur coat which he wore summer and winter. Once, needing to perform the ritual washing, he arose and left his coat on the ground. Hasan of Basra, happening on the scene, perceived the coat flung in the road.

"This barbarian does not know its value," he commented. "This fur coat ought not to be left here. It may get lost."

So he stood there watching over it. Presently Habib returned.

"Imam of the Muslims," he cried after saluting Hasan, "why are you standing here?"

"Do you not know," Hasan replied, "that this coat ought not to be left here? It may get lost. Say, in whose charge did you leave it?"

"In His charge," Habib answered, "who appointed you to watch over it." (Habib Al-Ajami)

No Boat?

Hasan once wished to go to a certain place. He came down to the bank of the Tigris, and was pondering something to himself when Habib arrived on the scene.

"Imam, why are you standing here?" he asked.

"I wish to go to a certain place. The boat is late," Hasan replied.

"Master, what has happened to you?" Habib demanded. "I learned all that I know from you. Expel from your heart all envy of other men. Close your heart against worldly things. Know that suffering is a precious prize, and see that all affairs are of God. Then set foot on the water and walk."

With that Habib stepped on to the water and departed. Hasan swooned. When he recovered, the people asked him, "Imam of the Muslims, what happened to you?"

"My pupil Habib just now reprimanded me," he replied. "Then he stepped on the water and departed, whilst I remained impotent. If tomorrow a voice cries, 'Pass over the fiery pathway' - if I remain impotent like this, what can I do?"

"Habib," Hasan asked later, "how did you discover this power?"

"Because I make my heart white, whereas you make paper black," Habib replied.

"My learning profited another, but it did not profit me," Hasan commented. -Hasan Al-Ajami

How?

Once Rabe'a sent Hasan three things - a piece of wax, a needle, and a hair.

"Be like wax," she said. "Illumine the world, and yourself burn. Be like a needle, always be working naked. When you have done these two things, a thousand years will be for you as a hair."

"Do you desire for us to get married?" Hasan asked Rabe'a.

"The tie of marriage applies to those who have being," Rabe'a replied. "Here being has disappeared, for I have become naughted to self and exist only through Allah. I belong wholly to Him. I live in the shadow of His control. You must ask my hand of Him, not of me."

"How did you find this secret, Rabe'a?" Hasan asked.

"I lost all 'found' things in Him," Rabe'a answered.

"How do you know Him?" Hasan inquired.

"You know the 'how'; I know the 'howless,'" Rabe'a said.

The World

A leading scholar of Basra visited Rabe'a on her sickbed. Sitting beside her pillow, he reviled the world.

"You love the world very dearly," Rabe'a commented. "If you did not love the world, you would not make mention of it so much. It is always the purchaser who disparages the wares. If you were done with the world, you would not mention it either for good or evil. As it is, you keep mentioning it because, as the proverb says, whoever loves a thing mentions it frequently."

When to Teach?

Beshr possessed seven book cases of volumes on Traditions. He buried them all in the ground, and did not transmit them.

"The reason I do not transmit Traditions," he explained, "is that I perceive in myself a lust to do so. If I perceive in my heart a lust to keep silence, then I will transmit." -Beshr Ibn Al-Hareth

The True Pilgrimage

"A man encountered me on the road," Abu Yazid recalled.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"On the Pilgrimage," I replied.

"How much have you got?"

"Two hundred dirhams."

"Come, give them to me," the man demanded. "I am a man with a family. Circle round me seven times. That is your pilgrimage."

"I did so, and returned home." -Abu Yazid Al-Bestami

The Proper Task

"You walk on the water!" they said.

"So does a piece of wood," Abu Yazid replied.

"You fly in the air!"

"So does a bird."

"You travel to the Kaaba in a single night!"

"Any conjurer travels from India to Demavand in a single night."

"Then what is the proper task of true men?" they asked.
"The true man attaches his heart to none but God," he replied.

The Noble Thief

A thief had been hanged in Baghdad. Jonaid went and kissed his feet.

"Why did you do that?" he was asked.

"A thousand compassions be upon him!" he replied. "He proved himself a true man at his trade. He did his work so perfectly, that he gave his life for it." -Abo 'L'Qasem Al-Jonaid

The Test of the Birds

The shaikh Jonaid had a disciple whom he loved above all the others. The other disciples were moved to jealousy, a fact which the shaikh realized by his mystic intuition.

"He is superior to you in manners and understanding," he told them. "That is what I had in view; let us make an experiment, so that you may also realize it."

Jonaid commanded twenty birds to be brought to him.

"Each of you take one," he told his disciples. "In a place where no one can see you kill it, then bring it back."

All the disciples went off and killed and brought back the birds - all, that is, except that favorite disciple. He brought his bird back alive.

"Because the master said it must be done in a place where no one can see," the disciple answered. "Wherever I went, God saw."

"You see the measure of his understanding?" Jonaid exclaimed. "Compare that with that of the others."

All the other disciples begged God's forgiveness.

The Test of the Camel

Ibn Kahfif had two disciples, one called Ahmad the Older and the other Ahmad the Younger. The shaikh favoured Ahmad the Younger the more. His companions were jealous, arguing that Ahmad the older had performed many tasks and endured much discipline. The shaikh, learning of this, desired to demonstrate to them that Ahmad the Younger was the better of the two. Now a camel was sleeping at the door of the convent.

"Ahmad the Older!" Ibn Khafif cried out.

"Here am I," Ahmad the Older responded.

"Carry that camel up to the roof of the convent," Ibn Khafif ordered.

"Master," Ahmad the Older protested, "how is it possible to carry a camel on to the roof?"

"That is enough," Ibn Khafif said. "Ahmad the Younger!"

"Here am I," replied Ahmad the Younger.

"Carry that camel on to the roof of the convent!"

Ahmad the Younger at once girded his loins, rolled up his sleeves and ran out of the convent. Putting his two hands under the camel, he cried with all his might but could not lift the beast.

"Well done! Now we know," Ibn Khafif exclaimed. Then turning to his companions he added, "Ahmad the Younger did his duty. He obeyed my command and offered no objection. He had regard to my command, not to whether the task could be carried out or no. Ahmad the Older was only concerned to argue and dispute. From outward actions one can perceive the inner intention." -Ibn Khafif

The Walnut's Lesson

One day as Al-Shebli was going along he encountered two boys quarreling over a walnut they had found. He took the walnut from them.

"Be patient, till I divide it between you!" he told them.

When he broke it open, the nut proved to be empty. A voice proclaimed, "Go on, divide it, if you are the Divider!"

"All that quarreling over an empty nut," Shebli commented shamefaced. "And all that pretension to be a divider over nothing!"

Kindness to Animals

Fear God, in treating dumb animals and ride them when they are fit to be ridden and get off them when they are tired.

An adulteress passed by a dog at a well; and the dog was holding out his tongue from thirst, which was near killing him, and the woman drew off her boot, and tied it to the end of her garment, and drew water for the dog, and gave him a drink; and she was forgiven for that act.

"Are there rewards for doing good to quadrupeds, and giving them water to drink?" Muhammad said, "Verily there are heavenly rewards for any act of kindness to a living animal."

-By Mohammad, from The Hadith: "Sayings of the Prophet"

Wean Yourself

Little by little, wean yourself. This is the gist of what I have to say. From an embryo, whose nourishment comes in the blood, move to an infant drinking milk, to a child on solid food, to a searcher after wisdom, to a hunter of more invisible game.

Think how it is to have a conversation with an embryo. You might say, "The world outside is vast and intricate. There are wheat fields and mountain passes, and orchards in bloom. At night there are millions of galaxies, and in sunlight the beauty of friends dancing at a wedding."

You ask the embryo why he, or she, stays cooped up in the dark with eyes closed. Listen to the answer.

There is no "other world." I only know what I've experienced. You must be hallucinating."

-Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)

Sleep No More

If you want great wealth,
and that which lasts forever,
Wake up!
If you want to shine
with the love of the Beloved,

Wake up!
You've slept a hundred nights,
And what has it brought you?
For your Self, for your God,
Wake up! Wake up!
Sleep no more.

-Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)

GROUP RECITALS

The Caravansary

Once Khidr went to the King's palace and made his way right up to the throne.

Such was the strangeness of his appearance that none dared to stop him.

The king, who was Ibrahim ben Adam, asked him what he was looking for.

The visitor said: 'I am looking for a sleeping-place in this caravansary.'

Ibrahim answered: 'This is no caravansary, this is my palace.'

The stranger said: 'Whose was it before you?'

'My father's', said Ibrahim.

'And before that?'

'My grandfather's.'

'And this place, where people come and go, staying and moving on, you call other than a caravansary?'

Religion

All religion, as theologians - and their opponents - understand the word, is something other than what it is assumed to be.

Religion is a vehicle. Its expressions, rituals, moral and other teachings are designed to cause certain elevating effects, at a certain time, upon certain communities.

Because of the difficulty of maintaining the science of man, religion was instituted as a means of approaching truth. The means always became, for the shallow, the end, and the vehicle became the idol.

Only the man of wisdom, not the man of faith or intellect, can cause the vehicle to move again. -Alauddin Attar

The Meaning of Culture

The Sufic understanding of culture is not that which is understood by the ordinary man, who limits the meaning.

Sheikh Abu Nasr Sarraj speaks of these three forms of culture:

Worldly culture, which is merely acquiring information, opinions and learning of a conventionalized kind;

Religious culture, which is repetitious, following rules and discipline, behaving in an ethically acceptable way;

Sufi culture, which is a self-development, realizing what is relevant, concentration and contemplation, cultivation of inner experience, following the path of Search and Nearness.

The Aim

The hidden meaning in existence is like a tree subsisting. And the deeply hidden fruit of it is man, O Master. The aim of the bough - O One without a Teacher - is ripened fruit, not just another tree alone. -Ablahi Mutlaqtar

Wild Utterances

We give out strange phrases to ordinary people because our experiences cannot be put in their ordinary phrases. I have

known that which cannot be described, through and through, and that which is in it overwhelms all ordinary definition. -Ibn Ata

To Reach the Degree of Truth...

None attains to the Degree of Truth until a thousand honest people have testified that he is a heretic. -Junaid of Baghdad

Death Visiting

Death does not visit more than once. Be prepared, therefore, for its coming. -Abu-Shafiq of Balkh

Thou art There

The flitting of a light in desert dusk -thou art there.

The weary duty of the Magian's forced ritual -thou art there.

The movement in response to another movement -thou art there.

Not in the book of the scribe, but in the smile at it - thou art there.

The Grace of the graceful, no the mind of the graceful - thou art there.

The question and answer: between them, not in them - thou art there.

Between the lumbering paces of the elephant - thou art there.

In harmony, in love, in being itself, in truth, in absoluteness - thou art there.

The pearl rejected by the oyster-fancier - thou art there.

The inexplicability of non-rhythm, of seeming change - thou art there.

The interchange, pulsation, sweetness, silence, rest:

In congruity and in incongruity - thou art there.

In the glow, the spark, the leaping flame, the warmth and the burning; in the relaxation and the agitation: Thou art there!

-Haykali

What to Do and What to Have Done

All wisdom can be stated in two lines:

What is done for you -allow it to be done.

What you must do yourself - make sure you do it. -Khawwas

Men and Knowledge

There are many trees: not all of them bear fruit.

There are many fruits: not all of them may be eaten.

Many, too, are the kinds of knowledge: yet not all of them are of value to men.

-Jesus, son of Mary, according to the Book of Amu-Darya

What is Identity?

When someone knocked on the door, Bayazid called out: 'What do you seek?'

The caller answered: 'Bayazid.'

Bayazid replied: 'I, too, have been seeking "Bayazid" for three decades, and I have not yet found him.'

The Answer

We wrote a hundred letters, and you did not write an answer. This, too, is a reply. -Zauqi

We are Alive

We are waves whose stillness is non-being.

We are alive because of this, that we have no rest. -Abu-Talib Kalim

Some Final Essays

Sufi Lectures

Sufi students may or may not be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the traditional Classics of Sufism. It is the Sufi Guide, however, who indicates to each circle or pupil the curriculum: the pieces from the Classics from letters and lectures, from traditional observances which apply to a particular phase of society, to a particular grouping, to a certain individual.

The usage of materials sharply divides Sufi ideology from any other on record. It is this attitude which has prevented Sufism from crystallizing into priestcraft and traditionalism. In the originally Sufic groupings where this fossilization has indeed taken place, their fixation upon a repetitious usage of Sufi materials provides a warning for the would-be Sufi that such an organization has 'joined the world.'

What is Sufism?

The question is not "what is Sufism?", but "what can be said and taught about Sufism?"

The reason for putting it in this way is that it is more important to know the state of the questioner and tell him what will be useful to him than anything else. Hence the Prophet (Peace and Blessings upon him!) has said: 'Speak to each in accordance with his understanding.'

You can harm an inquirer by giving him even factual information about Sufism, if his capacity of understanding is faulty or wrongly trained.

This is an example. The question just recorded is asked. You reply: 'Sufism is self-improvement.' The questioner will assume that self-improvement means what he takes it to mean.

If you said, again truly: 'Sufism is untold wealth', the greedy or ignorant would covet it because of the meaning which they put upon wealth.

But do not be deceived into thinking that if you put it in a religious or philosophical form, the religious or philosophical man will not make a similar covetous mistake in taking, as he thinks, your meaning. -Idris ibn-Ashraf

Knowledge

Knowledge is generally confused with information. Because people are looking for information or experience, not knowledge, they do not find knowledge.

You cannot avoid giving knowledge to one fitted for it. you cannot give knowledge to the unfit; that is impossible. You can, if you have it, and if he is capable, fit a man for receiving knowledge. -Sayed Najmuddin

Seven Thoughts on Famous Teachers

People tend to want to study under famous teachers. Yet there are always people not considered distinguished by the public who could teach them as effectively. -Ghazali

A teacher with a small following, or no apparent following at all, may be the right man for you. In nature, small ants do not swarm to see elephants, in hope of gain. An illustrious master may be of use only to advanced scholars. -Badakhshani

If a teacher of great repute tells you to go study under someone who is apparently not outstanding, he knows what you need. Many students feel slighted by advice like this, which is in fact to their advantage. -Abdurahman of Bengal

I have learned what I have learned only after my teachers had freed me of the habit of attaching myself to what I regarded as teachers and teachings. Sometimes I had to do nothing at all for long periods. Sometimes I had to study things which I could not link in my mind, no matter how I tried, with higher aspirations. - Zikiria ibn El-Yusufi

Those who are attracted by externals, who look for the outwards signs of teachership, who rely on emotion in studies or reading any book they might choose- those are the pond-flies of the Tradition; they skip and skim upon the surface. Because they have words for 'profound' and 'significant', they think incorrectly, that they know these experiences. This is why we say that, for practical purposes, they know nothing. -Talib Shamsi Ardabili

Take care you do not mistake indigestion for something else. You may visit a great man or read his book and you may feel attraction or hostility. Often this is only indigestion in the student. -Mustafa Qalibi of Antioch

If I were embarking upon the Way anew, my plea would be: 'Teach me how to learn and what to study.' And, even before that: 'Let me really wish to learn how to learn, as a true aspiration, not simply in self-pretense.' -Khawaja Ali Ramitani

Teaching of the Sufis

Many people practice virtues or associate with the wise and great people, believing that this is the pursuit of self-improvement. They are deluded. In the name of religion, some of the worst barbarities have been committed. Trying to do good, man has done some of his worst actions.

The flaw comes from the absurd assumption that the mere connection with something of value will convey a corresponding advantage to an unaltered individual.

Much more is necessary. Man must not only be in contact with good: he must be in contact with a form of it which is capable of transforming his function and making him good. A donkey stabled in a library does not become literate.

This argument is one of the differences between Sufi teaching and attempted practice of ethic or self-improvement in other endeavors.

The point is generally neglected by the reader or student. Talib-Kamal said: 'The Thread does not become ennobled because it goes through the jewels.' And: 'My virtues have not improved me, any more than a desolate place is made fertile by the presence of a treasure.'

A treasure is a treasure. But if it is to be put to work to recreate a ruin, the treasure must be used in a certain way.

Moralizing may be a part of the process. The means of transforming the man is still needed. It is this means which is the Sufi secret. Other schools, very often, are not at the point where they can see beyond the first stage; they are intoxicated with the discovery of ethic and virtue, which they therefore conclude constitute a panacea. -Abdal Ali Haidar

How Strange a Thing is Man

Just try to conceive for a moment that you are a being unlike a human being. Unperceived by man, you enter one of his abodes. As an observer, what would you make of the cause or the objective of his actions? Assume that you have no experience of humanity.

The man whom you are observing lies down and falls asleep. You do not sleep, because you are not of his nature. How could you understand what he has done or why? You would be forced to say: 'He is dead'; or perhaps: 'he is mad'; or again: 'This must be a religious observance.' You would be forced, because of your lack of material to which to refer this man's actions, to attribute them to the nearest action known to you, in your own world.

Now, while we still watch this man, we find that he wakes up. What has happened? We may think: 'He has miraculously revived', or something of the sort. He goes to the fountain and washes himself. We say: 'How odd!'

Now the man is cooking something in a pot, and sweat stands on his brow. 'A religious observance... or perhaps he is the slave of this strange leaping, luminous thing called fire, and has to serve it in this way...'

In short, everything which he does seems insane, incomplete or motivated by causes which arise in our own imagination - if we are that visitor who uses his own scale, or none at all, to measure the human activity.

So it is with the dervish. He laughs, he cries. He is kind, he is cruel. He repents, talks of wine, shuns people and then goes to visit them. He serves mankind and says that he is serving God. You talk of God and he may protest and say that you are ignorant. What are you to make of such a man?

He is a man of another world. You attribute his action to the kind of actions you know about; his knowledge to the kind of thing which you call knowledge; his feelings you compare with what you take them to be. His origins, his Path, his destiny: you look at them all from only one point of view.

How strange a thing is man!

But there is a way to understand him. Leave off all preconceptions as to what our dervish may be. Follow his explanations or his symbols of the Sufi Path. Be humble, for you are a learner lower than all learners; for you have to know the things which will alone enable you to learn. No, I cannot teach you the Qalandar Path. I have but warned you. Go, seek a Sufi and plead first for forgiveness for your heedlessness, for you have been too long asleep. -Oration of Qalandar Puri

The Study Group

It is interesting to note, from the point of view of contemporary psychology, how study groups always face a challenge. This challenge is as to whether the group will stabilize itself early on comforting props (like certain drills, exercises, readings, authority figures) or whether the group has in itself sufficient stability to reach for a reality beyond exterior, social factors.

It is the composition of the group which will decide this. If its members already have a sound social equilibrium, they will not need to convert their study atmosphere into the source of stability and reassurance. If the members have already acquired physical and intellectual satisfactions, they will not need to attempt to extract these from their Sufic group.

It is the seekers of social, intellectual and emotional stabilization who are the unsuccessful candidates for Sufi teaching in genuine schools. Imitation schools use Sufi externals - including such letters and lectures as these- and operate as disguised social-psychological groups. This is very valuable though Sufically sterile activity is not the quest for 'higher knowledge about man.'

Advice to the Vigiler

O you wrapped up in your raiment!
Keep vigil the night long, save a little-
A half thereof, or abate a little thereof
Or add thereto and chant the Qur'an in measure,
For We shall charge you with a word of weight.
Lo! The vigil of the night is when impression is more keen and
speech more certain.
Lo! You have by day a chain of business.
So remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself with
complete devotion.
-Qur'an 73.1-8

Jewish Thoughts and Words

I am by no means an expert on Judaism, I have not read the entire old testament, Talmud or midrash. A friend of mine once told me that the bible was a singular work of literature in that it hasn't a single joke in 2000 pages. This may be true, but the Jewish people of course have a sense of humor, sometimes even a Druidic sense. I have liberally taken many examples from "A Treasury of Jewish Humor," edited by Nathan Ausubel, M. Evans and Company 216 east 49th St., NYC 10017 (Doubleday) 1951 (reprinted) ISBN 0-87131-546-7. I have also borrowed from many other sources.

Parables

Rabbi Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, was deeply impressed by the ability of his friend, Rabbi Jacob Krantz, to have a parable ready for every problem he encountered. One day, Rabbi Elijah decided to ask how such a feat was possible.

Rabbi Jacob answered him by saying, "I will respond to your question about parables by using a parable. Once a nobleman decided that his son should be the very best musketeer. He therefore entered his son into a military academy to learn the martial skills. For five years the young man studied and learned and practiced until he was the most accomplished of musketeers.

"He graduated from the academy with a gold medal. While on his way home, he entered a village in order to rest. While standing on a street, he happened to notice a stable wall. There were the chalk marks of a target on the wall. Each target had a bullet hole at its exact center. Astonished at the skill of the marksman, the young man determined to meet the accomplished shooter. He asked throughout the village and finally discovered who had done the shooting - a small Jewish boy dressed as a beggar.

"The nobleman faced the child. 'Who taught you to shoot so well?' he asked.

"The boy answered, 'Let me explain. First I shoot the bullets at the wall. Only then do I take a piece of chalk and draw circles around the holes.'

"This is what I do," said the Preacher of Dubnow. "I don't search for the parable to fit the subject under discussion. Rather, I learn as many parables as I can. Eventually the right subject will come along for every parable."

-Jacob Krantz 1741-1804, Rabbi, Preacher of Dubnow

Hide and Seek

Rebbe Baruch's grandson Yehiel was crying as he entered his grandfather's study. The concerned rebbe asked about the source of the tears.

"I have a friend who cheated me and left me alone to cry."

"Please explain," said the rebbe.

"The two of us were playing hide-and-seek, grandfather. It was my turn to hide, and I did it so well that my friend couldn't find me. Instead of continuing to look, he gave up. That's not fair, is it?"

The rebbe kissed the boy and began to cry. Yehiel asked why he was crying. The rebbe explained. "Like you, Yehiel, God, too, is unhappy. He is hiding and humanity does not look for him. Humanity has stopped its search. That also is not fair."

-Baruch of Medzeboth 1751-1811, Grandson of Baal Shem Tov

Differences of Custom

Rabbi Adler was sitting next to Herbert Cardinal Vaughan at a luncheon one afternoon. The cardinal turned to the rabbi and said, "Now, Dr. Adler, when may I have the pleasure of helping you to some ham?"

"At your Eminence's wedding," replied the rabbi.

-Hermann Adler 1839-1911, Chief Rabbi of British Empire)

Publishing Advice

An author came to see Rabbi Abele, wishing the rabbi to provide a favorable introduction to the author's commentary on the Book of Job. The rabbi agreed.

Later, the same author came back to the rabbi for still another introduction, this time for a commentary on Proverbs. The rabbi was not impressed by the work, but he did not wish to offend the author, so he simply said that he could not provide his approval by writing the introduction.

"But, Rabbi," said the author, "What made you prefer my commentary on Job to the one on Proverbs?"

The rabbi thought for a moment. "I will tell you if you insist. Job had a million problems, so one more book about him would be only a slight additional affliction. Solomon, on the other hand, led a happy life. I didn't see why you should make him suffer."

-Abele 1764-1836, Rabbi of Vilna & Talmudic scholar

Papa's Gift

Asimov's father looked at one of his son's book and asked, "How did you learn all this, Isaac?"

"From you, Papa."

"From me? I don't know any of this."

"You didn't have to, Papa. You valued learning, and you taught me to value it. All the rest came without trouble."

-Isaac Asimov 1920-, American biochemist & author

Contributions

Two men came to see Rabbi Landau to seek a charitable contribution. The rabbi asked them how much they needed. The men said, "We need 1000 gulden immediately to help the people." The rabbi left the room and returned with a leather case. He showed the men that the case was filled with gold coins. "Here," said the rabbi. "I've got 990 gold pieces. You must get the other 10 pieces you need from people in your city."

The men looked at Rabbi Landau in astonishment. "Rabbi," one began, evidently unsure of how to proceed. "It is a mitzvah to give, and you are performing a great mitzvah. But why do you start such a mitzvah and stop almost at the end?"

"You are both learned," answered the rabbi. "You should know why. It is wrong to give and by so doing deprive others of the joy of giving. I want to help, but I also want to allow other Jews a chance to be charitable."

-Ezekiel Landau 1713-1793, Author on Jewish Law, Rabbi of Prague

Hasty Prayers

The rabbi was visiting a hotel. The Jewish merchants who were staying in the hotel had come to the town for a fair. One morning the rabbi heard them racing through their prayers before they rushed to the fair. That evening he invited the merchants to

his room. When he arrived, he spoke unintelligibly for several moments. The merchants were mystified. Finally, one said, "Rabbi, we appreciate being invited by you, but we can't understand your words."

The rabbi responded in words that were all too clear: "Now you can imagine how the Almighty feels when you mumble your prayers in the morning."

One shocked merchant spoke up. "Master, a little baby mumbles also. Nobody understands when he coos and cries, but his mother understands. We are the children of God, and the Lord understands us no matter how we speak."

"You are absolutely right," said the rabbi. "Please forgive me."

-Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev 1740-1810, Rabbi & Hassidic

Where is God?

Even as a young boy, Rabbi Naphtali astonished adults with his quick, insightful replies. One day, a friend of Naphtali's father came for a visit and said to the child, "Naphtali, I'll give you a gold coin if you can tell me where God can be found."

The boy immediately replied, "I'll give you two gold coins if you can tell me where He cannot be found."

-Naphtali of Ropshitz 1760-1827, Rabbi and founder of Hassidic dynasties

The Disbeliever

Rabbi Spektor was visited one day by a young, well-dressed man. The man had come to ask the sage to solve a vexing religious problem. The man did not believe in any religion, but he remained unsure about whether he should also discard his belief in God.

"I am glad you came," the rabbi said. "You say you don't believe. Tell me, have you mastered the Bible?"

"I can't claim that I have. I did read some parts as a child, but recently I have concentrated on my studies in the university."

"Perhaps the Talmud?" the rabbi inquired.

The young man looked surprised. "Rabbi, you don't expect me to waste time on anything like that."

"Okay, you know nothing about the Talmud. How about the great Jewish philosophers? What have you read of Maimonides, ibn Gabirol, or Moses Mendelssohn?"

"I haven't read a word any of them have written."

"Young man, you call yourself an unbeliever, yet you know nothing about Jewish literature. At least call yourself by your right name - you are an ordinary ignoramus."

-Isaac Elhannon Spektor, 1817-1896, Rabbi

Tradition

Rabbi Steinsaltz was teaching a class. He was only 25 years old at the time, and he realized that some in the class were great thinkers, the best in the nation. Some were three times his age. As he thought about it, he became embarrassed at the thought that he should teach them. Suddenly he realized that there was only one way he could justify his teaching. He decided to tell himself that these great minds, his elders, were listening to Adin Steinsaltz not as an individual, but as a representative of a tradition. In that sense, he was 5,000 years old and teaching 75 year-old babies.

-Adin Steinsaltz 1937-, Rabbi and Talmudic scholar

The Unpopular Rabbi

Winning a Jewish argument can sometimes be difficult.

There was once a rabbi from a small town in Russia. He was given a monthly salary and allowed to live in a residence owned by the community. After many years of service, the town's Jewish dignitaries decided that he should be removed from his job. They discharged him and asked him to leave the house. He refused to go, and the case came before the Russian court. A judge there sent it to Rabbi Widrevitz.

The rabbi listened carefully to both sides and decided that the ousted rabbi had done nothing offensive, but that for the sake of the community, he should be discharged. He told the Jewish leaders that he had decided in their favor.

"But, he's still living in the house owned by the community," one said. "How can we get him to leave?"

"Compulsion is not a good idea," the rabbi said.

"What shall we do then?"

"There is a peaceful way. All of you should move from the town and leave him alone. That is my advice."

-Haim Jacob Widrevitz 1795-1854, Rabbi & Scholar

The Accused Maid

Rabbi Wolf was widely known as the fairest of judges. Justice was extremely important to him, and he could not be corrupted.

One day his own wife accused her maid of having stolen a very valuable object. The servant, who was an orphan, began to cry, and then she denied having stolen the object. The wife decided that a rabbinical court was needed to decide the case.

When the rabbi saw the wife preparing to go to the court, he put on his Sabbath robe, so that he might go as well. His wife was surprised. "It's not dignified that a man of your standing should go to the court with me. I am very capable of pleading my own case," she told him.

The rabbi said, "Oh, I am sure that you are. What I am concerned about is who will plead the case of your maid, who is a poor orphan. I am going to make sure that she is treated justly."

-Wolf of Zbaraz 1708-1788, Rabbi & Community Leader

The Disbeliever & God

Abraham was sitting near his tent when an old man approached. The man was obviously exhausted. Abraham, who was known for his hospitality, rose to meet the stranger and to welcome him. The stranger was offered a place in the tent to rest. The old traveler declined the offer, however, preferring instead to rest under a nearby tree. Abraham continued to press the offer, wishing to give the man every comfort. Finally the traveler was persuaded to enter the tent.

Abraham gave the man some goat's milk, butter, and cakes. The hungry man gratefully ate all the food. After the meal, Abraham told the stranger that it was time to pray to the Lord.

"But I do not know your God," said the stranger. "I only pray to the idol that my hands have built."

Abraham began to tell the man about God. He tried to convince the man of God's goodness and urged the man to abandon faith in idols. But the man would not listen to Abraham; instead, he remained steadfast in his pagan beliefs. Abraham angrily demanded that the man leave the tent. The man departed without a word.

The incident haunted Abraham. As he thought about the stranger, he slowly came to realize that God had endured the

man's disbelief for many years, yet Abraham had not been able to stand it for a single night. Furthermore, Abraham realized, forgiveness could not come from God; it could come only from the wronged traveler.

Abraham ran from the tent. He searched all night, and he finally found the man and begged to be forgiven. After listening carefully to Abraham's words, he offered forgiveness. The traveler had provided Abraham with a crucial ethical lesson about imitating the forgiving aspect of God's nature.

-Abraham 19th Cent. B.C.E., First Patriarch of the Jewish People

Postponement

Dr. Einstein was invited to give a speech at a dinner honoring the president of Swarthmore College. After a glowing introduction he stood and announced to the crowd, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry, but I have nothing to say." He then sat down. A second later he was back up again. "If I ever do have something to say, I'll come back."

Six months later, Einstein sent a wire to the president: "Now I have something to say." Another dinner was scheduled. Einstein came and made his speech.

Abandonment

Max Brod, a close friend of author Franz Kafka, encountered many intellectuals who had assimilated. Brod, who had remained faithful to his religion, always treated those intellectuals with great humanity.

Once, just before the First World War, Brod was in Prague, where he spoke with a Jewish professor at the German university in that city. In reply to a question, the Jewish professor said, "I have abandoned Judaism."

Dr. Brod replied, "You may have abandoned Judaism, but Judaism has not abandoned you."

-Max Brod 1884-1968, Jewish author and composer

Philanthropy

The Jews have always considered charity an important virtue, not only for the good it does, but also for what it reveals about a person.

Rabbi Harif and a companion once came to the home of a wealthy man to seek funds for the building of a new Talmud Torah. The wealthy man refused to give a donation to build the school. Rabbi Harif's companion was surprised by the refusal, and as the two men walked away from the house, he expressed his views to Rabbi Harif, adding, "He usually gives whenever he is asked."

Rabbi Harif said, "This time he may be right in his refusal."

"How is that possible?" asked the companion.

"You see, those who give to charity usually do so out of fear that the misfortune that they are helping to alleviate might one day afflict them. For instance, one person might help the crippled because he thinks one day he himself might be crippled; another might give to the blind out of fear of becoming blind; and so on. But why should this man have given to education? He is never likely to be afflicted by the thirst for learning."

-Izel Harif, died 1873, Rabbi of Slonim

Fresh Bread

A group of rabbis were gathered at a celebration. They began to discuss their well-known rabbinical ancestors. Rabbi Yechiel had to say, "I'm the first eminent ancestor in my family." The collected rabbis were very surprised to hear this comment.

The conversation naturally turned to the Torah. Each rabbi began to explain a text by using the teachings and sayings of one of his rabbinical ancestors. Finally it was time for Rabbi Yechiel to speak. He got up and said, "My father was a simple baker. His teaching was that only fresh bread tastes good, and so I should avoid stale bread. This is also true of learning."

-Yechiel of Ostrowce 1851-1928, Rabbi & Scholar

One's Worth

Sir Moses was once asked how much he was worth. He answered, "I am worth 40000 pounds."

The questioner was flabbergasted. "I thought you were worth millions."

Sir Moses smiled. "I do possess millions. But you asked me how much I am worth, and since 40000 pounds represent the sum I distributed during the last year to various charitable institutions, I regard this sum as the barometer of my true worth. For it is not how much a person possesses, but how much he is willing to share with the less fortunate that determines his actual worth."

-Sir Moses Montefiore 1784-1885, British Financier & Philanthropist

Two Thoughts from David

King David's practical wisdom was legendary.

Once, one of king's infant children became critically ill. David prayed and fasted. He slept on the ground for the week of the illness. After that week, the baby died. The king's servants were afraid to tell him of the tragedy. Against such expectations, when David heard the sad news he changed clothes, went to pray, and then ate a meal.

The servants, quite surprised at his reaction, asked him why when the child had been ill he had fasted and cried, yet when the child died, he had gotten up and eaten.

The king replied, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for I thought, who knows whether the Lord will not be gracious to me that the child may live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back?"

King David went to the court jeweler. He told the jeweler to make him a ring and to inscribe on it some statement that would temper excessive delight in an hour of triumph, but also lift him from despair in an hour of loss. The jeweler thought long and hard about what kind of statement should be inscribed. But he was perplexed; he could not find suitable words.

Solomon finally offered a suggestion: "Inscribe on the ring the words Gam Zeh Ya-avor - This, too, shall pass."

-David reigned 1010-970 B.C.E., Second king of Israel

Gardening and Tax-Collectors

The Emperor Antoninus sent a messenger to Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi. The messenger carried a vital question. "The Imperial Treasury is rapidly being depleted. Can you advise me on how I might increase it?"

Rabbi Judah did not respond. Instead, he took the messenger into his garden and began to work. He uprooted large turnips and

planted much smaller turnips in their place. Then he did the same with beets and radishes.

The messenger, seeing that the rabbi would not answer, requested that he write a letter, but the rabbi said that no letter was needed.

The messenger returned to the emperor.

"Did Rabbi Judah give you a letter for me?" the emperor asked.

"No."

"Did he say anything to you?"

"No, he didn't do that either."

"Did he do anything?"

"Yes, he led me into his garden, dug up large vegetables, and planted smaller ones in their place."

"Then I understand his advice," said the emperor.

The emperor then dismissed his governors and tax collectors. They were replaced with less well-known but more honest officials. Before very long, the Imperial Treasury was replenished.

-Judah Hanasl, 2nd cent-3rd cent C.E. Rabbi, Editor of Mishnah

A Fair Exchange

King Artaban of Parthea one day sent a gift to Rabbi Judah. The gift was an exquisite and quite expensive pearl. The king's only request was that the rabbi send a gift in return that was of equal value. Rabbi Judah sent the king a mezuzah.

Artaban was displeased with the gift and came to confront the rabbi. "What is this? I sent you a priceless gift and you return this trifle?"

The rabbi said, "Both objects are valuable, but they are very different. You sent me something that I have to guard, while I sent you something that will guard you." -Judah Hanasl

On One Foot

A stranger came to the house of Shammai. Shammai greeted the stranger and asked what he wanted. The stranger said that he wanted to learn the whole of the Torah while he stood on one foot. Shammai immediately saw that the stranger wished to make fun of him. He became angry and told the stranger to go away.

The stranger then went to the house of Hillel. Hillel greeted him and asked what he wanted. The stranger repeated his jeering request to be taught the whole of the Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel also saw that the stranger was mocking him, but Hillel did not become angry. Instead, Hillel said that he would teach the stranger as was wished.

Hillel began the lesson. "What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor."

The stranger waited for more. Finally he asked, "Is that all the Torah?"

"Yes," said Hillel. "That is the foundation. All the rest is commentary. Go and study."

The stranger said, "Thank you Hillel. If that is the foundation, I will study all the Torah."

-Hillel first cent B.C.E. - first cent C.E., Famous scholar

The Jewish Jeweler

King Don Pedro, ruler of Aragon, heard from his counselor, the troubadour Nicholas of Valencia, that the Jews were inferior

people. The king had heard of a wise Jew named Ephraim ben Sancho and asked that this man be brought before him. Ephraim came, and the king asked him directly which of their faiths was superior. Ephraim recognized the dangers inherent in either answer, and so he said, "Our faith is better suited for us Jews, for our God led us into freedom and out of our slavery in Egypt. Your faith is better for the Christians, for you have been able to rule over much of the world."

The king was not satisfied with the answer. "I don't want to know the benefits each of us gets from our religion. I want to know which religion is superior."

Ephraim said, "Let me consider this question for three days, for it is a difficult question requiring much thought. I will give you my answer at the end of the third day."

The king agreed.

Ephraim could not eat or sleep for the three days. He prayed constantly for guidance. Finally, it was time to go back to the palace. The king immediately noticed how sad Ephraim looked and asked the Jewish sage why.

"I look so sad because of what happened today. May I tell the story for your majesty to judge?"

"You may speak," said the king.

"A month ago my neighbour, who is a jeweler, went traveling to a distant land. He had two sons, who always fought. Before he left, he gave each of his sons an expensive gem. Today these brothers are still arguing, for they came to me to judge which of the gems is more valuable. I reminded them that their father was the jeweler and the best expert on the value of gems, and I suggested that they ask him because he could judge far better than I.

"When I told them this, they became angry at me, and they began to beat me. Don't I have a right to be sad?"

"You have been mistreated," said the king. "They deserve to be punished for how they have behaved."

"My king. May your ears hear the words your mouth has spoken. You asked me which of two gems is superior. How can I give you the right answer? There is only one expert on these types of gems, and that is the Lord. He must tell you which is better."

The king was greatly impressed with Ephraim's wisdom.

-Ephraim Ben Sancho 980-1060, community leader

Beggars

Rabbi Zusya was staying at an inn. A wealthy guest mistook him for a beggar and treated him without respect. The guest later learned the rebbe's true identity and asked for Zusya's forgiveness.

"Why do you ask me to forgive you?" Rabbi Zusya said in response. "You haven't done anything to Zusya. You insulted not Zusya, but a poor beggar. I suggest you go out and ask beggars everywhere to forgive you."

-Zusya of Hanipoli died 1800, Hasidic rabbi

Two Ideas from Singer

An interviewer asked Singer whether he had become a vegetarian for religious reasons or out of concern for his health. Singer told him "It is out of consideration for the chicken."

Singer was asked whether, in all his philosophical musing, he had reached any conclusion about whether humans have free will or whether their actions are determined. His answer was, "We have to believe in free will. We've got no choice."

-Isaac Bashevis Singer 1904- , American Yiddish Actor.

A Poor Jew

A poor man came to Rabbi Joseph's house. The man said that he had come to ask a question regarding the sacred rituals of Passover. He told the rabbi that he could not afford to buy wine, so he wished to know if he could fulfill the obligation to drink four cups of wine during the seder by drinking four cups of milk. Rabbi Joseph said that no Jew could fulfill this important religious commandment with milk. The rabbi then gave the man twenty-five rubles with which to buy wine.

After the man had gone, the rabbi's wife went to her husband with a question. Why, when wine cost two or three rubles, had the rabbi given the man twenty-five?

Rabbi Joseph smiled and said, "When a poor Jew asks if he can use milk at his seder because he cannot afford wine, it is obvious that he cannot afford meat either."

The Doctor Doesn't Worry

The doctor was checking up on the health of his patient.

"Fine, fine! Mr. Cohen! You're doing much better," he consoled him after completing his examination. "Your general condition is improved. There is only one thing that doesn't look so good - your floating kidney. But that doesn't worry me a bit!"

"And if you had a floating kidney, do you think I'd worry about it?" snapped back Mr. Cohen.

Qualification of an Expert

"Do tell me, Rabbi," once asked the president of a congregation, "why is it that a godly man like you is always talking about business matters? Now take me, I'm a businessman, but once I leave my office I do nothing but talk about spiritual matters."

"This follows a very sound principle!" answered the Rabbi.

"What principle is that, Rabbi?"

"Oh, the principle that people usually like to discuss things they know nothing about."

Nature and Poets

Like a great poet, Nature is capable of producing the most stunning effects with the smallest means. Nature possesses only the sun, trees, flowers, water, and love. But for him who feels no love in his heart, none of these things has any poetic value. To such an individual the sun has a diameter of a certain number of miles, the trees are good for making a fire, the flowers are divided into varieties, and water is wet. -Heinrich Heine

To Tide Him Over

A disciple sought the advice of his rabbi.

"I'm poor, Rabbi. My wife is sick and my children are hungry."

"Go home. God will help you," advised the rabbi.

"Thank you, thank you, Rabbi!" gushed the poor man gratefully. "I'm sure God will help me! But until He does, won't you be good enough to lend me five rubles?"

Deferred Judgment

Once a Jewish "merchant" who kept a stall in a village marketplace in Poland bought a sack of prunes from another "merchant." When he examined the prunes, however, he found them full of worms. Without loss of time he hailed the seller before the communal elder.

Now the elder was a very old man and he had a sweet tooth. So he took out his spectacles, put them on his nose, and began examining the prunes. First he tasted one prune judiciously, then another and another. Still not satisfied, he continued to taste them with a speculative air.

This went on for fifteen minutes. Then, completely sated, the elder pushed the prunes away from him with disgust.

"Why do you waste my time?" he cried. "What am I, a prune expert?"

The Long and Short of It

A thief was loitering among the stalls in the marketplace. When the fish dealer wasn't looking, he picked up a big carp and hid it under his coat. As he was walking off, the fish vendor called after him: "Listen uncle, next time you steal a fish be sure that either your coat is longer or the fish is shorter!"

He Did All He Could

Once there was a famous preacher who could move his audience to tears with his eloquence. On the occasion of the funeral of a prominent citizen, he delivered an eulogy. He elaborated on the life of the deceased with touching verve, referred to the purity of his character, to the nobility of his deeds, and to the tragedy of his sudden departure. Nonetheless, his hearers remained unmoved. Not even the mourners in the immediate family were seen to shed a tear.

"Rabbi," asked one of the preacher's admirers wonderingly, "how is it you haven't been able to wring a single tear out of the mourners?"

"My job is only to turn on the faucet," answered the preacher. "Is it my fault if nothing comes out."

Increased Horse Power

A Jewish rustic, whose soul was heavy with sin, decided to visit a rabbi in a neighboring town to ask for his intercession with God. When he returned home from this visit the rabbi of his own town asked him reproachfully: "Isn't one rabbi enough for you? Must you have two?"

"You know how it is, Rabbi," answered the farmer. "Two horses can pull a wagon out of the mud better than one!"

Some Jewish Proverbs

If you're lucky, everybody says you're smart.

If a rabbi isn't in constant danger of being driven out of town by their synagogue, he isn't doing his job.

One fool can ask more questions than ten wise men can answer.

Every dog feels important on his own dunghill.

Those who have nothing are always eager to share it with others.

Some people may be compared to new shoes: the cheaper they are the louder they squeak.

The best part about telling the truth is that you don't have to remember what you said.

The wish to be wiser than everybody else is the biggest foolishness. -Sholom Aleichem

The space in a needle's eye is sufficient for two friends, but the whole world is scarcely big enough to hold two enemies. -Solomon ibn Gabriol

Money is round, so it rolls away.

Man's attitude towards great qualities in others is often the same as towards high mountains- he admires them but he prefers to walk around them. -Moritz Saphir

What is the test of good manners? Being able to bear patiently with bad ones. -Solomon Ibn Gabriol

The Considerate Beggar

A merchant was carrying some goods to market in his wagon. On the way he met a beggar trudging along with a heavy pack on his shoulders. The merchant felt sorry for him and asked him to get into the wagon.

As they rode on in silence the merchant saw that the beggar was sitting with his pack still on his shoulders.,

"Why don't you put your pack down?" he asked in surprise.

"Bless you," said the man, "it's enough that you're carrying me! Do I have to burden you with my pack besides?"

Advice

Most people, when in prosperity, are so over brimming with wisdom (however inexperienced they may be), that they take every offer of advice as a personal insult, whereas in adversity they know not where to turn, but beg and pray for counsel from every passer-by. -Baruch Spinoza

Late

A Jew hurried to the railroad station to catch a train for Vilna but the train pulled out just as he arrived.

Seeing this, he wrung his hand and moaned, "Woe is me that such a misfortune should happen to me! It was so important for me to catch that train."

"How late were you, uncle?" a by-stander inquired sympathetically.

"Just about thirty seconds."

"Not more? Heh! By the way you carry on I thought it must have been at least one hour!"

No Peace for a Rabbi

Squabbles with the congregation's leaders were driving the rabbi to distraction.

"If you're so unhappy why don't you find yourself another post?" suggested a colleague. "I hear there's a good pulpit vacant in Detroit."

The elderly rabbi shook his head wearily.

"Don't you know that there are seven purgatories in Gehenna? You must have wondered, why seven? Isn't one good purgatory enough to punish any hardened sinner? And the answer is 'no'! No matter how excruciating the torments are in any one purgatory the sinner is bound to get used to them. Once he's used to them he suffers less. But since God is just, what does he do? He has the devils carry the wretch to the next purgatory, where he has to start getting used to a new set of tortures."

"I'm in the same position. Whatever tortures I have to endure in this congregational purgatory I'm already accustomed to. Believe me, were I to take the Detroit pulpit I'd have to start a new purgatory all over again!"

De Profundis

Most people have no idea what profound is. They go down to the very depths in order to look for it, while all along they could have found it on the surface. But in order to find it on the surface they would have to be quite deep themselves. -Peter Altenburg

The Philosopher

There once lived a thoughtful man who sought solitude in order to probe into the problems of creation and being and to determine the purpose of all life. These thoughts preoccupied him all the time.

One day he was walking as usual by the bank of the river, absorbed in contemplation. Suddenly, he lifted his eyes and saw a man standing near by. The man had dug a small hole on the bank and was pouring water from a jug into it.

Surprised, the philosopher asked the stranger, "What are you doing?"

"I am going to empty the river and pour all the water from it into this hole," the man answered.

"This is utter madness!" answered the philosopher. "It's an impossible task!"

"Sillier and even more impossible are the questions you're trying to solve!" retorted the man.

Having spoken thus the stranger disappeared.

-Shem-tob Palquera 13th Cent. C.E.

Popularity

Two Yiddish poets, bitter rivals, met in the Cafe Royale on Second Avenue after not meeting for years. Over a glass of tea with lemon the two began to boast about the progress they had made in their careers.

"You have no idea how many people read my poetry now!" bragged one. "My readers have doubled!"

"Mazl tov, mazl tov!" cried the other poet, enthusiastically pumping his hand. "I had no idea you got married!"

God's Garden

Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? When the Holy One, praised be He, created Adam, he showed him all of the trees in the Garden of Eden, telling him "Behold, My works are beautiful and glorious; yet everything which I have created is for your sake. Take care that you do not corrupt or destroy My world."

Why the Sixth Day?

Why was man created on the sixth day? So that, should he become overbearing, he can be told: "The gnat was created before you were."

Growing Roots

When our learning exceeds our deeds we are like trees whose branches are many but whose roots are few: the wind comes and uproots them... But when our deeds exceed our learning we are like trees whose branches are few but whose roots are many, so that even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against them, they would be unable to move them. -Talmud

Wearisome Things

Generations come and generations go, while the earth endures forever.

The sun rises and the sun goes down; back again it returns to its place and rise there again.

The wind blows south, the wind blows north, round and round it goes and returns full circle.

All streams run into the sea, yet the sea never overflows; back to the place from which the streams ran they return to run again.

All things are wearisome; no man can speak of them all.

What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again,

And there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there anything of which one can say, "Look, this is new"? No, it has already existed, long ago before our time.

The people of old are not remembered, and those who flow will not be remembered by those who follow them.... It is a sorry business that God has given men to busy themselves with. I have seen all the deeds that are done here under the sun; they are all emptiness and a chasing after wind. -Ecclesiastes

Sacrifices

Rabbi Meir was once asked, "Why do the scriptures tell us in some passages that sacrifice is very pleasant unto the Lord, while in others it is said that God dislikes sacrifices?" He answered, "It depends whether a man's heart is sacrificed at that time he brings the sacrifice."

-Baraita Kallah 8

Water and Stones

Rabbi Akiba, illiterate at forty, saw one day a stone's perforation where water fell from a spring, and having heard people say, "Waters wear stones," he thought, "If soft water can bore through a rock, surely iron-clad Torah should, by sheer persistence, penetrate a tender mind"; and he turned to study.

-Talmud, Abot de Rabbi Nathan 6

Christian Thoughts

I am There

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: From me all has come forth, and to me all has reached. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there." -Gospel of Thomas

Inside You

Jesus said, "If you leaders say to you, 'Look, the kingdom is in heaven,' then the birds of heaven will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside you and it is outside you." -Gospel of Thomas

Washing the Feet

When Jesus had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, which you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." -John 13:12-17

In All Things

I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark and I have breathed out nothing that can die... I flame above the beauty of the fields, I shine in the waters; in the sun, the moon and the stars, I burn... All living things take their radiance from me; and I am the life, which remains the same through eternity, having neither beginning nor end.

-St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) Medieval German Abbess.

God is Mother

This fair lovely "mother" is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot truly be said of anyone or to anyone except of him and to him who is the true Mother of life and of all things. To the property of motherhood belong nature, love, wisdom and knowledge, and this is God.

-Julian of Norwich (1342-1420) English anchoress

A Prayer for the Frightened

Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you;
All things are passing;
God never changes;
Patient endurance
Obtains all things;
Who God possess
In nothing is wanting;
God alone suffices.

-Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) Spanish Catholic Mystic, Carmelite

The Dark Night

One dark night,
Fired with love's urgent longings
-Ah, the sheer grace!-
I went out unseen,
My house being now all stilled;
...With no other light or guide
Than the one that burned in my heart;
This guided me
More surely than the light of noon
To where He waited for me
-Him I knew so well-
In a place where no one else appeared.
O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
The Lover with His beloved,
Transforming the beloved in her Lover.
....I abandoned and forgot myself,
Laying my face on my Beloved;
All things ceased; I went out from myself,
Leaving my cares
Forgotten among the lilies.
-St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) Spanish Catholic mystic.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
the courage to change the things I can and
the wisdom to know the difference.
-Reinhold Niebuhr 1892-1971, Protestant theologian

Birmingham Jail Letter by Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1963, some of his fellow clergymen had issued a statement that, while sympathizing with his civil rights goals, criticized his tactic of civil disobedience. In jail for that offense, King, with a smuggled pen and on scraps of paper, defended his actions in a letter that was to become the most famous document of the movement.

My fellow clergymen...

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws... One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two laws: There are just laws and there are laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code which squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put in the term of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality... To use the words of Martin Bruber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an "I-it" relationship

for the "I-thou" relationship, and ends up relegating persons to the status of things... So I can urge me to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong...

You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my non-violent efforts as those of the extremist...

But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love - "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice - "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a might stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ - "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist - "Here I stand; I can do not other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist - "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist - "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist - "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be.

...Let us hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Canticle of Brother Sun

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
And first my lord Brother Sun,
Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.
How beautiful he is, how radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most high, he bears the likeness.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
In the heavens you have made them, bright
And precious and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,
By which you cherish all that you have made.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
So useful, lowly, precious and pure.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten up the night.
How beautiful he is, how gay! Full of power and strength.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
Various fruits and colored flowers and herbs.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death,
From whose embrace no mortal can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Happy those She finds doing will!
The second death can do no harm to them.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks,
And serve him with great humility.

-St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) Franciscan saint.

For the Nation

From Book Common Prayer p.838, from Norman Nelson

Almighty God, giver of all good things: We thank you for the natural majesty and beauty of this land. They restore us, though we often destroy them.

Heal us.

We thank you for the great resources of this nation. They make us rich, though we often exploit them.

Forgive us.

We thank you for the men and women who have made this country strong. They are models for us, though we often fall short of them.

Inspire us.

We thank you for the torch of liberty which has been lit in this land. It has drawn people from every nation, though we have often hidden from its light.

Enlighten us.

We thank you for the faith we have inherited in all its rich variety. It sustains our life, though we have been faithless again and again.

Renew us.

Help us, O Lord, to finish the good work here begun. Strengthen our efforts to blot out ignorance and prejudice, and to abolish poverty and crime. And hasten the day when all our people, with many voices in one united chorus, will glorify your holy Name.

Amen.

Part Four: The Indian

Sub-continent

Hindu Thoughts

India is a myriad of differing practices, beliefs and systems of thoughts. I cannot hope to do justice to them all, but I've spent a few days looking for some Druidic examples to share with you. I hope that you make a most systematic and thorough examination than I did.

Isa Upanishad: All Beings in Your Self

Behold the universe in the glory of God: and all that lives and moves on earth. Leaving the transient, find joy in the Eternal; set not your heart on another's possessions...

The Spirit, without moving, is swifter than the mind; the senses cannot reach him: He is ever beyond them. Standing still, he overtakes those who run. To the ocean of his being, the spirit of life leads the streams of action.

...Who sees all beings in his own Self, and his own Self in all beings, loses all fear.

...When a sage sees the great Unity and his Self has become all beings, what delusion and what sorrow can ever be near him?

... May life go to immortal life, and the body go to ashes, OM. Oh my soul, remember past strivings, remember! O my soul, remember past strivings, remember!

Chandogya Upanishad: Thou Art That

There is a light that shines beyond all things on earth, beyond us all, beyond the heavens, beyond the highest, the very highest heavens. This is the Light that shines in our heart.

OM. There lived once a boy, Svetaketu Aruneya by name. One day his father spoke to him in this way: "Svetaketu, go and become a student of sacred wisdom. There is no one in our family who has not studied the holy Vedas and who might only be given the name of Brahman by courtesy."

The boy left at the age of twelve, and, having learnt the Vedas, he returned home at the age of twenty-four, very proud of his learning and having a great opinion of himself.

His father, observing this, said to him: "Svetaketu, my boy, you seem to have a great opinion of yourself, you think you are learned, and you are proud. Have you asked for that knowledge whereby what is not heard is heard, what is not thought is thought, and what is not known is known?"

"What is that knowledge, father?" asked Svetaketu.

"By knowing a lump of clay, my son, all that is clay can be known, since any differences are only words and the reality is clay; and by knowing a piece of gold all that is gold can be known, since any differences are only words and the reality is only gold..."

Svetaketu said: "Certainly my honored masters knew not this themselves. If they had known, why would they not have told me? Explain this to me, father."

"So be it, my child. Bring me a fruit from this banyan tree."

"Here it is, father."

"Break it."
"It is broken, Sir."
"What do you see in it?"
"Very small seeds, Sir."
"Break one of them, my son."
"It is broken, Sir."
"What do you see in it, my son?"
"Nothing at all, Sir."

Then his father spoke to him: "My son, from the very essence in the seed which you cannot see comes in truth this vast banyan tree. "Believe me, my son, an invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is reality. That is Atman. THOU ART THAT."

"Explain more to me, father," said Svetaketu.

"So be it, my son. Place this salt in water and come to me tomorrow morning."

Svetaketu did as he was commanded, and in the morning his father said to him: "Bring me the salt you put into the water last night."

Svetaketu looked into the water, but could not find it, for it had dissolved.

His father then said, "Taste the water from this side. How is it?"

"It is salt."
"Taste it from the middle. How is it?"
"It is salt."
"Taste it from that side. How is it?"
"It is salt."
"Look for the salt and come again to me."

The son did so, saying: "I cannot see the salt. I only see the water."

His father then said: "in the same way, O my son, you cannot see the Spirit. But in truth he is here.

"An invisible but subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Truth. THOU ART THAT."

Two Quotes

As men approach me, so I receive them. All paths, Arjuna, lead to me. -Bhagavad Gita 4.11

Like the bee, gathering honey from different flowers, the wise man accepts the essence of different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions. -Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3

Jain Thoughts

Jainism, often listed in the top ten religions of the world (perhaps 10 million) is greatly unknown by most people. It is an indigenous strain of thought, over 4000 years old, somewhat similar to Hinduism in their attitude towards karma and the cycle of rebirth. Occasionally membership overlaps, however Jainism is singular in that it does not stem from the Vedic or Brahmanic tradition. It has its own series of sages, Tirthankaras, which ended about 2500 years ago and a contemporary of the Buddha. They lack a mythology or creation myth and have no priests, though they do have holy women and men who are ascetics. They are a bit anti-ritualistic and are famous in their strict vegetarianism and espousal of non-violence towards all animals; some to the extent of veiling their mouth to avoid breathing in microscopic creatures. Some are very anti-materialistic and roam about unclothed ("sky-clad" in their language) begging for a living. Among their most influential impact on India is inspiring Gandhi's non-violent resistance protest movement and anti-caste crusade. Materials on them are rather difficult to find in libraries, but I found some internet sites with their thoughts recorded in English, so take a look.

What is Ritual and Religion?

Many people put great emphasis on rites and rituals. Because of this, some people think the religion is the thing of past. It is waste of time. Religion is rigid and orthodox. Religion represents narrow-mindedness. Science has progressed beyond religion. Some people are worshipping. Some are reciting mantra. Some are moving beads on a mala (rosary.) Some are singing religious songs. Some are visiting religious places like Palitana. Some are asking for rewards from god. Some want to improve their fate. Some are praying to go to heaven. Many activities like these are practiced on the name of religion. Is this really the religion? Answer is no if this is nothing more to it. Answer is yes if there is more to it.

What is Religion?

First, we should try to understand the true meaning of the religion. It is definitely not the business where you wheel & deal with the god. It is not the thing to practice because of the social pressure or to show-off that you are religious. The Sanskrit word for the religion is dharma. The meaning of dharma is very own nature of the thing. For all living beings, our soul is the real thing. This makes "to see, to know and to realize" - the true nature of the soul as our religion. In other words, the laws of nature in truest and purest form are the religion.

Laws of nature lead us to the laws of self-initiatives and self-efforts. Without self-efforts and self-initiatives, one cannot see, know and realize his/her own true qualities. That's why Jainism relies a great deal on one's own efforts and initiatives, and laws of nature. Self-effort can change our fate. Remember our present fate is due to our past karma.

One time Bhagavan Mahavira was asked what is the religion from a realistic point of view. Bhagavan Mahavira said, "the realistic religion is consisted of four parts: 1) equality of all living ones, 2) every living soul has right to put self-effort to improve itself and do not take away this right, 3) do not rule other living ones, and 4) all views should be viewed with equanimity - without like or dislike. If we adopt only one of these, other three will automatically be adopted. Notice that Bhagavan Mahavira did not say that follow what I've said or follow the Jain religion.

What is Truth and Knowledge?

Do not live to know, know to live. Knowledge is not the religion, practice is the religion. Good conduct is the religion. In our conduct we should look at happiness and unhappiness with equanimity. We should believe in possibilities. Even opposing views can be parts of one truth. Accept co-existence with others. Look at the good side of others. The religion is for self-improvement not for improving others. If each individual improves, the society, nation and world will automatically improve.

How Should We Live?

We should now understand that if we want to have happiness and comforts, then we should be careful what we do and how we do it. The following is a list of some activities which can bring comfort to others and can ultimately provide the same for us. They are:

- 1) offering food to the needy (Only vegetarian food.)
- 2) offering clothes to the needy.
- 3) helping the sick.
- 4) helping others to acquire knowledge.
- 5) giving charity (Be sure that the money is used for a good cause.)
- 6) helping parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and others in need.
- 7) helping animals or organizations that help animals.
- 8) studying religion and following its precepts in our daily lives.
- 9) worshipping Tirthankaras like Lord Mahira.

What are the Different Jain Fundamentals?

Jain philosophy can be described in various ways, but the most acceptable tradition is to describe it in terms of the Nav Tattvas or nine fundamentals. They are:

- 1) Jiva (soul)
- 2) Ajiva (non-living matter)
- 3) Punya (results of good deeds)
- 4) Pap (results of bad deeds)
- 5) Asrava (influx of karmas)
- 6) Samvar (stoppage of karmas)
- 7) Bandh (bondage of karmas)
- 8) Nirjara (eradication of karmas)
- 9) Moksha (liberation)

Now, let us use a simple analogy to illustrate these Tattvas. There lived a family in a farm house. They were enjoying the fresh cool breeze coming through the open doors and windows. The weather suddenly changed, and a terrible dust storm set in. Realizing it was a bad storm, they got up to close the doors and windows. By the time they could close all the doors and windows, lots of dust had entered the house. After closing the doors and the windows, they started clearing the dust that had come in to make the house clean.

We can interpret this simple illustration in terms of Nav-Tattvas as follows:

1) Jivas are represented by the people. 2) Ajiva is represented by the house. 3) Punya is represented by enjoyment resulting from the nice cool breeze. 4) Pap is represented by discomfort resulting from the sand storm, which brought dust into the house. 5) Asrava is represented by the influx of dust through the doors and windows of the house which is similar to the influx

of karman particles to the soul. 6) Bandh is represented by the accumulation of dust in the house, which is similar to bondage of karman particles to the soul. 7) Samvar is represented by the closing of the doors and windows to stop the dust from coming into the house, which is similar to the stoppage of influx of karman particles to the soul. 8) Nirjara is represented by the cleaning up of accumulated dust from the house, which is similar to shedding accumulated karmic particles from the soul. 9) Moksha is represented by the cleaned house, which is similar to the shedding off all karmic particles from the soul.

The Problem?

Those who praise their own doctrines and disparage the doctrines of others do not solve any problem. -Sutrakritanga 1.1.50 (Jain)

The Butcher and Papanubandhu Pap:

There lived a butcher in Magadh city. He enjoyed his job. One day, King Shrenik decided that there would be no more killing in the city. All killing in the city halted except for this butcher's killing. As to when he was asked why he did not observe King Shrenik's command, he said he loved killing and could not stop. King Shrenik decided to put him in an almost dry well so that there would be nothing to kill. To everyone's surprise, the killing did not stop there either. The butcher made animals with wet clay and then pretended to kill them. Since he was enjoying killing so much, he accumulated pap (bad karmas), which gave rise to a situation where he could do nothing other than, continue killing.

The Immortal Song

1. May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart. May the universe prosper -- such is my cherished desire.
2. May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous, and may my life be an offering at their feet.
3. May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel, the irreligious, and my tears of compassion flow from my eyes.
4. May I always be there to show the path to the pathless wanderers of life. Yet if they should not hearken to me, may I bide in patience.
5. May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts. May we all sing in chorus the immortal song of human concord.

Fight Against Desires

O man! Control thyself. Only then can you get salvation. If you are to fight, fight against your own desires. Nothing will be achieved by fighting against external enemies; if you miss this occasion, it will be lost forever. One's own unconquered soul is one's greatest enemy.

Virtuous Prayer

May my thoughts and feeling be such that I may always act in a simple and straightforward manner. May I ever, so far as I can, do good in this life to others.

May I never hurt and harm any living being; may I never speak a lie. May I never be greedy of wealth or the wife [spouse] of another. May I ever drink the nectar of contentment!

May I always have a friendly feeling towards all living beings of the world and may the stream of compassion always flow from my heart towards distressed and afflicted living beings.

May I never entertain an idea of egotism; nor may I be angry with anybody! May I never become jealous on seeing the worldly prosperity of other people.

May I never become fretful towards bad, cruel and wicked persons. May I keep tolerance towards them. May I be so disposed!

May I ever have the good company of learned ascetics and may I ever keep them in mind. May my heart be always engrossed and inclined to adopt the rules of conduct which they observe.

May my heart be overflowing with love at the sight of the virtuous, and may I be happy to serve them so far as possible.

May I never be ungrateful (towards anybody); nor may I revolt (against anybody.) May I ever be appreciating the good qualities of other persons and may I never look at their faults.

May my mind neither be puffed up with joy, nor may it become nervous in pain and grief. May it never be frightened even if I am in a terrible forest or strange places of cremation or graveyards.

May my mind remain always steady and firm, unswerving and unshaken; may it become stronger every day. May I bear and endure with patience the deprivation of dear ones and occurrences of undesired evils.

May all living beings of the world be happy! May nobody ever feel distressed! May the people of the world renounce enmity, sin, pride and sing the songs of joy every day.

May Dharma (truth) be the topic of house-talk in every home! May evil be scarce! May (people) increase their knowledge and conduct and thereby enjoy the blessed fruit of human birth.

May disease and pestilence never spread, may the people live in peace, may the highest religion of Ahimsa (non-injury) pervade the whole world and may it bring about universal good!

May universal love pervade the world and may ignorance of attachment remain far away. May nobody speak unkind, bitter, and harsh words!

May all become "heroes of the age" heartily and remain engaged in elevating the Cause of Righteousness. May all gain the sight of Truth called "Vastuswarupa" (Reality of substance) and may they bear, with pleasure, trouble and misfortunes!

AMEN

The Doctrine of Maybe

Since no speech is capable of simultaneously describing the manifold aspects of the reality without incurring contradiction, the Jains advance a theory of qualified speech as a corollary to the doctrine of non-absolutism. This is called Asyad-vada or 'the doctrine of maybe'. A statement like 'x is eternal' is not only dogmatic but also wrong, since it denies impermanence. The correct thing would then be to say 'maybe the x is eternal', which would indicate the existence of other properties not expressly stated by the speaker. Seven such predications are possible: maybe yes, maybe no, maybe yes and no, maybe indescribable, and three more combinations of these.

Nonviolence Prayer

From clubs and knives, stakes and maces, breaking my limbs,
An infinite number of times I have suffered without hope.
By keen-edged razors, by knives and shears,
Many time I have been drawn and quartered, torn apart and skinned.

Helpless in snares and traps, a deer,
I have been caught and bound and fastened, and often I have been killed.

A helpless fish, I have been caught with hooks and nets;
An infinite number of times I have been killed and scraped, split and gutted.

A bird, I have been caught by hawks or trapped in nets,
Or held fast by birdlime, and I have been killed an infinite number of times.

A tree, with axes and adzes by carpenters
An infinite number of times I have been felled, stripped of my bark, cut up, and sawn into planks.

As iron, with hammer and tongs by blacksmiths
An infinite number of times I have been struck and beaten, split and filed....

Ever afraid, trembling, in pain and suffering,
I have felt the utmost sorrow and agony....

In every kind of existence I have suffered
Pains which have scarcely known reprieve for a moment.

-Prince Mrgaputra

Creator? Creation?

If God created the world, where was he before creation? If you say he was transcendent then, and needed no support, where is he now?... If he is ever perfect and complete, how could the will to create have arisen in him? If, on the other hand, he is not perfect, he could no more create the universe than a potter could.... If out of love for living things and need of them he made the world, why did he not make creation wholly blissful, free from misfortune? ... Know that the world is uncreated, as time itself is, without beginning and end, and is based on the principles, life and rest. Uncreated and indestructible, it endures under the compulsion of its own nature.

Buddhist Thoughts

See For Yourself

It is proper... to doubt, to be uncertain... Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; ... nor upon the consideration, "The monk is our teacher." Rather when you yourselves know: "These things are bad; when undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill," abandon them. Likewise when you yourselves know: "These things are good; when undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness," enter on and abide them. -Bodhiharma

Carrying a Girl

Two monks on pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a girl dressed in all her finery and obviously not knowing what to do, for the river was high and she did not want her clothes spoilt. Without more ado, one of the monks took her on his back, carried her across, and put her down on dry ground. Then the monks continued on their way. But the other monk started complaining; "Surely it is not right to touch a woman; it is against the commandments to have close contact with women; how can you go against the rules for monks!" and so on in a steady stream. The monk who had carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he remarked: "I set her down by the river. But you are still carrying her."

Sand Castles

Some children were playing beside a river. They made castles of sand, and each child defended his castle and said, "This one is mine." They kept their castles separate and would not allow any mistakes about which was whose. When the castles were all finished, one child kicked over someone's else's castle and completely destroyed it. The owner of the castle flew into a rage, pulled the other child's hair, struck him with his fist and bawled out, "He has spoilt my castle! Come along all of you and help me to punish him as he deserves." The others all came to his help. They beat the child with a stick and then stamped on him as he lay on the ground. Then they went on playing in their sand-castles, each saying, "This is mine; no one else may have it. Keep away! Don't touch my castle!" But evening came; it was getting dark and they all thought they ought to be going home. No one now cared what became of his castle. One child stamped on his, another pushed his over with both his hands. Then they turned away and went back each to his home.

Flapping Things

Two monks were arguing about a flag. "The flag is flapping," said one. "No," said the other; "the wind is flapping." The argument went back and forth. The Master happened to be passing by. He told them: "Not the wind, not the flag; your minds are flapping."

The Water Jar

Do not disregard evil, saying, "It will not come nigh unto me": by the falling of drops even a water jar is filled; likewise the fool, gathering little by little, fills himself with evil.

Do not disregard merit, saying "It will not come nigh unto me": by the falling of drops of water even a water jar is filled;

likewise the wise man, gathering little by little, fills himself with good. -Dhammapada 121-122

Verily, from meditation arises wisdom. Without meditation wisdom wanes. -Dhammapada 282

What is Zen?

A special tradition outside the scriptures;
No dependence upon words and letters;
Direct pointing at the mind;
Seeing into one's own nature,
and the attainment of Buddhahood.
-Bodhidharma

On Trust in the Heart

The Perfect Way is difficult only for those who pick and choose;
Do not like, do not dislike; all will then be clear.
Make a hairbreadth difference, and Heaven and Earth are set apart;
If you want the truth to stand clear before you, never be for or against.
The struggle between "for" and "against" is the mind's worst disease....
The more you talk about It, and the more you think about It, the further from It you go;
Stop talking, stop thinking, and there is nothing you will not understand....
There is no need to seek Truth; only stop having views...
The ultimate Truth about both Extremes is that they are One Emptiness...
...Whether we see it or fail to see it, it is manifest always and everywhere....
Take your stand on this, and the rest will follow of its own accord;
To trust in the Heart is the Not Two, the Not Two is to trust in the Heart.
I have spoken in vain; for what can words tell
Of things that have no yesterday, tomorrow or today?
-3rd Chinese Patriarch, Seng-Ts'an died 606 c.e.

Loving Kindness (Metta Sutta)

In safety and in bliss
May all creatures be of a blissful heart.
Whatever breathing beings there may be,
No matter whether they are frail or firm,
With none excepted, be they long or big
or middle-sized, or be they short or small
Or thick, as well as those seen or unseen,
Or weather they are far or near,
Existing or yet seeking to exist,
May all creatures be of a blissful heart.
Let no one work another one's undoing
Or even slight him at all anywhere;
And never let them wish each other ill
Through provocation or resentful thought.
And just as might a mother with her life
Protect the son that was her only child,
So let him then for every living thing
Maintain unbounded consciousness in being,
And let him too with love for all the world
Maintain unbounded consciousness in being
Above, below, and all round in between,
Untroubled, with no enemy or foe.
And while he stands or walks, or while he sits
Or while he lies down, free from drowsiness,

Let him resolve upon this mindfulness;
This is Divine Abiding here, they say.

Truth

Kapathika: "How should a wise man maintain truth?"

The Buddha: "A man has a faith. If he says 'This is my faith,' so far he maintains truth. But by that he cannot proceed to the absolute conclusion: 'This alone is Truth, and everything else is false.'"

-Majjhima Nikaya ii.176 Canki Sutta

Must I Now Preach?

(Majjhima-nikaya 26 by Gotama Buddha)

I have attained, thought I, to this Doctrine profound, recondite, hard to comprehend, serene, excellent, beyond dialectic, abstruse, and only to perceived by the learned. Must I now preach what I so hardly won? Men sunk in sin and lust would find it hard to plumb this Doctrine - up stream all the way, abstruse, profound, most subtle, hard to grasp. Dear lusts will blind them that they shall not see in densest mists of ignorance befogged.

As thus I pondered, my heart inclined to rest quiet and not to preach my Doctrine. But Brahma Sahampati's mind came to know what thoughts were passing within my mind, and he thought to himself: The world is undone, quite undone, inasmuch as the heart of the Truth-finder inclines to rest quiet and not to preach his Doctrine! Hereupon, as swiftly as a strong man might stretch out his arm or might draw back his outstretched arm, Brahma Sahampati vanished from the Brahma world and appeared before me. Towards me he came with his right shoulder bared, and with his clasped hands stretched out to me in reverence, saying: -May it please the Lord, may it please the Blessed One, to preach his doctrine! Beings there are whose vision is but little dimmed, who are perishing because they do not hear the Doctrine: - these will understand it!

Sikh's Thoughts

Another of the unknown top-ten religions of the worlds comes from India, but it is one of the most recently founded ones, in the 13th century, I believe, under a series of 7 prophets or so, the last and greatest being Guru Nanak, who finalized their writings, the Adri Granth. (sp?) It was formed when Muslim and Hindu communities were intermixing after an invasion and a sort of mixture resulted with a monotheistic god in charge of humanity's endless cycles of births. This group was often besieged by Muslim and Hindu authorities and, as a result, became very tightly organized on a militaristic pattern. They are non-genderist and aggressively egalitarian. They are famous for their five "K's," a knife, long hair, an iron ring decoration, a comb and one other thing. Their single Golden Temple, built on the site where their writing was first proclaimed, is a famous structure as shown in the picture on this page. Currently their homeland is cruelly divided between Pakistan and India and in a constant state of unrest.

Basic Sikh Philosophy and Beliefs

There is only One God. He is the same God for all people of all religions. The soul goes through cycles of births and deaths before it reaches the human form. The goal of our life is to lead an exemplary existence so that one may merge with God. Sikhs should remember God at all times and practice living a virtuous and truthful life while maintaining a balance between their spiritual obligations and temporal obligations.

The true path to achieving salvation and merging with God does not require renunciation of the world or celibacy, but living the life of a householder, earning a honest living and avoiding worldly temptations and sins. Sikhism condemns blind rituals such as fasting, visiting places of pilgrimage, superstitions, worship of the dead, idol worship etc.

Sikhism preaches that people of different races, religions, or sex are all equal in the eyes of God. It teaches the full equality of men and women. Women can participate in any religious function or perform any Sikh ceremony or lead the congregation in prayer.

The fight against social and political injustice has historically been an integral part of Sikhism. As a religious leader Guru Nanak did not turn a blind eye to political suppression or consider it outside the realm of religion, but undertook political protest through his writings, speaking out against the cruelty of rulers.

Women in Sikhism: 3 Quotes

"We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman, we are engaged and married to woman. We make friendship with woman and the lineage continued because of woman. When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman. Why should we talk ill of her, who gives birth to kings? The woman is born from woman; there is none without her. Only the One True Lord is without woman" (Guru Nanak Dev, Var Asa, pg. 473)

Marriage is an equal partnership of love and sharing between husband and wife. They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies." (Guru Amar Das, Pauri, pg. 788)

Women have an equal right to participate in the congregation. Come my sisters and dear comrades! Clasp me in thine embrace. Meeting together, let us tell the tales of our

Omnipotent Spouse (God.) In the True Lord are all merits, in us all demerits." (Guru Nanak Dev, Sri Rag, pg. 17)

What is Truth and Knowledge?

Do not live to know, know to live. Knowledge is not the religion, practice is the religion. Good conduct is the religion. In our conduct we should look at happiness and unhappiness with equanimity. We should believe in possibilities. Even opposing views can be parts of one truth. Accept co-existence with others. Look at the good side of others. The religion is for self-improvement not for improving others. If each individual improves, the society, nation and world will automatically improve.

Letter to the Ascetic

They who eat filth are no better than swine
They who roll in dust no better than elephants or donkeys.
They who live in the crematoriums no better than jackals: they who abide in the tombs no better than owls.
Thou wanderest in the woods? So do the deer.
Thou livest in silence? So do the trees.
Thou art a celibate? So are the eunuchs.
Thou wanderest barefooted? So do the monkeys.
And, how wilt thou, O wretch, O slave of woman, lust and wrath, attain God without Wisdom? (1)
Thou bidest in the forest? So do the demons.
Thou livest on milk? So do the children in the world.
Thou livest on air? So doth a serpent.
Thou livest on grass, vegetables and desirest no wealth? So doth the cow, the ox.
Thou fliest in the skies? So do the birds.
Thou sittest long in meditation? So do the cranes, the cats, the wolves.
Yea, they who knew, let not their attainment be advertised: O mind, let not such deceit enter thy heart even unconsciously. (2)
Thou livest in the earth? So do the white ants.
Thou fliest in the skies? So do the sparrows.
Thou eatest only fruit? So do the monkeys.
Thou wanderest unseen? So do the ghosts.
Thou floatest on the water? So do the black flies.
Thou eatest fire? So doth a chakori (type of bird.)
Thou worshippesst the sun? No better then the lotus.
Thou bowest to the moon? No better then the water lilies. (3)
If thou callest Him Narayan, or a water god, why not also the tortoise, the fish and the shark?
If Vishnu with a lotus in the navel, what about the lake which abounds in the lotus?
If Gopinath and Gopal, being the cowherd, what about other tenders of the cows?
The ignorant wretches mutter his customary names, but dwell not on the Mystery that is God Who saves and cherishes all. (4)

All Religions are Alike to Me

No difference there is between a temple and a mosque, nor between the Hindu worship or the Muslim prayer: for men are the same all over, though they appear not the same.

Gods and demons, yakshas and gandharvas, Hindus and Muslims, they all seem different, but the difference is only of the dress, custom and country.

The same eyes have they, the same ears, the same body, the same habits, a get-together of earth, air, water and fire.

Allah is no different from Abhenkha, the Puranas no different from the Koran. All men are made alike. They appear no different to me. (16)

Tibetan Thoughts

Many, including myself, praise the wisdom of the Tibetan people without knowing much about them. This people were once among the great feared raiders of central Asia, until the introduction of Buddhism in their country tamed their wildness and turned them to a contemplative people famed for their gentleness and collective wisdom. The secular and religious leader of this people, the Dalai Lama (now in his 14th incarnation) is currently seeking help for his land which is undergoing genocide and ethnic cleansing by the Chinese. A mixture of Buddhism and indigenous gods, a common practice throughout Asia, it has a deep reverence for the holy places of the country (much like the Navajo landscape), its beliefs and for its monks. It is notable that the Mongols share this Tibetan Buddhism and acknowledge the Dalai Lama as their spiritual leader. I would recommend also researching past incarnations of the Dalai Lama, such as the work of Sir Charles Bell on #13 Dalai Lama. One of famous aspects of a variant of Tibetan Buddhism is the Tantric approach of doing the opposite of what is acknowledged to be right, to learn a special type of wisdom.

With Impurity the Wise Make Themselves Pure

They who do not see the truth
Think of birth and death as distinct
This discrimination is the demon
Who produces the ocean of transmigration.
Freed from it the great ones are released
From the bonds of becoming...
The mystics, pure of mind,
Dally with lovely girls,
Infatuated with the poisonous flames of passion,
That they may be set free from desire...
He is not Buddha, he is not set free,
If he does not see the world
As originally pure, unoriginated,
Impersonal and immaculate...
Water in the ear is removed by more water,
A thorn in the skin by another thorn.
So wise men rid themselves of passion
By yet more passion.
As a washerman uses dirt
To wash clean a garment,
So, with impurity,
The wise man makes himself pure.

Of What Use is Meditation?

...Will one gain release, abiding in meditation?
...What's to be done by reliance on mantras?
What is the use of austerities?
What is the use of going on pilgrimage?...
Abandon such false attachments and renounce such illusion!...
Without meditating, without renouncing the world,
One may stay at home in the company of one's wife.
Can it be called perfect knowledge...
If one is not released while enjoying the pleasures of sense?
Mantras and tantras, meditation and concentration,
They are all a cause of self-deception.
...Eat, drink, indulge the senses,
Fill the mandala (with offerings) again and again,

By things like these you'll gain the world beyond.
 Tread upon the head of the foolish worldling and proceed!
 As in Nirvana, so is Samsara.
 Do not think there is any distinction.
 Do not sit at home, do not go to the forest,
 But recognize mind wherever you are.
 When one abides in complete and perfect enlightenment,
 Where is Samsara and where is Nirvana?
 Do not err in this matter of self and other.
 Everything is Buddha without exception...
 The fair tree of thought that knows no duality,
 Spreads through the triple world.
 It bears the flower and fruit of compassion,
 And its name is service of others.
 ...He who clings to the void
 And neglects Compassion,
 Does not reach the highest stage.
 But he who practices only Compassion,
 Does not gain release from toils of existence.
 He, however, who is strong in practice of both,
 Remains neither in Samsara nor in Nirvana.

Tolerance

If you are a tolerant person and another person is demanding something unreasonable, you may, without anger or ill-will, judge the situation and see if you need a counter measure. Then you take the countermeasure. In the case of Tibet, there is a lot of suffering under the name of liberation. But if I see the Chinese leaders as human beings - our neighbours, people with a long history and a high civilization- instead of having ill-will, I have respect. Doing this help reduce negative feelings and gives rise to patience and tolerance. This does not mean that I accept Chinese oppression. I do whatever I can to stand firm against oppression, but I do it without ill-will.... When your mind is dominated by anger, you become half-mad, and you won't be able to hit the target. -Dalai Lama #14

Change

From a Buddhist point of view, no error is impossible to be changed. There is always a possibility for change. The recognition of our human intelligence can help us have more confidence in facing difficult situations. This is very important. When you feel discouraged, "I'm too old," "I'm not intelligent enough," "I've done too many evil things in the past," or "I'm simply not good enough," a common Buddhist practice is to study the lives of past generations of Buddhist adepts who acted even worse than you did or were even more foolish. Doing this, you will see that they were able to attain liberation, and you will realize, "If they could do it, I can do it too." you see your situation in a relative context, not just in the extreme, such as "I am simply too old." -Dalai Lama

Teachers and Students

You are a teacher because you have students. In cultivating a relationship with a spiritual teacher it is important not to be too quick to consider that person to be your spiritual teacher, because it is a very powerful relationship. For however long it may take - two years, five years, ten years, or longer- you simply regard this other person as a spiritual friend, and, in the meantime, you observe closely that person's behavior, attitudes, and ways of teaching, until you are very confident of his or her integrity. Then there is no need of a license. But it is very important, from the beginning, to have a very firm, sound approach. -Dalai Lama

The Tibetan Path

By Rob Harrison, ODAL

For some of us a Druidic path means a continual search for truth. That means we tend to investigate things philosophical and religious. There are a number of groups claiming the absolute truth, with centuries of violence accredited to their history in their effort to validate their "truth." These types of groups I rule out, as they tend to be androcratic and dualistic. As well there is a trend to lay claim to ancient religions, some of which is dressed up with modern fluff. However, the primeval practices aren't to be dismissed out of hand. There are valid expressions of some of these aboriginal forms that can speak to us today. One of those forms is Tibetan Buddhism, and I want to share with you some of their truth, particularly some of their cosmology, (preparation for death) and how their culture is fitting in to our current world.(Medical school positives, purpose of Kalachakra initiation)

Tibetan Buddhism is complicated. Perhaps they would argue that point relative to the practice of emptiness. What could be simpler? However, their texts make a different case altogether. So an explanation of their Buddhism is not easy. I won't go into their organizational details. I will tell you that Tibet was the first culture to weave together the three strands of Buddhism. Those three are the Greater Vehicle, the Lesser Vehicle, and Tantra. As I understand the differences, the Greater Vehicle is focused on meditational and yogic practices. The Lesser vehicle focuses on ethical issues, and Tantra has to do with the realization of enlightenment in this lifetime. Among these three strands, Tibet has four main orders, and each branch has it's particular tantras, yogas, and meditations.

What I have done though is study some of the Dalai Lama's writing, some of the essentials of Tibetan Buddhism, and some writings relative to the Kalachakra initiation. The Dalai Lama is the head of Tibet, and since going into exile, has written numerous books. It boggles my mind how he has the attitude he does towards those who invaded his land and have tortured his people for forty-some-odd years. The essentials of Buddhism have to do with taking refuge in the teaching of Buddhism, the community of Buddhists, and Buddha. Buddha is not God. The essence of Buddhism is, "...a human being's direct, exact, and comprehensive experience of the final nature and structure of reality." On top of taking refuge there are the various "practices," the "exoteric path for the evolutionary development of the human individual...." The Kalachakra initiation has a fascinating mythological root in the nation of Shambhala. Buddha taught it to the King and his ninety six minor rulers who conferred it over time to the entire population, the purpose being to unite the people against invasion and avert annihilation. This is a point we will revisit later.

There are some intriguing aspects to the cosmology of Tibetan Buddhism. In the Kalachakra Initiation, there is a description of space particles and the origins of the universe. There is also another description of the universe in Buddhism, and neither are considered the navigation of the ship, as it were. It would be like the difference of describing a mission to Mars to politicians and then to engineers. Same mission, but two totally different pictures. So almost three thousand years ago, Buddha described the empty space between atoms: space particles. There is a similarity between the space particles that exist and the stream of life. When the wind of karma of collected individuals eventually affects a space particle then the "empty eon" ends and a new universe begins. The space particle endures as a condensed trace of the disassociated elemental particle of the previous universe. Since Berzin's tome is not intended to be a scientific treatise, it leaves the question of what the numerous universes are

in our section of space(that which is viewable by mechanical means), and does the affected space particle resume the former shape it contains the traces of, or does it evolve? The Tibetans were printing centuries before the Europeans clunked out the Gutenberg Bible, so they were advanced in their time. How they came by this information is unknown as well.

Another provocative aspect of Tibetan Buddhism is their view of the future. Since they don't adhere to the idea of God, they don't necessarily have an "end time" scenario. The Kalachakra tradition does contain a prophecy of future galactic war, and a description of their astrological predictive methods. This prophecy has given rise to the speculation that the kingdom of Shambhala is celestial, and that extra-terrestrials visited this planet and shared the science of calendar making and other technology. This happens to be the belief of the Zulu's of Southern Africa and the Aymara tribe of Bolivia. When we consider things like the Stonehenge and New Grange in Ireland, with the amazing accuracy with which they were built, as well as the advanced knowledge needed to quarry, move, and erect such stones, it suddenly doesn't seem so far fetched.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the Medical College is officially the Medical and Astrology College. Astrology plays an important part not only in the predictions of the future, but in the Tibet approach to medical healing. If you were to obtain an astrological chart from that school, in it would be the date you will die. It is an aspect of Tibetan astrology and world view that is so very different from the West. "The Buddha said that of all the different times to plow, autumn is the best, and of all the different kinds of fuel for fire that cow dung is the best, and of all the different kinds of awareness, the awareness of impermanence and death is the best."

No one knows when they will die. Even to Tibetans, their own astrology isn't carved in stone. Since the time of death is unknown, their view is to be prepared for it. To be prepared for the worst is better than being caught off guard, in Tibetan estimation. There are a variety of practices that living people can to prepare themselves for death. The basic one is to develop the mind that all in this reality is impermanent. That can be accomplished in meditation. There are other practices related to death and dying, and can be found in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, and The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying. At the core of this conviction is the belief in reincarnation and karma, which contrasts sharply with the Christian conviction of judgment, heaven, and hell.

In the close of our millennium, there is a substantial growth in the learning of other cultures. Many peoples are discovering their own roots, especially here in America. Being a drummer, I've witnessed a swell in musical acculturation; the mixing of the Afro-Cuban techniques with standard beats of rock and roll. The Latin beats of the America's, and the merging of Celtic styles with modern styles of rhythm. The "world" music section at retail music centers has grown tremendously, as has the rise in ethnic restaurants. People want to know their own roots, and they want to experience the cultures of the rest of the world. For the most part, that is a good thing. However, the conflicts in Kosovo and Tibet show us that not all cultures want to co-exist. Particularly political cultures.

For many years, the situation in Tibet was essentially unknown. That the Chinese had and still imprison and torture monks and nuns was unknown to me until 1997, and it already had a 38 year history by then. There are positives that have emerged from t

he exile, however. For starters, it has brought to light the flagrant abuses of human rights by the Chinese government. This is equally amplified by the Chinese Communist efforts to outlaw a meditation group know as Falon Gong in 1999. Despite their political double speak, human rights abuses continue unabated. A

second advantage for the rest of the world is that for the first time, the Tibetans have begun sharing their medical knowledge with the rest of the world. Their expertise lies in the areas of diagnosis and pharmaceuticals as treatment. Theirs is the only known culture to be able to detoxify mercury. They have had success in working with AIDS patients, and they were invited to Russia to see if they could help with the numerous diseases that have resulted from the nuclear meltdown that occurred in Cheyrbobl in the early 1980's. Again they have had success where all others have failed. The first satellite pharmacy for Tibetan medicine will open in Spring Green, Wisconsin, at the Mahayan Dharma Center, on Clyde Road off County Road C, about an hour west of Madison on Highway 14. I share that because I know the route well. It's a beautiful area. Anyway....

Another strong influence on culture is the Buddhist approach to conflict. They believe in peace. They didn't have much of an army when the Chinese invaded. They don't have one now. The Dalai Lama has brought to the Presidency of the United States the challenge to be the first to lay down arms. In other words, what if they had a war, and nobody came? Who will be first? As I mentioned earlier, the Kalachakra initiation is given with the view towards peace through protection. Not the protection of the technology of destruction, but through the protection of living harmoniously. Interestingly enough, the ancient texts of the Kalachakra Initiation include instructions on building armaments. The Dalai Lama gives the following illustration: Two meditators are sitting beside a rushing torrent. Along comes a man, who wants to cross the torrent. The meditators try to dissuade him, but he becomes unreasonable. One meditator decides nothing can be done, and resumes his practice. The other one gets up and "punched the man unconscious so he would not kill himself in the river."

Who was the violent one? "Thus, if all other means fail to end a drastic situation, then out of the wish to end others' sufferings, and without hatred or anger, we need not hesitate to use forceful means. In doing so, however, we need to be willing to accept the painful consequences of our actions, even if it is hellish suffering."

According to the Kalachakra, then the energy that went into the technology of war needs to go into the technology of peace, the building of an environment that is conducive to the growth of the people. This current world can annihilate itself many times over, yet still will not feed, clothe, or educate everyone despite the abundant resources to do so. The Kalachakra initiation is conferred to bring to an end this unwillingness to build peace. An army of meditators, to use a little irony.

We Druids can learn a lot from our Tibetan kin. There is much that is similar in the magical systems of the Tibetans and Druids, albeit I believe that the Tibetans are more advanced in their abilities to do it. Perhaps in time, had the Chinese not invaded them, the Tibetans would have come down from the "roof of the world," and shared their cultural riches with the world. For whatever reason, it has happened. The challenge now is to make the most of it.

-12 Fomhar, XXXVII YR, 5M6E
Circa August 12, 1999
Rob Harrison
Third Order

QUOTES FROM:

Thurman, Robert - Essential Tibetan Buddhism, pg 9, pg. 44.
Berzin, Alexander - Taking the Kalachakra Initiation, pg 33.
Dalai Lama - The Way To Freedom, pg. 48
Berzin, Alexander - The Kalachakra Initiation, pg. 53.

Part Five: The Far East

Chinese Thoughts

The reason why many people are totally confused by Chinese proverbs is that many sites have lists of Chinese sayings, not all of which are proverbs. They are a mix bag of proverbs, idioms, colloquialisms etc... Since I am not a scholar of linguistic and Chinese literature, I don't know what exactly qualifies as a proverb. Some Chinese idioms sound and look like proverbs, but they are not proverbs by definition. There are English proverbs that translate into Chinese idioms but not Chinese proverbs, and vice-versa. E.g. the Chinese saying "*The view of a frog at the bottom of a well is limited.*" is a proverb that is usually used as an idiom: "*view of a frog at the bottom of a well.*" That has a similar, but not identical, counterpart in English: *tunnel vision*.

Add legs to the snake after you have finished drawing it is foolish.

Age and time do not wait for people.

An ant may well destroy a whole dam.

Bad things never walk alone.

A book holds a house of gold.

Butcher the donkey after it finished his job on the mill.

A crane standing amidst a flock of chickens.

A camel standing amidst a flock of sheep.

Crows everywhere are equally black.

The death of the heart is the saddest thing that can happen to you.

A dish of carrot hastily cooked may still has soil uncleaned off the vegetable.

Dismantle the bridge shortly after crossing it.

Distant water won't help to put out a fire close at hand.

Distant water won't quench your immediate thirst.

Do not want others to know what you have done? Better not have done it anyways.

Donkey's lips do not fit onto a horse's mouth.

A dog won't forsake his master because of his poverty; a son never deserts his mother for her homely appearance.

Dream different dreams while on the same bed.

Even a hare will bite when it is cornered.

Fail to steal the chicken while it ate up your bait grain.

A fall into a ditch makes you wiser.

Fighting a wolf with a flexible stalk.

A flea on the top of a bald head.

Flowing water never goes bad; our door hubs never gather termites.

A frog in a well shaft seeing the sky.

Flies never visit an egg that has no crack.

A good fortune may forbode a bad luck, which may in turn disguise a good fortune.

A great man can bend and stretch.

Have a mouth as sharp as a dagger but a heart as soft as tofu.

How can you expect to find ivory in a dog's mouth?

How can you put out a fire set on a cart-load of firewood with only a cup of water?

If you do not study hard when young you'll end up bewailing your failures as you grow up.

If a son is uneducated, his dad is to blame.

If you have never done anything evil, you should not be worrying about devils to knock at your door.

An inch of time is an inch of gold but you can't buy that inch of time with an inch of gold.

It is easy to dodge a spear that comes in front of you but hard to keep harms away from an arrow shot from behind.

A Jade stone is useless before it is processed; a man is good-for-nothing until he is educated.

Kill a chicken before a monkey.

Kill one to warn a hundred.

Like ants eating a bone.

Looking for the ass while on its very back.

Lift a stone only to drop on your own feet.

The longer the night lasts, the more our dreams will be.

Mend the pen only after the sheep are all gone.

No wind, no waves.

Of all the strategems, to know when to quit is the best.

Once bitten by a snake, he/she is scared all his/her life at the mere sight of a rope.

Once on a tiger's back, it is hard to alight.

Once you pour the water out of the bucket it's hard to get it back in it.

One cannot refuse to eat just because there is a chance of being choked.

One monk shoulders water by himself; two can still share the labor among them. When it comes to three, they have to go thirsty.

Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire.

An overcrowded chicken farm produce fewer eggs.

Pick up a sesame seed but lose sight of a watermelon.

Play a harp before a cow.

Paper can't wrap up a fire.

Reshape one's foot to try to fit into a new shoe.

Shed no tears until seeing the coffin.

A smile will gain you ten more years of life.

A sly rabbit will have three openings to its den.

The soldier who retreats 50 paces jeers at the one who retreats 100 paces.

Some prefer carrot while others like cabbage.

Steal a bell with one's ears covered.

Three humble shoemakers brainstorming will make a great statesman.

There are always ears on the other side of the wall.

There is no silver here: three hundred taels.

Thousands of bones will become ashes before a general achieves his fame.

A tiger never returns to his prey he did not finish off.

Vicious as a tigress can be, she never eats her own cubs.

Waiting for a rabbit to hit upon a tree and be killed in order to catch it.

We are not so much concerned if you are slow as when you come to a halt.

A weasel comes to say "Happy New Year" to the chickens.

When you are poor, neighbors close by will not come; once you become rich, you'll find new relatives.

Without rice, even the cleverest housewife cannot cook.

You can't catch a cub without going into the tiger's den.

You think you lost your horse? Who knows, he may bring a whole herd back to you someday.

You won't help shoots grow by pulling them up higher.

You can't expect both ends of a sugar cane are as sweet.

Your fingers can't be of the same length.

Chinese Stories

Moderation in Harvest

If you do not allow nets with too fine a mesh to be used in large ponds, then there will be more fish and turtles than they can eat; if hatchets and axes are permitted in the forests on the hills only in the proper seasons, then there will be more timber than they can use. This is the first step along the kingly way. - Mencius I.A.3

Discretion

Ch'un-yu K'un said, "Is it prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other?"

"It is," said Mencius.

"When one's sister-in-law is drowning, does one stretch out a hand to help her?"

"Not to help a sister-in-law who is drowning is to be a brute. It is prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, a man and a woman do not touch each other, but in stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law one uses one's discretion." -Mencius IV.A.17

The Bell Stand

Woodworker Ch'ing carved a piece of wood and made a bell stand, and when it was finished, everyone who saw it marveled, for it seemed to be the work of gods or spirits. When the Marquis of Lu saw it, he asked, "What art is it you have?" Ch'ing replied, "I am only a craftsman - how would I have any art? There is one thing, however. When I am going to make a bell stand, I never let it wear out my energy. I always fast in order to still my mind. When I have fasted for three days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of titles or stipends. When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of praise or blame, of skill or clumsiness. And when I have fasted seven days, I am so still that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exist for me. My skill is concentrated and all outside distractions fade away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the Heavenly nature of the trees. If I find one of superlative form, and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up 'Heaven' with 'Heaven.' That's probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by the spirits." - Chuang Tzu 19

The Roots of Wisdom

This book is a 16th century, Ming collection, of Tzu-ch'eng Hung (apparently a retired high official), republished by Kodansha in 1985. The title, "Vegetable Root Discourses," is a reference to a quote of Chu Hsu Sung. "If one is able to chew the vegetable greens and roots well, he should be able to do all things."

#1 Mountain and Forest

He who talks about the pleasures of mountain and forest
May not yet have the true content of such places.
He who detest conversations about fame and profit
Has not yet forgotten such themes.

#8 Form and Spirit

Men understand how to read books that have words,
But do not understand how to read those that lack them.
They know how to pluck the lute that has strings,
But do not know how to pluck the one that has none.
Caught by the form
But untouched by the spirit:
How will they get at the substance of either music or literature?

#23 On Giving Advice

When attacking someone's faults
Do not be too severe.
You need to consider how well he will weather what he hears.
When teaching someone by showing him what is good,
Do not pass certain heights,
But hit upon what he should be able to follow.

#27 Balance in Vocation

When outfitted in the accouterments of a high official,
One should not forsake the savor of the mountain recluse.
When living among the forest and springs,
One should preserve in his heart the administration of the state.

#33 Sky Lessons

A single cloud leaves the peaks:
Going or staying - it is in no place involved.
A bright mirror moon hangs in the sky:
Peace or noise - with neither is it concerned.

#55 Where They Belong

When flowers are put in a tray,
They in the end lack the force of life.
When birds are put in a cage,
They quickly decline in their natural inclinations.
Better it is:
To have flowers and birds in mountains
Mix and Flock together, producing their patterns,
Flying about at their own free will,
Spontaneously carefree and in harmony with themselves.

#56 On Education

Reading books but not seeing the wisdom and intelligence within:
This is being a slave to paper and print.

Being of high rank and not loving the people:
This is a thief wearing ceremonial robes.
Lecturing on learned subjects but not giving proper respect to putting them into action:
This is Zen of the mouth alone.
Performing great achievements but giving no thought to the seeds of virtue for the future:
This is but flowers blooming and withering before the eyes.

#96 How to Advise

When a friend or relative has made a mistake,
It is best not to become violently angry,
Best not to neglect it completely.
If this affair is difficult to discuss,
Euphemistically take up another subject, then hid the one, but suggest the other.
If today the person does not understand,
Patiently wait another day and admonish him again.
Be like the spring winds that thaw what is frozen;
Be like soft ch'i that melts away the ice.
Only with this will you be a model to your family.

#102 Simply Natural

When literature is compose at its best,
There is nothing particularly extraordinary about it:
It is simple appropriate.
When human character is developed at its best,
There is nothing particularly wonderful about it:
It is simply natural.

#130 Be Yourself

Do not inhibit your own beliefs because of public doubt.
Do not just entrust yourself to your own ideas, and discard the words of others.
Do not add small benefits to yourself while wearing down your entire person.
Do not appropriate public opinion to accommodate your own emotions.

#169 Why Be Upset?

When I have rank, and people respect it, they are respecting my tall cap and great sash.
When I am destitute, and people despise me, they are despising my cotton garb and straw sandals.
If this is so, at bottom they do not respect me,
So why should I be happy?
At bottom they do not despise me,
So why should I be upset?

#193 Where to Look

On high mountain peaks there are no trees, but in river valleys and winding places
Grasses and trees grow dense.
Where water is rapid and swirls about, there are no fish, but in deep pools and quiet places
Fishes and turtles gather together.
Thus is the gentleman extremely cautious
Of lofty actions
Of quick emotions.

Taoist Thoughts

from Lao Tzu's "Hua Hu Ching"

#38 Truth

Why scurry about looking for the truth?
Can you be still and see it in the mountain? the pine tree?
yourself?
Don't imagine that you'll discover it by accumulating more
knowledge.
Knowledge creates doubt, and doubt makes you ravenous for
more knowledge.
You can't get full eating this way.
The wise person dines on something more subtle:
He eats the understanding that the named was born from the
unnamed, that all being flows from non-being, that the
describable world emanates from an indescribable source.
He finds this subtle truth inside his own self, and becomes
completely content.
So who can be still and watch the chess game of the world?
The foolish are always making impulsive moves, but the wise
know that victory and defeat are decided by something more
subtle.
They see that something perfect exists before any move is made.

#43 Balance

In ancient times, people lived holistic lives. They didn't
overemphasize the intellect, but integrated mind, body and spirit
in all things.
... If you want to stop being confused, then emulated these
ancient folk: join your body, mind and spirit in all you do.
Choose food, clothing and shelter that accords with nature.
Rely on your own body for transportation.
Allow your work and your recreation to be one and the same.
Do exercise that develops your whole being and not just your
body.
...Serve others and cultivate yourself simultaneously.
Understanding that true growth comes from meeting and solving
the problems of life in a way that is harmonizing to yourself and
to others.
If you can follow these simple old ways, you will be continually
renewed.

#48 Knowledge (Tao Te Ching)

In pursuit of knowledge,
every day something is added.
In the practice of the Tao,
every day something is dropped.
Less and less do you need to force things,
until finally you arrive at non-action.
When nothing is done,
nothing is left undone.
True mastery can be gained
by letting things go their own way.
It can't be gained by interfering.

Mongolian Proverbs

When things go well, the priests proclaim: 'It is because of the
priests that things go well!!!' When things go badly, they advise:
'It is due to karma.'

"Maggots breed where there are flies — just like that, lies breed
where there are priests."

The mountain falcon flies high; The wiseman's son speaks in
proverbs.

Without council there is no wisdom; without praise no heroes.

Wealth - until the first snowstorm; hero - until the first bullet.

A horse released can be caught, a word released never.

The path to Buddhahood has five stages;

Vows, meditation, knowledge, understanding of one's nature, and
release.

When profit comes, it comes with a delay.

In the country of the blind, close your eyes.

In the land of the lame, walk pigeon-toed.

If you become a camel, they'll put a load on your back.

Ride on the back of a calf - you'll never reach the nomad camp.

Water flows from its source to the sea; evil acts return to the
doer.

Vodka destroys everything but its container.

Man knows the wolf, but the wolf doesn't know the man.

At the moment of death, seek no aid except in religion.

Plant only one seed of virtue; much fruit will be harvested.

A thief hates the moonlight; an evil man hates a just one.

Stealing will not make you rich; lying will not make you a
Buddha.

Korean Proverbs

Reversing Black and white.
The more you beat a drum, the more sound it makes.
It is a rice cake in a picture.
Rice eaten in haste chokes you.
First give an illness, then a medicine.
A thief of needles will become a thief of oxen, later.
The Thief who learned his craft late in life, does not care about the break of day.
The ground hardens after the rain.
Even an old straw shoe has its own mate.
To catch a tiger, you have to go into a tiger's den.
The upper waters must be clear for the lower waters to be clear.
If you dig a well, dig only one.
A thousand yang belonging to another person is not worth one poon of one's own money.
Tap even a stone bridge before crossing it.
One mudfish clouds the whole pond.
Do no mend the barn after the cow is lost.
After three years the school dog can read.
After chasing the chicken, the dog watches the roof.
If you shake any person, some dust will fall off.
The sunlight may even enter a rat hole.
Even a monkey can fall from a tree.
The empty cart makes more noise.
Three bushels of beads can make no jewels unless strung together.
The ax falls on a straight tree first.
Dust gathers to make a mountain.
Though there is love downwards, there may be no love upwards.
Though the heavens fall, there will be a hole to escape through.
A big debt can be repayed with small words
Birds can hear the talk in the daytime, rats can hear the talk in the nighttime.
An empty cart rattles loudly.
Even if you know the way, ask one more time.
One can build a mountain by collecting specks of dust.
If you talk nicely to other people, they will talk nice to you.
Rice & wheat bow their head as they ripen.

Korean Stories

The land where you live is your native country

[Sarakamyon kohyang]

"Universalism has always been a part of the oriental way of thinking. Man is not bound by geographical limitations for he is a son of Heaven and Earth. He is free to go anywhere he pleases. He moves to a strange world to begin a new settlement. As he settles down he merges with the natives of the area. He comes to like the land and becomes accustomed to a new way of life. It is not the land which makes man a native, but the man who must adapt himself to the natives. Man is free to be wherever he wants but he is not free to himself unless he adjusts to the land into which he has moved. Thus it is not by the right of birth but by the right of his ability to adjust that makes the strange land his native country. Those who are imigrants to foreign lands experience this truth. It becomes their native country as they begin to adjust themselves to the new way of life."

The Teacher's Poison

Once upon a time, there was a small private tutorial school, called *so-dang*, where several children were learning Chinese classics from an old teacher. The teacher was such a strict disciplinarian that all his pupils were afraid of him whenever they misbehaved.

The teacher used to enjoy snacking, while he was watching children studying. He would take out a small basket from his closet in the study hall and snack on something with great relish, frequently issuing a warning to the children that it was only for adult consumption and would be fatally poisonous to children. The children were curious but never had a chance to find out what it was that the teacher was eating.

Then, one day, the teacher had some business and went to town, leaving behind a stern reminder that children should study hard during his brief absence. Out of irresistible curiosity, a few older pupils decided to investigate the teacher's closet to find out his secret snack food which was supposed to be poisonous to them. Inside the bamboo basket they found dried persimmons neatly stacked and layered with dried persimmon peels. They had thought that the teacher had been eating some sort of medicinal food intended for adults only.

Having uncovered the secret and found such a delicacy, the children forgot all about whom the food belonged to and were overcome by mouth-watering appetite. At first, only a few older and more daring younger ones gobbled up a few persimmons, but soon every one got into the act. And in no time the entire basket was emptied except for some peels.

When the feast was over, the children came to their senses and realized what they had done. They did what was unthinkable! They were worried: "What should we say to the teacher when he returns?" They racked their brains to come up with some excuses which the tutor might consider and accept. Then they might get less severe punishment. One of the boys, who had ordinarily been quiet, suggested an idea. The boy picked up the teacher's treasured inkstone from his desk and dropped it on the hard wooden floor, breaking it into halves and spattering black ink all over the teacher's cushioned seat. He then toppled the teacher's desk, and told everybody to lie down on all over the floor with blankets covered over their bodies.

Late in that afternoon the teacher returned from the trip. No sooner he opened the door to the study hall with a loud "Eh

hemm!" than he found the hall was in big mess--spattered ink, upsidedown desk, and all the children lying under the coverings, looking all dazed. Astounded at the scene, the teacher bellowed: "What is going on? What has happened?" The master-minded boy got up slowly, his face showing mock pain, and said: "Master, in the midst of rough play during a brief recess, we accidentally toppled your desk, breaking your cherished inkstone. We did not know what to do. Finally, everyone of us decided to die to pay for our unforgivable mischief. So, we took the basket out and ate all that was in it. Now, we are waiting for the poison to take effect. We are very, very sorry, Master." The teacher made a long and deep breath and went outside without saying a word. And outside, he said to himself with a smile: "Hmmm... they are growing!"

The Tiger in the Trap

Once upon a time, there was a small hamlet in the deep mountains. The people of this hamlet were always afraid of tigers that roamed in the surrounding mountains. One day, their fear and anxiety brought all the villagers together to discuss their problem and find some ways of living peacefully without this constant fear. After much discussion, they came to an agreement: they decided to dig pits here and there to trap tigers. Every able-bodied villager came out to dig deep pits around the village and, particularly, along both sides of the mountain pass leading to the village.

One day, a traveller was passing through the area and heard strange groaning sounds nearby. He approached where the sounds came from and found a large tiger trapped in a pitfall and trying to jump out. Seeing the traveller, the tiger begged him for help: "Please, help me out of this trap, and I will never forget your kindness." Out of mercy, the traveller dragged a felled tree and lowered it into the pitfall. And the tiger climbed out.

As soon as the tiger was out of the trap, he said to the traveller: "I am grateful for your help, but because humans made the trap to catch me, for that I will have to kill you." The traveller was utterly speechless and became frightened, too. Trying to be calm and mustering his courage, however, he said: "Wait a minute, Mr. Tiger. It is patently unfair and outrageous to kill me. Fairness demands that we should have a few impartial parties to judge who is right." The tiger agreed and both of them went to an ox.

After listening to their story, the ox said: "Well, it is the fault of humans. We, oxen, too, have a grudge against humans. They drive us hard for their own benefit and then they butcher us mercilessly. This is all very unfair!"

Next, they went to a pine tree. The pine tree listened to their story and said: "Humans are wrong. They cut us down for lumber and for their firewood. What have we done to them to deserve that? They just have no heart!"

Listening to the second opinion, the tiger was elated and ready to attack the traveller, when a hare was hopping toward them. "Phew, just in time, Mr. Hare. Please, judge our case," and the traveller told the hare what had happened. The hare, then, said: "Fine, but before I make any judgment, I must see the original scene." So, the traveller, the tiger and the hare all went to the pitfall where the tiger had been trapped. The hare said to the tiger: "I must see exactly how you were before this traveller rescued you. Where exactly were you?" Eager to show where he was, the tiger jumped right into the pitfall. The hare asked: "Was this felled tree in the pitfall when you fell into it, Mr. Tiger?" "No, it was not." So, the hare and the traveller took the tree out of the pitfall. The hare, then, said to the traveller: "Mr. Traveller, now, be on your way." And the hare, too, hopped away.

The Miraculous Awakening of Zen

You observe many thoughts arising in your mind, but you mustn't search for which of these thoughts is the real you. Searching is avoidance. To seek is to suffer. You need to understand this carefully.

By Venerable Hyunoong Sunim with translator Ja Gwang.

Excerpted from a Saturday morning Hartford Street Zen Center (San Francisco) Dharma talk

Hyunoong Sunim is a Korean Zen teacher, a Taoist master and a herbalist. He established the Sixth Patriarch Zen Center in Berkeley and is the resident teacher.

The word Zen means the mind of awakening or miraculous awareness. It has no form. It is also not silent. It doesn't stay fixed in any one place. It is something one has to experience. If you bring any understanding with you into this practice you will obstruct the path... Zen is the Buddha mind. And Buddha mind is in each individual person. It's here in this moment as we sit. It's absolutely not separate from us. That's all we need to trust.

The name is Zen, but according to the person practicing this, some think Zen is sitting quietly while others say Zen is having a clear mind. Some say Zen is forgetting all the complexities of life, while others say Zen is guarding nothingness... There are many kinds of Zen Buddhists in the world but if we forget the correct path, then even if we do Zen practice all we are doing is wasting time.

When you first begin Zen practice you observe many thoughts arising in your mind, but you mustn't search for which of these thoughts is the real you. Searching is avoidance. To seek is to suffer. You need to understand this carefully. This is our fundamental delusion. Someone doing Soto Zen just has silence--but that is not practice--when you reenter reality that silence will shatter. Our Zen nature doesn't abide in any one place, it functions from moment to moment, so we mustn't hold onto anything. When we stay in one place this creates a view and we make distinctions--Soto Zen/Rinzai Zen, awakening/delusion. If you say you have awakening you are actually very far from awakening.

There is a Zen koan that says, "Knowing obstructs Zen, not knowing obstructs Zen." Knowing is delusion because knowing can create tension and obstruct our practice. So we decide "Ok I don't know," but that is also relying on delusion. We need to recognize the mind that knows, and let go of that. And because "not knowing" also obstructs our Zen, we need to be aware of this too. Our Buddha nature has nothing to do with knowing or not knowing—it is spontaneous awareness and cannot be touched intellectually. Right here is where our thoughts are completely cut off.

Knowing, not knowing, nothing can cling to this awareness. The sentient being mind will attach itself anywhere--over here over there, Hell or Heaven, awakening/delusion. It creates duality everywhere.

We have this miraculous awareness that cannot be expressed in words; and we have to simply experience it. Then automatically the things that we cling to are released. At that point we are no longer attached-- not because we are trying to be unattached but because our nature no longer clings to anything. At this point religion disappears. There isn't anything we are carrying around with us. This is something that cannot be understood. It simply requires faith. It can only be experienced through awareness. Through this, wisdom and power grow. If you constantly practice, at one point that empty mind within you is suddenly revealed. Then there is only realization, and you can enter a correct path. Only with such realization can true practice begin.

If one practices Soto Zen correctly, one's practice becomes the same as koan practice, and the conflicts within you will disappear. If you meet Dogen you come to the world of Rinzai, and if you meet Rinzai you meet the world of Dogen. You will see the Zen of the ancient masters and American Zen too. We can all become one Dharma family and benefit each other. Through this, societies become purified. Otherwise we will cling to a small mind and this is suffering...

In our Rinzai Zen, even though we are sitting, we don't pay a lot of attention to our posture. We totally focus on mind and the koan, and in doing that both body and mind become quiet. You utilize the sitting posture because of its convenience. We can be active in reality and when we come to sit we let go of body and mind. We only focus on the koan. As our active energy settles down into our lower body we may sometimes feel a little itchy spot and spontaneously our hand goes to scratch it. But your practice continues.

Let's open our narrow minds. We mustn't compete with others. It would be nice if we could come together into one Dharma. It doesn't matter whether one is practicing Soto or Rinzai Zen, whether Christian or whatever. Someone following the path of awakening can understand it as soon as they see it. Let's reveal the ancient path of Zen ... and that would be one goal if Buddhism can be reborn in the United States, if someone awakens to correct traditional Zen here. I believe great Zen power can arise in America.

Japanese Proverbs

Yeah! More quotes. Can't get enough of them. These were taken from Japanese Proverbs and Sayings by Daniel Crump Buchannan, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman & London, 1965/1988. 0-8061-1082-1. It is mostly a pre-WW2 collection, so some of them newer ones won't be here.

To him who in the love of Nature holds the key.

Communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language.

A country may go to ruin but its mountains and streams remain.

A jewel will not sparkle unless polished.

A snake though placed in a bamboo tube, cannot become perfectly straight.

Don't use a ladle for an ear-pick.

Don't give an order after listening to only one side.

The person who swims well often drowns.

A doctor may be careless about his own health.

A mummy hunter becomes a mummy.

Fall seven times, get up eight times.

Pull if it does not work when you push.

The protruding nail is hammered down.

One can study calligraphy at eighty.

The tadpole is the frog's child.

A padded jacket is a nice present, even in summer.

A pig used to dirt turns its nose up at rice.

Too much courtesy is a discourtesy.

The pebble in the brook secretly think itself a precious stone.

The smallest good deed is better than the greatest good intention.

Better no medicine than a bad doctor.

If money is not your servant, it will be your master.

Forgiving the unrepentant is like drawing pictures on water.

Time spent laughing is time spent with the gods.

Darkness reigns at the foot of the lighthouse.

It is the beggar's pride that he is not a thief.

To wait for luck is the same as waiting for death.

We learn little from victory, much from defeat.

The clog and the Buddha are both from the same piece of wood.

Unless you enter the tiger's den you cannot take the cubs.

When you're thirsty it's too late to think about digging a well.

A bad spouse is a hundred years of bad harvest.

When kept secret, people tend to imagine it is a very good thing.

You can't do anything with it if you don't have it.

When one dog barks for nothing, all other dogs bark in earnest.

Japanese Lessons

Even a ten-thousand foot embankment may give way because of an ant hole.

Silent worms dig holes in the walls.

Even a Buddha's face does not wear a benign look after the third slap.

Every medicine when exceeded becomes poison.

Money grows on the tree of persistence.

One who smiles rather than rages is always the stronger.

A great retired person lives hid in the market.

Metal is tested by fire, men by wine.

If you despise yourself others will afterwards despise you.

Rather than 10000 lanterns from a rich man is one lantern from a poor man.

Where there is no antagonist, there is no quarrel.

The flow of water and the future of human beings is uncertain.

If you would bend the tree, do so when it is young.

Three persons together produce the wisdom of the Buddha.

If the fountain head is clear, the stream will be clear.

Don't draw legs on a snake.

A lean horse fears not the whip.

A skilled artisan is not fussy about the materials.

When you have your own children, you will understand your obligation to your parents.

A good Go player is also a good player of Shogi.

Even a journey of a thousand kilometers starts with one step.

Rather than shave your head, shave your heart.

About sea matters, ask a fisherman.

Next door to the temple live demons.

The Buddha altar of one's own house is the most esteemed.

If victorious, a government army; if defeated, traitors.

The lantern-bearer should go ahead.

Poets without traveling, know places of note.

It is better to be ignorant than to be mistaken.

Silence is part of consent.

Speech is silver, silence is gold.

The flower does not talk.

If you beat even new floor mats, dirt will come out.

Even a monkey will fall from a tree.

Of course, I am collecting these materials as I live in Japan, so it is natural that I include a special section on Japan, which was one of the profound influences on the Druids in the 60s and 70s. Materials are plentiful from this country which has a long tradition of permitting the blending of religions together. One particular problem in bringing selections from Japan is that Shinto, one of the top-ten religions of the world, has no official scripture, a patch and uncertain mythology and is very disorganized. There are a couple of oracles, and most of the 19th/20th century state Shinto is rather unpleasantly nationalistic. Enjoy and share.

Basho's Poems

From **The Essential Basho**, Translated by Sam Hamill. Published by Shambala in Boston, 1999.

Summer grasses:
all that remains of great soldiers'
imperial dreams

Eaten alive by
lice and fleas -- now the horse
beside my pillow pees

Along the roadside, blossoming wild roses
in my horse's mouth

Even that old horse
is something to see this
snow-covered morning

On the white poppy,
a butterfly's torn wing
is a keepsake

The bee emerging
from deep within the peony
departs reluctantly

Crossing long fields,
frozen in its saddle,
my shadow creeps by

A mountain pheasant cry
fills me with fond longing for
father and mother

Slender, so slender
its stalk bends under dew --
little yellow flower

New Year's first snow -- ah --
just barely enough to tilt
the daffodil

In this warm spring rain,
tiny leaves are sprouting
from the eggplant seed

For those who proclaim
they've grown weary of children,
there are no flowers

Nothing in the cry
of cicadas suggests they
are about to die

Ikkyu's Poems

From **Wild Ways: Zen Poems of Ikkyu**, translated by John
Stevens. Published by Shambala in Boston, 1995.

A Man's Root, from *Wild Ways*, page 53
Eight inches strong, it is my favourite thing;
If I'm alone at night, I embrace it fully –
A beautiful woman hasn't touched it for ages.
Within my *fundoshi* there is an entire universe!

I Hate Incense

A master's handiwork cannot be measured
But still priests wag their tongues explaining the "Way" and
babbling about "Zen."
This old monk has never cared for false piety
And my nose wrinkles at the dark smell of incense before the
Buddha.

A Fisherman

Studying texts and stiff meditation can make you lose your
Original Mind.
A solitary tune by a fisherman, though, can be an invaluable
treasure.
Dusk rain on the river, the moon peeking in and out of the clouds;
Elegant beyond words, he chants his songs night after night.

My Hovel

The world before my eyes is wan and wasted, just like me.
The earth is decrepit, the sky stormy, all the grass withered.
No spring breeze even at this late date,
Just winter clouds swallowing up my tiny reed hut.

A Meal of Fresh Octopus

Lots of arms, just like Kannon the Goddess;
Sacrificed for me, garnished with citron, I revere it so!
The taste of the sea, just divine!
Sorry, Buddha, this is another precept I just cannot keep.

A Happy Thought

Exhausted with gay pleasures, I embrace my wife.
The narrow path of asceticism is not for me:
My mind runs in the opposite direction.
It is easy to be glib about Zen -- I'll just keep my mouth shut
And rely on love play all the day long.

Bathing Time

It is nice to get a glimpse of a lady bathing –
You scrubbed your flower face and cleansed your lovely body
While this old monk sat in the hot water,
Feeling more blessed than even the emperor of China!

Thoughts of Ryokan

Mini Poems

even before trees rocks I was nothing
when I'm dead nowhere I'll be nothing

this ink painting of wind blowing through pines
who hears it?

sin like a madman until you can't do anything else
no room for any more

fuck flattery success money
all I do is lie back and suck my thumb

one long pure beautiful road of pain
and the beauty of death and no pain

mirror facing mirror
nowhere else

passion's red thread is infinite
like the earth always under me

my monk friend has a wierd endearing habit
he weaves sandals and leaves them secretly by the roadside

no words sitting alone night in my hut eyes closed hands open
wisps of an unknown face

we're lost where the mind can't find us
utterly lost

To My Teacher

An old grave hidden away at the foot of a deserted hill,
Overrun with rank weeds growing unchecked year after year;
There is no one left to tend the tomb,
And only an occasional woodcutter passes by.
Once I was his pupil, a youth with shaggy hair,
Learning deeply from him by the Narrow River.
One morning I set off on my solitary journey
And the years passed between us in silence.
Now I have returned to find him at rest here;
How can I honor his departed spirit?
I pour a dipper of pure water over his tombstone
And offer a silent prayer.
The sun suddenly disappears behind the hill
And I'm enveloped by the roar of the wind in the pines.
I try to pull myself away but cannot;
A flood of tears soaks my sleeves.

In my youth I put aside my studies
And I aspired to be a saint.
Living austerely as a mendicant monk,
I wandered here and there for many springs.
Finally I returned home to settle under a craggy peak.
I live peacefully in a grass hut,
Listening to the birds for music.
Clouds are my best neighbors.
Below a pure spring where I refresh body and mind;
Above, towering pines and oaks that provide shade and
brushwood.
Free, so free, day after day –
I never want to leave!

Yes, I'm truly a dunce
Living among trees and plants.
Please don't question me about illusion and enlightenment –
This old fellow just likes to smile to himself.
I wade across streams with bony legs,
And carry a bag about in fine spring weather.
That's my life,
And the world owes me nothing.

Smaller Poems

When all thoughts
Are exhausted
I slip into the woods
And gather
A pile of shepherd's purse.

Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too, quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

At dusk
I often climb
To the peak of Kugami.
Deer bellow,
Their voices
Soaked up by
Piles of maple leaves
Lying undisturbed at
The foot of the mountain.

Blending with the wind,
Snow falls;
Blending with the snow,
The wind blows.
By the hearth
I stretch out my legs,
Idling my time away
Confined in this hut.
Counting the days,
I find that February, too,
Has come and gone
Like a dream.

No luck today on my mendicant rounds;
From village to village I dragged myself.
At sunset I find myself with miles of mountains between me and
my hut.
The wind tears at my frail body,
And my little bowl looks so forlorn –
Yes this is my chosen path that guides me
Through disappointment and pain, cold and hunger.

My Cracked Wooden Bowl

This treasure was discovered in a bamboo thicket –
I washed the bowl in a spring and then mended it.
After morning meditation, I take my gruel in it;
At night, it serves me soup or rice.
Cracked, worn, weather-beaten, and misshapen

But still of noble stock!

Midsummer –
I walk about with my staff.
Old farmers spot me
And call me over for a drink.
We sit in the fields
using leaves for plates.
Pleasantly drunk and so happy
I drift off peacefully
Sprawled out on a paddy bank.

How can I possibly sleep
This moonlit evening?
Come, my friends,
Let's sing and dance
All night long.

Stretched out,
Tipsy,
Under the vast sky:
Splendid dreams
Beneath the cherry blossoms.

Wild roses,
Plucked from fields
Full of croaking frogs:
Float them in your wine
And enjoy every minute!

When spring arrives
From every tree tip
Flowers will bloom,
But those children
Who fell with last autumn's leaves
Will never return.

I watch people in the world
Throw away their lives lusting after things,
Never able to satisfy their desires,
Falling into deeper despair
And torturing themselves.
Even if they get what they want
How long will they be able to enjoy it?
For one heavenly pleasure
They suffer ten torments of hell,
Binding themselves more firmly to the grindstone.
Such people are like monkeys
Frantically grasping for the moon in the water
And then falling into a whirlpool.
How endlessly those caught up in the floating world suffer.
Despite myself, I fret over them all night
And cannot staunch my flow of tears.

The wind has settled, the blossoms have fallen;
Birds sing, the mountains grow dark –
This is the wondrous power of Buddhism.

In a dilapidated three-room hut
I've grown old and tired;
This winter cold is the
Worst I've ever suffered through.
I sip thin gruel, waiting for the
Freezing night to pass.
Can I last until spring finally arrives?
Unable to beg for rice,
How will I survive the chill?
Even meditation helps no longer;
Nothing left to do but compose poems
In memory of deceased friends.

My legacy –
What will it be?
Flowers in spring,
The cuckoo in summer,
And the crimson maples
Of autumn...

Rinzai's Quote

Rinzai was fond of asking: "What, at this moment, is lacking?"

The Book of Haiku

(Previously in the RDNA's "Dead Lake Scrolls")

Placing the kitten
To weigh her on the balance
She went on playing.
-Issa

Nine times arising
To see the moon whose solemn pace
marks only midnight yet
-Basho

O sprint time twilight...
Precious moment worth to me
a thousand pieces
-Sotuba

O summer twilight
bug-depreciated to a
mere five hundred.
-Kikaku

Snow Whispering down
all day long, earth has vanished
leaving only sky
-Joso

Carven Gods long gone
dead leaves alone forgotten
on the temple porch.
-Basho

Vanishing springtime
wistful the lonely widow
pouts at her mirror.
-Seiki

A bright autumn moon...
in the shadow of each grass
an insect chirping.
-Busoh

Black cloud bank broken
scatters in the night... now see
moonlighted mountains!
-Basho

Two ancient pine trees
a pair of gnarled and sturdy limbs
with 10 green fingers.
-Ryota

Yellow butterfly...
fluttering, fluttering on
over the ocean.
-Shiki

Crossing it alone
in cold moonlight, the brittle bridge
echoes my footsteps
-Taigi

Every single step
is quivering now with light
O how bitter cold!
-Taigi

One fallen flower
returning to the branch? oh no!
a white butterfly.
-Meritake

Grey moor, unmarred
by any branch... a single branch
a bird... November
-Anonymous

The soft summer moon...
who is it moves in white there...
on the other bank?
-Chora

Here is the dark tree
denuded now of leafage...
but a million stars!
-Shiki

He who climbs this hill
of flowers finds here a shrine
to the kind goddess.
-Basho

Some poor villages
lack fresh fish or flowers,
all can share this moon.
-Saikaku

Under a spring mist
ice & water forgetting
their old difference....
-Teitaku

Colder far than snow...
winter moonlight echoing on
my whitened hair.
-Joso

After moon viewing
my companionable shadow
walked along with me.
-Jodo

Coolness on the bridge...
Moon, you and I alone
unresigned to sleep
-Kikusa-ni

Winter moonlight casts
cold tree-shadows long and still
my warm one moving.
-Shiki

Weeping...Willows
kneel here by the waterside
mingling long green hair.
-Kyorai

In stony moonlight
hills and fields on every side
white and bald as eggs
-Yansetsu

Penetrating hot
September sun on my skin
feel the cooling breeze.
-Basho

Feeble feeble sun
it can scarcely stretch across
winter-wasted fields
-Bokuson

Ah leafless willow
bending over the dry pool
of stranded boulders.
-Busoh

The Path and Pith

Suppose a man goes to the forest to get some of the pith that grows in the center of a tree and returns with a burden of branches and leaves, thinking that he has secured what he went after; would he not be foolish?

A person seeks a path that will lead him away from misery; and yet, he follows that path a little way, notices some little advance, and immediately becomes proud and conceited. He is like the man who sought pith and comes back satisfied with a burden of branches and leaves.

Another man goes into the forest seeking pith and comes back with a load of branches. He is like the person on the path who becomes satisfied with the progress he has made by a little effort, and relaxes his effort and becomes proud and conceited.

Another man comes back carrying a load of bark instead of the pith he was looking for. He is like the person who finds that his mind is becoming calmer and his thought clearer, and then relaxes his effort and becomes proud and conceited.

Then another man bring back a load of woody fiber of the tree instead of the pith. Like him is one who has gained a measure of intuitive insight, and then relaxes his effort. All of

these seekers, who become easily satisfied after insufficient effort and become proud and overbearing, relax their efforts and easily fall into idleness. All these people will inevitably face suffering again.

-Majjhima Nikaya i.192-195. (Buddhism)

Parable of the Raft

"O monks, a man is on a journey. He comes to a vast stretch of water. On this side the shore is dangerous, but on the other it is safe and without danger. No boat goes to the other shore which is safe and without danger, nor is there any bridge for crossing over. Then that man gathers grass, wood, branches, and leaves and makes a raft, and with the help of that raft crosses over safely to the other side, exerting himself with his hands and feet. Having safely crossed over and gotten to the other side, he thinks, 'This raft was of great help to me. With its aid I have crossed safely over to this side, exerting myself with my hands and feet. It would be good if I carry this raft on my head or on my back whenever I go.'

"What do you think, O monks, if he acted in this way would that man be acting properly with regard to the raft?"

"No, sir."

"In which way, then, would he be acting properly with regard to the raft? Having crossed and gone over to the other side, suppose that man should think, 'It would be good if I beached this raft on the shore, or moored it and left it afloat, and then went on my way wherever it may be.' Acting in this way would that man act properly with regard to the raft.

"In the same manner, O monks, I have taught a doctrine similar to a raft- it is for crossing over, and not for carrying. You who understand that the teaching is similar to a raft, should give up attachment to even the good Dharma; how much more then should you give up evil things."

-Majjhima Nikaya i.134-135

About Death

It comes from the origin,
It returns to the original land
In the Plain of High Heaven-
That spirit is one and the same,
Not two.
The Way of death
Is found in one's own mind
And no other;
Inquire of it in your own heart,
In your own mind.
Leave to the kami
The path ahead;
The road of the returning soul
Is not dark
To the land of the Yomi,
To the world beyond.
In all things
Maintaining godly uprightness:
Such a one at last will see
All dark clouds cleared away.
All humanity born into
The land of sun-origin, this
Land of Japan,
Come from the kami,
And to the kami will return.
-Naokata Nakanishi, Shinto Priest, 19th Cent.

Sun and Moon

My Lord, boundless as
The sun and moon
Lighting heaven and earth;
How then can I have concerns
About what is to be?
-Man'yoshu poem 20, 8th Cent (pre-Buddhist)

Two Shinto Quotes

If the poorest of mankind come here once for worship, I will surely grant their heart's desire. -Oracle of Itsukushima, Shinto, 13th Cent.

All human bodies are things lent by God. With what thought are you using them? -Tenrikyo, Ofudesaki 3.41, New Religion 19th Cent.

Mountain Tasting:

Weeds and Rain

This collection is from an itinerant beggar-monk, Santohka, who roamed 24,000 miles around Japan from WW1 to 1940, dying around 1950. He came from a broken family, had a rotten childhood and was saved from suicide by some monks. He itinerant begging was his vocation, occasionally farming, and writing poems in exchange for drinking money. This was the ideal life for him. These are taken from "Mountain Tasting" by Taneda Santoka, trans. by Mr. Stevens.1991, Weatherhill Inc., NY.

Food from Heaven

Today my path was wonderful. I wanted to shout out to the waves, the birds the pure water- I'm grateful for everything. The sun shone brightly and the number of pilgrims increases daily. The memorials, the bridges, the shrines, and the cliffs were so beautiful. My rice was like the food of heaven.

18

Going deeper,
and still deeper-
The green mountains.

53

Waking from a nap,
Either way I look: mountains.

56

Well, which way should I go?
The wind blows.

83

Aimlessly, buoyantly,
Drifting here and there,
Tasting the pure water.

86

So this is what
He calls his tea grove-
A single bush!
(said by Seisensui on visiting Santoka's hut)

195

The sky at sunset-
A cup of sake
Would taste so good!

214

Fallen leaves in the forest.
I see a Buddha.

295

Thirsty for a drink of water-
The sound of a waterfall.

319

In the space between the buildings-
Look at the mountain's greenness!

351

Slapping at the flies,
Slapping at the mosquitoes,
Slapping at myself.

364

When will I die?
I plant seedlings.

Zen Stories

What would a section on Japan be without more Zen stories? These selections were taken from Donal Ritchie's "Zen Inklings: some stories, fables, parables and sermons." 1982/1991. Weatherhill Publishers, NY. ISBN 0-8348-0170-1. I hope you enjoy them.

The Holy Demon

There was once a demon who desired to become a priest. His reason was that being evil- the nature of demons- was too difficult. Being good might be easier. Thus it was that he desired to take his vows.

This is one version of the story. Another is that he saw the badness of his ways and was contrite. Yet another was that he had been living on a diet of bad people and wanted to taste some good, hence his desire to enter a temple. For all these differences, the stories do agree that one day he presented himself at the temple gate.

The abbot, worldly man that he was, heard the request without surprise and said that he would bring up the matter at the next council. Until that time, then, the demon might again retire to his lair. Also, he might want to do something about his talons. They would certainly render handling the prayer beads difficult and, in any event, would probably catch in the long sleeves of the priestly garb.

The demon saw the reasons for this, went home, took a knife, and pared his talons. This hurt, and his paws were still aching when a week later, neatly bandaged, he presented himself.

The board was sitting on the matter, the abbot informed him, noting with a small smile the absence of claws. Would he please be so good as to return in a week? And, in the meantime, he might want to do something about his horns. They would interfere with ecclesiastical headdresses, were he ever to rise above a mere monk, and, in any event, did not go well with priestly garb.

The demon agreed with this, went home, and began paring his horns - a long, difficult, and painful process. He finally had to burn the stubs, an experience not at all comfortable. Then he presented himself at the temple, two depressions where the horns had been.

The abbot complimented him on their absence; then he smile regretfully and said that all of the members of the board were not as yet entirely of one accord. Could he not come back the following week? And, in the meantime, he might think of what to do about his fangs. These would interfere with his eating the simple monkish fare and, in addition, somewhat detracted from an otherwise attractive smile.

The demon understood the wisdom of this, returned home, and with many a howl of pain and some tears put his teeth to the grindstone and ground them down to the gums. Smiling in agony, he then, a week later, again presented himself at the temple, showing two great gaps where his fangs had been.

The abbot, affable, received him at once, noting with pleasure the holes in the demon's smile. He then imparted the best of news. The board had finally agreed. It had decided that it would be a signal honor to have a demon monk. Also, a consideration not imparted to the penitent, the propaganda value of a demon brought to Buddha would be great.

The demon attempted to look pleased but seemed somehow less zealous than before. Upon inquiry, the abbot learned that this was because the demon was feeling poorly. Though he had originally come in earnestness and good health, the excision of

talons, horns and fangs had, it appeared, not only tired him but actually made him ill. His paws were bleeding, his forehead infected, his gums were suppurating, and he had a fever.

The abbot showed his sympathy but remarked that, after all, the good life is the strenuous one. Only those with strength, both outer and inner, should consider embarking upon it. The demon was left to extract from this what he could.

In the meantime, continued the abbot, it would be best for him to regain his health before joining their community. The demon understood all this, went back, and became very ill indeed.

The fever raged, paws throbbled, head knocked, and his mouth was nothing but aches. Since he could no longer claw, butt and consume sinners he also grew thinner and thinner. If being good is this difficult, he thought, I had better not attempt a virtuous life.

Finally, feeling near death, the demon went again to the temple. There he told the abbot, though he no longer had the strength to become a priest, he would like to die in the embrace of the true religion.

The abbot agreed at once. The abbot at once invited the sick demon into the temple, gave him a room to himself, and assigned two acolytes to nurse him.

Every day the sick demon sank further. He took to the prayer beads but they hurt his paws, tried to eat his rice gruel but it hurt his jaws, even tried on the hat of the dead but it hurt his head. Being good is frightfully difficult, he decided, much more difficult than being merely evil.

But he did not die, and little by little the pain left him. This event was viewed with some displeasure by the abbot. There would, apparently, be no big sensation. He would have to content himself with a good thing - a repentant demon. Well, he was big enough, at least, to do most of the heavy work around the temple.

At this point in the story the various versions again diverge. In one, the demon, maimed though he is, finds happiness in being good- preparing the bath, cleaning the attic, lugging the rice bales. In another, a final, fatal relapse and expires amid clouds of incense and much evidence of Buddha's benevolence.

In yet another version, however, the demon fully recovered. Every day he felt better and better, and this troubled him because the innocent creature did not know what was occurring. Being good cannot be this simple, he thought. Then he discovered the reason. His talons, horns, and fangs were growing. He was again becoming an evil demon. Only he did not phrase it in this way. He was filled with delight because he was again becoming himself.

So, when no one was around, he practiced his grimaces and felt with joy the evil wrinkles again forming around his mouth. He gnashed his fresh fangs with pleasure and playfully dug holes in the matting of his room with his new horns. When the acolytes were around, however, he was careful to look innocent and keep his eyes round. He also rarely smiled, lest they see the sharp new fangs.

I have tried to be good and I have failed, he told himself. But he felt no regret. To return to his own self caused too much happiness for that.

He also reverted to his old habits. One day, feeling particularly joyful, he sprang from his pallet and gobbled up both of the acolytes. They tasted very good after so many weeks of nothing but gruel. He snapped their bones and got at the marrow with the innocent and earnest zeal that was naturally his.

Then he crouched in wait in the corridor and ate up all the other priests and finally, as he was coming around a corner, the

abbot himself. Then the demon stretched himself, roared, and galloped off into the forest.

It was, as the late abbot had prophesied, a sensation indeed. Whole generations were frightened into proper behavior with the tale, and no one ventured near the place. Both cobwebs and legends formed around the deserted temple.

All agreed that a terrible thing had occurred. All except one. He was a holy man, an old monk who lived in a hut in the mountain. He said it was the most natural thing in the world. It is all very well for a demon to become holy, he said, but he must become holy as a demon, not as some mutilated creature no longer itself. And, in any event, who has to say that this demon was not, as he had always been, in some way, his own way, holy?

As for the temple - well, one must pay for one's mistakes. And, all in all, the good life is the strenuous one. As for the demon, he had attempted to become what he wasn't, and this, said the holy man, had almost killed him. Impelled by a longing for ease, always a bad counselor, he had wandered far from his natural path. Fortunately for him he had returned to it.

Perhaps, after his adventure, he had returned with a new purpose, with a fresh insight. He now knew how difficult good is and could compare his old lazy badness with his new and understood evil. One must die in order to be reborn, and whether the result is good or bad is beside anyone's point.

Then he delivered the moral that always comes after the text. There is, whether we like it or not, room for all of us in this world, priests and demons alike. To awake to one's own true nature is the aim of all.

This version of the tale is not popular and is not often heard.

The Earnest Acolyte

There was once an acolyte from Kochi. He impressed his family, his friends and acquaintances, and the other acolytes with his dedication and his zeal. He did not, however, impress his roshi.

All day and sometimes all night he sat seriously at zazen. Given a koan, he concentrated with the greatest gravity. Any task set him he performed with heavy consideration.

If anyone, said the other acolytes, deserved a swift satori, it was this earnest acolyte. The roshi did not agree with this opinion. He called in the young man.

"Why are you working so earnestly?"

"To attain satori. That is why I am here."

"I see."

Then the roshi went about his business and the acolyte about his. Things continued. The roshi attended to his duties and lived his life. The earnest acolyte sat straight, folded his hands just so, never once nodded off, closed his eyes firmly, and breathed regularly.

The peeping acolytes expected him to go into a paroxysm of satori at any moment. This, however, did not occur. Even though he concentrated so earnestly on not concentrating that sweat beaded his temples, nothing occurred.

Finally he went to see the roshi.

"Even though I meditate so long, so diligently, so thoroughly, nothing occurs."

"I see."

"What should I do?"

"You should go home. You are wasting your time."

The acolyte was shocked. He attempted to argue with the roshi, who, however, sat silently and would not answer until the troubled young man rose to leave the room.

"Sit down and I will tell you something. You have not understood my words and I must explain. I said that you were wasting your time and that is what I meant. To explain, however:

"Zen does not culminate in satori. It is not a goal that one works toward. Zen is sufficient without that. This is because it is a means without an end. In this way it can be said to be like life. Life, this life, our life, anyone's life, has no goal. Rather, one lives.

"In the same way, one should meditate. This meditation is its own goal. It is not a process leading to something else. It is living.

"The reason you are wasting your time is because you are unaware of this. You think only of the future and so neglect the present. Worse, you use this present only for the pursuit of something you have merely read and heard of. You think of this satori as some kind of reward. And you really believe that you would be, in your sense, different if it were to occur.

"Therefore you are wasting your time here. You should go back home and live.

"That is what I mean, and this is what I have said. If you were not quite so blind you would already have seen it. And even now as I talk you are expecting, even now, some kind of understanding to rise from these worthless words. You have understood nothing and had best leave."

The crushed acolyte withdrew. He did not, however, go home. He sat quietly with the others. Sometimes at night he sat in the garden. He continued.

Whether he attained satori or not is not known. In any event, it has nothing to do with this story.

A Singular Animal

A woodcutter was hard at work in the remote mountains when a strange animal appeared. He had never seen an animal anything like it before.

"Ah," said the animal, "you have never seen anything like me before."

The woodcutter was very surprised to hear the animal speak.

"And you are astonished that I can speak..."

The woodcutter was also surprised that the best knew his thoughts.

"And that I know what you are thinking," continued the animal.

Looking at the animal, the woodcutter wanted to catch it and take it back home.

"So you want to catch me alive, do you?"

If not that, maybe he could give it one blow with his ax and then carry it home.

"And now you want to kill me," said the animal.

The woodcutter realized that he could do nothing at all, since the beast always knew what he was thinking of doing. So, he went back to work, determining to ignore the animal.

"And now," it said, "you abandon me."

Work as he might, the woodcutter soon found himself thinking of the animal standing there. The beast would then make an appropriate comment. He wished it would go away and was then told that he was wishing it would go away.

The animal apparently did not wish to go away. It stood there, near him, and read all of his thoughts. Nor did it seem well intentioned.

Finally, not knowing what else to do, the woodcutter resignedly took up his ax again, determined to pay no more

attention to this singular animal, and began single-mindedly cutting the trees.

While he was so doing, with no thought in his head except the ax and the tree, the head of the ax flew off the handle and struck the animal dead.

Five Shinto Selections

These three stories were collected by a Shinto priest who lives in town here and he donated them to this edition of ARDA. Simplicity and purity is the heart of Shinto, all the rest is local custom. How Druidic!

The Way of Shinto

When on the way to these shrines one does not feel like an ordinary person any longer but as though reborn in another world. How solemn is the unearthly shadow of the huge groves of ancient pines and chamaecyparis, and there is a delicate pathos in the few rare flowers that have withstood the winter frosts so gaily. The crossbeams of the Torii or Shinto gateway is without any curve, symbolizing by its straightness the sincerity of the direct beam of the Divine promise. And particularly is it the deeply-rooted custom of this Shrine that we should bring no Buddhist rosary or offering, or any special petition in our hearts and this is called "Inner Purity." Washing in sea water and keeping the body free from all defilement is called "Outer Purity." And when both these Purities are attained there is then no barrier between our mind and that of the Deity. And if we feel to become thus one with the Divine, what more do we need and what is there to pray for? When I heard that this was the true way of worshipping at the Shrine, I could not refrain from shedding tears of gratitude.

Hello? Can Anyone Hear Me?

There was an old shrine at the foot of the hill near a town.

One summer day, a storm hit the town. Many trees fell down in the wind. It rained so hard that the shrine was washed away.

The next day, people found a big hole. "The old shrine used to stand there," someone said. A boy shouted into the hole, "Hello? Can anyone hear me?" There wasn't even an echo. The boy threw his red marble into the hole. People waited quietly, but no sound came back. "Boy! This hole must be really deep. It's the perfect place to throw things away," he thought.

The next day, the boy threw his test papers into the hole. Other people saw him and threw in things that they didn't want.

A few days later, a garbage truck dumped all its garbage into the hole. Soon all the garbage trucks in the town were dumping garbage into the hole. It was easier than burning it in the town plant.

A few years passed, but the hole never filled up. People became less and less worried about the garbage because there was a perfect place for it. Factories dumped industrial waste into the hole. Scientists even dumped nuclear waste there.

The town became clean and beautiful. More and more people came to live there.

One day a man was working on the roof of a new building. A voice above him shouted, "Hello? Can anybody hear me?" He looked up, but all he could see was the clear blue sky. He continued working.

Suddenly, a red marble hit the roof beside him. But he was too busy to notice it.

The Creation of the World

(From the Nihongi)

Of old, Heaven and Earth were not yet separated, and the In and Yo, not yet divided. They formed a chaotic mass like an egg, which was of obscurely defined limits, and contained germs. The purer and cleaner part was thinly diffused and formed Heaven, while the heavier and grosser element settled down and became Earth. The finer elements easily became a united body, but the consolidation of the heavy and gross element was accomplished with difficulty. Heaven was therefore formed first, and Earth established subsequently. Thereafter divine beings were produced between them.

We have next what is called the seven generations of Gods, ending with the creator deities, Izanagi (the male who invites) and his sister Izanami (the female who invites.)

Hereupon all the Heavenly Deities commanded the two Deities, the Male-Who-Invites and the Female-Who-Invites, consolidate and give birth to this drifting land. Granting to them an heavenly jeweled spear and stirred, they thus charged them. So the two Deities, standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, pushed down the jeweled spear and stirred with it, whereupon, when they had stirred the brine till it went curdle-curdle, and drew the spear up, the brine that dripped down from the end of the spear was piled up and became an island. This is the Island of Onogoro.

The two Deities having descended on Onogoro-jima erected there an eight-fathom house with an august central pillar. Then Izanagi addressed Izanami, saying: "How is thy body formed?" Izanami replied, "My body is completely formed except one part which is incomplete." Then Izanagi said, "My body is completely formed and there is one part which is superfluous. Suppose that we complement that which is incomplete in thee with that which is superfluous in me, and thereby procreate lands." Izanami replied, 'It is well.' Then Izanagi said, "Let me and thee go round this heavenly august pillar, and having met at the other side, let us become united in wedlock." This being agreed to, he said, "Do thou go round from the left, and I will go round from the right." When they had gone round, Izanami spoke and exclaimed, 'How delightful! I have met a lovely youth.' Izanagi the said, 'How delightful! I have met a lovely maiden.' Afterwards he said, 'It was unlucky for the woman to speak first.' The child, which was the first offspring of their union, was the leech-child, which at the age of three was still unable to stand upright, and was therefore placed in a reed boat and sent adrift.

The two deities next give birth to the islands of Japan and a number of deities. The last deity to be produced is the God of Fire. But in giving birth to him Izanami is mortally burned. After death, she descends beneath the earth. Izanagi goes in search of her; but Izanagi finally meets his wife and offers to bring her back with him. Izanami begs him to wait at the door of the subterranean palace, and not to show a light. But the husband loses patience; he light a tooth of his comb and enters the palace where, by the flame of his torch, he perceives Izanami in process of decomposition; seized with panic, he flees. His dead wife pursues him, but Izanagi, managing to escape by the same way that he had gone down under the earth, casts a great rock over the entrance. Husband and wife talk together for the last time, separated from each other by this rock. Izanagi pronounce the sacramental formula for separation between them, and then goes up to heaven; while Izanami goes down forever into subterranean regions. She become the Goddess of the dead, as is generally the case of chthonian and agricultural goddesses, who are divinities of fecundity and, at the same time, of death, of birth, and of entry into the maternal bosom.

A Blade of Grass

Even in a single leaf of a tree, or a tender blade of grass, the awe-inspiring Deity manifests itself. -Urabe-no-Kanekuni (Shinto)

What is Shinto?

Shinto was the earliest Japanese religion, its obscure beginnings dating back at least to the middle of the first millennium B.C. Until approximately the sixth century A.D., when the Japanese began a period of rapid adoption of continental civilization, it existed as an amorphous mix of nature worship, fertility cults, divination techniques, hero worship, and shamanism. Unlike Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam, it had no founder and it did not develop sacred scriptures, an explicit religious philosophy, or a specific moral code. Indeed, so unself-conscious were the early Japanese about their religious life that they had no single term by which they could refer to it. The word *Shinto*, or "the Way of the *kami* (gods or spirits)," came into use only after the sixth century, when the Japanese sought to distinguish their own tradition from the foreign religions of Buddhism and Confucianism that they were then encountering. Thus, in its origins, Shinto was the religion of a pristine people who, above all, were sensitive to the spiritual forces that pervaded the world of nature in which they lived. As one ancient chronicle reports: in their world myriad spirits shone like fireflies and every tree and bush could speak.

Remarkably, neither Shinto's relatively primitive original character nor the introduction of more sophisticated religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, caused the religion to wane in importance. In part its continued existence can be explained by pointing to changes that took place within Shinto, for after the sixth century, it was gradually transformed into a religion of shrines, both grand and small, with set festivals and rituals that were overseen by a distinct priestly class. However, such developments have had little effect on basic Shinto attitudes and values. More crucial to Shinto's survival, therefore, have been its deep roots in the daily and national life of the Japanese people and a strong conservative strain in Japanese culture.

The Shinto world view is fundamentally bright and optimistic, as befits a religion in which the main deity is a sun goddess. While it is not unaware of the darker aspects of human existence, Shinto's chief *raison d'etre* is the celebration and enrichment of life.

Much can be learned about Shinto's world view from Japanese mythology. Two eighth-century works, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), include the story of the creation of the Japanese islands by the divine couple, Izanagi and his mate, Izanami; the subsequent birth of numerous gods and goddesses -- the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, chief among them; and the descent of representatives of the Sun Goddess' line to rule the islands. Two aspects of the mythology are particularly noteworthy. The first is its this-worldly orientation. Other worlds are mentioned in the mythology -- the High Plain of Heaven, for example, and the Dark Land, an unclean land of the dead -- yet we receive only the haziest impressions of them. Blessed with a mild climate, fertile seas, and impressive mountain landscapes, the early Japanese seem to have felt little compulsion to look far beyond their present existence.

A second important feature of the mythology is the close link among the gods, the world they created, and human beings. The tensions present in Western religion between the Creator and the created, and the human and natural realms, are conspicuously absent. In the Shinto view, the natural state of the

cosmos is one of harmony in which divine, natural, and human elements are all intimately related. Moreover, human nature is seen as inherently good, and evil is thought to stem from the individual's contact with external forces or agents that pollute our pure nature and cause us to act in ways disruptive of the primordial harmony.

Shinto deities are referred to as *kami*. The term is frequently translated "god" or "gods," but it expresses a concept of divinity significantly different from that found in Western religion. In particular, Shinto deities do not share the characteristics of utter transcendence and omnipotence often associated with the concept of god in the West. In the broadest sense, a *kami* may be anything that is extraordinary and that inspires awe or reverence. Consequently, a wide variety of *kami* exist in Shinto: there are *kami* related to natural objects and creatures -- the spirits of mountains, seas, rivers, rocks, trees, animals, and the like; there are guardian *kami* of particular locales and clans; also considered *kami* are exceptional human beings, including all but the last in Japan's long line of emperors. Finally, the abstract, creative forces are recognized as *kami*. Evil spirits are also known in Shinto, but few seem irredeemably so. While a god may first call attention to its presence through a display of rowdy or even destructive behavior, generally speaking, the *kami* are benign. Their role is to sustain and protect.

Worship in Shinto is undertaken to express gratitude to the gods and to secure their continued favor. Worship may take the form of one of the many large communal festivals that occur at fixed times during the year, celebrating such events as spring planting, the fall harvest, or some special occasion in the history of a shrine. However, it may also be carried out privately in a much-abbreviated fashion in the home or at the neighborhood shrine. Although a festival may continue for several days, shifting at times in mood from the solemn to the lighthearted or even raucous, individual worship may require only a few moments to complete. In spite of such contrasts, both types of Shinto worship have three essential elements in common. Both begin with the all-important act of purification, which ordinarily involves the use of water; in both an offering is presented to the *kami*, today usually money but often food; and in both a prayer or petition is made. We may further note that in general Shinto worship is performed at a shrine. These structures, which are made only of natural materials and located on sites selected for their abodes for the *kami* rather than as shelters for the worshippers.

Since Shinto is without scriptures, dogmas, and creeds, worship has always had a central place in the religion. Rather than through sermons or study, it has been through its festivals and rituals, as well as the physical features of the shrine itself, that Shinto has transmitted its characteristic attitudes and values. Most prominent among these are a sense of gratitude and respect for life, a deep appreciation of the beauty and power of nature, a love of purity and -- by extension -- cleanliness, and a preference for the simple and unadorned in the area of aesthetics.

A Shinto Priest's Life

These essays on Shinto were taken from a book, "Kami no Michi: the way of the kami. The life and thought of a Shinto priest." written by Yukikata Yamamoto in 1987 and published by Tsubaki America Publ., 1545 West Alpine, Stockton, CA, 95204. These essays may contribute to the self-understanding of Druidism which shares some similarities. The prominent author, Rev. Yamamoto, is the priest of one of the greatest shrines in Japan, located in Mie prefecture and has worked with many interfaith councils over the last 50 years to explain what Shinto is to the world.

#1 What is Shinto?

The word Shinto is a combination of two terms --*shin*, meaning god, and *to*, or *do*, meaning way. *Shin* is the Chinese character for god and *kami* is the Japanese pronunciation of that character. *Shin*, or *kami*, means any divine being or anything in the world or beyond that can inspire in human beings a sense of divinity and mystery. "*Do*" can be the ordinary word for a road or it can have the same metaphorical meaning as in English, way of life or way of God.

Shinto is nothing new, and yet, because of its belief in the endless power of renewal, it is ever new. It is old but ever new. It is primordial. Before man set pen to paper, or rationalized doctrines or formulated scientific principles, people of old had intuitive insights that were probably as basically true as the proven truths of modern science. They caught the spirit of the cosmos.

Japan's early military successes against China and Russia at the turn of the century gave massive confidence as well as prestige to the military. Looking for ways to strengthen its hold on society, the government decided to use Shinto. Shinto became formally separated from Buddhism and its abuse was made that much easier.

During the era of State Shinto, many ceremonies and rituals were suppressed by government order because they represented natural religion rather than the government manufactured ideology. Shinto had been distorted to further the ends of national unity at the expense of either genuine spirituality or truth.

The end of the Pacific War meant the liberation of many groups to restore shrines that had been closed down by government order and they also revived many practice that had been suppressed, especially in the mountain shrines where many Buddhist practices had been mixed with Shinto rituals.

Today, we have to be taught these religious things. Perhaps Shinto can remind us that we were born as children of the Kami, fully equipped to fulfill our role and achieve satisfaction as we are. Perhaps it can further remind us that if we probe deeply enough into our spiritual roots there lies within our grasp enough wisdom, truth and goodwill to solve even the most serious problems besetting our modern world.

Let us join hands and hearts in the way of the kami, the way the divine in the universe has given us to discover, and realize the highest and best of which humankind is capable- a world of peace, truth, justice, and freedom.

We are children of the sun dependent equally upon the sun's light and heat for our survival. Consequently all human beings are children of the kami and therefore brothers and sisters in their common humanity. Shinto tries to teach people how to live naturally and one way to express this is by stressing the equality of all human beings under the sun.

#2 Kannagara: The Rhythm of the Gods

Kannagara would probably be called in the West "natural religion," meaning "natural" is contrast to "revealed," not a religion of nature. The life of man is located in Daishizen, Great Nature, the vast cosmic setting into which we are born, where we live and within our lives mind any meaning. Natural Religion is the spontaneous awareness that the Divine can be found in any culture. People learn to see in the flow of life and in the processes of nature, promptings from the creative origins of the world. In response to these, the basic ideas of religion come into being at the birth of a new culture.

Japanese mythology speaks of how the ancient Japanese felt about their world, its origins and the origins of the world around them. These historical events mark the beginning of basic religious systems and human cultures. Shinto reflects an awareness of the Divine that calls for man to live "according to the kami" so that he or she can find happiness and fulfillment in experiencing the basic joys of life.

Kannagara is not itself a religion, nor is it the basis of a religion although it is at the heart of Shinto. It is best understood as a non-exclusive principle of universalism that can exist in all religions and should exist as a self-corrective idea that calls every historical religion back to its fundamental roots and to the basic insight of all Natural Religion that the finest results for life are achieved when man lives "according to the kami."

This is why a Shinto believer will not reject something just because it is not Shinto. A Shinto believer can be at home with any kami that shows the power to elevate his or her soul. This approach to religion can be called the kannagara understanding of the place of religion in human life, human society and in human culture in general.

In a sense, kannagara refers to the underlying basis of spirituality common to all religions. Religions should therefore try to realize the spirit of kannagara in order to remain true to themselves. Kannagara need not be understood necessarily as unique to the Japanese but is a concept with universal significance and applicability. Kannagara has to do with spirit, and with bringing the spirit of man and his activities into line with the spirit of Great Nature.

The Spirit of Great Nature may be a flower, may be the beauty of the mountains, the pure snow, the soft rains or the gentle breeze. Kannagara means being in communion with these forms of beauty and so with the highest level of experiences of life. When people respond to the silent and provocative beauty of the natural order, they are aware of kannagara. When they respond in life in a similar way, by following ways "according to the kami," they are expressing kannagara in their lives. They are living according to the natural flow of the universe and will benefit and develop by so doing.

To be fully alive is to have an aesthetic perception of life because a major part of the world's goodness lies in its often unspeakable beauty. Unlike Western Puritanism, which has reservations about beauty as basis of understanding life, Shinto has never denied it. These ideas cannot be taught directly. They can only be captured by someone whose experience of them is sufficiently moving for him or her to realize their fullest meaning.

This is why Shinto is associated with sacred spaces, places of either striking natural beauty, or places that had an atmosphere that could strike awe in the heart of the observer. Shinto has no need of formalized systems of ethics which instruct people how to behave. People who are trying to express kannagara will be living "according to the kami" and therefore will not require detailed regulations. If man were in need of detailed rules, claimed Motoori Norinaga, he would be little better than an animal that needs to be trained and retrained in order to behave properly. Humankind is surely beyond this type of morality. Beauty, Truth and Goodness are essentially related

and when beauty is perceived, truth and goodness follow close behind.

Though participating in the spirit of kannagara, human beings, earth and heaven can achieve harmonious union. When their relationship is perfectly harmonious, the ideal universe comes into being. But of course, this does not always happen, and the reason is that man often makes mistakes that lead to becoming impure. When people become impure in this sense, they stray from themselves and they have to find themselves again. If people can return to being themselves, then the kami rejoice and human progress and prosperity become possible.

The manner by which that purity is restored is purification, or *oharai* in Japanese. The acts of purification are performed by priest who act as intermediaries when they are purified, speaking to the kami on behalf of the people they will in turn ceremonially purify. There are many forms of *oharai*, but in the traditions of Tsubaki Grand Shrine, *misogi harai* or purification under a free-standing waterfall is the most profound, most efficacious, most visibly symbolic of how mankind can restore the spirit of kannagara in the soul, can renew the spirit and can revitalize the creative force and energies of life.

#3 Shinto and Western Religions:

Weaving the Warp and Woof

One way to get inside the basic spirit of Shinto is to put it beside other world religions for comparison. This helps to pinpoint the distinctive qualities of Shinto. The core concept is vertical *musubi*, (connection), the vertical *musubi* of kannagara. This is the attempt to bring the kami, the divine into direct relation with humans. In Shinto rituals, the kami alights on the *sakaki*, the evergreen tree and so the blessings and benefits are possible. The spirit, *mitama*, of any kami can be invited to alight on a sacred purified place so that people may commune with the kami.

Shinto grew and developed from these basic insights, none of which can be attributed to any particular historical founder. Shinto grew as a folk way of people seeking to meet their kami and consequently, the tradition expanded without particular historical personalities behind it.

This contrasts in a marked way with Christianity, which came into being because of the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose historical life, teaching, death and resurrection became the basis of faith.

Buddhism looks to its founder, Gotama, whose historical experiences led him to sit under the Bodhi tree and meditate until he had unlocked the secrets of existence. Thus he formulated the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, known also as the Middle Way, and his teaching, the result of his Enlightenment, led to the historical person becoming known as the Buddha, the Enlightened One. The same may be said of Islam whose founder understood himself to be a prophet of God. The tradition of Judaism looks back to a catalogue of founding figures, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and on through the ages of Hebrew history which is rich in dynamic and powerful personalities.

The characteristic feature of these traditions is what I would call their horizontal *musubi*, that is to say that the founder was a historical person who transmitted the religion or who embodied it in a way that it was transmitted horizontally from that point of history to other people.

Shinto at different times in its history found able exponents and scholars among its priests and devotees, but fundamentally none of these could be called "founders." They were engaged in the creative transmission of the traditions, in interpreting the Japanese classics or in researching the history of a particular Kami. They were not, in the Indo-European sense,

"founders" or "spiritual leaders," although Japan has had these, in Buddhism in particular.

Vertical *musubi* and horizontal *musubi* can be looked on in terms of the 'warp' and the 'woof', as in a piece of tapestry. The horizontal and the vertical are basically alike in that they are constituents of a pattern. Their difference lies not in substance or form, but in role. The warp (Vertical) is constant and continuing so the thread must be long, steady, regular and firm. The woof (horizontal) makes the actual design reflecting the time, era and circumstances and consequently is capable of making a variety of designs according to how it is used. Because the warp functions as the base, the woof can act with freedom, and in turn, because of the designs made by the woof a patterned fabric can be made. The warp and the woof complement each other. The question is not which is more important or which is "correct," more useful or even ultimately valid.

A Shinto believer who denounces other religions is not a real Shinto believer. A real Shinto believer can be at home in a Shinto Shrine at New Year, a Buddhist Temple at the Obon festival for the souls of the ancestors or a Christian church on Christmas Eve. All of these make individual sense. They are authentic. They complement each other. This principle applies not simple to religion but to all the cultures of mankind. Non-rational creatures (plants and animals) do not possess the means necessary, the language, to create the vertical *musubi* without which a culture cannot come into being. Thus development is not possible even after tens of thousands of years. Once created, traditions can be transmitted through the horizontal *musubi*.

It is through this process that the various cultures of the world have come into being, that humankind has developed as a species and prospered by extending intellectually, socially and geographically. The core of the vertical *musubi* (warp) is *kokoro*, the heart, while the horizontal *musubi* (woof) is necessarily accompanied by the material objects and artifacts of civilization. Physical objects (including people) are the core of the horizontal *musubi*.

At New Year, more than 80 million Japanese visit shrines like the Grand Shrines of Ise, Izumo Taisha, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Meiji Jingu or Shrines of Inari, Hachiman or other kami, yet how many Japanese can actually name the *Gosaijin* or enshrined kami at each? From the viewpoint of Shinto, it is immaterial whether these people can answer the question or not, or whether they can answer other questions about who built the shrine, or how it is administered, etc...

We see Christians going to Lourdes for cures, or pilgrims going to the Holy Land, or Mecca or even in Japan followers of Kukai or Nichiren climbing mountains or traveling great distances. These are specific, with devotions being focused not necessarily on one person but on the transmission of a tradition to a "saint" or sacred messenger like a prophet or apostle. They are cultural expressions or manifestations of horizontal *musubi*.

#4 Shinto's Interaction with Other Religions

Shinto has few doctrines and virtually no canon of sacred writings. Muslims have the Koran, Buddhists have the sutras, Christians have their Bible and followers of Judaism have their writings which they share with the Christians. It is not that Shinto has nothing at all. There are some writings - the ancient mythology, some *norito* or ritual addresses to the kami - but these are short and fragmentary compared with the writings in other religions where records and teachings are very important,

... serving as the authority on how the tradition should be interpreted and transmitted.

Shinto is often classified as polytheistic. The polytheism in Shinto is quite different from the polytheism found in primitive cultures usually contrasted with monotheism, however. There is ultimately only one kami and all kami share the same quality but in the one kami can divide into several parts and these can function in different places at the one time - in *Takaamahara* (the cosmos), *Takamanohara* (the solar system) and *Onokoro-jima* (the earth.)

Each part has its own function that it exercises almost like part of the human body, functioning separately but retaining integrity of existence because there is total organic unity. According to the idea that the one is many but the many are one, reverence for one kami means reverence for all kami. Irrespective of individual shrines or groups of shrines, reverence of the kami means all kami. This is the one very significant part of Shinto which make impossible conflicts between denominations (the officially acknowledged 13 sects) or between particular shrines. Since Shinto is not an anthropomorphic religion with humankind at the center, it can more easily follow the way of *kannagara*. Religions derived from human initiative or inspiration require some form of interpretation. This is how their transmission and continuity is assured.

The more profound and subtle a doctrine is in a philosophical sense, the higher the standing of that religion will be. Human beings have their limitations, however, and they make imperfect judgments. Disagreements and conflicts are inevitable. This is particularly true in religions where doctrines are formalized and stated. The more subtle a doctrine is, the greater is the likelihood of disagreement among the individuals or groups involved in interpreting the doctrines.

The best example of this in the West is the battle in early Christianity over the definition of the substance of the person of Christ, whether it was like or the same as the substance of God. The difference in Greek was the letter *iota*. Here was a case of subtlety where there was literally not much more than an "iota of difference." When such divisions occur on interpretation of a doctrine, rival groups appear and new movements form. These probably will be subject to further dispute and subdivision. As this process goes on, endless numbers of new groups begin to appear.

This is the situation of religion today. There are, in Japan, for example, around 45 denominations of Nichiren Buddhism. There are hundreds of Christian denominations in the United States. When religions have "objects" at their center in the sense I defined earlier, these tendencies are unavoidable. There is a saying "*Shuron wa dochira makete mo Skaka no haji*" which means: "It doesn't matter which sect teaching loses to which, it is all to the shame of the Buddha."

Shinto is a pure and simple way of thinking about the way of the divine in the universe. It constantly emphasizes happiness within life and within the world. It is concerned about human life within Nature and under heaven, the relationship between human and kami. The attitude and approach in Shinto to the world and to human life is positive, optimistic and open minded.

In this sense Shinto is simple. Other religions may be more formalistic in matters of doctrine and more extravagant in terms of philosophy and ideas, but these also may have deep concern over sins, over human weaknesses and anxieties and cannot encourage an optimistic and positive approach to life.

Christianity in the West might disapprove suicide, but, according to a Japanese American scholar of suicide in Japan, Mamoru Iga, Christianity promotes a suicidal tendency in the Japanese mind because, he writes, "self-awareness and the sense of guilt are emphasized in Christianity. Self-awareness produces internal conflict in that country where 'selflessness' (or merging

into society) is the basic value." Iga notes that this tendency to melancholy is notable among intellectuals in Japan who become Christian. He documents his argument with examples taken from writers in Japan who committed suicide. The point is simple that the more seriously certain aspects of inwardness are emphasized, the greater the risk of these kinds of ambiguity taking place.

In Shinto, the *goshintai* or object of reverence may be a single *gohei*, the piece of white cut and folded sacred paper which can be said to reflect the simplicity of belief of original Shinto. Other may have one or another of the *Sanshu-no-Jingi*, the three sacred treasures of the Imperial Regalia, the Mirror, the Sword and the Jewel. Still others may have a natural object such as a rock, tree, pool or island as a *goshintai*.

Some people interpret the three sacred treasure narrowly from an old fashioned Confucian standpoint as the symbol of *chi-yu-jin* wisdom, valor and humanity. But taken in the wider sense, the three could be taken to represent the *sammisangen*, the principle of the three elements that constitute existence. Gas, liquid and solid are three elemental basics, and their role can be expanded to explain and interpret such elements as true reason and principle or mission, existence and destiny, or life, soul and spirit.

The objects revered or worshipped in other religions, in some forms of Christianity or in Buddhism, are much grander and gorgeously artistic than anything in Shinto. The same may be said of buildings and architecture. In contrast to the simple and usually unadorned wood used in traditional shrine building, the buildings of other religions such as the Vatican in Rome often seem to be competing with each other in size and extravagance.

There is a song that goes "*iwa to kagura no jindai yori miki agarume kami wa nai.*" *Kagura* is a combination of two Chinese characters, one begin *kami* and the other being *tanoshi* happiness. *Jindai* or sometimes *Shindai* is another combination using *kami* and a character meaning "ancient" or "classical." *Miki* is another combination of *kami* and *sake*, and means the sacred rice wine placed before the kami in rituals. No kami from the classical age of the kami ever refuses the sacred dances or the sacred wine.

Translated freely, this means that in Shinto, the kami and the people join together and enjoy the activities of the matsuri, the festival which includes eating and drinking as necessary components of the ritual along with music and dance known as *kagura* which are enthusiastically performed in the great act of celebrating life.

Perhaps the best symbol of all these points in the torii, gate like entranceway to shrine precincts. The gates have no doors and are open summer and winter, day and night. The open-minded and open-hearted aspects of Shinto become quite visible in this way.

#5 Shinto and Buddhism in Japan

Buddhism was the first foreign religion to come to Japan, and because of this has a peculiar relationship with Shinto, a relationship unique in Buddhism anywhere and perhaps unique among religions. The relationship is long and complicated but somehow over the centuries both managed to work out a relationship that involved arguments as well as compromise. Sometimes the advantage went to Buddhism, and sometimes the advantage went to Shinto.

In the case of the doctrine of *Honji-Suijaku-Setsu*, the idea of one religion being the manifestation of another, Buddhism too the advantage by having Shinto kami understood as manifestations of the Buddha. In *Ryobu-Shinto*, Shinto syncretized with Buddhism, the advantages were more evenly balanced. State Shinto was in complete control, favored over

Buddhism, immediately before and during the Pacific War by government decree.

No matter the era, no single Buddhist leader or founder of Buddhist sect ever overlooked the existence of Shinto. Nichiren, the famous Buddhist figure of the Kamakura age was given a name that uses two characters. One character, *nichi*, means the sun, and the principal divinity of Japan is Amaterasu Omikami, deity of the Sun. The other is *ren*, Lotus, the principal flower symbol of Buddhism.

One statue of Nichiren carries a sutra in one hand and a shaku (the wooden flat stick carried by Shinto priests) in the other. When Saicho was building the Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai sect on Mt. Hiei in Kyoto, he first built a protective shrine. Kukai, the other great leader of the Heian age, acted in a similar way when he erected the Kongobu-ji, the head temple of the esoteric sect called Shingon, on Mt. Koya. To ignore or belittle Shinto would be to ignore *kannagara* and that is something that even the most convinced or dogmatic would not do. They knew in their blood that such an attitude was not permissible.

Prince Shotoku Taishi, the regent to the Imperial House credited with introducing Buddhism formally to Japan, was never seen in Buddhist dress. He always wore the court dress appropriate to a Shinto priest, and was so depicted on the old 10,000 yen Bank of Japan bank note. He gave the nation a guide for national life called in Japanese the Seventeen Clause Constitution, which, while it speaks of Buddhism and Confucianism, deep down is based on *kannagara*.

Japanese religion at its roots is founded on the open spirit of *kannagara* which is best seen in the simplicity of Shinto that can freely meet and mix with any tradition that seeks for the highest in humankind to be infused with the finest that the divine can inspire in it. This is the secret of the way of the kami and its long history both within the religious life of Japan and among the great religions of the world.

#6 What is the Model Life of a Priest?

At the age of 13, my father came from the neighboring village of Kameyama to the shrine and in time married my mother who, as a daughter of the Yamamoto family, stood directly in the long line of descent. He was born in 1886, about 20 years after Japan had begun her tumultuous surge of modernization following the Meiji Restoration, when the feudal government of the Shoguns of the House of Tokugawa collapsed in the face of internal dissension and external threats from Western nations. Despite the traumas of his time, he never lost his belief in the brotherhood of humanity, in the dignity of human life, in the value of freedom and in the divine providence we experience when we follow the way of the kami.

He was always speaking of peace, insisting that war is wrong. He refused to take the physical examination required for conscription and was fined for his action, a fine that was paid by his adopted father, Tsubaki head priest Yukitoshi Yamamoto; he was the first conscientious objector in the area.

My father never performed the rituals in a perfunctory manner. He wanted to understand what he was doing, to be able to explain the basics of Tsubaki shinko (faith) to people. He devoted his life to gaining a better understanding of the tradition of Shinto, and of Tsubaki Shrine, become a scholar who authored numerous books and delivered lectures on Shinto. My father studied very hard until late at night, literally burning the midnight oil in our mountain shrine to which electricity came rather late. He probed the mysteries of the universe as they are set forth in Shinto ritual. He sought to unlock the powers of the cosmos by

studying the practice of Shinto rituals with a pure heart, a clear mind and a receptive spirit so that their efficacy in his life, and in the lives of those on whose behalf he was performing them, would be released to the fullest.

My father strove to embody his understanding of these eternal verities in his life and in his work. The degree to which this was achieved is attested in a strange way. More than one visitor to the shrine has looked at a photograph of my father in his later years and remarked with surprise that he looked very like the physical image we use in the Shrine of the kami. He had devoted his entire life to trying to know better the origin, nature and powers of the Great Kami and in time, he grew to have a likeness to this kami he had come to know so well. Perhaps this reflects how intense his belief in the intrinsic value of what he was doing as high priest.

From my father, I learned more than from my university days concerning the ideals of the priesthood. In him I had a model of what a priest should be. His influence still permeates the shrine and our daily ritual reflects the imprint of the routine and discipline by which he ordered his life.

Although my father made demands on himself, he never imposed himself of his opinions on his children. He did transmit to us *Shi-shi-mai-shinji*, the power of the lion dance and many other of the intangible cultural properties of our heritage. These we found in the various children's rituals observed on our behalf. We learned to practice misogi at eight or nine years of age. As small children facing that cold waterfall, we were influenced by his practice. People sometimes say that a child grows up seeing his father's back. That was very true in our case. All of us children helped my father clean up the ground of the shrine set among many trees, sugi (cryptomeria) and hinoki (cypress.) In the fall we had to sweep away huge leaves and in the winter we had to clear snow from the path. I remember the taste of breakfast after this work; it was so great.

In one of my father's books, he writes, "Human beings who are weak will become the victims of those who are strong." He never showed any fear of people in authority at any time in his life and he refused ever to become the victim of any tyrant's strength. His strong beliefs caused him trouble more than once before and during the war years. He had a disdain for the military mentality that had seized hold of the Japanese government and never hesitated to say so when the occasion arose. He was constantly harassed by the special police who went looking for dissidents, spying on teachers in classrooms and generally intimidating any citizens who showed any resistance to the policies of the government. Yet somehow he survived in a time which he considered to be one of confusion.

He believed that ideally human beings and kami should work for co-prosperity. Nations should be equal. His philosophy focused on a strange mixture of human being, kami and animal found in everything and how these should be kept in balance. His hopes of peace and understanding led me to my interest in world peace and to my involvement in the International Association of Religious Freedom. Had he lived long enough, he would have shared my activities, because my ideals are his ideals, my hopes are his hopes and the dreams I have come to cherish would have been his dreams.

Part Six: Down Under

Australian Thoughts

I was thinking of collecting a bunch of dream-time stories for the Greenbook, but after reading these selections, perhaps you'll agree with me that that is not such a good idea. As you know, the Aborigine religions are the oldest verifiable religions in the world, about 40,000 years old, and like the Native Americans, are in danger of being wiped out by social disruption, poverty, alcoholism, prejudice, missionary conversion and rising teenage violence. All they want is their land back and not to be disturbed, that's not too much?

These are some conversations that Harvey Arden (of National Geographic), age 70, had with aborigines in the Kimberley (NW Australian coast) and published in "Dreamkeepers: A Spirit-Journey into Aboriginal Australia" by HarperCollins Publishers, 1994. ISBN: 0-06-016916-8. Mr. Arden also published a book called "Wisdomkeepers" about his experiences with Native Americans, which was a best seller. After this, are a collection of Aborigine poems from "Inside Black Australia: an Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry" collected by Kevin Gilbert 1988. Penguin Books 487 Maroondah Highway, PO Box 257, Rindwood, 3134, Australia. ISBN 0-14-011126-3

Dreamtime Stories and Dignity

"Can't you understand? It's not mine to give you, that story. I don't own it. It's the property of my people.... It's like a watch, a gold watch. Like I'm wearing the gold watch my father gave me and you ask me the time. So I tell you the time. But I don't give you the watch, too, do I? White fella now, he asks for the time and then he wants to take the watch, too! That's the Gadia way, the whitefella way. So don't you come here askin' me for any of your Dreamtime stories. Get your own Dreamtime. Don't take ours. Let's talk about Aboriginal dignity, not Dreamtime stories. That's what you should be writing about in your bloody book.

"Aboriginal dignity is coming back," he said, "but it's coming back in a violent way."

"How is it violent?" I asked.

"It's violent because it has to overcome violence."

"You mean... revolution?" I asked. "Armed revolt?"

He shook his head, scorn tightening his lips.

"We Aborigines make up barely one percent of the people in Australia, mate. You think we're going to pick up guns and start a revolution to overthrow the government? No, it's not violence against white people I'm talking about. It's the violence inside us, the violence Gadia planted inside us and left growin' there..."

"When I was a boy back in the fifties, the coppers around Wyndham here used to shoot blackfellas for ten bob a head. So that's where we got the violence. Things like that, a million things like that. And now it's all coming out, it's spilling out of us, but it's a violence directed against ourselves, not against whites. That's the sad thing. Mostly it's violence against ourselves.

"Our young people get pissed on the grog and get in fights and kill each other. They go to jail and hang 'mselves in their cells. No one knows why, 'cause that's not the Aboriginal way, to kill yourself. We never committed suicide in the old days. We never believed in that. "Deaths in custody" the government calls it. They even made a bloody commission to study it!"

"So where does the dignity come in?" I asked. The notions of Aboriginal dignity, on the one hand, and Aboriginal violence against themselves, on the other, didn't quite seem to jibe in my mind as they did in his.

His broad nostrils flared. His eyes burned into me. I was infuriating him. He bit off his words as he spoke.

"The dignity come from overcoming the violence, mate. Don't you see? It comes from not letting the violence destroy us from the inside. We're not all that way, you know. We don't all get pissed on the grog and fight and kill each other. Me, I could be that way, too, but I'm not. I chose not to. I had some school, I got a job, I pay taxes... I don't want their bloody pension check every other Tuesday, their 'sit-down money' like they call it, so we can go out and sit on the ground under a boab tree and drink ourselves into oblivion. That's not for me. Dignity is overcoming that, overcoming the violence inside us, the violence that you, the Gadia, put there.

"So now the Gadia are feeling guilty," he went on. "They decided to give us back some land, some of our own lost land that they stole years ago and pushed us off of... Well, now that I'll bloody well take! My mob, my family here in Wyndham, we got a little block of land they're givin' us back. See that range of hills out there, across the Gulf and on the other side? We own a piece of that, our mob does. So we're gettin' ready to go back to the country, back out bush, gonna build our selves a place to live out there. An 'outstation' they call it. We know they're just doing it to get rid of us, get us out of the way, but we don't care. We like being' out of the way, off by ourselves, away from all the humbug here in town. We're not going to cry about what happened in the past. We're looking toward the future, not the bloody past. That's what I mean by dignity."--

"So that's why I say you better stop lookin' for the blackfella's secret and stick with your own whitefella's God. That's why I say you'll never discover the black-fella's secret. And even if you did, you'd only be sorry. It's not your secret, and it could hurt you, could even kill you. Same with the Dreamtime stories. They're not your stories. They're not for children like your fairy tales. Don't write your book about those like all those anthros and journo's do, comin' here and stealin' our stories.

"Write about the real blackfella, the blackfella today... Write about how he's gettin' back his dignity." - Anonymous

The Church and Me

"My wife belong to another sort of church, what they call a People's Church, a nondenominational-type thing. We were there a number of years. I even became church secretary.. But after a while I could feel that something wasn't quite right. Something stronger was calling out to me. When church was finished on Sunday, the kids and I would rush home, take off those good clothes, toss on a n old pair of shorts, and head out bush to hunt goanna (reptile) or whatever. Next Sunday the kids'd say, "Do we have to go to Sunday school?" And we'd say, "Oh, yes, you have to do it." But then we started asking ourselves, "Why the heck do we have to do this? Because we're really getting nothing out of it!"

"I started asking people within the church, ' Shouldn't we be doing something more than this? Couldn't we do something to help Aboriginal people?' They said, "aren't' you happy here? Haven't you got everything you want?" I said, "Ye, I've got a car, a home, a good job. But it's not what I want!"

There's something else. I want to help my people be somebody in this world. But how can I do that when I'm part of something that's killing us as Aboriginal people?"

"I really started getting mad about it. I was jumping up and down about those things. So they told me straightway, "Well, you

don't belong in this church!" And they kicked me out. Well, let me tell you, I never felt so good in all my life as I did that day when my wife and I just walked out of there. Ahhh, it was a fantastic feeling! And my wife - the one who got me into that church in the first place - she was the most relieved person of all! She stood beside me and she said, 'Gee, that's the best thing we've ever done in our life!"

"So we knew we had to go out and do something else, something real, not phony. Something truly spiritual. And that was Aboriginal land rights. Now, if there are people who want to classify land rights as 'political', that's up to them. But to me, land rights is religious, it's spiritual, not political. To us the land is a spiritual thing, not political, not economic. Without it we have no religion, no spiritual life as a people.

"Political is a European-type term. Just like sovereignty is a European term. We never had a sovereign, we Aboriginal people. Sovereignty is a divine right. But we Aboriginals can only have that divine right over our own land, our own piece of country. SO sovereignty isn't really an issue. The real issue is rights to land. Not 'claims' to the land, like the government likes to phrase it. We aren't claiming the land. It's ours by right, by history, by blood, so we don't have to claim it. What we want is the right to go back to and have control over our own ancestral land, the only land where we can live in proper relationship to the earth, and to the Universe." -Reg Birch, Wyndam City

The Now

"I was reading your book, (Wisdomkeepers)" he said. "There's a line by an old Indian chief I especially like in there, about how white man's religion celebrates something that happened 2,000 years ago and to him nothing's happened since then, but how Indian's religion celebrates what's happening now.

"That's how it is with us Aboriginal people, too. And it's not just religion I'm talking about, you know. When I'm in white man's world, there in my office in Kununurra or wherever, I'm always thinking about what I said to such and such a government minister last month and who I have to meet next week, or what I or you or somebody else did or didn't do yesterday and what I've got to do tomorrow or next month. I don't have any time to think about *now*, no time to be present to the actual moment, you know? White man forgets the *now*, don't you think? We Aboriginals - and Indians, of course - we live in that *now*. To us, the most sacred time of all is *now*.

Thinking about tomorrow or next year is a bother, a waste of time, really. But because of my position as commissioner, I've got to deal in white man's tomorrows and yesterdays while still not forgetting the Aboriginal's *now*. I've got to keep my foot in both worlds you see.

"Even sitting here talking with you fellows," he went on, "that's happening *now*, so I'm totally absorbed in it. Right here, this conversation, it's the most important conversation in the world because it's happening *here and now*.

-Reg Birch, Wyndam City

A Simple Request

"Just stop by and say hello to us, that's all we ask."-Daisy Utemorrah

The Developers

Like a spear thrust deep within my heart
the drill turns deep within the earth.
Like the Yulo makes the soul depart
the Company kills with greedy mirth.
Like with a shield to parry blows
I now use words and demonstrate
against all wrong that I know,
I will not assimilate.
I am this Land and it is mine,
I cannot change and to it be true.
I cannot let the Company mine,
I cannot give this Land to you.
- W. Les Russell

Red

Red is the colour
of my Blood;
of the earth,
of which I am a part;
of the sun as it rises, or sets,
of which I am a part;
of the blood
of the animal,
of which I am a part;
of the flowers, like the waratah,
of the twining pea,
of which I am a part;
of the blood of the tree
of which I am a part.
For all things are a part of me,
and I am a part of them.
- W. Les Russell

The Unhappy Race

White fellow, you are the unhappy race.
You alone have left nature and made civilized laws.
You have enslaved yourselves as you enslave the horse and other
wild things.
Why, white man?
Your police lock up your tribe in houses with bars,
We see poor women scrubbing floors of richer women.
Why, white man, why?
You laught at 'poor blackfellow', you say we must be like you.
You say we must leave the old freedom and leisure,
We must be civilized and work for you.
Why, white fellow?
Leave us alone, we don't want your collars and ties,
We don't need your routines and compulsions.
We want the old freedom and joy that all things have but you,
Poor white man of the unhappy race.
- Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

The Past

Let no one say the past is dead.
The past is all about us and within.
Haunted by tribal memories, I know
This little now, this accidental present
Is not the all of me, whose long making
Is so much of the past.
Tonight here in suburbia as I sit
In easy chair before electric heater,
Warmed by the red glow, I fall into dream:

I am away
At the camp fire in the bush, among
My own people, sitting on the ground,
No walls about me,
The stars over me,
The tall surrounding trees that stir in the wind
Making their own music,
Soft cries of the night coming to us, there
Where we are one with all old Nature's lives
Known and unknown,
In scenes where we belong but have now forsaken.
Deep chair and electric radiator
Are but since yesterday,
But a thousand thousand campfires in the forest
Are in my blood.
Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.
Now is so small a part of time, so small a part
Of all the race years that have moulded me.
- Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

Mary's Plea

Where am I
You, my people
Where am I standing.
Take me back
 and hold my hand
I want to be with you.
I want to smell
 the smoke
 ,of burnt grass.
Where are you
 my people
I am lost;
I've lost everything; my culture
 that should be my own.
Where am I
The clouds
 o'er shadow me,
 but my memories are there.
But I am lost,
 my people,
Take me back
And teach the things
I want to learn.
Is it really you my people,
The voices,
The soft voices that I hear.
- Daisy Utemorrah

Soul Music

Dancing to vibrations of unheard melodies
Swaying to the sound of silence in his ears
The deaf man danced alone.
People hearing, laughed
'Poor bastard', they cried. 'He doesn't even know,
The music stopped, long, long ago!'
The deaf man kept on dancing
Laughing to himself
'If only they would listen, if only they could know,
How it feels to hear the music
Real Music
The music of your soul!'
- Stephen Clayton

Tree

I am the tree
the lean hard hungry land
the crow and eagle
sun and moon and sea
I am the sacred clay
which forms the base
the grasses vines and man
I am all things created
I am you and
you are nothing
but through me the tree
you are
and nothing comes to me
except through that one living gateway
to be free
and you are nothing yet
for all creation
earth and God and man
is nothing
until they fuse
and become a total sum of something
together fuse to consciousness of all
and every sacred part aware
alive in true affinity.
- Kevin Gilbert

Conclusion

There is, of course, no conclusion, only continuation. Please read onward, review what you were taught long ago, and teach other what you will learn tomorrow. I hope you enjoyed these selections.

A Letter to My Mother

I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now
White fulla bin take me from you, I don't know why
Give me to missionary to be God's child.
Give me new language, give me new name
All time I cry, they say - 'that shame'
I go to city down south, real cold
I forget all them stories, my Mother you told
Gone is my spirit, my dreaming, my name
Gone to these people, our country to claim
They gave me white mother, she give me new name
All time I cry, she say - 'that shame'
I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now.

I grow as Woman now, not Piccaninny no more
I need you to teach me your wisdom, your lore
I am your Spirit, I'll stay alive
But in white fulla way, you won't survive
I'll fight for Your land, for your Sacred sites
To sing and to dance with the Brolga in flight
To continue to live in your own tradition
A culture for me was replaced by a mission
I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now.
One day your dancing, your dreaming, your song
Will take me your Spirit back where I belong
My Mother, the earth, the land - I demand
Protection from aliens who rule, who command
For they do not know where our dreaming began
Our destiny lies in the law s of White man
Two Women we stand, our story untold
But now as our spiritual bondage unfold
We will silence this Burden, this longing, this pain
When I hear you my Mother give me my Name
I not see you long time now, I not see you long time now.
-Eva Johnson

This is a Blank Page

