

Green Book Of Meditations Volume Five

Chicken-Flavored Soup for the Druid's Soul

Introduction

This collection is a bit of a hodgepodge of stories that I have come across since completing Green Book Volume 4 in 1998, but lacks the decisive pattern in its presentation. I hope that you will enjoy the selections and find them of use. There is a greater selection of humor in this volume than is usual, and I hope that you will not take deep offense if one of them pokes fun at you.

As always, I hope that what seems like a simple ha-ha joke will also appear as an "a-ha" joke. To me, some times, even the most simple questions has seemed like an impenetrable whistle. Why did I collect these stories? It is one thing to have knowledge and another thing to possess wisdom. I can collect all the mysteries in the world, but unless I can penetrate even one, it seems a sorry waste of time, doesn't it? But how can I collect mysteries, unless I can spot them in the first place? Perhaps I am not too far without hope. I hope that you will enjoy them too.

Being in D.C. is an unusual experience of big-city life away from the suburbs and rural towns of the last 15 years. I am more limited in my excursions into heavy nature and I have withdrawn a bit into Graduate school studies and full-time work. To balance this, I've done more research and sought stories to inspire me.

The selections represent a window into my own personal search. My ongoing fascination with monastic life and Zen is again well represented here. The wry Sufi humor resurfaces yet again. A large collection of religious humor, hopefully will be appreciated. Hazlenuts is a collection of stories circulated by other Druids in the Reform over the last 20 years. The Book of Self-Motivation is for those Druids having difficulties in life. The Book of Booze and Book of Al-Anon deal with Alcohol. The Book of Ultimate Answers is transferred from Part Nine in the original collection and will hopefully be more in style next to the aforementioned books. The Nightingale Story is a wonderful story that I couldn't pass up sharing with you. The Jedi Collection is also a transplant from Part Nine in ARDA and will be completed in 2003 after the release of the final movie. Finally, I had reservations on releasing the Book of Religious Freedom, as it is a political tract that may not sit well with some members; but might prove a useful tool for Druids involved in political movements to preserve religious freedom in these trying times. But living in D.C., I couldn't help but become involved in the Church & State issues.

-Enjoy,
Mike Scharding
Washington, DC
July 16, 2002

Drynemetum Press



Table of Contents

Introductory Materials -197

Introduction
Table of Contents

Monky Business - 201

Bodhidharma
Time To Learn
Bell Teacher
Two Rabbits
Egotism
Duke and the Wheelwright:
Shield and Spear
The Flute Player
Blind Man's Lantern
The Umbrella
And Then What is There?
Is That So?
Two Words
The Art of Burglary
The Burglar and the Moon
Important Teaching
The Garden Keeper
Prosperity
The Inn
Without Fear
Obedience
No Water, No Moon
Calling Card
Mokusen's Hand
Publishing the Sutras
Heaven and Hell ----- 205
Gudo & the Emperor
Transmission of the Book
One Note Zen
Most Valuable Thing
Reformation
Temper
Time to Die
About Teaching
Silent Temple
Two Principles to Live By
Then Zen
Emptiness
End of Questions
One Flicks Dirt* with His Toe
The Parable of the Zither
Su Shi and the Buddhist Monk
Happy Chinaman
Wo and Jah
Buy Your Own Fish
Mother's Advice
Heart Burns Like Fire
Dead Man's Answer
Grass and Trees
Black-Nose Buddha
Ryonen's Clear Realization
Sour Miso -----208
No Work, No Food
The True Path
Killing
The Blockhead Lord

Zengetsu's Rules
A Drop of Water
Three Kinds of Disciples
Zen Dialogue
Buddha's Zen
Not the Wind, Not the Flag
Everyday Life is the Path
Joshu Washes the Bowl
Seizei Alone and Poor
Arresting the Stone Buddha
The Hungry Student
Three Zen Jokes
How To Rule a Country
The Two Different Monks
24 Hours To Die
Beginning
Positioning

Next Book of Nasrudin the Sufi - 214

The Cow and the Judge
The Burglary
The Fortuitous Burglar
The Donkey and the Official
Free Bread
The Soup
Working Spirit
Treasure Hunt
Casket
Blurred Vision
Bridge Talk
Nasrudin the Advisor
Nasrudin and the Frog
Watering the Plants
Giving Directions
Rabi`a's gifts to Hasan of Basra
Deductive Reasoning
Tit for Tat
More Useful
Promises Kept
When You Face Things Alone
Obligation -----217
Assumptions
Why We Are Here
The Unshaven Man
Nasruddin and his Donkey
Nasruddin and the Violin
The False Prophet
The Poor Story Teller
Nasruddin and the Bedouins
Nasruddin at the Fashion Show
Nasruddin and the Tourist
Afterthoughts
To the Editor
Father and Son
The Second Time Around
The Gates
The Will of Allah
Nasruddin Meets Death
Home Repairs
100 Silver Coins
The Two Beggars
Walnuts and Pumpkins
The Turban
The Crow and the Meat
Servitude

The Other Place -----220
 Paying the Piper
 Trousers and Robe
 Two Cooked Fish
 End of the World
 Saifu
 Lesson of the Sandals
 Two Pots
 The Perfect Wife
 The Cloak and the Feast
 Mullah Nasruddin and His Beautiful Daughter
 The King and His Dreams
 Cursing Rulers
 The Chess Game and the Shoes
 A Wise Mullah
 A Mother's Three Gifts
 Two Great Gifts
 A Suggestion Against Headache
 Teaching a Donkey to Read
 The King and the Woodcutter
 Of the Jungle

Religious Jokes - 226

House of Ill Repute
 Catholic Conversion
 Religious Accident
 Newly Discovered First Page of the Bible
 Like Moses, Shakespeare and G*d
 The Atheist and the Monster
 Two Beggars
 Crew
 Hostages
 Three Reform Rabbis
 Lotto
 Outer Space Priests
 Where is God?
 The Collar
 The Power of Scripture
 Lawns and God
 Sisterhood
 Going to Heaven
 Fatherhood
 The Skinny Dip
 Is Hell Endothermic or Exothermic?
 Sunday School
 Why Sex Is Better Than Church
 Water Games
 Divine Judgement
 A Six Year-Old Girl
 Real Motives
 The Ants Go Marchin' ----- 232
 Plagiarism
 The Solution
 Horses and Rabbis
 The Doctrine of the Feline Sedentation
 Priest and Rabbi Meet on a Plane
 Jewish and Chinese Calendars
 Church on Fire...
 Bread for Jewish New Year...
 Irish Postage Stamps
 10 Commandments
 Dead Sea Gull
 Cartoonist
 Traditional Values
 Jesus Hears about Christology
 The Irishman at the Pub
 Synagogue Dog

God Scandal
 Promotions
 Good Question
 Theology vs. Astronomy
 He Could Have Been a Doctor or a Lawyer
 Sports Car
 Actual Personals from Israeli Newspapers

Wisdom of the Internet - 237

The Talking Clock
 The Car Dealership
 A Happy Cat
 The Sacred Rac
 Sleeping Through the Storm
 Sandcastles
 The Lumber Jack
 The Fence
 The Four Philanthropists
 The Fisherman
 The Pit
 A Tale of Tradition
 A Tale For All Seasons
 The Window
 Wanting God
 Plant Your Garden Today
 A Persian Proverb
 The Desiderata
 On Responsibility
 Reflections Of The Sky Nation
 Walking on Water
 Wise Blind Elephants
 The Other Side
 Reality?

Falling Hazlenuts of Wisdom - 242

Cats in the Corner
 Zen Duck
 Sigil Thinking
 Microcosm
 Relicuous Society
 Sufic/Druidic Connections
 Reflections on a Ritual
 Smokey The Bear Sutra
 The Druids and the Stars
 The Accident
 The Donkey
 Chickens & the Coop
 Where Did All the Celts Go?
 Picking a Path
 The Two Pots
 Chop Wood, Carry Water
 The Ten Laws of Murphy
 Gold and Silver Harps
 The Mona Lisa
 The Oak and the Maple ----- 247
 Understanding is Nothing.
 Approaching Death
 Way of Salami
 Way of Service
 Way of Cheese
 Loneliness
 To My Teacher
 Some Quotes on Life
 Soldier and the Professor
 No Vacation
 Where There's a Will...

Other is Better
 Happy Alliance
 Real Reason
 The Cage
 Return to Me
 How to Love Nature ----- 250
 Wayfarer
 Orbits
 Vigiling
 Rules of Paganism
 Order of Chocolate Contemplatives
 Some Ideas on What Enlightenment/Salvation
 A Few Thoughts on Harmonious Living
 Football as a Fertility Rite
 The Church of Apathy
 Why did Isaac's Chicken Cross the Road?
 A Pagan Pledge of Allegiance
 The Whole World Stinks
 The Baker and the Farmer
 The Mountain & The Baby
 Wild Fandango
 Poverty
 A Woman's Place
 You Don't Know
 New Shoes
 A Visit of Kings
 A Big Quiet House
 Three Fish
 Who is King of the Jungle
 An Invocation Poem

The Book of Self-Motivation - 257

Ten Rules for the Good Life
 Life Is...
 Each day I learn more
 15 Ways to Enhance Your Day
 Things We Can Learn from a Dog..
 Things To Remember
 I've Learned...
 On Relationships
 Hang In There
 The School of Life
 Just For Today
 Thoughts To Live By
 Recipe For A Happy Life
 A Life In Your Hands
 Xvxry Pxrson Is Important
 Be Good To You
 The Lion and The cougar
 Watch Your Thoughts
 Letting Go
 How To Survive the Business of Living
 How To Love Yourself -----262
 My Declaration of Self Esteem
 Our Deepest Fear
 How to Be Unhappy
 Laws of Success
 Claim Your Freedom
 Attitude
 God's Days
 On Letting Go
 Fair Fighting
 A Start
 A Practical Guide of Life
 Life's Little Instructions
 The Principles of Attitudinal Healing

Who's Counting?
 Take Time
 Promise Yourself
 Just for Today
 The Word is a Puzzle
 A Special Teacher
 Listening
 A Lesson from a Mad hatter
 Weakness or Strength?
 What is Maturity ----- 267
 Choices
 Let Go
 How High Can You Jump?
 Keeper of the Spring
 If I Had My Life to Live Over
 Wranglers and Stranglers
 Quick Decisions
 Winner versus Loser
 Things to Remember
 On Youth
 Grind or Shine
 If You Think
 Total Self Confidence
 Notes on the Tao Te Ching
 A Creed To Live By
 Peak Performer
 The Paradoxical Commandments
 Awakening

The Book of Booze - 272

The Artesian Mysteries
 The Gospel of Bracicea
 A Prayer to Bracicea
 The Whiskey Lesson
 The Tavern
 Top 10 Reasons Why Beer is Better Than Jesus
 We Have Drunk Whang
 The Wild Rover
 The Hard Drinker
 Whiskey, You're the Devil
 The Rambler
 John Barleycorn
 Ballad of St. Bunstable
 Parish of Dunkeld

The Book of Al-Anon - 276

Bake the Cake
 Three Frogs Riddle
 Ups and Downs of Life
 It's All Relative
 Anyone Up There?

The Book of Ultimate Answers - 277

The Book of the African Jedi Knight -281

The Book of the Bantu
 The Book of the Jedi

The Nightingale - 291

Book of Interfaith Peace Prayers - 294

The Hindu Prayer for Peace
Baha'i Prayer for Peace
Buddhist Prayer for Peace
Jewish Prayer for Peace
Jainist Prayer for Peace
Muslim Prayer for Peace
Native African Prayer for Peace
Native American Prayer for Peace
Shinto Prayer for Peace
Zoroastrian Prayer for Peace
Sikh Prayer for Peace
Christian Prayer for Peace
Prayer of St. Francis
Let There be Peace on Earth
I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing

Book of Freedom and Liberty - 296

The Challenge of Religious Freedom
Prayer: It Ain't That Complicated
Religious and Biblical Arguments for Church-State Separation
The Words that Branded Him – A Muslim Perspective

Quotes on Religious Liberty - 303

"Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia," 1779
Words of Thomas Jefferson
Words of James Madison
Words of John Adams
Words of Other Revolutionaries

The Supreme Court - 308

Words of the Supreme Court
An Overall View Of Religious Liberty: As Defined By U.S.
Supreme Court Cases

Monkey Business

Found at <http://www.rider.edu/users/suler/zenstory/zenstory.html>

Bodhidharma

After nine years in China, Bodhidharma wished to go home in India and gathered his disciples around him to test their apperception.

Dofuku said: "In my opinion, truth is beyond affirmation or negation, for this is the way it moves."

Bodhidharma replied: "You have my skin."

The nun Soji said: "In my view, it is like Ananda's sight of the Buddha-land – seen once and for ever."

Bodhidharma answered: "You have my flesh."

Doiku said: "The four elements of light, airness, fluidity, and solidity are empty [i.e., inclusive] and the five skandhas are no-things. In my opinion, no-thing [i.e. spirit] is reality."

Bodhidharma commented: "You have my bones."

Finally, Eka bowed before the master and remained silent.

Bodhidharma said: "You have my marrow."

Time To Learn

A young but earnest Zen student approached his teacher, and asked the Zen Master:

"If I work very hard and diligent how long will it take for me to find Zen?"

The Master thought about this, and then replied, "Ten years."

The student then said, "But what if I work very, very hard and really apply myself to learn fast -- How long then?"

Replied the Master, "Well, twenty years."

"But, if I really, really work at it. How long then?" asked the student.

"Thirty years," replied the Master.

"But, I do not understand," said the disappointed student. "At each time that I say I will work harder, you say it will take me longer. Why do you say that?"

Replied the Master, "When you have one eye on the goal, you only have one eye on the path."

Bell Teacher

A new student approached the Zen master and asked how he should prepare himself for his training. "Think of me a bell," the master explained. "Give me a soft tap, and you will get a tiny ping. Strike hard, and you'll receive a loud, resounding peal."

Two Rabbits

A martial arts student approached his teacher with a question. "I'd like to improve my knowledge of the martial arts. In addition to learning from you, I'd like to study with another teacher in order to learn another style. What do you think of this idea?"

"The hunter who chases two rabbits," answered the master, "catches neither one."

Egotism

The Prime Minister of the Tang Dynasty was a national hero for his success as both a statesman and military leader. But despite his fame, power, and wealth, he considered himself a humble and devout Buddhist. Often he visited his favorite Zen master to study under him, and they seemed to get along very well. The fact that he was prime minister apparently had no effect on their relationship, which seemed to be simply one of a revered master and respectful student.

One day, during his usual visit, the Prime Minister asked the master, "Your Reverence, what is egotism according to Buddhism?" The master's face turned red, and in a very condescending and insulting tone of voice, he shot back, "What kind of stupid question is that!?"

This unexpected response so shocked the Prime Minister that he became sullen and angry. The Zen master then smiled and said, "THIS, Your Excellency, is egotism."

Duke and the Wheelwright:

Duke Huan was reading a book in the hall. Wheelwright Pian, who had been chiseling a wheel in the courtyard below, set down his tools and climbed the stairs to ask Duke Huan:

"May I ask what words are in the book Your Grace is reading?"

"The classic of a famous sage," the Duke responded.

"Is he still alive?"

"Oh no, he is long dead"

"Then you've been reading the dregs left over by a dead man, isn't it?"

Duke Huan said, "How dare a wheelwright to have opinions about the book I read! If you can explain yourself, I'll let it pass. Otherwise, it's death!"

Wheelwright Pian said, "In my case I see things in terms of my own work. I chisel at a wheel. If I go too slowly, the chisel slides and does not stay put. If I hurry, it jams and doesn't move properly. When it is just right, I can feel it in my hand and respond to it from my heart. I can explain this to my son, but I cannot pass on the skills to him. That is why at seventy years old, I am still making wheels. The sage who couldn't pass down his wisdom is already dead; and that's why I say the book you're reading is merely the dregs of a dead man."

-Zhuangzi, Chap. 5-13

Shield and Spear

An armorer of Chu boldly claims to make the best spears and shields.

"My shields are so strong; they cannot be penetrated by any weapon," he said. He then added, "My spears are so sharp; they can pierce any shield."

A man asks, "If your spear is thrown at your shield, what then?"

The armorer had no reply.

By logic, both an impenetrable shield and an all-piercing spear cannot exist at the same time.

-*State of Chu (841-233 b.c.), Chou Dynasty*

The Flute Player

Whenever King Xuan of Qi had musicians playing the yu, a wind instrument with reed, he will have three hundred of them

playing together. Knowing this, a student from Nanguo applied for a job. The king accepted and paid him the same salary as the others.

After the death of King Xuan, King Min became the ruler of Qi. He liked to have the musicians playing solo. The student from Nanguo fled.

-*Han Fei Zi*

What is the moral of this story? One way to weed out the incompetent is to measure each individually.

Blind Man's Lantern

In early times in Japan, bamboo-and-paper lanterns were used with candles inside. A blind man, visiting a friend one night, was offered a lantern to carry home with him.

"I do not need a lantern," he said. "Darkness or light is all the same to me."

"I know you do not need a lantern to find your way," his friend replied, "but if you don't have one, someone else may run into you. So you must take it."

The blind man started off with the lantern and before he had walked very far someone ran squarely into him.

"Look out where you are going!" he exclaimed to the stranger. "Can't you see this lantern?"

"Your candle has burned out, brother," replied the stranger.

The Umbrella

After ten years of apprenticeship, Tenno achieved the rank of Zen teacher. One rainy day, he went to visit the famous master Nan-in. When he walked in, the master greeted him with a question, "Did you leave your wooden clogs and umbrella on the porch?"

"Yes," Tenno replied.

"Tell me," the master continued, "did you place your umbrella to the left of your shoes, or to the right?"

Tenno did not know the answer, and realized that he had not yet attained full awareness. So he became Nan-in's apprentice and studied under him for ten more years.

And Then What is There?

The emperor, who was a devout Buddhist, invited a great Zen master to the Palace in order to ask him questions about Buddhism. "What is the highest truth of the holy Buddhist doctrine?" the emperor inquired.

"Vast emptiness... and not a trace of holiness," the master replied.

"If there is no holiness," the emperor said, "then who or what are you?"

"I do not know," the master replied.

Is That So?

A beautiful girl in the village was pregnant. Her angry parents demanded to know who was the father. At first resistant to confess, the anxious and embarrassed girl finally pointed to Hakuin, the Zen master whom everyone previously revered for living such a pure life. When the outraged parents confronted Hakuin with their daughter's accusation, he simply replied "Is that so?"

When the child was born, the parents brought it to the Hakuin, who now was viewed as a pariah by the whole village.

They demanded that he take care of the child since it was his responsibility. "Is that so?" Hakuin said calmly as he accepted the child.

For many months he took very good care of the child until the daughter could no longer withstand the lie she had told. She confessed that the real father was a young man in the village whom she had tried to protect. The parents immediately went to Hakuin to see if he would return the baby. With profuse apologies they explained what had happened.

"Is that so?" Hakuin said as he handed them the child.

Two Words

There once was a monastery that was very strict. Following a vow of silence, no one was allowed to speak at all. But there was one exception to this rule. Every ten years, the monks were permitted to speak just two words. After spending his first ten years at the monastery, one monk went to the head monk. "It has been ten years," said the head monk. "What are the two words you would like to speak?"

"Bed... hard..." said the monk.

"I see," replied the head monk.

Ten years later, the monk returned to the head monk's office. "It has been ten more years," said the head monk. "What are the two words you would like to speak?"

"Food... stinks..." said the monk.

"I see," replied the head monk.

Yet another ten years passed and the monk once again met with the head monk who asked, "What are your two words now, after these ten years?"

"I... quit!" said the monk.

"Well, I can see why," replied the head monk. "All you ever do is complain."

The Art of Burglary

The son of a master thief asked his father to teach him the secrets of the trade. The old thief agreed and that night took his son to burglarize a large house. While the family was asleep, he silently led his young apprentice into a room that contained a clothes closet. The father told his son to go into the closet to pick out some clothes. When he did, his father quickly shut the door and locked him in. Then he went back outside, knocked loudly on the front door, thereby waking the family, and quickly slipped away before anyone saw him. Hours later, his son returned home, bedraggled and exhausted.

"Father," he cried angrily, "Why did you lock me in that closet? If I hadn't been made desperate by my fear of getting caught, I never would have escaped. It took all my ingenuity to get out!"

The old thief smiled. "Son, you have had your first lesson in the art of burglary."

The Burglar and the Moon

A Zen Master lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening, while he was away, a thief sneaked into the hut only to find there was nothing in it to steal. The Zen Master returned and found him.

"You have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty handed. Please take my clothes as a gift." The thief was bewildered, but he took the clothes and ran away. The Master sat naked, watching the moon.

"Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could give him this beautiful moon."

Important Teaching

A renowned Zen master said that his greatest teaching was this: Buddha is your own mind. So impressed by how profound this idea was, one monk decided to leave the monastery and retreat to the wilderness to meditate on this insight. There he spent 20 years as a hermit probing the great teaching.

One day he met another monk who was traveling through the forest. Quickly the hermit monk learned that the traveler also had studied under the same Zen master. "Please, tell me what you know of the master's greatest teaching."

The traveler's eyes lit up, "Ah, the master has been very clear about this. He says that his greatest teaching is this: Buddha is NOT your own mind."

The Garden Keeper

A priest was in charge of the garden within a famous Zen temple. He had been given the job because he loved the flowers, shrubs, and trees. Next to the temple there was another, smaller temple where there lived a very old Zen master. One day, when the priest was expecting some special guests, he took extra care in tending to the garden. He pulled the weeds, trimmed the shrubs, combed the moss, and spent a long time meticulously raking up and carefully arranging all the dry autumn leaves. As he worked, the old master watched him with interest from across the wall that separated the temples.

When he had finished, the priest stood back to admire his work. "Isn't it beautiful," he called out to the old master. "Yes," replied the old man, "but there is something missing. Help me over this wall and I'll put it right for you."

After hesitating, the priest lifted the old fellow over and set him down. Slowly, the master walked to the tree near the center of the garden, grabbed it by the trunk, and shook it. Leaves showered down all over the garden.

"There," said the old man, "you can put me back now."

Prosperity

A rich man asked a Zen master to write something down that could encourage the prosperity of his family for years to come. It would be something that the family could cherish for generations. On a large piece of paper, the master wrote, "Father dies, son dies, grandson dies."

The rich man became angry when he saw the master's work. "I asked you to write something down that could bring happiness and prosperity to my family. Why do you give me something depressing like this?"

"If your son should die before you," the master answered, "this would bring unbearable grief to your family. If your grandson should die before your son, this also would bring great sorrow. If your family, generation after generation, disappears in the order I have described, it will be the natural course of life. This is true happiness and prosperity."

The Inn

A famous spiritual teacher came to the front door of the King's palace. None of the guards tried to stop him as he entered and made his way to where the King himself was sitting on his throne.

"What do you want?" asked the King, immediately recognizing the visitor.

"I would like a place to sleep in this inn," replied the teacher.

"But this is not an inn," said the King, "It is my palace."

"May I ask who owned this palace before you?"

"My father. He is dead."

"And who owned it before him?"

"My grandfather. He too is dead."

"And this place where people live for a short time and then move on - did I hear you say that it is NOT an inn?"

Without Fear

During the civil wars in feudal Japan, an invading army would quickly sweep into a town and take control. In one particular village, everyone fled just before the army arrived - everyone except the Zen master. Curious about this old fellow, the general went to the temple to see for himself what kind of man this master was. When he wasn't treated with the deference and submissiveness to which he was accustomed, the general burst into anger. "You fool," he shouted as he reached for his sword, "don't you realize you are standing before a man who could run you through without blinking an eye!"

But despite the threat, the master seemed unmoved. "And do you realize," the master replied calmly, "that you are standing before a man who can be run through without blinking an eye?"

Obedience

The master Bankei's talks were attended not only by Zen students but also by persons of all ranks and sects. He never quoted sutras nor indulged in scholastic dissertations. Instead, his words were spoken directly from his heart to the hearts of his listeners.

His large audience angered a priest of the Nichiren sect because the adherents had left to hear about Zen. The self-centered Nichiren priest came to the temple, determined to have a debate with Bankei.

"Hey, Zen teacher!" he called out. "Wait a minute. Whoever respects you will obey what you say, but a man like myself does not respect you. Can you make me obey you?"

"Come up beside me and I will show you," said Bankei.

Proudly the priest pushed his way through the crowd to the teacher.

Bankei smiled. "Come over to my left side."

The priest obeyed.

"No," said Bankei, "we may talk better if you are on the right side. Step over here."

The priest proudly stepped over to the right.

"You see," observed Bankei, "you are obeying me and I think you are a very gentle person. Now sit down and listen."

No Water, No Moon

When the nun Chiyono studied Zen under Bukko of Engaku she was unable to attain the fruits of meditation for a long time.

At last one moonlit night she was carrying water in an old pail bound with bamboo. The bamboo broke and the bottom fell out of the pail, and at that moment Chiyono was set free!

In commemoration, she wrote a poem:

*In this way and that I tried to save the old pail
Since the bamboo strip was weakening and about to break
Until at last the bottom fell out.
No more water in the pail!
No more moon in the water!*

Calling Card

Keichu, the great Zen teacher of the Meiji era, was the head of Tofuku, a cathedral in Kyoto. One day the governor of Kyoto called upon him for the first time.

His attendant presented the card of the governor, which read: Kitagaki, Governor of Kyoto.

"I have no business with such a fellow," said Keichu to his attendant. "Tell him to get out of here." The attendant carried the card back with apologies.

"That was my error," said the governor, and with a pencil he scratched out the words Governor of Kyoto. "Ask your teacher again."

"Oh, is that Kitagaki?" exclaimed the teacher when he saw the card. "I want to see that fellow."

Mokusen's Hand

Mokusen Hiki was living in a temple in the province of Tamba. One of his adherents complained of the stinginess of his wife.

Mokusen visited the adherent's wife and showed her his clenched fist before her face.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the surprised woman.

"Suppose my fist were always like that. What would you call it?" he asked.

"Deformed," replied the woman.

The he opened his hand flat in her face and asked: "Suppose it were always like that. What then?"

"Another kind of deformity," said the wife.

"If you understand that much" finished Mokusen, "you are a good wife." Then he left. After his visit, this wife helped her husband to distribute as well as to save.

Publishing the Sutras

Tetsugen, a devotee of Zen in Japan, decided to publish the sutras, which at that time were available only in Chinese. The books were to be printed with wood blocks in an edition of seven thousand copies, a tremendous undertaking.

Tetsugen began by traveling and collecting donations for this purpose. A few sympathizers would give him a hundred pieces of gold, but most of the time he received only small coins. He thanked each donor with equal gratitude. After ten years Tetsugen had enough money to begin his task.

It happened that at that time the Uji River overflowed. Famine followed. Tetsugen took the funds he had collected for the books and spent them to save others from starvation. Then he began again his work of collecting.

Several years afterwards an epidemic spread over the country. Tetsugen again gave away what he had collected, to help his people.

For a third time he started his work, and after twenty years his wish was fulfilled. The printing blocks, which produced the

first edition of sutras, can be seen today in the Obaku monastery in Kyoto.

The Japanese tell their children that Tetsugen made three sets of sutras, and that the first two invisible sets surpass even the last.

Heaven and Hell

A soldier named Nobushige came to Hakuin, and asked: "Is there really a paradise and a hell?"

"Who are you?" inquired Hakuin.

"I am a samurai," the warrior replied.

"You, a soldier!" exclaimed Hakuin. "What kind of ruler would have you as his guard? Your face looks like that of a beggar."

Nobushige became so angry that he began to draw his sword, but Hakuin continued: "So you have a sword! Your weapon is probably much too dull to cut off my head."

As Nobushige drew his sword Hakuin remarked: "Here open the gates of hell!"

At these words the samurai, perceiving the master's discipline, sheathed his sword and bowed.

"Here open the gates of paradise," said Hakuin

Gudo & the Emperor

The emperor Goyozei was studying Zen under Gudo. He inquired: "In Zen this very mind is Buddha. Is this correct?"

Gudo answered: "If I say yes, you will think that you understand without understanding. If I say no, I would be contradicting a fact which you may understand quite well."

On another day the emperor asked Gudo: "Where does the enlightened man go when he dies?"

Gudo answered: "I know not."

"Why don't you know?" asked the emperor.

"Because I have not died yet," replied Gudo.

The emperor hesitated to inquire further about these things his mind could not grasp. So Gudo beat the floor with his hand as if to awaken him, and the emperor was enlightened!

The emperor respected Zen and old Gudo more than ever after his enlightenment, and he even permitted Gudo to wear his hat in the palace in winter. When Gudo was over eighty he used to fall asleep in the midst of his lecture, and the emperor would quietly retire to another room so his beloved teacher might enjoy the rest his aging body required.

Transmission of the Book

In modern times a great deal of nonsense is talked about masters and disciples, and about the inheritance of a master's teaching by favorite pupils, entitling them to pass the truth on to their adherents. Of course Zen should be imparted in this way, from heart to heart, and in the past it was really accomplished. Silence and humility reigned rather than profession and assertion. The one who received such a teaching kept the matter hidden even after twenty years. Not until another discovered through his own need, that a real master was at hand was it learned that the teaching had been imparted, and even then the occasion arose quite naturally and the teaching made its way in its own right. Under no circumstance did the teacher even claim, "I am the successor of So-and-so." Such a claim would prove quite the contrary.

The Zen master Mu-nan had only one successor. His name was Shoji. After Shoji had completed his study of Zen, Mu-nan called him into his room. "I am getting old," he said, "and as far as I know, Shoji, you are the only one who will carry on this teaching. Here is a book. It has been passed down from master to master for seven generations. I have also added many points according to my understanding. The book is very valuable, and I am giving it to you to represent your successorship."

"If the book is such an important thing, you had better keep it," Shoji replied. "I received your Zen without writing and am satisfied with it as it is."

"I know that," said Mu-nan. "Even so, this work has been carried from master to master for seven generations, so you may keep it as a symbol of having received the teaching. Here."

They happened to be talking before a brazier. The instant Shoji felt the book in his hands he thrust it into the flaming coals. He had no lust for possessions.

Mu-nan, who never had been angry before, yelled: "What are you doing!"

Shoji shouted back: "What are you saying!"

One Note Zen

After Kakua visited the emperor he disappeared and no one knew what became of him. He was the first Japanese to study Zen in China, but since he showed nothing of it, save one note, he is not remembered for having brought Zen into his country.

Kakua visited China and accepted the true teaching. He did not travel while he was there. Meditating constantly, he lived on a remote part of a mountain. Whenever people found him and asked him to preach he would say a few words and then move to another part of the mountain where he could be found less easily.

The emperor heard about Kakua when he returned to Japan and asked him to preach Zen for his edification and that of his subjects. Kakua stood before the emperor in silence. He produced a flute from the folds of his robe, and blew one short note. Bowing politely, he disappeared.

Most Valuable Thing

A student asked Sozan, a Chinese Zen master, "What is the most valuable thing in the world?"

The master replied: "The head of a dead cat."

"Why is the head of a dead cat the most valuable thing in the world?" inquired the student.

Sozan replied: "Because no one can name its price."

Reformation

Ryokan devoted his life to the study of Zen. One day he heard that his nephew, despite the admonitions of relatives, was spending his money on a courtesan. Inasmuch as the nephew had taken Ryokan's place in managing the family estate and the property was in danger of being dissipated, the relatives asked Ryokan to do something about it.

Ryokan had to travel a long way to visit his nephew, whom he had not seen for many years. The nephew seemed pleased to meet his uncle again and invited him to remain overnight.

All night Ryokan sat in meditation. As he was departing in the morning he said to the young man: "I must be getting old, my hand shakes so. Will you help me tie the string of my straw sandal?"

The nephew helped him willingly. "Thank you," finished Ryokan, "you see, a man becomes older and feebler day by day."

Take good care of yourself." Then Ryokan left, never mentioning a word about the courtesan or the complaints of the relatives. But, from that morning on, the dissipations of the nephew ended.

Temper

A Zen student came to Bankei and complained: "Master, I have an ungovernable temper. How can I cure it?"

"You have something very strange," replied Bankei. "Let me see what you have."

"Just now I cannot show it to you," replied the other.

"When can you show it to me?" asked Bankei.

"It arises unexpectedly," replied the student.

"Then," concluded Bankei, "it must not be your own true nature. If it were, you could show it to me at any time. When you were born you did not have it, and your parents did not give it to you. Think that over."

Time to Die

Ikkyu, the Zen master, was very clever even as a boy. His teacher had a precious teacup, a rare antique. Ikkyu happened to break this cup and was greatly perplexed. Hearing the footsteps of his teacher, he held the pieces of the cup behind him. When the master appeared, Ikkyu asked: "Why do people have to die?"

"This is natural," explained the older man. "Everything has to die and has just so long to live."

Ikkyu, producing the shattered cup, added: "It was time for your cup to die."

Silent Temple

Shoichi was a one-eyed teacher of Zen, sparkling with enlightenment. He taught his disciples in Tofuku temple.

Day and night the whole temple stood in silence. There was no sound at all.

The teacher abolished even the reciting of sutras. His pupils had nothing to do but meditate.

When the master passed away, an old neighbor heard the ringing of bells and the recitation of sutras. Then she knew Shoichi had gone.

Two Principles to Live By

A traveler through the mountains came upon an elderly gentleman who was busy planting a tiny almond tree. Knowing that almond trees take many years to mature, he commented to the man "It seems odd that a man of your advanced age would plant such a slow-growing tree!"

The man replied, "I like to live my life based on two principles. One is that I will live forever. The other is that this is my last day."

(paraphrased from either Lao Tsu or Chuang-T'su)

Then Zen

One of Ho Chi Zen's students asked him, "What was the occasion of your enlightenment?"

Ho replied: "I forget."

Emptiness

In Chuang Tzu, he is visited by another character, Great Knowledge, whose inquiries he answers by laughing and slapping his knee and shouting, "I don't know! I don't know!"

End of Questions

Upon meeting a Zen master at a social event, a psychiatrist decided to ask him a question that had been on his mind.

"Exactly how do you help people?" he inquired.

"I get them to where they can't ask any more questions," the Master answered.

One Flicks Dirt with His Toe

[The Buddha is speaking]: "When the mind is pure, the Buddha land will be pure."

At that time, Shariputra, moved by the Buddha's supernatural powers, thought to himself: "If the mind of the bodhisattva is pure, then his Buddha land will be pure. Now when our World-Honored-One first determined to become a bodhisattva, surely his intentions were pure. Why then is this Buddha land so filled with impurities?"

The Buddha, knowing his thoughts, said to him, "What do you think? Are the sun and the moon impure? Is that why the blind man fails to see them?"

Shariputra replied, "No, World Honored One. That is the fault of the blind man. The sun and moon are not to blame."

Buddha: "Shariputra, it is the failings of living beings that prevent them from seeing the marvelous purity of the land of the Buddha, the Thus Come One. The Thus Come One is not to blame. Shariputra, this land of mine is pure, but you fail to see it."

Shariputra said, "When I look at this land, I see it full of knolls and hollows, thorny underbrush, sand and gravel, dirt, rocks, many mountains, filth and defilement."

The Buddha then pressed his toe against the earth, and immediately the thousand-million fold world was adorned with hundreds and thousands of rare jewels. All the members of the great assembly sighed in wonder at what they had never seen before, and all saw that they were seated on jeweled lotuses."

The Buddha said to Shariputra, "Now do you see the marvelous purity of this Buddha land?"

Shariputra replied, "Indeed, I do. Now all the marvelous purity of the Buddha land is before me."

The Buddha said to Shariputra, "If a person's mind is pure, then he will see the wonderful blessings that adorn this land."

[The above is from "The Vimalakirti Sutra" translated by Burton Watson, pp. 29-31. I have edited some sentences for brevity.] By the way, Watson's translation of the Vimalakirti is a triumph! The introduction alone is worth the price of the book.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote:

"Fire can be produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, and a candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years. If even the most ordinary things of this world are such wonders, then how much more wondrous is the power of the Mystic Law?"

(From "The One Essential Phrase")

And:

"Please understand that I am merely joining my one drop to the rivers and the oceans or adding my candle to the sun and the moon, hoping in this way to increase even slightly the volume of the water or the brilliance of the light."

(From "Recitation of the Hoben and Juryo Chapters")

The Parable of the Zither

"Sona, you cannot produce a good sound on the zither if you tighten the strings too much, can you?"

"That is correct, man of great virtue."

"And at the other extreme, you cannot produce a good sound either if you loosen the strings too much, can you?"

"What you said is precisely right, man of great virtue."

"Then what would you do?"

"Man of great virtue, it is vital to tune the strings properly and neither tighten nor loosen them too much."

"Sona, you should realize that the practice of the Way, which I preach, is exactly the same. If you are too assiduous in your practice, you will strain your mind and become too tense. However if you relax your mind too much, then you will be overwhelmed by laziness. You must strike a balance in your practice of the Way as well."

(From Treasures of the Heart by Daisaku Ikeda)

Su Shi and the Buddhist Monk

The famous Chinese poet Su Shi* (1037-1101 A.D.) was visiting his friend, who was a Buddhist monk. Su Shi asks the monk what Su Shi is like in the monk's eyes.

The monk replies, "In my eyes, you are a Buddha."

Su Shi is very happy with this response.

The monk then asks Su Shi the same question, and Su Shi answers, "In my eyes, you are dung!"

The monk smiles, and Su Shi is delighted, because he thinks he is so much better than the monk.

Then some days later, Su Shi tells the story to a friend, and the friend tells him the truth, "The monk sees you as a Buddha, because he sees everything as Buddha, because he has a Buddha's heart and eyes. You see the monk as dung, because you see everything as dung, because you have a dung's heart and eyes!"

[This story is from Nomis Fung]

Happy Chinaman

Anyone walking about Chinatowns in America will observe statues of a stout fellow carrying a linen sack. Chinese merchants call him Happy Chinaman or Laughing Buddha.

This Hotei lived in the T'ang dynasty. He had no desire to call himself a Zen master or to gather many disciples around him. Instead, he walked the streets with a big sack into which he would put gifts of candy, fruit, or doughnuts. These he would give to children who gathered around him in play. He established a kindergarten of the streets.

Whenever he met a Zen devotee he would extend his hand and say: "Give me one penny." And if anyone asked him to return to a temple to teach others, again he would reply: "Give me one penny."

Once as he was about his play-work, another Zen master happened along and inquired: "What is the significance of Zen?"

Hotei immediately plopped his sack down in silent answer.

"Then," asked the other, "what is the actualization of Zen?"

At once the Happy Chinaman swung the sack over his shoulder and continued on his way.

Wo and Jah

A troubled man named Wo could not figure out how to live. So he began meditating to find some answers. After many months he felt no progress, so he asked the temple priest for help.

The priest said, "Go see old Jah."

So he hiked to old Jah's village and came upon the happy-looking old man coming from the forest under a heavy load of firewood.

"Excuse me, honored Jah," he said. "But can you teach me the secret of life?"

Jah raised his eyebrows and gazed at Wo. Then with some effort he twisted out from beneath his great bundle of firewood and let it crash to the ground.

"There, that is enlightenment," he said, straightening up with relief and smiling.

The troubled man looked on in shock at the prickly firewood scattered over the ground. "Is that all there is to it?" he said.

"Oh, no," said Jah. Then he bent down, collected all the scattered sticks, hoisted them carefully up on his back and made ready to walk on. "This is enlightenment, too. Come. Let's go together for tea."

So Wo walked along with Jah. "What is old Jah showing me?" he asked.

Jah replied, "First, yes, you are suffering a heavy burden. Many do. But, as the Buddha taught and many have realized, much of your burden and much of your joylessness is your craving for what you can't have and your clinging to what you can't keep.

"See the nature of your burden and of the chafing you experience as you try to cling to it useless, unnecessary, damaging; and you can let it go. In doing so, you find relief, and you are freer to see the blessings of life and to choose wisely to receive them."

"Thank you, old Jah," said Wo. "And why did you call picking up the burden of firewood again enlightenment as well?"

"One understanding is that some burden in life is unavoidable — and even beneficial, like firewood. With occasional rest, it can be managed, and with freedom from undue anxiety about it, it will not cause chafe.

"Once the undue burden is dropped, we straighten up and see and feel the wonder and power of being. Seeing others suffering without that freedom and blissful experience, we willingly and knowingly pick up their burdens out of compassion joining and aiding others in their various struggles for liberation, enlightenment and fulfillment."

"Thank you, Old Jah," said the exhilarated Wo. "You have enlightened me."

"Ah-so," said Jah. "Your understanding is enlightened. Now to make it part of your living and your spirit, you must go follow the eight practices and meditate. Then you will learn to detach yourself from your useless burden of cravings and to attach yourself to the profound source of being, out of which life, creativity, joy and compassion form and flow."

And so Wo went and did. And understanding the truths gave him comfort. And practicing the good behaviors kept him from harming himself or others anymore. And concentrating on the deep blissful potential of life gave him a continuing sense of

companionship and joyful awe and of well-being in his spirit, no matter what else of pain he had to deal with.

Buy Your Own Fish

A government minister very much enjoyed eating fish. Every morning, many people lined up at his front doors, eagerly presenting gifts of expensive and exotic fish to him.

Observing this, with great uneasiness, he calmly thanked them for their kindness but flatly refused to receive any one of those fish. This lack of social courtesy deeply surprised and annoyed his young brother, who lived with him. One night, after dinner he curiously asked his elder brother for the reason.

"Its very simple," the minister revealed. "To avoid potential trouble, a wise man should never let his inclinations or hobbies be known by the public. I fail miserably on that point because my taste for fish is common knowledge. Knowing my likes, those gift-givers will try to satisfy them. If I accept their gifts, I owe them favors. When making a decision, I would inevitably or subconsciously have their concerns on my mind. I might bend a law to return a favor. If this continues, I risk getting caught and losing my position and reputation. Who then will bother to give gifts to a disgraced and powerless prisoner? Therefore, I must vigorously decline their generosity. Without owing them any gratuity, I am my own master. Making appropriate and unbiased decision, I can keep my post much longer and continue to buy my own fish."

His brother promptly apologized for his short sightedness.

Mother's Advice

Jiun, a Shingon master, was a well-known Sanskrit scholar of the Tokugawa era. When he was young, he used to deliver lectures to his brother students.

His mother heard about this and wrote him a letter:

"Son, I do not think you became a devotee of the Buddha because you desired to turn into a walking dictionary for others. There is no end to information and commentation, glory and honor. I wish you would stop this lecture business. Shut yourself up in a little temple in a remote part of the mountain. Devote your time to meditation and in this way attain true realization."

Heart Burns Like Fire

Soyen Shaku, the first Zen teacher to come to America, said: "My heart burns like fire but my eyes are as cold as dead ashes." He made the following rules, which he practiced every day of his life.

In the morning before dressing, light incense and meditate.

Retire at a regular hour.

Partake of food at regular intervals. Eat with moderation and never to the point of satisfaction.

Receive a guest with the same attitude you have when alone. When alone, maintain the same attitude you have in receiving guests.

Watch what you say, and whatever you say, practice it.

When an opportunity comes do not let it pass by, yet always think twice before acting.

Do not regret the past. Look to the future.

Have the fearless attitude of a hero and the loving heart of a child.

Upon retiring, sleep as if you have entered your last sleep.

Upon awakening, leave your bed behind you instantly as if you had cast away a pair of old shoes.

Dead Man's Answer

When Mamiya, who later became a well-known preacher, went to a teacher for personal guidance, he was asked to explain the sound of one hand.

Mamiya concentrated upon what the sound of one hand might be. "You are not working hard enough," his teacher told him. "You are too attached to food, wealth, thing, and that sound. It would be better if you died. That would solve the problem."

The next time Mamiya appeared before his teacher he was again asked what he had to show regarding the sound of one hand. Mamiya at once fell over as if he were dead.

"You are dead all right," observed the teacher, "But how about that sound?"

"I haven't solved that yet," replied Mamiya looking up.

"Dead men do not speak," said the teacher, "Get out!"

Grass and Trees

During the Kamakura period, Shinkan studied Tendai six years and then studied Zen seven years; then he went to China and contemplated Zen for thirteen years more.

When he returned to Japan many desired to interview him and asked obscure questions. But when Shinkan received visitors, which was infrequently, he seldom answered their questions.

One day, a fifty-year old student of enlightenment said to Shinkan: "I have studied the Tendai school of thought since I was a little boy, but one thing in it I cannot understand. Tendai claims that even the grass and trees will become enlightened. To me this seems very strange."

"Of what use is it to discuss how grass and trees become enlightened," asked Shinkan? "The question is how you yourself can become so. Did you ever consider that?"

"I never thought of it in that way," marveled the old man.

"Then go home and think it over," finished Shinkan.

Black-Nosed Buddha

A nun who was searching for enlightenment made a statue of Buddha and covered it with gold leaf. Wherever she went she carried this golden Buddha with her.

Years passed and, still carrying her Buddha, the nun came to live in a small temple in a country where there were many Buddhas, each one with its own particular shrine.

The nun wished to burn incense before her golden Buddha. Not liking the idea of the perfume straying to the others, she designed a funnel through which the smoke would ascend only to her statue. This blackened the nose of the golden Buddha, making it especially ugly.

Ryonen's Clear Realization

The Buddhist nun, known as Ryonen, was born in 1797. She was the granddaughter of the famous Japanese warrior Shingen. Her poetical genius and alluring beauty were such that at seventeen she was serving the empress as one of the ladies of the court. Even at such a youthful age fame awaited her.

The beloved empress died suddenly and Ryonen's hopeful dreams vanished. She became acutely aware of the

impermanency of life in this world. It was then that she desired to study Zen.

Her relatives disagreed, however, and practically forced her into marriage. With a promise that she might become a nun after she had borne three children, Ryonen assented. Before she was twenty-five she had accomplished this condition. Then her husband and relatives could no longer dissuade her from her desire. She shaved her head, took the name of Ryonen, which means to realize clearly, and started on her pilgrimage.

She came to the city of Edo and asked Tetsugyu to accept her as a disciple. At one glance the master rejected her because she was too beautiful. Ryonen then went to another master, Hakuo. Hakuo refused her for the same reason, saying that her beauty would only make trouble. Ryonen obtained a hot iron and placed it against her face. In a few moments her beauty had vanished forever. Hakuo then accepted her as a disciple.

Commemorating this occasion, Ryonen wrote a poem on the back of a little mirror:

*In the service of my Empress
I burned incense to perfume my exquisite clothes,
Now as a homeless mendicant
I burn my face to enter a Zen temple.*

When Ryonen was about to pass from this world, she wrote another poem:

*Sixty-six times have these eyes beheld the changing scene
of autumn.
I have said enough about moonlight.
Ask no more.
Only listen to the voice of pines and cedars when no wind
stirs.*

Sour Miso

The cook monk Dairyo, at Bankei's monastery, decided that he would take good care of his old teacher's health and give him only fresh miso, a paste of soy beans mixed with wheat and yeast that often ferments. Bankei, noticing that he was being served better miso than his pupils asked: "Who is the cook today?"

Dairyo was sent before him. Bankei learned that according to his age and position he should eat only fresh miso. So he said to the cook: "Then you think I shouldn't eat at all." With this he entered his room and locked the door.

Dairyo, sitting outside the door, asked his teacher's pardon. Bankei would not answer. For seven days Dairyo sat outside and Bankei within.

Finally in desperation an adherent called loudly to Bankei: "You may be all right, old teacher, but this young disciple here has to eat. He cannot go without food forever!"

At that Bankei opened the door. He was smiling. He told Dairyo: "I insist on eating the same food as the least of my followers. When you become the teacher I do not want you to forget this."

No Work, No Food

Hyakujo, the Chinese Zen master, used to labor with his pupils even at the age of eighty, trimming the gardens, cleaning the grounds, and pruning the trees.

The pupils felt sorry to see the old teacher working so hard, but they knew he would not listen to their advice to stop, so they hid away his tools.

That day the master did not eat. The next day he did not eat, nor the next. "He may be angry because we have hidden his tools," the pupils surmised. "We had better put them back."

The day they did, the teacher worked and ate the same as before. In the evening, he instructed them: "No work, no food."

The True Path

Just before Ninakwa passed away the Zen master Ikkyu visited him. "Shall I lead you on?" Ikkyu asked.

Ninakawa replied: "I came here alone and I go alone. What help could you be to me?"

Ikkyu answered: "If you think you really come and go, that is your delusion. Let me show you the path on which there is no coming and no going."

With his words, Ikkyu had revealed the path so clearly that Ninakawa smiled and passed away.

Killing

Gasan instructed his adherents one day: "Those who speak against killing and who desire to spare the lives of all conscious beings are right. It is good to protect even animals and insects. But what about those persons who kill time, what about those who are destroying wealth, and those who destroy political economy? We should not overlook them. Furthermore, what of the one who preaches without enlightenment? He is killing Buddhism."

The Blockhead Lord

Two Zen teachers, Daigu and Gudo, were invited to visit a lord. Upon arriving, Gudo said to the lord: "You are wise by nature and have an innate ability to learn Zen."

"Nonsense," said Daigu. "Why do you flatter this blockhead? He may be a lord, but he doesn't know anything of Zen."

So, instead of building a temple for Gudo, the lord built it for Daigu and studied Zen with him.

Zengetsu's Rules

Zengetsu, a Chinese master of the T'ang dynasty, wrote the following advice for his pupils:

Living in the world yet not forming attachments to the dust of the world is the way of a true Zen student.

When witnessing the good action of another, encourage yourself to follow his example. Hearing of the mistaken action of another, advise yourself not to emulate it.

Even though alone in a dark room, be as if you were facing a noble guest. Express your feelings, but become no more expressive than your true nature.

Poverty is your treasure. Never exchange it for an easy life.

A person may appear a fool and yet not be one. He may only be guarding his wisdom carefully.

Virtues are the fruit of self-discipline and do not drop from heaven of themselves as does rain or snow.

Modesty is the foundation of all virtues. Let your neighbors discover you before you make yourself known to them.

A noble heart never forces itself forward. Its words are as rare gems, seldom displayed and of great value.

To a sincere student, every day is a fortunate day. Time passes, but he never lags behind. Neither glory nor shame can move him.

Censure yourself, never another. Do not discuss right and wrong.

Some things, though right, were considered wrong for generations. Since the value of righteousness may be recognized after centuries, there is no need to crave an immediate appreciation.

Live with cause and leave results to the great law of the universe. Pass each day in peaceful contemplation.

A Drop of Water

A Zen master named Gisan asked a young student to bring him a pail of water to cool his bath.

The student brought the water and, after cooling the bath, threw on to the ground the little that was left over.

“You dunce” the master scolded him. “Why didn’t you give the rest of the water to the plants? What right have you to waste even a drop of water in this temple?”

The young student attained Zen in that instant. He changed his name to Tekisui, which means a drop of water.

Three Kinds of Disciples

A Zen master named Gettan lived in the latter part of the Tokugawa era. He used to say: “There are three kinds of disciples: those who impart Zen to others, those who maintain the temples and shrines, and then there are the rice bags and the clothes-hangers.”

Gassan expressed the same idea. When he was studying under Tekisui, his teacher was very severe. Sometimes he even beat him. Other pupils would not stand this kind of teaching and quit. Gasan remained, saying: “A poor disciple utilizes a teacher’s influence. A fair disciple admires a teacher’s kindness. A good disciple grows strong under a teacher’s discipline.”

Buddha’s Zen

Buddha said: “I consider the positions of kings and rulers as that of dust motes. I observe treasure of god and gems as so many bricks and pebbles. I look upon the finest silken robes as tattered rags. I see myriad worlds of the universe as small seeds of fruit, and the greatest lake in India as a drop of oil on my foot. I perceive the teachings of the world to be the illusion of magicians. I discern the highest conception of emancipation as golden brocade in a dream, and view the holy path of the illuminated ones as flowers appearing in one’s eyes. I see mediation as a pillar of a mountain, Nirvana as a nightmare of daytime. I look upon the judgment of right and wrong as the serpentine dance of a dragon, and the rise and fall of beliefs as but traces left by the four seasons.”

Zen Dialogue

Zen teachers train their young pupils to express themselves. Two Zen temples each had a child protégé. One child, going to obtain vegetables each morning, would meet the other on the way.

“Where are you going?” asked the one.

“I am going wherever my feet go,” the other responded.

This reply puzzled the first child who went to his teacher for help. “Tomorrow morning, “ the teacher told him,

“when you met that little fellow, ask him the same question. He will give you the same answer, and then you ask him: “Suppose you have no feet, then where are you going?” That will fix him.

The children met again the following morning.

“Where are you going?” asked the first child.

“I am going wherever the wind blows,” answered the other.

This again nonplussed the youngster, who took his defeat to the teacher.

“Ask him where he is going if there is no wind,” suggested the teacher.

The next day the children met a third time.

“Where are you going?” asked the first child.

“I am going to market to buy vegetables,” the other replied.

Not the Wind, Not the Flag

Two monks were arguing about a flag. One said: “The flag is moving”

The other said: “The wind is moving.”

The sixth patriarch happened to be passing by. He told them: “Not the wind, not the flag; mind is moving.”

Everyday Life is the Path

Joshu asked Nansen: “What is the path?”

Nansen said: “Everyday life is the path.”

Joshu asked: “Can it be studied?”

Nansen said: “If you try to study, you will be far away from it.”

Joshu asked: “If I do not study, how can I know it is the paths?”

Nansen said: “The path does not belong to the perception world, neither does it belong to the nonperception world. Cognition is a delusion and noncognition is senseless. If you want to reach the true path beyond doubt, place yourself in the same freedom as sky. You name it neither good nor not-good.”

At these words Joshu was enlightened.

Joshu Washes the Bowl

A monk told Joshu: “I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me.”

Joshu asked: “Have you eaten your rice porridge?”

The monk replied: “I have eaten.”

Joshu said: “Then you had better wash your bowl.”

At that moment the monk was enlightened.

Seizei Alone and Poor

A monk named Seizei asked of Sozan: “Seizei is alone and poor. Will you give him support?”

Sozan asked: “Seizei?”

Seizei responded: “Yes, sir.”

Sozan said: “You have Zen, the best wine in China, and already have finished three cups, and still you are saying they did not even wet your lips.”

Arresting the Stone Buddha

A merchant bearing fifty rolls of cotton goods on his shoulders stopped to rest from the heat of the day beneath a shelter where a large stone Buddha was standing. There he fell asleep, and when he awoke his goods had disappeared. He immediately reported the matter to the police.

A judge named O-oka opened court to investigate. "That stone Buddha must have stolen the goods," concluded the judge. "He is supposed to care for the welfare of the people, but he has failed to perform his holy duty. Arrest him."

The police arrested the stone Buddha and carried it into the court. A noisy crowd followed the statue, curious to learn what kind of a sentence the judge was about to impose.

When O-oka appeared on the bench he rebuked the boisterous audience. "What right have you people to appear before the court laughing and joking in this manner? You are in contempt of court and subject to a fine and imprisonment."

The people hastened to apologize. "I shall have to impose a fine on you," said the judge, "But I will remit it provided each one of you brings one roll of cotton goods to the court within three days. Anyone failing to do this will be arrested."

One of the rolls of cloth which people brought was quickly recognized by the merchant as his own, and thus the thief was easily discovered. The merchant recovered his goods, and the cotton rolls were returned to the people.

The Hungry Student

There was once a student who was so poor all he ever had to eat was rice. Plain white rice. Morning, noon and night.

The student lived on the second floor of a building; on the first floor there was a fine restaurant. One hot day, after he had cooked up his rice, the student opened the window to get some air. AHHHHHHhhhhhhhhhh! All the smells from the restaurant below came wafting his way. He sat by the open window and began to eat. AHHHHHHhhhhhhhhhh! The smells seemed to flavor his rice! What a delicious discovery! Now, each time he cooked a meal, he would open the window and invite the smells to come in.

One day, the student was walking through the crowded streets with a friend. The friend was worried that the student had so little and cried, "You are so poor! You don't even have money for food. All you ever eat is rice. I tell you, why not quit your studies and go into business with me? I'll give you meat three times a day."

The student smiled and shook his head. "Oh, I would never quit my studies," he said, "Besides, it's not so bad..." and he proceeded to tell his friend all about the restaurant and the open window and the smells. Too bad for him! The owner of the restaurant was walking right behind them and he heard everything. He began to poke the student with his finger.

"Excuse me, excuse me...I am the owner of that restaurant."

The student turned around, "Is that so?" he brightened, "What a pleasure to meet you! And what a fine restaurant you must have! I myself have never been able to dine there, but the smells! Oh, the savory smells!"

"That's right," sneered the restaurant owner, "And you've been smelling my smells for some long time now. What would you say, about six or seven months?"

"Yes," the student nodded, "That sounds about right."

The owner's eyes tightened up. "Well," he whined, "You owe me some money!"

"What?" cried the student, "Surely there must be some mistake."

"Oh, no. No mistake. No mistake at all." The restaurant owner was busy now with paper and pencil, writing up a bill. "Smells from my restaurant, six or seven months... Money, money, money! You owe me money! "

"Sir, I owe you nothing. No!"

"Oh, yes!"

"No!"

"Oh, yes!"

"No!"

By now the two were shouting in the busy street and a crowd had gathered round. At last, someone called out: "You two will never settle this yourselves. Why not go and see Ooka? Ooka the Wise."

Ooka was a famous judge. This seemed like a very good idea, so the two of them hurried across town until they came to a huge building. Inside there was a long hall. And, at the end of the long hall, on a high chair behind a large desk was Ooka. Ooka the Wise.

The restaurant owner rushed up to Ooka and began his shrill complaint, "Ooka! Ooka! This man owes me money..." He told Ooka all about the rice and the window and the smells from his restaurant. Ooka listened intently. Then slowly, he turned to the student and asked, "Is this so? Have you been smelling this man's smells?"

"Uh, why yes. Yes, I have, sir," the student admitted.

"I see," said Ooka, "And do you have any money?" Now it just so happened that the student had every coin he owned in his pocket that day.

"Yes, yes I do." Ooka extended his hand. "Give me the coins," he ordered.

The student reached deep into his pockets and pulled out his coins. He handed them to Ooka. Ooka began to count the coins. Clink, clink, clink.

The restaurant owner's eyes lit up when he saw all that money. Clink, clink, clink. The student looked like he would cry. It was all the money he had. Clink. Ooka finished counting. He gathered up all the coins and then he handed them--back to the student.

"Wait!" cried the restaurant owner, "What about my payment?"

"My dear sir," said Ooka, "Did you not hear the clinking of the coins?"

"Yes..."

"Well," smiled Ooka, "The clinking of the coins is the price of smells."

Three Zen Jokes

Q--What do you get when you cross a Zen Buddhist with a Druid?

A--Someone who worships the tree that is not there.

Q--What do you get when you cross a Zen Buddhist with a Druid mathematician?

A--Someone who worships the square roots of the tree that is not there.

Q--What do you get when you cross a Zen Buddhist with a Druid veterinarian?

A--Someone who worships the bark of the tree that is not there.

How To Rule a Country

The Country of Yang had been devastated by a palace insurrection and an invasion, and the older ruler had suffered an untimely and humiliating death. After visiting the sacked city and wounded soldiers, the new king Yang-Jau was disturbed and wondered how a similar situation could be prevented.

"Your Majesty, if you want to be an Emperor" said an advisor, named Go Wai; "you should treat your subordinates as teachers. To be a King, you should treat them as friends. To be a Lord, you should treat them as guests. If you wish to ruin your country, you should treat them as servants or even slaves. The choice is yours alone."

Impressed and a little surprised, the king politely returned, "Your statement is very interesting. Since I desire to be an Emperor, whom should I begin to respect?"

"Your Majesty might start with me," the advisor boldly suggested, "a little known person. As a result, other capable individuals, with greater reputations, will be envious and come to try their political fortunes here. These intellectuals, whose counsel you seek and esteem, having heard of your generosity and expecting to be treated likewise, will confidently approach your Majesty and freely present their ideas and suggestions. Your Majesty may then choose the best administrators from among them. Thus our country's prosperity and Your Majesty's potency will be secured."

The king was well pleased and acted swiftly. The news rapidly spread among neighboring countries. Hearing this, people were amazed. Many well-educated gentlemen resigned their current positions and relocated themselves to this country. In less than three years, after meticulous selections and severe competitions, a handful of distinguished and competent foreigners were properly appointed, with similar generous treatment from the king. They helped him to efficiently manage his country and steadily expand its borders.

The Two Different Monks

During the time of Guatama Siddharta there were no telephones or Internet or even a written language. Because communication is so vital for transmitting the teachings of the Buddha, a class of disciples called traveling monks arose to facilitate communication between the Buddha and his supporters.

Those who were chosen had to be in good physical condition, be completely honest, and have excellent memories. One such monk was Sadhonna.

Sadhonna was returning to the Deer Park where the Buddha was staying when he encountered a monk practicing the Sadmadhi of self denial.

The self-denying monk resembled cobwebs stretched over a skeleton. He was sitting on an anthill in the Lotus Position. He did not even twitch as ants pulled at his flesh.

Sadhonna called to him, "Fellow monk, I am on my way to see the Buddha. Is there any message you would like to convey?"

The self-denying monk grimaced and said, "Ask the Buddha, how many more lifetimes I will endure before attaining Buddhahood."

Sadhonna assured the self-denying monk that he would ask, and then continued on his journey.

Just before nightfall, he heard someone singing a little off key. He could see someone, dressed in monk's clothing, clumsily dancing in a little clearing in the woods.

He called out to him saying, "Fellow monk, I am on my way to see the Buddha. Is there any message you would like to convey?"

The dancing monk thought for a moment and said, "Yes, ask him when will I reach my enlightenment."

Sadhonna assured the dancing monk he would ask, and then he walked on to see the Buddha.

A few months later Sadhonna returned and encountered the self-denying monk. His flesh was so thin that his bones were visible. "The Buddha answered your question," Sadhonna said

"How long until I reach my enlightenment?" whispered the self-denying monk.

"Four more lifetimes," answered Sadhonna.

The self-denying monk grimaced.

Sadhonna traveled a bit further and encountered the dancing monk. "The Buddha has answered your question," he said.

"How many more lifetimes?" asked the dancing monk.

Sadhonna pointed to a large tree with thousands of leaves shimmering in the sunlight and said "As many as the leaves on that tree."

The dancing monk laughed and attained enlightenment instantly.

24 Hours To Die

Raj asked Buddha, "Reverend Sir, how come my mind wanders around to forbidden places and yours does not?" "Sir, how come I do back-biting and you don't?" "Sir, how come I don't have compassion for others, while you have?" All the questions that Raj asked were of similar nature.

Buddha replied, "Raj, your questions are good, but it seems to me that in 24 hours from now you will die."

Raj got up and started getting ready to go.

Buddha asked, "Raj, what happened? You came with such vitality now you are totally dismayed."

Raj said, "Sir, my mother told me that your words are true and are to be held in high esteem. So please let me go so that I may meet my family members, friends and others before I die."

Buddha said, "But there are still 24 hours. Sit, we will talk more."

Raj said, "Reverend Sir, please let me go. I must meet my people before I die."

So Raj left and went home. Met his mother and started crying. The word spread. His friends came; other family members came; neighbors came. Everyone was crying with Raj. Time flew.

Raj was busy either crying or counting the hours. When only 3 hours were left, he pulled up a cot and lied down. Although the Death has not yet arrived, poor Raj was kind of dead.

When only an hour was left, Buddha walked in.

Buddha said to Raj, "Raj, why are you lying down on the cot with your closed eyes. Death is still an hour away. And an hour is 60 minutes long. That's a lot of time. Get up, let us talk."

Raj: "Sir, what is it now that you want to talk? Just let me die peacefully."

Buddha: "Raj, there is still time and our talk will get over before the 'ordained' time."

Raj: "Okay, Sir... say what you have to say."

Buddha: "In the past 24 hours, did you curse anyone?"

Raj: "How could I curse anyone, I was all the time thinking about death."

Buddha: "In the past 24 hours, did you think or wish ill for anyone?"

Raj: "How could I do that, I was all the time thinking about death."

Buddha: "In the past 24 hours, did you steal?"

Raj: "Sir, how can you even ask that, I was all the time thinking about death?"

Finally the Buddha said, "Raj, I don't know who has to die and who has to live. But understanding the ultimate truth — i.e. death — can be very enlightening. All the questions you posed to me have been answered by yourself because of the awareness of death that you experienced during the past 24 hours. The difference between me and you is that you were aware of death for the past 24 hours, I have been aware for the past 24 years."

Beginning

(Deng Ming-Dao)

This is the moment of embarking.

All auspicious signs are in place.

In the beginning, all things are hopeful. We prepare ourselves to start anew. Though we may be intent on the magnificent journey ahead, all things are contained in the first moment: our optimism, our faith, our resolution, and our innocence.

In order to start, we must make a decision. The decision is a commitment to daily self-cultivation. We must make a strong connection to our inner selves. Outside matters are superfluous. Alone and naked, we negotiate all of life's travails. Therefore, we alone must make something of ourselves, transforming ourselves into the instruments for experiencing the deepest spiritual essence of life.

Once we make our decision, all things will come to us. Auspicious signs are not a superstition, but a confirmation. They are a response. It is said that if one chooses to pray to a rock with enough devotion, even that rock will come alive. In the same way, once we choose to commit ourselves to spiritual practice, even the mountains and valleys will reverberate to the sound of our purpose.

Positioning

(Deng Ming-Dao)

Heron stands in the blue estuary,
Solitary, white, unmoving for hours.

A fish! Quick avian darting;
The prey is captured.

People always ask how to follow Tao. It is as easy and natural as the heron standing in the water. The bird moves when it must; it does not move when stillness is appropriate.

The secret of its serenity is a type of vigilance, a contemplative state. The heron is not in mere dumbness or sleep. It knows a lucid stillness. It stands unmoving in the flow of the water. It gazes unperturbed and is aware. When Tao brings it something that it needs, it seizes the opportunity without hesitation or deliberation. Then it goes back to its quiescence without disturbing itself or its surroundings. Unless it found the right position in the water's flow and remained patient, it would not have succeeded.

Actions in life can be reduced to two factors; positioning and timing. If we are not in the right place at the right time, we cannot possibly take advantage of what life has to offer us.

Almost anything is appropriate if an action is in accord with the time and place. But we must be vigilant and prepared. Even if the time and the place are right, we can still miss our chance if we do not notice the moment, if we act inadequately, or if we hamper ourselves with doubts and second thoughts.

When life presents an opportunity, we must be ready to seize it without hesitation or inhibition. Position is useless without awareness. If we have both, we make no mistakes.

The Next Book of Nasruddin

The name that every Afghan remembers hearing about in childhood. Here are few of the thousands of humorous and thoughtful stories about Him. His origin is being claimed by three countries. Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. "The Nasruddin stories, known throughout the Middle East, constitute one of the strangest achievements in the history of metaphysics. Superficially, most of the Nasruddin stories may be used as jokes. They are told and retold endlessly in the teahouses and caravanserais, in the homes and on the radio waves, of Asia. But it is inherent in the Nasruddin story that it may be understood at any of many depths. There is the joke, the moral - and the little extra which brings the consciousness of the potential mystic a little further on the way to realization."

The Cow and the Judge

Qazi (Judge) Nasruddin was working in his room one day when a neighbor ran in and said, "If one man's cow kills another's, is the owner of the first cow responsible?"

"It depends," answered Nasruddin.

"Well," said the man, "your cow has killed mine."

"Oh," answered Nasruddin. "Everyone knows that a cow cannot think like a human, so a cow is not responsible, and that means that its owner is not responsible either."

"I'm sorry, Judge," said the man. "I made a mistake. I meant that my cow killed yours."

Judge Nasruddin thought for a few seconds and then said, "When I think about it more carefully, this case is not as easy as I thought at first." And then he turned to his clerk and said, "Please bring me that big black book from the shelf behind you..."

The Burglary

Mullah Nasruddin and his wife came home one day to find the house burgled. Everything portable had been taken away.

"It's all your fault," said his wife, "for you should have made sure that the house was locked before we left."

The Neighbors took up the chant:

"You did not lock the windows," said one.

"Why did you not expect this?" said another.

"The locks were faulty and you did not replace them," said a third.

"Just a moment," said Nasruddin, "surely I am not the only one to blame?"

"And who should we blame?" they shouted.

"What about the thieves?" said Nasruddin. "Are they totally innocent?"

The Fortuitous Burglar

That was the time Mullah Nasruddin's family was very poor. One day Nasruddin's wife woke him in the middle of the night and whispered,

"Nasruddin, There is a thief in the kitchen!"

"Shhh... Stupid woman!" replied Nasruddin. "Let him be. Perhaps he'll find something valuable, then we seize it!"

The Donkey and the Official

Mulla Nasrudin had an insatiable craving for knowledge, but did not seem to know what knowledge was. As a result he asked a local wise man the stupidest questions, always based upon random assumptions

One day the Mulla noticed that his donkey was missing. He ran to the wise man's house. 'Well, Mulla, what is it this time?'

'My donkey is gone! Where can I find it?'

The wise man was quite fed up with the Mulla. 'Nasrudin,' he said, 'the donkey has run off, turned into a man and been appointed the magistrate in the next town.'

Thanking the wise man for his information, the Mulla trudged to the court. There sat the magistrate, and Nasrudin shook his fist at him:

'Come home at once, you foolish animal!'

The magistrate was furious. 'Who are you and how dare you talk to me like that? I'll have you sent to the prison!'

'I'm the well-known Mulla Nasrudin, and I have it on the best authority that you are my donkey.'

'That's ridiculous. Nobody in his right senses would credit such a thing!'

Nasrudin drew himself up to his full height. 'Say what you like he said, I prefer to believe the statement of a wise man rather than that of a donkey.'

Free Bread

The Mullah's wife sent him to buy some bread. When the Mullah arrived at the bread shop he saw a long line waiting to buy bread. He thought he would do something to get in front of the line. He shouted, "People, don't you know the Sultan's daughter is getting married tonight and he is giving away free bread?"

The multitude ran toward the palace as the Sultan was generous to a fault and loved his daughter more than anyone. The Mullah was now in front of the line and was about to buy his bread when he thought to himself, "Mullah, you are truly a fool. All the citizen's are getting free bread tonight and I am about to pay for it. So he ran to the palace and when he got there was thoroughly beaten by the disappointed people.

The Soup

A farmer came to town as a guest of the Mullah. The farmer brought a goose as a gift for the Mullah. That night Mullah Nasrudin's wife cooked the goose and served it in a feast with many other delicacies to the Mullah and others with the farmer sitting in the place of honor among the guests.

The farmer returned home the next day and a week later a stranger knocked on the Mullah's door saying, "I am the friend of the guy who brought you the goose." The Mullah welcomed him and asked his wife to cook a big meal and invited the stranger to dinner. Hardly a week had gone by when another stranger came claiming to be the friend of the friend of the guy who had brought the goose. Once again the stranger was fed a big meal and so was the next stranger who was the friend of the friend of the friend of the guy who had brought the goose.

By this time the Mullah and his wife had become pretty fed up of feeding all the countryside. Nasrudin's wife told him that they had only one chicken left. Mullah said not to worry since he had a plan.

When the next friend of the friend of the friend of the friend of the guy who had brought the goose arrived the Mullah told his wife to boil some water and serve it in a soup bowl. The guest

tasted the water and asked what kind of a soup was this. The Mullah replied, "Sir you have before you the soup of the soup of the soup of the soup of the goose that the friend of your friend of your friend of your friend brought."

No more strangers visited Mullah after that.

Working Spirit

The mullah got a job at the Bazaar as a porter. Today he had to load bags of wheat onto a cart. The foreman noticed that he was carrying one bag where the other workers carried two. The Foreman asked the Mullah, "How come you only carry one bag at a time and all the others carry two?" The Mullah replied, "I'm not that lazy to make one trip when I can make two."

Treasure Hunt

This merchant in Baghdad had some bad luck. A thief robbed his house of all his gold. The authorities caught the thief but he would not reveal where he had hidden the merchant gold. One night in a dream he was told by a Genie to go to Cairo to seek his fortune. So with great difficulty he made his way to Cairo. When he got there as it happened there was a robbery and the people caught him and beat him up and then took him to the Captain of the guard. He told his story of how he had left his home in Baghdad and arrived in Cairo in search of his fortune.

The Captain told him, "You fool, three times I dreamt a Genie who said that if I went to Baghdad I would find a great oak tree next to a well on top of a hill overlooking the great mosque. He said if I searched the well, I would find a great treasure. But, I'm wise. I stayed home. You don't find me going on a wild goose chase. The merchant recognized the well as that in his own home and returned home. He searched his well and found his stolen wealth.

Casket

The master was attending the wake of a friend. But keeping in accordance with the deceased wishes, the family had requested that the casket remain closed.

The deceased was very well liked, and many people lined up to walk past the casket. Some knelt in prayer beside it while others placed their hands on the closed lid and said their final good-byes.

Meanwhile, the master sat quietly in the back of the room. Before long, the funeral director approached and stated with some embarrassment, "Excuse me, I know you were a great friend of the deceased, and there is something I must tell you. My embalmer was sick today, so I had no choice but to leave the body in the basement refrigerator. So now, all these good people are paying homage to an empty box!"

The master smiled and said "Tell me sir, how would it be different if his body were in the casket?"

Blurred Vision

A businessman was highly critical of his competitors' storefront windows. "Why, they are the dirtiest windows in town," he claimed.

Fellow business people grew tired of the man's continual criticism and nitpicking comments about the windows. One day over coffee, the businessman carried the subject just too far. Before leaving, a fellow storeowner suggested the man get his own windows washed.

He followed the advice, and the next day at coffee, he exclaimed, "I can't believe it. As soon as I washed my windows, my competitor must have cleaned his too. You should see them shine."

Bridge Talk

Bohlul was sitting on a bridge, watching the river flow by. The king saw him, and immediately had him arrested. "A bridge is for passing, not for staying!" said the king. Bohlul then replied to the king, "You should take a look at yourself. Look at how you are clinging to this life."

Nasrudin the Advisor

Some say that Nasrudin lived in the time of the great conqueror Tamerlane, and was one of his advisers.

One day, so goes the tale, Timur the Lame called the Mulla and said, "Nasrudin, the Empire is full of slanderers. How can we stop their evil work?"

'You can never stop crime unless you punish all the criminals,' said Nasrudin.

'You mean the slanderers?'

'And their accomplices - those who listen to them,' the Mulla reminded him.

Nasrudin and the Frog

Nasrudin went to a bar regularly. Whenever he sat down to drink, he used to take out a frog from his pocket and put it on the table. It was his pet. He would start drinking and after a while, he would stop. He would then put back the frog in the pocket and leave. Everyone was astonished about this.

One day he went to drink again. The bartender came to him and murmured, "Drinks for you on the house today, sir."

"Thank you" Nasrudin said, "What is the occasion?"

"Please tell me why do you always bring this frog with you. I am very curious."

Nasrudin paused for a while. Then he answered, "Look, it is very simple. When I begin to see two frogs on the table, I remember it is time for me to leave. Otherwise, I might fall on my way home and have injury. So after some drinks, I put the frog back and leave."

After Nasrudin went back to drinking. The bartender whispered to the waitress, "Go find a second frog for me."

Watering the Plants

Nasrudin used to water his plants daily. He would bring the container near the plants and pour from it. But no water would come out. But he kept pouring one by one lost in his own world. His close neighbor who was watching this for quite some days came to him and asked, "Excuse me, Nasrudin, may I ask you something?"

Nasrudin smiled, "Sure"

Neighbor, "You are pouring water to these plants everyday but I don't see water coming out from the container. What is the matter?"

Nasrudin again smiled, "No need of water. What do you think these plants are? They are all plastic."

The neighbor (even more confused): "For god's sake, tell me then why is there any need of pretending to put water in these plastic plants?"

Nasrudin laughed: "So that the neighbors would not think these are plastic plants. It is just between you and me. If I don't pretend to water them regularly, they might find out these are not real, after all."

Giving Directions

Once Nasrudin was standing by the road near his house. A car came and stopped in front of him. A gentleman from the car rolled down the window and asked, "Sir, can you tell me which is the way to Delhi?"

Nasrudin watched him for a while and said, "Go left, then go right. After 9 km, turn right. Again take left. Now turn right. Continue for another 9 km and you will come to a crossroad. Now go straight and you will reach there."

"Thank you" said the man and the car left. After a while he came back to Nasrudin. Annoyingly he said, "What is all this? I followed all your directions properly and here I am at the same place where I began from."

Nasrudin coolly replied, "Fine, I was just checking whether you can follow the directions or not. Now I will give you proper directions to Delhi."

The Man against Sufis and Dhu Nun

A certain young man was always speaking against Sufis. One day, Dhu Nun took the ring from his finger and gave it to the man.

"Take this to the market and sell it for a dollar," he said.

The young man took it to the market and tried to sell it, but no one would give him more than 10 cents for it. The young man returned to Dhu Nun with the news.

"Now, take the ring to the jewelers and see what they price it at," said Dhu Nun.

The jewelers priced the ring at 1000 dollars.

"You know as much about Sufis," Dhu Nun told the young man when he returned, "as those people in the marketplace know about this ring."

The young man repented, and disbelieved in the Sufis no more.

[Adapted from Farid-ud-Din Attar's "Tadhkirat al-Awliyya" / "Memorial of the Saints."]

Rabi`a's gifts to Hasan of Basra

Once Rabi`a al-Adawiyya sent Hasan of Basra 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 Rabi`a.

"The tie of marriage applies to those who have being," Rabi`a replied. "Here being has disappeared, for I have become naughted to self and exist only through Him. 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, Rabi`a?" Hasan asked.

"I lost all 'found' things in Him," Rabi`a answered.

"How do you know Him?" Hasan inquired.

"You know the 'how'; I know the 'how-less'," Rabi`a said.

Deductive Reasoning

"How old are you, Mulla?" Someone asked,

"Three years older than my brother." Replied Nasruddin

"How do you know that?" asked the stranger.

"Reasoning. Last year, I heard my brother tell someone that I was two years older than him. A year has passed. That means that I am older by one year. I shall soon be old enough to be his grandfather."

Tit for Tat

Nasruddin went into a shop to buy a pair of trousers. Then he changed his mind and chose a cloak instead, at the same price. Picking up the cloak, he left the shop.

"You have not paid," shouted the merchant.

"I left you the trousers, which were of the same value as the cloak."

"But you did not pay for the trousers, either."

"Of course not," said Mullah, "Why should I pay for something that I did not want to buy?"

More Useful

One day, Mullah Nasruddin entered his favorite teahouse and said; "the moon is more useful than the sun."

An old man asked "Why Mulla?"

Nasruddin replied, "We need the light more during the night than during the day."

Promises Kept

A friend asked the Mullah, "How old are you?"

"Forty" replied the Mullah.

The friend said, "But you said the same thing two years ago!"

"Yes," replied the mullah, "I always stand by what I have said."

When You Face Things Alone

A neighbor noticed that Nasruddin was weeping over his lost donkey and said, "you may have lost your donkey, Nasruddin, but you don't have to grieve over it more than you did about the loss of your first wife."

Nasruddin replied, "Ah, but if you remember, when I lost my wife, all you villagers said 'We'll find you someone else.' So far, nobody has offered to replace my donkey."

Obligation

Nasruddin nearly fell into a pool one day. A man whom he knew slightly was nearby, and saved him. Every time he met Nasruddin after that he would remind him of the service which he had performed. When this had happened several times Nasruddin took him to the water, jumped in, stood with his head just above water and shouted: "Now I am as wet as I would have been if you had not saved me! Leave me alone."

Assumptions

A certain man asked the famous Mulla Nasrudin, "What is the meaning of fate, Mulla?"

Mulla replied, "Assumptions."

"In what way?" the man asked again.

Mulla looked at him and said, "You assume things are going to go well, and they don't - that you call bad luck. You assume things are going to go badly and they don't - that you call good luck. You assume that certain things are going to happen or not happen - and you so lack intuition that you don't know what is going to happen. You assume that the future is unknown. When you are caught out - you call that Fate."

Why We Are Here

Walking one evening along a deserted road, Nasruddin saw a troop of horsemen rapidly approaching. His imagination started to work; he saw himself captured or robbed or killed and frightened by this thought he bolted, climbed a wall into a graveyard, and lay down in an open grave to hide.

Puzzled at his bizarre behavior, the horsemen - honest travelers - followed him. They found him stretched out, tense, and shaking.

"What are you doing in that grave? We saw you run away. Can we help you? Why are you here in this place?"

"Just because you can ask a question does not mean that there is a straightforward answer to it," said Nasruddin, who now realized what had happened. "It all depends upon your viewpoint. If you must know, however, I am here because of you - and you are here because of me!"

The Unshaven Man

A man was walking along the street when he passed another man with a lot of stubble on his face standing outside a shop. The first man asked:

"How often do you shave?"

"Twenty or thirty times a day," answered the man with the stubble.

"What! You must be a freak!" exclaimed the first man.

"No, I'm only a barber," replied the man with the stubble.

Nasruddin and his Donkey

One day, one of Mullah Nasruddin's friend came over and wanted to borrow his donkey for a day or two. Mullah, knowing his friend, was not kindly inclined to the request, and came up with the excuse that someone had already borrowed his donkey. Just as Mullah uttered these words, his donkey started braying in his backyard. Hearing the sound, his friend gave him an accusing look, to which Mullah replied: "I refuse to have any further dealings with you since you take a donkey's word over mine."

Nasruddin and the Violin

Once, Mullah Nasruddin bought a violin. And he began to play. NEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.....

Same note, same string, over and over.

NEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.....

After a few hours his wife was at her wits' end. "Nasruddin!" she screamed.

NEEE..

Nasruddin put down the bow. "Yes dear?"

"Why do you play the same note? It's driving me crazy! All the real violin players move their fingers up and down, play on different strings! Why don't you play like they do?"

"Well dear, I know why they go up and down and try all different strings."

Why is that?"

"They're looking for *this* note." And he picked up his bow and resumed his playing.

NEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.....

The False Prophet

A certain man claimed to be a prophet and was brought before the Sultan, who said to him, "I bear witness that you are a stupid prophet!"

The man replied, "That is why I have only been sent to people like you."

The Poor Story Teller

Someone said to Ashab, "If you were to relate traditions and stop telling jokes, you would be doing a noble thing."

"By God!" answered Ashab, "I have heard traditions and related them."

"Then tell us," said the man.

"I heard from Nafai," said Ashab, "on the authority of such-and-such, that the Prophet, may God bless him, said, 'There are two qualities, such that whoever has them is among God's elect.'"

"That is a fine tradition," said the man. "What are these two qualities?"

"Nafai forgot one and I have forgotten the other," replied Ashab.

Nasruddin and the Bedouins

"When I was in the desert," said Nasruddin one day, "I caused an entire tribe of horrible and bloodthirsty Bedouins to run."

"However did you do it?"

"Easy. I just ran, and they ran after me."

Nasruddin at the Fashion Show

Once, when Mullah Nasruddin was visiting a Western town, he was invited to attend a fashion show. He went, and afterwards he was asked how he liked it.

"It's a complete swindle!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Whatever do you mean?" he was asked.

"They show you the women - and then try to sell you the clothes!"

Nasruddin and the Tourist

Mullah Nasruddin went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and on the way he passed through Medina. As he was walking by the main mosque there, a rather confused looking tourist approached him. "Excuse me sir," said the tourist, "but you look like a native of these parts; can you tell me something about this mosque? It looks very old and important, but I've lost my guidebook."

Nasruddin, being too proud to admit that he, too, had no idea what it was, immediately began an enthusiastic explanation. "This is indeed a very old and special mosque," he declared, "It was built by Alexander the Great to commemorate his conquest of Arabia."

The tourist was suitably impressed, but presently a look of doubt crossed his face. "But how can that be?" he asked, "I'm sure that Alexander was a Greek or something, not a Muslim... Wasn't he?"

"I can see that you know something of these matters," replied Nasruddin with chagrin, "In fact, Alexander was so impressed at his good fortune in war that he converted to Islam in order to show his gratitude to God."

"Oh, wow," said the tourist, and then paused. "Hey, but surely there was no such thing as Islam in Alexander's time?"

"An excellent point! It is truly gratifying to meet a visitor who understands our history so well," answered Nasruddin. "As a matter of fact, he was so overwhelmed by the generosity God had shown him that as soon as the fighting was over he began a new religion, and became the founder of Islam."

The tourist looked at the mosque with new respect, but before Nasruddin could quietly slip into the passing crowd, another problem occurred to him. "But wasn't the founder of Islam named Mohammed? I mean, that's what I read in a book; at least I'm sure it wasn't Alexander."

"I can see that you are a scholar of some learning," said Nasruddin, "I was just getting to that. Alexander felt that he could properly dedicate himself to his new life as a prophet only by adopting a new identity. So, he gave up his old name and for the rest of his life called himself Mohammed."

"Really?" wondered the tourist, "That's amazing! But...but I thought that Alexander the Great lived a long time before Mohammed? Is that right?"

"Certainly not!" answered the Mullah, "You're thinking of a different Alexander the Great. I'm talking about the one named Mohammed."

Afterthoughts

Mulla was told that he would lose his phone if he didn't retract what he had said to the general manager of the phone company in the course of conversation over the wire. "Very well, Mulla Nasrudin will apologize," he said.

He called main 7777.

"Is that you Mr. Doolittle?"

"It is."

"This is Mulla Nasrudin."

"Well?"

"This morning in the heat of discussion I told you to go to hell!"

"Yes?"

"WELL," said Nasrudin, "DON'T GO!"

To the Editor

The editor of town weekly received this letter from Mulla Nasrudin: "Dear Sir: Last week I lost my watch which I valued highly. The next day I ran an ad in your newspaper. Yesterday, I went home and found my watch in the pocket of my brown suit. YOUR PAPER IS WONDERFUL."

Father and Son

Mulla Nasrudin, a distraught father, visiting his son in a prison waiting room, turned on him and said: "I am fed up with your record: attempted robbery, attempted burglary, attempted murder, attempted assassination. What a failure you have turned out to be; you can't succeed in anything you try out."

The Second Time Around

Mulla Nasrudin and one of his friends rented a boat and went fishing. In a remote part of the lake they found a spot where the fish were really biting.

"We'd better mark this spot so we can come back tomorrow," said the Mulla.

"O.k., I'll do it," replied his friend.

When they got back to the dock, the Mulla asked, "Did you mark that spot?"

"Sure said the second, "I put a chalk mark on the side of the boat."

"YOU NITWIT," said Nasrudin. "HOW DO YOU KNOW WE WILL GET THE SAME BOAT TOMORROW?"

The Gates

NASRUDDIN - Keeper of Faith In Turkey, where some people allege Nasruddin is buried, there are HUGE locked gates at his gravesite. Yet his headstone reads - "Sometimes you do not need a key to get through gates. All you need to do is walk around them as there are no walls."

The Will of Allah

"May the Will of Allah be done," a pious man was saying about something or the other.

"It always is, in any case," said Mullah Nasruddin. "

"How can you prove that, Mullah?" asked the man.

"Quite simply. If it wasn't always being done, then surely at some time or another my will would be done, wouldn't it?"

Nasruddin Meets Death

Nasruddin was strolling to market one day when he saw a strange, dark shape appear, blocking his path. "I am Death," it said, "I have come for you."

"Death?" said Nasruddin. "But I'm not even particularly old! And I have so much to do. Are you sure you aren't mistaking me for someone else?"

"I only kill people who are not yet ready to die," said Death.

"I think you're wrong," replied the Hoja. "Let's make a bet."

"A bet? Perhaps. But what shall the stakes be?"

"My life against a hundred pieces of silver."

"Done," said Death, a bag of silver instantly appearing in his hand. "What a stupid bet you made. After all, what's to stop me from just killing you now, and thus winning automatically?"

"Because I knew you were going to kill me," said Nasruddin, "that's why I made the bet."

"Hmmm..." mused Death. "I see. But... but, didn't you also know, then, that I would not be able to kill you, because of the terms of our agreement?"

"Not at all," said Nasruddin, and continued down the road, clutching the bag of money.

Home Repairs

One day Nasruddin repaired tiles on the roof of his house. While Nasruddin was working on the roof, a stranger knocked the door. "What do you want?" Nasruddin shouted out.

"Come down," replied stranger, "So I can tell it."

Nasruddin unwilling and slowly climbed down the ladder. "Well!" replied Nasruddin, "what was the important thing?"

"Could you give little money to this poor old man?" begged the stranger.

Tired Nasruddin started to climb up the ladder and said, "Follow me up to the roof."

When both Nasruddin and beggar were upside, on the roof, Nasruddin said, "The answer is no!"

100 Silver Coins

Nasruddin opened a booth at the fair with a sign above it: "Two Questions On Any Subject Answered For Only 100 Silver Coins."

A man who had two very urgent questions handed over his money, saying: "A hundred silver coins is rather expensive for two questions, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Nasruddin, "and the next question, please?"

The Two Beggars

As Nasruddin emerged from the mosque after prayers, a beggar sitting on the street solicited alms. The following conversation followed:

"Are you extravagant?" asked Nasruddin.

"Yes Nasruddin," replied the beggar.

"Do you like sitting around drinking coffee and smoking?" asked Nasruddin.

"Yes," replied the beggar.

"I suppose you like to go to the baths everyday?" asked Nasruddin.

"Yes," replied the beggar.

"...And maybe amuse yourself, even, by drinking with friends?" asked Nasruddin.

"Yes, I like all those things," replied the beggar.

"Tut, Tut," said Nasruddin, and gave him a gold piece. A few yards farther on. Another beggar who had overheard the conversation begged for alms also.

"Are you extravagant?" asked Nasruddin.

"No, Nasruddin" replied second beggar.

"Do you like sitting around drinking coffee and smoking?" asked Nasruddin.

"No," replied second beggar.

"I suppose you like to go to the baths everyday?" asked Nasruddin.

"No," replied second beggar.

"...And maybe amuse yourself, even, by drinking with friends?" asked Nasruddin.

"No, I want to only live meagerly and to pray," replied second beggar.

Whereupon the Nasruddin gave him a small copper coin.

"But why, wailed second beggar, do you give me, an economical and pious man, a penny, when you give that extravagant fellow a sovereign?"

"Ah my friend," replied Nasruddin, "his needs are greater than yours."

Walnuts and Pumpkins

One hot day, Nasruddin was taking it easy in the shade of a walnut tree. After a time, he started eyeing speculatively, the huge pumpkins growing on vines and the small walnuts growing on a majestic tree. "Sometimes I just can't understand the ways of God!" he mused. "Just fancy letting tiny walnuts grow on so majestic a tree and huge pumpkins on the delicate vines!" Just then a walnut snapped off and fell smack on Mullah Nasruddin's baldhead.

He got up at once and lifting up his hands and face to heavens in supplication, said: "Oh, my God! Forgive my questioning your ways! You are all wise. Where would I have been now, if pumpkins grew on trees!"

The Turban

One day an illiterate man came to Mullah Nasruddin with a letter he had received. "Mullah Nasruddin, please read this letter to me."

Mullah Nasruddin looked at the letter, but could not make out a single word. So he told the man. "I am sorry, but I cannot read this."

The man cried: "For shame, Mullah Nasruddin! You must be ashamed before the turban you wear (i.e. the sign of education)"

Mullah Nasruddin removed the turban from his own head and placed it on the head of the illiterate man, said: "There, now you wear the turban. If it gives some knowledge, read the letter yourself."

The Crow and the Meat

One day Mullah Nasruddin went to the market and bought a fine piece of meat. On the way home he met a friend who gave him a special recipe for the meat. Mullah Nasruddin was very happy. But then, before he got home, a large crow stole the meat from Mullah Nasruddin's hands and flew off with it.

"You thief!" Mullah Nasruddin angrily called after departing crow. "You have stolen my meat! But you won't enjoy it; I've got the recipe!"

Servitude

Mullah Nasruddin was unemployed and poor but somehow he got little money to eat beans and pilaf at a cheap restaurant. He ate and examined walking people outside with the corner of the eye. He noticed a long, handsome swashbuckler (bully man) behind the crowd. The Man was well dressed from head to foot, with velvet turban, silver embroidered vest, silk shirt, satin baggy-trousers and golden scimitar (short curved sword.)

Mullah Nasruddin pointed the man and asked restaurant keeper, "Who is that man over there!"

The waiter replied, "He is Fehmi Pasha's servant."

Mullah Nasruddin sighed from far away, looked at the sky and said: "Oh, my Good Lord! Look at that Fehmi Pasha's servant and look at your own servant, here."

The Other Place

One day a visitor came to Mullah Nasruddin with a question. "Mullah Nasruddin, the place that we humans come from and the place that we go to, what is it like?"

"Oh," said Mullah Nasruddin, "it is a very frightening place."

"Why do you say that?" the visitor asked.

"Well, when we come from there as babies, we are crying, and when somebody has to go there, everybody cries."

Paying the Piper

One day Mullah Nasruddin wished to learn playing zurna (a kind of shrill pipe) and visited a zurna player. "How much does it cost to learn playing zurna?" asked Mullah Nasruddin.

"Three hundred akche (coin) for the first lesson and one hundred akche for the next lessons," asked zurna player.

"It sounds good," replied Mullah Nasruddin. "We may start with second lesson. I was a shepherd when I was a young boy, so I already had some whistle experiences. It must be good enough for first lesson, isn't it?"

Trousers and Robe

One day Mullah Nasruddin went to market to buy new clothes. First he tested a pair of trousers. He didn't like the trousers and he gave back them to the shopkeeper. Then he tried a robe, which had same price as the trousers. Mullah Nasruddin was pleased with the robe and he left the shop. Before he climbed on the donkey to ride home he stopped by the shopkeeper and the shop-assistant.

"You didn't pay for the robe," said the shopkeeper.

"But I gave you the trousers instead of the robe, isn't it?" replied Mullah Nasruddin.

"Yes, but you didn't pay for the trousers, either!" said the shopkeeper.

"But I didn't buy the trousers," replied Mullah Nasruddin. "I am not so stupid to pay for something which I never bought."

Two Cooked Fish

Once a renowned philosopher and moralist was traveling through Nasruddin's village when he asked him where there was a good place to eat. He suggested a place and the scholar, hungry for conversation, invited Mullah Nasruddin to join him. Much obliged, Mullah Nasruddin accompanied the scholar to a nearby restaurant, where they asked the waiter about the special of the day. "Fish! Fresh Fish!" replied the waiter.

"Bring us two," they answered. A few minutes later, the waiter brought out a large platter with two cooked fish on it, one of which was quite a bit smaller than the other. Without hesitating, Mullah Nasruddin took the larger of the fish and put in on his plate.

The scholar, giving Mullah Nasruddin a look of intense disbelief, proceed to tell him that what he did was not only blatantly selfish, but that it violated the principles of almost every known moral, religious, and ethical system.

Mullah Nasruddin calmly listened to the philosopher's extempore lecture patiently, and when he had finally exhausted his resources, Mulla Nasruddin said, "Well, Sir, what would you have done?"

"I, being a conscientious human, would have taken the smaller fish for myself."

"And here you are," Mullah Nasruddin said, and placed the smaller fish on the gentleman's plate.

End of the World

A group of philosophers traveled far and wide to find, and contemplated for many years, the end of the world but could not state a time for its coming. Finally they turned to Mullah Nasruddin and asked him: "Do you know when the end of the world will be?"

"Of course, said Mullah Nasruddin, when I die, that will be the end of the world."

"When you die? Are you sure?"

"It will be for me at least," said Mullah Nasruddin

Keeping Warm

On a frigid and snowy winter day Mullah Nasruddin was having a chat with some of his friends in the local coffee house. Mullah Nasruddin said that cold weather did not bother him, and in fact, he could stay, if necessary, all night without any heat. "We'll take you up on that, Mullah Nasruddin," they said. "If you stand all night in the village square without warming yourself by any external means, each of us will treat you to a sumptuous meal. But if you fail to do so, you will treat us all to dinner."

"All right it's a bet," Mullah Nasruddin said. That very night, Mullah Nasruddin stood in the village square till morning despite the bitter cold. In the morning, he ran triumphantly to his friends and told them that they should be ready to fulfill their promise.

"But as a matter of fact you lost the bet, Mullah Nasruddin," said one of them. "At about midnight, just before I went to sleep, I saw a candle burning a window about three hundred yards away from where you were standing. That certainly means that you warmed yourself by it."

"That's ridiculous," Mullah Nasruddin argued. "How can a candle behind a window warm a person three hundred yards away?" All his protestations were to no avail, and it was decided that Mullah Nasruddin had lost the bet. Mullah Nasruddin accepted the verdict and invited all of them to a dinner that night at his home. They all arrived on time, laughing and joking, anticipating the delicious meal Mullah Nasruddin was going to serve them. But dinner was not ready. Mullah Nasruddin told them that it would be ready in a short time, and left the room to prepare the meal. A long time passed, and still no dinner was served. Finally, getting impatient and very hungry, they went into the kitchen to see if there was any food cooking at all. What they saw, they could not believe. Mullah Nasruddin was standing by a huge cauldron, suspended from the ceiling. There was a lighted candle under the cauldron. "Be patient my friends," Mullah Nasruddin told them. "Dinner will be ready soon. You see it is cooking."

"Are you out of your mind, Mullah Nasruddin?" they shouted. How could you with such a tiny flame boil such a large pot?"

"Your ignorance of such matters amuses me," Mullah Nasruddin said. "If the flame of a candle behind a window three hundred yards away can warm a person, surely the same flame will boil this pot which is only three inches away."

Saifu

An angry man came in to a cafe and yelled: "IS SAIFU HERE?" No body answered so he yelled again: "IS SAIFU HERE OR NOT?"

Finally a guy got up, "YAH, I AM SAIFU" he said.

The angry man came closer and punched the guy, knocked him down on the floor and then left the cafe. The guy got up, cleaned his nose from blood and while every one was expecting a reaction from him, returned to his table without saying anything.

Some one came and asked the guy: "How can you just sit here and do nothing? That man knocked you down and you are not even cursing him."

"You wouldn't say that if you knew what I have done to him," said the man with a smirk. "What? How?" asked the other man with curious excitement.

"I am not SAIFU," said the guy proudly.

Lesson of the Sandals

One day Nasruddin was taking a walk in his village, when several of his neighbors approached him. "Nasruddin Hoja!" they said to him, "you are so wise and holy! Please take us as your pupils to teach us how we should live our lives, and what we should do!"

Nasruddin paused, and then said "Alright; I will teach you the first lesson right now. The most important thing is to take very good care of your feet and sandals; you must keep them clean and neat at all times."

The neighbors listened attentively until they glanced down at his feet, which were in fact quite dirty and shod in old sandals that seemed about to fall apart. "But Nasruddin Hoja," said one of them, "your feet are terribly dirty, and your sandals are a mess! How do you expect us to follow your teachings if you don't carry them out yourself?"

"Well," replied Nasruddin, "I don't go around asking people how I should live my life either, do I?"

Two Pots

Later that evening, Nasruddin was cooking up some things. He went to his neighbor and asked for a pot and promised to return it the next day. A knock, knock came on the neighbor's door the next day. Nasruddin had come to return the pot. The neighbor looks at his pot and inside was one smaller. The neighbors said, "There is a small pot inside the one I loaned you."

Nasruddin told him, "The pot gave birth."

The neighbor was quite pleased to hear this and accepted the two pots. The very next morning, Nasruddin knocks on the neighbor's door to borrow a larger pot than the previous one. The neighbor happily abides his the request. A week goes past, without Nasruddin knocking to return the pot. The neighbor and Nasruddin bump into each other at the bazaar a few days latter. Nasruddin's neighbor asked, "Where is my pot?"

"It's dead," says Nasruddin. "But how can that be?" queries the neighbor.

Nasruddin points out, "If a pot can give birth, then a pot can also die."

The Perfect Wife

One afternoon, Nasruddin and his friend were sitting in a cafe, drinking tea, and talking about life and love. "How come you never got married, Nasruddin?" asked his friend at one point.

"Well," said Nasruddin, "to tell you the truth, I spent my youth looking for the perfect woman. In Cairo, I met a beautiful and intelligent woman, with eyes like dark olives, but she was unkind. Then in Baghdad, I met a woman who was a wonderful and generous soul, but we had no interests in common. One woman after another would seem just right, but there would always be something missing. Then one day, I met her. She was beautiful, intelligent, generous and kind. We had everything in common. In fact she was perfect."

"Well," said Nasruddin's friend, "what happened? Why didn't you marry her?"

Nasruddin sipped his tea reflectively. "Well," he replied, "it's a sad thing. Seems she was looking for the perfect man."

The Cloak and the Feast

Mullah Nasruddin in Banguet Nasruddin heard that there was a banquet being held in the nearby town, and that everyone was invited. He made his way there as quickly as he could. When the Master of Ceremonies saw him in his ragged cloak, he seated him in the most inconspicuous place, far from the great table where the most important people were waiting on hand and foot. Nasruddin saw that it would be an hour at last before the waiters reached where he was sitting.

So he got up and went home. He dressed himself in a magnificent sable cloak and turban and returned to feast. As soon as the heralds of the Emir, his host, saw this splendid sight they started to beat the drum of welcome and sound the trumpets in a manner befitting a visitor of high rank. The Chamberlain came out of the palace himself, and conducted the magnificent Nasruddin to a place almost next to the Emir. A dish of wonderful food was immediately placed before him. Without a pause, Nasruddin began to rub handfuls of it into his turban and cloak.

"Your Eminence," said the prince, "I am curious as to your eating habits, which are new to me."

"Nothing special," said Nasruddin; "the cloak get me in here and got me the food. Surely it deserves its portion."

Mullah Nasruddin and His Beautiful Daughter

Mullah Nasruddin had a beautiful daughter, the desire of all the evil eyes of the men lived in his village. Everyone sought the hand of the fair maiden, but Mullah Nasruddin protected her from the outside world, saving her for the wealthy young khan who lived just outside the village.

At last the young Khan came to ask for the hand of the beautiful maiden. Mullah Nasruddin drove a hard bargain and was to receive the highest bride-price ever bargained for in the entire region. With the usual Muslim regard for ceremony, Mullah Nasruddin insisted on a long waiting-period before the wedding vows could be taken.

It seems that the young and beautiful daughter of Mullah Nasruddin had a mind and a body of her own. She fell in love with a young stalwart ne'er-do-well in the village, who constantly showered her with attention as she went to the nearby well to gather water in the morning and at dusk. Her trips to get water began to take longer periods of time. Most people in the village know what was happening, but no one dared tell Mullah Nasruddin.

The time for the wedding approached and the young, wealthy Khan came to collect his bride. Mullah Nasruddin brought her to greet her betrothed. Lo and behold! She was well

pregnant by this time. The young, rich Khan was horrified, and turned on the Mullah Nasruddin, demanding to know why such a thing had occurred. And when Mullah Nasruddin merely replied that such things are normal when people get married; the young, rich Khan stormed out of Mullah Nasruddin's compound, and said that he withdrew his offer of marriage to the young beautiful daughter of Mullah Nasruddin and therefore would expect a return on the down payment on the bride price.

Mullah Nasruddin, genuinely shocked, called after the young, rich Khan and the young Khan returned. "Let us be sensible about this," pleaded Mullah Nasruddin. "Actually, I should double the bride price now that my daughter is truly pregnant and can give you a son."

The young Khan, even more horrified, stuttered and asked, "In the name of Allah, why?" Mullah Nasruddin calmly replied, "Why just last week I delivered a cow to a man to whom I had sold the cow several months before. In the interim period, the cow became pregnant, and when I delivered the cow, I demanded and received twice the original amount. Now what is so different between a cow and a daughter?"

The King and His Dreams

Once there was a king who had a dream that all his teeth had fallen out. He woke up upset and asked that the best interpreters be brought to the palace.

The first interpreter said, "My king, I am sorry to inform you that all your family members will die in your lifetime." The king got very upset and ordered that the interpreter be imprisoned.

Then the second, the third and the fourth interpreters said the same thing. The king was very angry and very upset. He imprisoned all of them and insisted on a search for better interpreters.

Finally, a wise interpreter came by. He said, "My king, you will live a long life. In your lifetime, you will share your family's joys and sorrows. You will be present to assist those who need you even after many family members have gone." The king became very happy and gave the interpreter a lot of presents.

Cursing Rulers

Once there was a man who seized power by force. He insisted that every follower of the previous ruler curse that ruler in public or else he or she would be killed. One of the followers of the previous ruler thought of a way to satisfy the present ruler without cursing the previous one.

He stood up in public and said, "This ruler is asking me to curse the previous ruler, I curse HIM (this ruler) and ask you to do the same." The people did not get it and cursed the previous ruler. At the same time, the man was released.

The Chess Game and the Shoes

Once there was a king who beat each person he played chess with. One day, a farmer came by and asked to play chess with the king. The king agreed. As they were beginning, the farmer took off his shoes and put them on the chair and sat on them. As the game proceeded, the king kept wondering about the shoes. The farmer won the game at the end. The king then asked the farmer about the shoes. The farmer replied that he took his shoes off so the king would not fully concentrate on the game.

A Wise Mullah

There was a wise Mullah in the lands of Allah who taught in the streets and the market place. He was much respected by the people for his wisdom in the writings and his knowledge of Mohammed. But he was best known for his wit, which some said was sharper than the headsman's axe and twice as final.

One day the Mullah and his wife were in the village buying goods for the feast to be held that week. He saw a man he had counseled to the faith and who had yet to renounce his infidel Christian ways. He walked up to the man and greeted him with a holy blessing.

"I thank you" the infidel replied. "And how do you fare, good Mullah?"

The Mullah answered him. "I am blessed by Allah with a good wife and many fine children. You can see how Allah blesses the true believers in this land. You are still a bachelor, and an infidel. I am sure that if you took up the true faith Allah would grant you a wife."

The young man answered, "I am not convinced that getting a wife is enough to make me convert."

The Mullah had perceived that this young man was quite taken with the fairer sex, and so he explained to him; "Mohammed, in his wisdom, decreed that it was Allah's will that a man be allowed to have as many wives as he wishes. I know that your infidel faith does not allow more than one wife."

This impressed the young man. "This is true. I might be persuaded by such an argument." At this time the Mullah's wife began to shout after him, calling in a most ungracious way to cease his gossiping and carry her purchases.

This caused the infidel to ask; "If you are allowed many wives, why is it that you, a Mullah have only one wife?"

"The answer is simple," the Mullah replied. "The prophet said it was allowed, he never said it was a good idea!"

A Mother's Three Gifts

Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered. Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother.

The first said, "I built a big house for our mother."

The second said, "I sent her a camel with a driver."

The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat. You remember how Mom enjoyed reading the Divan-e Hafez? And you know she can't see very well. So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Divan. It took elders of the town 19 years to teach him. He's one of a kind. Mama just has to name the Ghazal number, and the parrot recites it."

Soon thereafter, mom sent out her letters of thanks: "Ali," she wrote one son, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house. Reza," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay most of the time at home, so I rarely use the camel. And the driver is so rude! My Dearest Nasruddin," she wrote to her third son, "You have the good sense to know what your mother likes. The chicken was delicious."

Two Great Gifts

Once upon a time, Nasruddin went to the marketplace and put up a sign that read: "Whoever has stolen my donkey, please return it to me and I will give it to them."

"Nasruddin!" exclaimed the townspeople, "Why would you put up such a sign?"

"There are two great gifts in life," replied Nasruddin. "One is to find something that you've lost and the other is to give something that you love away."

A Suggestion Against Headache

A man asked Nasruddin: "I have terrible headaches, what do you think I should do?"

Nasruddin replied: "A few days ago I had a terrible toothache. Nothing helped, so I had it pulled out. Now I am fine."

Teaching a Donkey to Read.

During a conversation with Tamerlane, Nasruddin started bragging about his donkey. "It is so smart that I can teach it even how to read," he said.

"Then go ahead and teach it how to read. You have three months," Tamerlane ordered. Nasruddin went home and began to train his donkey. He put its feed between the pages of a big book and taught it to turn the pages with its tongue to find its feed. Three days before the three-month period was over, Nasruddin stopped feeding his donkey.

When he took the donkey to Tamerlane, he asked for a big book and put it in front of his donkey. The hungry animal turned the pages of the book one by one with its tongue, but when it found no feed, it began to Bray.

Tamerlane watched the donkey closely, and exclaimed, "That sure is a strange way of reading!"

Nasruddin remarked, "But this is how a donkey reads!"

The King and the Woodcutter

Written by - Khairan and Andrew Patterson

There once was a king of Persia long ago who wanted to know what his people were saying and doing. He trusted no one in his palace. He was sure that they would only tell him what they thought he would like to hear or something by which they might benefit. So to know what was going on, the king had to see with his own eyes.

So the king would go to a secret room, put on dirty old clothes and a turban to cover his head to disguise himself. In that way, he could walk around the city himself and listen as well as see what people were saying and doing and no one would know he was king.

One evening. The king in his disguise passed by a house where the door was slightly open. From inside the house he could hear laughter and the sounds of happy people. He stopped and peered through the open door to see what was going on. From inside the house, the owner of the house, saw the king looking into his house and called out to him in the usual Persian greeting of inviting someone into their home, "Come in my friend. My home is your home!"

The King pushed the door open and was greeted by the owner, a pleasant, friendly man. The king looked around the man's house and could see everyone was hurrying here and there doing their chores. They all had smiles on their faces and were very cheerful.

The king was puzzled and asked, "When I passed by your house and I heard sounds of happiness coming from inside your house. I wanted to see why your home is so different than the other houses I passed."

"Oh, I am a woodcutter," replied the owner of the house. "Every day, I take my donkey and go into the mountains where I cut firewood. I load firewood on my donkey and come back to the city. Everyone needs firewood to cook their food and heat water in their homes for baths. Everyday, a lot of people buy my firewood and I make a lot of money."

The king could see that the man was not wealthy or powerful like he was, but he was happy and content with the money he made from selling firewood. Excusing himself, the king hurried back to his palace. The next day, the king issued an order. "No cutting firewood, no hauling firewood, and no selling firewood."

That evening, he put on his disguise and hurried to the home of the woodcutter. Everything was the same like the day before. There was much laughter, joy and happiness instead of sadness and silence. The woodcutter again saw the king standing outside his door, looking into his house and called out, "Come in! Come in, my friend! My home is your home."

The king pushed the door open further and entered the woodcutter's house.

"What happened today?" "Oh yes," replied the woodcutter. "So today, I took my donkey to the mountains where there are streams with delicious water that comes from melting snow. I filled large jars with this water and brought it down into the city where I sold it to many people. The people loved the taste of the fresh mountain water and bought the water. I made a lot of money."

The king now planned to make his next move and could hardly wait to get back to the palace. The next day, the king had an order posted all around the city, which read: "By order of the King, there shall be no cutting firewood, no hauling firewood, no selling firewood. And there shall be no hauling mountain water or selling mountain water."

Putting on his disguise, just as he did the two previous evenings, the king hurried to the woodcutter's home. Everything was the same as the day before. Again, from inside the woodcutter's home he could hear sounds of joy and happiness. The king was puzzled; there should be sadness, maybe screaming and anger, but not joy. When the woodcutter saw the king standing outside, he called out to him.

"Come in, my friend. Come in. My home is your home."

"What happened today?" asked the king. "Didn't the king order that no one is to cut, haul, or sell firewood and no one is to haul or sell water?"

"Yes," replied the woodcutter, "but a man needs to rest sometime. My family is happy to have me home for the day. And I am happy I could be here all day to help my wife and our children do things around the house. Won't you stay and have some tea with us?"

"No, no," said the king, and excused himself and hurried back to the palace.

The next morning, the king sent a messenger to the home of the woodcutter. By order of the king, the woodcutter was to come to the palace to be the official sword bearer. But the king was very tricky and offered to pay the woodcutter so little money that any man would grumble and be unhappy. The woodcutter did not recognize the king and put on the sword. All day he did as the king directed him to do.

That evening, the king was eager to see if the woodcutter would now be unhappy with his life. Again he put his disguise and hurried to the woodcutter's home. Again the door was slightly open and from inside he could hear sounds of happiness and joy.

The woodcutter from inside his home saw the king and called out to him. "Salaam (peace to you) my friend. Come in. My home is your home."

The king was now really puzzled. How could there still be happiness and joy in the woodcutter's home when there should be anger or sadness? As if he did not know, the king asked, "What happened today?"

"A very strange thing happened," replied the woodcutter. "The king sent for me to come to the palace and to be his sword bearer. All day I have to carry this heavy sword, yet the king pays me so little money.

"However, this sword the king gave me is heavy from much gold and silver and it has many beautiful gems all over it. So I took the sword to the market where I sold it. People in the market gave me so much money for the sword that I can now buy three houses and retire for the rest of my life.

"I have to have a sword to carry, so I went to a carpenter who made a wooden sword for me. This I put in place of this heavy gold sword. This wooden sword is so much lighter and easier for me to carry that I can walk around the palace all day without feeling tired!"

Always mindful to make guests comfortable, Persians always offer guests something to eat or drink. So the woodcutter asked the king, "Won't you stay and have some tea and food with us? After selling that sword, I can now afford to have the best tea in the world for my family and guests."

So now the king was really upset because the woodcutter had been more clever than he. He declined the woodcutter's offer and hurried back to his palace.

The next morning, the king was sitting on his throne. He called for his sword-bearer. Entering the throne room, the woodcutter didn't recognize the king as the man who had visited his home for three evenings. He walked up and stood beside a man in chains before the king.

"The man beside you," said the king, "is a terrible criminal. I order you to take your sword and cut off this man's head this very moment. If you fail to cut this man's head off, I will have your head cut off."

The poor woodcutter, now ordered to kill the man beside him, grabbed the handle of his wooden sword. Lifting his eyes to heaven, he called out, "Oh Allah, I shall cut off this man's head as the king has ordered me to do. But if this man is innocent, may my sword turn to wood..."

Of The Jungle

By Anjum Makki

And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they in their turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and vice versa. And this is a chain of gradation and inter-dependence. (15.19) The Holy Qur'an

It was not too long ago in the passage of time, in a city not far from here, there lived a local politician and this city was surrounded by thousands of acres of agricultural land. A huge dense forest thickly populated by tall trees covered a vast portion of this land running into a few hundred square kilometers. One day the politician decided to make a detailed survey of his constituency and during such surveys he had to make lengthy detours around this huge forest. This inconvenienced him a great deal and he decided that he should somehow put an end to this problem. That day, he decided to venture deep into the forest to find a way to solve this problem.

He had never gone inside the forest before, though it stood on the land of his constituency. Filled with resolve, he walked with determined steps into the forest. What he saw inside totally shocked him. The forest on his land grew wild. According to his thinking a forest meant that it should have plenty of huge trees and, therefore, anything that was not a tree was useless. He cleverly reasoned that the grass and the bushes that grew wild in his forest absorbed precious water from the ground that was meant for the trees. Then there was the problem of all those fallen leaves, the dry twigs and the rotting branches that fell from the trees, had scattered all over the forest and merely cluttered the ground. All the problems that plagued his constituency would vanish if the forest were cleared of its wild undergrowth and roads were built inside the forest for people to move about freely. He made this into a poll-issue and very soon the people of the city gave him the authority to carry out his plans by voting him to power.

After taking stock of the problem, he went to a nearby village and hired hundreds of laborers to clean up this forest. He promised to pay them well for all their services rendered by them in this regard and he instructed his laborers to get started on the job from the next day itself. All pleas for caution from other well-meaning people who wanted to preserve the wild nature of the forest went unheeded by the politician. The laborers came next day armed with pickaxes, shovels, sickles and brooms. First they swept the area clean and wherever they could they gathered all the dry twigs, the leaves and the rotting branches and started burning them. Having finished the task after a few weeks they attacked the bushes and the low obstructing branches of the trees with their axes and made them into huge heaps and started burning them down too.

After a few weeks time, his forest started wearing a clean and an airy look. The politician took a great interest in planting the new trees to replace those trees he had got felled for obstructing the way. The new trees were planted in neat rows and were lined up to look like chairs alongside a wall and there was not a single speck of dirt to cover up the groups. The laborers had done a thorough job to the last detail. The politician was very pleased with the orderly sight that greeted him from every corner of the forest.

Three years passed by and the people of the city began to notice strange changes in his clean forest. The crowns of the tallest trees had their crowns thinned out and they were sparsely populated with leaves. On a closer look they found that the leaves of even the largest of trees had started to lose their color and sheen. They almost wore a transparent look; the forest had become peppered with dead trees, standing tall but totally lifeless and dried-up. Then there were those huge trees, victims of many storms that had fallen across the path totally blocking the path of the traveler who passed that way. Winter was a long way off and

yet the ground lay covered with yellow leaves. Only a short time had passed since the politician had cleaned up the forest and it was untidy once again, worse than before a poor shadow of its former self.

The politician who had also heard about the sad state of the forest was puzzled. He could simply not understand why the trees had dried up and it was certainly not from lack of care from his side. Three years had passed since he had cleared the forest of its thick undergrowth. Along with the forest, he also took great care to attend to the problems of the people of his constituency. He had inlaid the forests with roads and electricity and telecommunication cables, which brought them close to the other people of the outside world. Finally at his wits end he called for help from the experts who lived in his constituency and they were asked to form a committee to study the problems in the forest and suggest remedial measure within three months time.

The experts studied the problem and at the end of three months they submitted a report to the politician. According to the report, what had happened was that the laborers in their enthusiasm to clean up the forest had swept out just everything-all that should have been swept out and all that should have been left untouched. The dry branches of the dead trees were certainly of no use, except perhaps as firewood but the bushes had also been chopped out needlessly. The politician had briefed the laborers earlier that the only things of importance in a forest were the trees and the bushes were of no value at all! However the people of the city found out from their own sad experience that the trees could not live without the bushes for they began to dry soon after the bushes had disappeared. They cursed themselves for entrusting the care of their forest into the hands of a shortsighted politician.

The report also gave the reasons as to why the bushes were so important to a forest. The forest is not just a forest and it can be compared to a densely populated city. The houses in the forest were the nests and the burrows and its inhabitants the birds and the animals. While it is true that some birds build their nests high up in the tall trees, there are many others that build their nests in the thick undergrowth tucked away safe in the thick foliage away from prying human eyes. They would dart quickly into their nests as soon as they sensed danger from other birds or animals and the moment they sensed a stranger nearby.

When the laborers had chopped down the thick undergrowth on the advice of the politician, the birds that nested there took flight immediately and flew far away and settled themselves in other forests and that was the beginning of all the problems that were going to plague the forests in the months to come. The reasons were not far to seek. It is a well-known fact that the birds rarely sit on a branch idling or whiling away their time. They fly all around the forest hopping from branch to branch from dawn to dusk tidying up the forest in their own methodical way. As soon as they spot a beetle or a caterpillar on the trees they quickly snatch it up by their beaks and they eat to their fill. After that they start hunting for more and take it in their beaks to their baby nestlings. The baby-birds on their part eat an awful lot of bugs brought to them by their parents and grow very fast. The forest birds used to eat away thousands of bugs everyday and when the birds flew away to other forests, the beetles and the caterpillars' had the time of their lives. They made merry, multiplied and multiplied in alarming proportions.

The trees in the forest started drying up because they were now swarming with insects. Some insects feasted on their leaves and others on the roots. The tree appeared to them like a well laid-

out banquet table but with a difference. Here, the insects would make a feast of the table too! After the birds had left they had multiplied rapidly and attacked each tree in regiments. The caterpillars were the first to advance and they chewed up the leaves and the roots. The trees used to absorb light and air through its leaves and water from its roots for photosynthesis. In its absence the trees became weak with thirst and hunger. These weaknesses laid them open to attack from many more enemies. The next in line to attack were the beetles, the type that fed on the bark of the trees. These beetles started chewing through the bark and they started boring long winding tunnels under the barks, chewing up on the wood as they worked and carting away the sawdust on their backs.

If only the tree had been stronger and healthier, it would have done away with the beetles in no time, feeding on its bark by its own defense mechanism, by drowning them in the heavy sticky sap that flowed underneath the bark. But the tree was no longer its former self; as it had been before the caterpillars had overran it. It had dried up because of lack of food and water and there was not much sap left in it. There was no one to defend the tree either as the birds had already taken flight to safer areas.

The beetles feeding on the bark stayed on the job boring away at the tree from all sides and it was not long before the tunnels merged forming a bored out band under the bark. The beetles had cut between the roads inside the trees that linked the leaf with its roots and the live healing sap could no longer flow beneath the bark. The trees lost their last leaves. They still stood straight up in the forest, but hollowed and eaten down from inside, and they were dead.

Even now the enemies of the trees would not let it rest in peace. New beetles different from the bark-eating beetles arrived on the scene and they had feelers that were longer than their bodies and they made straight to the center of the tree trunk to eat it away continuously and turned the once mighty trees into mere hollow shells ruining it completely. Like this, all the trees of this forest were ruined completely.

All this happened because the people acting on the advice of a politician had chopped down the bushes and shrubs in the forest. The politician in his narrow vision had imagined a forest that was only filled with trees. He was mistaken, the experts told him so, for no forest is complete without the shrubs, the bushes, animals, birds, beetles and the caterpillars alongside the trees.

All the plants and animals in the forest lived with each other according to a master -plan, the law of nature, and they had co-existed for centuries living off each other in perfect harmony. This co-existence for centuries was destroyed in a very short duration all because of the shortsighted vision of a politician, who had imagined in his mind a forest that was only made up of trees and he had not bothered to ask the learned and the wise about the rules of this master-plan before he had ordered the forest to be cleaned up.

The people now wise from the findings of the experts woke up suddenly to the facts that now faced them. Their city would be deprived of clean healthy air from the forest, medicinal herbs, firewood, fruits and flowers that grew wild in it. They rushed to the forest armed with paste hoping that the caterpillars would stick to it and they also sprayed the leaves with a poisonous spray. It was no use. There were too many insects and nothing could stop them anymore.

Religious Jokes

Those that are wise will learn from this story and not repeat the same mistakes again. The next time we decide to change nature we should know that everything created by nature is interlinked with everything else and we should not forget this relationship. Even the woodpecker and the ants are important members of a forest for they too eat up harmful insects and help to keep the forest in order.

If you wish to help protect a forest in your area, you should remember that it should extend to all its inhabitants and don't let anyone break off the branches of a tree, or root out bushes, destroy the nests of birds or burn away ant-hills for we have a responsibility of saving the forests for the generations that are going to come after us.

We provide sustenance of every kind, physical, mental, spiritual, etc., for you (i.e. for mankind.) But we do more. We provide for every one of Our creatures. And there are those of which mankind is not even cognizant. We provide for them also. There are those who may at first sight appear hostile to man, or whom man may consider hostile, such as wild and noxious animals. They are Our creatures, and We provide for them also, as they are Our creatures. But there is due order and balance in the economy of Our universal Plan.' (15.20) Surah Al-Hijr of the Holy Qur'an

House of Ill Repute

You've probably heard the story of the two Irishmen who were working on the road in front of a notorious house of ill repute. As they laboured, they were shocked to see the pastor of the Methodist Church walk down the street and, after a few furtive glances over his shoulder, duck into that house. *Would ya look at that, Darby!* said Pat. *What a shameful disgrace, that Protestant so-called man of God sinning in the likes of that place!* They both shook their heads in disgust and continued their work.

A little later, the Rabbi from the synagogue across town parked his car three blocks away but ended up entering that same door. *Did ya see that, Darby?* said Pat. *Is nothing sacred to those Jewish people? What is the world coming to? A man of the cloth indulging in sins of the flesh! Tis a shame, I tell ya!*

It wasn't long before a third man, this one a Roman Catholic priest, followed the path of his colleagues, right through the door of that place. *Oh no, Darby, look!* said Pat, removing his cap. *One of the poor girls must have died!*

Catholic Conversion

A Jewish man moves into a Catholic neighborhood. Every Friday the Catholics go crazy because, while they're morosely eating fish, the Jew is outside barbecuing steaks. So the Catholics work on the Jew to convert him.

Finally, by threats and pleading, the Catholics succeed. They take the Jew to a priest who sprinkles holy water on the Jew and intones:

....."Born a Jew
.....Raised a Jew
.....Now a Catholic."

The Catholics are ecstatic. No more delicious, but maddening smells every Friday evening. But the next Friday evening, the scent of barbecue wafts through the neighborhood. The Catholics all rush to the Jew's house to remind him of his new diet. They see him standing over the cooking steak. He is sprinkling water on the meat and saying:

....."Born a cow
.....Raised a cow
.....Now a fish."

Religious Accident

A rabbi and a priest get into a car accident and it's a bad one. Both cars are totally demolished but amazingly neither of the clerics is hurt. After they crawl out of their cars, the rabbi sees the priest's collar and says, "So you're a priest. I'm a rabbi. Just look at our cars. There's nothing left, but we are unharmed. This must be a sign from God. God must have meant that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace the rest of our days."

The priest replies, "I agree with you completely. This must be a sign from G-d."

The rabbi continues, "And look at this. Here's another miracle. My car is completely demolished but this bottle of Kedem wine didn't break. Surely God wants us to drink this wine and celebrate our good fortune." Then he hands the bottle to the priest. The priest agrees, takes a few big swigs, and hands the

bottle back to the rabbi. The rabbi takes the bottle, immediately puts the cap on, and hands it back to the priest.

The priest asks, "Aren't you having any?"

The rabbi replies, "No...I think I'll wait for the police."

Newly Discovered First Page of the Bible

They recently discovered a smaller scroll hidden in the cylinder of the first scroll of the ancient Biblical scriptures, believed to be the actual "first page" of the Bible. When deciphered, it read:

"Copyright (c) 300 B.C. God. All Rights Reserved First Scrawling: First-Sunrise-After-Stonehenge-Keystone-Is-Shadowed, 300 B.C.

All beings, places and events depicted in this work are fictional, and any resemblance to actual beings, places and events past, present or future is purely coincidental.

WARNING: Some of the actions performed in this work are dangerous and should only be attempted by professionals familiar with the action in question.

NOTE: Those tiny points of light in the sky when it gets dark are called 'stars.' Some of them do blow up on occasion. In no way should this be construed as a sign that there is, beneath such an explosion, any form of savior. Should such a misconstrual happen, the author will not be held responsible for the avalanche of arrogance, zeal, bigotry, humanocentricity and other vile acts which will surely follow the residents of the planet into time eternal until someone sees fit to erase the denizens of the world and let the author start over.

ISBN 0-000000-0000-1

Suggested retail: 1 sheep."

Like Moses, Shakespeare and G*d.

So the Synagogue got really fed up with its Rabbi. The Executive Committee met and he -too-reluctantly, concluded that they'd have to let him go. Trouble was - who'd want to take him - especially if it got out that he'd been fired? So the Executive Committee decided to give him a glowing letter of recommendation. It compared the Rabbi to Shakespeare, Moses and even G-d Himself.

The recommendation was so warm that within six weeks the Rabbi succeeded in securing himself a pulpit in a major upwardly-mobile Synagogue 500 miles away, at twice his original salary and with three junior Rabbis working under him. Needless to say, in a couple of months the Rabbi's new employers began to observe some of his imperfections. The President of the Rabbi's new pulpit angrily called the President of the old Synagogue charging "We employed this man mostly on the basis of your recommendation. How could you possibly compare him to Shakespeare, Moses and even G-d Himself, when he can't string together a correct sentence in English, when his knowledge of Hebrew is worse than mine and that on top of everything else, he's a liar, a cheat and an all-round low-life?"

"Simple," answered his colleague. "Like Shakespeare he has no Hebrew or Jewish knowledge. Like Moses, he can't speak

English, and like G-d Himself - Er is nisht kan mentch' (He's not a human being!.)"

The Atheist and the Monster

An atheist was spending a quiet day fishing when suddenly his boat was attacked by the Loch Ness monster. In one easy flip, the beast tossed him and his boat high into the air. Then it opened its mouth to swallow both. As the man sailed head over heels, he cried out, "Oh, my G-d! Help me!"

At once, the ferocious attack scene froze in place, and as the atheist hung in mid-air, a booming voice came down from the clouds, "I thought you didn't believe in Me!"

"Come on G-d, give me a break!," the man pleaded. "Two minutes ago I didn't believe in the Loch Ness monster either!"

Two Beggars

Two beggars were sitting next to each other. One holds a sign saying "Please help the war veteran," and the other holds a sign saying "Please help a poor Jew."

People pass by and even those who didn't intend to give money to any of them, give to the first to upset the Jew.

One good man passes by, gives money equally to both, and then says to the Jew: "Why don't you change your sign? Don't you understand that nobody will give you any money?" and walks away.

As he goes, the Jews turn to the other one and says: "Imagine that, Haime, he would teach US business..."

Crew

Yeshiva University decided to field a crew team. Unfortunately, they lost race after race. They practiced for hours every day, but never managed to come in any better than dead last.

The Rosh Yeshiva finally decided to send Yankel to spy on the Harvard team. So Yankel shlepped off to Cambridge and hid in the bulrushes off the Charles River, from where he carefully watched the Harvard team as they practiced.

Yankel finally returned to Yeshiva. "I have figured out their secret," he announced. "They have eight guys rowing and only one guy shouting."

Hostages

Just before Rosh Hashanah, a team of terrorists invades the shul and takes the rabbi, the cantor and the shul president hostage. Hours later, the governor stands tough, he won't give them a million dollars, nor a getaway car nor a Jumbo Jet.

The terrorists gather the three hostages in a corner and inform them that things look bad and they're going to have to shoot them. Nevertheless, to show that they're not really a bad bunch, they'll grant each hostage one wish.

"Please," says the rabbi, "for the last two months I've been working on my Rosh Hashanah Sermon. What a waste to die now without having carried it before an audience. I'll go happily if you let me recite my sermon. It's an hour - ninety minutes long, tops."

They promise to grant him the wish.

"Please," says the cantor, "after 50 years I've finally gotten the 'Hinnen!' prayer just right. What a waste to die and not sing it to an audience. It's only about 45 minutes long - then I'll go happily."

The terrorists promise to grant the cantor his wish too and they turn to the shul president.

"Please," says the president with tears in his eyes, "Shoot me first!"

Three Reform Rabbis

Three Reform Rabbis were in a terrible auto wreck. None survived. One minute they were driving along the highway, talking and laughing and joking, and the next, BOOM! they were before the Creator of all. Shaking his head, The Omnipotent One looks at the three.

"Reform I can understand. But where will it end? You! Goldblum! The ashtrays in your temple so My people could smoke while the Torah was being read?" Goldblum shuddered. God went on. "I can live with that. Men are weak, but the Word is strong!"

Goldblum sighed with relief.

"Bauman! Really, I can accept My people need to eat, but really: serving Ham & Cheese Sandwiches to the devout at the temple during Yom Kippur?"

Bauman hung his head in shame.

"Even that I can allow to pass, even with the eating of that which is not Kosher. I'm not pleased at all with the playing fast and loose with my people, but I can accept these indiscretions."

Bauman also heaved a sigh of relief.

Finally, He turns to the third rabbi and says, "You, Rabinowitz, have gone too far! Am I asking too much? No, you flaunt the world at Me, even on the holiest days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur by putting out a sign saying... 'Closed for the Holidays!'"

Lotto

An observant Jew called Jacob finds himself in dire trouble. His business has gone bust and he's in serious financial trouble. He's so desperate that he decides to ask God for help. He goes into the synagogue and begins to pray. "God, please help me, I've lost my business and if I don't get some money, I'm going to lose my house as well, please let me win the lotto."

Lotto night comes and somebody else wins it.

Jacob goes back to the synagogue. "God, please let me win the lotto, I've lost my business, my house and I'm going to lose my car as well."

Lotto night comes and Jacob still has no luck!!

Back to the synagogue. "My God, why have you forsaken me?? I've lost my business, my house, my car and my wife and my children are starving. I don't often ask you for help and I have always been a good servant to you. Why won't you just let me win the lotto this one time so I can get my life back in order???"

Suddenly there is a blinding flash of light as the heavens open and Jacob is confronted by the voice of GOD himself: "JACOB, MEET ME HALF WAY ON THIS ONE...BUY A DAMNED TICKET."

Outer Space Priests

NASA sent many many shuttles into orbit circling the earth. They attempted to include passengers of all races, color and creed.. Eventually they invited, a priest, a Druid (as a catch-all) and a rabbi to orbit the earth in the shuttle...

Upon their return, crowds of people formed to hear their religious leaders impressions. First the Catholic priest emerged,

beaming and happy, in his white robe. He made a statement regarding how wonderful it was to visit G-d's creation from space. He said, "It was totally amazing, I saw the sun rise and set, I saw the beautiful oceans. I never knew Asia and Africa were so large! Perhaps, we should send more missionaries?"

Then the Reformed Druid emerged in his white suit also beaming at the peaceful power of creation as view from outer space. He said, "I saw the magnificent earth, our home, I saw the majestic sun. I'm truly in awe. I'm glad to be back with feet firmly planted again on my Goddess. I had to wing a prayer during an eclipse of the Sun and moon by the earth, but it worked okay. The crew enjoyed the whiskey. Oh, and no angels were seen."

Then the Orthodox rabbi came out. He was completely disheveled, his beard was tangled and in every direction, his kippa was frayed, his tallit was wrinkled, like you can't imagine. The crowds asked him, "Rabbi, did you enjoy the flight?... creation?... outer space?"

The rabbi threw his hands in the air and said, "What ENJOY??? What was there to enjoy??? Oyoyoy! Three days of continual sunrise and setting! On with the tefillin, off with the tefillin, Mincha, Maariv, Mincha, Maariv!...Gevalt!!!!!"

Where is God?

In a certain suburban neighborhood, there were two brothers, 8 and 10 years old, who were exceedingly mischievous. Whatever went wrong in the neighborhood, it turned out they had a hand in it. Their parents were at their wit's end trying to control them. Hearing about a priest nearby who worked with delinquent boys, the mother suggested to the father that they ask the priest to talk with the boys. The father replied, "Sure, do that before I kill them!"

The mother went to the priest and made her request. He agreed, but said he wanted to see the younger boy first and alone. So the mother sent him to the priest.

The priest sat the boy down across a huge, impressive desk he sat behind. For about five minutes they just sat and stared at each other. Finally, the priest pointed his forefinger at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy looked under the desk, in the corners of the room, all around, but said nothing. Again, louder, the priest pointed at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

Again the boy looked all around but said nothing. A third time, in a louder, firmer voice, the priest leaned far across the desk and put his forefinger almost to the boy's nose, and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy panicked and ran all the way home. Finding his older brother, he dragged him upstairs to their room and into the closet where they usually plotted their mischief. He finally said, "We are in big trouble."

The older boy asked, "What do you mean, big trouble?"

His brother replied, "God is missing and they think we did it!"

The Collar

A little boy, not accustomed to seeing a priest in his "work uniform," went up to the priest and asked, "Why do you dress so funny?"

The priest replied, "This is the uniform that I wear when I work."

The child, still staring at him, asked, "Do you have a boo boo?"

The priest was somewhat puzzled, but quickly figured out that the child was looking at his white and black Roman collar. The priest pulled out the white plastic insert and showed it to the child, telling him that it was also part of his uniform.

On the backside of the collar there was some writing: "Wash with warm soapy water." The priest showed this to the little boy and then asked him, "Do you know what these words say?"

The little boy, obviously much too young to read, stated, "I sure do."

The priest, a little taken aback, then replied, "OK then, tell me what they say."

The little boy then replied, "Kills fleas and ticks for up to six months!"

The Power of Scripture

This lady surprised a burglar in her kitchen. He was all loaded down with the things he was going to steal. She had no weapon and was all alone. The only thing that she could think to do was quote Scripture. So she holds up a hand and says: "ACTS 2:38!!!"

The burglar quakes in fear and then freezes to the point that she is able to get to the phone and call 911 for the cops. When the cops arrive, the burglar is still frozen in place. They are very much surprised that a woman alone with no weapon could do this. One of them asked the lady: "How did you do this?"

The woman replied, "I quoted Scripture."

The cop turned to the burglar: "What was it about the scripture that had such an effect on you?"

The burglar replied: "Scripture! What scripture? I thought she said she had an ax and two 38's."

Lawns and God

GOD: St. Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there in the USA? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, sir -- just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You'd better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: Dumb and Dumber, Lord. It's a real stupid movie about...

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis

Sisterhood

A man was brought to Mercy Hospital, and went in for coronary surgery. The operation went well, and as the groggy man regained consciousness, he was reassured by a Sister of Mercy waiting by his bed.

"Mr. Smith, you're going to be just fine," the nun said while patting his hand.

"We do have to know, however, how you intend to pay for your stay here. Are you covered by insurance?"

"No, I'm not," the man whispered hoarsely.

"Can you pay in cash?"

"I'm afraid I can't, Sister."

"Do you have any close relatives, then?"

"Just my sister in New Mexico," replied, "but she's a spinster nun."

"Nuns are not spinsters, Mr. Smith," the nun replied. "They are married to God."

"That's right..." the man said with a smile, "So bill my Brother-in-law."

Going to Heaven

Father O'Malley walks into a pub in Donegal, and says to the first man he meets, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

The man said, "I do Father."

The priest said, "Then stand over there against the wall."

Then the priest asked the second man, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

"Sure, Father, and who wouldn't?" was the man's reply.

"Then stand over there against the wall," said the priest.

Then Father O'Malley walked up to Murphy and said, "Do you want to go to Heaven?"

Murphy shook his head and said, "No, I don't Father."

The priest said, "C'mon lad... I don't believe this. You mean to tell me that when you die you don't want to go to Heaven?"

Murphy said, "Oh, when I die, yes. Sure, I thought you were getting a group together to go right now."

Fatherhood

An old man was once on the subway, and he sat down next to a younger man. He noticed that the young man had a strange kind of shirt collar.

Having never seen a priest before, he asked, "Excuse me sir, but why do you have your shirt collar on backwards?"

The priest became a bit flustered but politely answered, "I wear this collar because I am a Father."

The older gent thought a second and responded, "Sir, I am also a father but I wear my collar front-ways. Why do you wear your collar so differently?"

The priest thought for a minute and said, "Sir, I am the Father for many."

The older fellow quickly answered, "I too am the father of many. I have five sons, six daughters and too many grandchildren to count... But I wear my collar like everyone else does. Why do you wear it your way?"

The priest who was beginning to get exasperated thought and then blurted out, "Sir, I am the Father for hundreds and hundreds of people."

Now the kindly old gentleman was stunned and sat silently for a long time.

As he got up to leave the subway train, he leaned over to the priest and said, "Well, sonny, perhaps, it's your pants you should wear backwards."

The Skinny Dip

A minister, a priest and a rabbi went for a hike one day. It was very hot. They were sweating and exhausted when they came upon a small lake. Since it was fairly secluded, they took off all their clothes and jumped in the water. Feeling refreshed, the trio decided to pick a few berries while enjoying their "freedom."

As they were crossing an open area, who should come along but a group of ladies from town. Unable to get to their clothes in time, the minister and the priest covered their privates and the rabbi covered his face while they ran for cover.

After the ladies had left and the men got their clothes back on, the minister and the priest asked the rabbi why he covered his face rather than his privates. The rabbi replied, "I don't know about you, but in MY congregation, it's my face they would recognize."

Is Hell Endothermic or Exothermic?

Dr. Schlambaugh, a senior lecturer at the Chemical Engineering Department, University of Oklahoma, is known for posing questions on final exams like: "Why do airplanes fly?"

In May a few years ago, the "Momentum, Heat and Mass Transfer" exam paper contained the question: "Is Hell exothermic or endothermic? Support your answer with proof."

Most students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law or similar. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we must postulate that if souls exist, they must have some mass. If they do, then a mole of souls also must have a mass. So, at what rate are souls moving into hell and at what rate are souls leaving? I think we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it does not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for souls entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some religions say that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions, and people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all people and all souls go to Hell. With the birth and death rates what they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change in the volume of Hell. Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the ratio of the mass of the souls and volume needs to stay constant.

[Answer 1] So, if Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.

[Answer 2] Of course, if Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase in souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it? If we accept the postulate (given to me by Teresa Banyan during freshman year) that "it'll be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and taking into account that I still have not succeeded in having sexual relations with her, then [Answer 2] cannot be correct;..... thus, Hell is exothermic.

The student got the only A.

Sunday School

A mom and dad were worried about their son not wanting to learn math at the school he was in, so they decided to send him to a Catholic school. After the first day of school, their son comes racing into the house, goes straight into his bedroom and slams the door shut. Mom and dad are a little worried about this and go to his bedroom to see if he is okay. Then they find him sitting at his desk doing his homework. The boy keeps doing that for the rest of the year. At the end of the year the son brings home his report card and gives it to his mom and dad. Looking at it they see under math an A+. Mom and dad are very happy and ask the son what changed your mind about learning math? The son looked at mom and dad and said, "Well, on the first day when I walked into the classroom, I saw a guy nailed to the plus sign at the back of the room behind the teacher's desk and I knew they meant business."

Why Sex Is Better Than Church

You get better quality partners by being good at sex than by being good at religion.

Having sex doesn't make you feel guilty.

You don't have to get out of bed to have sex.

Sex is fun.

If someone is yelling at you during sex, you're probably doing it right.

The company is better.

You don't have unwanted observers judging your sincerity.

It is so interesting that you don't fall asleep until afterwards, or not at all.

Sex doesn't have so many rules.

Countries don't make war on each other for their sexual practices.

You don't have to take someone else's word on how to have sex.

The environment is more comfortable.

The memories have a higher rerun value.

You never have doubts that you're actually having sex.

Even when it's bad, it's good.

You'll never waste an afternoon arguing with someone over whether their sex life is better than yours.

You won't be ostracized for not having sex.

You don't have to worry about whether you've chosen the right kind of sex.

They don't pass around collection plates in bed.

You won't be eternally tortured in flames for not having sex, not having enough sex, or being bad at sex.

Singing is optional during sex.

You don't have to dress up for sex.

You can hope for a second coming without 2,000 years of effort.

In the throes of sexual passion, one can cry out, "Oh God! God!," but in a church service one can not cry out, "Oh Sex! Oh Sex!"

Water Games

Jesus and Moses were sitting on a bench in heaven, remembering the good old days. They talked about what they used to be able to do and wondered if they still had their old tricks in them.

So, they decided to go see if they still had extra-worldly powers like they had so many years before. The pair went to the Red Sea and Moses raised his hands and parted the sea just like he had when he was much much younger.

Jesus, clearly amazed, asked Moses, "There's so much that I did, but what could I do now to see if I still have the power?"

"Walk on water like the good old days," replied Moses.

So Jesus kicked off his sandals and stepped into the water. He took three steps on the surface and then sank under the murky waters of the Red Sea. Dumbfounded, he looked at Moses and wondered what was the matter.

"Must be those holes in your feet," Moses responded.

Divine Judgment

A drunk man who smelled like beer sat down on a subway seat next to a priest. The man's tie was stained, his face was plastered with red lipstick, and a half empty bottle of gin was sticking out of his torn coat pocket. He opened his newspaper and began reading.

After a few minutes the man turned to the priest and asked, "Say, Father, what causes arthritis?"

"My Son, it's caused by loose living, being with cheap, wicked women, too much alcohol and a contempt for your fellow man."

"Well, I'll be damned," the drunk muttered, returning to his paper.

The priest, thinking about what he had said, nudged the man and apologized.

"I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to come on so strong. How long have you had arthritis?"

"I don't have it, Father. I was just reading here that the Pope does."

A Six Year-Old Girl

One day a 6 year-old girl was sitting in a classroom. The teacher was going to explain evolution to the children. The teacher asked a little boy: Tommy do you see the tree outside?

TOMMY: Yes.

TEACHER: Tommy, do you see the grass outside?

TOMMY: Yes.

TEACHER: Go outside and look up and see if you can see the sky.

TOMMY: Okay. (He returned a few minutes later) Yes, I saw the sky.

TEACHER: Did you see God?

TOMMY: No.

TEACHER: That's my point. We can't see God because he isn't there. He doesn't exist.

A little girl spoke up and wanted to ask the boy some questions. The teacher agreed and the little girl asked the boy:

LITTLE GIRL: Do you see the tree outside?

TOMMY: Yes.

LITTLE GIRL: Tommy do you see the grass outside?

TOMMY: Yessssss (getting tired of the questions by this time.)

LITTLE GIRL: Did you see the sky?

TOMMY: Yessssss

LITTLE GIRL: Tommy, do you see the teacher?

TOMMY: Yes.

LITTLE GIRL: Do you see her brain?

TOMMY: No.

LITTLE GIRL: Then according to what we were taught today in school, she must not have one!

Real Motives

Preacher: Do you say your prayers at night, little boy?

Jimmy: Yes, sir.

Preacher: And do you always say them in the morning, too?

Jimmy: No, sir. I ain't scared in the daytime.

The Ants Go Marchin'

by Mark Twain

Last summer in Germany in the company of a crowd of German research scholars, I was fired by their example to do a little research of my own. I first had made about a dozen little toy churches and labeled them "Presbyterian," "Catholic," "Methodist" and so on. Then I rang a church bell and turned loose a crowd of ants I had caught. I found that the ants paid no attention whatever to my churches. This was Experiment No. 1.

Experiment No. 2 consisted of placing a little honey, say in the Episcopal Church, and ringing the bell. Before its notes had ceased every last one of the ants had entered the portals of the Episcopal Church. Experiment 3 was the transferring of the honey to the Methodist Church and ringing for service. The former devout Episcopalians now went over in a body to the Methodist Church. In short, in whatever church I placed the honey, there I would find the ants before I had done ringing the church bell. From these experiments there could be but one deduction, viz: that ants have intelligence.

Plagiarism

by Mark Twain

After listening to a sermon by Bishop Doane, Twain remarked "I enjoyed your sermon this morning very much. I have a book at home with every word of it." To this implied charge of plagiarism, the bishop protested. Finally he showed the clergyman an unabridged dictionary and said he "stood ready to prove it."

The Solution

by Mark Twain

During a trip in London, Mark Twain was a guest at a banquet of English scholars. The conversation drifted into a discussion of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. The party became divided in its opinion, and finally one desperate person turned to Mark Twain, who had not entered the discussion, and begged him to commit himself. Mark Twain replied,

"I'll wait until I get to Heaven and ask Shakespeare who did write his plays."

"I don't think, Mr. Clemens, that you will find Shakespeare in Heaven," replied the loyal Baconite.

"Then," replied Mark Twain, "You ask him."

Horses and Rabbis

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!"

The Doctrine of the Feline Sedentation

How would the Church of England deal with "the cat sat on the mat" if it appeared in the Bible?

The liberal theologians would point out that such a passage did not of course mean that the cat literally sat on the mat. Also, cat and mat had different meanings in those days from today, and

anyway, the text should be interpreted according to the customs and practices of the period.

This would lead to an immediate backlash from the Evangelicals. They would make it an essential condition of faith that a real physical, living cat, being a domestic pet of the Felix Domesticus species, and having a whiskered head and furry body, four legs and a tail, did physically place its whole body on a floor covering, designed for that purpose, which is on the floor but not of the floor. The expression "on the floor but not of the floor" would be explained in a leaflet.

Meanwhile, the Catholics would have developed the Festival of the Sedentation of the Blessed Cat. This would teach that the cat was white and majestically reclined on a mat of gold thread before its assumption to the Great Cat Basket of Heaven. This would be commemorated by the singing of the Magnificat, lighting three candles, and ringing a bell five times. This would cause a schism with the Orthodox Church which would believe that tradition would require Holy Cats Day [as it would be colloquially known] to be marked by lighting six candles and ringing the bell four times. This would be partly resolved by the Cuckoo Land Declaration recognizing the traditional validity of each.

Eventually, the House of Bishops would issue a statement on the Doctrine of the Feline Sedentation. It would explain that traditionally the text describes a domestic feline quadruped superjacent to an unattached covering on a fundamental surface. For determining its salvific and eschatological significations, it would follow the heuristic analytical principles adopted in dealing with the Canine Fenestration Question [How much is that doggie in the window?] and the Affirmative Musaceous Paradox [Yes, we have no bananas]. And so on, for another 210 pages.

The General Synod would then commend this report as helpful resource material for clergy to explain to the man in the pew the difficult doctrine of the cat sat on the mat.

Priest and Rabbi Meet on a Plane

The Dalai Lama once commented that we should look for what spiritual paths have in common rather than the differences. Case in point:

A Priest and a Rabbi are riding in a plane. After a while, the Priest turns to the Rabbi and asks, "Is it still a requirement of your faith that you not eat pork?"

The Rabbi responds, "Yes that is still one of our beliefs."

The Priest then asks, "Have you ever eaten pork?"

To which the Rabbi replies, "Yes on one occasion I did succumb to temptation and tasted pork."

The Priest nodded in understanding and went on with his reading.

A while later, the Rabbi spoke up and asked the Priest, "Father, is it still a requirement of your church that you remain celibate?"

The Priest replied, "Yes, that is still very much a part of our faith."

The Rabbi then asked him, "Father, have you ever fallen to the temptations of the flesh?"

The Priest replied, "Yes Rabbi, on one occasion I was weak and broke with my faith."

The Rabbi nodded understandingly for a moment and then said, "A lot better than pork isn't it?"

Jewish and Chinese Calendar

A Hebrew teacher stood in front of his classroom and said, "The Jewish people have observed their 5,759th year as a people. Consider that the Chinese, for example, have only observed their 4,692nd year as a people. What does that mean to you?"

After a moment of silence, one student raised his hand.

"Yes, David," the teacher said. "What does that mean?"

"It means that the Jews had to do without Chinese food for 1,063 years."

Church on Fire

During a recent ecumenical gathering, a secretary rushed into the meeting shouting, "The building is on fire!"

The Methodists immediately gathered in the corner and prayed.

The Baptists cried, "Where is the water?"

The Quakers quietly praised God for the blessings that fire brings.

The Lutherans posted a notice on the door, declaring the fire was evil.

The Roman Catholics passed the plate to cover the damage.

The Jews posted symbols on the doors, hoping the fire would pass.

The Congregationalists shouted, "Every man for himself!"

The Fundamentalists proclaimed, "It's the vengeance of God!"

The Episcopalians formed a procession and marched out.

The Christian Scientists concluded there was no fire.

The Presbyterians appointed a chairperson who was to appoint a committee to look into the matter and submit a written report.

The secretary grabbed the fire extinguisher and put the fire out.

Bread for Jewish New Year

As prelude to the Jewish New Year—especially its Tashlich ceremony, which rids one of an entire prior year of sins—just taking a few crumbs from whatever old bread is in the house lacks subtlety and religious sensitivity. Consider these alternatives...

For ordinary sins, use White Bread

For erotic sins, French Bread

For particularly dark sins, Pumpnickel

For complex sins, Multigrain

For twisted sins, Pretzel

For tasteless sins, Rice Cakes

For sins of indecision, Waffles

For sins committed in haste, Matzo

For sins committed in less than 18 minutes, Shmura Matzo

For sins of Chutzpah, Fresh Bread

For substance abuse, Poppy Seed

For inhaling, Stoned Wheat

For committing arson, Toast

For committing auto theft, Caraway

For being ill/tempered, Sourdough

For silliness, Nut Bread

For not giving full value, Short Bread

For war/mongering, Kaiser Rolls

For immodest dressing, Tarts

For causing injury or damage to others, Torts

For promiscuity, Hot Buns

For davening off tune, Flat Bread

For being holier than thou, Bagels

For unfairly upbraiding another, Challah

For trashing the environment, Dumplings

For sins of laziness, Any Very Long loaf

For sins of pride, Puff Pastry

For sins of the righteous, Angel Food Cake

For selling your soul, Devil's Food Cake

For lust in your heart, Wonder Bread

Irish Postage Stamps

A Woman went to the Post Office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards.

"What denomination?" Asked the clerk.

"Oh, good heavens! Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well give me 50 Protestant and 50 Catholic ones."

10 Commandments

A student was asked to list the 10 Commandments in any order.

His answer? "3, 6, 1, 8, 4, 5, 9, 2, 10, 7."

Dead Sea Gull

I was at the beach with my children when my four-year-old son ran up to me, grabbed my hand, and led me to the shore, where a sea gull lay dead in the sand.

"Mommy, what happened to him?" the little boy asked. "He died and went to Heaven," I replied.

My son thought a moment and then said, "And God threw him back down?"

Cartoonist

Bill Keane, creator of the Family Circus cartoon strip tells of a time when he was penciling one of his cartoons and his son Jeffy said, "Daddy, how do you know what to draw?"

I said, "God tells me."

Jeffy said, "Then why do you keep erasing parts of it?"

Traditional Values

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) -- NASA engineers and mathematicians in this high-tech city are stunned and infuriated after the Alabama state legislature narrowly passed a law yesterday redefining pi, a mathematical constant used in the aerospace industry. The bill to change the value of pi to exactly three was introduced without fanfare by Leonard Lee Lawson (R, Crossville), and rapidly gained support after a letter-writing campaign by members of the Solomon Society, a traditional values group. Governor Fob James says he will sign it into law on Wednesday.

The law took the state's engineering community by surprise. "It would have been nice if they had consulted with someone who actually uses pi," said Marshall Bergman, a manager at the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. According to Bergman, pi

is a Greek letter that signifies the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. It is often used by engineers to calculate missile trajectories.

Prof. Kim Johanson, a mathematician from University of Alabama, said that pi is a universal constant, and cannot arbitrarily be changed by lawmakers. Johanson explained that pi is an irrational number, which means that it has an infinite number of digits after the decimal point and can never be known exactly. Nevertheless, she said, pi is precisely defined by mathematics to be "3.14159, plus as many more digits as you have time to calculate."

"I think that it is the mathematicians that are being irrational, and it is time for them to admit it," said Lawson. "The Bible very clearly says in I Kings 7:23 that the alter font of Solomon's Temple was ten cubits across and thirty cubits in diameter, and that it was round in compass."

Lawson called into question the usefulness of any number that cannot be calculated exactly, and suggested that never knowing the exact answer could harm students' self-esteem. "We need to return to some absolutes in our society," he said, "the Bible does not say that the font was thirty-something cubits. Plain reading says thirty cubits. Period."

Science supports Lawson, explains Russell Humbleys, a propulsion technician at the Marshall Spaceflight Center who testified in support of the bill before the legislature in Montgomery on Monday. "Pi is merely an artifact of Euclidean geometry."

Humbleys is working on a theory, which he says will prove that pi is determined by the geometry of three-dimensional space, which is assumed by physicists to be "isotropic," or the same in all directions. "There are other geometries, and pi is different in every one of them," says Humbleys. Scientists have arbitrarily assumed that space is Euclidean, he says. He points out that a circle drawn on a spherical surface has a different value for the ratio of circumference to diameter. "Anyone with a compass, flexible ruler, and globe can see for themselves," suggests Humbleys, "it's not exactly rocket science."

Roger Learned, a Solomon Society member who was in Montgomery to support the bill, agrees. He said that pi is nothing more than an assumption by the mathematicians and engineers who were there to argue against the bill. "These nabobs waltzed into the capital with an arrogance that was breathtaking," Learned said. "Their prefatorial deficit resulted in a polemical stance at absolute contraposition to the legislature's puissance."

Some education experts believe that the legislation will affect the way math is taught to Alabama's children. One member of the state school board, Lily Ponja, is anxious to get the new value of pi into the state's math textbooks, but thinks that the old value should be retained as an alternative. She said, "As far as I am concerned, the value of pi is only a theory, and we should be open to all interpretations." She looks forward to students having the freedom to decide for themselves what value pi should have.

Robert S. Dietz, a professor at Arizona State University who has followed the controversy, wrote that this is not the first time a state legislature has attempted to redefine the value of pi. A legislator in the state of Indiana unsuccessfully attempted to have that state set the value of pi to three. According to Dietz, the lawmaker was exasperated by the calculations of a mathematician who carried pi to four hundred decimal places and still could not achieve a rational number.

Many experts are warning that this is just the beginning of a national battle over pi between traditional values supporters and the technical elite. Solomon Society member Lawson agrees. "We just want to return pi to its traditional value," he said, "which, according to the Bible, is three."

Jesus Hears about Christology

Jesus said, "Whom do men say that I am?"

And his disciples answered and said, "Some say you are John the Baptist returned from the dead; others say Elias, or other of the old prophets."

And Jesus answered and said, "But whom do you say that I am?"

Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Logos, existing in the Father as His rationality and then, by an act of His will, being generated, in consideration of the various functions by which God is related to his creation, but only on the fact that Scripture speaks of a Father, and a Son, and a Holy Spirit, each member of the Trinity being co-equal with every other member, and each acting inseparably with and interpenetrating every other member, with only an economic subordination within God, but causing no division which would make the substance no longer simple."

And Jesus, answering, said, "What?"

The Irishman at the Pub

An Irishman walks into a bar in Dublin, orders three pints of Guinness and sits in the back of the room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finishes them, he comes back to the bar and orders three more.

The bartender says, "You know, a pint goes flat after I draw it; it would taste better if you bought one at a time." The Irishman replies, "Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in America, the other in Australia, and I'm here in Dublin. When we all left home, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days when we drank together." The bartender admits that this is a nice custom, and leaves it at that. The Irishman becomes a regular in the bar, and always drinks the same way: He orders three pints and drinks them in turn.

One day, he comes in and orders two pints. All the other regulars notice and fall silent. When he comes back to the bar for the second round, the bartender says, "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your great loss."

The Irishman looks confused for a moment, then a light dawns in his eye and he laughs. "Oh, no," he says, "everyone's fine. I've just quit drinking."

Synagogue Dog

While leading the Friday evening services, the Rabbi noticed a member of the congregation, Bernie, walk in with a St. Bernard dog. The Rabbi, horrified, asked the Cantor to continue the service and went to talk to Bernie.

Rabbi: "What are doing here with a dog?"

Bernie: "The dog came here to pray."

"Oh, come on," says the Rabbi.

"YES!" says Bernie.

Rabbi: "I don't believe you. You are just fooling around; that's not a proper thing to do in temple."

Bernie: "Its true!"

"Ok," says the Rabbi (thinking he would call Bernie's bluff), "then show me what the dog can do."

"OK" says Bernie nodding to the dog...The dog proceeds to open up the barrel under his neck and removes a yarmulke, a tallis, and prayer book and actually starts saying prayers... in Hebrew! The Rabbi is so shocked he listens for a full 15 minutes.

When the Rabbi regains his composure, he is so impressed with the quality of the praying he says to Bernie. "Do you think your dog would consider going to Rabbinical school?????"

Bernie, throwing up his hands in disgust says, "YOU talk to him!!! He wants to be a doctor!"

God Scandal

Turmoil rocked Heaven this morning as allegations arose that God had had an affair with a former worshipper. The scandal was begun when a 21 year old woman, known only as Mary, claimed that she had given birth to God's "only son" last week in a barn in the hamlet of Bethlehem.

Sources close to Mary claim that she "had loved God for a long time," that she was constantly talking about her relationship with God, and that she was "thrilled to have had his child." In a press conference this morning, God issued a vehement denial, saying that "No sexual relationship existed," and that "the facts of this story will come out in time, verily."

Independent counsel Kenneth Beelzebub immediately filed a brief with the Justice department to expand his investigation to cover questions of whether any commandments may have been broken, and whether God had illegally funneled laundered money to his illegitimate child through three foreign operatives known only as the "Wise Men." Beelzebub has issued subpoenas to several angels who are rumored to have acted as go-betweens in the affair.

Critics have pointed out that these allegations have little to do with the charges that Beelzebub was originally appointed to investigate, that God had created large-scale flooding in order to cover up evidence of a failed land deal.

In recent months, Beelzebub's investigation has already been expanded to cover questions surrounding the large number of locusts that plagued God's political opponents in the last election, as well as to claims that the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was to divert attention away from a scandal involving whether the giveaway of a parcel of public land in Promised County to a Jewish special interest group was quid pro quo for political contributions.

If these allegations prove to be true, then this could be a huge blow to God's career, much of which has been spent crusading for stricter moral standards and harsher punishments for wrongdoers. Indeed, God recently outlined a "tough-on-crime" plan consisting of a series of 10 "Commandments," which has been introduced in Congress in a bill by Rep. Moses. Critics of the bill have pointed out that it lacks any provisions for the rehabilitation of criminals, and lawyers for the ACLU are planning to fight the "Name in Vain" Commandment as being an unconstitutional restriction on free speech.

Promotions

A Catholic priest and a Rabbi are talking about job prospects:

"Well," says the priest, "there's a good chance that I'll be the next Bishop - maybe within the next couple of years."

"Bishop!" marvels the Rabbi, "very nice. And after that?"

"Oh, I don't know, I suppose it's possible I could become Archbishop... given luck, and God's blessing."

"Very nice, very nice; and after Archbishop?"

"Ha! Well, you know, it's Cardinal after that, but it's really very unlikely. But in theory, I could become a Cardinal."

"Lovely!" enthuses the Rabbi, "the scarlet would suit your complexion. So what's after Cardinal?"

The priest smiles: "After Cardinal? Well, it's Pope - but I'm hardly likely to become... hmmm, oh I suppose it's just possible. If a Pole why not an Englishman again? Yes, I could just become Pope."

The Rabbi is delighted, "Splendid! And after Pope?"

The priest looks at him in surprise: "After Pope? There's nothing after Pope! I mean, there's just God above the Pope - I can't become God."

"So why not? One of our boys made it."

Good Question

Moses made a third pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. After much climbing he arrived at the burning bush and removed his sandals. Kneeling down, he said a prayer of entreaty:

"Oh mighty God, your people have sent me back to ask you a question about the Ten Commandments."

"What question do they have?" roared the deity above.

"They want to know, are they listed by priority?"

Theology vs. Astronomy

A theologian and an astronomer were talking together one day. The astronomer said that after reading widely in the field of religion, he had concluded that all religion could be summed up in a single phrase.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," he said, with a bit of smugness, knowing that his field is so much more complex.

After a brief pause, the theologian replied that after reading widely in the area of astronomy he had concluded that all of it could be summed up in a single phrase also.

"Oh, and what is that?" the astronomer inquired.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are!"

He Could Have Been a Doctor or a Lawyer

A Jewish father was troubled by the way his son turned out, and went to see his Rabbi about it.

"I brought him up in the faith, gave him a very expensive bar mitzvah, cost me a fortune to educate him. Then he tells me last week he has decided to be a Christian! Rabbi, where did I go wrong?"

"Funny you should come to me," said the Rabbi. "Like you I, too, brought my boy up in the faith, put him through University, cost me a fortune, then one day he, too, tells me he has decided to become a Christian."

"What did you do?" asked the father.

"I turned to God for the answer," replied the Rabbi.

"And what did he say?" pressed the father.

"God said, 'Funny you should come to me...'"

Sports Car

After years of hard work, a man who has finally made his way in business decides to treat himself and buys an extravagance: A new Lamborghini. However, after buying it, he feels a bit guilty. So, he goes to the Rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue in his town and asks for a mezuzah (a parchment scroll placed over the doorway to bless a Jewish home) for the Lamborghini.

"You want a mezuzah for what?" the Rabbi asks.
 "It's a Lamborghini," the man replies.
 "What's a Lamborghini?" asks the Rabbi.
 "A car, an Italian sports car."
 "What? That is blasphemy!" the Rabbi shouts. "You want a mezuzah for a sports car? Go to the Conservatives!"

Well, the man is reluctant, so he waits a few days but finally goes to the Conservative Rabbi and asks for a mezuzah.

"You want a mezuzah for what?" the Rabbi asks.
 "It's a Lamborghini," the man replies.
 "What's a Lamborghini?" asks the Rabbi.
 "A car, an Italian sports car."
 "What? That is blasphemy!" the Rabbi shouts. "You want a mezuzah for a sports car? Go to the Reformed!"

Again, the man feels guilty, but finally he breaks down and goes to the Reformed Rabbi.

"Rabbi," he asks, "I'd like a mezuzah for my Lamborghini."
 "You have a Lamborghini?" asks the Rabbi.
 "You know what it is?"
 "Of course! It's a fantastic Italian sports car! Can I see it?"
 They go out and the Rabbi carefully looks over the entire car, finally settling into the driver's seat.
 "Well, this is fantastic," the Rabbi tells the man. "I have only one question."
 "What's that?"
 "What's a mezuzah?"

- Jewish businessman, 49, manufactures Sabbath candles, Chanukah candles, havdalah candles, Yahrzeit candles. Seeks non-smoker. POB 787.
- Israeli professor, 41, with 18 years of teaching in my behind. Looking for American-born woman who speaks English very good. POB 555.
- 80-year-old bubby, no assets, seeks handsome, virile Jewish male, under 35. Object matrimony. I can dream, can't I? POB 545.
- I am a sensitive Jewish prince whom you can open your heart to. Share your innermost thoughts and deepest secrets. Confide in me. I'll understand your insecurities. No fatties, please. POB 86.
- Jewish male, 34, very successful, smart, independent, self-made. Looking for girl whose father will hire me. POB 53.
- Desperately seeking shmoozing! Retired senior citizen desires female companion 70+ for kvetching, kvelling, and krechtzing. Under 30 is also OK. POB 64

Actual Personals From Israeli Newspapers

- Attractive Jewish woman, 35, college graduate, seeks successful Jewish Prince Charming to get me out of my parents' house. POB 46
- Shul Gabbai, 36. I take out the Torah Saturday morning. Would like to take you out Saturday night. Please write. POB 81
- Couch potato latke, in search of the right applesauce. Let's try it for eight days. Who knows? POB 43.
- Divorced Jewish man, seeks partner to attend shul with, light Shabbat candles, celebrate holidays, build Succah together, attend brisses, barmitzvahs. Religion not important. POB 658
- Orthodox woman with gelt, seeks man who got gelt, or can get gelt. Get it? I'll show you mine, if you show me yours. POB 72
- Sincere rabbinical student, 27. Enjoys Yom Kippur, Tisha B'av, Taanis Esther, Tzom Gedaliah, Asarah B'Teves, Shiva Asar B'Tammuz. Seeks companion for living life in the "fast" lane. POB 90.
- Yeshiva bochur, Torah scholar, long beard, payos. Seeks same in woman. POB 43.
- Worried about in-law meddling? I'm an orphan! Write. POB 74.
- Nice Jewish guy, 38. No skeletons. No baggage. No personality. POB 76
- Female graduate student, studying kaballah, Zohar, exorcism of dybbuks, seeks mensch. No weirdos, please. POB 56.
- Staunch Jewish feminist, wears tzitzis, seeking male who will accept my independence, although you probably will not. Oh, just forget it. POB 435.

Wisdom of the Internet

I got the following stories from this web-site on April 11, 2002.
<http://www.storybin.com/sponsor.html>

The Talking Clock

While proudly showing off his new apartment to friends, a college student led the way into the den.

"What is the big brass gong and hammer for?" one of his friends asked.

"That is the talking clock," the student replied.

"How's it work?" the friend asked.

"Watch," the kid says, then proceeds to give the gong an ear shattering pound with the hammer.

Suddenly someone screams from the other side of the wall, "*Knock it off, you ass! It's two am!*"

The Car Dealership:

In the late 70s, when American cars were not in such a great demand, this guy owned a Chrysler dealership in a small town in the Midwest. This guy was not doing so well. He saw his competitors, selling Hondas, Toyotas and other Japanese cars, with customers lining up to buy their small gas efficient vehicles, while he whiled away his time pining for even one person to enter his dealership to examine his gas-guzzlers. Anyway, one day he went fishing and caught this little goldfish who, to his surprise, said, "Please sir, I am a special fish with magical powers. Let me go and I'll give you one wish." The guy thought to himself, "What have I to lose?" and let the fish go free. The fish thanked him and told him to write his wish on a piece of paper and put it under his pillow and sleep on it. In the morning his wish would be fulfilled. So that night the guy wrote, "I wish to own an foreign car dealership in a large cosmopolitan city." He put the paper under his pillow and the last thing he thought of before going to sleep is, "Here goes nothing." Next morning he woke up in Tokyo owning a Chrysler dealership.

A Happy Cat

There is a story told about a cat who discovered that happiness was in his tail. He kept trying over and over to get it, but all he could do was run around in circles. Exhausted and frustrated, with this endless pursuit, he eventually stopped. And then, he discovered that if he'd just go on about his life then it would follow him wherever he went.

The Sacred Rac

(Anthology Abstracts, June 21, 1989, Vol. IX No.12)

An Indian anthropologist, Chandra Thapar, made a study of foreign culture, which had customs similar to those of his native land. One culture in particular fascinated him because it reveres one animal as sacred, much as the people in India revere the cow.

The tribe Dr. Thapar studied is called the Asu and is found on the American continent north of the Tarahumara of Mexico. Though it seems to be a highly developed society of its type, it has an overwhelming preoccupation with the care and feeding of the rac -- an animal much like a bull in size, strength and temperament. In the Asu tribe, it is almost a social obligation to own at least one if not more racs. Anyone not possessing at least one is held in low esteem by the community because he is too poor to maintain one of these beasts properly. Some members

of the tribe, to display their wealth and social prestige, even own herds of racs.

Unfortunately the rac breed is not very healthy and usually does not live more than five to seven years, for it has a tendency to throw its shoes often. There are rac specialists in each community, perhaps more than one if the community is particularly wealthy. These specialists however, due to the long period of ritual training they must undergo and to the difficulty of obtaining the right selection of charms to treat the rac, demand costly offerings whenever a tribesman must treat his ailing rac.

At the age of sixteen in many Asu communities, many youths undergo a puberty rite in which the rac figures prominently. The youth must petition a high priest in a grand temple. He is then initiated into the ceremonies that surround the care of the rac and is permitted to keep a rac.

Although the rac may be used as a beast of burden, it has many habits, which would be considered by other cultures as harmful to the life of the society. In the first place the rac breed is increasing at a very rapid rate and the Asu tribesmen have given no thought to limiting the rac population. As a consequence the Asu must build more and more paths for the rac to travel on since its delicate health and its love of racing other racs at high speeds necessitates that special areas be set aside for its use. The cost of smoothing the earth is too costly for any one individual to undertake; so it has become a community project and each tribesman must pay an annual tax to build new paths and maintain the old. There are so many paths needed that some people move their homes because the rac paths must be as straight as possible to keep the animal from injuring itself. Dr. Thapar also noted that unlike the cow, which many people in his country hold sacred, the excrement of the rac cannot be used as either fuel or fertilizer. On the contrary, its excrement is exceptionally foul and totally useless.

Worst of all, the rac is prone to stampedes in which it runs down anything in its path, much like stampeding cattle. Estimates are that the rac kills thousands of the Asu in a year.

Despite the high cost of its upkeep, the damage it does to the land, and its habit of destructive stampedes, the Asu still regard it as being essential to the survival of their culture.

Need help figuring out who this strange tribe is?

Sleeping Through the Storm

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man, and hired him.

A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace.

The young man slept soundly.

The farmer and his wife then inspected their property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements.

The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. All was well.

The farmer then understood the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

Sandcastles

Hot sun. Salty air. Rhythmic waves. A little boy is on the beach. On his knees he scoops and packs the sand with plastic shovels into a bright red bucket. Then he upends the bucket on the surface and lifts it. And, to the delight of the little architect, a castle tower is created.

All afternoon he will work. Spooning out the moat. Packing the walls. Bottle tops will be sentries. Popsicle sticks will be bridges. A sandcastle will be built.

Big city. Busy streets. Rumbling traffic.

A man is in his office. At his desk he shuffles papers into stacks and delegates assignments. He cradles the phone on his shoulder and punches the keyboard with his fingers. Numbers are juggled and contracts are signed and much to the delight of the man, a profit is made.

All his life he will work. Formulating the plans. Forecasting the future. Annuities will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire will be built.

Two builders of two castles. They have much in common. They shape granules into grandeurs. They see nothing and make something. They are diligent and determined. And for both the tide will rise and the end will come.

Yet that is where the similarities cease. For the boy sees the end while the man ignores it. Watch the boy as the dusk approaches.

As the waves near, the wise child jumps to his feet and begins to clap. There is no sorrow. No fear. No regret. He knew this would happen. He is not surprised. And when the great breaker crashes into his castle and his masterpiece is sucked into the sea, he smiles. He smiles, picks up his tools, takes his father's hand, and goes home.

The grownup, however, is not so wise. As the wave of years collapses on his castle he is terrified. He hovers over the sandy monument to protect it. He blocks the waves from the walls he has made. Salt-water soaked and shivering he snarls at the incoming tide.

"It's my castle," he defies.

The ocean need not respond. Both know to whom the sand belongs...

And I don't know much about sandcastles. But children do. Watch them and learn. Go ahead and build, but build with a child's heart. When the sunsets and the tides take - applaud. Salute the process of life and go home.

The Lumber Jack

A young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job.

"That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree."

The young man stepped forward, and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "You can start Monday."

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday rolled by -- and Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your paycheck on the way out today."

Startled, the young man replied, "I thought you paid on Friday."

"Normally we do," said the foreman. "But we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last place today."

"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!"

The foreman, sensing the young man's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your ax?"

The young man replied, "No sir, I've been working too hard to take time for that!"

Our lives are like that. We sometimes get so busy that we don't take time to "sharpen the ax." In today's world, it seems that everyone is busier than ever, but less happy than ever. Why is that? Could it be that we have forgotten how to stay sharp?

The Fence

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven six nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."

The Four Philanthropists

There is a story about a village, which was overtaken by enemy forces. All of the warriors who inhabited the village were gathered together and imprisoned by the conquerors.

Amidst the villagers were four philanthropists who became aware of the prison conditions that their compatriots were enduring. The first philanthropist went to the prison and said to the captors, "I understand that my brothers are without clean water. I want to take all my riches, and use them to purify the water, so that my brothers will have clean water, that they will not get sick." The captors agreed and granted the man this right. He walked away, feeling that he had fulfilled his destiny in doing this act of charity for his brothers.

The second philanthropist went to the prison, and approached the captors, saying "I understand my brothers are sleeping on rocks. I want to take all my riches, and provide bedding for the men, so they may rest comfortably in prison." The captors agreed, and the man left, feeling that he had fulfilled his purpose in aiding his brothers' plight.

The third philanthropist went to the prison, and spoke to the captors, saying "I have heard that my brothers have no food. They have only bread and water. I have a large farm, and want to harvest all my crops to see that the men have good food to eat while they are in prison." The captors agreed, and the philanthropist left, knowing he had done much good in helping his brothers in prison.

The fourth philanthropist ~ a wise man of higher awareness ~ found the keys to the prison. One night, he slipped into the prison and freed all his brothers from their captivity.

The Fisherman

One day a fisherman was lying on a beautiful beach, with his fishing pole propped up in the sand and his solitary line cast out into the sparkling blue surf. He was enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sun and the hope of catching a fish.

About that time, a businessman came walking down the beach trying to relieve some of the stress of his workday. He noticed the fisherman sitting on the beach and decided to find out why this fisherman was fishing instead of working hard to make a living for himself and his family.

"You're not going to catch many fish that way," said the businessman, "You should be working harder rather than lying on the beach!"

The fisherman looked up, smiled and replied, "And what will my reward be?"

"Well, you can get bigger nets and catch more fish!" was the businessman's answer.

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman, still smiling.

The businessman replied, "You will make money and you'll be able to buy a boat, which will then result in larger catches of fish!"

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman again.

The businessman was beginning to get a little irritated with the fisherman's questions. "You can buy a bigger boat, and hire some people to work for you!" he said.

"And then what will my reward be?"

The businessman was getting angry. "Don't you understand? You can build up a fleet of fishing boats, sail all over the world, and let your employees catch fish for you!"

Once again the fisherman asked, "And then what will my reward be?"

The businessman was red with rage and shouted at the fisherman, "Don't you understand that you can become so rich that you will never have to work for your living again! You can spend all the rest of your days sitting on this beach, looking at the sunset. You won't have a care in the world!"

The fisherman, still smiling, looked up and said, "And what do you think I'm doing right now?"

The Pit

A man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.

A subjective person came along and said, "I feel for you down there."

An objective person came along and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there."

A Christian Scientist came along and said, "You only think you're in the pit."

Confucius said, "If you would have listened to me you wouldn't be in that pit."

Buddha said, "Your pit is only a state of mind."

A realist said, "That's a pit."

A scientist calculated the pressure necessary, pounds and square inches, to get him out of the pit.

A geologist told him to appreciate and study the rock strata.

An evolutionist said, "You are a rejected mutant destined to be removed from the evolutionary cycle, in other words he is going to die in the pit so he can't produce any more pit falling offspring."

The game warden said, "Did you have a permit to dig that pit?"

A professor lectured him on elementary principles of the pit.

A self-pitying person said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit."

An optimist said, "Things could get worse."

A pessimist said, "Things are going to get worse."

A friend saw the man in the pit, took him by the hand and lifted him out.

A Tale of Tradition

A hard working Chinese rice farmer was supporting his children, wife, and his aging father. He worked long and hard each day, and still, he was barely making enough to feed his children and wife.

One day, he stopped working for the entire day. Instead he built a small cart out of wood he had. The next day he went to his aging father, and insisted that the old man was no longer able to help the family. He was only eating and taking up precious resources. So, he loaded him into the newly built cart, and headed up a nearby mountain.

When he got to the top, he stopped, and aimed the cart facing down the mountain, but before he could roll the cart towards a cliff, his father stopped him saying, "wait, son, I can understand what you are doing, and even why you are doing it, but please save the cart, your son will need it."

A Tale For All Seasons

by Kurt Kauter

"Tell me the weight of a snowflake," a coal-mouse asked a wild dove.

"Nothing more than nothing," was the answer.

"In that case, I must tell you a marvelous story," the coal-mouse said.

"I sat on the branch of a fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow-not heavily, not in a raging blizzard-no, just like a dream, without a sound and without any violence. Since I did not have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the 3,741,953rd dropped onto the branch, nothing more than nothing, as you, say-the branch broke off."

Having said that, the coal-mouse flew away.

The dove, since Noah's time an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while, and finally said to herself, "Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for peace to come to the world."

The Window

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window.

The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation. And every afternoon

when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color of the rainbow. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words. Then unexpectedly, a sinister thought entered his mind. Why should the other man alone experience all the pleasures of seeing everything while he himself never got to see anything? It didn't seem fair.

At first thought the man felt ashamed. But as the days passed and he missed seeing more sights, his envy eroded into resentment and soon turned him sour. He began to brood and he found himself unable to sleep. He should be by that window - that thought, and only that thought now controlled his life.

Late one night as he lay staring at the ceiling, the man by the window began to cough. He was choking on the fluid in his lungs. The other man watched in the dimly lit room as the struggling man by the window groped for the button to call for help.

Listening from across the room he never moved, never pushed his own button, which would have brought the nurse running in. In less than five minutes the coughing and choking stopped, along with that the sound of breathing. Now there was only silence - deathly silence.

The following morning the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths. When she found the lifeless body of the man by the window, she was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take it away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it all himself. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed.

It faced a blank wall!

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Wanting God

A hermit was meditating by a river when a young man interrupted him.

"Master, I wish to become your disciple," said the man.

"Why?" replied the hermit.

The young man thought for a moment. "Because I want to find God."

The master jumped up, grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, dragged him into the river, and plunged his head under water. After holding him there for a minute, with him kicking and struggling to free himself, the master finally pulled him up out of

the river. The young man coughed up water and gasped to get his breath.

When he eventually quieted down, the master spoke. "Tell me, what did you want most of all when you were under water."

"Air!" answered the man.

"Very well," said the master. "Go home and come back to me when you want God as much as you just wanted air."

Plant Your Garden Today

Plant your garden today

First, plant 3 rows of peas;

Patience

Promptness

Prayer

Next, plant 3 rows of squash;

Squash gossip

Squash indifference

Squash criticism

Then, plant 4 rows of lettuce;

Let us obey the good laws

Let us be Loyal

Let us be true to our Obligations

Let us be unselfish

Finish, with 4 rows of turnip;

Turn up when Needed

Turn up with a Smile

Turn up with a Vision

Turn up with Determination

A Persian Proverb

He who knows not,

And knows not that he knows not,

Is a fool - shun him.

He who knows not,

And knows that he knows not,

Is a child - teach him.

He who knows,

And knows not that he knows,

Is asleep - wake him.

He who knows,

And knows that he knows,

Is wise - follow him.

The Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery.

But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars and you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

On Responsibility

Responsibility is the ability to fulfill one's needs and to do so in such a way that one does not deprive others of the opportunity of fulfilling their needs. A responsible person does that which gives him a feeling that he is worthwhile to himself and others. Acquiring responsibility is a very complicated, life-long, process. This ability must be learned.

If a person is not involved with others who care enough about him to give love and discipline, then he will not learn responsibility. Children "test" with irresponsible behavior. Through discipline tempered with love, the child learns someone cares. Before an irresponsible student can accept discipline, he must feel certain the teacher/counselor cares enough to show him the responsible way to behave.

The teacher/counselor often must suffer the pain of the student's intense anger by firmly holding the student to the responsible course of action. If firmness is not constant, the student will repeat his patterns of irresponsibility. A person gains self-respect through discipline, closeness to others through love. Discipline must contain the element of love, which says, "I care enough about you to confront you to behave in a more responsible manner."

Reflections Of The Sky Nation

The Thunder-beings were busy giving birth to new clouds, sending them to dance in the blue playground of sky. Grandfather Sun provided the glittering sunbeams, which acted like jump ropes for today's newborn white, puffy Cloud People.

One of the most curious little clouds wandered off on the winds. She decided she was going to have a talk with Sacred Mountain. "Grandmother Mountain, I've come to ask you if your forests need rain today," she said. "I want to be of service, and so I thought I had better find out what is needed most."

Sacred Mountain told the little cloud that there was plenty of moisture today, but the little one could help in another way. Sacred Mountain taught the little cloud how to understand the thoughts and questions that the human beings were having. It was fun for the little cloud to capture the waves of human thoughts rising from the Earth and to answer the humans' unspoken questions by becoming shapes that formed a series of ideas. The needed answers were found through the linking ideas.

The little cloud approached Sacred Mountain at the end of the day with another question that caused Cloud to have a heavy heart, "Grandmother Mountain, I've worked all day to reflect

helpful answers to the Human Tribe, but now I have one very important question. How can we get them to look up and pay attention?

Walking on water

Three monks decided to practice meditation together. They sat by the side of a lake and closed their eyes in concentration. Then suddenly, the first one stood up and said, "I forgot my mat." He stepped miraculously onto the water in front of him and walked across the lake to their hut on the other side.

When he returned, the second monk stood up and said, "I forgot to put my the other underwear to dry." He too walked calmly across the water and returned the same way. The third monk watched the first two carefully in what he decided must be the test of his own abilities. "Is your learning so superior to mine? I too can match any feat you two can perform," he declared loudly and rushed to the water's edge to walk across it. He promptly fell into the deep water.

Undeterred, the third monk climbed out of the water and tried again, only to sink into the water. Yet again he climbed out and yet again he tried, each time sinking into the water. This went on for some time as the other two monks watched.

After a while, the second monk turned to the first and said, "Do you think we should tell him where the stones are?"

The first monk said, "What stones?"

Wise Blind Elephants

Six wise, blind elephants were discussing what humans were like. Failing to agree, they decided to determine what humans were like by direct experience.

The first wise, blind elephant felt the human, and declared, "Humans are flat."

The other wise, blind elephants, after similarly feeling the human, agreed.

The Other Side

One day a young Buddhist on his journey home, came to the banks of a wide river. Staring hopelessly at the great obstacle in front of him, he pondered for hours on just how to cross such a wide barrier. Just as he was about to give up his pursuit to continue his journey he saw a great teacher on the other side of the river. The young Buddhist yells over to the teacher "Oh wise one, can you tell me how to get to the other side of this river?"

The teacher ponders for a moment looks up and down the river and yells back "My son, you are on the other side."

Reality?

Location is an art gallery.

Artist: That, sir, is a cow grazing.

Visitor: Where is the grass?

Artist: The cow has eaten it.

Visitor: But where is the cow?

Artist: You don't suppose she'd be fool enough to stay there after she'd eaten all the grass, do you?

Falling Hazelnuts of Wisdom

These were collected by RDNA Druids and published on my web page between April 2000 and July 2002.

Cats in the Corner

from Alyx in CO

There was a master in a monastery that had about thirty disciples. They used to

conduct meditation, prayer, and other spiritual exercises. The master loved cats, and therefore had a cat in his monastery. During meditation, the cat would run around disturbing the meditation. The disciples complained to the master, so the master tied the cat in the corner of the meditation hall during meditation time, in order that it would not cause a disturbance.

Thus, things went on. During meditation, the cat would be tied in the corner, while at other times it was free to roam. Several years later the master died, but the cat remained, and the disciples continued to tie the cat in the corner during meditation.

Eventually, the disciples changed; the new disciples did not know why there was a cat inside the hall during meditation, but they nevertheless continued to tie it in the corner at the appropriate time. And when in time the cat died, they went and bought a new one, and tied that one in the corner during meditation time, too.

As time went by the group grew and founded new monasteries. The new master, though he did not know the origin of the cat in the corner, said that it helped the meditation and therefore declared, "Let us have a cat tied in the corner during meditation time in all our monasteries." So in all of their monasteries, there was a cat tied in the corner during meditation time.

Soon many learned treatises were being written about the spiritual importance of tying a cat in the corner during meditation. Some disciples even wrote that it was impossible to meditate properly without the cat.

And this is how Theology and the Philosophy of Religion are created.

Zen Duck

by Gayla Paul in Corn Grove, Iowa.

Duck walks into a bar and says to the bartender, "Got any bread?" Bartender says, "No, no bread here." Next day, the duck walks in again and says, "Got any bread?" Bartender says, "No, sorry buddy, still no bread." The very next day the duck walks into the bar yet again and says to the bartender, "Got any bread?"

Bartender is getting annoyed at this point and says, "No! We do not have any bread here! No bread!" N-O! NO bread!" But again, the very next day the duck is back, and again the duck says, "Got any bread?"

The bartender just about throws a fit and says to the duck, "I have never had any bread, I will never have any bread and I don't have any bread now, AND if you EVER come in here asking for bread again I will nail your feet to the bar!"

Next day, duck walks into the bar and says, "Got any nails?" Bartender says, "No." Duck says, "Got any bread?"

Sigil Thinking

Forrest Stephen Gott on May 2002

In closing, I will offer a personal interpretation on the Sigil (or should I say misinterpretation?) Life is a road of many paths, and the two lines for me are a path, surrounded by a circle of love. It has no physical representation, and it extends beyond the circle for no particular reason other than showing that parts of that path may not always be safe, but can lead to a new circle of love/friendship.

Microcosm

by Robert M. Pirsig,

"Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"

The application of this knife, the division of the world into parts and the building of this structure is something everybody does. All the time we are aware of millions of things around us - these changing shapes, these burning hills, the sound of the engine, the feel of the throttle, each rock and weed and fence post and piece of debris beside the road - aware of these things but not really conscious of them unless there is something unusual or unless they reflect something we are predisposed to see. We couldn't possibly be conscious of these things and remember all of them because our mind would be so full of useless details we would be unable to think.. From all this awareness we must select, and what we select and call consciousness is never the same as the awareness because the process of selection mutates it. We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world.

Religious Society

Faith & Practice: London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends. Submitted by Don Morrison

The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organization, which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstance; but the spring of life lies deeper, and often escapes recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union that allows the free flowing through the society of the spiritual life, which is its strength. Such words as "discipleship," "fellowship," "brotherhood," describe these central springs of religious life...

Sufic/Druidic Connections

Submitted by Richard Shelton

from Idries Shah's "The Sufis"

The poets were the chief disseminators of Sufi thought, earned the same reverence as did the ollamhs, or master poets, of earl medieval Ireland, and used a similar secret language of metaphorical reference and verbal cipher. Nizami the Persian Sufi writes: "Under the poet's tongue lies the key of the treasury." This language was a protection of thought only proper to those that understand it, and against accusations of heresy or civil disobedience. Ibn el Arabi, summoned before an Islamic inquisition at Aleppo to defend himself against charges of nonconformity, pleaded that his poems were metaphorical, the basic message being God's perfection of man through divine love. He had, for precedent, the incorporation in the Jewish Scriptures

of the erotic Song of Solomon, which was officially interpreted by the Pharisee sages as a metaphor of God's love for Israel; and by the Catholic authorities as a metaphor of God's love for his Church.

In its most advanced form, the secret language uses Semitic consonantal roots to conceal and reveal meanings; and western scholars seem unaware that even the popular "Thousand and One Nights" is Sufic in content, and that its Arabic title *Alf layla wa layla* is a code phrase indicating its main content and intention: "Mother of Records." Yet what seems at first sign Oriental occultism is an ancient and familiar Western habit of thought. Most English and French school children begin history lessons with a picture of their Druidic ancestors lopping mistletoe from a sacred oak. Although the Druids are credited by Caesar with ancestral mysteries and a secret language, the lopping seems so simple a ceremony, mistletoe being still used in Christmas decorations, that few readers pause to consider what I mean. The current view that the Druids were virtually emasculating the oak makes no sense.

"Now, all other sacred trees, plants and herbs have peculiar properties. The alder's timber is waterproof and its leaves yield a royal red dye; birch is the host of the hallucigenetic fly-cap mushroom; oak and ash attract lightening for a holy fire; the mandrake root is anti-spasmodic. The foxglove yields digitalis, which accelerates the beat of the heart; poppies are opiates; ivy has toxic leaves and its flowers provide bees with the last honey of the year. But the berries of the mistletoe; widely known in folklore as an "all heal," have no medicinal properties, though greedily eaten by wood pigeons and other non-migratory birds in winter. The leaves are equally valueless; and the timber can be put to few uses. Why then was the mistletoe singled out as the most sacred and curative of plants. The only answer can be that the Druids used it as an emblem of their own peculiar way of thought. Here is a tree that is no tree, but fastens itself alike on oak, apple, poplar, beech, thorn, even pine, grows green, nourishing itself on the topmost branches when the rest of the forest seems asleep, and the fruit of which is credited with curing all spiritual disorders. Lopped sprigs of it are tied to the lintel of a door and can invite sudden and surprising kisses. The symbolism is exact, if we can equate Druidic with Sufic thought, which is not planted like a tree, as religions are planted, but self-engrafted on a tree already in existence, it keeps green though the tree itself is asleep, in the sense that religions go dead by formalism; and the main motive power of its growth is love, not ordinary animal passion or domestic affection but a sudden surprising recognition of love so rare and high that the heart seems to sprout wings. Strangely enough, the Burning Bush from which God appeared to Moses in the desert is now thought by Biblical scholars to have been an acacia glorified by the red leaves of a locanthus, the Eastern equivalent of mistletoe."

[Shelton: Thought you might be interested in this. Graves, as always, must be taken with a grain of salt, since his intuitionistic leaps far exceed anything warranted by documentation. But this time he may be close to the mark, or at any rate, it would be nice to think so. And it does ring true. This book by the way is a good introduction to the ideas behind Graves' White Goddess – which is absolutely the most frustrating book I've ever tried to read.]

Reflections on a Ritual

Berkeley poet Julia Vinograd sent us this contribution.

A carelessly flung branch flaunts an armpit of moss, roots plunge the willing earth, blind, sucking, stabbing like the touch of a bride's first cry upon her wedding night, a finger flute that raises fertile corpses into heavy scented white improbable petals, a mockery of pink and sweaty flesh, a marriage of the living and the dead around the still troubled ancient pool of the heart full of smooth water-rounded stones remade like any memory with constant use...

And treacherous ripples of desire to break that mirror before a straying falcon shatters its impatience with his own.

Drink of thirst that stains all mouths with silence. No god, no mortal or any other merchant comes here, where circling trees rear at the sky like stallions in a storm and leave perfume-laden wounds upon the sun.

At night eyes climb implicit tangled jungles of which the moon is the not yet planted seed. Beguiled by purity and sacrilege, lightly dancing, only fingers touching...

No one looks at a single leaf or asks what color sap pulses in private midnight veins.

Worship went mad here once, then fell asleep and vines embraced its dreams.

While delicate ferns sprout from its snoring nostrils, only wild things enter: small, bright-eyed skittering coins of fur rest, are gamboled, lost, replaced, forgotten.

Old ghosts and fledgling sparrows test each others' wings and a great stone breast waits to suckle whatever thrives on all the clean ruthlessness it aches with... who will relieve it after so long a time?

The call is of green thorns still more tender than tight buds. Come sharpen, come open, come storm silence with itself and grow at last till no reflection taints the pool impaled upon your eyes and well content.

Smokey The Bear Sutra

This story appears to be anonymous, and "may be reproduced free forever."

Once in the Jurassic, about 150 million years ago, the Great Sun Buddha in this corner of the Infinite Void gave a great Discourse to all the assembled elements and energies: to the standing beings, the walking beings, the flying beings, and the sitting beings - even grasses, to the number of thirteen billion, each one born from a seed, were assembled there: a Discourse concerning Enlightenment on the planet Earth.

"In some future time, there will be a continent called America. It will have great centers of power called such as Pyramid Lake, Walden Pond, Mt. Rainier, Big Sur, Everglades, and so forth; and powerful nerves and channels such as Columbia River, Mississippi River, and Grand Canyon. The human race in that era will get into troubles all over its head, and practically wreck everything in spite of its own strong intelligent Buddha-nature."

"The twisting strata of the great mountains and the pulsings of great volcanoes are my love burning deep in the earth. My obstinate compassion is schist and basalt and granite, to be mountains, to bring down the rain. In that future American Era I shall enter a new form: to cure the world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger; and mindless rage eating food that will not fill it."

And he showed himself in his true form of

Smokey The Bear.

A handsome smokey-colored brown bear standing on his hind legs, showing that he is aroused and watchful.

Bearing in his right paw the Shovel that digs to the truth beneath appearances; cuts the roots of useless attachments, and flings damp sand on the fires of greed and war;

His left paw in the Mudra of Comradely Display - indicating that all creatures have the full right to live to their limits and that deer, rabbits, chipmunks, snakes, dandelions, and lizards all grow in the realm of the Dharma;

Wearing the blue work overalls symbolic of slaves and laborers, the countless men oppressed by a civilization that claims to save but only destroys;

Wearing the broad-brimmed hat of the West, symbolic of the forces that guard the Wilderness, which is the Natural State of the Dharma and the True Path of man on earth; all true paths lead through mountains;

With a halo of smoke and flame behind, the forest fires of the kali-yuga, fires caused by the stupidity of those who think things can be gained and lost whereas in truth all is contained vast and free in the Blue Sky and Green Earth of One Mind;

Round-bellied to show his kind nature and that the great earth has food enough for everyone who loves her and trusts her;

Trampling underfoot wasteful freeways and needless suburbs; smashing the worms of capitalism and totalitarianism;

Indicating the Task: his followers, becoming free of cars, houses, canned food, universities, and shoes, master the Three Mysteries of their own Body, Speech, and Mind; and fearlessly chop down the rotten trees and prune out the sick limbs of this country America and then burn the leftover trash.

Wrathful but Calm, Austere but Con-tic, Smokey the Bear will illuminate those who would help him; but for those who would hinder or slander him,

He Will Put Them Out.

Thus his great Mantra:

Namah samanta vairanz chanda mahoroshana Sphataya hum traka ham main

I dedicate myself to the universal diamond. Be this raging fury destroyed

And he will protect those who love woods and rivers, Gods and animals, hobos and madmen, prisoners and sick people, and musicians;

And if anyone is threatened by advertising, air pollution, or the police, they should chant *SMOKEY THE BEAR'S WAR SPELL*:

Drown Their Butts

Crush Their Butts

Drown Their Butts

Crush Their Butts

And *Smokey The Bear* will surely appear to put the enemy out with his vajra-shovel. Now those who recite this Sutra and then try to put it in practice will accumulate merit as countless as the sands of Arizona and Nevada,

Will help save the planet Earth from total oil slick,
Will enter the age of harmony of man and nature,
Will win the tender love and caresses of men, women, and beasts,
Will always have ripe blackberries to eat and a sunny spot under a pine tree to sit at,
And in the end will win highest perfect enlightenment.

thus we have heard.

The Druids and the Stars

An old Druid and his student are camping on a mountain, set up their tent, and are asleep. Some hours later, The Druid wakes this faithful friend. "Look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

The student replies, "I see millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?" asks the Druid.

The student ponders for a minute. "Astronomically speaking, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, it's evident the Gods are all powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, teacher?"

The Druid is silent for a moment, then speaks. "You idiot, it means someone has stolen our tent!"

The Accident

Bob and his father are driving in a car. They have a terrible accident, and Bob's father dies. Bob is seriously hurt and taken to the hospital in an ambulance. He has to have surgery. The doctor comes to look at Bob and exclaims, "I can't operate on him! He's my son!" Who is the doctor?

The Donkey

An old man, a boy and a donkey were going to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked. As they went along they passed some people who remarked it was a shame the old man was walking and the boy was riding. The man and boy thought maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions.

Later they passed some people that remarked, "What a shame, he makes that little boy walk." They decided they both would walk!

Soon they passed some more people who thought they were stupid to walk when they had a decent donkey to ride.

So, they both rode the donkey! Now they passed some people that shamed them by saying how awful to put such a load on a poor donkey.

The boy and man said they were probably right so they decided to carry the donkey. As they crossed a bridge, they lost their grip on the animal and he fell into the river and drowned.

The moral of the story: "If you try to please everyone, you will eventually lose your ass."

Chickens & the Coop

by Mike of Monument Grove RDNA

After watching "Chicken Run," I received this story from my Japanese teacher. It is by Abe Kobou, and I've translated it into English for you.

A long time ago, chickens were still living freely in the wild. However their life was not an easy one, for they were chased about by weasels and cats; so much that their day was divided between searching far for food, and flying out of the reach of predators.

One day as they were pecking, a human came up to them carrying a bunch of timber and tools. He offered, "I will build you a wire-covered house in which you will be safe from predators." The chickens looked distrustingly at him. "Look here, I do not have claws like a cat, nor do I have fangs like a weasel. There is no reason to fear someone as harmless as me, is there?" The chickens began to discuss this, but the human quickly proceeded to construct the house without waiting for their decision.

The chickens inspected the entrance, which had a large lock that could only be opened by a human hand. When they pointed it out, he said, "If you could open it, so much more could a weasel or a cat. Do not worry, if it is food you are seeking, I promise to bring some and fill your food box everyday." This impressed most of the chickens very much.

One chicken, distrusted the honeyed words of the human. "Perhaps," he said, "you wish to still our eggs, and sell us to the butcher?" The man smiled and replied, "I have only a wish to protect you. Why, indeed, perhaps you yourself are receiving bribes from the weasels and cats to dupe your fellow chickens from this safe alternative?"

This immediately divided the chickens. As the wise chicken could neither prove nor disprove his innocence, he was soon doubted and ostracized from the group. A great debate broke out, but eventually the sensible faction decided, "Let's try it for now, and if we don't like it, I'm sure that we can renegotiate an equitable change of the contract." That decided the issue and their victory was sealed. The human, genteelly opened the door wide and the chickens stately marched into the coop. The rest, as we all know, is history. (See "Chicken Run" the movie, 2000)

Where Did All the Celts Go?

By Ian Friesland

I couldn't be farther away from Ireland (or my native Belgium) but my thoughts fly to that distant land, and I'd like to write a little about it. The RDNA is not exclusively Celtic (we're not, but we all have our favorite traditions), but most other Druid groups are definitely in the Celtophiles section. The problem as I see it, is that people study ancient Celts, but ignore the modern Celts.

We appear to be in a love-hate relationship with traditions. We love ancient Celtic Traditions but not modern Celtic traditions with hundreds of years of shaping by Celts (yes, under Christian & alcoholic influence.) Certainly, age sometimes empowers the survival and attractiveness of some beliefs beyond their practical usage (i.e. "fossilization.") For me, the age of the tradition is just one pointer on its feasibility; but it's applicability, wisdom, timing and associations must also be taken into account. As an example, we don't do ritualistic murder anymore. As Mortus said in his/her essay on Death and Sacrifice in Samhain's issue, the RDNA dropped human sacrifice when our mores and perceptions on the issue had changed, even though livestock (deadstock?) is cheaper now than ever before in history.

Irish and country folk of Europe still carry out several life-affirming (& life-denying) activities that may or may not have continuity from pagan times, often under the guise of various saints, despite the otherworldly orientation of monotheism in general. You know this, already. It's hard to tell whether or not these traditions were carry-overs from a bygone organized religion or rather, perhaps, simply natural developments from working daily with (or against) Nature's mysteries on the farm and forest. But the Celts are still here, but they're mostly speaking English nowadays, so no complaining about the difficulty of translating "Old Irish," just go next door and talk to McPherson and start or revive traditions.

How many American Neo-Pagans can explain the Dail of Ireland, name 7 living Irish poets or dramatists? Talk about the devolution process' effect on Celtic nationalism? Explain the economic situation of the Welsh economies? What about Brittany's (ahem, not Ms. Spears) engulfment by France or Galicia by Spain which we don't hear about because most of us don't read French or Spanish after High school? Mad cow or foot & mouth disease (I've got that I suppose)'s role in the devastation of the crafting culture? I'm not calling upon you to march the streets of Dublin with placards, but if you feel such a connection to these ancient Druids; how about helping their grandchildren continue the living culture?

Picking a Path

By Mike

We don't know as much as our ancestors collectively. We may add a new piece of knowledge & technology, but in matters of the soul, we are often merely treading old paths in a well-trodden forest. Although you may try to blaze a new trail, you are likely to cross several old trails in the process. One day, you might stop blazing and pick one of those trails out of convenience when you see a destination that can be reached the more easily by that path. Perhaps one day, you'll open a space for an arboreal farm.

Ideas are like seeds, they come from a tree or flower and grow up by themselves. Some are self-pollinating others reproduce by cross-pollinating. Like the bible adage, the growth of seeds depends on the ground in which they begin. If transplanted to new territory, they may grow or wither. Trees and plants reproduce by excessive distribution of seeds, such that a few will make it to maturity; while the bulk of them succumb to the stresses of the world. Most teachers know this about students and the need for balanced growth.

A small imbalance in the body can soon kill, if untreated. Hopefully, most students will notice deficiencies in their training. As Confucius said, "When I show three sides of a square, they should come up with the fourth. But dear Ching! When I show him one side, he shows me the other three!" It is far easier to destroy individuals than groups, but a slow group collapse can be most devastating. A poison can kill more than a medicine of the same amount can cure, but an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. As Darth-Vader learned, if you wish fame & power, a dubious achievement, the quickest way is through infamy and harmful actions. Most do-gooders and saints go unrecognized, because they need not recognition. In these matters, a little well-timed guidance goes a long way.

The Two Pots

From Stacey

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for the task for which it was created, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself and I want to apologize to you. I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Do you notice that there are flowers only on your side of the path but not on the other pot's side? That is because I have always known about your flaw. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you have watered them. For two years, I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots but, it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding.

Take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them. There is a lot of good out there. Blessed are the flexible, for they are never bent out of shape.

Remember to appreciate all the different people in your life! Or, as I like to think of it, if it hadn't been for the crackpots in my life it would have been pretty boring and life certainly wouldn't have been beautifully interesting...

Chop Wood, Carry Water

From Stacey

A young student asked of the Master "what did you do before you became Master?"

The Master replied "I fetched wood and carried water."

The Student asked "What do you do now that you are Master?"

The Master replied "I fetch wood and carry water."

-Lao Tzu

Now, just about everyone who has hung about spiritual circles for any time has heard this. It may not be from Lao Tzu, legendary composer of the Tao Te Ching, maybe 2500 years ago, contemporary, more or less, with Gautama the Buddha, as it is often said to come from Ch'an or Zen sources. But what does that matter?

We may take the ordinary events of life as unimportant when we engage on what we perceive as the 'great mystical journey.'

Still, what does this cost us? Is it worth the price?

We have this trip to take; but can we say which parts of life are more or less important?

After the powerful 'peak experience,' it always seems to go back to this: "Chop wood; carry water." Maybe we have to learn that no thing in life is more than another, and each is part of the warp and woof, the interwoven strands, the weaving, of its tapestry.

Is enlightenment then just that, the putting down of the heavy load we have carried and been burdened by, our suffering?

Are we then like Sisyphus, who was condemned by Zeus to push the heavy boulder up the hill, nearly to the peak, only to, forever, have it slip from his grasp to the bottom again, only to have to start again over and over from the beginning?

"Before Satori, 'Chop wood; carry water;' after Satori, 'chop wood, carry water.'"

The Ten Laws of Murphy

If anything can go wrong, it will.

Nothing is ever as simple as it seems.

Everything takes longer than you expect.

Left to themselves all things go from bad to worse.

Nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

Mother Nature is a bitch.

It is impossible to make anything foolproof because fools are so ingenious.

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

If you can keep your head when, all around you, others are losing theirs, you just don't understand the situation.

For every human problem, there is a neat, simple solution - and it is always wrong.

Gold and Silver Harps

A Druid priest passes away and goes to Tir nan Og.

Upon her arrival, she is awarded a silver harp for her good deeds on earth. As she looks around, she notices a scruffy looking fellow with a beautiful golden harp.

"Why does he get such a beautiful harp when a good Druid priest, like myself, gets only this silver harp?" she asked.

"Well," said Mannanan, "over here in Tir nan Og we reward results. Every Solstice when you preached, people slept. Those who did pray were only going through the motions. That man got people to pray every day, and when they prayed, they meant it with all their heart!"

"Which church is he from?" asked the priest.

"He's not from a church," said Mannanan, "He was a New York City taxi driver!"

The Mona Lisa

Richard Kehl, "Silver Departures"

A Twentieth Century-Fox executive in Paris arranged for an exhibit of the fake paintings used in the movie "How To Steal A Million." He phones Howard Newman of the New York office, who said the fakes could not be shipped because they were on tour.

"What should I do?" asked the Paris man frantically.

"Get some originals," said Newman. "Nobody'll know the difference."

The Oak and the Maple

By Darren

And one winter day Maple asked Oak, "Why must I bear this snow?"

And Oak replied, "Because you have spread your branches."

And Maple asked, "Then why did I spread my branches?"

And Oak replied, "To catch the wind and sun, those things that give you life. And here, sometimes, the wind brings snow."

And Maple asked, "Then why have I come here?"

And Oak replied, "The winds blew, and you rode them. You liked them then, and laughed at the joy of spinning."

And Maple asked, "Then why did I grow here?"

And Oak replied, "Because the soil is good, between the stones."

And Maple asked, "Then why did the stones not stop me?"

And Oak replied, "Because you knew what you must do."

And Maple asked, "What is it, then, that I must do?"

And Oak replied, "Spread your branches. And bear some snow."

Understanding is Nothing.

By Henry Miller in Plexus

"You understand," said Chaydem, "but the reality of it escapes you. Understanding is nothing. The eyes must be kept open, constantly. To open your eyes you must relax, not strain. Don't be afraid of falling backwards into a bottomless pit. There is nothing to fall into. You're in it and of it, and one day, if you persist, you will be it. I don't say you will have it, please notice, because there's nothing to possess. Neither are you to be possessed, remember that! You are to liberate your self. There are no exercises, physical, spiritual, to practice. All such things are like incense- they awaken a feeling of holiness. We must be holy without holiness. We must be whole... complete. That's being holy. Any other kind of holiness is false, a snare, and a delusion."

Approaching Death

by Irony, Volcano Grove, -Rainier Maria Rilke's work.

I reproach all modern religions for having handed to their believers consolations and glossings over of death, instead of administering to them the means of reconciling themselves to it and coming to an understanding with it. With it, with its full, unmasked cruelty: this cruelty is so tremendous that it is just with it that the circle closes: it leads right back again into the extreme of a mildness that is great, pure, and perfectly clear (all consolation is turbid) as we have never surmised mildness to be, not even on the sweetest spring day. But toward the experiencing of this most profound mildness which, were only a few of us to feel with conviction, could perhaps little by little penetrate and make transparent all the relations of life: toward the experiencing of this richest and soundest mildness, mankind has never even taken the first steps- unless in its oldest, most innocent times, whose secret has been all but lost to us. The content of "initiations" was, I am sure, nothing but the imparting of a "key" that permitted the reading saw the word "death" without negation; like the moon, life surely has a side permanently turned away from us which is not its counterpart but its complement towards perfection, towards consummation.

Way of Salami

Submitted by Mike, quoting Mark Walsh

Nothing in the deli is more important than anything else. There is no hierarchy. Salami may be \$5.99 a pound and baloney \$1.99. But you eat salami the same way you eat baloney, and you digest salami the same way you do baloney, and you excrete salami the same way you do baloney. Once you realize this, price becomes meaningless

Way of Service

Submitted by Mike, quoting Mark Walsh

If you are constipated, study your face in the mirror. Be familiar with it. Know it intimately. Learn to recognize that look in others. When someone comes to the deli with the look of constipation on their face, give them no options. If they ask for baloney, do not respond with "We have five different kinds of baloney, what kind of baloney would you like?" take the nearest baloney and start slicing. Giving options, in this case, gets you caught from behind.

Way of Cheese

Submitted by Mike, quoting Mark Walsh

The way of cheese is in the re-creation. A stick of American cheese slices perfectly into 147 slices. I know. I have counted. When you can slice a stick of American cheese and re-stack it so it is impossible to tell the stick has been sliced, you will be enlightened.

Provolone cheese operates against all the laws of the deli. It comes packaged in three-foot long sticks; it melts and turns soft quickly; it does not slice properly. If a deli clerk gets five perfect slices in a pound, he is luck. If a deli clerk never finds satori, it is because of provolone cheese.

Life is suffering. Provolone cheese is amoral and persistent. Accept it into your life. Let it happen.

Loneliness

J. Krishnamurti Think on These Things.

Submitted by Irony.

You try being alone, without any form of distraction, and you will see how quickly you want to get away from yourself and forget what you are. That is why this enormous structure of professional amusement, of automated distraction, is so prominent a part of what we call civilization. If you observe, you will see that people the world over are becoming more and more distracted, increasingly sophisticated and worldly. The multiplication of pleasures, the innumerable books that are being published, the newspaper pages filled with sporting events- surely, all these indicate that we constantly want to be amused.

Because we are inwardly empty, dull, mediocre, we use our relationships and our social reforms as a means of escaping from ourselves. I wonder if you have noticed how lonely most people are? And to escape from loneliness we run to temples, churches, or mosques, we watch television, listen to the radio, read, and so on...

If you inquire a little into boredom you will find that the cause of it is loneliness. It is in order to escape from loneliness that we want to be together, we want to be entertained, to have distractions of every kind: gurus, religious ceremonies, prayers, or the latest novel. Being inwardly lonely we become mere

spectators in life; and we can be the players only when we understand loneliness and go beyond it. Because beyond it lies the real treasure.

To My Teacher

From Stacey of the Baccharis Grove

Here is the translation of Ryokan's poem that reminds us very much of Emmon Bodfish, the founder of the Live Oak grove of Orinda Ca. who passed away this year in a violent death. All who knew him, remember him as a wise person with much to share with his grove. Stacey pictures Emmon's grave much like this this poem as he is buried among the redwoods. Ryokan's translated poem is taken from "Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf" translated by John Stevens

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.

Some Quotes on Life

From the Volcano Grove

He who mounts a wild elephant goes where the wild elephant goes. -Randolph Bourne

The world's spiritual geniuses seem to discover universally that the mind's muddy river, this ceaseless flow of trivia and trash, cannot be dammed, and that trying to dam it is a waste of effort that might lead to madness. -Anne Dillard

Prayer is not the moment when God and humans are in relationship, for that is always. Prayer is taking initiative to intentionally respond to God's presence. _L.R. Keck

I felt it better to speak to God than about Him. -St. Theresa of Lisieux

After ecstasy, the laundry. -Zen saying

To confront a person with his own shadow is to show him his own light.

Wisdom is not like money, which should be kept in a safe.

If you are greedy in conversation, you lose the wisdom of your friends.

If you see wrongdoing or evil and say nothing against it, you become its victim.

One who refuses to obey cannot command.

If you build a poor wooden bridge across the river, it never seems to rot until you have to cross it yourself.

Good fellowship is sharing good things with friends.

The one who asks the way does not get lost.

The string can be useful until a rope can be found.

However poor the crocodile becomes, it hunts in the river, not in the forest.

People count what they are refused, not what they are given.

Power must be handled in the manner of holding an egg in the hand; if you hold it too firmly it breaks; if you hold it too loosely it drops.

No friendship except after enmity.

Make friends when you don't need them.

He who pulls a branch, brings the leaves with it.

Before you marry keep both eyes open, afterwards keep one shut.

God made the sea, we make the ship; He made the wind, we make the sail; He made the calm, we make oars.

Fright is worse than a blow.

The knife does not know its owner.

When two elephants struggle, it's the grass that suffers.

The lion which kills is not the lion which roars.

Every man is honest until the day they catch him.

At the bottom of patience is heaven.

The grumbler does not leave his job, but he discourages possible applicants.

Virtue never stands alone. It is bound to have neighbors.

The river rarely rises above its source.

Is benevolence really that far away? No sooner do I desire it than it is here.

I have yet to meet a man who is as fond of virtue as he is of beauty in women.

To be wise, know your fellow men.

The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement.

Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others.

What the gentleman seeks, he seeks within himself; what the small man seeks, he seeks in others.

Learn widely and be steadfast in your purpose, inquire earnestly and reflect on what is at hand, and there is no need for you to look for benevolence elsewhere.

Soldier and the Professor

A soldier and a professor were on a plane. Tiring of conversation, the professor suggested a game of riddles to pass the time.

"If there is a riddle you can't guess, you give me a dollar and vice-versa."

"Okay," agreed the soldier, "But you are better educated. I'll only give you fifty cents."

"All right," said the professor, "you go first."

"Well, what bird has four legs swimming and two legs flying?"

The professor thought hard. He did not want to miss the very first question. The soldier's face lit up with a wide grin. Finally the professor said, "I don't know; here's a dollar. What's the answer?"

The soldier hesitated for a moment, then said slowly, "I don't know either; here's your fifty cents!"

That ended the game.

No Vacation

The late columnist Arthur Brisbane declined to accept William Randolph Hearst's offer of a six-month paid vacation in appreciation of his good work.

"There are two reasons why I will not accept your generous offer, Mr. Hearst," said Brisbane. "The first is that if I quit writing my column for half a year, it might affect the circulation of your newspapers. The second reason is that it might not!"

Where There's a Will...

A lawyer was cross-examining a witness. "You have just testified that you heard the shot at exactly 11:32 P.M. How did you know what time it was? Did you look at your watch?"

"No," the witness said, "I looked at the sundial in the garden."

"That's stupid," accused the lawyer. "How could you tell time by a sundial at 11:32 at night?"

"Well, I had a flashlight," the witness admitted.

Other is Better

"The Grass is always greener on the other side." If you were a judge how would you deal with this human belief?

A very famous and affluent official died and left equal portions of his wealth to his two daughters and sons-in-law. However, there were no precise prices on the land and homes that he passed on to them, each had a unique market value. Dissatisfied with the arrangement, each daughter believed the other party got the lion's share.

After the grandiose burial ceremony, the daughters filed civil lawsuits against each other, claiming that their own shares were less than the other's. In court, the judge asked them, one after the other, whether they thought they were treated unfairly. They each gave a firm "Yes."

The clerk recorded every word and let sign all the statements. The judge then asked them to provide an inventory and turn in a list of the inherited properties. They gladly complied with this request.

After they finished, he announced his decree; "These two daughters must exchange their inheritances with one another." The daughters were shocked. Each had hoped to gain more than the other. However, they could do nothing but accept this ruling.

Happy Alliance

P.T. Barnum, the great showman, used to exhibit a happy family. This family consisted of a lion, a tiger, a wolf, a bear, and a lamb, all in one cage.

"Remarkable," a visitor said one day to Mr. Barnum. "Remarkable, impressive. How long have these animals dwelt together in this way?"

"Eight months," Barnum replied. "But the lamb has to be replaced occasionally."

Real Reason

After winning a few battles and overthrowing the previous dynasty, King Jeb overheard that there was a wise man who dwelled in the capital, and decided to pay the man a visit.

The wise man was surprised to meet the king, but courteously conducted the king into his shabby lodge. After brief

amenities, the noble visitor politely asked the wiseman about his opinion for the collapse of the previous dynasty. Pondering for a moment, the man said he could not answer that question right away, and suggested the king come back tomorrow. The king agreed.

The next morning, the king arrived punctually. Knocking on the door, he received no answer. After patiently waiting for a few moments, the king began to be disturbed. Then some neighbors told him that this old man had fled the house last night in a hurry. The emperor felt cheated and betrayed.

"Your Majesty," his prime minister remarked, "I believe I know the reason. He is indeed a fine, old-fashioned gentleman, who didn't want to openly criticize the last emperor, who technically was his master. By intentionally breaking his promise with us, he cleverly conveys some of the most important causes of the previous dynasty's downfall. I think his deliberate absence indicates that trust and credibility are essential for the prosperity of an empire. Abusing both, the previous emperor lost his huge dynasty as well as his precious life. Your Majesty must always keep that in mind."

The emperor agreed with this perceptive analysis and with satisfaction left. His own dynasty was to last 200 years

The Cage

"Look at that one-the one staring at us through the bars. Doesn't he look intelligent?"

"Yes, there is something uncanny about it."

"Walks on his hind legs, too, and swings his arms."

"There! He's got a peanut. Let's see what he does with it."

"Well, what do you think about that! He knows enough to take the shell off before he eats it just like we do."

"There's a female alongside of him. Listen to her chatter at him. He doesn't seem to be paying much attention to her, though."

"She must be his mate."

"They look kind of sad, don't they?"

"Yes. I guess they wish they were in here with us monkeys."

Return to Me

by Pablo Neruda, Chilean, 1904-1973

Return to me, oh sun,
to my wild destiny,
rain of the ancient wood,
bring me back to the aroma and the swords
that falls from the sky,
the solitary peace of pasture and rock,
the damp at the river-margins,
the smell of the larch tree,
the wind alive like a heart
beating in the crowded restlessness
of the towering araucaria.
Earth, give me back your pure gifts,
the towers of silence which rose
from the solemnity of their roots.
I want to go back to being what I have not been,
and learn to go back from such deeps
that amongst all natural things
I could live or not live; it does not matter
to be one stone more, the dark stone,
the pure stone which the river bears away

How to Love Nature

by John Burroughs, American 1837-1921

Nature-love as Emerson knew it, and as Wordsworth knew it, and as any of the choicer spirits of our time have known it, had distinctly a religious value. It does not come to a man or a woman who is wholly absorbed in selfish or worldly or material ends. Except ye become in a measure as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of Nature- as Audubon entered it, as Thoreau entered it, as Bryant and Amiel entered it, and as all those enter it who make it a resource in their lives and an instrument of their culture.

The forms and creeds of religion change, but the sentiment of religion- the wonder and reverence and love we feel in the presence of the inscrutable universe- persist... If we do not go to church as much as did our fathers, we go to the woods much more, and are much more inclined to make a temple of them than they were.

Wayfarer

by Antonio Machado, Spanish

Wayfarer, the only way.

is your footsteps, there is no other.

Wayfarer, there is no way,

you make the way as you go.

As you go, you make the way

and stopping to look behind,

you see the path that your feet
will travel again.

Wayfarer, there is no way-
only foam trails in the sea.

Orbits

by Rainer Maria Rilke, German 1875-1926

I live my life in growing orbits

Which move out over the things of the world.

Perhaps I can never achieve the last,

but that will be my attempt.

I am circling around God, the ancient tower,

And I have been circling for a thousand years,

and I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,

or a great song

Vigiling

by Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi 1207-1273

Some nights, stay up till dawn.

As the moon sometimes does for the sun.

Be a full bucket pulled up the dark way
of a well, then lifted out into light.

Something opens our wings.

Something makes boredom and hurt disappear.

Someone fills the cup in front of us.

We taste only sacredness.

Rules of Hollywood Paganism

By Michelle Curtis, March 1996

1. Pick one faith and stick with it. Dilettantism is the mark of the amateur.

2. Avoid needless embarrassment. Practice the correct pronunciation of your gods name in the privacy of your room before chanting it in public. Flash cards are often helpful.

3. Never invoke anything bigger than your head.

4. Avoid all cabbalistic jewelry over 10 pounds in weight. You're just asking for trouble.

5. Citronella candles may not be used in rituals. I cannot stress this enough. Pastel-colored candles in the shape of cute animals are like beacons to the Dark Lords.

6. Always keep your kit with you: candles, chalk, incense, silver knife, thugee knife, service revolver, garlic, cabfare, condoms, change.

7. Never be a cultist that goes to rough up the investigators. Ransacking hotel rooms is probably safe but going round to beat up the good guys a definite no-no.

8. When Black Mass goes awry, stay away from the cult leader. enraged daemons always go for the pompous.

9. Don't gloat.

10. If you do gloat, never reveal your plans.

11. If you gloat and reveal your plans, never leave the investigators to die slowly. They don't.

12. If you do gloat, reveal your plans and leave the investigators to die slowly don't have the audacity to look surprised when they show up to foil you.

13. Investigators always arrive at the last moment to foil you. Start a half hour early. They hate that.

14. Select ceremonial robes that are easy to run in while still affording ample concealment.

15. When a religious artifact begins emitting light, close your eyes.

16. When mutilating cattle, avoid the ones with the testicles.

17. During ritual sacrifice, taking bits home "for later" is now considered bad form.

18. Blood tests are now required of all sacrificial victims before the ritual. The effects of HIV+ offerings on the average maletic deity have never been witnessed by anyone living or even intact.

19. Contrary to historic belief, drugs and invocations do not mix. When the shit comes down it is vitally necessary to be able to discern between the gibbering monstrosity to throw holy water at, and the gibbering monstrosity that will go away after a few hours, some B-complex and a hot bath.

20. Never play strip tarot.

21. Piety and belief are powerful things and few forces in nature can stand against one who is true to his faith and his soul. However, it is also true that gods are on the side of the heaviest artillery so be prepared to change sides at the drop of a hat.

22. For those situations where a fresh living sacrifice is just not feasible or possible, the lower ranks of daemons can be fooled by microwaving a previously frozen chunk of ex-victim and cleverly jiggling it. A mock victim sculpted of spam is right out.

Order of Chocolate Contemplatives

INTRODUCTION:

Once again the high holy days of the Order of Chocolate Contemplatives (O.C.C.) are at hand.

The O.C.C. was founded in 1893 when my great-grandmother opened an old trunk in her aunt's attic and discovered secret documents and recipes recorded by the mysterious Fraulein Verboten. These documents describe an ancient order whose purpose is to find enlightenment through chocolate, a task that its current members pursue with diligence, with guidance from their Secret Chefs on the astral pan. Initiates explore all the psychological, sensual, mystical and psychoactive properties of this profound substance.

If you wish to join the O.C.C., dip yourself, or a part of yourself in liquid chocolate and dedicate yourself to the pursuit of chocolate-ness. You may also post to alt.magick regarding the history of chocolate, its psycho-active properties, its relationship to Candlemas or Yule, favorite recipes, which signs should be the WATER and FIRE sign(s) for chocolate and why, or your own experiences exploring chocolate's exquisite pleasures. These articles will be collected in the Chocolate Chronicles. This is also a time for renewal when old members of the O.C.C. are encouraged to proclaim their love of chocolate in the same way described above.

The high holy days of the O.C.C. start on February 1st and go on for 14 days, culminating on the 14th of February, a day long associated with love and chocolate. The groundhog is the animal guardian of the O.C.C. and chocolate groundhogs are always in good taste. St. Valentine is the patron saint and also one of the Secret Chefs. On the final holy day, St. Valentine's Day, chocolate is celebrated in a special way the entire day long -- in thoughts, word, deed and ingestion. Many (choc rats) opt for a sensual finale, while some (choc doves) for a more meditative and sublime chocolate experience. The choc rats also prefer popular chocolate treats whereas the choc doves go for imported, pricey brands. Despite these superficial differences all are pursuing the celebration of chocolate, and I hope that the factional sniping will not occur this year. Whatever your style of celebration it will work provided that you celebrate chocolate with chocolate.

Many new initiates ask about sex-chocolate. Information on this is not publicly available for your own safety. Also, members of high rank are bound by oaths and cannot discuss it. General information is in the book Secrets of the German Sex-Chocolate Magickians, so the curious can read this. Please do not inquire further.

SPECIFICS:

First, if you start late, go ahead and do several days at a time mentally in order to catch up, but only eat the prescribed 1 piece of chocolate per day, until the 14th, otherwise you could blow-out your chakras and digestive system. Lectures aside, this is not a time for gluttony. Chocolate can really knock your socks off and should be treated with care. Feel free to circulate this, in its entirety, wherever you wish.

#1:

DIRECTION: North

ANIMAL: Groundhog

ELEMENT: Earth

SIGN: Taurus

POWER: Law

ARCHANGEL: Uriel/Ariel

CHOCOLATE TYPE: Nuts and caramel and/or other ingredients mixed in.

Mine for the surprises. Brownies with chocolate bits and nuts are good for new initiates. Nothing too risky. Chocolate is strong enough, as is.

MEDITATION: Life is good. Life is a beautiful, sensual experience. The two main secrets to life are put before you:

- 1.) Life is what happens when you think of something else.
- 2.) Sometimes the only (or easiest) thing to change about a situation is your perception of it. Thinking about this will give you insights to make your life more enjoyable. Experiment with different energy patterns in your daily life. If you're an assertive go-go-go sort of person lay back and go with the flow and watch how people respond. If you're usually laid-back then rev up a little and see what happens. Learn to use both ying and yang to your best advantage. Reinforce your revelations with savory chocolate to make them stick. The purpose here is to use your energy most effectively to make your life as happy, and pleasurable as possible. deity, virtue

- 1 Bmilges limits his words
- 2 Barnafa is content with his lot in life
- 3 Benpagi knows his place
- 4 Belmara uncomplaining acceptance of suffering
- 5 Balceor trust in the sages
- 6 Blisdon good naturedness
- 7 Bynepor patience

#2:

DIRECTION: West

ANIMAL: Fish

ELEMENT: Water

SIGN: still being decided...

POWER: emotion

ARCHANGEL: Gabriel

CHOCOLATE TYPE: Chocolate dissolved in a liquid. Chocolate mousse is especially good. Mugs of hot chocolate are good too (but no instant please.) For more advanced members, try chocolate liqueur or chocolate in coffee. MEDITATION: Consider how to flow through life with as much pleasure and as little pain as possible. For each action there is an equal and opposite reaction, so take care to do yourself a favor and *not* invoke your nemesis. Consider how to make your life simpler on all planes. Then take the next step and learn to have not just neutral experiences, but positive ones! Every act, idea, interaction, feeling, sensation, can bring you positive energy. Learn to find chocolate everywhere and learn to give it freely. Take the highest and lowest -- turn everything into expressions of love and appreciation and give back the same in return.

deity, virtue

- 1 Bonefon moderation in frivolity
- 2 Bermale moderation in conversation
- 3 Bragiop moderation in sleep

- 4 Blintom moderation in pleasure
- 5 Bazpama moderation in worldly affairs
- 6 Bvtmomo moderation in business affairs
- 7 Babalel knowledge of scriptures

#3:

DIRECTION: South

ANIMAL: Snakes

ELEMENT: Fire

SIGN: to be decided...

POWER: will

ARCHANGEL: Michael

CHOCOLATE TYPE: Milk chocolate. Nothing in it.

MEDITATION: Here we first encounter the scandalous past of our holy substance -- its affiliation with the cruel and hot southern gods. All you've heard about their cruelty and their relationship with chocolate is true. But fear not! They were practicing the dark side of chocolate. They were mixing chocolate with fire and emotion. Emotion needs to be cooled, in water. It's far more effective to mix chocolate with fire and WILL. Therefore, the key word for this week is WILL. Use the strength you've discovered in chocolate and filter your thoughts and words with purpose. Imbue every act with meaning. Throw things out -- useless ideas and possessions. This is a good time to end any relationships that suck out your vitality. You are not the same as you once were, you are now changed -- stronger and better. Treat people with respect and restraint.

deity, virtue

- 1 Bnagole deliberation
- 2 Brisfli discussion with students
- 3 Branglo debate with colleagues
- 4 Bernole attendance on scholars
- 5 Basmelo purity
- 6 Befafes joy
- 7 Bobogel humility

#4

DIRECTION: East

ANIMAL: Birds

ELEMENT: Air

SIGN: Aquarius

POWER: Inspiration and creativity

ARCHANGEL: Raphael

CHOCOLATE TYPE: Pure dark chocolate.

MEDITATION: This is your final point of ascent. Focus on the highest intellectual enjoyment you have of chocolate and the chocolate teachings. By now you should be seeing chocolate everywhere and in everything. Look and you shall see. Feel the joy of chocolate in everyone and you (m)eat. You are now approaching the brink of ecstasy. If you have started any projects, now is a fortuitous time to complete them. If you are procrastinating about something, start it now -- you'll feel much better. This is a time to resolve old difficulties, conflicts, feelings and ideas. If you have trouble doing this, visualize all your problems in a pot with chocolate, melting away, then go to bed early and sleep purposefully on the troubles. In the morning you'll see the answer. This is also the time to consider the *opposite* of all you've contemplated in the prior weeks. Think of when and how to use the opposites. Finally, go through the prior 4 weeks of work, contemplating what you learned and

invoking the deities of the days and the archangels of the weeks to give you strength and guidance. Sleep on what you've learned.

diety, virtue

- 1 Basledf reverence
- 2 Bmamgal awe
- 3 Blumapo intuitive insight
- 4 Besgeme understanding
- 5 Bapnido orderly speech
- 6 Bornogo attentive listening
- 7 Baligon study

The final day: the 14th of February

On the final day, revel in all you've learned. Celebrate in your own style. You are on the brink of enlightenment and ecstasy now. Ask the deities and Secret Chefs to give you purity and strength. Do whatever is necessary to push yourself over the edge. Today and today only you can eat as much chocolate, wherever and however you like. :)

Merry Whatever

From Glenn McDavid

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit our best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender-neutral, celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all...No reindeer or barn animals were injured during the making of these greetings.

As well, please enjoy a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the generally accepted calendar year 1999, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make America great, (not to imply that America is necessarily greater than any other country or is the only "America" in the western hemisphere), and without regard to the race, creed, color, age, physical ability, religious faith, choice of computer platform, or sexual preference of the wishee. These sentiments will not affect any equipment as yet unscanned for Y2K problems.

(By accepting this greeting, you are accepting these terms. This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for her/himself or others, and is void where prohibited by law, and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher. This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year, or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.)

"IF THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD SENT HIS EPISTLES BY E-MAIL..."

From: Glenn McDavid gmcdavid@winternet.com

Found on an ancient clay floppy disk:

Subject: The Third E-mail to the Corinthians
Date: 24/03/65 21:07:33 ROMAN standard time
From: Apostle Paul (paulorsaul@theapostles.org)
To: congregation@corinth.org
File: Epistle3.txt (104201 bytes)

[Only the first part of this message is displayed. The entire message has been turned into a text attachment, encoded in 128-bit MIME and can only be read if you have an obscure program that you won't have heard of.]

Paul, an apostle of Christ and a slave of the Lord, to the brothers in Corinth who are using e-mail accounts other than AOL. I will send a separate message to those using AOL accounts, knowing how primitive their e-mail service is at the present time.

This is the third e-mail I am sending to you. Did you receive my other two? I have had no reply from you yet, and a "fatal delivery" error message for the second e-mail, in which I wrote about love, faith and hope. I will send it again, just in case.

I sent my second message to the congregations throughout the whole of Asia Minor, but my service provider considered this to be spamming and closed down one of my accounts. To those who are using Web based e-mail accounts, I will send Timothy to you with my message on foot. It will get there quicker.

Philemon and Titus send you their love. I found their e-mails amidst a flood of junk mail and get-rich-quick messages, in which there is no real profit.

Look - I hope you don't mind, but I think I'll stick with the parchments next time.

Anyway, I wanted to write to you on the important subject of..

{End of Message}

SOME IDEAS ON WHAT ENLIGHTENMENT/SALVATION IS:

I have recently had an awakening where I realized that enlightenment consisted of an openness, and awareness to what is. I am seeking to broaden my openness, becoming more fresh, and more of a beginner. I have also made vows to help liberate all beings, and would like to gain knowledge to do so. I am eventually hoping to reach the point of the absolute boundary between chaos and order, the center of the wheel as it were, and to be able to dance at that point. I am also seeking a community of like-minded folk, as well as a system that will help fill in the infinite gaps in my knowledge. Here is a little something I wrote regarding what I have learned recently.

to be like a CHILD who views every thing with freshness
to be an EXPLORER curious about what they will encounter

to be an OBSERVER interested in what they can discover
to be AWARE of the stream of life as it flows
to be able to SEE what is happening around you
to be able to be fully PRESENT in the current moment
to be AWAKE enough to experience the beauty of life
to be a QUESTIONER of strongly held assumptions
to be a BEGINNER still able to learn new ideas
to be a STUDENT who realizes they do not know
to be NON-JUDGMENTAL open to each situation as it

arises

to be ADAPTABLE to varying circumstances
to be UNCONDITIONED not set in any certain way
to be BEYOND conceptual extremes
to be FREE from machine-like living

by Ruth Ann oskolkoff/95

A FEW THOUGHTS ON HARMONIOUS LIVING:

All life is interconnected so live with simplicity
All life is sacred so live with compassion
All life is changing so live with awareness
All life is a teacher so live with humility

by Ruth Ann oskolkoff/95

Football as a Fertility Rite

Author unknown;

Obviously, Football is a syndrome of religious rites symbolizing the struggle to preserve the Egg of Life through the rigors of impending winter. The rites begin at the Autumn Equinox and culminate on the first day of the New Year, with great festivals identified with bowls of plenty. The festivals are associated with flowers such as roses; fruits such as oranges; farm crops such as cotton; and even sun worship and appeasement of great reptiles such as alligators.

In these rites, the Egg of Life is symbolized by what is called "The Oval," an inflated bladder covered with hog skin. The convention of "The Oval" is repeated in the architectural oval-shaped design of the vast outdoor churches in which the services are held every Sabbath in every town and city. Also every Sunday in the greater centers of population where an advanced priesthood performs. These enormous churches dominate every college campus; no other edifice compares in size with them, and they bear witness to the high spiritual development of the culture that produced them.

Literally millions of worshipers attend the Sabbath services in these open-air churches. Subconsciously, these hordes are seeking an outlet from sexual frustration in anticipation of violent masochism and sadism about to be enacted by a highly trained

priesthood of young men. Football obviously arises out of the Oedipus complex. Love of mother dominates the entire ritual. (Notre Dame and Football are synonymous.)

The rites are performed on a green rectangular area orientated to the four directions. The green area, symbolizing Summer, is striped with ominous white lines representing the knifing snows of Winter. The white stripes are repeated in the ceremonial costumes of the four whistling monitors who control the services through a time period divided into four quarters, symbolizing the four Seasons. The ceremony begins with colorful processions of musicians and semi-nude virgins who move in and out of ritualized patterns. This excites the thousands of worshipers to rise from their seats, shout frenzied poetry in unison and chant ecstatic anthems through which runs the Oedipus theme of willingness to die for the love of mother. The actual rites, performed by 22 young priests of perfect physique, might appear to the uninitiated as a chaotic conflict concerned only with hurting the Oval by kicking it, then endeavoring to rescue and protect the Egg.

However, the procedure is highly stylized. On each side there are eleven young men wearing colorful and protective costumes. The group in so-called "possession" of the Oval arrange themselves in an egg-shaped "huddle," as it is called, for a moment of prayerful meditation and whispering of secret numbers to each other. Then they rearrange themselves with relation to the position of the Egg. In a typical "formation" there are seven priests "on the line," seven being a mystical number associated not, as Jung purists might contend, with the "seven last words" but actually, with sublimation of the "seven deadly sins" into "the seven cardinal principles of education."

The central priest crouches over the Egg, protecting it with his hands, while over his back quarters hovers the "Quarterback." The transposition of "back quarters" to "quarterback" is easily explained by the Adler School. To the layman the curious posture assumed by the "Quarterback," as he hovers over the central priest, immediately suggests the Cretan origins of Mycenaean animal art, but this popular view is untenable. Actually, of course, the "quarter-back" symbolizes the libido, combining two instincts, namely, a) Eros, which strives for even closer union, and b) the instinct for destruction of anything which lies in the path of Eros. Moreover, the "pleasure-pain" excitement of the hysterical worshipers focuses entirely on the actions of the libido-quarterback. Behind him are three priests representing the male triad.

At a given signal, the Egg is passed by sleight-of-hand to one of the members of the triad who endeavors to move it by bodily force across the white lines of Winter. This procedure up and down the enclosure, continues through the four quarters of the ritual. At the end of the second quarter, implying the Summer Solstice, the processions of musicians and semi-nude virgins are resumed. After forming themselves into pictograms representing alphabetical and animal fetishes, the virgins perform a most curious rite requiring far more dexterity than the earlier phallic Maypole rituals from which it seems to be derived. Each of the virgins carries a wand of shining metal which she spins on her fingertips, tosses playfully into the air, and with which she interweaves her body in most intricate gyrations.

The virgins perform another important function throughout the entire service. This concerns the mystical rite of "conversion" following success of one of the young priests in carrying the Oval across the last white line of Winter. As the moment of "conversion" approaches, the virgins kneel at the edge of the rectangle, bury their faces in the earth, and then raise their arms to heaven in supplication, praying that "the uprights will be split." "Conversion" is indeed a dedicated ceremony.

+++ The Church of Apathy +++

Join our Church of Apathy... when you get good and ready, or around-to-it. This is the official church for those that don't wish to identify with a specific religion. For those that feel that atheism and agnosticism are just too much damn work. Others, who believe that their religion solves all their problems, need not apply. We are a relatively New Religion with new attitudes.

We are Apathists. We seek no converts. We distribute no pamphlets. We ring no doorbells.

The Church of Apathy was thought about by its Founders for several years, before they decided to organize on December 26th, 1968, they decided not to become tax exempt, nor claim any guidance from any divine source. In 1979 they decided to look around for a suitable church site, but that effort proved to be too much trouble, and besides they really didn't care where they met anyway. The founders thought they should have a clergy person, but so far all that applied were rejected. They asked stupid questions about our not having a prayer book with writing in it. Some complained that we didn't have a Symbol or a Logo identifying our religion. Some wanted us to light candles, bless wine, chant, and sway. kneel, pray, or in general "carry on" like mainstream religions.... all of these candidates for the clergy person were rejected.

We soon will be celebrating the 30th year of our founding. We Apathists encourage those that share our deeply rooted apathy to think about joining our church as non-active members. We seek no donations nor offerings.... you keep your money, and we'll keep ours. As we have no mother church, postal address, telephone number, or website, we are sometimes difficult to locate. However if you have faith, and are not in any big rush to join our Church of Apathy, you are the type of person that could benefit by being an Apathist.

We are happy to say that in almost 30 years, not one of our members has been called "a dirty Apathist" to their face, they have demanded, and received "apple fritters" as their religious rights, in prisons and university cafeterias, and our Religion is not part of any college course on "Comparative Religions," and as far as we know, none of our faithful have been healed, saved, or converted. Some have rented from Avis but we consider that as free will.

Someday we would like to sponsor our own TV ministry, but we haven't figured out as yet what to preach about. We strongly believe that one should not take YES for an answer.....but if they do, they do.

We do have a motto: Don't Bother Us..and We Won't Bother You.

--writ by Rubin....reluctantly

Why did Isaac's Chicken Cross the Road?

P.E.I. Bonewits (ADF): Real crossing-the-road, we have seen, is a very interwoven and complicated subject. Our conclusion could be that real crossing-the-road is the build up of chicken emotion in conjunction with chicken concepts to vary the modulation of chicken energy so as to effect the modulation of the road's energy. That's all! Perhaps it is unfortunate, though, to use the word "chicken" in relation to it, since the "C" word is being used now in a way it was never used before in the English language and is an utterly meaningless term without a qualifying adjective. And this, of course, is the fault of the medieval Christian Church, through the Gothic Chickens it invented and used as the basis of persecuting men, women and chickens. The word "chicken" itself comes from an Indo-European root, "cheeka/e" meaning "one who lays eggs," and it has no relation to

the later Anglo-Saxon word for "wise spirit of flight," as so often stated by certain contemporary "Chics." An'Chk'Rrhod ("Our Own Chickens on Our Own Roads"), an authentic Neo-Chicken Rooster tradition, offers the best of paleo-, meso- and neo-Chickenism...

A Pagan Pledge of Allegiance

Author: WolfSquint

I Pledge Allegiance,
to the Earth,
And all the Creatures which inhabit it,
And to the Oceans,
Which give us Life
One Planet, under sky, inter-dependent
With Energy, and sustenance for all.

The Whole World Stinks

Wise men and philosophers throughout the ages have disagreed on many things, but many are in unanimous agreement on one point: "We become what we think about." Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A man is what he thinks about all day long." The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius put it this way: "A man's life is what his thoughts make of it." In the Bible we find: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

One Sunday afternoon, a cranky grandfather was visiting his family. As he lay down to take a nap, his grandson decided to have a little fun by putting Limburger cheese on Grandfather's mustache. Soon, grandpa awoke with a snort and charged out of the bedroom saying, "This room stinks." Through the house he went, finding every room smelling the same. Desperately he made his way outside only to find that "the whole world stinks!"

So it is when we fill our minds with negativism. Everything we experience and everybody we encounter will carry the scent we hold in our mind.

The Baker and the Farmer

A baker in a little country town bought the butter he used from a nearby farmer. One day he suspected that the bricks of butter were not full pounds, and for several days he weighed them.

He was right. They were short weight, and he had the farmer arrested.

At the trial the judge said to the farmer, "I presume you have scales?"

"No, your honor."

"Then how do you manage to weigh the butter you sell?" inquired the judge.

The farmer replied, "That's easily explained, your honor. I have balances and for a weight I use a one-pound loaf I buy from the baker."

The Mountain & The Baby

There were two warring tribes in the Andes, one that lived in the lowlands and the other high in the mountains. The mountain people invaded the lowlanders one day, and as part of their plundering of the people, they kidnapped a baby of one of the lowlander families and took the infant with them back up into the mountains.

The lowlanders didn't know how to climb the mountain. They didn't know any of the trails that the mountain people used,

and they didn't know where to find the mountain people or how to track them in the steep terrain.

Even so, they sent out their best party of fighting men to climb the mountain and bring the baby home. The men tried first one method of climbing and then another. They tried one trail and then another. After several days of effort, however, they had climbed only several hundred feet.

Feeling hopeless and helpless, the lowlander men decided that the cause was lost, and they prepared to return to their village below. As they were packing their gear for the descent, they saw the baby's mother walking toward them. They realized that she was coming down the mountain that they hadn't figured out how to climb. And then they saw that she had the baby strapped to her back. How could that be?

One man greeted her and said, "We couldn't climb this mountain. How did you do this when we, the strongest and most able men in the village, couldn't do it?"

She shrugged her shoulders and said, "It wasn't your baby."

Wild Fandango

Ted and John wanted to get away from the countryside and see the world. One day Ted said to his brother "You know, we could do really well setting up our bungee-jumping service in Mexico."

John thought this was a great idea, so the two pooled their money and bought all the equipment they needed.

They traveled to Mexico and began to set up a tower near the center of the town for good publicity. As they began building the tower, a crowd assembled nearby. Slowly more and more people gathered to watch them work.

They were excited at having such a big audience that Ted decided to jump and show his prospective clients all about bungee jumping.

He bounced at the end of the cord. When he came back up, John noticed that he had a few cuts and scratches. As he flew by, John asked if the cord was too long. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to catch him. So Ted fell again, bounced and came back up.

This time Ted was seriously bruised and bleeding. Again, John just missed catching him and asked if the cord was too long.

Ted fell a third time. This time, when he bounced back, he was a complete mess with a couple of broken bones and was almost unconscious.

Luckily, John finally caught his brother and said "What happened? Was the cord too long?"

Ted said, "No, the cord was fine, but what in the world is a piñata?"

Poverty

One day a father and his rich family took his son to a trip to the country with the firm purpose to show him how poor people can be. They spent a day and a night in the farm of a very poor family. When they got back from their trip the father asked his son, "My dear Son, how was the trip?"

"Very good Dad!"

"Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.

"Yeah!"

"And what did you learn?"

The son answered, "I saw that we have a dog at home, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden, they have a creek that has no end. We have imported

lamps in the garden, they have the stars. Our patio reaches to the front yard, they have a whole horizon."

When the little boy was finishing, his father was speechless.

His son added, "Thanks Dad for showing me how poor we are!"

A Woman's Place

Governor White and his wife were driving through the open Texas countryside one day, out for a relaxing drive and talk

The couple happened to be around the area where Mrs. White grew up, and as they pulled into a gas station to fuel up and check out the car, Mark noticed a little nervousness with his wife. He didn't say anything, but when the gas station attendant came out to their car, Mark began to notice what was really going on. Both his wife and the attendant looked surprised to see each other, and they acted with that awkwardness that two people have when they've been close in the past, but weren't anymore.

Governor White pretended not to notice this. They finished at the gas station and continued back down the highway. The car fell silent and neither said a word. For a long time they remained silent, and all the while Mrs. White kept looking out the window, staring off into the distance. Mark was considerate and patient with this silence, and he continued to drive in the silence. But after the silence had gone on for almost an hour, he interrupted, trying to break the silence.

"Honey, I couldn't help but notice how you and that gas station attendant looked at each other. You were involved with each other at one point, weren't you," he asked?

"Well, yea," She responded, quietly.

"Well, I guess I know how you feel. You were probably thinking about that and needed some space, right," he continued?

"Yea," she said again.

"I guess you were probably thinking about how different your two lives had become. I guess you were thinking that if you had married him, then you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant now, instead of my wife. Right," he said?

"Well, No. Actually I was thinking that he'd be the governor now."

The Sack

A Sufi Story from the Middle East

Mullah came upon a frowning man walking along the road to town. "What's wrong?" he asked.

The man held up a tattered bag and moaned, "All that I own in this wide world barely fills this miserable, wretched sack."

"Too bad," said Mullah, and with that, he snatched the bag from the man's hands and ran down the road with it.

Having lost everything, the man burst into tears and, more miserable than before, continued walking. Meanwhile, Mullah quickly ran around the bend and placed the man's sack in the middle of the road where he would have to come upon it.

When the man saw his bag sitting in the road before him, he laughed with joy, and shouted, "My sack! I thought I'd lost you!"

Watching through the bushes, Mullah chuckled. "Well, that's one way to make someone happy!"

You Don't Know

An Eastern European Tale

A pious old man would each day cross the village green and go into the temple to pray. A soldier watched him do this day after day. One morning, in an ill temper, the soldier stopped the old man and said, "Where do you think you're going?"

"I don't know," replied the old man.

"What do you mean, you don't know?!" said the soldier. "Everyday I see you walk out of your house at this time, cross the village green and go into the temple to pray! Answer me! Where are you going?"

Again the old man replied, "I don't know."

With that, the soldier grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, took him to the jail and pushed him into a cell. Just as the soldier was turning the key, the old man looked at the jail and said, "See! You don't know!"

New Shoes

A Taoist Tale from China by Han Fei

A man needed a new pair of shoes. Before he went to the marketplace, he drew a detailed picture of his feet on a piece of paper, carefully measured them, and wrote down all their dimensions. Then, he set off on foot for the shoe store. Arriving later that day at the bazaar, he unhappily discovered that he had forgotten to bring the paper with his measurements on it! He turned around and walked back home to get it. It was sunset by the time he returned to the market, and all the shops were closed. He explained his situation to one of the shopkeepers who had already packed away all his wares.

"Foolish man!" said the merchant. "You could have trusted your feet and tried the shoes on in the store! Why did you go home to get your diagrams?"

The man blushed, "I guess I trusted my measurements more..."

Visits of Kings

A Tale from the Middle East

The Imperial Majesty visited a small teahouse one morning. He called for an omelet. With great ceremony he was flattered and served the omelet on the crude tableware of the teahouse. The owner apologized over and over for the common cloth on the table and the simple furniture. "Not at all up to the standards of a king!" he said.

"It's fine," the king reassured him. "How much do I owe for the omelet?"

"For you, Sire, the omelet will be 1,000 pieces of gold."

"Whoa!" The king raised an eyebrow. "Eggs must be expensive around here. Is that because they are scarce?"

"It's not the eggs which are scarce around here, Your Majesty," said the shopkeeper, "It is the visits of kings!"

A Big Quiet House

A Yiddish Folktale from Eastern Europe

There was once a man who wished his small, noisy house was larger and quieter. He went to the wise old woman of the town and explained his need. She said, "I can solve your problem. Just do as I say." The man agreed.

"If you have a chicken, some sheep, a horse, and a cow," she said, "bring them into the house with you."

"That's a silly thing to do," thought the old man. But he did it anyway. Now his house was already small, and with all those animals in it, there was no room at all. He returned to the old woman and cried, "I need more room! The animals are so noisy I can't think!"

"Take all those animals out of your dwelling," she replied.

When he had put all the animals comfortably back in the barn, the man went into his house. To his amazement, it suddenly looked remarkably bigger! Without the animals inside, his house was now quiet too!

Three Fish

A Tale from India

Three fish lived in a pond. One was named Plan Ahead, another was Think Fast, and the third was named Wait and See. One day they heard a fisherman say that he was going to cast his net in their pond the next day.

Plan Ahead said, "I'm swimming down the river tonight!"

Think Fast said, "I'm sure I'll come up with a plan.

Wait and See lazily said, "I just can't think about it now!"

When the fisherman cast his nets, Plan Ahead was long gone. But Think Fast and Wait and See were caught!

Think Fast quickly rolled his belly up and pretended to be dead. "Oh, this fish is no good!" said the fisherman, and threw him safely back into the water. But, Wait and See ended up in the fish market.

That is why they say, "In times of danger, when the net is cast, plan ahead or plan to think fast!"

Who Is King Of The Forest?

A Tale from India

When Tiger jumped on Fox, Fox cried out, "How dare you attack the King of the Jungle!"

Tiger looked at him in amazement, "Nonsense! You are not King!"

"Certainly I am," replied Fox, "All the animals run from me in terror! If you want proof, come with me." Fox went into the forest with Tiger at his heels. When they came to a herd of deer, the deer saw Tiger behind Fox and ran in all directions.

They came to a group of monkeys. The monkeys saw Tiger behind Fox and they fled. Fox turned to Tiger and said, "Do you need more proof than that? See how the animals flee at the very sight me?!"

"I'm surprised, but I've seen it with my own eyes. Forgive me for attacking you, Great King." Tiger bowed low and with great ceremony he let Fox go.

The Book of Self-Motivation

Ten Rules for the Good Life

-Thomas Jefferson

1. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
2. Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.
3. Never spend your money before you have it.
4. Never buy what you do not want because it is cheap; it will never be dear to you.
5. Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst, and cold.
6. Never repent of having eaten too little.
7. Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.
8. Don't let the evils, which have never happened, cost you pain.
9. Always take things by their smooth handle.
10. When angry, count to ten before you speak; if very angry, count to one hundred.

Life Is...

"Life is a game of cards. The cards are shuffled and the hands are dealt. You must play your cards well" -- Eugene Hare

"Life is a play. It's not its length, but its performance that counts." -- Seneca

"Life is a B-picture script." -- Kirk Douglas

"Life is something like a trumpet. If you don't put anything in, you won't get anything out." -- W.C. Handy.

"A life is a simple letter in the alphabet. It can be meaningless. Or it can be part of a great meaning." -- Jewish Seminary

"Life is a daring adventure, or nothing." -- Helen Keller

"Life is an onion. You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep." -- Carl Sandburg

"Life is what's happening while you're thinking about something else." -- AA saying

Each Day I Learn More

Each day I learn more than I teach;
I learn that half knowledge of another's life
Leads to false judgment;
I learn that there is surprising kinship in human nature;
I learn that it's a wise father who knows his own son;
I learn that what we expect we get;
I learn there's more good than evil in this world;
That age is a question of spirit;
That youth is the best of life
No matter how numerous the years;
I learn how much there is to learn.

15 Ways to Enhance Your Day

Get up early.
Look around outside before going to work
Relax and enjoy your meals.
Spend time with friends.
Pace yourself.
Find a quiet place to go to.

Praise yourself and others.
Develop positive relationships.
See your mistakes as stepping-stones.
Keep track of your own moods so you can watch out for them.

Say No without feeling guilty.
Learn effective time management.
Pay attention to health, diet and sleep.
Exercise regularly.
Keep from comparing yourself to others.

Things We Can Learn From a Dog

Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joy ride.
Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
Take naps and stretch before rising.
Run, romp and play daily.
Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.
Be loyal.
Never pretend to be something you're not.
If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.
Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout.. run right back and make friends.
Delight in the simple joys of a long walk.

Things to Remember

I find what I look for in people. If I look for God, I find God. If I look for bad qualities, I find them. I, in a sense, select what I expect, and I receive it.

A life without challenges would be like going to school without lessons to learn. Challenges come not to depress or get me down, but to master and to grow and to unfold thereby.

In the Father's wise and loving plan for me, no burden can fall upon me, no emergency can arise, no grief can overtake me, before I am given the grace and strength to meet them.

A rich, full life is not determined by outer circumstances and relationships. These can be contributory to it, but cannot be the source. I am happy or unhappy because of what I think and feel.

I can never lose anything that belongs to me, nor can I possess what is not really mine.

To never run from a problem: either it will chase me or I will run into another just like it, although it may have a different face or name.

To have no concern for tomorrow. Today is the yesterday over which I had concern.

To never bang on a closed door: Wait for it to open and then go through it.

A person who has come into my life has come either to teach me something, or to learn something from me.

I've Learned...

I've learned that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.

I've learned that no matter how much I care, some people just don't care back.

I've learned that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that counts.

I've learned that you can get by on charm for about 15 minutes. After that, you'd better know something.

I've learned that you shouldn't compare yourself to the best others can do, but to the best you can do.

I've learned that it's not what happens to people that's important. It's what they do about it.

I've learned that no matter how thin you slice it, there are always two sides.

I've learned that it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.

I've learned that it's a lot easier to react than it is to think.

I've learned that you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.

I've learned that you can keep going long after you think you can't.

I've learned that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

I've learned that either you control your attitude or it controls you.

I've learned that regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.

I've learned that heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

I've learned that learning to forgive takes practice.

I've learned that there are people who love you dearly, but just don't know how to show it.

I've learned that money is a lousy way of keeping score.

I've learned that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.

I've learned that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down may be the ones to help you get back up.

I've learned that I'm getting more and more like my grandma, and I'm kinda happy about it.

I've learned that sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I've learned that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance. Same goes for true love.

I've learned that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

I've learned that maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.

I've learned that you should never tell a child her dreams are unlikely or outlandish. Few things are more humiliating, and what a tragedy it would be if she believed it.

I've learned that your family won't always be there for you. It may seem funny, but people you aren't related to can take care

of you and love you and teach you to trust people again. Families aren't biological.

I've learned that no matter how good a friend someone is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.

I've learned that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I've learned that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I've learned that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I've learned that sometimes when my friends fight, I'm forced to choose sides even when I don't want to.

I've learned that just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other. And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.

I've learned that sometimes you have to put the individual ahead of their actions.

I've learned that we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.

I've learned that if you don't want to forget something, stick it in your underwear drawer.

I've learned that you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.

I've learned that the clothes I like best are the ones with the most holes in them.

I've learned that two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

I've learned that no matter how you try to protect your children, they will eventually get hurt and you will hurt in the process.

I've learned that there are many ways of falling and staying in love.

I've learned that no matter the consequences, those who are honest with themselves, get further in life.

I've learned that many things can be powered by the mind, the trick is self-control.

I've learned that no matter how many friends you have, if you are their pillar, you will feel lonely and lost at the times you need them most.

I've learned that your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

I've learned that even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.

I've learned that writing, as well as talking, can ease emotional pains.

I've learned that the paradigm we live in is not all that is offered to us.

I've learned that credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.

I've learned that the people you care most about in life are taken from you too soon.

I've learned that although the word "love" can have many different meanings, it loses value when overly used.

I've learned that it's hard to determine where to draw the line between being nice and not hurting people's feelings and standing up for what you believe.

I've learned that no matter how fast or how far you go, you can't outrun God.

I've learned that no matter how far away I've been, He'll always welcome me back.

I've learned that love is not for me to keep, but to pass on to the next person I see.

I've learned that even if you do the right thing for the wrong reason, it's still the wrong thing to do.

On Relationships

Woody Allen said it best when asked about "relationships," and he told a story to illustrate. He said I think this story speaks about relationships:

A man came in to see a psychiatrist. When the psychiatrist asked him what the problem was, the man said, "Well, it's my brother. I think he's crazy."

"Why do you think that," asked the Doctor.

"Well," said the man, "he thinks he's a chicken."

"Hmmm.." the doctor replied, "That does sound sort of strange. Why don't you bring him in for therapy?"

"I can't," said the man.

"Well, why not," asked the doctor.

"Because, I need the eggs," the man said.

I guess we are intertwined a little more than we like to think. And, we always see the other's strangeness even though we have just as much of our own strangeness, and often we have "complimentary" strangeness.

Hang In There

Nicolo Paganini was a well-known and gifted nineteenth century violinist. He was also well known as a great showman with a quick sense of humor. His most memorable concert was in Italy with a full orchestra. He was performing before a packed house and his technique was incredible, his tone was fantastic, and his audience dearly loved him. Toward the end of his concert, Paganini was astounding his audience with an unbelievable composition when suddenly one string on his violin snapped and hung limply from his instrument. Paganini frowned briefly, shook his head, and continued to play, improvising beautifully.

Then to everyone's surprise, a second string broke. And shortly thereafter, a third. Almost like a slapstick comedy, Paganini stood there with three strings dangling from his Stradivarius. But instead of leaving the stage, Paganini stood his ground and calmly completed the difficult number on the one remaining string.

The School of Life

(Bonnie Tivenen, New Beginnings in Reading)

Respect all people - old, young, rich, and not so rich.

Try not to worry.

Don't tell everyone your business.

Be happy with the things you have.

Exercise every day.

Don't go looking for trouble.

Look for the good in everything and everyone.

Get enough sleep.

Try to forgive and forget.

Always do what you think is right.

Don't worry about what people think of you.

Spend time with your family.

Make time to see friends.

Don't spend money that you don't have.

Try to be happy and kind.
Don't be afraid to say what you think.
Try to be the best that you can be.

Just For Today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle all my problems at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires, I will take my "luck" as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do a least two things I don't want to do--just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, keep my voice low, be courteous, criticize not one bit. I won't find fault with anything, nor try to improve or regulate anybody but myself.

Just for today I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

Thoughts To Live By

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

A good example is the best sermon.

Every good thought is a prayer.

What we pray for may not be for our ultimate good. "No" can be an answer to a prayer as well as "Yes."

If you worry, why pray? If you pray, why worry?

No one is easier to deceive than oneself.

The greatest fault of all is to be conscious of none.

Any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

No matter how hopeless the present problem may seem, remember: This, too, shall pass.

Living in harmony with ourselves is essential to living in harmony with others,

Fear is the enemy of good works; it is a deadly sickness of the soul.

More things are accomplished by prayer than the world realizes.

Knowledge advances one step at a time; let us be patient.

One with God is always in the majority.

How poor are they that have not patience; what wound did ever heal but by degrees?

No one's knowledge can go beyond experience.

The misfortunes which are hardest to bear are those which never come.

Growth is the only evidence of life.

A person who makes no mistakes usually does not make anything.

Love is understanding, acceptance, and tenderness. If it tries to strangle and possess, it is not love.

The more often we think and act honestly, the stronger the habit becomes.

The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power within us.

They hurt the absent who quarrel with the drunken.

Al-Anon is a kissing cousin to invention because they were both born of necessity.

If you find life is empty, try putting something into it.

Beware of the rubber conscience and the concrete heart.

The trouble with many of us is that in trying times we stop trying.

A Life In Your Hands

(Dorothy Law Holte)

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn;

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight;

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy;

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty;

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient;

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence;

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate;

If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice;

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith;

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself;

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

Xvxry Pxrson is Important

One manager let employees know how valuable they are with the following memo:

"You Arx A Kxy Pxrson"

Xvxn though my typxwritxr is an old modxl, it works vxry wxll -- xxcpt for onx kxy. You would think that with all thx othxr kxys functioning propxrlly, onx kxy not working would hardly bx noticxd; but just onx kxy out of whack sxxms to ruin thx wholx xffort.

You may say to yoursxlf -- Wxll, I'm only onx pxrson. No onx will noticx if I don't do my bxst. But it doxs makx a diffxrxncx, bxcausx an xffctivx organization nxxds activx participation by vxvry onx to thx bxst of his or hxr ability.

So, thx nxxt timx you think you arx not important, rxnxxmbxr my old typxwritxr. You arx a kxy pxrson.

Be Good to You

Be Yourself – Truthfully
Accept Yourself – Gracefully
Value Yourself – Joyfully
Forgive Yourself – Completely
Treat Yourself – Generously
Balance Yourself – Harmoniously
Bless Yourself – Abundantly
Trust Yourself – Confidently
Love Yourself – Wholeheartedly
Empower Yourself – Prayerfully
Give Yourself – Enthusiastically
Express Yourself – Radiantly

The Lion and The cougar

A pointed fable is told about a young lion and a cougar. Both thirsty, the animals arrived at their usual water hole at the same time. They immediately began to argue about who should satisfy their thirst first. The argument became heated, and each decided he would rather die than give up the privilege of being first to quench his thirst. As they stubbornly confronted each other, their emotions turned to rage. Their cruel attacks on each other were suddenly interrupted. They both looked up. Circling overhead was a flock of vultures waiting for the loser to fall. Quietly, the two beasts turned and walked away. The thought of being devoured was all they needed to end their quarrel.

Watch Your Thoughts.

Watch Your Thoughts.
They Become Words.

Watch your Words.
They Become Actions.

Watch Your Actions.
They Become Habits.

Watch Your Habits.
They Become Character.

Watch Your Character.
For It Becomes Your Destiny.

Letting Go

There's nothing to fear --- you're as good as the best,
As strong as the mightiest, too.
You can win in every battle or test;
For there's no one just like you.

There's only one you in the world today;
So nobody else, you see,
Can do your work in as fine a way:
You're the only you there'll be!

So face the world, and all life is yours
To conquer and love and live:
And you'll find the happiness that endures
In just the measure you give;

There's nothing too good for you to possess,
Nor heights where you cannot go:
Your power is more than belief or guess ---
It is something you have to know.

There is nothing to fear --- you can and you will.
For you are the invincible you.
Set your foot on the highest hill ---
There's nothing you cannot do.

How To Survive the Business of Living

(Karen Kaiser Clark, The Center For Executive Planning)

Real is the person who does not define happiness as an absence of problems. Surviving this business of living is a difficult ordeal at times. How can we retain a healthy sense of humor and experience a sense of balance in our lives? How can we realistically and yet with a sense of wonder live fully and not just survive? How can we maybe even celebrate this business of living? To answer some of these questions we will focus on seven points.

Life Isn't Fair

No matter how good we get at this business of living, none of us gets out of it alive. Frustrating, isn't it! Life doesn't always deal us a good hand and doing our best doesn't always pay off with a positive.

Suffering

Growth is seldom easy and pain is an integral part of our human condition. Everybody hurts. It's just that some of us are better actors in hiding the pain we feel. Seldom if ever... are all of our ducks in a row.

Loneliness and Alikelessness

Dr. Albert Schweitzer said, "We are all so much together, but we are all dying of loneliness." We have all known moments of apartness and empty loneliness. Embracing that reality is essential if we are to cope effectively.

Personal Responsibility

We each have a choice to be either a death- peddler or a life-giver. We are responsible for the choices we make. We can become most of what we wish to be if we are willing to change and pay the price.

Self Worth

A poster reads, "God don't make junk." People are special and each is, "Beautiful in his/her own way." We are more than our accomplishments!

People Need People

Life is not meant to be lived in isolation. All of life occurs within relationships. We need to know we are needed and so do those we need.

Mystery

Life is not just one big problem to be solved. Rather, it is a mystery to be experienced, all the more meaningful and beautiful when it is shared and celebrated with other persons who are committed to "growing deep, not just tall!"

How To Love Yourself

(Louise L. Hay)

Stop All Criticism - Criticism never changes a thing. Refuse to criticize yourself. Accept yourself exactly as you are. Everybody changes. When you criticize yourself, your changes are negative. When you approve of yourself, your changes are positive.

Don't Scare Yourself - Stop terrorizing yourself with your thoughts. It's a dreadful way to live. Find a mental image that gives you pleasure (mine is yellow roses), and immediately switch your scary thought to a pleasure thought.

Be Gentle And Kind And Patient - Be gentle with yourself. Be kind to yourself. Be patient with yourself as you learn the new ways of thinking. Treat yourself as you would someone you really loved.

Be Kind To Your Mind - Self-hatred is only hating your own thoughts. Don't hate yourself for having the thoughts. Gently change your thoughts.

Praise Yourself - Criticism breaks down the inner spirit. Praise builds it up. Praise yourself as much as you can. Tell yourself how well you are doing with every little thing.

Support Yourself - Find ways to support yourself. Reach out to friends and allow them to help you. It is being strong to ask for help when you need it.

Be Loving To Your Negatives - Acknowledge that you created them to fulfill a need. Now, you are finding new, positive ways to fulfill those needs. So, lovingly release the old negative patterns.

Take Care Of Your Body - Learn about nutrition. What kind of fuel does your body need to have optimum energy and vitality? Learn about exercise. What kind of exercise can you enjoy? Cherish and revere the temple you live in.

Mirror Work - Look into your eyes often. Express this growing sense of love you have for yourself. Forgive yourself looking into the mirror. Talk to your parents looking into the mirror. Forgive them too. At least once a day say: "I love you, I really love you."

Love Yourself... Do It Now - Don't wait until you get well, or lose the weight, or get the new job, or the new relationship. Begin now -- and do the best you can.

My Declaration of Self Esteem

(From Self Esteem by Virginia Satir)

I am Me. In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me.

Everything that comes out of me is authentically mine, because I alone chose it --

I own everything about me: my body, my feelings, my mouth, my voice, all my actions, whether they be to others or myself.

I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, and my fears. I own my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes.

Because I own all of me, I can become intimately acquainted with me.

By so doing, I can love me and be friendly with all my parts. I know there are aspects about myself that puzzle me, and other aspects that I do not know --

But as long as I am friendly and loving to myself, I can courageously and hopefully look for solutions to the puzzles and ways to find out more about me.

However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is authentically me.

If later some parts of how I looked, sounded, thought, and felt turn out to be unfitting, I can discard that which is unfitting, keep the rest, and invent something new for that which I discarded. I can see, hear, feel, think, say, and do.

I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive, and to make sense and order out of the world of people and things outside of me.

I own me, and therefore, I can engineer me. I am me, and I am Okay.

Our Deepest Fear

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. You are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within you. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." -Nelson Mandela

How To Be Unhappy

Make little things bother you. Don't just let them, MAKE them.

Lose your perspective on things and keep it lost: don't put first things first.

Get yourself a good worry, one about which you cannot do anything.

Be a perfectionist, which means not that you work hard to do your best, but that you condemn yourself and others for not achieving perfection.

Be right. Be always right. Be the only one who is always right, and be rigid in your rightness.

Don't trust or believe people, or accept them at anything but their worst and weakest. Be suspicious. Insist that others always have hidden motives.

Always compare yourself unfavorably to others. This guarantees instant misery.

Take personally everything that happens to you.

Don't give yourself whole-heartedly to anyone or anything.

Laws of Success

(Jack Yianitsas)

Do you want something? -- Will you pay the price?

The great sin -- Gossip.

The great cripple -- Fear.

The greatest mistake -- Giving up.

The most satisfying experience -- Doing your duty first.

The best action -- Keep the mind clear and judgment good.

The greatest blessing -- Good health.

The biggest fool - The man who lies to himself.

The great gamble -- Substituting hope for facts.

The most certain thing in life -- Change.

The greatest joy -- Being needed.
 The cleverest man -- The one who does what he thinks is right.
 The most potent force -- Positive thinking.
 The greatest opportunity -- The next one.
 The greatest thought -- God.
 The greatest victory -- Victory over self.
 The best play -- Successful work.
 The greatest handicap -- Egotism.
 The most expensive indulgence -- Hate.
 The most dangerous man -- The liar
 The most ridiculous trait -- False pride.
 The greatest loss -- Loss of self-confidence.
 The greatest need -- Common sense.

Claim Your Freedom

Freedom is not a destination. It's a journey.

You need to be free to choose the right road for yourself. The right road is the one that leads to your best. All that matters is that you end up a free person - free to decide where you want to go and how you intend to get there.

The method is simple: act freely and freedom will be yours. Because being free is being real, if you want to be free, you need to make friends with the truth.

No matter how clearly you can point to forces blocking you, the most important obstacles to you freedom are within.

You are the one who permits obstacles to block your path. While being stuck is frustrating, it also keeps you from risking, safe from failure and from discovering your weaknesses and shortcomings. Your prison is always your choice. To break free, you have to give up whatever security being bound offers.

You should be able to face the present without the emotions of the past intruding. In the end you're only as free as you are in your heart. Your freedom lies just behind your forgiving. When you free yourself, you also free the world.

I am free.
 I declare it.

Attitude

(Charles Swindell)

The longer I live
 The more I realize the impact of attitude on life.
 Attitude, to me, is more important than the past,
 Than education,
 Than money,
 Than circumstances,
 Than failures,
 Than success,
 Than what other people think or say or do.
 It is more important than appearance,
 Giftedness or skill.
 It will make or break an organization,
 A school, a home.
 The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day.
 Regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.
 We cannot change our past.
 We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way.

We cannot change the inevitable.
 The only thing we can do
 Is play the string we have.
 And that is our attitude.
 I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me
 And 90 percent how I react to it.
 And so it is with you.

God's Days

(Robert J. Burdette)

There are two days in the week upon which and about which I never worry -- two carefree days kept sacredly free from fear and apprehension. One of these days is Yesterday. Yesterday, with its cares and fret and pains and aches, all its faults, its mistakes and blunders, has passed forever beyond my recall. It was mine; it is God's.

The other day that I do not worry about is Tomorrow. Tomorrow, with all its possible adversities, its burdens, its perils, its large promise and performance, its failures and mistakes, is as far beyond my mastery as its dead sister, Yesterday. Tomorrow is God's day; it will be mine.

There is left, then, for myself but one day in the week - Today. Any man can fight the battles of today. Any woman can carry the burdens of just one day; any man can resist the temptation of today. It is only when we willfully add the burden of these two awful eternities - Yesterday and Tomorrow - such burdens as only the Mighty God can sustain - that we break down.

It isn't the experience of Today that drives men mad. It is the remorse of what happened Yesterday and fear of what Tomorrow might bring. These are God's Days... Leave them to Him.

On Letting Go

To "let go" does not mean to stop caring, it means I can't do it for someone else.

To "let go" is not to cut myself off, it's the realization I can't control another.

To "let go" is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.

To "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.

To "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.

To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to effect their destinies.

To "let go" is not to be protective, it's to permit another to face reality.

To "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.

To "let go" is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.

To "let go" is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes, and cherish myself in it.

To "let go" is not to criticize and regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be.

To "let go" is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.

To "let go" is to fear less, and love more.

Fair Fighting

Generally we think of fights as unpleasant confrontations between two or more people where tempers flare, voices are raised, and angry insults are exchanged. Fights need not be this way. They are normal and necessary in most relationships, but dirty, unfair fights only result in bitterness, distrust, and feelings of revenge.

Clean, fair fights, on the other hand, are confrontations where disagreements and grievances are dealt with according to a specific set of rules. At the end of a fair fight most people feel refreshed and relieved because a sensitive issue has been settled in a constructive way.

The following rules must be observed when conducting a clean, fair fight:

No hitting below the belt -- purposely calling attention to known weaknesses or sensitive areas.

No false agreements -- pretending to go along or to agree when you don't.

No character analysis or psychoanalyzing -- telling a person what they are thinking, feeling, or why they acted as they did.

No stereotyping -- labeling or name-calling.

No gunny sacking -- saving up minor grievances and dumping them all at once rather than dealing with them one at a time as they occur.

No playing archaeologist -- digging up past happenings.

Don't generalize -- using statements such as "You always..." or "You never..." to describe a person's behavior.

Stick to the issue -- dealing with only one issue at a time.

Don't drop "the bomb" -- over-reacting to a situation and making idle threats; giving an ultimatum.

Avoid "round robin" fights -- continuing with repetitive, stale arguments where no progress is being made toward conflict resolution.

The purpose of arguments and conflict is to resolve difficulties or solve problems, not to assign blame or to find fault. Do not keep score. Do not lecture. Differentiate between behavior and being. Treat everyone with regard and respect. Do not judge the perceptions and feelings of others. Accept differences. And don't forget the best part of all fights -- making up afterwards. Making up is an essential part to complete resolution.

A Start

(Leo Buscaglia)

Each day, I promise myself not to try to solve all my life problems at once -- nor shall I expect you to do so;

Starting each day, I shall try to learn something new about me and about you and about the world I live in, so that I may continue to experience all things as if they had been newly born;

Starting each day, I shall remember to communicate my joy as well as my despair, so that we can know each other better;

Starting each day, I shall remind myself to really listen to you and to try to hear your point of view and to discover the least-threatening way of giving you mine, remembering that we are both growing and changing in a hundred different ways;

Starting each day, I shall remind myself that I am a human being and not demand perfection of you until I am perfect, so you're safe;

Starting each day, I shall try to be more aware of the beautiful things in our world -- I'll look at the flowers, I'll look at the birds, I'll look at the children, I'll feel the cool breezes, I'll eat good food -- and I'll share these things with you;

Starting each day, I shall remind myself to reach out and touch you, gently, with my words, my eyes and with my fingers, because I don't want to miss feeling you;

Starting each day, I shall dedicate myself again to the process of being a lover -- and then see what happens;

You know, I'm really convinced that if you were to define love, the only word big enough to engulf it all would be "Life" -- LOVE IS LIFE -- in all its aspects... And if you miss love, you miss life!

Please don't!

A Practical Guide to Life

(Charles Fitzsimmons)

There is reason and purpose and harmony in the Universe. We are a part of all that, and a great amount of our work in this life is to learn that lesson.

We define life in terms of our body. You may like or hate your body, but it is the mechanism that defines what we call life. Most of us start out believing that we are our body, and it takes considerable effort on our part to overcome the complications of that misunderstanding.

We are here to learn lessons. That is what life is about. Each day we will have the opportunity to learn lessons. You may like the lessons or you may think them stupid or irrelevant.

There are no mistakes, only lessons. Growth is a process of trial and error experimentation. The experiences that we label failures are as valuable a part of the process as the experiments that ultimately work.

A lesson is repeated until it is learned. A lesson will be presented to you in various forms until you have learned it. When you have completely learned a lesson, you will then go on to the next one.

Learning lessons does not end. This is what life is about; as long as there is life, there are lessons.

What you make of this life is up to you. You already have everything you will ever need to learn your lessons. There is nothing you have to do first.

Every thing you experience in life is neutral. The only value of anything outside yourself is measured by the way you experience it.

When you have learned that lesson, it will be a powerful tool you can use to set up more lessons.

The Universe will bring you everything you need to learn your lessons. The value of your experiences is determined by you. The Universe will never bring you more than you can handle.

What you do with those resources is up to you. Whether your choice is to learn or to fail, the Universe will support your choice, and bring whatever you need to manifest it.

Whatever you choose, EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY!!!
From time to time, you will forget this.

Life's Little Instructions

Every so often you push your luck.

Never underestimate the power of a kind word or deed.

Never give up on anybody -- miracles happen every day.

Become the most positive and enthusiastic person you know.

Learn to listen.

Think big thoughts, but relish small pleasures.

Don't expect others to listen to your advice or ignore your example.

Opportunity sometimes knocks very softly.
Leave everything a little better than you found it.
Don't forget: a person's emotional need is to feel appreciated.
Never waste an opportunity to tell someone you love them.
Treat everyone you meet like you want to be treated.
Make new friends but cherish the old ones.
Don't use time or words carelessly, neither can be retrieved.
Judge your success by the degree that you're enjoying peace, health, and love.
Smile a lot: it costs nothing and is beyond price.

The Principles of Attitudinal Healing

The essence of our being is Love.
Health is inner peace.
Healing is letting go of fear.
Giving and receiving are the same.
We can let go of the past and of the future.
Now is the only time there is and each instance is for giving.
We can learn to love ourselves and others by forgiving rather than judging.
We can become love finders rather than faultfinders.
We can choose and direct ourselves to the happy inside regardless of what is happening outside.
We are students and teachers to each other.
We can focus on the whole of life rather than the fragments.
Since love is eternal, death need not be viewed as fearful.
We can always perceive others as either extending love or giving a call for help.

Who's Counting?

Napoleon was involved in conversation with a colonel of a Hungarian battalion who had been taken prisoner in Italy. The colonel mentioned he had fought in the army of Maria Theresa.

"You must have a few years under your belt!" exclaimed Napoleon.

"I'm sure I've lived sixty or seventy years," replied the colonel.

"You mean to say," Napoleon continued, "you have not kept track of the years you have lived?"

The colonel promptly replied, "Sir, I always count my money, my shirts, and my horses - but as for my years, I know nobody who wants to steal them, and I shall surely never lose them."

Takes Time

Take time to laugh
It is the music of the soul.

Take time to think
It is the source of power.

Take time to play
It is the source of perpetual youth.

Take time to read
It is the fountain of wisdom.

Take time to pray
It is the greatest power on earth.

Take time to love and be loved
It is a God-given privilege.

Take time to be friendly
It is the road to happiness

Take time to give
It is too short a day to be selfish

Take time to work
It is the price of success.

Promise Yourself

(C.D. Larson, Your Forces and How to Use Them)

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind;
To talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet;

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them;

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true;

To think only the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best;

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own;

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future;

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile;

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others;

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear; and too happy to permit the presence of trouble;

To think well of yourself and to proclaim this fact to the world, not in loud words, but in great deeds;

To live in the faith that the whole world is on your side so long as you are true to the best that is in you.

Just For Today

Decide to be happy today, to live with what is yours - your family, your business, your job, and your luck. If you can't have what you like, maybe you can like what you have.

Just for today, be kind, cheerful, agreeable, responsive, caring, and understanding. Be your best, dress your best, talk softly, and look for the bright side of things. Praise people for what they do and do not criticize them for what they cannot do. If someone does something stupid, forgive and forget. After all, it's just for one day.

Who knows, it might turn out to be a nice day.

The World Is A Puzzle

There was a man who had a little boy that he loved very much. Everyday after work the man would come home and play with the little boy. He would always spend all of his extra time playing with the little boy.

One night, while the man was at work, he realized that he had extra work to do for the evening, and that he wouldn't be able to play with his little boy. But, he wanted to be able to give the boy something to keep him busy. So, looking around his office, he saw a magazine with a large map of the world on the cover. He got an idea. He removed the map, and then patiently tore it up into small pieces. Then he put all the pieces in his coat pocket.

When he got home, the little boy came running to him and was ready to play. The man explained that he had extra work to do and couldn't play just now, but he led the little boy into the dining room, and taking out all the pieces of the map, he spread them on the table. He explained that it was a map of the world, and that by the time he could put it back together, his extra work would be finished, and they could both play. Surely this would keep the child busy for hours, he thought.

About half an hour later the boy came to the man and said, "Okay, it's finished. Can we play now.?"

The man was surprised, saying, "That's impossible. Let's go see." And sure enough, there was the picture of the world, all put together, every piece in its place.

The man said, "That's amazing! How did you do that?" The boy said, "It was simple. On the back of the page was a picture of a man. When I put the man together the whole world fell into place."

A Special Teacher

Years ago a Johns Hopkins professor gave a group of graduate students this assignment: Go to the slums. Take 200 boys, between the ages of 12 and 16, and investigate their background and environment. Then predict their chances for the future.

The students, after consulting social statistics, talking to the boys, and compiling much data, concluded that 90 percent of the boys would spend some time in jail.

Twenty-five years later another group of graduate students was given the job of testing the prediction. They went back to the same area. Some of the boys - by then men - were still there, a few had died, some had moved away, but they got in touch with 180 of the original 200. They found that only four of the group had ever been sent to jail.

Why was it that these men, who had lived in a breeding place of crime, had such a surprisingly good record? The researchers were continually told: "Well, there was a teacher..."

They pressed further, and found that in 75 percent of the cases it was the same woman. The researchers went to this teacher, now living in a home for retired teachers. How had she exerted this remarkable influence over that group of children? Could she give them any reason why these boys should have remembered her?

"No," she said, "no I really couldn't." And then, thinking back over the years, she said musingly, more to herself than to her questioners: "I loved those boys...."

Listening

When a man whose marriage was in trouble sought his advice, the Master said, "You must learn to listen to your wife."

The man took this advice to heart and returned after a month to say he had learned to listen to every word his wife was saying.

Said the Master with a smile, "Now go home and listen to every word she isn't saying."

A Lesson from a Mad Hatter

One of the first steps to accomplishing great things in your life is to cease dwelling on the negative things in your past. Carefully assess your present strengths, successes, and achievements. Dwell on those positive events in your life, and quit limiting your potential by constantly thinking about what you have done poorly. Alice and the Mad Hatter in Wonderland had a conversation that illustrates this concept:

Alice: Where I come from, people study what they are not good at in order to be able to do what they are good at.

Mad Hatter: We only go around in circles in Wonderland, but we always end up where we started. Would you mind explaining yourself?

Alice: Well, grown-ups tell us to find out what we did wrong, and never do it again

Mad Hatter: That's odd! It seems to me that in order to find out about something, you have to study it. And when you study it, you should become better at it. Why should you want to become better at something and then never do it again? But please continue.

Alice: Nobody ever tells us to study the right things we do. We're only supposed to learn from the wrong things. But we are permitted to study the right things other people do. And sometimes we're even told to copy them.

Mad Hatter: That's cheating!

Alice: You're quite right, Mr. Hatter. I do live in a topsyturvy world. It seems like I have to do something wrong first, in order to learn from what not to do. And then, by not doing what I'm not supposed to do, perhaps I'll be right. But I'd rather be right the first time, wouldn't you?

Weakness or Strength?

Sometimes your biggest weakness can become your biggest strength. Take, for example, the story of one 10-year-old boy who decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident.

The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why, after three months of training the master had taught him only one move.

"Sensei," the boy finally said, "Shouldn't I be learning more moves?"

"This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you'll ever need to know," the sensei replied.

Not quite understanding, but believing in his teacher, the boy kept training.

Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals.

This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the sensei intervened.

"No," the sensei insisted, "Let him continue."

Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion.

On the way home, the boy and sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind.

"Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the sensei answered. "First, you've almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second, the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grip your left arm."

The boy's biggest weakness had become his biggest strength.

What is Maturity?

Maturity is the growing awareness that you are neither wonderful nor worthless.

It has been said to be the making of place between what is, and what might be.

It isn't a destination. It is a road.

It is the moment you wake up after some grief or staggering blow and think, 'I'm going to live after all.'

It is the moment when you find out something you have long believed in isn't so, and parting with the old conviction, find that you're still you;

The moment you discover somebody can do your job as well as you can, and you go on doing it anyway;

The moment you do the thing you have always been afraid of; the moment you realize you are forever alone--but so is everybody else, and so in some ways you are more together than ever, and a hundred other moments when you find out who you are.

It is letting life happen in its own good order, and making the most of what there is.

Choices

There comes a time in your life, when you must decide,
No help from anyone, on which you've always relied.
Between right and wrong, between black and white,
Between good and bad, to walk away or fight.
To be honest and true. to be open with your heart, or to hide your feelings, play it safe from the start.
To sit back and watch, to listen and learn,
Or jump into the fire, taking a chance on a burn.
To stay. to move. to not care, or always prove.
To be strong, to be weak, to be aggressive, to be meek.
To laugh out loud with all your might, or smile a little just to be polite.
To stay together. to live apart. to think with your mind, or trust with your heart.
To live in the past. to always look back, to look ahead to the future, with ambition you won't lack.
Begun at the front. or start at the end, believe in your own self, or follow the trend.
To dream. to hope, to quit, to cope. To be a lover, to be a friend to be real, or just pretend.

Choices we make can make or break, to have to decide at all could be our worst fall.

Choices are sometimes deceiving, you can be lured by the sweetest bait.

So make your decision wisely, because to change your mind could be too late.

Life is about choices, for however we decide,

We'll have to live with our decision until the day we have died.

Let Go

The following is a very meaningful story, which is called "Let Go," and written by Dr. Billy Graham.

A little child was playing one day with a very valuable vase. He put his hand into it and could not withdraw it. His father too, tried his best, but all in vain. They were thinking of breaking the vase when the father said, "Now, my son, make one more try. Open your hand and hold your fingers out straight as you see me doing, and then pull."

To their astonishment the little fellow said, "O no, father. I couldn't put my fingers out like that, because if I did I would drop my penny."

Smile, if you will--but thousands of us are like that little boy, so busy holding on to the world's worthless penny that we cannot accept liberation. I beg you to drop the trifle in your heart. Surrender! Let go, and let God have His way in your life.

How High Can You Jump?

Flea trainers have observed a predictable and strange habit of fleas while training them. Fleas are trained by putting them in a cardboard box with a top on it. The fleas will jump up and hit the top of the cardboard box over and over and over again. As you watch them jump and hit the lid, something very interesting becomes obvious. The fleas continue to jump, but they are no longer jumping high enough to hit the top. Apparently, Excedrin headache 1738 forces them to limit the height of their jump.

When you take off the lid, the fleas continue to jump, but they will not jump out of the box. They won't jump out because they can't jump out. Why? The reason is simple. They have conditioned themselves to jump just so high. Once they have conditioned themselves to jump just so high, that's all they can do!

Many times, people do the same thing. They restrict themselves and never reach their potential. Just like the fleas, they fail to jump higher, thinking they are doing all they can do.

Keeper of the Spring

The late Peter Marshall was an eloquent speaker and for several years served as the chaplain of the US Senate. He used to love to tell the story of the "Keeper of the Spring," a quiet forest dweller who lived high above an Austrian village along the eastern slope of the Alps.

The old gentleman had been hired many years earlier by a young town councilman to clear away the debris from the pools of water up in the mountain crevices that fed the lovely spring flowing through their town. With faithful, silent regularity, he patrolled the hills, removed the leaves and branches, and wiped away the silt that would otherwise have choked and contaminated the fresh flow of water. The village soon became a popular attraction for vacationers. Graceful swans floated along the crystal clear spring, the mill wheels of various businesses located near the water turned day and night, farmlands were naturally irrigated, and the view from restaurants was picturesque beyond description.

Years passed. One evening the town council met for its semiannual meeting. As they reviewed the budget, one man's eye caught the salary figure being paid the obscure keeper of the spring. Said the keeper of the purse, "Who is the old man? Why do we keep him on year after year? No one ever sees him. For all we know, the strange ranger of the hills is doing us no good. He isn't necessary any longer." By a unanimous vote, they dispensed with the old man's services.

For several weeks, nothing changed.

By early autumn, the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the rushing flow of sparkling water. One afternoon someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint in the spring. A few days later, the water was much darker. Within another week, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks, and a foul odor was soon detected. The mill wheels moved more slowly, some finally ground to a halt. Swans left, as did the tourists. Clammy fingers of disease and sickness reached deeply into the village.

Quickly, the embarrassed council called a special meeting. Realizing their gross error in judgment, they rehired the old keeper of the spring, and within a few weeks, the veritable river of life began to clear up. The wheels started to turn, and new life returned to the hamlet in the Alps.

Never become discouraged with the seeming smallness of your task, job, or life. Cling fast to the words of Edward Everett Hale: "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something I can do." The key to accomplishment is believing that what you can do will make a difference.

If I Had My Life to Live Over

If I had my life to live over, I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax, I'd limber up. I would be sillier than I've been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously, take more chances, and take more trips. I'd climb more mountains, and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones. You see, I'm one of those people who lived seriously, sanely, hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot-water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than this trip. If I had my life to live over, I would start going barefoot earlier in the spring, and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances, I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Wranglers and Stranglers

Years ago there was a group of brilliant young men at the University of Wisconsin, who seemed to have amazing creative literary talent. They were would-be poets, novelists, and essayists. They were extraordinary in their ability to put the English language to its best use. These promising young men met regularly to read and critique each other's work. And critique it they did!

These men were merciless with one another. They dissected the most minute literary expression into a hundred pieces. They were heartless, tough, even mean in their criticism. The sessions became such arenas of literary criticism that the members of this exclusive club called themselves the "Stranglers."

Not to be outdone, the women of literary talent in the university were determined to start a club of their own, one comparable to the Stranglers. They called themselves the

"Wranglers." They, too, read their works to one another. But there was one great difference. The criticism was much softer, more positive, more encouraging. Sometimes, there was almost no criticism at all. Every effort, even the most feeble one, was encouraged.

Twenty years later an alumnus of the university was doing an exhaustive study of his classmates' careers when he noticed a vast difference in the literary accomplishments of the Stranglers as opposed to the Wranglers. Of all the bright young men in the Stranglers, not one had made a significant literary accomplishment of any kind. From the Wranglers had come six or more successful writers, some of national renown such as Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who wrote *The Yearling*.

Talent between the two? Probably the same. Level of education? Not much difference. But the Stranglers strangled, while the Wranglers were determined to give each other a lift. The Stranglers promoted an atmosphere of contention and self-doubt. The Wranglers highlighted the best, not the worst.

Quick Decisions

A game warden noticed how a particular fellow named Sam consistently caught more fish than anyone else, whereas the other guys would only catch three or four a day. Sam would come in off the lake with a boat full. Stringer after stringer was always packed with freshly caught trout. The warden, curious, asked Sam his secret. The successful fisherman invited the game warden to accompany him and observe. So the next morning the two met at the dock and took off in Sam's boat. When they got to the middle of the lake, Sam stopped the boat, and the warden sat back to see how it was done.

Sam's approach was simple. He took out a stick of dynamite, lit it, and threw it in the air. The explosion rocked the lake with such a force that dead fish immediately began to surface. Sam took out a net and started scooping them up.

Well you can imagine the reaction of the game warden. When he recovered from the shock of it all, he began yelling at Sam. "You can't do this! I'll put you in jail, buddy! You will be paying every fine there is in the book!" Sam, meanwhile, set his net down and took out another stick of dynamite. He lit it and tossed it in the lap of the game warden with these words, "Are you going to sit there all day complaining, or are you going to fish?"

The poor warden was left with a fast decision to make. He was yanked, in one second, from an observer to a participant. A dynamite of a choice had to be made and be made quickly!

Life is like that. Few days go by without our coming face to face with an uninvited, unanticipated, yet unavoidable decision. Like a crashing snow bank, these decisions tumble upon us without warning. Quick. Immediate. Sudden. No council, no study, no advice. Pow!

Winners versus Losers

The Winner is always a part of the answer;
The Loser is always a part of the problem.

The Winner always has a program;
The Loser always has an excuse.

The Winner says, "Let me do it for you;"
The Loser says, "That's not my job."

The Winner sees an answer for every problem;
The Loser sees a problem in every answer.

The Winner says, "It may be difficult but it's possible;"
The Loser says, "It may be possible but it's too difficult."

Things to Remember

I find what I look for in people. If I look for God, I find God. If I look for bad qualities, I find them. I, in a sense, select what I expect, and I receive it.

A life without challenges would be like going to school without lessons to learn. Challenges come not to depress or get me down, but to master and to grow and to unfold thereby.

In the Father's wise and loving plan for me, no burden can fall upon me, no emergency can arise, no grief can overtake me, before I am given the grace and strength to meet them.

A rich, full life is not determined by outer circumstances and relationships. These can be contributory to it, but cannot be the source. I am happy or unhappy because of what I think and feel.

I can never lose anything that belongs to me, nor can I possess what is not really mine.

To never run from a problem: either it will chase me or I will run into another just like it, although it may have a different face or name.

To have no concern for tomorrow. Today is the yesterday over which I had concern.

To never bang on a closed door: wait for it to open and then go through it.

A person who has come into my life has come either to teach me something, or to learn something from me.

On Youth

Youth is not entirely a time of life -- it is a state of mind. It is not wholly a matter of ripe cheeks, red lips, or supple knees. It is a temper of will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions.

Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fears; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

In the central place of every heart, there is a recording chamber; so long as it receives messages of beauty and hope, cheer and courage, you are young.

When the wires are all down and your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then and only then have you grown old.

Grind Or Shine

Adversity is the grindstone of life. Intended to polish you up, adversity also has the ability to grind you down. The impact and ultimate result depend on what you do with the difficulties that come your way. Consider the phenomenal achievements of people experiencing adversity.

Beethoven composed his greatest works after becoming deaf. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote the History of the World during a thirteen-year imprisonment. If Columbus had turned back, no one could have blamed him, considering the constant adversity he endured. Of course, no one would have remembered him either.

Abraham Lincoln achieved greatness by his display of wisdom and character during the devastation of the Civil War. Luther translated the Bible while enduring confinement in the Castle of Wartburg. Under a sentence of death and during twenty years in exile, Dante wrote the Divine Comedy. John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress in a Bedford jail.

Finally, consider a more recent example. Mary Groda-Lewis endured sixteen years of illiteracy because of unrecognized dyslexia, was committed to a reformatory on two different occasions, and almost died of a stroke while bearing a child. Committed to going to college, she worked at a variety of odd jobs to save money, graduated with her high school equivalency at eighteen, was named Oregon's outstanding Upward Bound student, and finally entered college. Determined to become a doctor, she faced fifteen medical school rejections until Albany Medical College finally accepted her. In 1984, Dr. Mary Groda-Lewis, at thirty-five, graduated with honors to fulfill her dream.

Adversity - the grindstone of life. Will it grind you down or polish you up?

If You Think

If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't!
If you want to win, but think you can't,
It's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost;
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will;
It's all in the state of the mind.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger and faster man,
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the man who thinks he can.

Total Self Confidence

I am resourceful and I have the ability to do whatever it takes to succeed, and to support all those whom I love.

I enjoy life's challenges, and I learn from everything that happens in my life.

I live each day with passion and power.

I feel strong and powerful, happy, and excited.

I have tremendous confidence in my talents and my abilities.

I meet every situation knowing I am its master.

I have deep respect for myself and for everyone I meet each day.

I am committed to perform at the best of my ability in all that

I do.

I forgive myself and others easily.

I am aware of the priceless value of my life and the life of everyone I meet.

My confidence is unshakable because I live with integrity.

I am always at peace because I trust and follow my internal guidance.

Notes on the Tao Te Ching

Words are words, they are not life. Words are used to draw lines and describe concepts. Life is not a concept, nor is it divided or explained by words. Words cause nonsense. Life is lived, not described.

Words separate things: There is life/death, difficult/easy, long/short, high/low... and all points in between. Music comes from varying tones. No sane person can determine the law of life, the way of life in between these points. No one knows the way, or what will or should happen next. How can a leader be important and show the way when they are limited. Never be important.

Good government comes from many people who live by their hearts and not some important person's rule and direction based on their limited knowledge.

The Universe can take care of itself. It does not need important people.

People go crazy arguing about the Universe, though it has taken care of itself very long.

Life is free -- the more you breathe, the more breath is left to breathe.

The Universe is deathless.

A human is like this also. They take care of themselves. There is an inherent undertone and current of health and integrity, which takes care of a person. A person seeks a natural level with their Universe.

Tao is quiet and unnoticed by the outside world.

We live in the space (emptiness) of a house. Tao is empty of outside appearances.

External orientation causes problems. Internal orientation is quiet and sensible.

Life flows deeper than the rising and setting of the sun. A deeper existence is in each person as well. This is timeless.

This cannot be understood, but it flows. "When the river is murky, be patient and let the rivers flow and take its course, it will clear the mud."

Accept life (birth, flowering, death) quietly and openly. Accept the flowing of the River.

A good leader leads others to leading themselves.

People lose Tao, distortion in the outward comes -- law, ritual, words, hypocrisy. This is not the inward quiet flow of life, but confusion and chaos.

Again, words or analysis of life, distracts from life; status carries problems; law causes thieves -- these ways fail to bring happiness. Tao is in the heart, not in greed, status, or knowledge.

People's knowledge is a distraction, their leaders are a fake. How can someone know the way for other people? The material world is so important to people, they make their mark, while I am quietly nursing at the breast of life.

You try to know or measure what cannot be understood or measured. Accept life that way, it precedes anyway.

Yield to life forces. What can happen that cannot be mended?

Be natural following life, don't insist or force. Nature does not insist. Follow life naturally and you will be alive.

These notes paraphrase in common language a modern translation of the Tao Te Ching.

A Creed to Live By

By Nancy Sims

Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.

Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.

Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them life is meaningless.

Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live all the days of your life.

Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.

Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to give love. The fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don't dismiss your dreams. To be without dreams is to be without hope; to be without hope is to be without purpose.

Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you're going. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored each step of the way.

Peak Performer

(Adapted from the Self Esteem Workbook)

One of the wonderful by-products of high self-esteem is that you become a "Peak Performer." Every day you become more aware of your abilities and recognize that opportunities to stretch your capabilities are limitless. You desire change, growth, and challenge, and a healthy self-esteem provides the energy.

Peak performers have more than goals, they have a vision of what their life will mean to themselves and others. Peak performers do not live in the future. Peak performers make sure each step taken in the present keeps them on the road toward their life goal.

Peak Performers Can Say:

I am motivated and have a mission with realistic and measurable goals.

I accept complete responsibility for everything I think, say, feel, and do.

I look for the window of opportunity in every situation and know that I will learn from every experience if I choose.

I always help others to do their best, and I encourage everyone to contribute something.

I correct my course when I reach an obstacle. This way, when things go wrong, I am still headed in the right direction.

I expect and appreciate change. It does not overwhelm me because I am prepared.

I stand up for my own opinions and values and respect others.

I am able to manage myself. I do not require instruction every step of the way.

I am not afraid of making mistakes or of taking reasonable risks.

I am my own coach. I engage in positive self-talk and rehearsal.

I am a life-long student. I am always ready to learn, and I know growth takes sustained effort.

I know myself well and still expect to find hidden talents, resources, strengths, weaknesses, energy, and interests.

I respect reality both pleasant and painful.

I engage in self-confrontation and do not blame others.

I readily forgive others and myself and correct mistakes when possible.

I am patient, kind, gentle, and compassionate with myself.

I have no need to prove I am better or worse than anybody else.

The Paradoxical Commandments

by Dr. Kent M. Keith

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.

Give the world the best you have anyway.

Awakening

A time comes in your life when you finally get it...when, in the midst of all your fears and insanity, you stop dead in your tracks and somewhere the voice inside your head cries out...ENOUGH! Enough fighting and crying and blaming and struggling to hold on.

Then, like a child quieting down after a tantrum, you blink back your tears and begin to look at the world through new eyes.

This is your awakening.

You realize it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change, or for happiness, safety and security to magically appear over the next horizon.

You realize that in the real world there aren't always fairy tale endings, and that any guarantee of "happily ever after" must begin with you... and in the process a sense of serenity is born of acceptance.

You awaken to the fact that you are not perfect and that not everyone will always love, appreciate or approve of who or what

you are... and that's OK. They are entitled to their own views and opinions.

You learn the importance of loving and championing yourself... and in the process a sense of new found confidence is born of self-approval.

You stop complaining and blaming other people for the things they did to you - or didn't do for you - and you learn that the only thing you can really count on is the unexpected.

You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say and that not everyone will always be there for you and that everything isn't always about you.

So, you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself... and in the process a sense of safety and security is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers and you begin to accept people as they are and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties... and in the process a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness.

You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. You begin reassessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for.

You learn the difference between wanting and needing and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with.

You learn that there is power and glory in creating and contributing and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix.

You learn that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era, but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life.

You learn that you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world and that you can't teach a pig to sing.

You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that martyrs get burned at the stake.

Then you learn about love. You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be. You learn that alone does not mean lonely.

You stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes. You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO.

You also stop working so hard at putting your feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring your needs.

You learn that your body really is your temple. You begin to care for it and treat it with respect. You begin to eat a balanced diet, drink more water, and take more time to exercise.

You learn that being tired fuels doubt, fear, and uncertainty and so you take more time to rest. And, just as food fuels the body, laughter fuels our soul. So you take more time to laugh and to play.

You learn that, for the most part, you get in life what you believe you deserve, and that much of life truly is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for and that wishing for something to happen is different than working toward making it happen.

More importantly, you learn that in order to achieve success you need direction, discipline and perseverance. You also learn that no one can do it all alone, and that it's OK to risk asking for help.

You learn the only thing you must truly fear is fear itself.

You learn to step right into and through your fears because you know that whatever happens you can handle it and to give in to fear is to give away the right to live life on your own terms.

You learn to fight for your life and not to squander it living under a cloud of impending doom.

You learn that life isn't always fair, you don't always get what you think you deserve and that sometimes bad things happen to unsuspecting, good people... and you learn not to always take it personally.

You learn that nobody's punishing you and everything isn't always somebody's fault. It's just life happening. You learn to admit when you are wrong and to build bridges instead of walls.

You learn that negative feelings such as anger, envy and resentment must be understood and redirected or they will suffocate the life out of you and poison the universe that surrounds you.

You learn to be thankful and to take comfort in many of the simple things we take for granted, things that millions of people upon the earth can only dream about: a full refrigerator, clean running water, a soft warm bed, a long hot shower.

Then, you begin to take responsibility for yourself by yourself and you make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and to never, ever settle for less than your heart's desire.

You make it a point to keep smiling, to keep trusting, and to stay open to every wonderful possibility.

You hang a wind chime outside your window so you can listen to the wind.

Finally, with courage in your heart, you take a stand, you take a deep breath, and you begin to design the life you want to live as best you can.

---Maryam Webster, M.Ed.Solutions,

Tools & Support for People
Taking Charge of Their Lives
Tel: 408.866.SOUL [7685]

The Book of Booze

The Artesian Mysteries

-The Carletonian Funny Page, 1994

The great prophet Bubba stepped before the assembled masses and spoke to them, saying:

"Oh ye who go amongst one another mooching beer, know ye that thy beer-karma suffers

And all y that, upon seeing thy brothers and sisters thirsting, withholds from them thy precious beer, know ye that thy beer - karma is that of a trout!

For when thou hast beer, it is good that thou sharest it with those who have not beer,

And when thou drink the beer of another, thou art truly indebted to that person, in a debt of beer.

Borrow beer freely, my brothers and sisters, when you have not beer yet you thirst.

Yet honor thy beer debt to thy neighbor, lest your beer karma be imperiled.

And when someone asks of thy beer, give it freely so that you might be given beer when you are in need, for such is the nature of beer karma.

Know thee, also, that when thou partakes in the beer of another, or whenever thou shares beer with someone,

Then you both become brothers and sisters in beer.

Go forth then, be fruitful and brew; share your beer in bountiful times.

Do not hesitate to borrow beer in times of need, so long as thou returns beer in kin in times of plenty."

These words the great Bubba has spoken.

The Gospel of Bracicea

Collected by Pat Haneke

A philosophy professor (a Druid perhaps?) stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The students laughed. The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it. Said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this is your life. The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

"The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness.

"Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal.

"Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

But then...

A student then took the jar, which the other students and the professor agreed was full, and proceeded to pour in a glass of beer. Of course the beer filled the remaining spaces within the jar making the jar truly full.

The moral of this tale is:

That no matter how full your life is, there is always room for BEER.

A Prayer to Bracicea

Our lager,
Which art in barrels,
Hallowed be thy drink.
Thy will be drunk, (I will be drunk),
At home as it is in the pub.
Give us this day our foamy head,
And forgive us our spillages,
As we forgive those who spill against us.
And lead us not to incarceration,
But deliver us from hangovers.
For thine is the beer, The bitter, The lager.
Barmen.

The Whiskey Lesson

Isaac Bonewits, 1999

When some Druids see half a glass of whiskey, they think, "It is half-full." Others glumly conclude, "It's half-empty." But Reformed Druids grab the glass, shoot it down, slam the cup and say, "Huh, hey,... what?"

Top 10 Reasons Why Beer is Better Than Jesus

No one will kill you for not drinking Beer.

Beer doesn't tell you how to have sex.

Beer has never caused a major war.

They don't force Beer on minors who can't think for themselves.

When you have a Beer, you don't knock on people's doors trying to give it away.

Nobody's ever been burned at the stake, hanged, or tortured over his brand of Beer.

You don't have to wait 2000+ years for a second Beer.

There are laws saying Beer labels can't lie to you.

You can prove you have a Beer.

If you've devoted your life to Beer, there are groups to help you stop.

The Tavern

C.A. Doxiadis

I received my greatest lesson in aesthetics from an old man in an Athenian taverna. Night after night he sat alone at the same table, drinking his wine with precisely the same odd movements. I finally asked him why he did this, and he said, "Young man, I first look at my glass to please my eyes, then I take it in my hand to please my hand, then I bring it to my nose to please my nostrils, and I am just about to bring it to my lips when I hear a small voice in my ears, "How about me?" So I tap my glass on the table before I drink from it. I thus please all five senses.

We Have Drunk Whang

by Michael Scharding, based on the Rig-Veda, "We Have Drunk Soma." Whang is one part Whiskey/one part Water/ lots of Tang.

Of the sweet food I have partaken wisely,
That stirs the good thought, best banisher of trouble,
On which to feast, all gods as well as mortals,
Naming the sweet food "Tang," come together...
We have drunk Whang, have become immortal,
Gone to the light have we, the gods discovered.
What can hostility do against us?
What, O Immortal, mortal man's fell purpose?
Joy to our heart be thou, when drunk, O Be'al,
Like Mother to a son, most kind, O Whang;
Thoughtful like friend to friend, O thou of wide fame,
Prolong our years that we may live, O Whang.
These glorious freedom-giving drop by me imbibed
Have knit my joints together as straps a chariot;
From broken legs may Whang drops protect me,
May they from every illness keep me far removed...
Be gracious unto us for good, King Whang;
We are thy devotees; of that be certain.
When might and wrath display themselves, O Be'al,
Do not abandon us, as wished by foemen.
Protector of our body art thou, Whang,
In every limb has settled man-beholding:
If we infringe thine ordinances be gracious
As our good friend, O god, for higher welfare...
Ailments have fled away, diseases vanished,
The powers of darkness have become affrighted.
With might hath Whang mounted up within us;
The dawn we've reached, where men renew existence.
Oh, Whang! Your praises will I ever sing forth!

The Wild Rover

I've been a wild rover for many a year,
And I spent all my money on whiskey and beer,
But now I'm returning with gold in great store,
And I swear that I'll play the wild rover no more.

chorus: And its no, nay, never,
No, nay, never, no more,
Will I play the wild rover,
No, never, no more.

I went to an alehouse I used to frequent,
And I told the landlady my money was spent,
I asked her for credit, she answered me "Nay,
Such custom as yours I can get any day."

I pulled from my pocket three sovereigns bright,
And the landlady's eyes opened wide with delight,
"You shall have whiskies and wines of the best,
And the words that I spoke, they were only in jest."

I'll go to my father, confess what I've done,
And ask if he'll pardon, his prodigal son,
And if he forgives me as oft times before,
Then I swear I will play the wild rover no more.

The Hard Drinker

Sung to the tune of Wild Rover

I've been a hard drinker for many a year,
And I always fall over on ten pints of beer,
So now when I drink, I sit on the floor,
And I never will risk falling over no more.

chorus: And it's no, nay, never,
No, nay, never, no more,
Will I drink and fall over,
No never, no more.

I went to a bar that I used to frequent,
Despite having sworn that I'd give up for Lent,
I asked for two pints, but the barman said "Nay!
You'll only fall over like you did yesterday."

I'll pulled from my pocket two shiny gold pounds,
And I managed to do it without falling down,
The barman said "Sir, please choose from this list,
And I'm sorry if just now I thought you were Brahms."

I think that I'll stick now to stiff drinks and shorts,
Like whiskey and ponche and pernod and ports,
Cut down on the volume of all that I drink,
Then at least when I throw up I won't block the sink.

I'll go back to my girlfriend, confess what I've done,
And if she should hit me I won't turn and run,
I'll promise to give up... but if I should fail...
I'll see you next Thursday for ten pints of ale.

Whiskey, You're the Devil

Now brave boys, we're on the march
off to Portugal and Spain
Drums are beating, banners flying
the Devil at home will come tonight
so it's go, fare thee well
with a too da loo ra loo ra doo de da
a too ra loo ra loo ra doo de da
me rikes fall too ra laddie-o
there's whisky in the jar

Oh, whisky you're the devil
you're leading me astray
over hills and mountains
and to Amerikay
you're sweetness from the Bleachner
and spunkier than tea
oh whisky you're my darling drunk or sober

The French are fighting boldly
men are dying hot and coldly
give every man his flask of powder

his firelock on his shoulder
so its go, fare thee well
with a too da loo ra loo ra doo de da
a too ra loo ra loo ra doo de da
me rikes fall too ra laddie-o
there's whisky in the jar

Oh, whisky you're the devil
you're leading me astray
over hills and mountains
and to Amerikay
you're sweetness from the Bleachner
and spunkier than tea
oh whisky you're my darling drunk or sober

Says the old wan do not wrong me
don't take me daughter from me
for if you do I will torment you
when I'm dead my ghost will haunt you
so its go, fare thee well
with a too da loo ra loo ra doo de da
a too ra loo ra loo ra doo de da
me rikes fall too ra laddie-o
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The Rambler

I'm a rambler, I'm a gambler,
I'm a long way from home,
And if you don't like me,
well leave me alone.

Chorus: I'll eat when I'm hungry,
I'll drink when I'm dry,
And if the moonshine don't kill me,
I'll live 'til I die.

I've been a moonshiner for many a year.
I've spent all me money on whiskey and beer.
I'll go to me hollow and set up me still
And I'll sell you ten gallons for a two dollar bill.

I'll go to some hollow in this country
Ten gallons of moonshine, I'll go on a spree.
No women to follow, the world is all mine
I love none so well as I love the moonshine.

Oh moonshine, oh moonshine, oh how I love thee
Ten gallons of whiskey, I'll go on a spree.
I love all moonshiners and I love all moonshine
They're breath is as sweet as the dew on the vine.

John Barleycorn

There were three men come out of the west
Their fortunes for to try
And they have made a solemn vow
John Barleycorn must die (2x)

[Chorus]:
Fa la la la, it's a lovely day
Fa la la la lay o
Fa la la la, it's a lovely day
Sing fa la la la lay

They plowed him in three furrows deep
Laid clods all on his head
And they have made a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead

[Chorus]

Well then there came a shower of rain
Which from the clouds did fall
John Barleycorn sprang up again
And so amazed them all

Well then came men with great sharp scythes
To cut him off at the knee
They bashed his head against a stone
And they used him barbarously

Well then came men with great long flails
To cut him skin from bone
The miller has used him worse than that
He ground him between two stones

They wheeled him here, they wheeled him there
Wheeled him into the barn
And they have used him worse than that
They bunged him in a vat

They worked their will upon John Barleycorn
But he lives to tell the tale
We pour him into an old brown jug
And we call him home-brewed ale

Ballad of St. Bunstable

In an temple on the coast of the Vesper's frigid shores,
An acolyte, named Bunstable, was told to do his chores.
He did not have an inkling of just what fate had in mind,
Patron saint of fermentation, alcohol, beer, mead, and wine.

Bunstable, he was a simple soul, he wasn't very bright.
But he did his duty faithfully, morning, noon, and night.
His chores, they weren't too complex, for that would tax his head.
One in particular was simple. This is what his abbot said:

CHORUS:
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
No matter what may happen, you make sure that wine stays hid.
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
Now we all guard our wine like Saint Bunstable did.

One fateful day came Pirate raiders, like a dark wave on the coast.
The abbey was unable to repel the brigand raider's host.
Bunstable was in the cellar, heard them slaughter young and old.
And though trembling with fear, he knew to do as he'd been told.

The cellar door it had been locked, but the Pirates would break through
So grimly looking round, he knew exactly what to do.
He broke open each and every cask, he did not think of flight.
And when the deed was done, he'd drunk every drop in sight.

CHORUS:
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
No matter what may happen, you make sure that wine stays hid.
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
Now we all guard our wine like Saint Bunstable did.

When the Pirates came downstairs, they were somewhat less than pleased
That Bunstable had drunk the wine, there was none to be seized.
They threatened Bunstable with flame, but when fire met his breath,
There was a great explosion, and they all burned to death.

When the raiders reached their heaven, they were certainly surprised,
And for his act of bravery Bunstable was canonized.
It truly is a miracle, to drink up as he did,
And it is to his credit that he kept the wine well hid.

CHORUS:
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
No matter what may happen, you make sure that wine stays hid.
Guard the wine, guard the wine.
Now we all guard our wine like Saint Bunstable did.

Parish of Dunkeld

Lyrics: Traditional
Music: Bonnie Dundee

chorus:
Oh, what a parish, a terrible parish;
Oh, what a parish is that at Dunkeld.
They hangit their minister, drooned the precentot,
Dang doon the steeple and fuddled the bell.

The steeple was doon but the kirk was still stannin',
They biggit a lum* whar the bell used to hang.
A still-pot they got and they brewed hielan' whisky;
On Sunday they drank it and ranted and sang.

O, had you but seen how graceful they lookit,
To see the crammed pews so socially joined.
MacDonell the piper stood up in the pulpit,
He made the pipes skirl out the music divine.

Wi' whiskey and beer they would curse and they'd swear;
They'd argue and fecht [wi' ye done] will tell.
But Geordie and Charlie they [bothered fer] early
Wi' whiskey they're worse than the devil himsel'.

When the hairt-cheerin' spirit had mounted their garrets,
Tae a ball on the green they a' did adjourn.
The maids wi' coats kilted they skippit and lilted,
When tired they shook hands and then hame did return.

Wad the kirks a' of Scotland held like social meetings
Nae warning ye'd need from a far-tinklin' bell,
For true love and friends would draw you thegather
Far better than roarin' the horrors o' hell.

The Book of Al-Anon

Bake the Cake

One night a sponsor got a call from one of his sponsees. The sponsee complained the same old complaints of being restless, irritable and discontent. The sponsor asked him if he was reading his Big Book and the sponsee said that he was reading it daily and that it wasn't helping!

The sponsor then instructed his new friend to find a cookbook. He came back to the phone with the cookbook and was instructed to read the recipe for chocolate cake. So he read to him all the ingredients, how hot the oven was to be and when he was through his sponsor told him to read it again. By now the sponsee is a little upset and asks what this has to do with staying sober. With a laugh, his sponsor told him to humor him!

So he read it again, all the ingredients, oven temperature, and after he read it to him the second time, the sponsor asked him for a piece of cake. The sponsee told him he could not give him any cake and the sponsor asked him why? "Because I haven't gone through the action of making the cake."

With a laugh, the sponsor told his sponsee that that was why he wasn't getting any results from the Big Book! Reading the book alone will not keep you sober, but, the action of following the directions in it will!

Three Frogs Riddle

Question: There were once three frogs on a log and one of them made a decision to jump in. How many were left?

Answer: There are still three frogs on a log, he only made a decision, he took no action!

Ups and Downs of Life

A little boy is telling his Grandma how "everything" is going wrong. School, family problems, severe health problems, etc.. Meanwhile, Grandma is baking a cake. She asks her grandson if he would like a snack, which of course he does.

"Here, have some cooking oil."

"Yuck" says the boy.

"How about a couple raw eggs?"

"Gross, Grandma!"

"Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?"

"Grandma, those are all yucky!"

To which Grandma replies: "Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves. But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! God works the same way. Many times we wonder why he would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!"

It's All Relative

A woman is riding a bus in the Midwest, when a man gets on the bus and sits down next to her. He's wearing a black hat, long black coat, black slacks and shoes, and he has a long curly dark beard.

The woman looks at him disgustedly. "Jews like you," she hisses at him.

He looks up at her, puzzled, and says, "I beg your pardon, madam?"

She says, "Look at you. All in black, a beard, never take off your hat! It's Jews like you that give the rest of us a bad name."

He says calmly, "I beg your pardon, madam, but I am not Jewish. I'm Amish." The woman looks back and smiles, "How nice. You've kept your customs."

Anyone Up There?

A man was walking in the mountains just enjoying the scenery when he stepped too close to the edge of the mountain and started to fall. In desperation he reached out and grabbed a limb of a gnarly old tree hanging onto the side of the cliff. Full of fear he assessed his situation. He was about 100 feet down a sheer cliff and about 900 feet from the floor of the canyon below. If he should slip again he'd plummet to his death.

Full of fear, he cries out, "Help me!" But there was no answer. Again and again he cried out but to no avail.

Finally he yelled, "Is anybody up there?"

A deep voice replied, "Yes, I'm up here."

"Who is it?"

"It's the L-rd"

"Can you help me?"

"Yes, I can help."

"Help me!"

"Let go."

Looking around the man became full of panic. "What?!?!"

"Let go. I will catch you."

"Uh... Is there anybody else up there?"

Some Questions

1 - Have you ever decided to stop drinking for a week or so, but only lasted for a couple of days?

2 - Do you wish people would mind their own business about your drinking-- stop telling you what to do?

3 - Have you ever switched from one kind of drink to another in the hope that this would keep you from getting drunk?

4 - Have you had to have an eye-opener upon awakening during the past year?

5 - Do you envy people who can drink without getting into trouble?

6 - Have you had problems connected with drinking during the past year?

7 - Has your drinking caused trouble at home?

8 - Do you ever try to get "extra" drinks at a party because you do not get enough?

9 - Do you tell yourself you can stop drinking any time you want to, even though you keep getting drunk when you don't mean to?

10 - Have you missed days of work or school because of drinking?

11 - Do you have "blackouts"?

12 - Have you ever felt that your life would be better if you did not drink?

The Book of Ultimate Answers

Written by
Rev. Michael Scharding, D.D.
in June 1994 c.e.

No part of this book may be printed, reproduced or stored by any means presently known, or to be created in the future, without express written permission of the author; except short quotations for scholarly studies or for book reviews. The following people that I'll list are granted exceptions and are allowed to print 10 issues a year. An exception to this restriction is extended to all past, present & future Reformed Druids of North America for raising grove-funds. Another exception is made to anybody who is fluent in Ge'ez *and* Scots-Gaelic. Another exception is made for anybody with two noses and a third ear. I also, graciously, will make an exception for the government officials of Malawi; who have been inspiringly helpful in writing this book. Finally, I would make an exception for Fillard.

Another Fine Product of the Drynemeton Press

Printing History

1st Printing 1994 (3 pgs)
2nd Printing 1994 (6 pgs)
3rd Printing 1994 (13pgs)
4th Printing 1996 (ARDA)
5th Printing 2003 (ARDA 2)

Cover Credits Sine Ceolbhinn, ODAL

Disclaimer

The author accepts no responsibility for the actions or decisions that are made by the reader as a result of reading this book. If you are actually using this book, then something is loose in your head. Similarly the reader bears no responsibility for the actions of the author for having written this book. If you're using this book, you should always seek loads of advice from people more knowledgeable than I (and this book) about the issues for which this book is being consulted (i.e. try your friends, relatives, priests, employers, children, plants, pets, crystals, etc.)

If this product doesn't work (and I don't mean if it works well) then please feel free to shred it or give it to your friend (or enemy) as a present.

When I call this a Reformed Druid publication, I mean it is a publication by a Reformed Druid. I hope that most other Reformed Druids disagree with my views.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Rev. Jewelnel Davis, who has inspired the Carleton Campus with her wisdom during her years here. I hope that this book will likewise provided needed answers to those faced with the inscrutability of the universe, or at least get them to give up using similar books and go back to talking with real people (which is a much wiser thing to do.)

Table of Contents

1	The Cover
2	Restrictions
	Printing History
	Disclaimers
3	Dedication
	Table of Contents
	Other Thanks
4	Preface: Why this book was written.
	Third Edition Updates
	Recommendations
	Reminders
5	Introduction: How to use this book
	How long to prepare beforehand
	Difficulty to Time scale-chart
	Clarifying examples for the scale categories
	Other important notes
6	Chapter One: Affirmative Answers
7	Chapter Two: Negative Answers
8	Chapter Three: Mixed Answers
9.	Conclusion: Why this book was really written

Other Thanks

There are a number of people I would like to thank for making this enormously difficult work possible. First I would like to thank my ancestors and all the past populace of the world which have made my culture(s), philosophy(s), religion(s), environment, language(s) and genetic code what they are today (you know who you are!)

I'd also like to thank the Carleton Academic Computing and Networking Center for the use of their computers while formatting this book for publication while I attended school there. Carleton's faculty, staff and students also deserve my thanks for instilling the knowledge, moral teachings and education that made this book possible.

Not to forget you, are all the many plant, animal & microbial creatures I've ingested to sustain my biological processes. I'm also very thankful that I can breathe the oxygenated air and that the sun comes up in the morning. For all these myriads of interlacing cycles and miraculous events (including hormones) I would like to thank the Creator(s.) You're doing a fine job, keep up the good work!

I would also like to thank the Sheltons, the Frangquists, Isaac Bonewits, Glenn McDavid, Sam Adams, Norman Nelson and the many Druids who have enlightened me on "the mysteries" of Druidism (whatever they are....)

To conclude, I'd like to thank whoever (or whatever) else I'm forgotten to include.

Preface: Why this book was written.

I was once sitting under a large oak tree on a sunny day when I came to the realization that there are a lot of unanswered questions in the world. Think about it, do you know the names of all the people in Ghana; or why do English speakers often put the adjectives before the nouns? We live in world awash with doubt and distressed with uncertainty. Will we ever know the right answers to every question? Probably not. However, we live in a society that demands answers. To not provide answers is to show incompetence or lack of education. Would you want to look incompetent or uneducated? I wouldn't, but it would seem fated that we will have to continue to live with that persistent embarrassment.

I decided that someone had to take care of all these loose ends, even at the risk of giving the wrong answers. I mean, isn't it better to have an answer, even if it is not THE answer, especially one that works; rather than to stand there and sheepishly say that you don't have an answer? Once I accepted this monumental task I was faced with a more daunting undertaking than passing my Senior Comprehensive exercise at Carleton while retaining a social life; providing viable answers to all the possible questions that can be posed in the English language. It was a toughie, but I managed to complete it in a few hours. Drawing upon my extraordinary ability to pull answers out of a baseball cap, I wrote this book. I have intended it to be a quick handbook to use whenever you are confronted with a perplexing problem or question.

While divinatory purposes are probably not a very effective use of the book, your use of the book is not my concern. Like the disclaimer says, you can do what you want with the book, that's your decision. This book has worked many times for myself and I hope it proves so for you. Enjoy!

Rev. Michael Scharding
June 20th, 1994 c.e.

Third Edition Update:

Due to the overwhelming desire for more answers, I've massively expanded the chapters of answers to provide more customized answers.

Recommendations

1. If you are not competent in the English language, have a friend help you use this book.
2. Similarly if you are blind, have them read this book to you or type it in Braille so that you can scan it.
3. If no one answer works, try combinations and permutations.

Reminders

1. If you are not using the book properly, then you perhaps don't deserve an answer.
2. Be persistent, it will work if you don't give up.
3. There's an answer in this book that works for your question!

Introduction:

How to use this book

There are three chapters to the Book of Ultimate Answers, one each for affirmative, negative and mixed answers. I have found that the Book of Ultimate Answers works best for me when used as outlined in the following flow-chart:

- I. Get comfortable.
- II. Pray and/or meditate for the recommended time (see below) on how to best formulate the question in the English languages.
- III. Open to the first chapter.
 - A. If an appropriate answer is there, you're done.
 - B. No luck? Try chapter two.
 - i. If you find an appropriate answer, cool.
 - ii. If that doesn't work, try chapter three.
 - a. If it worked, you're done.
 - b. If it you couldn't find a usable answer then return to chapter one.

How Long to Prepare Beforehand

Now depending on how difficult or important the question is, you'll have to formulate the question and ready your mind to spot a useable answer in your search. Imagine you're going to be asking this to Mahatma Ghandi at a press conference. You want to be very clear. This is because your mind is often running many sub-processes at the same time and it might be actually more concerned with finding an answer to another problem. The result? You get the right answer to a sub-conscious question instead of the one you asked. Remember, the answer may not be the one you want to find, so don't force it.

To help remedy this frequent problem, I'm providing the handy-dandy scale that I recommend to meditate and/or pray before using this book. It's roughly:

Difficulty to Time List

Inconsequential: 5 seconds
Simple: 1 minute
Pesky: 1 hour
Important: 1 day
Life-Changing: 1 month to a Year
Earth-Shattering: 2 years
Universe-Shattering: 15 years
Future Career/Marriage: 20 years and a day

Clarifying Examples

for the Scale Categories:

Inconsequential: What color is a tomato?
Simple: What should I watch on TV tonight?
Pesky: Should I change brands of shampoo?
Important: Do I wish to learn Gaelic?
Life-Changing: Do I get a nose-job?
Earth-Shattering: Shall I reveal my divinity to CNN?
Universe-Shattering: Shall I bestow warp-engine capability to mere mortal Earthlings?
Future Career/Marriage: Do I want to marry Alex?

Other important notes:

Feel encouraged to modify the words in any answer (i.e. the tense, conjugation, plurality, gender, inflection, punctuation, cultural understanding, order, grammatical purpose, spelling or definition) in order to make it a more suitable answer. Remember, you only need an answer that works, not the best answer!

Chapter One: Affirmative Answers

Could be a positive answer to your question:

'Fraid so.
Yes.
Of course!
Probably.
Because.
Easily.
With difficulty.
Perhaps so.
Go with it.
Definitely.
I said so.
Once and a while.
Why not?
Partially so.
Some of the world's greatest people have thought so.
Occasionally.
It bodes well.
In a twisted way, yeah.
I wish so to.
I have it on good authority.
So a rumor has it. Next question please.
Uh, huh.
In a mytho-poetic sense.
In some situations.
That would be nice.
Few have ever doubted it.
When you are ready.
Only if you do it the right way.
Some would think so.
Yeah!
If you can accept the risks.
At the appropriate time.
If things favor it.
Do what's best.
Trust in yourself.
It has always been so.
If you trust them.
Couldn't agree with you more.
I'd say go with it, but ask someone for a second opinion.
True.
If you're lucky.
If Ghandhi would do it, so should you.
You'll win.
When one truly loves someone.
You are ready and skillful enough to do it.
No problem.
Cautiously.
Oh, I've got the answer, but you must try that again in a "yes-no" format.

Didn't find a suitable answer? Try chapters two and three.

Chapter Two: Negative Answers

Oh, it might be a negative on this one. An answer could be one of the following:

No.
Never.
Because.
Couldn't be.
Unlikely.
Don't.
You'll lose.
Mustn't
When the "hot-motifed-culture's interpretation of Hell" freezes over!
Can't.
Give up.
Not often.
Won't.
Not worth the bother.
Not with your resources.
Try not to.
Shouldn't.
Impossible.
Not in my book!
Might not.
Don't you dare!
If your friend jumped off a cliff, would you also jump off a cliff?
Think about it, it wouldn't work.
Cautiously.
Most likely not.
In your dreams!
If you do, you'll be sorry.
Not now.
Later.
Too late.
Not here.
Not there.
That isn't legal, is it?
Forget it.
It's unprecedented.
Someone else can do it.
That's morally reprehensible!
Not soon.
Not ever.
When clams sing Beethoven from mountain-tops!
Best to wait.
Try a different alternative or approach.
You know that I've got the answer, but you must phrase it in a "yes-no" format.

Didn't find a suitable answer? Try chapters one and three.

Chapter Three: Mixed Answers

You asking a complicated question or one requiring an overly specific answer. I think the answer would be one of the following:

Maybe.
Answer unclear, ask later.
Do more meditating or praying.
You're not ready to use this book. I'd recommend that you talk with your friend, relative, superior/inferiors.
Tricky.
That's a matter of faith, isn't.
You're not intelligent enough to understand the fine mechanics of the solution.
I bet the word(s) you're looking for are in a dictionary.
Wait.
It's hard to express the answer with written words, try waving this book around.
There is no clear answer.
There are no clear answers.
I would offend somebody if I answered that one.
What would you say?
42.
That's a toughie, send oodles of money to the Mayo Clinic and perhaps they'll tell you.
Look it up.
Could be.
That's a fact, this book deals with slippery issues!
If you only knew...
You cannot make the decision by yourself.
We tried that one before, inconclusive.
No one knows.
Nothing knows.
Whenever.
Whatever.
Whoever.
Whyever.
However.
Because.
Whenceever.
Rephrase the question.
It's unlike anything we've ever seen before, Cap'n.
Why bother?
In time, you will come to know.
That is a question not tending towards edification.
Wait a minute, at what time?
Wait a minute, who?
Wait a minute, which?
Wait a minute, why?
Wait a minute, how exactly?
Only if she/he/it/them/I/you/we/you-all does it first.
Are you sure you got the facts straight?
That really depends.
Ask an expert.
Pay stricter attention.
I'll get back to you on that one.
Ha! Ha! That's a good one.
Well, now!...
If I could walk that way, I wouldn't....
Best to do more research first.
I've already answered that one.
That question has been outdated, try a newer one.
That's a secret.
The answers definitely a real number.
Could be an imaginary number.
Too many possible answers.
If you were paying attention...
You're not asking the right question.

There are better books on the subject, check the library.
If there aren't better books... write them.
Could you make that a bit more clear.
Only if they/it don't find out.
A thousand years from now, who'll care?
It wouldn't make sense, even if I explained it to you.
Consider it from their point of view.
The first.
The latter.
Both.
Neither.
One of the middle ones.
One (or more) but not the other(s)
D.
All of the above.
None of the above.
One of the above.
You're not using English, this only works for English.
Is something green stuck between your teeth?
Is that a rhetorical question?
If I told you that, I would have to shoot you.
Not even Nixon knew that.
Slower. Slower.
I don't know.
I don't care.
Sleep on it.
Isn't there something else you should be doing right now?
Time to make the donuts.
It's interesting you should ask that, I was thinking the same thing.
It doesn't matter.
It would be alot easier if you could ask that again, but as a "yes-no" question.
Didn't find a suitable answer? Try chapters one and two.

Conclusion:

Why this book was really written.

Actually, I did write this book for most of the pre-said reasons, in a way. As a Reformed Druid, and a North American one at that, I have a right to say what I believe and other Reformed Druids won't claim that I'm a heretical Druid. The RDNA lacks recognizably official dogma and its customs or traditions are very mutable. The RDNA's official doctrine is summed up in the two Basic Tenets:

1. The object of the search for religious truth, which is a never-ending and spiritual search, can be found through Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; but this is one way, yea!, one way among many.

2. And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it people do live, yea, even as they do struggle through life are they come face to face with it.

This is the only statement that all Reformed Druids agree with (and possibly most Druids...) Anything more or less than this is your own variant, and we all bring our own stuff willingly or unwillingly. None of us are "pure" Reformed Druids, we are all possessors of differing beliefs, but share a stated agreement with those two identically worded beliefs; irregardless of our own interpretation. Can one have unity through difference? Richard Shelton said "Reformed Druidism is compatible with all religions, even if they deny it." The way I've looked at it, most religions that I'm familiar with use images from Nature at least once to demonstrate or symbolize a theological point; saya bird building a nest in the spring time. If this is so, then people of all religions should be able to gather and hear the same story of a bird building

a nest, and come away with a personal gain of spiritual understanding. This is what the RDNA is about.

One of the unstated purposes of the RDNA is to deepen our critical awareness of the foundations underlying our personal, individual beliefs and/or to understand the roots of our religion(s) or philosophy. In a way, I've pursued this goal by writing & publishing my thoughts as a focusing tool for this exploration, because knowing someone will read your musings makes you work harder. But truth seems to be a thing that changes with new facts reveal an unseen twist in your understandings. God is guiding me on a strange path of mysticism to find Her spiritual truths. Nothing that I've published is necessarily what I currently believe, at the time that you are reading this. Ha!

Another side-effect of Reformed Druidism is a desire to pull people's legs. David Frangquist once stated "The role of the Third Order is keep people guessing...Druidism has its tongue planted firmly in its cheek." I wished to poke fun at a book called "Dianet*cs" and other self-help books that purported to have answers for your personal problems. I think these books cater to those folk who are unwilling to talk with real live people and those who consider any book to be true as gospel if it is published by someone with loads of letters behind their name (esp. Ph.D..)

In the Reformed Druid fashion, I have endeavored to bring you to a deeper realization of the inconsistencies inherent in being an expert on other people's problems, especially about people you don't even know. The Book of Ultimate Answers actually works, but it may be the wrong way to come to answers. Sometimes the most flawless systems can also be the most devious if they are inappropriate. Just because it works doesn't mean it should be used.

Sarah: "I've got a splitting pain in my head."

Jean: "Have you considered amputation?"

Imagine how many leaders and experts daily make decisions based on blind reliance upon long-accepted collections of official answers (i.e. files, dossiers, scriptures.) It's not that written sources do not contain truths, they do!, but one cannot always use the same answer to the same question. Abiding by precedents can be a problematic habit, as the expression goes: "give a child a hammer and soon everything looks like a nail."

One of my other gripes with the self-help genre is that they often have only a very short section of practical answers and advice. What seems to take a great deal of those books (and, incidentally, this one) is a lot of bibble-babble (or Bible-Babel as a friend of mine calls it.) The author usually has their own personal philosophy which they would be delighted if everyone else shared. The people easiest to "convert" are those with weak self-images whose insecurity draws them to powerful, charismatic "know-it-alls." If you are still reading this and are one of those people, you won't find the answer through Reformed Druidism either ("Druidism is a faith, if not in answering, then in questioning.") You'll find your answer, if it's to be found, by your own efforts (possibly divinely aided.)

The last rumor I'd like to share is that people do not always lie, sometimes they are just misinformed and don't realize it or (more likely) won't admit it. I am, myself, greatly "uneducated" in accredited forms of theological training. I am merely winging it, which so many "experts" are also secretly doing. I hope this book has jolted you into a deeper speculation of the purpose, motives and capabilities of the "self-help book" genre.

The Books of the African Jedi-Knight

Introduction

To the Reader,

Welcome to the Books of the African Jedi-Knight. I do not mean, by any means to belittle African-Americans or Africans by the publishing of this book. It's merely an exercise in comparative religious readings on my part, for Jediism is very much a philosophy, if not a religion.

Many of the materials herein are copyrighted, not that that slowed me down in choosing to include them. I hope that anyone obtaining a copy of this publication will show at least some respect to those copyright owners by not charging a profit when distributing these works to another person.

By no means are any of the documents here in contained to be considered "secret" or "oathbound" by our members. Nor does this book express the opinion of anyone but its author. Feel free to show them to anyone you will.

The RDNA, especially Carleton, has never officially called itself a Neo-pagan religion. However, many of its members may feel themselves to be a neo-pagan. Some prefer to look upon it as merely a philosophical union that deals with religion. Both of these are good. However, we can learn from all the spiritual masters of most (if not all) religions that have appeared on this world. Take the opportunity to peruse and cogitate on what you find inside.

Only one of the greatest complements you can give to the RDNA is to publish a little work of your own to help others looking for the ways. Also try to practice what you preach. Imitation is the highest flattery.

Peace! Peace! Peace!

Michael Scharding,

Archdruid 93-94, O.D.A.L., Bel., Gran.,

Dean of Druidic Textology (DDT)

39th Day of Geamradh,

Year XXXI of the Reform

(12/8/93 and updated in 1996)

The Books of the African Jedi-Knight

Printing History

1st Printing 1993

2nd Printing 1996 (in ARDA)

3rd Printing 2003 (in ARDA2)

A Book on the Bantu

This little publication is an attempt to dissuade the belief that the Star Wars trilogy was overly "Christian" in its symbology of the Force. This work came about through my readings of "Bantu Philosophy" (LOC # GN.T4513 C3) by Rev. Placide Tempels, a Jesuit Priest of the early 20th century (*translated from the French.*) The Bantus called the spiritual and divine entity(s) "The Force." Correlations began to develop with further readings, but by no means is Lucasian Theology identical to Bantu Theology.

For those unfamiliar with Africa, the Bantus are the people of Zaire (*AKA the Congo*) and Angola. Most are pagan in the sense that they do not call Christ their personal savior. They may have been drastic changes in their beliefs since the early 1950s when this was published.

We start with some readings from the book. I apologize for the sexist use of "he" referred to in the book, as it was written in the 50s. Michael

What is Force? pg. 52

I believe that we should most faithfully render the Bantu thought in European language by saying that Bantu speak, act, live as if, for them, beings were forces. Force is not for them an adventitious, accidental reality. Force is even more than a necessary attribute of beings: Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force

When we think in terms of the concept "being," they use the concept "force." Where we see concrete beings, they see concrete forces. When we say that "beings" are differentiated by their essence or nature, Bantu say that "forces" differ in their essence or nature. They hold that there is the divine force, celestial or terrestrial forces, human forces, animal forces, vegetable and even material or mineral forces.

The reader will be able to form his own opinion at the end of this study as to the validity, the exact worth of this hypothesis: in contradistinction to our definition of being as "that which is," or "the thing insofar as it is," the Bantu definition reads, "that which is force," or "the thing insofar as it is force," or "an existent force." We must insist once again that "force" is not for Bantu a necessary, irreducible attribute of being: no, the notion "force" takes for them the place of the notion "being" in our philosophy. Just as we have, so have they a transcendental, elemental, simple concept with them "force," with us "being."

It is because all being is force and exists only in that it is force, that the category "force" includes of necessity all "beings." God, men living and departed, animals, plants, and minerals. Since being is force, all these beings appear to the Bantu as forces. This universal concept is hardly used by the Bantu, but they are susceptible to philosophical abstractions though they express them in concrete terms only. They give a name to each thing, but the inner life of these things presents itself to their minds as such specific forces and not at all as static reality.'

Energy and Life Force pg. 47

The spirits of the first ancestors, highly exalted in the superhuman world, possess extraordinary force inasmuch as they are the founders of the human race and propagators of the divine inheritance of vital human strength. The other dead are esteemed only to the extent to which they increase and perpetuate their vital force in their progeny.

In the minds of Bantu, all beings in the universe possess vital force of their own: human, animal, vegetable, or inanimate. Each being has been endowed by God with a certain force,

capable of strengthening the vital energy of the strongest being of all creation: man.

Supreme happiness, the only kind of blessing, is, to the Bantu, to possess the greatest vital force: the worst misfortune and, in very truth, the only misfortune is, he thinks, the diminution of this power.

Every illness, wound or disappointment, all suffering, depression, or fatigue, every injustice and every failure; all these are held to be, and are spoken of by the Bantu as, a diminution of vital force.

Illness and death do not have their source in our own vital power, but result from some external agent who weakens us through his greater force. It is only by fortifying our vital energy, through the use of magical recipes, that we acquire resistance to malevolent external forces.

We need not be surprised that the Bantu allude to this vital force in their greetings one to another, using such forms of address as: "*You are strong.*" or "*You have life in you,*" "*you have life strongly in you*" {or "*The Force is with you*" Editor} and that they express sympathy in such phrases as "*Your vital force is lowered,*" "*your vital energy has been sapped.*" A similar idea is found in the form of sympathy, "*wafwa ko !*" which we translate "*you are dying,*" and by reason of our mistranslation, we are quite unable to understand the Bantu and find them given to ridiculous exaggeration when they continually say that they are "dead" of hunger or of fatigue, or that the least obstacle or illness is "killing" them.

In their own minds, they are simply indicating a diminution of vital force, in which sense their expression is reasonable and sensible enough. In their languages, too, are words like "*kufwa*" and "*fukwididila,*" indicating the progressing stages of loss of force, of vitality, and the superlative of which signifies total paralysis of the power to live. It is quite erroneous for us to translate these words by "to die" and "to die entirely."

General Laws of Vital Causality, pg. 67

After what we have said upon the question of "force-beings" grouped in respect of their natures, of intensity of life class by class, and of the precedence according to primogeniture, it will be now clear that, among clan peoples, the universe of forces that are organically constructed in what we can call an ontological hierarchy. The interaction of forces and the exercise of vital influence occurs, in fact, according to determined laws. The Bantu universe is not a chaotic tangle of unordered forces blindly struggling with one another. Nor must we believe that this theory of forces is the incoherent product of a savage imagination, or that the action of the same force can be now propitious and now pernicious, without a determining power to justify the fact. Doubtless there are force influences acting in this unforeseeable manner, but this assertion does not allow the conclusion that action occurs in a manner scientifically unpredictable, in a totally irrational mode. When a motorcar breaks down, one can say that this event was not determined in advance by what constitutes the essential nature of a motor-car, but we do not on that account believe ourselves obliged to deny the correctness and validity of the laws of mechanics. On the contrary, the breakdown itself can be explained only by adequate application of these very laws. The same is true of the laws of the interaction of forces. There are possible and necessary actions, other influences, which are metaphysically impossible by reason of the nature of the forces in question. The possible causal factors in life can be formulated in certain metaphysical, universal, immutable and stable laws. These laws can, I think, be set out as follows:

RULE I. Man (living or deceased) can directly reinforce or diminish the being of another man.

RULE II. The vital human force can directly influence inferior force-beings (animal, vegetable, or mineral) in their being itself.

RULE III. A rational being (spirit, manes, or being) can act indirectly upon another rational being by communicating his vital influence to an inferior force (animal, vegetable, or mineral) through the intermediary of which it influences the rational being. This influence will also have the character of a necessarily effective action, save only when the object is inherently the stronger force, or is reinforced by the influence of some third party, or preserves himself by recourse to inferior forces exceeding those which his enemy is employing.

Note: Certain authors claim that inanimate beings, stones, rocks, or plants and trees are called by the Bantu "bwanga" as exercising their vital influence on all that comes near them. If this were authenticated, it would open the question: "do lower forces act by themselves upon higher forces?" Some authors say that they do. For my part, I have never met any African who would accept this hypothesis. A priori, such an occurrence would seem to me to contradict the general principles of the theory of forces. In Bantu metaphysics the lower force is excluded from exercising by its own initiative any vital action upon a higher force. Besides, in giving their examples, these authors ought to recognize that often a living influence has been at work, for example, that of the manes. Likewise, certain natural phenomena, rocks, waterfalls, big trees, can be considered -and are considered by the Bantu- as manifestations of divine power; they can also be the sign, the manifestation, the habitat of a spirit. It seems to me that such should be the explanation of the apparent influences of lower forces on the higher force of man. Those lower beings do not exercise their influence of themselves, but through the vital energy of a higher force acting as cause. Such an explanation accords in all cases with Bantu metaphysics. Such manifestations belong to the third law enunciated above.

Loneliness, pg. 103

Just as Bantu ontology is opposed to the European concept of individuated things, existing in themselves, isolated from others, so Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationships with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it.

The Bantu cannot be a lone being. It is not a good enough synonym for that to say that he is a social being. No; he feels and knows himself to be a vital force, at this very time to be in intimate-and personal relationship with other forces, acting above him and below him in the hierarchy of forces. He knows himself to be a vital force, even now influencing some forces, and being influenced, by others.

Ancestors, pg. 64

The Created Universe is centered on man. The present human generation living on earth is the center of all humanity, including the world of the dead.

The Jews had no precise views of the beyond, nothing more than that of compensation in the future life for earthly merit. The idea of bliss became known to them a short time only before the coming of Christ. "Sheol" was a desolate region; and sojourning there seemed a gloomy business, offering little enough to attract those who had the good fortune to be still living on earth.

In the minds of the Bantu, the dead also live; but theirs is a diminished life, with reduced vital energy. This seems to be the conception of the Bantu when they speak of the dead in general, superficially and in regard to the external things of life. When

they consider the inner reality of being, they admit that deceased ancestors have not lost their superior reinforcing influence; and that the dead in general have acquired a greater knowledge of life and of vital or natural force. Such deeper knowledge as they have in fact been able to learn concerning vital and natural forces they use only to strengthen the life of man on Earth. The same is true of their superior force by reason of primogeniture, which can be employed only to reinforce their living posterity. The dead forbear who can no longer maintain active relationships with those on earth is "completely dead," as Africans say. They mean that this individual vital force, already diminished by decease, has reached a zero diminution of energy, which becomes completely static through lack of faculty to employ its vital influence on behalf of the living. This is held to be the worst of disasters for the dead themselves. The spirits of the dead ("manes") seek to enter into contact with the living and to continue living function upon earth.

The unconscious, evil vital influence, pg. 131

Those who have lived among Bantu have given striking illustrations of cases in which one finds himself accused of "excising a pernicious influence and is condemned by reason of the illness or death of another, without his being convicted of fault, or even of any wicked intention. Often the elements of proof are entirely lacking and the miscarriage of justice is palpable to an European witness. And yet it is said that the accused, after making a feeble defense, submits, to the declarations and decisions of diviners or ordeals, or to the sentence of elders and wise men; and he accepts the penalties which are inflicted. Such facts are incomprehensible to the minds of European jurists. I believe that I have found an adequate explanation in Bantu philosophy.

The vital forces are under the governance of God, without human intervention. The hierarchy of forces is an ontological order, founded in the nature of being, not depending only on external agreements and on external meddling. All forces are in relationships of intimate interdependence; vital influence is possible from being to being without recourse to external intermediaries. The vital forces, moreover, are not quantitative, mathematical values, nor are they static qualitative values definable by philosophy. They are active forces not distinct from the being itself, which function not only in themselves and on themselves; but forces whose actions can pulsate through the whole universe of forces, to whatever extent they are in vital relationships with them.

Such vital influence is possible from man to man: it is indeed necessarily effective as between the progenitor, a superior vital force and his progeny-an inferior force. This interaction does not occur only when the recipient object is endowed, in respect of the endowing subject, with a superior force, which he may achieve off himself, or by some vital external influence, or (especially) by the action of God.

What evil demands restitution? pg. 144

Since, in the minds of Bantu, the worst eviland, indeed, the only real injustice is the harm done to the vital force, it should be at least, surprising that they should measure exactly the amount of restitution by the *lex talionis*, an eye for an eye. The exact restitution of an object stolen, or the drawing of a tariff of damages, can in no wise be founded upon their conception of life as centered in man. How can they hope to measure good and evil done to man by, criteria which are external to him? From their point of view this overlooks the essential point; the re-

establishment of the ontological order and of the vital forces that have been disturbed. Even when the restitution takes the form of a transfer of natural goods it is considered as part of the re-establishment of life; or, rather, as being a re-establishment of life.

Besides and beyond economic damages, the "*bisan-so*" the sorrow or the wrong done to the Man, constitutes the right to reparation. The man, wounded during his Peaceful enjoyment of life, in the fullness of his vital force, the wholeness of his life, has a right to restoration of being. Material indemnities have no other significance than that of achieving the restoration of the man.

Conclusion, pg. 78

If one desired to ridicule this philosophy or to give a childish caricature of it, objecting that its concepts do not rest upon the discipline of rigorous scientific experience, it would be as well to take care not to commit oneself to arguments more ridiculous than the pretended stupidity of these primitive peoples themselves.

Is our philosophy based upon scientific experiment? Does depend upon chemical analysis on mechanics or on anatomy? Natural sciences can no more refute a system of philosophy than they can create one. Our elders used to possess a systematized philosophy which the most advanced modern sciences have not broken down. Moreover, our ancestors came by their knowledge of being at a time when their experimental scientific knowledge was very poor and defective, if not totally erroneous. The tool of empirical science is sense experience of visible realities, while philosophy goes off into intellectual contemplation of general realities concerning the invisible nature of beings. But no instrument exists for measuring the soul, though this fact does not exclude the possibility that experiences may occur in order to furnish intelligence with reasonable proof of the existence of the spiritual principle in life. It is the intellect that creates science. Indeed the experiments of the natural sciences, as also the generalizations of the philosopher ought to-be made methodically and with discernment and analyzed in accordance with sound logical reasoning. This presupposes that one does not question the objective worth of intellectual knowledge. Happily, primitive peoples are no more tortured with doubt than our *subevolues* or human reasoning.

The Book of the Jedi

Words by George Lucas and Co.

Typed up by Chris A. Johnson

Edited by Michael Scharding

Obviously, distribution of this is against the copyright law, so be careful not to charge money for it. Every time I now watch the Star Wars series I note deeper and deeper religious symbology impregnating it. As you've read in the Bantu Philosophy introduction, now apply what you have learned towards this text. LOOK for possible parallels and connections. On later read-throughs, try searching for Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian parallels, they're really in there. By understanding common themes amongst religious systems, one gains a greater appreciation of their vital differences. I suspect that by understanding the unique points on one's faith, one is strengthened in resolve to hold to that faith; and one also acknowledges areas that are further elaborated in other religions.

I consider this book to be a religious text in and of itself. Enjoy!

STAR WARS

(On Tatoine, at Luke's Home)

Aunt Roe: Luke is not much of a farmer, he's got too much of his father in him.

Uncle Owen: I know.

(In Ben's home)

Ben: Owen disagreed with your father's ethics and would not have gotten involved. He was the best star fighter in the galaxy and a cunning warrior... and my friend. I have something for you. Your father wanted you to have it when you were old enough. Your uncle wouldn't allow it. He feared you would go off with Obi Wan on a suicidal adventure. It is a light saber. It is the weapon of a Jedi, not clumsy like a blaster or a laser, an elegant weapon from a more civilized era. For over a 1000 generations they were guardians of the civilization before the Dark Times when the empire hunted down the Jedi...Now the Jedi are all but extinct. Vader was seduced by the Dark Side of the Force. He betrayed and murdered your father.

Luke: The Force?

Ben: Now, the Force is what gives the Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things; it surrounds us, it penetrates us, it binds the galaxy together.

Ben: Learn about the Force, Luke.

Luke: I want to learn the ways of the force and be like my father.

Ben: You must do what you feel is right.

(In the Death Star's Meeting Room)

Admiral Motti: This station is now the ultimate power in the universe. I suggest we use it.

Vader: Don't be too proud of this technological terror you've constructed. The ability to destroy a planet is insignificant next to the power of the Force.

Admiral Motti: Don't try to frighten us with your sorcerer's ways, Lord Vader. Your sad devotion to that ancient

religion has not helped you conjure up the stolen data tapes, nor given you clairvoyance enough to find the Rebels' hidden fort(Vader chokes him through the Force)

Vader: I find your lack of faith disturbing.

(on the streets of Mas Eislely)

Stormtrooper: How long have you had these droids?

Luke: About three or four seasons.

Ben: They're up for sale if you want them.

Stormtrooper: Let me see your identification.

Ben: You don't need to see his identification.

Stormtrooper: We don't need to see his identification.

Ben: These aren't the droids you're looking for.

Stormtrooper: These aren't the droids we're looking for.

Ben: He can go about his business.

Stormtrooper: You can go about your business.

Ben: Move along.

Ben: Move along. Move along.

(They continue to the tavern. A Jawa appears and covets Luke's speeder.)

C3PO: I can't abide those Jawasdisgusting creatures.

Luke: (To Jawa) Go on, go on. (To Ben) I can't understand how we got by those troops. I thought we were dead.

Ben: The Force. It has a strong influence on the weak-minded.

(En route to Alderaan. Luke fighting a target remote.)

Ben: Remember, a Jedi can feel the force flowing through him.

Luke: You mean it controls your actions?

Ben: Partially. But it also obeys your commands.

(The remote hits Luke with a stinger blast in the seat of the pants.)

Han: Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side, kid.

Luke: (Deactivates lightsaber) You don't believe in the Force, do you?

Han: Kid, I've flown from one side of this galaxy to the other and I've seen a lot of strange stuff,-but I've never seen anything to make me believe there's one all-powerful Force controlling everything. There's no mystical energy field that controls my destiny. It's all a lot of simple tricks and nonsense.

Ben: (takes flight helmet from wall) I suggest you try it again, Luke. This time, let go your conscious self and act on instinct. (Places helmet on Luke's head.)

Luke: But, with the blast shield down I can't even see! How am I supposed to fight?

Ben: Your eyes can deceive you. Don't trust them. (Luke reactivates his lightsaber. Remote fires, hits his leg.) Stretch out with your feelings. (Luke blocks three blasts from the remote.) You see? You can do it. (Luke deactivates lightsaber, removes helmet.)

Han: I'd call it luck.

Ben: In my experience, there's no such thing as luck.

Han: Look, good against remotes is one thing... Good against a living that's something else. (Console beeps) Looks like we're coming up on Alderaan. (Han and Chewbacca exit.)

Luke: You know, I did feel something. I could almost see the remote.

Ben: That's good. You've taken your first step into a larger world.

(After the planet blows up, Ben faints)

Luke: Are you all right?

Ben: I felt a great disturbance in the Force, as if millions of voices cried out in Terror.

(In the hanger.)

Imperial Commander: There's no one on board, sir. According to the log, the crew abandoned ship just after takeoff. It must be a decoy, sir. Several of the escape pods have been jettisoned.

Vader: Did you find any droids?

Imperial Commander: No sir. If there were any on board, they must also have jettisoned.

Vader: Send a scanning crew on board. I want every part of this ship checked.

Imperial Commander: Yes sir.

Vader: I sense something, a presence I've not felt since....

(In the control room.)

Luke: I wanna go with you.

Ben: Be patient, Luke, stay and watch over the droids.

Luke: But he can

Ben: They must be delivered safely or other star systems will suffer the same fate as Alderaan. Your destiny lies along a different path from mine. (opens door) The Force will be with you. Always.

(In the meeting room)

Vader: He is here.

Tarkin: obi-Wan Kenobi? What makes you think so?

Vader: A tremor in the Force. The last time I felt it was in the presence of my old master.

Tarkin: Surely he must be dead by now.

Vader: Don't underestimate the Force.

Tarkin: The Jedi are extinct; their fire has gone out of the universe. (Comlink buzzes.) You, my friend, are all that's left of their religion. (Answering comlink) Yes?

Commander: We have an emergency alert in detention block AA-23.

Tarkin: The Princess? Put all sections on alert.

Vader: Obi-Wan is here. The Force is with him.

Tarkin: If you're right, he must not be allowed to escape.

Vader: Escape is not his plan. I must face him alone.

(Ben uses Force to distract soldiers.)

(The duel)

Vader: I've been waiting for you, Obi-Wan. We meet again at last. The circle is now complete. When I left you, I was but the learner. Now I am the master.

Ben: Only a master of evil, Darth. (They fight)

Vader: Your powers are weak, old man.

Ben: You can't win, Darth. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine. (They fight)

Vader: You should not have come back. (The fight continues. Vader strikes down Ben. Ben's cloak falls to the ground, empty.)

Luke: No! (Stormtroopers turn from covering Vader and attack Luke & co.) Han, Leia, and Artoo urge Luke to get in the ship. Vader prods Ben's cloak with his foot.)

Han: Blast the door, kid! (and Vader and stormtrooper reinforcements are cut off from the hanger bay.)

Ben: Run Luke, run!

(At the Rebel briefing)

Dodanna: Then man your ships. And may the Force be with you.

(In the Rebel hanger)

Luke: ...Take care of yourself, Han. I guess that's what you're best at, isn't it?

Han: Hey, Luke. May the Force be with you.

(As Luke takes off)

Ben: Luke, the Force will be with you.

(During the battle)

Ben: Luke, trust your feelings. (Luke does a nice strafing run.)

(In the trench Luke activates his targeting computer.)

Ben: Use the Force, LUKE. (Luke looks away from the computer) Let go, LUKE.

Vader: The Force is strong in this one.

Ben: Luke, trust me. (Luke deactivates the targeting computer)

(Later, Luke destroys the Death Star without aid of the computer. But you knew that.)

(After the battle)

Ben: Remember, the Force will be with you. Always.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

(In the Wampa ice cave, Luke uses the Force to pull his lightsaber from the snow into his hand and slice off the Wampa's hand.)

(In snowstorm.)

Ben: LUKE. Luke!

Luke: Ben?

Ben: You will go to the Dagobah system.

Luke: Dagoba?

Ben: There you will learn from Yoda, the Jedi Master who instructed me.

(When the Imperial Starfleet comes out of lightspeed too close to Hoth and the Rebels activate their energy shield, Vader chokes Admiral Ozzel through the Force from a completely different room and thereby promotes Captain Piett to Admiral.)

(on the Super Star Destroyer)

Star Destroyer Captain #2: ...And that, Lord Vader, was the last time they appeared on any of our scopes. Considering the amount of damage we've sustained, they must have been destroyed.

Vader: No, Captain, they're alive., I want every ship available to sweep the

asteroid field until they are found.

Piett: Lord Vader!

Vader: Yes, Admiral, what is it?

Piett: The Emperor commands you to make contact with him.

Vader: Move the ship away from the asteroid field so that we can send a clear transmission. (In Vader's chamber) What is thy bidding, my Master?

Emperor: There is a great disturbance in the Force.

Vader: I have felt it.

Emperor: We have a new enemy: Luke Skywalker.

Vader: Yes, my Master.

Emperor: He could destroy us.

Vader: He's just a boy. Obi-Wan can no longer help him.

Emperor: The Force is strong in him. The son of Skywalker must not become a Jedi.

Vader: If he could be turned, he would be a powerful ally.

Emperor: Yes ... yes. He would be! Can it be done?

Vader: He will join us or die, Master.

(On Dagobah)

Yoda: Why are you here?

Luke: I'm looking for a someone.

Yoda: Help you I can!

Luke: I don't think so, I'm looking for a great warrior.

Yoda: Great Warrior?

Luke: I'm looking for a Jedi Master.

Yoda: Jedi Master, you are looking for. Come, I'll show you.

(In Yoda's home)

Yoda: Why do you want Yoda?

Luke: I want to be a Jedi, like my father.

Yoda: Your father, a powerful Jedi, powerful Jedi he was.

Luke: You knew my father?

Yoda: I cannot teach him. The boy has no patience.

Ben's Voice: He will learn patience.

Yoda: Much anger in him. Like his father.

Ben's Voice: Was I any different when you taught me?

Luke: Yoda... I ... I am ready! Ben! Ben, I can be a Jedi! Ben, tell him I'm re (bumps his head on the ceiling)

Yoda: Ready are you? What know you of ready? For eight hundred years have I trained Jedi! My own council will I keep on who is to be trained! A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind. This one, along time have I watched. All his life has he looked away: to the future, to the horizon. Never his mind on where he was, mm? What he was doing. Mm. Adventure. Heh! Excitement. Heh! (pokes Luke) A Jedi craves not these things. You are reckless!

Ben: So was I, if you remember.

Yoda: He is too old. Yes. Too old to begin the training.

Luke: But I've learned so much.

Yoda: Will he finish what he begins?

Luke: I won't fail you. I'm not afraid.

Yoda: You will be. You will be.

(Luke's training I. Luke runs through the swamps with Yoda on his back.)

Yoda: Run! Yes! Yes! A Jedi's strength flows from the Force! But beware of the Dark Side. Anger, fear, aggression: the Dark Side are they! Easily they flow, quick to join you in a fight. If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny, consume you it will! As it did Obi-Wan's apprentice.

Luke: (Stops, panting.) Vader. Is the Dark Side stronger?

Yoda: No! No. No. Quicker, easier, more seductive.

Luke: Then how am I to know the good side from the bad?

Yoda: You will know! When you are calm. At peace! Passive. A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defense. Never for attack.

Luke: But tell me why I can't

Yoda: No, no, there is no why! Nothing more will I teach you today. Clear your mind of questions. Mmmm. Mmm.

Luke: (Sets Yoda down, puts on jacket.) There's something not right here. I feel cold... death.

Yoda: That place (indicates cave) is strong with the Dark side of the Force. A domain of evil it is. In you must go.

Luke: What's in there?

Yoda: only what you, take with you. (Luke takes his weapons.) Your weapons you will not need them. (Luke ignores him. He enters the cave and fights a slow-motion battle with Darth Vader, who he beheads. Vader's mask explodes, revealing the face beneath: Luke's own.)

(Luke's training II. He is standing on one hand with Yoda perched on his foot.)

Yoda: Good, yes. Feel the Force flow! Yes! Now: the stone. (Luke lifts a stone through the Force.) Feel it. (Artoo notices the sinking X-Wing. His whistling breaks Luke's concentration.) Concentraaaaaate! (Luke and Yoda fall.)

Luke: (Looking at X-Wing) Oh no. We'll never get it out now!

Yoda: So certain are you? Always with you it cannot be done. Hear you nothing that I say?

Luke: Master, moving stones around is one thing. This is totally different!

Yoda: No! No different! only different in your mind. You must unlearn what you have learned.

Luke: All right, I'll give it a try.

Yoda: No! Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try. (Luke raises the X-Wing a bit, then drops it. It sinks completely.)

Luke: I can't. It's too big.

Yoda: Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? (Luke shakes his head) Hum. And well you should not. For my ally is the Force, and a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us, and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. (Pinches Luke's shoulder) You must feel the Force around you: here, between you, me, between the rock, everywhere! Yes! Even between land and ship.

Luke: You work the impossible. (Luke sulks. Yoda raises the ship and deposits it on the shore. Luke is incredulous.)

Luke: I don't! I don't believe it!

Yoda: That is why you fail.

(Vader chokes captain Needa through the Force for loosing the Falcon.)

(Luke's training III. Luke standing on his hands with two boxes levitated.)

Yoda: Concentrate! Feel the Force flow! Yes! (Luke levitates Artoo.) Good, calm. Through the Force, things you will see. Other places, the future, the past, old friends long gone.

Luke: Han? Leia! (He drops the boxes and Artoo and falls.)

Yoda: Hmm. Control, control, you must learn control!

Luke: I... I saw a city in the clouds!

Yoda: Mmm. Friends you have there.

Luke: They were in pain.

Yoda: It is the future you see.

Luke: The future? Will they die?

Yoda: Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future.

Luke: I've got to go to them.

Yoda: Decide you must how to serve them best. If you leave now, help them you could, but... you would destroy all for which they have fought and suffered.

(On Cloud City, in the dining room, Vader blocks Han's laser bolts with his hand and pulls Han's gun across the table through the Force.)

(Luke's departure from Dagobah)

Yoda: Luke, you must complete the training!

Luke: I can't get this vision out of my head. They're my friends, I've got to help them!

Yoda: You must not go!

Luke: But Han and Leia will die if I don't!

Ben: You don't know that. (Apparition of Ben appears) Even Yoda cannot see their fate.

Luke: But I can help them! I feel the Force.

Ben: But you cannot control it. This is a dangerous time for you, when you will be tempted by the Dark Side of the Force.

Yoda: Yes, yes, to Obi-Wan you listen! The cave, remember your failure at the cave!

Luke: But I've learned so much since then! Master Yoda, I promise to return and finish what I've begun! You have my word!

Ben: It is you and your abilities the Emperor wants. That is why your friends are made to suffer.

Luke: That's why I have to go..

Ben: Luke, I don't want to lose you to the Emperor the way I lost Vader.

Luke: You won't.

Yoda: Stopped he must be. On this all depends. Only a fully trained Jedi Knight, with the Force as his ally, will conquer Vader and his Emperor. If you end your training now, if you choose the quick and easy paths Vader did, you will become an agent of evil.

Ben: Patience!

Luke: And sacrifice Han and Leia?

Yoda: If you honor what they fight for... yes.

Ben: If you choose to face Vader, you will do it alone. I cannot interfere.

Luke: I understand. Artoo? Fire up the converters. (Luke enters the X-Wing.)

Ben: Luke! Don't give into hate. That leads to the Dark Side!

Yoda: Strong is Vader! Mind what you have learned, save you it can!

Luke: I will! And I'll return. I promise. (Luke takes off)

Yoda: Told you I did. Reckless is he. Now, matters are worse.

Ben: That boy is our last

Yoda: No. There is another.

(After Han is frozen in carbonite)

Imperial Commander: Skywalker has just landed, my Lord.

Vader: See to it that he finds his way in here. (Lando attempts to take Leia by the arm, but Chewie snarls at him.) Calrissian, take the Princess and the Wookiee to my ship.

Lando: You said they'd be left in the city under my supervision!

Vader: I am altering the deal. Pray I don't alter it any further. (Vader chokes Lando for a brief instant. Lando's hand goes to his throat. This one is taken from the novelization, but in the film Lando's hand does go to his throat. Sort of.)

(The duel I. Luke holsters his blaster. The lights come up, Vader's breathing is heard.),

Vader: The Force is with you, young Skywalker, but you are not a Jedi yet. (Luke ascends the steps and they duel.)

(The duel II)

Vader: You have learned much, young one.

Luke: You'll find out I'm full of surprises. (They exchange blows. Vader knocks Luke's saber from his hand and it falls to the floor below. Vader swings at Luke, Luke rolls down the stairs. Vader leaps, and lands between Luke and his lightsaber.)

Vader: Your future lies with me, Skywalker. Obi-Wan knew this to be true.

Luke: No. (He is backing towards the pit. Vader lunges Luke falls in.)

Vader: All too easy. (He turns on the carbonite switch with the Force. Luke leaps from the chamber and climbs the pipes above. Vader doesn't notice.) Perhaps you are not as strong as the Emperor thought. (A clang comes from above. Vader sees Luke) Impressive. (He slices a hose. Steam spews out.) Most impressive. (Luke drops and aims the broken pipe at Vader.) Oomph! (Luke picks up his lightsaber with the Force and blocks Vader's next swing with it.) Obi-Wan has taught you well. You have controlled your fear. (They exchange blows.) Now, release your anger. Only your hatred can destroy me.

(They fight. Luke drives Vader off the side of the chamber. Luke deactivates his lightsaber and follows. He enters a connecting tunnel, then the Control Room. Vader appears. Rather than fight, he sends large machinery hurtling at Luke. When Luke blocks the machinery, Vader attacks. Then Vader simply hurtles the machinery at Luke, who can't block it all. One piece breaks the large window, causing a pressure difference which pulls Luke out. He catches a catwalk and pulls himself up.)

Vader: Trust your feelings, I'm your Father!

Luke: (Luke wines) No, that can't be! That's Impossible!

(Beneath the city, Luke calls first for Ben and then for Leia, who hears his call. As they attempt to escape)

Vader's Voice: Luke

Luke: Father.

Vader's Voice: Son, come with me.

Luke: Ben, why didn't you tell me? (Luke gets up and goes to the cockpit.)

Lando: Chewie! (Chewie bashes his tool against the ship.)

Luke: It's Vader.

Vader's Voice: Luke, it is your destiny.

Luke: Ben, why didn't you tell me?

(Aboard the medical frigate)

Luke: Chewie, I'll be waiting for your signal. Take care, you two. And may the Force be with you.

THE RETURN OF THE JEDI

(Luke in Jabba's palace. He chokes the guards a la Vader to get past them. He plays with Bib Fortuna's mind like Ben did to the stormtroopers. He also attempts to use his

mind powers on Jabba, but they are ineffective. In the book, he leaps to the grate above the rancor and swings around up there out of reach, but the scene was cut from the movie.)

(Luke makes extensive use of the Force in fighting Jabba's guards. Leia also uses it to choke Jabba.)

(The Emperor's arrival)

Emperor: Rise, my friend.

Vader: The Death Star will be completed on schedule, my Master.

Emperor: You have done well, Lord Vader. And now, I sense you wish to continue your search for young Skywalker.

Vader: Yes, my Master.

Emperor: Patience, My friend. In time, he will seek you out, and when he does, you will bring him before me. Only together can we turn him to the Dark Side of the Force.

Vader: Yes, My Master.

Emperor: Everything is proceeding as I have foreseen.

(Yoda's farewell)

Yoda: That face you make. Look I so old to young eyes?

Luke: No. of course not.

Yoda: I do. Yes I do. Sicker I've become. Yes. Old and weak. When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not. Hmm? (Chuckles, then coughs.) Soon will I rest. Yes. Forever sleep. Earned it I have.

Luke: Master Yoda, you can't die!

Yoda: Strong am I with the Force, but not that strong. Twilight is upon me, and soon night must fall. That is the way of things. The way of the Force.

Luke: But I need your help. I've come back to complete the training.

Yoda: No more training do you require. Already know you thatwhich you need.

Luke: Then I am a Jedi.

Yoda: Oh! Not yet. One thing remains. Vader. You must confront Vader. Then, only then, a Jedi will you be. And confront him you will.

Luke: Master Yoda, is Darth Vader my father?

Yoda: A rest I need. Yes. Rest.

Luke: Yoda, I must know.

Yoda: Your father he is. Told you, did he?

Luke: Yes.

Yoda: Unexpected is this, and unfortunate.

Luke: Unfortunate that I know the truth?

Yoda: No! Unfortunate that you rushed to face him! That incomplete was your training! That not ready for the burden were you.

Luke: I'm sorry.

Yoda: Remember, a Jedi's strength flows from the Force. But beware: anger, fear, aggression: the Dark Side are they. If once you start down the Dark path, forever will it

dominate your destiny! Luke.. do not... do not underestimate the powers of the Emperor, or suffer your father's fate you will. Luke... when gone am I, the last of the Jedi will you be. Luke! The Force runs strong in your family. Pass on what you have... learned... Luke... there, is... anoth..er... Sk... Sky... walk... er... (Yoda dies.)

(Luke uses the Force to remember who the heck his sister was.)

(When the strike team is attempting to get past the security shield of the Death Star, Luke and Vader sense each others presence.)

(Luke uses the Force to levitate Threepio and thereby convince the Ewoks to join them.)

Luke: The Force is strong in my family. My father has it... I have it... and... my sister has it.

(Luke and Vader meet)

Vader: The Emperor has been expecting you.

Luke: I know, father.

Vader: So, you have accepted the truth.

Luke: I have accepted the truth that you were once Anakin Skywalker, my father.

Vader: That name no longer has any meaning for me.

Luke: It is the name of your true self, you've only forgotten. There is good in you. The Emperor hasn't driven it from you fully. That was why you couldn't bring yourself to kill me before. That's why you won't bring me to your Emperor now.

Vader: I see you have constructed a new lightsaber. Impressive. Your skills are complete. Indeed you are powerful, as the Emperor has foreseen.

Luke: Come with me.

Vader: Obi-Wan once thought as you do. You don't know the power of the Dark Side. I must obey my Master.

Luke: I will not turn, and you'll be forced to kill me.

Vader: If that is your destiny.

Luke: Search your feelings, father. You can't do this. I feel the conflict within you, let go of your hate!

Vader: It is too late for me, son. The Emperor will show you the true nature of the Force. He is your master now.

Luke: Then my father is truly dead.

(Emperor's throne room I)

Emperor: Welcome, young Skywalker. I have been expecting you. You no longer need those. (He motions to Luke's binders. They fall to the ground.) Guards, leave us. I am looking forward to completing your training. In time, you will call me Master.

Luke: You're gravely mistaken. You won't convert me as you did my father.

Emperor: oh no, my young apprentice. You will find that it is you who are mistaken. About a great many things.

Vader: His lightsaber. (Hands it, butt first, to the Emperor.)

Emperor: Ah yes. A Jedi's weapon. Much like your father's. By now you must know that your father can never be turned from the Dark side. so will it be with you.

Luke: You're wrong. Soon I'll be dead, and you with me.

Emperor: Perhaps you refer to the imminent attack of your Rebel fleet. Ah yes, I assure you, we are quite safe from your friends here.

Luke: Your overconfidence is your weakness.

Emperor: Your faith in your friends is yours.

Vader: It is pointless to resist, my son.

Emperor: Everything that has transpired has done so according to my design. Your friends, out there on the sanctuary moon, are walking into a trap, as is your Rebel fleet. It was I who allowed the Alliance to know the location of the shield generator. It is quite safe from your pitiful little band. An entire legion of my best troops awaits them. Oh, I'm afraid the deflector shield will be quite operational when your friends arrive.

(Space battle. The Rebel fleet roars from hyperspace. All wings report in.)

Wedge: Lock s-foils in attack position.

Admiral Ackbar: May the Force be with us.

(Emperor's throne room II)

Emperor: Come, boy, see for yourself. From here you will witness the final destruction of the Alliance, and the end of your insignificant Rebellion. (Touches lightsaber) You want this, don't you. The hate is swelling in you now. Take your Jedi weapon. Use it. Strike me down with it. Give in to your anger. With each passing moment you make yourself more my servant.

Luke: No.

Emperor: It is unavoidable. It is your destiny. You, like your father, are now... mine.

(Emperor's throne room III)

Emperor: Your fleet is lost, and your friends on the Endor moon will not survive. The Alliance will die, as will your friends. Good... I can feel your anger. I am defenseless. Take your Jedi weapon. Use it. Strike me down with all of your hatred, and your journey towards the Dark side will be complete! (Luke takes his sword through the Force, ignites it, and swings. Vader blocks the blow. Emperor laughs.)

(Emperor's throne room IV)

(Luke and Vader duel. Luke kicks Vader down the stairs (reminiscent of the falling down stairs bit in the previous film].)

Emperor: (laughs.) Use your aggressive feelings, boy! Let the hate flow through you. (Luke deactivates his lightsaber.)

Vader: obi-Wan... has taught you well.

Luke: I will not fight you, father. (Vader climbs the steps. Luke backs away.)

Vader: You are unwise to lower your defenses! (Luke reactivates his lightsaber to defend himself. They exchange blows. Luke jumps into a control booth and deactivates his lightsaber. He then flips up onto a catwalk.)

Luke: Your thoughts betray you, father. I feel the good in you, the conflict.

Vader: There is no conflict.

Luke: You couldn't bring yourself to kill me before and I don't believe you'll destroy me now.

Vader: You underestimate the power of the Dark Side. If you will not fight, then you will meet your destiny. (Throws his sword, which causes catwalk to fall. Luke slides down below the throne room. Vader follows.)

Emperor: (laughing.) Good. Good!

(Emperor's throne room V)

(Vader searching for Luke beneath the throne room)

Vader: You cannot hide forever, Luke

Luke: I will not fight you.

Vader: Give yourself to the Dark Side. It is the only way you can save your friends. Yes! Your thoughts betray you. Your feelings for them are strong, especially for... sister! So, you have a twin sister! Your feelings have now betrayed her, too! Obi-Wan was wise to hide her from me. Now, his failure is complete. If you will not turn to the Dark Side, then perhaps she will.

Luke: NEVER! (Attacks Vader, beats him back. Knocks him to his knees, slices his right hand off.)

Emperor: Good! Your hate has made you powerful. Now, fulfill your destiny, and take your father's place at my side.

Luke: (looks at his mechanical hand, then to Vader's severed mechanical one.) Never. (Deactivates lightsaber and throws it away.) I'll never turn to the Dark Side. You've failed, your Highness. I'm a Jedi, like my father before me.

Emperor: So be it, Jedi.

(Emperor's throne room VI)

Emperor: If you will not be turned, you will be destroyed. (Hits Luke with lightning. Vader stands by his Master.) Young fool. Only now, at the end, do you understand. (Hits Luke with lightning.) Your feeble skills are no match for the power of the Dark Side. (Hits Luke with lightning.) You have paid the price for your lack of vision. (Hits Luke with lightning.)

Luke: (Screams, including:) Father, help me!

Emperor: Now, young Skywalker, you will die. (Hits Luke with lightning.)

Luke: (Screams, including:) Father!

(Vader grabs Emperor and throws him into a pit. Luke pulls Vader away from the pit.)

(Vader, unmasked)

Anakin Skywalker: Now go, my son. Leave me.

Luke: No. I'll not leave you here, I've got to save you.

Anakin Skywalker: You already have, Luke

(On the Ewok Planet)

Ben: The Force will always be with you, young Skywalker.

The Nightingale

as written by Hans Christian Andersen

In China, you must know, the Emperor is a Chinaman, and all whom he has about him are Chinamen too. It happened a good many years ago, but that's just why it's worthwhile to hear the story, before it is forgotten. The Emperor's palace was the most splendid in the world; it was made entirely of porcelain, very costly, but so delicate and brittle that one had to take care how one touched it. In the garden were to be seen the most wonderful flowers, and to the costliest of them silver bells were tied, which sounded, so that nobody should pass by without noticing the flowers.

Yes, everything in the Emperor's garden was admirably arranged. And it extended so far, that the gardener himself did not know where the end was. If a man went on and on, he came into a glorious forest with high trees and deep lakes. The wood extended straight down to the sea, which was blue and deep; great ships could sail to and fro beneath the branches of the trees; and in the trees lived a nightingale, which sang so splendidly that even the poor Fisherman, who had many other things to do, stopped still and listened, when he had gone out at night to throw out his nets, and heard the Nightingale.

"How beautiful that is!" he said; but he was obliged to attend to his property, and thus forgot the bird. But when in the next night the bird sang again, and the Fisherman heard it, he exclaimed again, "How beautiful that is!"

From all the countries of the world travelers came to the city of the Emperor and admired it, and the palace, and the garden, but when they heard the Nightingale, they said, "That is the best of all!"

And the travelers told of it when they came home; and the learned men wrote many books about the town, the palace, and the garden. But they did not forget the Nightingale; that was placed highest of all; and those who were poets wrote most magnificent poems about the Nightingale in the wood by the deep lake.

The books went through all the world, and a few of them once came to the Emperor. He sat in his golden chair, and read, and read: every moment he nodded his head, for it pleased him to peruse the masterly descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden. "But the Nightingale is the best of all!"—it stood written there.

"What's that?" exclaimed the Emperor. "I don't know the Nightingale at all! Is there such a bird in my empire, and even in my garden? I've never heard of that. To think that I should have to learn such a thing for the first time from books!"

And hereupon he called his Cavalier. This Cavalier was so grand that if any one lower in rank than himself dared to speak to him, or to ask him any question, he answered nothing but "P!"—and that meant nothing.

"There is said to be a wonderful bird here called a Nightingale!" said the Emperor. "They say it is the best thing in all my great empire. Why have I never heard anything about it?"

"I have never heard him named," replied the Cavalier. "He has never been introduced at court."

"I command that he shall appear this evening, and sing before me," said the Emperor. "All the world knows what I possess, and I do not know it myself!"

"I have never heard him mentioned," said the Cavalier, "I will seek for him. I will find him."

But where was he to be found? The Cavalier ran up and down all the staircases, through halls and passages, but no one among all those whom he met had heard talk of the Nightingale. And the Cavalier ran back to the Emperor, and said that it must be a fable invented by the writers of books.

"Your Imperial Majesty cannot believe how much is written that is fiction, besides something that they call the black art."

"But the book in which I read this," said the Emperor, "was sent to me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be a falsehood. I will hear the Nightingale! It must be here this evening! It has my imperial favor; and if it does not come, all the court shall be trampled upon after the court has supped!"

"Tsing-pe" said the Cavalier; and again he ran up and down all the staircases, and through all the halls and corridors; and half the court ran with him, for the courtiers did not like being trampled upon.

Then there was a great inquiry after the wonderful Nightingale, which all the world knew excepting the people at court. At last they met with a poor little girl in the kitchen, who said,—

"The Nightingale? I know it well; yes, it can sing gloriously. Every evening I get leave to carry my poor sick mother the scraps from the table. She lives down by the strand, and when I get back and am tired, and rest in the wood, then I hear the Nightingale sing. And then the water comes into my eyes, and it just as if my mother kissed me!"

"Little Kitchen Girl," said the Cavalier, "I will get you a place in the kitchen, with permission to see the Emperor dine, if you will lead us to the Nightingale, for it is announced for this evening."

So they all went out into the wood where the Nightingale was accustomed to sing; half the court went forth. When they were in the midst of their journey a cow began to low.

"O!" cried the court page, "now we have it! That shows a wonderful power in so small a creature! I have certainly heard it before."

"No, those are cows lowing!" said the little Kitchen Girl. "We are a long way from the place yet!"

Now the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Glorious!" said the Chinese Court Preacher. "Now I hear it—it sounds just like little church bells."

"No, those are frogs!" said the little Kitchen-maid. "But now I think we shall soon hear it."

And then the Nightingale began to sing.

"That is it!" exclaimed the little Girl. "Listen, listen! and yonder it sits."

And she pointed to a little gray bird up in the boughs.

"Is it possible?" cried the Cavalier. "I should never have thought it looked like that! How simple it looks! It must certainly have lost its color at seeing such grand people around."

"Little Nightingale" called the Kitchen-maid, quite loudly "our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing before him."

"With the greatest pleasure!" replied the Nightingale, and began to sing most delightfully.

"It sounds just like glass bells!" said the Cavalier. "And look at its little throat, how it's working! It's wonderful that we should never have heard it before. That bird will be a great success at court."

“Shall I sing once more before the Emperor?” asked the Nightingale, for it thought the Emperor was present.

“My excellent little Nightingale,” said the Cavalier, “I have great pleasure in inviting you to a court festival this evening, when you shall charm his Imperial Majesty with your beautiful singing.”

“My song sounds best in the greenwood!” replied the Nightingale; still it came willingly when it heard what the Emperor wished.

The palace was festively adorned. The walls and the flooring, which were of porcelain, gleamed in the rays of thousands of golden lamps. The most glorious flowers, which could ring clearly, had been placed in the passages. There was a running to and fro, and a thorough draught, and all the bells rang so loudly that one could not hear one’s self speak.

In the midst of the great hall, where the Emperor sat, a golden perch had been placed, on which the Nightingale was to sit. The whole court was there, and the little Cook-maid had got leave to stand behind the door, as she had now received the title of a real court cook. All were in full dress, and all looked at the little gray bird, to which the Emperor nodded.

And the Nightingale sang so gloriously that the tears came into the Emperor’s eyes, and the tears ran down over his cheeks; and then the Nightingale sang still more sweetly, that went straight to the heart. The Emperor was so much pleased that he said the Nightingale should have his golden slipper to wear round its neck. But the Nightingale declined this with thanks, saying it had already received a sufficient reward.

“I have seen tears in the Emperor’s eyes—that is the real treasure to me. An emperor’s tears have a peculiar power. I am rewarded enough!” And then it sang again with a sweet, glorious voice.

“That’s the most amiable coquetry I ever saw!” said the ladies who stood round about, and then they took water in their mouths to gurgle when any one spoke to them. They thought they should be nightingales too. And the lackeys and chambermaids reported that they were satisfied too; and that was saying a good deal, for they are the most difficult to please. In short, the Nightingale achieved a real success.

It was now to remain at court, to have its own cage, with liberty to go out twice every day and once at night. Twelve servants were appointed when the Nightingale went out, each of whom had a silken string fastened to the bird’s leg, which they held very tight. There was really no pleasure in an excursion of that kind.

The whole city spoke of the wonderful bird, and when two people met, one said nothing but “Nigh-tin,” and the other said “gale;” and then they sighed, and understood one another. Eleven peddler’s children were named after the bird, but not one of them could sing a note.

One day the Emperor received a large parcel, on which was written “The Nightingale.”

“There we have a new book about this celebrated bird,” said the Emperor.

But it was not a book, but a little work of art, contained in a box, an artificial nightingale, which was to sing like a natural one and was brilliantly ornamented with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. So soon as the artificial bird was wound up, he could sing one of the pieces that he really sang, and then his tail moved up and down, and shone with silver and gold. Round his neck hung a little ribbon, and on that was written, “The Emperor of China’s Nightingale is poor compared to that of the Emperor of Japan.”

“That is capital!” said they all, and he who had brought the artificial bird immediately received the title, Imperial Head-Nightingale-Bringer.

“Now they must sing together; what a duet that will be!”

And so they had to sing together; but it did not sound very well, for the real Nightingale sang in its own way, and the artificial bird sang waltzes.

“That’s not his fault,” said the Play-master; “he’s quite perfect, and very much in my style.”

Now the artificial bird was to sing alone. He had just as much success as the real one, and then it was much handsomer to look at—it shone like bracelets and breastpins.

Three-and-thirty times over did it sing the same piece, and yet was not tired. The people would gladly have heard it again, but the Emperor said that the living Nightingale ought to sing something now. But where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown away out of the open window, back to the greenwood.

“But what is become of that?” said the Emperor.

And all the courtiers abused the Nightingale, and declared that it was a very ungrateful creature.

“We have the best bird, after all,” said they.

And so the artificial bird had to sing again, and that was the thirty-fourth time that they listened to the same piece. For all that they did not know it quite by heart, for it was so very difficult. And the Play-master praised the bird particularly; yes, he declared that it was better than a nightingale, not only with regard to its plumage and the many beautiful diamonds, but inside as well.

“For you see, ladies and gentlemen, and above all, your Imperial Majesty, with a real nightingale one can never calculate what is coming, but in this artificial bird everything is settled. One can explain it; one can open it, and make people understand where the waltzes come from, how they go, and how one follows up another.”

“Those are quite our own ideas,” they all said.

And the speaker received permission to show the bird to the people on the next Sunday. The people were to hear it sing too, the Emperor commanded; and they did hear it, and were as much pleased as if they had all got tipsy upon tea, for that’s quite the Chinese fashion; and they all said, “O!” and held up their forefingers and nodded. But the poor Fisherman, who had heard the real Nightingale, said,—

“It sounds pretty enough, and the melodies resemble each other, but there’s something wanting, though I know not what!”

The real Nightingale was banished from the country and empire. The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion close to the Emperor’s bed; all the presents it had received, gold and precious stones, were ranged about it; in title it had advanced to be the High Imperial After-Dinner-Singer, and in rank, to number one on the left hand; for the Emperor considered that side the most important in which the heart is placed, and even in an emperor the heart is on the left side; and the Play-master wrote a work of five-and-twenty volumes about the artificial bird; it was very learned and very long, full of most difficult Chinese words; but yet all the people declared that they had read it, and understood it, for fear of being considered stupid, and having their bodies trampled on.

So a whole year went by. The Emperor, the court, and all the other Chinese knew every little twitter in the artificial bird’s song by heart. But just for that reason it pleased them best—they could sing with it themselves, and they did so. The street boys sang, “Tsi-tsi-tsi-glug-glug!” and the Emperor himself sang it too. Yes, that was certainly famous.

But one evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best, and the Emperor lay in bed listening to it, something inside

the bird said, "Whizz!" Something cracked. "Whir-r-r!" All the wheels ran round, and then the music stopped.

The Emperor immediately sprang out of bed, and caused his body physician to be called; but what could he do? Then they sent for a watchmaker, and after a good deal of talking and investigation, the bird was put into something like order; but the Watchmaker said that the bird must be carefully treated, for the barrels were worn, and it would be impossible to put new ones in such a manner that the music would go. There was great lamentation; only once in a year was it permitted to let the bird sing, and that was almost too much. But then the Play-master made a little speech, full of heavy words, and said this was just as good as before—and so of course it was as good as before.

Now five years had gone by, and a real grief came upon the whole nation. The Chinese were really fond of their Emperor, and now he was ill, and could not, it was said, live much longer. Already a new Emperor had been chosen, and the people stood out in the street and asked the Cavalier how their old Emperor did.

"P!" said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his great gorgeous bed; the whole court thought him dead, and each one ran to pay homage to the new ruler. The chamberlains ran out to talk it over, and the ladies'-maids had a great coffee party. All about, in all the halls and passages, cloth had been laid down so that no footstep could be heard, and therefore it was quiet there, quiet quiet. But the Emperor was not dead yet: stiff and pale he lay on the gorgeous bed with the long velvet curtains and the heavy gold tassels; high up, a window stood open, and the moon shone in upon the Emperor and the artificial bird.

The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe; it was just as if something lay upon his chest: he opened his eyes, and then he saw that it was Death who sat upon his chest, and had put on his golden crown, and held in one hand the Emperor's sword and in the other his beautiful banner. And all around, from among the folds of the splendid velvet curtains, strange heads peered forth; a few very ugly, the rest quiet lovely and mild. These were all the Emperor's bad and good deeds, which stood before him now that Death sat upon his heart.

"Do you remember this?" whispered one to the other. "Do you remember that?" and then they told him so much that the perspiration ran from his forehead.

"I did not know that!" said the Emperor. "Music! music! the great Chinese drum!" he cried, "so that I need not hear all they say!" And they continued speaking, and Death nodded like a Chinaman to all they said.

"Music! music!" cried the Emperor. "You little precious golden bird, sing, sing! I have given you gold and costly presents; I have even hung my golden slipper around your neck—sing now, sing!"

But the bird stood still; no one was there to wind him up, and he could not sing without that; but Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes, and it was quiet, fearfully quiet.

Then there sounded from the window, suddenly, the most lovely song. It was the little live Nightingale, which sat outside on a spray. It has heard of the Emperor's sad plight, and had come to sing to him of comfort and hope. And as it sang the specters grew paler and paler; the blood ran quickly and more quickly through the Emperor's weak limbs; and even Death listened, and said,—

"Go on, little Nightingale, go on!"

"But will you give me that splendid golden sword? Will you give me that rich banner? Will you give me the Emperor's crown?"

And Death gave up each of these treasures for a song. And the Nightingale sang on and on; and it sang of the quiet churchyard, where the white roses grow, where the elder-blossom smells sweet, and where the fresh grass is moistened by the tears of survivors. The Death felt a longing to see his garden, and floated out at the window in the form of a cold, white mist.

"Thanks! thanks!" said the Emperor. "You heavenly little bird! I know you well. I banished you from my country and empire, and yet you have charmed away the evil faces from my couch, and banished Death from my heart! How can I reward you?"

"You have rewarded me!" replied the Nightingale. "I have drawn tears from your eyes, when I sang the first time— I shall never forget that. Those are the jewels that rejoice a singer's heart. But now sleep and grow fresh and strong again. I will sing you something."

And it sang, and the Emperor fell into a sweet slumber. Ah! how mild and refreshing that sleep was! The sun shone upon him through the windows, when he awoke refreshed and restored; not one of his servants had yet returned, for they all thought he was dead; only the Nightingale still sat beside him and sang.

"You must always stay with me," said the Emperor. "You shall sing as you please; and I'll break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces."

"Not so," replied the Nightingale. "It did well as long as it could; keep it as you have done till now. I cannot build my nest in the palace to dwell in; but let me come when I feel the wish; then I will sit in the evening on the spray yonder by the window, and sing you something, so that you may be glad and thoughtful at once. I will sing of those who are happy and of those who suffer. I will sing of good and of evil that remain hidden round about you. The little singing bird flies far around, to the poor fisherman, to the peasant's roof, to every one who dwells far away from you and from your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet the crown has an air of sanctity about it. I will come and sing to you—but one thing you must promise me."

"Everything!" said the Emperor; and he stood there in his imperial robes, which he had put on himself, and pressed the sword which was heavy with gold to his heart.

"One thing I beg of you: tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything. Then it will go all the better."

And the Nightingale flew away.

The servants came in to look to their dead Emperor, and—yes, there he stood, and the Emperor said "Good morning!"

Hans Christian Andersen. (1805–1875)

The Book of Interfaith

Peace Prayers

Hindu Prayer for Peace

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real.
Oh God, lead us from darkness to light.
Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in celestial regions.
May there be peace on Earth.
May the waters be appeasing.
May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all.
May all beneficent beings bring peace to us.
May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world.
May all things be a source of peace to us.
And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all and may that peace come to me also.

Baha'i Prayer for Peace

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.
Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.
Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger.
Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.
Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Buddhist Prayer for Peace

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses.
May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free.
May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another.
May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wilderness – the children, the aged, the unprotected – be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

Jewish Prayer for Peace

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High.
And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation – neither shall they learn war any more.
And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Jainist Prayer for Peace

Peace and Universal Love is the essence of the Gospel preached by all Enlightened Ones.
The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma
Forgive do I creatures all, and let all creatures forgive me.
Unto all have I amity, and unto none enmity.
Know that violence is the root cause of all miseries in the world.
Violence, in fact, is the knot of bondage.
"Do not injure any living being."
This is the eternal, perennial, and unalterable way of spiritual life.
A weapon, howsoever powerful it may be, can always be superseded by a superior one; but no weapon can, however, be superior to nonviolence and love.

Muslim Prayer for Peace

In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful.
Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations
That we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.
If the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust God, for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things.
And the servants of God,
Most gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address them, we say "PEACE."

Native African Prayer for Peace

Almighty God,
the Great Thumb we cannot evade to tie any knot;
the Roaring Thunder that splits mighty trees:
the all-seeing Lord up on high who sees even the footprints of an antelope on a rock mass here on Earth.
You are the one who does not hesitate to respond to our call.
You are the cornerstone of peace.

Native American Prayer for Peace

Oh Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you.
To your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth who provides for your children.
Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect, and to be kind to each other so that they may grow with peace of mind
Let us learn to share all good things that you provide for us on this Earth.

Shinto Prayer for Peace

Although the people living across the ocean
surrounding us, I believe,
are all our brothers and sisters,
why are there constant troubles in this world?
Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us?
I only earnestly wish that the wind will
soon puff away all the clouds which are
hanging over the tops of mountains.

Zoroastrian Prayer for Peace

We pray to God to eradicate all the
misery in the world:
that understanding triumph
over ignorance,
that generosity triumph over indifference,
that trust triumph over contempt, and
that truth triumph over falsehood.

Sikh Prayer for Peace

God adjudges us according
to our deeds,
not the coat that we wear:
that Truth is above everything,
but higher still is truthful living.
Know that we attaineth God when we loveth,
and only that victory
endures in consequences of which no
one is defeated.

Christian Prayer for Peace

Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS,
for they shall be known as
the Children of God.
But I say to you that hear, love your enemies.
Do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you
pray for those who abuse you
To those that strike you on the cheek,
offer the other one also,
and from those who take away your cloak,
do not withhold your coat as well.

Give to everyone who begs from you,
and of those who take away your goods,
do not ask for them again.
And as you wish that others would do to you,
do so to them.

Three Songs to Choose From:

Prayer of St. Francis

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love
Where there is injury your pardon, Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you
D---/-A-/----/- DA D-

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

(Bridge) O master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul
G-D-/A-D-/G-D-/E-A-

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life
-rewritten by Sebastian Temple

Let There Be Peace On Earth -

Sy Miller & Bill Jackson, Modified by Mike

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be.

With the Earth as our Mother,
Siblings all are we.
Let me walk with my Sibling
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,
Let this be the moment now.
With ev'ry step I take
Let this be my solemn vow;

To take each moment and live
Each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing

I'd like to build the world a home
And furnish it with love
Grow apple trees and honey bees
and snow-white turtle doves

I'd like to teach the world to sing
In perfect harmony
I'd like to hold it in my arms and keep it company

I'd like to see the world for once
All standing hand in hand
And hear them echo through the hills
"Ah, peace throughout the land"

Id like to build the world a home
And furnish it with love
Grow apple trees and honey bees
and snow-white turtledoves

Book of Freedom and Liberty

The Challenge of Religious Freedom

William Powell Tuck, First Baptist Church,
Lumberton, North Carolina Leviticus 26:12-13, John
8:31-36

I have seen the famous picture of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on numerous occasions, but it was only recently that I noticed that the sun was in the picture. One can see the sun shining through the window. It is uncertain whether the sun was rising or whether the sun was setting on that occasion, and I often wonder which it was. As I reflected on that picture, I began to wonder, even more today, is the sun of liberty setting or is it still rising? Is it coming to an end or just beginning? We hear sounds within our country today, which indicate that many people do not understand freedom very well. In fact, there are many who want to deny freedom to others while ensuring their own freedom. Many do not understand very clearly why our country was founded originally nor what its basic purpose was. We continue to suffer as a nation because of a that lack of awareness. "The American flag is not," as Henlee Barnett once said, "a blindfold but a bright symbol which inspires true patriots to challenge evil at every level of government." The American flag is a symbol of our country, but it is not a blindfold to keep us from seeing what we as a church should say and do to confront evil in our society. I am a loyal American, but I am Christian first. I do not think I could ever make the statement, "My country right or wrong." The pulpit and we as Christian citizens should always challenge our country to lift its ethical sights higher, to be what God would have this nation be.

In 1976 we celebrated the bicentennial of our country. This was a very momentous occasion, and I dare say, without fear of contradiction, that few here will live to see the next one hundred year celebration. There may be one or two in the nursery who might make it because of heredity or the advancement of medicine, but I think most of us will have to acknowledge that we shall not likely see the next celebration.

In 1976 there was a man who led a parade in Bartow, Florida, who was 134 years of age. Charlie Smith, who was originally from Liberia, was recognized in 1976 by the Social Security Administration as the oldest living American citizen. In 1854, at the age of twelve, he stood on a slave auction block in New Orleans and was sold to a rancher in Texas. When he was nineteen years old, the Civil War broke out. Later, he heard Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. He lived through numerous wars. He saw our country go through good and bad times, and he himself endured personal enslavement and suffering. From Africa to America, from slavery to freedom, from war to peace, here was a man who lived through many generations and who understood something about freedom better, I dare say, than any of us will ever truly understand it.

On this Sunday before the fourth of July, I want us to reflect on freedom -- especially religious freedom. I am aware that there are some voices that say that the church should not get involved at all in this kind of celebration. But the church has always been involved, and the church should continue to have something to say in the affairs of government. We cannot equate church and

country. Civil religion is always dangerous. We have too much of that heresy being proclaimed from television and other platforms today. But there is a healthy, legitimate role which religion can play in the celebration of any event in our country.

The first observation I would make is this: freedom really had its birth in the Hebraic-Christian religion. Contrary to what some historians say who try to trace our understanding of democracy back to the free city state of Greece, I believe that freedom goes back far beyond that. It goes back to Moses who stood before the Pharaoh of Egypt and demanded in the name of God, "Let my people go." It goes back to the time when the God of Israel said to his people, "I will establish my Tabernacle among you and will not spurn you. I will walk to and from among you; I will become your God and you shall become my people. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt and let you be their slaves no longer; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk upright" (Lev. 26: 12-13 NEB.) Even before Moses, there was Abraham who went out looking for a city without foundations, because it was built on the power and presence of God himself.

Some of our forefathers and mothers would not let the slaves they owned read the Bible. Do you know why? They knew very well that reading the Bible often provoked a desire for freedom in its readers. Black slaves were not allowed to read the Bible because slave owners feared they would see revealed in the Old Testament and the New Testament the God who was constantly setting his people free. The Bible resounds with cries for freedom from the God who would move against the oppressors of people, the God who would stand up for the slaves, the God who would stand up for the poor, the despised, the rejected, the imprisoned, the hurting, and the down and out. Someone has said that if he were a dictator and had control of a country, the one book he would not let the people read would be the Bible. Why? The Bible constantly tells us of the God who is the liberating God -- the God who is always seeking to free people.

Wherever there is a government that controls its people and there is no real freedom, there is a radical difference in how the people live, think, and act. Whenever there is a totalitarian church, which tells its people what they must think and must believe, there is no freedom.

In our country we have a free church in a free state. This was a radical dream of our founders. We must not lose that dream. We cannot let those who want to wed church and state be victorious. The state should not support the church nor should the church support the state. One should not dictate to the other. As a Christian we should try to influence the state. We should bear witness to the state, but we should not dictate to the state what it should do nor should it dictate to us. Freedom is born in an awareness of a liberating God. That is one of the reasons some people want to stop the study or practice of liberation theology in certain countries. Liberation theology links God with freeing people.

Secondly, freedom is never finished. It is always in process of becoming. It is always in danger of being lost. It is always something that we must work at again and again. You and I are very fortunate to live in a country that is free. There are many countries, which are not, and we must not take our own freedom for granted.

We have numerous symbols for freedom in our country. The Liberty Bell is one of those symbols. That bell was a real bell, which was rung early in the life of our country. Now it is just symbolic. The Statue of Liberty is another such symbol. Several years ago it was repaired. Perhaps the decay, which had occurred, is symbolic of something, which is happening within our own country. As with the Statue of Liberty, our own liberty is being eroded away and is in danger of loss. Freedom is always in danger

of being lost when the awareness of its significance slowly fades from our memories or when we are unaware of its value. Freedom is always more than a symbol. We need to remember the reality behind the symbol. Freedom needs to be a reality. Freedom is more than something we think about. It needs to permeate our whole being until we are aware that we must constantly fight to sustain its reality.

Do you remember the story of David? Jesus made a reference once to one of David's experiences. Jesus turned to the Scribes and Pharisees and asked, "Do you remember what David did?" (Matthew 12:3ff.) When he was fleeing from his enemies and was hungry, he went in the Temple and ate the shewbread from the Table of the Lord. This was the bread, which was reserved for the high priests. They would have considered that act a desecration. Then he turned to the priests and asked if they had any weapons of war that he might use to fight his enemies. After thinking for a moment, they responded, "The Sword of Goliath whom you slew in the valley of Elah, behold that is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. There is one other save that here." (I Samuel 21:1-10.) The sword of Goliath, of course. It had become only a symbol. It was on display. "There is none like that! Give it to me!" He lifted the sword to take it into battle.

The Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty, the Declaration of Independence, and our American flag are all symbols but they are much more. They are more than something to be put on display. The reality behind these symbols needs to remain clearly in our mind lest our freedom be snatched away when we least expect it. These symbols are reminders for us to remain on guard because the battle for freedom is one that is always being waged. We must remain on alert or lose it.

Baptists have had a significant role in the pilgrimage of our country and its quest for freedom. The hymn, "My Country 'tis of Thee," was written in 1832 by a Baptist minister named Samuel Francis Smith. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister. Baptists have not been afraid to be involved in our country's quest for freedom. In the early stages in the history of our country, a group of Baptist ministers, John Waller and Lewis Craig and three other dissenters were arrested and put in jail when they tried to preach in Spottsylvania County, Virginia. They were a part of those who said they wanted no part of an established church. Most of us do not know what the established church is since it doesn't exist in this country. The established church is one that is supported by taxes. Just as we pay taxes to maintain our government, we would be likewise taxed to sustain the church. In most countries where the people are taxed to support the church, the institutional church is dying. The established church is not the people's church, it is the government's church. We do not want that in this country.

One of the crowning achievements which Thomas Jefferson gave our country was the Act for Establishing Religious Freedom. This particular bill Jefferson considered one of the most significant accomplishments of his life. In fact, it is one of the three, which is listed on his grave. When this bill was finally passed in 1786, it stated, "Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry or whatever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or his goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall be in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities." This is a part of the very fabric of our country, and, of all people, Southern Baptists should be at the forefront defending the religious rights of all persons.

In place of separation of church and state, many are substituting a civil religion which has now wed the two. Civil religion has tried to claim that this country is a "Christian" nation

which can use the government to support whatever kind of religion a select group wants. This, of course, virtually denies religious freedom to non-Christians. I am a Christian and Baptist and I am proud of both, but I will give a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Moslem, or an atheist his or her right to believe or not believe. That is what religious freedom is -- freedom for all, not freedom just for Christians or Jews, but for all persons.

In 1788 John Leland met with James Madison in Orange County, Virginia, under an oak tree near the first church I ever pastored. James Madison persuaded Leland to vote for him with the understanding that upon his election he would see that a Bill of Rights for religious freedom was enacted. Leland got the support of other Baptists so that Madison was elected, and the Bill of Rights with the article for religious freedom was made the law of our land. This is part of our country's history, and, if we do not know it, we need to understand our past and learn from it.

Freedom is always unfinished, but it is in greater danger of being lost today than ever before. Some television preachers and other ministers are trying to persuade us that separation of church and state is a myth. Baptists, of all people, need to fight to be certain that religious freedom will continue to be a reality. The signers of the Declaration of Independence put more than words on a piece of paper when they signed their names to that document. The names of John Hancock and John Adams, who did not sign until August 2, were not revealed for six months in hopes that they could get back safely from New Hampshire to their homes in Georgia. The four signers of the Declaration of Independence from the state of New York were very wealthy men who owned fleets of ocean sailing ships. They lost everything they had so our country might be free. How can anyone dare suggest that we deny this kind of freedom today? We as Baptists need to stand tall in this struggle and remember that freedom is always an unfinished battle.

Remember, thirdly, that with freedom there always goes responsibility. I think it was Bishop Fulton Sheen who once said that we have a Statue of Liberty off our East Coast and we need a Statue of Responsibility off our West Coast. He is correct. There is no true freedom without responsibility. With our freedom, responsibility is essential to maintain that freedom. With freedom, there needs to be the responsibility to understand what freedom is. Freedom requires the responsibility of its believers to perpetuate it.

Freedom is not easy. It is much easier to be enslaved. Do you remember when Jesus told the Pharisees that he had come to set them free? "What do you mean set us free?" They wondered. "We have always been free. We are Abraham's children." In a sense that was true. To be Abraham's sons they realized that God was the liberating God who had freed them from Egypt. In a spiritual sense, they were always free. But... they had been in bondage to Babylon, Persia, and other countries. At the moment when Jesus was speaking to them, they were in bondage to Rome and had been in bondage to Greece. Jesus said, "I will make you free indeed," because the freedom he was giving them was internal. It was a relationship.

His freedom was relational. This is the freedom we have with the Father, and that kind of freedom no one can ever take away from us. We have the freedom of a son or a daughter of God. We are God's children and this relationship is so vital and real that nobody can snatch it away from us even if we are their slaves. In bondage we can still have the kind of freedom, which Christ gives. As God's children we are challenged to remember that with our religious freedom goes the responsibility to pass it on to others. We who are free are obliged to teach, preach, and sustain this freedom. If we are not vigilant, we may lose the liberty we cherish so much.

Several years ago an Italian film entitled *General Della Rovere* depicted the work of a resistance movement. The Nazi leaders arrested numerous persons -- some of whom were only innocent victims. Unable to identify the resistance leaders, the officer in charge ordered the execution of all those who had been captured. As the time of the execution drew near, one of those captured cried, "I'm innocent. I did not do anything." "You did not do anything? A resistance leader asked. 'No, I did not do anything.'" "I do not understand," the resistance leader continued. "Our whole way of life was being destroyed. Minds were being warped; institutions were being subverted; and you did not do anything?" "No," he said. "I did not do anything." "Then you deserve to be punished," he responded.

Too many of us want to be like the man Flip Wilson told about who said that he was a Jehovah's Bystander. He wanted to be a witness, but he did not want to get involved. Too many of us are members of the Jehovah's Bystanders and the Baptist Association of Spectators. We stay in the bleachers. We do not want to get involved. Too many of us stand aloof -- stand apart when God has called for involvement. We are challenged to stand up for freedom, to stand up for those who are oppressed, and to stand up for those who do not agree with us. Jehovah's Witnesses have their freedom today because at some point in the past there were Baptists in our country who were willing to say that although this group differs from us, we will give them the freedom to believe as they will and permit them to worship as they desire.

Freedom is always dangerous. Freedom allows for various viewpoints and different perspectives. It does not call for uniformity but respects diversity. We may not always like or agree with some of the views or ideas that differ from our own. But when real freedom exists, we allow other people to differ with us.

Freedom is always dangerous. When we have freedom that means we can have a Ku Klux Klan within our country. They have the freedom to hate Catholics and Jews. In order to have freedom, individuals have the liberty to hate. But at the same time, others can be loving and strive for ways to care for the needs of those who are oppressed in this country and around the world. Freedom gives room for a Moral Majority, a John Birch Society, or the Salvation Army. It allows for a group to protest the draft. Freedom permitted individuals to protest the Vietnam War or roll bandages to assist those in combat.

There is no true freedom without the opportunity to make choices. Freedom requires us to take a stand or a position on an issue. We have to give others the freedom and right to do the same. Did you know that the results of a recent survey indicate that fifty percent of the citizens in this country do not believe that people who have different religious beliefs from their own should be given freedom to practice their beliefs? That is frightening! It means that we have not taught the principle of freedom very well to our children.

The Vietnam War was one of the most divisive wars in our country's recent history. Good people were on both sides of that conflict. Gene Owens, a former pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, opposed the involvement of our country in the Vietnam War. He felt the war effort was unjust. So he decided to join others across the states that were protesting the war by ringing their church bells. The afternoon after he rang the church bell, a deacon came storming into his study saying, "You had no right to ring our church bell. That is 'our' church bell -- not 'your' bell." The next Sunday morning Gene Owens stood up in his pulpit and told the congregation about ringing the church bell and the deacon who had protested his act. "That deacon was right," he declared. "That was not my bell, I did not have any right to ring it. It is the church's bell." Then he reached under the pulpit and pulled out a bell. "But this is my bell," he

exclaimed, "and I am going to ring it now." He then rang it as loudly as he could. The congregation gave him a standing ovation. He said that week dozens of people gave him bells. The bell became a symbol of his right to take a position and state his own opinion.

Thomas Jefferson once said that the Baptist church is the purest form of democracy. Each person in a Baptist church is a priest before God. The minister cannot tell you exactly what you have to believe. You are a priest before God as I am. Freedom of the pulpit carries with it the responsibility of the pew. In each arena there is a demand for both freedom and responsibility.

Religious freedom has always had high priests in its hair. Established religion has stayed on the back of religious liberty. It has always had to wage battle against the tyranny of those in power, whether they were Kings, Queens, lords or presidents. Religious freedom has constantly fought for its survival against established religion, established government, widespread prejudice, and mass ignorance. If freedom is ever lost, we will be losing one of our most precious possessions. It is always worth the battle to maintain it.

In Hartnett County, North Carolina, there is a small church called Barbecue Presbyterian Church. A pistol and a round ball are kept in a small glass case in the church. An interesting story goes with the pistol and ball. Right before the Declaration of Independence was signed, a young Presbyterian minister came from Scotland to serve as pastor of the Barbecue Presbyterian Church. One Sunday he prayed for England, but he also prayed for those in our country who were involved in the revolution and asked God to bless them as well as England. After the service was over, he was met by three loyalists from England. One of them put a pistol against his head and said, "You see this pistol? If you dare stand in that pulpit and say one more word in support of the revolution, I will put this round ball in your head." He immediately went to the Presbytery and resigned. "I am not a complete fool," he said.

Later in the afternoon, he was walking down the main street of the town and one of his former church members came out of a store cursing. She had not been pleased with her bill. He overheard her and reprimanded her for this offense. She turned to him and said, "Well, preacher, why in the world would you not expect that the devil could do something to a poor little old woman like me if he could make you resign your pulpit in the face of opposition?" He was so shaken by her remarks that the next Sunday he went back to his pulpit and preached a fiery sermon in support of the revolution. After church the three loyalists were waiting for him and sure enough they put a ball in his head and killed him. But to this day in Barbecue Presbyterian Church, there is a ball and a pistol lying in a glass case to remind persons about freedom. They stand as a symbolic reminder, no, as a realistic and concrete image of one man who dared to stand up and lift his voice for freedom.

I hope that we will not lose our freedom as citizens of this country. Let us hold on to our religious freedom. It is a precious heritage. I pray to God that we will always remember its cost, always remember its author, and always remember our own responsibility in maintaining its light. The battle for freedom is always an unending, unfinished battle. Do your part to keep freedom alive.

Prayer: It Ain't That Complicated

Anne G. Cohen, A sermon preached January 22, 1995.

Proverbs 8:1-11, Matthew 6:7-15

Over the holidays, my father and stepmother were in Brazil visiting relatives. In their absence I spent several hours a day in the garage behind their house serving as mail order/shipping clerk for their Christian book company, Hope Publishing Inc. One rare sunny afternoon as I finished up an order for 25 copies of *The Way of A Pilgrim*, I noticed that I had left the door open and a swallow had accidentally flown inside. It was fluttering in panic against the upper windows, high above my head. With my heart pounding, I climbed up onto a desk, reached up and on the second try, managed to hold the bird lightly cupped between both hands - as I tried not to injure its wings or feet.

I climbed down without the use of my hands, holding what felt like air between my fingers. I could sense a tiny, fast little heartbeat and the slightest brush of feathery softness against my palms. That was all. I stepped outside, knelt on the grass and opened my hands. With a flash of color and a flutter of air, the tiny bird was gone. I felt as if I had prayed.

Last Sunday, after I left the church and headed back up to Pilgrim Pines, I came up on an accident on the 10 freeway in Fontana. It was a fatal accident, three bodies on the center median covered with tarps - one the size of an older child or young teen. As traffic slowed and stopped and crawled around the blocked lanes, there was a hush on the road around the scene. There was a presence of recently departed souls, of lives just lost. People paused to stare, but also - it seemed - to show care and caution and respect. That hush, for me, was a prayer.

Last Monday after another storm had rolled through, a double rainbow appeared over this valley. The colors were translucent and neon at the same time. It reminded me of the way Amy Barkley glowed and shimmered from within a watery world of tears and suffering. I dropped some mail off at Roger's house and made him come out to look at the colors reaching to heaven. He began to cry. The colors and his tears were a prayer to me.

On Friday, December 30th at 3:30p.m., Carl and I stood in Wilcox's Nursery in the plaza across from the courthouse in Avalon on Catalina Island. A fountain bubbled behind us, potted plants and trees surrounded us, a tourist family walked by smiling and their little girl waved at us. Carl and I put rings on each other's fingers and said the ancient words, "With this ring, I thee wed." I felt as if we had prayed.

I used to think prayer was a pretty involved process - a particular creation of mood and atmosphere - a formulation of thoughts translated into elaborate sentences which included archaic terms like "Thee" and "Thou" and "Wast" and "Shalt" are more exult." I thought I was messing things up when phrases like, "all that stuff" and "well, you know what I mean..." crept into my prayers.

But now I am beginning to understand that it "ain't that complicated." I'm beginning to believe that prayer is as many things as there are people in the world and moments in their lives. Prayer is many things to each person. And, for me, the most profound form of prayer is essentially noticing the presence of God in a particular moment.

Prayer is noticing God in whatever way is natural to a person.

Prayer is noticing God in the flutter of air which is the miracle of a tiny bird set free.

Prayer is noticing God in the aftermath of a recent fatality and the hush that falls upon the living.

Prayer is noticing God in the way that light is refracted between clouds and drops of water on a sad and glorious afternoon.

Prayer is noticing God at the same moment two people recognize that their lives are intertwined in a familiar, yet deeply miraculous way.

It is not all that complicated, after all.

Two thousand years ago, someone named Jesus told us something similar. The scholars' translation from the Jesus seminar goes like this:

When you pray, go into a room by yourself and shut the door behind you. When you pray to your Father, the hidden one. And your Father, with his eye for the hidden, will applaud you. And when you pray, you should not babble on as the pagans do. They imagine that the length of their prayers will command attention. So don't imitate them.

A lot of words, any words, are not really the main point. Because, God already "knows what you need before you ask."

The early church took Jesus' suggestion and added something of their own that made the prayer more meaningful to them. When we Protestants came along a few years back, we decided to get back to basics - to drop all the sacraments except the two Jesus participated in - Baptism and Communion - and to include in our worship the prayer Jesus suggested - plus that addition from the early church.

These things were not legislated. In fact, these things went contrary to the established church. These were choices made by our ancestors in faith who wanted to make prayer and worship more meaningful to them. They wanted direct conversation with God. They wanted something less complicated and elaborate, and in their own language.

If you wonder why in other churches you will hear different versions of the Lord's Prayer - some people saying "trespasses" or "sins," some people using inclusive versions calling God "Parent" or "Creator," it is because we continue in the wonderful Protestant way to remake prayer and worship so that it is meaningful to us. We Congregationalists resent being told how to pray, how to worship. That's why our fore-families came to this country.

This is one of the reasons that I am made very nervous by our newly elected Congress when they press for legislation instituting prayer in the public schools. People, kids included, notice God in their own way, in their own time - all the time. People, including kids, are always in conversation with God -

as they notice the warmth of the sun as they ride their bikes to school in the morning...

as they are overwhelmed with relief and gratitude to learn that the math test was postponed to Tuesday...

as they run over to tell their friends something great that happened over the weekend...

as they deliberate the concerns of fellow students in the student senate...

as they daydream recklessly in the middle of history class...

as the mysterious boy who has the locker next to yours quietly shows you one of his amazing pencil drawings...

as the girl with the red hair slips you a note asking you what you thought about the Faulkner story for English class...

These are the prayers of our children and young people. To legislate a formal moment in the midst of the school environment is to separate God out from their natural and constant prayer life. It tells our kids that their own way of being in conversation with God isn't really right or good enough. It imposes an adult structure - an adult expectation - onto the natural prayers of our kids.

One seemingly benign suggestion is to legislate a moment of silence. But knowing people and, especially passionate people, silence can be manipulated as powerfully as words. The way a silence is introduced has a large influence on how that silence is experienced.

The silence I leave between sermon and pastoral prayer is as unregulated as I can make it - "Let us be together - in silence and in prayer." Not all of us use that silence for what we have been taught is formal prayer. Some of us think ahead on what we have to do today. Some of us sort out our feelings and responses to the sermon. Some of us try to remember what the sermon was about. Some of us recklessly daydream. Some of us say the Lord's Prayer like a mantra. Some of us sleep. Some of us just get our jumbled thoughts to settle down as the silence ends. I know, I've done all of those things. And sometimes I just count to make sure the silence is long enough for some and not so long that it drives others crazy. But all of these are prayers - petitions and hopes, doubts and praise.

If I were to tell you what to do with your silence a number of you would resent the heck out of it. There is too much room for that in the public schools.

Prayer is a voluntary act, as the church is a voluntary organization. School is not a voluntary organization. Kids have to attend. If school begins to regulate their conversations with God - along with the information they get about world history and mathematics - something very fragile and natural and holy will be lost.

The best way to diminish a child's desire for a relationship with God is to force one upon them. In the environment of the school, it will feel like an assignment rather than a natural awareness of the soul. It is this kind of spiritual control that drives kids to claim atheism before they have even come to a conscious awareness of God. It complicates the conversation.

Those who wrote the Constitution were trying to ensure that no government here would establish religion for the people, as it had done so controllingly in England and other European countries. The idea was a separation of the necessary enforcements of government for our common life together - and the voluntary nature of the spiritual practice of religion.

In 1963 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that government-mandated prayer, Bible-reading and other religious exercises are inappropriate in public schools, Justice Tom Clark very carefully stated it this way - so that the court could not be accused of being anti-religious:

"The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the state is firmly committed to a position of neutrality."

This country does not need a narrowing down of the concept of what prayer or religion or faith is. We need a broadening of mind and heart, an openness to the millions of ways that God simply and profoundly works in the world - the billions of ways people experience God, notice God, are in conversation with God - even when they are unconscious of the fact.

They say when a person is desperate to find a mate, it never happens. It is when one stops looking and focuses on making their own life and spirit and heart healthy and happy that the right relationship comes along.

They say if you want a baby too much, it never happens. It is when you give up and start adoption proceedings and relax that you get pregnant.

So too, the presence of God is never more powerful than when we are surprised by it...in the airy heartbeat of a bird or the sudden hush on the freeway. That is not to devalue the voluntary practice of worship or regular meditation and other forms of prayer. These practices - if voluntary in nature - help us in our awareness skills, keep us limber in the exercise of noticing God, remind us - when we have grown to be dull and forgetful responsible adults - that all of life is a conversation with God.

Religious and Biblical Arguments for Church-state Separation

The Rev. John D. Williams
Director of Church Relations, Austin College, Sherman,
Texas

As a Presbyterian clergyman and a student of American history, it is my intention to discuss the American model of church-state separation from the perspective of a Christian minister. It is important to address these issues in this way because most opponents of church-state separation argue from a self-consciously Christian perspective. The overall response to these opponents should include addressing them on their own grounds. Opposing the separation of church and state is not only politically irresponsible, it's theologically irresponsible as well. My discussion will include references to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Such references are intended to demonstrate that being Christian does not mean being anti-separationist. They are intended to show that the separation of church and state is in no way an "un-Biblical" notion. Like all discussion of scripture, this one involves choosing particular ways of interpreting Biblical passages. The citations offered here are not meant to be proof texts, but examples of relevant scriptural themes, which bear directly on church-state issues.

Given all that, I want to suggest four reasons why separation of church and state is good for the Church and other religious institutions.

1) EXCLUSIVE RELIANCE ON VOLUNTARY SUPPORT MAKES FOR HEALTHY CHURCHES.

While traveling with a group of seminary students in England in January of 1987, I had lunch one day at Cambridge University with some fellow seminarians and an Anglican parish priest. One of the American seminary students in our group told the priest how much she envied him. After all, his church was supported by tax money. He had a beautiful and historic church building and none of the worries associated with raising enough money to keep the doors open and the lights on.

The priest was a little taken aback by her statement. He told her that he would trade places with her in a heartbeat. It was true, he said, that the established Church of England had plenty of money, and England had nice official rhetoric about being a "Christian" nation. But the Church also had empty pews and little or no stewardship commitment among its parishioners. Their attitude tended to be "I paid my taxes, why should I do more?"

The priest told us that he would much prefer serving a church under the American model, where the success of church programs and the vitality of congregations depended entirely upon the voluntary commitment of church members.

There is much in the Bible, which supports the idea that communities of faith should never ask for or accept anything other than voluntary support. In particular, the Third Commandment--"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (Exodus 20:7, RSV)"--seems to require that Jewish and Christian congregations accept only sincere and voluntary support.

This is a commandment against giving lip service to the support of religion without making the sincere and total commitment, which God requires. Coerced support of religion--through taxation, for example--by its very nature requires people to violate this commandment. It is difficult to see how anyone who took this commandment seriously could ever sanction any government mandated religious activity.

2) RESPECT FOR, AND PROTECTION OF, MINORITIES IS A CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE.

God's instruction to the people of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy includes the following words:

[The Lord] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.-Deuteronomy 10:18-19

This is a call to the chosen people of God to be especially cognizant of the rights and interests of minorities; to serve God by looking out for the people in their midst for whom no one else was looking out. It is a call based on the memory of Israel's status as a minority in Egypt. Further, it is a call, which has special relevance for Christians in light of the widespread persecution of the early church.

In terms of church-state issues, "loving the sojourner" involves going out of our way to guarantee that the adherents of minority religions and those who profess no religion at all have the same standing in society as the majority. In order to fulfill this religious obligation, members of the Judeo-Christian majority in America must steadfastly refuse to use the government to coerce the minority into supporting any religious agenda or institution.

3) THE CHURCH'S ABILITY TO EXERCISE ITS PROPHETIC OFFICE REQUIRES INDEPENDENCE FROM THE STATE.

By "prophetic office," I mean to refer to the Church's duty to evaluate and pass judgment on state actions in light of a transcendent standard--a standard beyond worldly political interests. This sort of "prophetic witness" has been an important part of the life of our nation and its religious communities throughout our history. Examples include the denunciation of slavery, opposition to racial segregation, and protests against the prosecution of the Vietnam War. To cite a contemporary example close to the hearts of many of the Religious Right, expressions by religious communities of opposition to legalized abortion are a form of prophetic witnessing as well. In each case, religious communities are, and have been, free to criticize and oppose official government policies and actions without fear of reprisal.

A church dependent upon, or excessively entangled with, the state might be less likely to speak out against state policies or be especially vulnerable to retaliation by the government.

On the other hand, church-state separation guarantees the Church's continued freedom to address and comment upon the actions and policies of the state without fear of reprisal.

As an example of the dangers of church-state entanglement and the threats such entanglement poses to religious freedom, I invite you to consider the recent controversies regarding the National Endowment for the Arts. As a result of the de facto establishment of art through the use of tax money to support the N.E.A., we have witnessed extensive, but not particularly enlightening, debate among members of Congress about what constitutes "appropriate" art. Does any sincere believer want to see similar debates about what constitutes "appropriate" religious behavior? Are any of us eager to have Jesse Helms and Newt Gingrich, Ted Kennedy and Barney Frank pass judgment on the actions of our churches?

4) ALLIANCE WITH THE STATE ALWAYS POLLUTES THE CHURCH.

The Words That Branded Him – A Muslim Perspective

Washington Post, Sunday, December 8, 2002; Page B03

In his book, *Why the Religious Right is Wrong About Separation of Church and State*, Rob Boston calls this argument "an amusing form of cynicism." It's nice that Rob is so easily amused--but this form of cynicism is quite well-founded.

I believe strongly that the health of the Church is best guarded by strict separation from Government--an institution famous for its inability to find hammers that cost less than \$500.

History is unanimous in its testimony that alliance with the state, either official or implied, always leads to trouble for the Church. Sometimes the Church abuses the state's power by employing it to persecute minorities, as in the execution of "heretics" in sixteenth century Geneva or seventeenth century Massachusetts (not to mention first century Palestine.) Other times the state exploits alliance with the Church by claiming divine sanction for temporal, political actions; as in the action of a Union general during the Civil War who forbade a Presbyterian minister to continue to pastor his church in St. Louis because he refused to pray publicly for the success of the Union armies, or the proclamation of the established Reich Church in Germany in 1932 that "God's law for us is that we look to the preservation of race, folk, and nation."

This is the danger inherent in any form of State supported prayer in public schools. Advocates of such prayers claim that they could be general prayers, which would not offend persons of various religious backgrounds. But such "general" prayers are patently un-Biblical. They are abuses, for the sake of political ends, of the important religious activity of devout prayer. In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "In praying, do not heap up empty phrases, as the Gentiles do. . . (Matthew 6:7.)" It is difficult to see how a coerced, ostensibly "non-sectarian" prayer could be anything other than a heap of empty phrases.

In conclusion, I recognize that many opponents of church-state separation act out of a genuine concern for the nation and a sincere belief in the efficacy of Christian faith. The temptation is great to try to save an obviously troubled society by uniting church and state for the good of all citizens. But those of us who are most committed to the Church ought to be most reluctant to sanction any such union. When faced with the temptation to try to use the state's coercive powers for our religious ends, we need always to remind ourselves that the State operates in the arena of worldly concerns, an arena of short term self-interest and capricious changes of heart. To any sincere believer who is tempted to pursue the weakening of church-state separation, to anyone who thinks that significant good can come from official state support of religion, I remind you of one other passage from the Sermon on the Mount:

Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

--Matthew 7:6

In recent months, writers and scholars in Iran, Bangladesh, Jordan, Pakistan, Nigeria and elsewhere have been jailed -- or worse, condemned to death -- for airing dissenting views.

The words of three such dissenters, Hashem Aghajari, Taslima Nasrin and Toujan Faisal, are excerpted below.

In Iran, weeks of student protests have followed the Nov. 9 death sentence handed down to Aghajari, a professor of history in Tehran, for apostasy. The charge stems from a lengthy, philosophical speech he delivered last June in which he questioned why only clergy had the right to interpret Islam. For good measure, Aghajari's sentence also includes 74 lashes of the whip, eight years in prison and a 10-year prohibition from teaching. His lawyer appealed the verdict last Monday.

From a June 19 speech by Hashem Aghajari delivered in Hamedan, Iran, on the 25th anniversary of the death of controversial Islamic scholar Ali Shariati. Translated from the Farsi.

Historic Islam is a culmination of what the spiritual thinkers [clergy] have experienced and considered through the ages and centuries past. Over time, the accumulated traditions become holy and are adorned in religious garb. At times the historical elements of these traditions and understandings become so credible that revisions become truly extraordinary events. Consider changes over the last century: Replacing traditional public baths with showers and modern water works was initially considered against the sharia [Islamic law]. Only bathing in traditional public pools was considered sufficient for meeting the Islamic cleansing requirements. Similarly, around the time of our constitutional revolution [in the early 20th century] one of the spiritual gentlemen issued an article condemning chemistry, physics and modern sciences, stating that, "Chemistry declares there is no god." Today, however, these same gentlemen do not oppose sciences, as they ride in late-model automobiles and have developed a taste for such things.

The understandings and interpretations of spiritual thinkers are irrelevant to Islam. These are *their* understandings. As they had the right to read and understand the Koran, so do we. We have the right to read the Koran and develop our own understanding. This understanding cannot be decreed to us. We separate historical Islam from essential Islam through analysis. We refer to the original text and [strive to] define the original content in today's terminology....

It is obvious that one who desires to be a Muslim in the 20th and 21st centuries is a different person from those living in Mecca and Medina of 1,400 years ago, [which had] populations similar to small villages in modern Iran. It is obvious that we have different ways and methods of understanding in all areas including economics and politics. To understand Islam today, and in every generation, one must consider himself the direct recipient of the Holy book, a recipient of God's [message] and the prophets.... We have the right to receive and interpret this message on our own and based on our own circumstances. Accepting ancient and accumulated traditions just because they are historical is regressive. It is mimicry.

For years the youth were discouraged from reading the Koran. They were told that understanding the Koran requires 101 levels of thinking not available to commoners. [Islamic scholar

Ali] Shariati, however, told his students to read the Koran themselves and to develop scientific methods for the study and scholarly interpretations. These methods can lead to deeper and better understanding of many topics. The clergy carrying tons of ancient baggage cannot compete in this arena. Therefore, students engaging in discovery and developing their own understanding are committing major crimes, as their activities may be bad for the gentlemen's business.... The whole Spiritual class would be out of work. In Islam there is no such class. The clergy and many of the titles and the hierarchy are new -- In many cases no more than 50 to 60 years since their invention... The spiritual clergy relates to historical Islam. In essential Islam, there is no such entity.

Dr. Shariati told us that in Islam, there exists a teaching relationship. An Islamic scholar does not need followers and does not consider his knowledge a means of leadership. Neither does the student worship the teacher. The relationship is an educational one. Today's student can be tomorrow's teacher. This relationship includes criticism....It is not mimicry. People are not circus monkeys to mimic without understanding. A student must comprehend and practice and strive to increase his understanding until he is independent of his teacher.

Today religion controls the government and the spiritual clergy occupies the seat of power.... The Islam we encounter is not the traditional Islam, but a fundamentalist one. In contrast, Islamic Protestantism [reformist Islam] is intellectual, practical and humane and as such is a progressive religion....

The religion we need today is one that respects human beings and values human [rights]. Compared with traditional religions, the fundamentalists are prone to harsh violations of human rights. Relying on their fundamentals, it is easy for them to declare, "Anyone who is not with us is our enemy."

Islamic Protestantism is an ongoing project, as we have a constant need to adapt. If our understanding and religious thinking become inflexible and spurious, we are subject to decline. As our needs and circumstances change, we must constantly critique and adjust the framework of our religious thinking.

Quotes on Religious Liberty

"Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia," Thomas Jefferson, 1779

Well aware that the opinions and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their minds; that Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible to restraint; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do, but to extend it by its influence on reason alone; that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world and through all time: That to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical;... that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry;... that the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction; that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy [sic], which at once destroys all religious liberty... ; and finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them. We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities...

(Those parts shown above in italics were, according to Edwin S. Gaustad, written by Jefferson but not included in the statute as passed by the General Assembly of Virginia. The bill became law on January 16, 1786. From Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, Vol. I (To the Civil War), Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982, pp. 259-261.

Jefferson was prouder of having written this bill than of being the third President or of such history-making accomplishments as the Louisiana Purchase. He wrote, as his own full epitaph, "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, And Father of the University of Virginia.")

Words of Thomas Jefferson:

It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.

(Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 363.)

Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth.

(Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 363.)

No man complains of his neighbor for ill management of his affairs, for an error in sowing his land, or marrying his daughter, for consuming his substance in taverns... in all these he has liberty; but if he does not frequent the church, or then conform in ceremonies, there is an immediate uproar.

(Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 364.)

... shake off all the fears of servile prejudices under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal for every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a god because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear. You will naturally examine first the religion of your own country. Read the bible then, as you would read Livy or Tacitus. The testimony of the writer weighs in their favor in one scale, and their not being against the laws of nature does not weigh against them. But those facts in the bible that contradict the laws of nature, must be examined with more care, and under a variety of faces. Here you must recur to the pretensions of the writer to inspiration from god. Examine upon what evidence his pretensions are founded, and whether that evidence is so strong as that it's [sic] falshood [sic] would be more improbable than a change of the laws of nature in the case he relates.... Do not be frightened from this enquiry by any fear of it's [sic] consequences. If it ends in a belief that there is no god, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in it's [sic] exercise, and the love of others which it will procure you. If you find reason to believe there is a god, a consciousness that you are acting under his eye, and that he approves you, will be a vast additional incitement. If that there be a future state, the hope of a happy existence in that increases the appetite to deserve it; if that Jesus was also a god, you will be comforted by a belief of his aid and love. In fine, I repeat that you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject any thing because any other person, or description of persons have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable not for the rightness but uprightness of the decision...

(Thomas Jefferson, letter to his young nephew Peter Carr, August 10, 1787. From Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, pp. 320-321.)

... And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and

suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions.... error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.... I deem the essential principles of our government ...[:] Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; ... freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected.

(Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801. From Mortimer Adler, ed., *The Annals of America: 1797-1820, Domestic Expansion and Foreign Entanglements*, Vol. 4; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, pp. 144-145.)

It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others; or their case may, by change of circumstances, become his own.

(Thomas Jefferson, letter to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 189.)

Certainly, no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the General Government. It must then rest with the States, as far as it can be in any human authority. But it is only proposed that I should recommend, not prescribe a day of fasting and prayer. That is, that I should indirectly assume to the United States an authority over religious exercises, which the Constitution has directly precluded them from. It must be meant, too, that this recommendation is to carry some authority, and to be sanctioned by some penalty on those who disregard it; not indeed of fine and imprisonment, but of some degree of proscription, perhaps in public opinion. And does the change in the nature of the penalty make the recommendation less a law of conduct for those to whom it is directed? I do not believe it is in the best interests of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct its exercises, its discipline, or its doctrines; nor of the religious societies, that the General Government should be invested with the power of effecting any uniformity of time or matter among them. Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the times of these exercises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and this right can never be safer than in their own hands, where the Constitution has deposited it.

(Thomas Jefferson, just before the end of his second term, in a letter to Samuel Miller--a Presbyterian minister--on January 23, 1808; from Willson Whitman, arranger, *Jefferson's Letters*, Eau Claire, Wisconsin: E. M. Hale and Company, ND, pp. 241-242.)

The clergy, by getting themselves established by law and ingrafted into the machine of government, have been a very formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man.

(Thomas Jefferson, as quoted by Saul K. Padover in *Thomas Jefferson on Democracy*, New York, 1946, p. 165, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 48.)

In every country and every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own. It is easier to acquire wealth and power by this combination than by deserving them, and to effect this, they have perverted the purest religion ever preached to man into mystery and jargon, unintelligible to all mankind, and therefore the safer for their purposes.

(Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Horatio Spofford, 1814; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 371)

I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives.... It is in our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be read. By the same test the world must judge me. But this does not satisfy the priesthood. They must have a positive, a declared assent to all their interested absurdities. My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest. The artificial structures they have built on the purest of all moral systems, for the purpose of deriving from it pence and power, revolt those who think for themselves, and who read in that system only what is really there.

(Thomas Jefferson, letter to Mrs. M. Harrison Smith: Mrs. M. Harrison, August 6, 1816. From Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds., *The Harper Book of American Quotations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 492.)

... our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day [Fourth of July] forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them....

(Thomas Jefferson, letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826 [Jefferson's last letter, dated ten days before he died]; from Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 372.)

It was what he did not like in religion that gave impetus to Jefferson's activity in that troublesome and often bloody arena. He did not like dogmatism, obscurantism, blind obedience, or any interference with the free exercise of the mind. Moreover, he did not like the tendency of religion to confuse truth with power, special insight with special privilege, and the duty to maintain with the right to persecute the dissenter. Ecclesiastical despotism was as reprehensible as despotism of the political sort, even when it justified itself, as it often did, in the name of doing good. This had been sufficiently evident in his native Virginia to give Jefferson every stimulus he needed to see that independence must be carried over into the realm of religion.

(E. S. Gaustad, "Religion," in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: A Reference Biography*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986, p. 279.)

Words of James Madison

Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity in exclusion of all other religions may establish, with the same ease, any particular sect of Christians in exclusion of all other sects? That the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?

(James Madison, "A Memorial and Remonstrance," addressed to the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1785; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: The Citadel Press, pp. 459-460. According to Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, pp. 39 ff., Madison's "Remonstrance" was instrumental in blocking the multiple establishment of all denominations of Christianity in Virginia.)

At age eighty-one [therefore, in 1832?], both looking back at the American experience and looking forward with vision sharpened by practical experience, Madison summed up his views of church and state relations in a letter to a "Reverend Adams": "I must admit moreover that it may not be easy, in every possible case, to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the Civil authority with such distinctness as to avoid collisions and doubts on unessential points. The tendency of a usurpation on one side or the other, or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them, will be best guarded by an entire abstinence of the Government from interference in any way whatever, beyond the necessity of preserving public order, and protecting each sect against trespass on its legal rights by others."

(Robert L. Maddox, *Separation of Church and State: Guarantor of Religious Freedom*, New York: Crossroad, 1987, p. 39.)

Words of George Washington

As President, Washington regularly attended Christian services, and he was friendly in his attitude toward Christian values. However, he repeatedly declined the church's sacraments. Never did he take communion, and when his wife, Martha, did, he waited for her outside the sanctuary.... Even on his deathbed, Washington asked for no ritual, uttered no prayer to Christ, and expressed no wish to be attended by His representative. George Washington's practice of Christianity was limited and superficial because he was not himself a Christian. In the enlightened tradition of his day, he was a devout Deist--just as many of the clergymen who knew him suspected.

(Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol*, New York: The Free Press, 1987, pp. 174-175.)

The Words of John Adams

We think ourselves possessed, or, at least, we boast that we are so, of liberty of conscience on all subjects, and of the right of free inquiry and private judgment in all cases, and yet how far are we from these exalted privileges in fact! There exists, I believe, throughout the whole Christian world, a law which makes it

blasphemy to deny or doubt the divine inspiration of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations.

In most countries of Europe it is punished by fire at the stake, or the rack, or the wheel. In England itself it is punished by boring through the tongue with a red-hot poker. In America it is not better; even in our own Massachusetts, which I believe, upon the whole, is as temperate and moderate in religious zeal as most of the States, a law was made in the latter end of the last century, repealing the cruel punishments of the former laws, but substituting fine and imprisonment upon all those blasphemers upon any book of the Old Testament or New.

Now, what free inquiry, when a writer must surely encounter the risk of fine or imprisonment for adducing any argument for investigating into the divine authority of those books? Who would run the risk of translating Dupuis? But I cannot enlarge upon this subject, though I have it much at heart. I think such laws a great embarrassment, great obstructions to the improvement of the human mind. Books that cannot bear examination, certainly ought not to be established as divine inspiration by penal laws. It is true, few persons appear desirous to put such laws in execution, and it is also true that some few persons are hardy enough to venture to depart from them. But as long as they continue in force as laws, the human mind must make an awkward and clumsy progress in its investigations. I wish they were repealed. The substance and essence of Christianity, as I understand it, is eternal and unchangeable, and will bear examination forever, but it has been mixed with extraneous ingredients, which I think will not bear examination, and they ought to be separated. Adieu.

(John Adams, letter to Thomas Jefferson, January 23, 1825. Adams was 90, Jefferson 81 at the time; both died on July 4th of the following year, on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. From Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 234.)

Words of Other Revolutionaries

I am fully of your Opinion respecting religious Tests; but, tho' the People of Massachusetts have not in their new Constitution kept quite clear of them, yet, if we consider what that People were 100 Years ago, we must allow they have gone great Lengths in Liberality of Sentiment on religious Subjects; and we may hope for greater Degrees of Perfection, when their Constitution, some years hence, shall be revised. If Christian Preachers had continued to teach as Christ and his Apostles did, without Salaries, and as the Quakers now do, I imagine Tests would never have existed; for I think they were invented, not so much to secure Religion itself, as the Emoluments of it. When a Religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its Professors are obliged to call for help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.

(Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, American statesman, diplomat, scientist, and printer, from a letter to Richard Price, October 9, 1780; from Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 93.)

Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly-marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law. Take away the law-establishment, and every religion re-assumes its original benignity.

(Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 1791-1792. From Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds., *The Harper Book of*

American Quotations, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 499-500.)

Toleration is not the opposite of intolerance but the counterfeit of it. Both are despotisms: the one assumes to itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, the other of granting it.

(Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, p. 58. As quoted by John M. Swomley, *Religious Liberty and the Secular State: The Constitutional Context*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987, p. 7. Swomley added, "Toleration is a concession; religious liberty is a right.")

Religious matters are to be separated from the jurisdiction of the state not because they are beneath the interests of the state, but, quite to the contrary, because they are too high and holy and thus are beyond the competence of the state.

(Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*, 1773, as quoted by Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 7.)

"Does not the core of all this difficulty lie in this," Isaac Backus--a Separatist minister turned Baptist--asked rhetorically in replying to a detractor in 1768, "that the common people [justly] claim as good a right to judge and act for themselves in matters of religion as civil rulers or the learned clergy?"

(James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis*, Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973, p. 136.)

For the civil authority to pretend to establish particular modes of faith and forms of worship, and to punish all that deviate from the standards, which our superiors have set up, is attended with the most pernicious consequences to society. It cramps all free and rational inquiry, fills the world with hypocrites and superstitious bigots--nay, with infidels and skeptics; it exposes men of religion and conscience to the rage and malice of fiery, blind zealots, and dissolves every tender tie of human nature. And I cannot but look upon it as a peculiar blessing of Heaven that we live in a land where everyone can freely deliver his sentiments upon religious subjects, and have the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without any molestation or disturbance--a privilege which I hope we shall ever keep up and strenuously maintain.

(Samuel West, Dartmouth, MA, Election Sermon, 1776, as quoted by Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 103.)

Is conformity of sentiments in matters of religion essential to the happiness of civil government? Not at all. Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men than it has with the principles of the mathematics. Let every man speak freely without fear--maintain the principles that he believes--worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no God, or twenty Gods; and let government protect him in so doing, i.e., see that he meets with no personal abuse or loss of property for his religious opinions. Instead of discouraging him with proscriptions, fines, confiscation or death, let him be encouraged, as a free man, to bring forth his arguments and maintain his points with all boldness; then if his doctrine is false it will be confuted, and if it is true (though ever so novel) let others credit it. When every man has this liberty what can he wish for more? A liberal man asks for nothing more of government.

(John Leland, "The Rights of Conscience Inalienable, and Therefore Religious Opinions not Cognizable by Law" [a pamphlet], New London, Connecticut, 1791. Reprinted in Mortimer Adler, ed., 1784-1796, *Organizing the New Nation: The Annals of America*, Vol. 3, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, pp. 447-448. Leland was a Baptist minister who refused to support the Constitution until Madison persuaded him that the Constitution would not undermine religious liberty.)

If we glance back at our early history, the reasons for placing religious freedom in the First Amendment may become clearer. The quest for that freedom was one of the motives for emigration to America, but not just for those who wanted to be free to practice their own faith. A surprising majority of colonial Americans were not part of any religious community. Even in New England, research shows, not more than one person in seven was a church member. It was one in fifteen in the middle colonies and fewer still in the South, according to the historian Richard Hofstadter.

(Milton Meltzer, *The Bill of Rights: How We Got It and What It Means*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1990, p. 71.)

Is it not strange that the descendants of those Pilgrim Fathers who crossed the Atlantic to preserve their own freedom of opinion have always proved themselves intolerant of the spiritual liberty of others?

(Robert E. Lee, 1807-1870, Confederate general, letter to his wife, December 27, 1856. From Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds., *The Harper Book of American Quotations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 498.)

In response to criticisms of Providence's policy of religious tolerance, [Roger] Williams issued in 1644 (forty-five years before Locke's Letter Concerning Toleration) his classic defense of religious liberty, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience Discussed*. "God," Williams forthrightly maintained, "requireth not a uniformity of Religion." The civil power, he argued, is incapable of touching the inner life of the spirit, which is the paramount concern of religion. "The civil sword," he wrote, "may make a nation of hypocrites and anti-Christians, but not one true Christian." If the church accepts establishment by the state, it puts itself in the position of "appealing to darkness to judge light, to unrighteousness to judge righteousness, the spiritually blind to judge and end the controversy concerning heavenly colors." The argument that a non-Christian state cannot effectively carry out its secular functions is simply false. Statecraft, like seacraft, is a practical skill, unrelated to religious faith. "A pagan or anti-Christian pilot may be as skillful to carry the ship to its desired port as any Christian mariner or pilot in the world, and may perform that work with as much safety and speed."

(A. James Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life*, Washington: Brookings Institution, 1985, p. 66.)

I must profess while heaven and earth last, that no one tenet that either London, England, or the world doth harbor is so heretical, blasphemous, seditious, and dangerous to the corporal, to the spiritual, to the present, to the eternal good of all men as the bloody tenent ... of persecution for cause of conscience.

(Roger Williams, 1603?-1683, founder of Rhode Island, as quoted by Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 23.)

It is the will and command of God that ... a permission of the paganish, Jewish, Turkish [Muslim], or anti-Christian consciences

The government has leverage on religious groups because of the tax-exemption privilege. Church leaders, eager for the church to be free to be the church, should ask for the removal of this privilege. If there were no tax privilege for religious groups, hucksters and people who are using religion as a cover for political movements would be discouraged.

(William Stringfellow, lawyer and lay theologian, as quoted in the *Dallas Times Herald*, December 9, 1978, p. A-27, according to Alan F. Pater and Jason R. Pater, compilers and editors, *What They Said in 1978: The Yearbook of Spoken Opinion*, Beverly Hills, CA: Monitor Book Co., 1979, p. 447.)

Voluntary, individual, silent prayer has never been banned or discouraged in the public schools. The Supreme Court has banned state-sponsored religious services. Those who advocate prayer services in the public schools do not want voluntary prayer. They want the government to be officially involved in promoting and sponsoring prayer services so as to put pressure on children to engage in public prayer. They apparently do not care whether parents want their children to engage in public prayer or be indoctrinated with sectarian religious ideas. The object is to provide a captive classroom audience that will be exposed to the prayers of those with a religious message, which they deliver in the form of a prayer.

(John M. Swomley, *Religious Liberty and the Secular State: The Constitutional Context*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987, p. 128.)

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (Jesus, as reported in Matthew 6:5-6.)

It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions.

(Tertullian, 160?-230?, Carthaginian church father, *Ad Scapulam*, 202 C.E., according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 94.)

... It is accordingly on this battlefield [religious belief], almost solely, that the rights of the individual against society have been asserted on broad grounds of principle, and the claim of society to exercise authority over dissentients openly controverted. The great writers to whom the world owes what religious liberty it possesses, have mostly asserted freedom of conscience as an indefeasible right, and denied absolutely that a human being is accountable to others for his religious belief. Yet so natural to mankind is intolerance in whatever they really care about, that religious freedom has hardly anywhere been practically realized, except where religious indifference, which dislikes to have its peace disturbed by theological quarrels, has added its weight to the scale. In the minds of almost all religious persons, even in the most tolerant countries, the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserves. One person will bear with dissent in matters of church government, but not of dogma; another can tolerate everybody, short of a Papist or an Unitarian; another, every one who believes in revealed religion; a few extend their charity a little further, but stop at the belief in a God and in a future state. Wherever the sentiment of the majority is still genuine and intense, it is found to have abated little of its claim to be obeyed.

(John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873, and Harriet Taylor Mill, ?-1858, "Chapter I: Introductory," *On Liberty*, 1859; reprinted in Curran V. Shields, ed., *On Liberty*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956, p. 11.)

The Supreme Court Materials

Words of the Supreme Court

Christianity is not established by law, and the genius of our institutions requires that the Church and the State should be kept separate....The state confesses its incompetency to judge spiritual matters between men or between man and his maker ... spiritual matters are exclusively in the hands of teachers of religion.

(U. S. Supreme Court, *Melvin v. Easley*, 1860, as quoted by Samuel Rabinove, "Church and State Must Remain Separate," in Julie S. Bach, ed., *Civil Liberties: Opposing Viewpoints*, St. Paul: Greenhaven Press, 1988, p. 53.)

The law knows no heresy, and is committed to the support of no dogma, the establishment of no sect.

(U. S. Supreme Court, *Watson v. Jones*, 1872, as quoted by John M. Swomley, *Religious Liberty and the Secular State: The Constitutional Context*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987, p. 7.)

[Chief Justice Morrison Waite, in *Reynolds vs. U.S.*, a Supreme Court decision in 1878] cited Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance of 1785, in which, said Waite, "he demonstrated 'that religion, or the duty we owe the Creator,' was not within the cognizance of civil government." This was followed, said Waite, by passage of the Virginia statute "for establishing religious freedom," written by Jefferson, which proclaimed complete liberty of opinion and allowed no interference by government until ill tendencies "break out into overt acts against peace and good order." Finally, the Chief Justice cited Jefferson's letter of 1802 to the Danbury Baptist association, describing the First Amendment as "building a wall of separation between church and state." Coming as this does, said Waite, "from an acknowledged leader of the advocates of the measure, it may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment thus secured."

(Irving Brant, *The Bill of Rights: Its Origin and Meaning*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1965, p. 407.)

Congress was deprived [by the First Amendment] of all legislative power over mere opinion, but was left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order.

(Chief Justice Morrison Waite, *Reynolds vs. U.S.*, 1878, as quoted by Robert S. Alley, ed., *The Supreme Court on Church and State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 353.)

... the First Amendment of the Constitution ... was intended to allow everyone under the jurisdiction of the United States to entertain such notions respecting his relations to his maker, and the duties they impose, as may be approved by his conscience, and to exhibit his sentiments in such form of worship as he may think proper, not injurious to the rights of others, and to prohibit legislation for the support of any religious tenets, or the modes of worship of any sect.

(U. S. Supreme Court, 1890, *Darwin v. Beason*, as quoted by Samuel Rabinove, "Religious Liberty and Church-State Separation: Why Should We Care?," speech on April 10, 1986, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, June 15, 1986, p. 528.

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception, they do not now occur to us.

(Justice Robert H. Jackson, U. S. Supreme Court, *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 1943. From Robert L. Maddox, *Separation of Church and State: Guarantor of Religious Freedom*, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987, p. 115.)

Supreme Court Justice Rutledge stated in 1947 that the First Amendment was not designed merely to prohibit governmental imposition of a religion; it was designed to create "a complete and permanent separation of the spheres of religious activity and civil authority...."

(Martha M. McCarthy, *A Delicate Balance: Church, State, and the Schools*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1983, p. 11.)

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government, can openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organization or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect "a wall of separation between church and State."

(Justice Hugo Black, U. S. Supreme Court, *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947. Quoted by John M. Swomley, Jr., *Religion, The State, & The Schools*, New York: Pegasus, 1968, pp. 21-22.)

The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.

(Justice Hugo Black, U. S. Supreme Court, *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947. From Samuel Rabinove, "Church and State Must Remain Separate," in Julie S. Bach, ed., *Civil Liberties: Opposing Viewpoints*, St. Paul: Greenhaven Press, 1988, p. 53.)

In efforts to force loyalty to whatever religious group happened to be on top and in league with the government of a particular time and place, men and women had been fined, cast in jail, cruelly tortured, and killed. Among the offenses for which these punishments had been inflicted were such things as speaking disrespectfully of the views of ministers of government-established churches, nonattendance at those churches,

expressions of nonbelief in their doctrines, and failure to pay taxes and tithes to support them.

(Justice Hugo Black, U. S. Supreme Court, *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, as quoted by Robert S. Alley, *The Supreme Court on Church and State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 41-42, according to Victoria Sherrow, *Separation of Church and State*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1992, pp. 15-16.)

As the momentum for popular education increased and in turn evoked strong claims for state support of religious education, contests not unlike that which in Virginia had produced Madison's Remonstrance appeared in various forms in other states. New York and Massachusetts provide famous chapters in the history that established dissociation of religious teaching from state-maintained schools. In New York, the rise of the common schools led, despite fierce sectarian opposition, to the barring of tax funds to church schools, and later to any school in which sectarian doctrine was taught. In Massachusetts, largely through the efforts of Horace Mann, all sectarian teachings were barred from the common school to save it from being rent by denominational conflict. The upshot of these controversies, often long and fierce, is fairly summarized by saying that long before the Fourteenth Amendment subjected the states to new limitations, the prohibition of furtherance by the state of religious instruction became the guiding principle, in law and in feeling, of the American people....

(Justice Felix Frankfurter, U. S. Supreme Court, in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, the 1948 decision that forbid public schools in Illinois from commingling sectarian and secular instruction; as quoted by Paul Blanshard, ed., *Classics of Free Thought*, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1977, pp. 61-62.)

The nonsectarian or secular public school was the means of reconciling freedom in general with religious freedom. The sharp confinement of the public schools to secular education was a recognition of the need of a democratic society to educate its children, insofar as the state undertook to do so, in an atmosphere free from pressures in a realm in which pressures are most resisted and where bitterly engendered. Designed to serve as perhaps the most powerful agency for promoting cohesion among a heterogeneous democratic people, the public school must keep scrupulously free from entanglement in the strife of sects. The preservation of the community from division conflicts, of government from irreconcilable pressures by religious groups, of religion from censorship and coercion however subtly exercised, requires strict confinement of the state to instruction other than religious, leaving to the individual's church and home, indoctrination in the faith of his choice.... The extent to which this principle was deemed a presupposition of our Constitutional system is strikingly illustrated by the fact that every state admitted into the Union since 1876 was compelled by Congress to write into its constitution a requirement that it maintain a school system "free from sectarian control." ...

(Justice Felix Frankfurter, U. S. Supreme Court, in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, the 1948 decision that forbid public schools in Illinois from commingling sectarian and secular instruction; as quoted by Paul Blanshard, ed., *Classics of Free Thought*, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1977, pp. 62-63.)

We find that the basic Constitutional principle of absolute separation was violated when the State of Illinois, speaking through its Supreme Court, sustained the school authorities of Champaign in sponsoring and effectively furthering religious

beliefs by its educational arrangement. Separation means separation, not something less. Jefferson's metaphor in describing the relation between church and state speaks of a "wall of separation," not of a fine line easily overstepped. The public school is at once the symbol of our democracy and the most pervasive means for promoting our common destiny. In no activity of the state is it more vital to keep out divisive forces than in its schools, to avoid confusing, not to say fusing, what the Constitution sought to keep strictly apart. "The great American principle of eternal separation"--Elihu Root's phrase bears repetition--is one of the vital reliances of our Constitutional system for assuring unities among our people stronger than our diversities. It is the Court's duty to enforce this principle in its full integrity. We renew our conviction that "we have staked the very existence of our country on the faith that complete separation between the state and religion is best for the state and best for religion."

(Justice Felix Frankfurter, U. S. Supreme Court, in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, the 1948 decision that forbid public schools in Illinois from commingling sectarian and secular instruction; as quoted by Paul Blanshard, ed., *Classics of Free Thought*, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1977, p. 64.)

The day that this country ceases to be free for irreligion, it will cease to be free for religion--except for the sect that can win political power.

(Justice Robert H. Jackson, dissenting opinion, U. S. Supreme Court, *Zorach v. Clauson*, April 7, 1952. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 190.)

We repeat and again reaffirm that neither a state nor the federal government can constitutionally force a person "to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion." Neither can constitutionally pass laws nor impose requirements which aid all religions as against non-believers, and neither can aid those religions based on a belief in the existence of a God as against those religions founded on different beliefs.

(Justice Hugo Black, U. S. Supreme Court, in *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the 1961 decision that *Torcaso* could not be required by Maryland to declare a belief in God before being sworn in as a notary public; as quoted by Paul Blanshard, ed., *Classics of Free Thought*, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1977, p. 10.)

The [U. S. Supreme] Court also has noted that the "first and most immediate purpose" of the establishment clause rests "on the belief that a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and degrade religion."

(Martha M. McCarthy, *A Delicate Balance: Church, State, and the Schools*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1983, p. 170. According to McCarthy, the quote is from *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421, 431 [1962].)

It is a matter of history that this very practice of establishing governmentally composed prayers for religious services was one of the reasons which caused many of our early colonists to leave England and seek religious freedom in America. ... By the time of the adoption of the Constitution, our history shows that there was widespread awareness among many Americans of the dangers of a union of Church and State. These people knew, some of them from bitter personal experience, that one of the greatest dangers to the freedom of the individual to worship in his own way lay in the Government's placing its official stamp of approval upon one particular kind of prayer or one particular form of religious service.... The First Amendment was added to the Constitution to

stand as a guarantee that neither the power nor the prestige of the Federal Government would be used to control, support or influence the kinds of prayer the American people can say--that the people's religions must not be subjected to the pressures of government for change each time a new political administration is elected to office.

(Justice Hugo Black, U. S. Supreme Court, in *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962 decision on school prayer, as quoted by Alan Barth, "The Roots of Limited Government," *The Rights of Free Men: An Essential Guide to Civil Liberties*, ed. James Clayton, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1984, p. 123.)

These men [the authors on the Constitution and First Amendment] knew that the First Amendment, which tried to put an end to government control of religion and prayer, was not written to destroy either. They knew rather that it was written to quiet well-justified fears which nearly all of them felt arising out of an awareness that governments of the past had shackled men's tongues to make them speak and to pray only to the God that government wanted them to pray to. It is neither sacrilegious nor antireligious to say that each separate government in this country should stay out of the business of writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people themselves and to those the people choose to look to for religious guidance.

(Justice Hugo Black, in *Engel v. Vitale*, U. S. Supreme Court 1962 decision on school prayer, as quoted by Alan Barth, "In Behalf of Religion," *The Rights of Free Men: An Essential Guide to Civil Liberties*, ed. James Clayton, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1984, p. 128.)

First, this Court has decisively settled that the First Amendment's mandate that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" has been made wholly applicable to the States by the Fourteenth Amendment.... Second, this Court has rejected unequivocally the contention that the Establishment Clause forbids only governmental preference of one religion over another.

(Justice Tom C. Clark, majority opinion, U. S. Supreme Court, *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), as quoted in Robert S. Alley, ed., *The Supreme Court on Church and State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 210-211.)

Finally, we cannot accept that the concept of neutrality, which does not permit a State to require a religious exercise even with the consent of the majority of those affected, collides with the majority's right to free exercise of religion. While the Free Exercise Clause clearly prohibits the use of state action to deny the rights of free exercise to anyone, it has never meant that a majority could use the machinery of the State to practice its beliefs. Such a contention was effectively answered by Mr. Justice Jackson for the Court in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*: "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to ... freedom of worship ... and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections."

(Justice Tom C. Clark, majority opinion, U. S. Supreme Court, *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), as quoted in Robert S. Alley, ed., *The Supreme Court on Church and State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 210-211.)

The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or to oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the state is firmly committed to a position of neutrality.

(Justice Tom C. Clark, majority opinion, U. S. Supreme Court, June 17, 1963, as quoted by Alan Barth, April 21, 1968, "Permission to Pray," *The Rights of Free Men: An Essential Guide to Civil Liberties*, ed. James Clayton, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1984, pp. 130-131.)

... the problem to be considered and solved when the First Amendment was proposed was not one of hazy or comparative insignificance, but was one of blunt and stark reality, which had perplexed and plagued the nations of Western civilization for some 14 centuries, and during that long period, the union of Church and State in the government of man had produced neither peace on earth, nor good will to man.

(Justice Prescott of the Maryland high court, *Horace Mann League of the United States v. Board of Public Works*, 220 A.2d 51, 60 (Md. 1966), as quoted by Martha M. McCarthy, *A Delicate Balance: Church, State, and the Schools*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1983, p. 1.)

Government in our democracy, state and national, must be neutral in matters of religious theory, doctrine and practice. It may not be hostile to any religion or to the advocacy of nonreligion; and it may not aid, foster, or promote one religion or religious theory against another or even against the militant opposite. The First Amendment mandates governmental neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.

(U. S. Supreme Court, *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 103 [1968], as quoted by Martha M. McCarthy, *A Delicate Balance: Church, State, and the Schools*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1983, p. 173.)

A certain momentum develops in constitutional theory and it can be a "downhill thrust" easily set in motion but difficult to retard or stop.... The dangers are increased by the difficulty of perceiving in advance exactly where the "verge" of the precipice lies. As well as constituting an independent evil against which the Religion Clauses were intended to protect, involvement or entanglement between government and religion serves as a warning signal.

(Chief Justice Warren Burger, U. S. Supreme Court, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602, 624-25 [1971], as quoted by Martha M. McCarthy, *A Delicate Balance: Church, State, and the Schools*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1983, p. 175.)

The government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion.

(John Paul Stevens, majority opinion, U. S. Supreme Court, *Wallace v. Jaffree*, June 4, 1985. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 191.)

Protecting religious freedoms may be more important in the late twentieth century than it was when the Bill of Rights was ratified. We live in a pluralistic society, with people of widely divergent religious backgrounds or with none at all. Government

cannot endorse beliefs of one group without sending a clear message to non-adherents that they are outsiders.

(Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, in a speech to a Philadelphia conference on religion in public life, May 1991, according to Tom Flynn, "The Supreme Court Battle: Preserving Civil Liberties in the Era of a Hostile Judiciary," *Free Inquiry*, Fall 1991, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 4.)

Religious beliefs and religious expression are too precious to be either proscribed or prescribed by the state.

(Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, according to Mark S. Hoffman, editor, "Notable Quotes in 1992," *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1993*, New York: Pharos Books, 1992, p. 32.)

An Overall View Of Religious Liberty As Defined By U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Last modified July 22, 2002

Establishment Clause: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."

The Establishment Clause has generally come to mean that government cannot authorize a church, cannot pass laws that aid or favor one religion over another, cannot pass laws that favor religious belief over non belief, cannot force a person to profess a belief. In short, government must be neutral toward religion and cannot be entangled with any religion.

Religion in public schools

Minersville v. Gobitis, 310 U.S. 586 (1940) - Supreme Court rules that a public school may require students to salute the flag and pledge allegiance even if it violates their religious scruples.

West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, 319 U.S. 624 (1943) - Court overturns *Gobitis* but is broader in its scope. No one can be forced to salute the flag or say the pledge of allegiance if it violates the individual conscience.

McCullum v. Board of Education, 333 U.S. 203 (1948) - Court finds religious instruction in public schools a violation of the establishment clause and therefore unconstitutional.

Zorach v. Clausen, 343 U.S. 306 (1952) - Court finds that release time from public school classes for religious instruction does not violate the establishment clause.

Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) - Court finds school prayer unconstitutional.

Abington School District v. Schempp, 374 U.S. 203 (1963) - Court finds Bible reading over school intercom unconstitutional **and** *Murray v. Curlett*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963) - Court finds forcing a child to participate in Bible reading and prayer unconstitutional.

Epperson v. Arkansas, 393 U.S. 97 (1968) - Court says the state cannot ban the teaching of evolution.

Stone v. Graham, 449 U.S. 39 (1980) - Court finds posting of the Ten Commandments in schools unconstitutional.

Wallace v. Jaffree, 472 U.S. 38 (1985) - Court finds state law enforcing a moment of silence in schools had a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Edwards v. Aguillard, 482 U.S. 578 (1987) - Court finds state law requiring equal treatment for creationism has a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Board of Education v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226 (1990) - The court rules that the Equal Access Act does not violate the First Amendment. Public schools that receive federal funds and maintain a "limited open forum" on school grounds after school hours cannot deny "equal access" to student groups based upon "religious, political, philosophical, or other content."

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992) - Court finds prayer at public school graduation ceremonies violates the establishment clause and is therefore unconstitutional.

Lamb's Chapel et al. v. Center Moriches Union Free School District, 508 U.S. 384 (1993) - Court says that school districts cannot deny churches access to school premises after-hours, if the district allowed the use of its building to other groups.

Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet, (1994) - Court states that the New York State Legislature cannot create a separate school district for a religious community.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, (2000) - Court rules that student-led prayers at public school football games violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Good News Club v. Milford Central School, (2001) - Court rules that Milford Central School cannot keep Good News Club from using its facilities because the school had created a limited public forum and prohibiting the religious club was viewpoint discrimination.

Religion in state colleges or universities

Widmar v. Vincent, 454 U.S. 263 (1981) - Court rules that a state university cannot refuse to grant a student religious group "equal access" to facilities that are open to other student groups.

Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, 515 U.S. 817 (1995) - Court finds student activity funds can be used to fund a Christian perspective student magazine called "Wide Awake."

Support for religious schools

Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510 (1925) - Court invalidates an Oregon law that required all children between the ages of eight and 16 to attend public schools. A Roman Catholic orphanage and military academy brought suit. The court said the Oregon law interfered with parents right to oversee and guide their children's education.

Everson v. Board of Education, 330 U.S. 1 (1947) - Court says that state reimbursement for bus fares to attend religious schools is constitutional.

Board of Education v. Allen, 392 U.S. 236 (1968) - Court says that the state's lending of textbooks to private and religious schools is constitutional.

Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971) - Court finds state supplements to the salary of Catholic school teachers to be unconstitutional.

Tilton v. Richardson, 403 U.S. 671 (1971) - Court finds that federal funding to private, religious, and public colleges in order to build classrooms is constitutional.

Committee v. Nyquist, 413 U.S. 756 (1973) and in *Sloan v. Lemon*, 413 U.S. 825 (1973) - Court rules that states cannot reimburse parents for sending their children to religious schools.

Meek v. Pittenger, 421 U.S. 349 (1975) - Court rules that states can lend textbooks to religious schools but no other materials.

Roemer v. Board of Public Works, 426 U.S. 736 (1976) - Court rules that states can provide grants to private and religious colleges.

Committee for Public Education v. Regan, 444 U.S. 646 (1980) - Court rules that states can reimburse religious schools for the cost of giving standardized tests.

Mueller v. Allen, 463 U.S. 388 (1983) - Court rules that taxpayers can deduct tuition, textbooks, and transportation expenses from state income taxes that were incurred by attending private and religious schools.

Aguilar v. Felton, 473 U.S. 402 (1985) - Court rules that sending public school teachers to religious schools to provide remedial education and counseling is unconstitutional.

Zobrest et al. v. Catalina Foothills School District, 509 U.S. 1 (1993) - Court rules that the school district does not violate the

Establishment Clause by furnishing a sign-interpreter to a deaf child in a sectarian school.

Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet, 512 U.S. 687 (1994) - Court rules that a school district carved out for religious reasons and financed by public funds violates the Establishment Clause.

Agostini v. Felton, 117 S.Ct. 1997, 138 L.Ed.2d 391 (1997) - Court overturns *Aguilar* and says that public school teachers providing supplemental, remedial instruction to disadvantaged students in religious schools does not violate the Establishment Clause.

Mitchell v. Helms, (2000) - High court rules that Chapter 2 of the Education and Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 does not violate the Establishment Clause when it provides educational equipment to religious schools with taxpayer money.

Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, (2002) - A 5-to-4 court, in an opinion written by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, upheld Ohio's voucher program that gives tax dollars to parents in Cleveland to send their children to religious or non-religious schools. It is the first time the court has upheld a voucher system.

Religious Tests to Hold Public Office

Torcaso v. Watkins, 367 U.S. 488 (1961) - Court holds that the state of Maryland can not require applicants for public office to swear that they believed in the existence of God. The court unanimously rules that a religious test violates the Establishment Clause.

Prayer in Legislatures

Marsh v. Chambers, 463 U.S. 783 (1983) - Court rules that prayers said in state legislatures do not violate the Establishment Clause.

Nativity Displays

Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668 (1984) - Court rules that a government owned nativity scene displayed on private land did not endorse a religion and therefore did not violate the Establishment Clause.

Allegheny County v. ACLU, 492 U.S. 573 (1989) - Court finds that a nativity scene displayed inside a government building violates the Establishment Clause.

Religion in the workplace

Sherbert v. Verner, 374 U.S. 398 (1963) - Court rules that the violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment demands a strict scrutiny. Adell Sherbert, a Seventh-day Adventist, was fired from her job because she refused to work on her Sabbath, Saturday. She was denied unemployment benefits from the state. The high court said that the State of South Carolina could only burden Sherbert's free exercise of her religion if it had a compelling interest in doing so. South Carolina could not meet the test. Sherbert received her unemployment benefits.

***Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990) overruled *Sherbert v. Verner*' compelling interest test.**

Free Exercise Clause:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..."

The Free Exercise Clause has generally come to mean that one may believe anything, but that religious actions and rituals can be limited by laws that are passed for compelling government reasons. A law passed that is aimed at a particular religion or religions in general have been considered unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. Laws must be neutral in regard to religions.

When Religious Acts Break the Law

Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145 (1878) - Court finds that the federal law prohibiting polygamy, which was challenged by a Mormon defendant, to be constitutional. Polygamy was outlawed.

United States v. Ballard, 322 U.S. 78 (1944) - Court rules that religious teachings could not be prosecuted for fraud. The beliefs of one person may seem preposterous to another, but religious liberty demands the "widest toleration of conflicting views."

Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972) - Court decides that the Amish do not have to follow state law which required that children attend school until the age of 16. The Amish stop their children's formal education at 8th grade.

Employment Division v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872 (1990) - Court rules that the Free Exercise Clause cannot exempt one from drug laws. The two defendants were members of the Native American Church and had ingested peyote, a hallucinogenic drug. The high court states a new rule: no religious actions may violate general laws, but laws aimed specifically at religions or a particular religious practice will be held unconstitutional.

Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah, 508 U.S. 520 (1993) - Court finds ordinances passed by the city of Hialeah, Florida, to stop members of the Santeria religion from sacrificing animals in their religious ceremonies were aimed directly at the church and are therefore unconstitutional. While sacrificing animals was outlawed, slaughtering them was not - so meat packing plants could continue to operate, or hunters continue to dress their kill.

Congress passes the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in October 1993. It restores the traditional reading of the Free Exercise Clause: the government must show a compelling interest to justify any substantial restriction on religion.

The **Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993** states in part:

Free Exercise of Religion is Protected

(a) IN GENERAL - Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except as provided in subsection

(b) EXCEPTION - Government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person -

(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and

(2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling interest.

(c) JUDICIAL RELIEF - A person whose religious exercise has been burdened in violation of this section may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government. Standing to assert a claim or defense under this section shall be governed by the general rules of standing under article III of the Constitution.

A challenge to the constitutionality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 19, 1997.

The case pits the City of Boerne, Texas' historic district law against St. Peter's Catholic Church which wants to rebuild and expand a part of its church so that it can accommodate its large membership (*City of Boerne, Texas v. P.F. Flores, Archbishop of San Antonio*)

Boerne city fathers refused to permit the building. Church leaders brought suit under RFRA, saying the law infringes on religious exercise.

The federal trial judge ruled RFRA unconstitutional. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed. Both sides asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the decision.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled RFRA unconstitutional as applied to the states on June 25, 1997. The case is *City of Boerne, Texas v. P.F. Flores, Archbishop of San Antonio*.

So Ends Volume Five
of the Green Books.

