

**MARKS  
&  
REMARKS**

**Inspirations To Live By**

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*Also by Thomas Stanks:*

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## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to all my teachers, renowned and lesser known, to my relatives and friends who sometimes are the best teachers, to my superiors who sought what was best for me and sponsored me to an invaluable education for which I am forever grateful. My greatest thanks goes to my wife, Helen, my lover, friend and supporter, who edited and formatted my work and made it available to any and all. I am honored and humbled by so many who have helped me to make these writings possible.



## **1 BEGINNINGS**

My happiest experience before starting school was playing baseball with my dad. He would take off work on Monday to help my mother with the laundry. Four boys plus my parents made for a lot of dirty clothes that, at that time, were boiled clean in a huge copper kettle. Taking a break from the wash, dad would pitch me the ball on our front porch, and I would hit it as hard as I could. I also loved our game because dad made my first bat from my first Christmas tree. This was the 1930's, depression times, and my parents saved money any way they could. On one swing I hit the ball straight back and it hit dad in the forehead before he could get his glove up. He ran to me, and I got scared, thinking he was going to hit me. Picking me up and hugging me he said, "That's the way to hit the ball, Tommy!"

My dad had played professional baseball and later managed teams. When I was in Junior High School, he gave me excellent advice to relax and concentrate on the

ball. What he said to me was one of the first quotes I remembered from that time: "A good hitting team can win more ball games than a poor fielding team can lose." It so impressed me that I wanted to be the best hitter possible. I often recalled his words when I was playing baseball or softball. I remembered reading about Ted Williams, the last player to hit .400 for the year. His concentration and eyesight were so good he could see the seams and rotation of the ball when it struck his bat. I tried to do the same. Consequently, I began keeping a record of sayings that moved me, and I continue the practice to this day.

One of the most impressive statements came from my favorite teacher. Mr. Hamill taught English and he lit a fire in me by his desire to have us strive for our highest ideals. One day he addressed the class in dramatic fashion:

*"A student, yea, a breath of God you are! So hew your life to serve yourself and your fellow man—As you would God serve you."*

Mr. Hamill again.

*"Life is making most of the present moment."*

My dad died the summer after my sophomore year in high school. And I remember Mr. Hamill telling me how sorry he was for me. His sympathy meant a great deal to me since I already admired him.

My journaling begins with flights of fantasy in my fourteenth year. I wanted to write down famous quotes that inspired me, and they reflect personal changes as I grew

older. Ideas for a great cause have always captivated me. You might call me a hero worshipper. I think unconsciously they worked in me to ruminate over a grand goal I could dedicate myself to. What follows are gems meaningful to me which I offer to you, dear reader, for your own consideration. When I decided to write them for publication, my wife, Helen, made a priceless suggestion. She said, "When you quote someone or something, why not join to it how it affects you? Tell the heartfelt value you attach to it?" And so, these are insights of many others that inspired me on my spiritual journey along with comments on their value for me. The quotations I call marks that caused me to look into myself, and the remarks that follow are personal reflections I offer you. They are meant to spark thought and love. Since they were amassed over a lifetime, I think it best to take small bites at a time, perhaps as subjects for daily inspiration. Anyone of them could be the subject of extended consideration, as each one was for me when I originally found them.

My original journaling had no order except chronological. To make it easier to read and follow, I group the material into categories that I see more fitting. I will sometimes comment singly or group several under a common heading. You can judge for yourself what worth it offers or doesn't.

By the time we were considering publication, I had already filled a notebook of quotations plus a stack of 4"x6" cards entitled "Letters to Helyn." I began the "Letters" soon after we were married in 1971. Although she spells her name H e l e n, I changed the spelling because

these messages were a cut above ordinary correspondence. For example, one of the first things I wrote was:

*"Dear Helyn, You've been getting kicked around all your life by your adopted mind. It will continue, unless you change your mind. Woman's prerogative..., but man's, too!"*

Another Letter to Helyn:

*"Self-Image, True or False? I don't think I need to tell you that your self-image is not your real Self. How can it be? It's an image—like a reflection in a mirror or in a pool of water. Whatever a thought produces—however accurate—is just that, a product, a production of your Self. You must bring the onslaught of images to a halt. Otherwise you identify with them and become them and not your Self. I'll never know how a movie projector works unless I stop it projecting and look at the projector.*

*Pure consciousness puts you in immediate contact with yourself. Get to consciousness without an object. Only by awareness without a medium, without a thought, without an image, can you be yourself. And at that moment the projected "I" vanishes. In losing your old self, you find your true Self."*

I will include other selections from "Letters to Helyn" as the journey progresses.

## 2 EARLY ENCHANTERS

The following quote made me take a serious look at nature which I loved so much:

*"The groves were God's first temples,"*—Zane Grey in SPIRIT OF THE BORDER.

I asked myself, "How did all this come about? Was there a progression in creation or did it all happen at once? Was there a Big Bang or did it evolve? Are God's groves more beautiful than the cathedrals with their height and stained glass windows of the Middle Ages?"

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*"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,"*

A teacher said this to us in junior high and called it "The Golden Rule." I found out later it was paraphrased from Matthew's and Luke's Gospel. I was delighted to see words from the Bible woven into my public school education.

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*"Whatsoever a man sows, that also shall he reap,"*—George Elliot in *SILAS MARNER*, as well as, in the Bible.

I was impressed to see Scripture taken seriously by a fine writer, since I loved both. I was making connections without realizing it at the time.

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*"Only my best is good enough,"*—Our High School Motto.

I took it as my campaign motto later when I was running for president of the Newman Club at the University of Pittsburgh.

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*"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe something inside them was superior to circumstance,"*—Bruce Barton, *READER'S DIGEST*, December, 1948.

This helped me realize the importance of inner life and strong convictions. It also showed the power of believing in myself.

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*"He is most powerful who has himself in his power,"*—Seneca.

*"The ideal man is he who finds happiness in himself,"*—Aristotle.

*"Know thyself,"* -Attributed originally to Socrates or the Delphic Oracle.

I read these three ancients around the same time, and the common thread I saw was how they stressed the value of the self

and the importance I must put on developing myself. I felt that they were teaching me something valuable.

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*"This minute, too, is part of eternity,"—Andrew Carnegie.*

Needing to carve a life for myself while firmly believing in God, I found Carnegie's words bridging the two worlds. His words meant much to me because in my teens I played basketball and swam in the pool at what was reputed to be the first free Carnegie Library, Braddock, PA. The Library also housed a basketball court and swimming pool where we could swim and play and then go upstairs to read.

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*"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man,"—William Shakespeare.*

My introduction to Shakespeare showed me drama not only for the stage but also for life. I wanted to be true to myself by letting a good conscience be my guide.

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*"Actions speak louder than words,"—Ancient proverb, source unknown.*

I felt my actions would be loud enough if I followed Shakespeare's instruction as given in the previous entry.

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*"The purest among the strong and the strongest among the pure, Christ lifted with his wounded hands empires from their hinges and changed*

*the stream of ages,"*—Jean Paul Richter,  
summer, 1951.

This quote made me reflect on several fronts. Could Christ be so strong and pure if he allowed himself to be crucified? If he did unhinge empires and change the world, was it for the good? And if it was good, shouldn't I be devoted to him?

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*There's part of the sun in an apple,  
There's part of the moon in a rose;  
There's part of the flaming Pleiades  
In every leaf that grows.*

*Out of the vast comes nearness;  
For the God whose love we sing  
Lends a little of His heaven  
To every living thing,"*—Augustus Wright  
Bambergeron on Encouragement Greeting Card.

The poem was on a card I got from a friend. Poetic insights like this made me think beyond what I could see and touch. I thought the author in his own poetic way captured the subtle ways oneness reveals itself. Could all be one in a way beyond my imagination?

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The following is by Tom Penney quoted in GOD GOES TO MURDERER'S ROW by Rev. M. Raymond, January, 1952. Tom was a condemned criminal who later died in the electric chair.

*"My plight is like the story of the  
raindrop that fell a liquid jewel from the  
heavens. It fell in the gutter and mingled*

*with the mud and lost its radiant  
sparkle. But then a sunbeam sought it  
out, kissed it and carried it into the  
heavens where in the cold brightness of  
the sky it became a pure white  
snowflake. God's love has been that  
sunbeam to me."*

I thought Tom was talking about himself. It made me wonder at how much a person can change, and then change again. Just having a body made me realize that I have a job to do in the material world.

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*"Every open mind should close like an open  
mouth, over something solid and substantial,"*

—G. K. Chesterton, January 23, 1952.

Even though I prided myself as having an open mind, I had to decide what to wrap it around if I was to direct myself. Is there an Absolute for me? What do I really believe in?

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That same year I read the following humorous dialogue between Chesterton and George Bernard Shaw. I understand they were great friends who often sparred over their contrasting beliefs and outlook. Chesterton was observing the leanness of Shaw and said,

*"To look at you, anyone would think a famine  
had struck England."*

And Shaw, regarding Chesterton's corpulence, retorted,

*"To look at you, anyone would think you have  
caused it."*

I was impressed how these great men could joke and have fun with each other. I realized that amid my serious searches a sense of humor can delightfully lighten the load. A good belly laugh relaxes the mind and brings people closer together. It was a lesson I wanted to keep and practice when matters got strained.

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*"Heroic self-denial is the result of goodness, rather than the cause,"*

—Loe Trese, VESSEL OF CLAY

What I got from this is that action follows being and not the reverse. The kind of result I get flows from the kind of person I am.

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The following quotes are from Leon Bloy's THE WOMAN WHO WAS POOR.

*"The more of a saint a woman is, the more of a woman she is."*

*"There is only one misery, and that is not to be saints."*

*"Lions aren't particular about you speaking to them like you do to humans. They listen chiefly with their eyes, a thing the human brute is almost always incapable of."*

Listening with their eyes is perhaps why women tend to be more compassionate than men. They tune in with more of themselves than men do.

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The following three quotes are what my roommate, Scott Rudy, shared with me in our one year in the minor seminary, 1951-52. We both had transferred from college to learn Latin in preparation for the major seminary, he from what is now Carnegie Mellon University and I from the University of Pittsburgh. We felt that entering the seminary brought us closer to our destiny.

*"The best way to kill time is to work it to death."*

*"Those who don't give up, get up."*

*"Our life is but a prayer."*

Scott and I both felt dissatisfied where we had been and wanted something more. We agreed that what goes on inside needs to be in the forefront of our lives. We both felt the seminary was the place to go to find our deeper selves.

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*"Humility is truth,"*—Thomas Aquinas.

*"We can be pretty sure we are humble, if we are never offended,"*—Fr. Alan Madden, Retreat Master, September, 1952.

I sensed truth in both statements, as well as in the fact that at times I am offended. Judging from the times I feel offended, I can conclude one thing, and that is I have a long way to go if I want to be humble.



### 3 WORKINGS FOR THIS WORLD

I found the following suggestions valuable for showing how different people, mostly renowned figures, look upon life. They show their regard for what they encounter and what might be done to improve the situation. They were the source for much reflection on my part. I have always been captivated by ideas for a great cause, and I think they worked in my unconsciousness till I found the model I wanted to pursue. Underneath it, I know I'm a hero worshipper.

*"The man who knows how will always have a job, but the man who knows why will be his boss,"*

Mr. Carl Seiber, whom I worked for after school in Carl's Pastry Shop during my junior and senior years of high school and in the summer of 1947. He was a great boss who treated me as a man although I was still a teenager. He tried to show me the way in a business world.

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*"Without the help of thousands of others,  
anyone of us would die naked and starved,"*  
—Franklin Delano Roosevelt when our  
country was in deep depression.

I reflected for a moment, even now, and realized how much each of us depends on others. Maybe a firm belief in these words led Roosevelt to initiate many national work projects for the benefit of the country and for people out of work. The effects of good deeds go on.

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*"You make a living by what you get.  
You make a life by what you give,"*

Winston Churchill, a great man believing giving is greater than getting. If it gives life, that's all that's needed.

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*"Whoever is out of patience is out of  
possession of his soul,"—Francis Bacon.  
"Patience is your degree of understanding  
the purpose of things,"—Edgar Cayce.*

I don't think patience is highly prized, but I know how good I feel when I let it rule the occasion. I just wish I could do it all the time. I have always admired a man or woman calm in the midst of a storm.

*"True Glory lies in the Silent Conquest of Ourselves,"*—Joseph P. Thompson.

I saw Thompson's Self Conquest as the antidote for impatience and an incentive for the Greater Understanding of the purpose of things mentioned in the previous quotes.

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*"Walk two weeks in a man's moccasins before you criticize him,"*—Old Indian Proverb.

This saying warned me of the danger of judging. Can anyone of us ever really know what's going on inside someone else? The proverb tells me to go to love instead of criticizing.

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*"For eternity and always there is only one now, one and the same now; the present is the only thing that has no end."*—Erwin Schroedinger.

A good friend commented on this notion: "The past is history, the future is mystery. Now is a gift; that is why it is called the present." If the present never ends, it is an inestimable gift, and gives me so much to think about. Always looking ahead, as I am prone to do, can make me lose the precious gift of now.

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*"We crucify ourselves between two thieves,  
regret for yesterday and fear for tomorrow."*

*"Nothing can work me damage except myself."*

These two quotes *came* from our first year  
theology speech course by Father Selner, S.S.,  
1954-55.

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*"Don't cry because it's over; smile because  
it happened,"—Dr. Seuss."*

I wish I had heard this as a child. It may have turned my  
hurtful tears into tears of joy.

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*"You can't have it all, but when you know  
what's important, you don't want it all  
anyway,"—Mark Sanborn."*

In determining what was important to me, there was so  
much of the "all" that I no longer cared for. I had found a  
treasure when I decided to enter the seminary. Letting go  
became easy, an even joyful thing to do.

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*"Now that I have a sheep and a cow,  
everybody bids me good night,"—Benjamin  
Franklin's AUTOBIOGRAPHY.*

*"A truly great man never stoops to an emperor, nor tramples on a worm,"—*  
Benjamin Franklin's AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Given Franklin's two examples, I contrasted the kind of man dazzled by riches and the man who would neither stoop to an emperor nor trample on a worm. It's easy to write about failings and successes as I am doing, but much harder to live an ideal. I find myself winning and losing the battle, but I keep trying to do the right and honorable thing.

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Mahatma Gandhi is someone who lived and died for his ideal. He would not surrender to wealth and power but lifted the weak and lowly. I understand that John Ruskin's book, UNTO THIS LAST, changed the life of this great Indian leader and liberator. Here is a quote from Ruskin that Gandhi personified in his life and work:

*"That country is richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has always the widest, helpful influence, both personal and by means of his profession, over the lives of others."*

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A Christmas message from Mahatma Gandhi,  
January 31, 1931:

*"I should not care if it was proved by someone that the man called Jesus never lived, and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writer's imagination. For the Sermon on the Mount would still be true for me."*

The incomparable value and outstanding lesson in what Gandhi says here is that he found words to live by regardless of external circumstances and of who said them. It revealed the conviction in Gandhi's heart that drove him to do so much for his fellow countrymen and for people all over the world.

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I will let the following speak for themselves. In each and all I found a precious nugget aptly and succinctly phrased. You, dear reader, can determine for yourself whether these sayings have value for you or not.

*"God gave us two ears and one mouth, so that we may hear twice as much as we speak,"* —Epictetus.

*"A true man of honor feels humbled himself when he cannot help humbling others,"*  
—General Robert E. Lee.

*"Personality is to a man what perfume is to a flower,"*—Charles M.Schwab.

*"A thing that nobody believes cannot be proved too often,"*—George Bernard Shaw.

*"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"*  
—Pat Byrnes in a St. Thomas Homiletic  
Meeting, Sunday, April 19, 1953.

*"A man died when he stopped giving and  
began grabbing,"*—E. J. Edwards in THE  
CHOSEN, July, 1953.

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the  
things I cannot change, The courage to  
change the things I can, And wisdom to  
know the difference,"*—Motto of Alcoholics  
Anonymous, quoted by Fr. Harley, S.J.,  
December 6, 1955.

*"Pain makes me think  
Thought makes me wise  
Wisdom makes life endurable,"*—from the  
play, "Tea-house of the August Moon," July,  
1956.

*"Sometimes the best things we do are no  
good, and what we think very little of turns  
out to be our best work,"*—Christmas  
vacation, 1957.

*"If the present is darkest, the future can only  
be brighter,"*—Christmas vacation, 1957.

*"May you be intoxicated with the wine of  
created beauty, nourished by the bread of  
earthly reality, and strengthened by the  
discipline of human struggle,"*—Teilhard de  
Chardin, Plymouth, MI, 1967-68.

*"The more I learn about myself, the more I become a different self,"—Ashleigh Brilliant, 1979.*

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### **Lighter Touches**

Lest I am too serious, I will take a lighter turn to close this chapter of "Workings for This World."

*"The world laughs in flowers,"—Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

*"Flowers...are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world,"—Emerson again.*

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An insightful mind like Mark Twain's helps us keep our sense of humor even about serious matters. The following drew many laughs when he first said them, and still do when read today.

*"If you don't read the newspapers you are uninformed, if you do read the newspapers, you are misinformed."*

*"No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session."*

*"There is no distinctly Native American  
criminal class, except Congress."*

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## 4 FOOTPRINTS OF ANOTHER WORLD

*"There is hunger in every man's heart to be more than he is,"—John W. Lynch in THIS LITTLE WHILE, February, 1955.*

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*"The reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once,"—Mozzie on the TV show "White Collar" quoting Albert Einstein, 2008*

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*"The truth dazzles gradually, or else the world would be blind,"—Emily Dickinson.*

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Elizabeth Barret Browning's artful play on Moses' burning bush:

*"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes—  
The rest sit around and pluck blackberries."*

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*"Greet everything that comes to my door as  
if it were a guide from beyond,"—Rumi.*

The guide from beyond may be in the form of my wife mentioning how dirty my water bottle is. The guide may be in the form of the car driving "too slowly" in front of me. The guide may be a child crying that his older brother hit him. The guide may be the millions suffering every day from genocide or lack of food. How do I react? If there is such a thing as Providence, how could these occurrences be otherwise than what Rumi advises—a guide from beyond? So many sufferings are man-made. God helps man by coming to his door to let him set things right. I tell myself, "When opportunity knocks, I better take advantage of it and listen with my heart."

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*"Don't call him 'this' or 'that.'  
In the love I know, what word would stay?  
Language is just a handful of dust  
A breath of his would blow away."*

Rumi again. The great visionary and poet expressed his love for God this way, which taught me the inadequacy of words.

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*"All mystics come from the same country  
and speak the same language,"—Lawrence  
LeShan.*

I still think words are insufficient, but mystics have their own understanding of the language they speak.

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Opening Lines From William Blake's AUGURIES  
OF INNOCENCE:

*"To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour."*

To see what Blake sees in these lines made me want to experience the same.

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Blake sees God's presence everywhere:

*"The pride of the peacock is the glory of God  
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God  
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God  
The nakedness of woman is the work of God."*

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*"After Zen, I saw everything in a new light. Up until that time, I was trying to build a relationship with Jesus. Then there was a shift from relationship to identity. I AM JESUS! Right now! With all my limitations!"—Rev. Robert Kennedy, Jesuit priest and Zen Master.*

Fr. Kennedy sees as virtuous establishing a relationship with God or Jesus. But he also feels there is another way, that of identification or oneness realized.

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*"The Big Bang was really the roaring laughter of God voluntarily getting lost for the millionth time,"—Ken Wilber,*

Wilber is considered a modern mystic by many people. His words showed me that we discover and also lose.

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*"When I am not an object, I am God. When I seek an object, I cease to be God. Rather, I can rest as the Witness, which is already free of objects, free of time, and free of searching,"—Wilber again.*

I hear Wilber saying that objectifying anything creates duality destroying oneness. Residing in my being without projecting lets things be as they are.

*"I had no God and was free of God, because I was God. But when I left that state and took my created being again, then I had a God,"— paraphrasing Meister Eckhart.*

It reminded me how I waver from one state to another, from one insight to another.

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*"Stillness is the language God speaks, everything else is a bad translation,"  
—Eckhart Tolle.*

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*"If I had a God whom I could understand, I should never consider him God,"—Saint Augustine, Albert the Great, and many others.*

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*"Bach gave us God's Word,  
Mozart gave us God's Laughter,  
Beethoven gave us God's Fire,  
God gave us MUSIC  
so that we can pray without words."  
—Inscription from German Opera House.*

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*"Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray,"—Kabir.*

Kabir so concisely and beautifully summed up what I believe and am trying to practice.

*"The world is illusory;  
God alone is real,  
God is the world,"—Sri Ramana Maharshi*

One conclusion I drew from the sayings above is that I can relate to anything I choose, but to really know something I have to become it in some way. Becoming it can happen in an instant or as a process, sometimes one and sometimes the other. It makes me take another look at what and how oneness exists. The thought struck me that I would need a complete makeover from what I normally am. Is that what Enlightenment is, making ourselves over to be One?

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## 5 BRIDGE TO ANOTHER WORLD

*"Just as a candle cannot burn without fire,  
men cannot live without a spiritual life,"*  
—Buddha.

When I read this, I thought immediately of meditation. In meditating I would ponder a saying like this and see how my sitting in meditation differed from my worldly life. I thought spirituality consisted of practices like meditation, prayer, church services, devotions, etc., not realizing in my early ignorance that I was separating spiritual life from ordinary main-stream living. When I read it to my wife, she said that thinking about her spiritual life reminds her of Rumi's saying: *"Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there."*

Helen continued, *"Yesterday, at the mall, when entering a store the woman behind me said, 'What do you do with a man who's always complaining?'"* While laughing, I answered, *"Leave him at home and go shopping!"* Then the woman followed me while I was

`browsing through the purse department, all the time talking to me. After a bit her behavior annoyed me and I stopped paying attention to her. She left, but in a way I felt bad thinking I had lost the opportunity for loving kindness."

Later at home, Helen told me about her experience, *"I met her in the field of oneness, when I told her to leave him and go shopping. But then I left her alone in the field when I refused to pay her the attention I know she was seeking. I was disappointed in myself because I want to be a better person than that."*

Rumi's words stirred me to see how my deeper urges want me to be united with the people in my life and not just meditate. Recently, I disagreed with a confrere on aiding the poor in other countries, and after we parted, I stayed with the disagreement in my mind and dwelt on it. It struck me that the echo of an angry word/thought continues to resound in me. It probably does me more harm than the person I directed it at. I did not have to say that. I could let the disagreement stand and at the same time pull him into a compassionate embrace as a fellow traveling human being. Love to the field of oneness is always open to me.

My discussion with my friend and Helen's experience with a fellow shopper opened my eyes to the fact that spirituality cannot be separated from ordinary life. I have to bring the two together in the oneness I am striving for, in the field of Rumi beyond disagreements.

Everyone has her or his own bridge to another world. We saw above how Buddha's words stirred Helen

and me to see what spirituality is for each of us. That sparked a remembrance of Rumi's famous line about finding a common field beyond wrong-doing and right-doing. In our experiences now, Helen and I often comment to each other whether we were in Rumi's field or not.

### **Spirituality is Love**

In an illuminating poem by St. Thomas Aquinas,  
ON BEHALF OF LOVE, God addresses the Inquisition:

*"Have you ever been in a conversation when children  
entered the room,  
and then you ceased speaking  
because your wisdom knew they were not old enough to  
benefit—to understand.*

*As exquisite is your world, most everyone in it is spiritually  
young.*

*Spirituality is love. And love never wars  
with the minute, the day,  
one's self and others.  
Love would rather die than maim a limb  
a wing.*

*Dear, anything that divides man from man, earth from sky,  
light and dark,  
one religion from another...  
O, I best keep silent, I see a child  
just entered the room."*

Aquinas highlights how sensitive and tender love is. It made me ask myself, "Am I willing to be that sensitive and tender with the people in my life?"

I have known for a long time that I have a hard edge in my behavior when confronted in certain situations. I become argumentative and hold my ground. I think I am defending myself from people that may be unkind or deceitful, stemming out of vivid incidents in my childhood. My mother, brother, my sixth grade teacher, and then my girlfriend, and later my boss did hurtful and harmful things to me. They embarrassed, lied, or took advantage of me when I was in need. Whether true or not doesn't matter because it was the way I perceived the incidents. I also had to remember that it was my perception, and it actually may have been otherwise.

Much later, when I got insight into my behavior, I did two things to correct my disposition. I first re-imagined how each of those "unkind persons" of my youth could have acted differently. They did not leave me or hurt me but understood my condition. I saw them as being considerate and acted kindly toward me to help me in my plight. The second thing I did was to see the incidents as logs that I could pile in a boat, catch it on fire, and push it out into the sea. By doing this, I could let it pass. It would help me let go of what I was holding onto, the "stories" written in my consciousness. I do this every time the "negative situation" comes up in my mind. Not only does it untie the cords binding me, it also releases the strands I hold of other people's guilt.

Much later, when it was still bothering me, I decided on a third action I could take. I wrote a letter to each of them, speaking openly and accusing them of what they did wrong. I fully vented my frustration, knowing I would never send the letters. A few days later, I wrote a letter to each again, forgiving them, asking their forgiveness if I was wrong, and telling them I was trying to forgive myself. I wouldn't send these letters either. I was just trying to take the higher road with them and with myself.

In practicing these "corrections," it dawned on me that if I wanted to be a loving person, I had to take these people into my embrace as well. Is there room in me to accept what I encounter, or do I close myself off from the infinity that could be mine? I AM includes all, which I will discuss later. The forgiveness is not to change the people I felt offended me, but to untangle the knot I held within me. Maybe there actually was nothing to forgive; what I needed to free me was to erase the imprint I had engraved into my mind. I can feel the burden lifting every day. I was free not only in my mind but free to go out to others in an uninhibited way.

Correcting what I saw amiss in myself reminded me of a grand doctrine playing out in my life. Spiritual writers emphasize the necessity of a strong ethical factor if I want to progress as a good human being, let alone advance in meditation. Buddhism in particular struck me for the way it breaks down rightful living. From the right understanding of my own suffering, it moves to right intention, then to right speech, and finally to right action.

Aquinas unifies much for us in his poem when he says spirituality is love. Further movement toward oneness happens because Scripture already said that God is love, and secondly, because love is considered to be the highest form of righteous behavior. I know I want to be a loving person in all situations. I want to meet others in that field of love beyond personal preferences of all kinds. And I know I'm not myself if I am not loving. Only in love can I feel at home in my own skin.

Here again I turn to individual quotations with personal comments. Each quote can be a subject for meditation, and the comment following is how I used it in my practice. I have found meditation to be like a journey. I embark on it, expecting one thing, and am surprised when something entirely different shows up. Columbus set out, I am told, to find a shorter passage to India and the Far East. Thinking he succeeded, he called the natives he encountered Indians. The voyage wasn't at all what he expected, and what he thought were inhabitants of the sub-continent of India turned out to be people of a whole new world he discovered.

*"We do not pray in order that we may change God's Will; we pray rather to change our own,"—Fulton J. Sheen, Spring, 1951.*

When I read this I realized that it was God's will that I should be praying for. I started praying that way and the practice changed my life. I felt that was the springboard for my deciding to enter the seminary that fall.

*"Your effort is the bondage,"—Sri Ramana Maharshi.*

I have learned that sticking with effort, striving as I often do, is ego-centered. In it I am trying to prove my dominance. I need to let go.

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*"Blades of grass are the handwriting of God and flowers are His capital letters,"—Rev. John A. O'Brien, TRUTHS MEN LIVE BY, spring, 1951.*

God is everywhere; we just have to know how to look.

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*"God and one constitute a majority,"—Rev. O'Brien again.*

If I truly seek God's will, I don't have to worry what others think or say. I don't need their agreement.

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*"If the sun and moon should doubt, They'd immediately go out,"—AUGURIES OF INNOCENCE, William Blake.*

This quote made me think that there is a force in the universe that keeps things going, whatever their length of life may be.

God allows the world to go on as it is. I cannot know that God and the world are one, unless my outlook allows it to be true for me. I accept what the Upanishads say,

*" I am That, You are That, All this is That."*

Higher consciousness may arrive at such affirmations. I accept that, but what helps me more is using the Evangelist John's view of faith which is an action and not an idea. For John, believing and knowing are the same. John reflects a truth of the Old Testament where absence of love of God on earth is equated with absence of the knowledge of God. He is saying that knowledge of God is impossible without love. With love it gives greater intimacy with God than seeing Him.

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The following two quotes are from Thomas Merton, SEVEN STORY MOUNTAIN, winter, 1952.

*"All things in heaven are just a little out of reach."*

*"All that is necessary to be a saint is to want to be me."*

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This following quote by Thomas Merton is from his later work, ZEN AND THE BIRDS OF APPETITE, 1968.

*"The real drive...is toward an enlightenment which is precisely a breakthrough into what is beyond system, beyond cultural and social structures, and beyond religious rite and belief."*

The extinction of the social and cultural self is a breakthrough into a realm of mystical beauty in which the "self" is lost and then reconstituted. I particularly liked the way Merton sees enlightenment not as an abandonment of the self but as a renewal of the "I AM." It indicates the need to unravel and assemble what is already in me.

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*"In a life-time we get very few chances to be brave, but many, many chances not to be cowards."*

*"Don't look for great things to do; look for things to do in a great way."*

These last two quotes are taken from a spiritual talk given by Fr. Linn, S.S., November 11, 1954. When I wanted to include these words in this book in 2018, I was thinking of putting them in the chapter entitled "Workings for This World." Then it dawned on me that to act as the statements suggest, more than a worldly motive is needed. Whatever form good actions take, they spring from spirit.

*"Only those who love want to die for others,"—Plato.*

Plato's pronouncement amazed me and showed me the heights love could scale out of regard for our fellowman.

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*"We know God when we know that we know Him not,"—Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard in THE MEANING OF GOD, March 8, 1952.*

Suhard's comment reminds me of what many thinkers have said about their belief, which I quoted in the previous chapter,

*"If I had a god that I could understand, I would not believe in him."*

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*"God sleeps in the rock, dreams in the plant, stirs in the animal, and awakens in man,"  
—Ibn Arabi, Sufi mystic, poet, philosopher, died 1240.*

The quote calls me to dwell on the four stages of God's presence, and the different states of awareness I am capable of.

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## 6 LIVING IN BOTH WORLDS

### Early Transporters

"If Christianity had been founded by a man, the chief emphasis would have been on the Beatitudes and not on the cross,"—Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, March 9, 1952.

The statement made me wonder whether any human being would have chosen the cross for any purpose. I couldn't help but recall words from Isaiah 55:8:

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways—It is Yahweh who speaks. Yes the heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts."*

I also heard a joke recently that pointed up the difference between how God sees things and how I see them. This

man is talking to God and asks Him, "Lord, what is a million years to you?" God answers, "A minute." Then the man asks, "What is a million dollars to you." God answers, "A penny." Finally, the man says, "Lord, give me a penny!" God answers, "Wait a minute."

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*"If there is something called Truth, we have no right to think what we like; if there is Goodness, we have no right (in fact it becomes less than human) to do what we like,"—Eric Gill, April 3, 1952.*

As difficult as it seemed to me, I asked, "Could the cross at one and the same time be Truth and Goodness?"

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*"It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or a civilization—it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt,"—Graham Greene in THE POWER AND THE GLORY, May, 1952.*

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*"The smaller we become the more we must shed on others our love of God,"—May 21, 1952.*

Smaller meant to me to become humble. And if humility is truth, as Aquinas says, then becoming smaller actually means to become a greater person.

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*"If I think it is hard for man to be God-like, how much harder it must have been for God to be man-like!"—November 21, 1952.*

Some may object to applying ease or difficulty to God's actions, but it does not detract from His greatness and love in becoming a human being.

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*"A being below the human level exists more perfectly in man's intelligence than it does in itself—for in us its existence is spiritualized. Hence, when we deal with objects on our own level or below it, our intellect is superior to our will. On the other hand, when the good we seek is above the human level and especially in God Who transcends all creatures, **THE WILL ATTAINS TO HIM MORE PERFECTLY THAN THE INTELLIGENCE**. Hence, the love of God is better than the knowledge of God, and on the contrary, the knowledge of bodily things is better than the love of them,"—Thomas Merton and St. Thomas Aquinas in **ASCENT TO TRUTH**, November, 1952.*

In reading this I said to myself that, although it may be true, many of us cannot make such a fine distinction. It is enough for me to know what is good and to love everyone and everything as well as I can.

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*"He came a light into the midst of men to make them realize the nearness of eternity,"*—THE SEMINARIAN AT HIS PRIE-DIEU, Robert Nash, S.J., December, 1954.

I think these words help answer for me why Christ walked among us.

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As a child I was taught that prayers are ACTS, an acronym for Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication. I was also told that prayer is man's strength and God's weakness, which made me feel good that I had a kind of "power" over God. Later it struck me that my notion was confirmed in my first year of theology when Fr. Laubacher, S.S. said in spiritual reading that

*"Prayer moves the hand that moves the world,"*—January, 1955.

Fr. Laubacher was rector of St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, Md. He was a model for me and was so gracious to give the homily at my first Mass.

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*"Early one morning the apostles missed Him, and they rightly surmised that they would find Him alone in prayer. One can see them standing around Him as He kneels motionless before them. Probably, indeed, the sight forced themselves to their knees, too. They keep watching Him, that erect Figure, that face alight with the divine love. They dare not intrude, but when He comes out of His prayer, they join their hands, and with eyes fixed upon Him, they make their petition, 'Lord, teach US to pray,' "*—Robert Nash, S.J. in THE SEMINARIAN AT HIS PRIE-DIEU, Winter, 1954-55.

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### **Later Reflections.**

*"God is reflected in all creatures as a beautiful landscape is reflected in a pool, but if we try to drink its waters, we only shatter the image,"*—Spiritual reading, 1953-54.

I deliberately saved this quote to be placed immediately after "Early Transporters." When I read and wrote this in my journal back in the 1950's, I thought it contained truth. I regarded it then as a warning not to get overly involved in worldly affairs. But I decided to remove the quote from earlier in the book and placed it here under "Later

Reflections." For as I look at it today in 2018, I re-thought the quote knowing I have to live in two worlds. I am challenged to rightly use all of God's created goods so that our Oneness with them and with Their Author is intensified. I think now that everything is God, not as He is, but as it is.

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*Birth and renewal...*

*"Each day is a beginning,  
Each day I am new.  
God ever creates me,  
And leads me to you,"* —Baltimore, MD,  
1966-67.

I regarded the "you" as anyone or anything that confronts me this day.

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*"Make ready for the Christ whose smile  
Like lightening sets free the song of  
Everlasting Glory that now sleeps beneath  
Your paper flesh like dynamite,"*  
—Christmas house card, St. John's  
Seminary, Plymouth, MI, 1968.

I loved the image of Christ setting free what is buried deep inside me. It can happen only if my life and behavior somewhat resembles his.

*"I who have died am alive again  
Today, and this is the sun's birthday;*

*This is the birthday of  
Life and of love...  
(And so,)  
We can never be born enough,"*  
—e.e. cummings, 1969.

I thought of cummings's quote as poetically paraphrasing the entry immediately before it.

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*"Christianity is peace, joy, love. It is self-renewing like nature's secret awakening at the beginning of spring,"—Pope John XXIII, 1969.*

Another way of verbalizing the last two entries.

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*"We are as young as our faith...  
As old as our doubt  
As young as our hope  
As old as our despair.  
So long as our hearts receive  
The message of beauty,  
Hope, cheer, courage,  
Grandeur, and power  
From the earth...  
From man...and from God...  
So long we are young,"—George Webster  
Douglas, 1968-69.*

It doesn't matter what the source is for our inspiration.  
What matters is that we can be resourceful and be renewed.

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*"Choose life, only that and always; and at whatever risk to let life leak out, to let it wear away by the mere passage of time, to withhold giving it and spending it, is to choose nothing,"—Sr. Helen Kelley on a student's ordination card, 1969.*

Sister Kelley's remarks reminded me of the ancient Roman saying, *"Primum Vivere"* or *"First Live."*

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*"they are afraid of climbing down  
from the idiotic tinpot heaven of ours  
because they don't know what they'll find  
when they do get down*

*they needn't bother, most of them will never  
get down at all,  
they've got to stay up.*

*and those that do descend have got to suffer  
a sense change into something new and  
strange.*

*become aware as leaves are aware  
and fine as flowers are fine  
and fierce as fire is fierce*

*and subtle, silvery, tinkling, and rippling  
as rain water*

*and still a man, but a man reborn from the  
rigidity  
of fixed ideas*

*resurrected from the death of mechanical  
motion and emotion.*"—D. H. Lawrence,  
January, 1970.

I love Lawrence's description of the quagmire anyone of us can fall into. Even more intense is the life we can aspire to, which he describes in a subtle but satisfying way.

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*"The realization of the Nondual traditions is uncompromising: there is only Spirit, there is only God, there is only Emptiness in all its radiant wonder. All the good and all the evil, the very best and the very worst, the upright and the degenerate—each and all are radically perfect manifestations of Spirit precisely as they are. There is nothing but God, nothing but the Goddess, nothing but Spirit in all directions, and not a grain of sand, not a speck of dust, is more or less Spirit than any other."*

*"This realization undoes the Great Search that is the heart of the separate-self sense. The separate-self is, at bottom, simply a*

*sensation of seeking,*"—Ken Wilber in THE EYE OF SPIRIT.

Wilber's remarks convinced me that I must be a finder rather than a seeker, and I had no doubt that this splendid treasury was buried deep in myself.

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Ken Wilber comments further on the marvelous anthologies contained in Lex Hixon's COMING HOME, which he called

*"The single best introductory book ever written on the world's great mystical traditions."*

He adds,

*"And the supreme insight shared by all the great traditions is simply this: absolute Spirit or Godhead is the ultimate source, essence, and identity of each and every individual being. Absolute Spirit is one's own True Nature or Original Face, which is the face of the cosmos as well. There is only God; and so these anthologies eloquently proclaim."*

Any comment on Wilber or on Hixon would be superfluous.

*"I enjoy watching the glory of the Father unfold as my personal experience."*

*"There is no such thing as God AND...."*

—Joel S. Goldsmith

I have long accepted as true these two statements from Joel S. Goldsmith, which highlights our oneness with the Supreme. The challenge for me is to live them every day of my life.

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*"The innermost and the highest part of the soul creates and receives God's Son and becoming-God's-Son in the bosom and heart of the heavenly Father,"—Meister Eckhart.*

This is one of the most outstanding statements in Christian spirituality. Becoming One has to happen somehow, and Eckhart points the way. He says,

*"A good man, in so far as he is good, has God's attributes not only in that he loves and works everything that he loves and works for the sake of God, whom he loves in everything and for whom he works, but he also loves and works for the sake of himself, who is the one loving. For what he loves, that is God, Father, Unbegotten; and he who loves is God, Son, Begotten."*

He adds of the man so gifted that

*"the impression and the influence of the highest and most exalted nature is to him more joyful and delightful than his self's own nature and being."*

I read this in 2015 and discussed it in one of my other books, THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY.

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### **Love Unites Our Worlds**

Love's Questions and Answers: Can love totally fulfill me? Can I trust love to do that?

It cannot be denied that it is also frightening that an emotion like love can do much damage. History shows me that undying allegiance to one's beliefs can lead to the slaughter of those not so aligned.

I want to love and at the same time I fear when it comes to loving a person. I am afraid that the love will not be returned or that I may lose control, which makes me unwilling to take a chance on love. The excuse not to love often stems from my own doubt and insecurity. What often blocks me is learned behavior that overcomes an instinctive thrust to trust and love as a child. I do have the instinct to fight or flight, but I also have other instincts as well. I always have a choice. *"Do I trust Love?"* Love is alive and changes. Love sometimes tells me to pass up the well-

marked path and take the unblazed trail. Often I cannot understand love or reason with it because reasoning is for the head and not for the heart. I have to be magnanimous, appealing to my own idealism, to love unconditionally. It is possible to bask in the love that I am determined to extend to others. An interior thrust of love connected to worldly realities can bring about the change that is needed in me and in the world.

What I write is an attempt to move myself and others in the direction of unconditional love. Beginning with myself, "*I am.*" I am husband, writer, reader, car driver, cat-owner, lover, shopper, eater, movie-goer, etc. Am I the best that I can be in each case? Or do I create a hierarchy that determines what is important and what is not important? All the things that I am is how I manifest to the world and how the world will be changed.

How much can I take in? How much can I absorb? This is beyond the mind's capacity. The realization cannot be thought, seen or worded. I am and I think all of us are more or less addicted to thinking. And I tend to think it's all about me. The intellect is a great servant but a tyrannical master. The heart can save me. Do I trust love enough to take me there? I often am afraid to love because I think that I may lose control. In doing so I use a mental shenanigan to keep away from the heart.

Mind's nature is to divide and oppose. When this mental process ends, a new consciousness is born. Mind creates a chasm while the heart crosses the divide. The new awareness seeking inclusion is love in action. Love

surmounts all obstacles and divisions.

At root, unadulterated consciousness is absolute love. Once free from the needs and concerns of the solitary self, total awareness is utter love. We can dwell in an inner space of freedom and all-inclusive awareness or in the confining camp of my own ego. My nature is to love. Our interior life determines more than anything else our degree of fulfillment. The goal is personal transformation from within. What I have most control of is myself.

As I let things happen and let go of myself, I like to say to it all: *"Ah! Is that so? And if that is so, then it's OK."*

To keep my sense of wonder, I frequently say to myself, *"Ah awe, it is so!"* This is especially helpful when an unpleasant circumstance pops up.

Change comes with understanding. In fact, there is no change without it. Effort is ego and tension creating, and because of tension I cannot see things clearly. Seeing things clearly is understanding.

I cannot understand unless I accept, and accepting is loving—Only when I love can I truly know. Understanding and accepting move in tandem.

When I love the energy moves. If I want to know my inner being and the phenomenon of energies, then I must love.

Many theologians and spiritual writers have said that God cannot be known but that He can be loved. My own opinion is that I can know something about God just

as I can know something about myself. But there is far more about God that I don't know, as there is much about myself that I can still learn.

Someone or something makes the world work. Someone or something breathes me. The Unmanifested Absolute becomes Absorbed Manifestation. I am aware that I'm putting tabs on something I only partially understand, and so, the Unknown, the Mystery, stays intact. Thus, I can be aware of and love the Unknown as far greater than myself but of which I am a part.

I like to see God and myself not as two entities side by side, but rather, myself as a small circle and God as a larger circle completely enveloping mine. God is the center in everything that is, and His circumference encloses all. There is a shared identity while mine is ever expanding toward God's all-embracing presence.

I am trying to create an image of what I see enunciated in scripture. In John 4:24, Jesus is not comparing internal with external worship. He says that we must worship in the Spirit: "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.*" The worshipper is IN the Spirit. It is the Spirit that is worshipping God in us, the Spirit in us as us.

Paul makes the same identification when he cites God praying to God: "*The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words to pray properly, the Spirit Himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put in words, and God Who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he*

*means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God,"—(Romans 8:26-27).*

I think it is difficult to recognize God's gift not only because of our dualistic way of thinking, but also because we understand so little about spirit. Jesus sees our difficulty when he says to the Samaritan woman, *"If only you recognized God's gift,"* (4:10).

These facts enchant me. I don't consciously seek to know more, yet new insights keep arising. Proof is in the extent of these writings. All I need to do is love. If I do so, I am in God and God is in me. It has made my life and my life's work so much easier. Is my mind sturdy enough to survive living in my heart?

God dwelling within me or my becoming God is not possible as long as I fear God. Just to be clear, I become God, not as He is, but as I am. At some point finding overtakes seeking, finding in myself what I am meant to be. In a sense, I have to father or mother myself. Jesus said, *"Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate"* (Luke 6:36).

I must incarnate the intellectual concept,

*"I am God, not as He is, but as I am,"*

into my daily action of thinking, seeing, loving, doing. It is clear to me that I am not doing this. I can't do this unless love is operative somewhere in my being, which again shows the necessity of God, Who is love, and I being but One. That love is in me but needs uncovered. A sense of

wonder pervades as to how this is brought about. To take it into myself, I need to feel it in some way. It is a mistake to want to meet God apart from myself at some future date. It's a double-ended mistake because it ends seeing Him now and in me.

There needs to be an inner realization that it's all God. God is life, life in all its multiple forms. He is the lamp I just turned on, spreading His light over my desk. He is in my fingertips as they touch the letters on my keyboard to write these words. He is in the glass of water on the desk beside my iPad. He is in my cat, Charmer, curled up on the lounge chair beside me. He is the chair, the wood and fabric that made it, the people who put it together, the clerks who sold it to me. God is my gratitude for bringing all this about. Life itself is holy. I have been brought forth to see the face of God in all its splendid wonder if I only know how to look. What a mistake to jump past all this that I have been given, all a lesson revealing itself to me and teaching me in one way or another. It is so easy to overlook so much in always seeking and reaching for what lies ahead. I miss God Who is always present in every moment of my life. The present doesn't take anything away from the future, but the future can rob me of the present.

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## 7 LOVE IS GOD IN US

Love has long been my favorite subject. Love has many faces, and the following quotations each paint a profile on how love is seen and experienced, first by the given author then by me.

*"Love is the bending of one's will to the will of another,"*—Fr. Ford, chaplain at the University of Pittsburgh, Spring, 1951.

I thought this would be hard for me because I prided myself on having a strong will. My question at that time came down to whose will we are talking about, and how much I can know of another's will.

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*"There is only one force in the world that is capable of overcoming love, another and stronger love,"*—Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard, December, 1952.

If this is true, when I go astray it must be because I choose an egotistical love instead of a genuine love.

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*"Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because men had loved her...this primary devotion to a place or thing is a source of creative energy,"—G. K. Chesterton, ORTHODOXY, May, 1952.*

Love is dynamic and powerful, no matter how directed.

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*"Love is most likely of all to spring from another's need of us, and the fact of spending ourselves for another, always generates new life in us,"—THE REED OF GOD, Caryll Houselander, retreat, 1952.*

This seemed too simplistic to me as I questioned that love "always generates new life." I know people who got bitter taking care of others or someone in particular, such as a nurse I knew who said, *"I got burned out at my job."*

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*"What is that love worth which has not been tried?"—Mother Mary Philip, January, 1953.*

This was another statement I questioned because I thought love could grow even if not tried or tested. It told me to, "Live and learn."

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*"Tell me whom you love, and I'll tell you who you are," -African-American folk saying.*

I felt the statement would be more relevant if "*what you love*" were substituted for "*whom you love*" as "*what*" can include a person or people.

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*"Love is the connection with spirit, and one way it flows is through form. That's the state of rapture Rumi praises, the joy of being inside an intersection with the divine, which is what this world is,"—Coleman Barks commenting in his book, RUMI THE BOOK OF LOVE.*

Barks' beautiful and concise description of Rumi's poetry shows how love gets its power as well as how it is manifested. I concluded that only a trusting "inner eye" can connect with spirit and see it manifested in form.

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*"Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers not thunder,"—Rumi*

Rumi is ever after us to raise our thoughts and words into the realm of love.

*"The quest for Love changes us....The moment you start looking for Love, you start to change within and without,"—Elif Shafak quoting Shams of Tabriz in her book, "A Novel of Rumi, THE FORTY RULES OF LOVE."*

I think Shafak's statement is true and beautiful. I can only add that once I have found the love I cherish, the "quest" and the "start" are ended. I move from being a seeker to a finder.

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One should keep the intellect satisfied and yet be careful not to spoil it. Intellect and love are made of different materials. Intellect ties people in knots and risks nothing, but love dissolves all tangles and risks everything.

Intellect is always cautious and advises,

*'Beware too much ecstasy,'*

whereas love says,

*'Oh, never mind! Take the plunge!'"—Elif Shafak quoting Shams again.*

It was so easy for me to live by my thoughts for a large part of my life. I believe and trust that I am now living in and out of love.

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Here once again is Shafak quoting Shams:

*"The path to the truth is a labor of the heart, not of the head. Make your heart your primary guide! Not your mind. Meet, challenge, and ultimately prevail over your nafs (false ego) with your heart. Knowing your self will lead you to the knowledge of God."*

I particularly like when he says Truth is found more in the heart than in the head. I think this is so because love resides in the will. I choose to love or not to love. And we know that a person's character is determined primarily by his will, by what he wants or intends.

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A love quotation from Edgar Cayce clearly gives preference to the heart over the head as a trustworthy guide in our spiritual venture. Edgar Cayce is the American mystic who founded the nonprofit Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.). The organization thrives in Virginia Beach and I have spent much time there participating in workshops. I was fortunate to have two of my articles published in their magazine, VENTURE INWARD. Cayce says,

*"The purpose of the heart is to know yourself to be yourself and one with God."*

Cayce clearly expands the notion and powers of the heart in finding one's purpose and destiny.

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The New Testament writers, as well as spiritual teachers since, attempt to preach what they have learned about God. Because we are ignorant of so much about God, it is extremely important to capitalize as much as we can on the little that we do know. What often is not stated, however, is that these writers are talking about something that is already in our makeup. God is love and love is our nature.

Mark says that love is greater than any holocaust or sacrifice. Matthew tells his hearers that love is above the Law and the Prophets. Luke expands the notion further in declaring that love is the source of everlasting life. Paul writes that love is above faith and hope and is the greatest gift of all. In his letter to the Corinthians he gives one of the finest descriptions ever written on the practice of love, frequently recited in the marriage ceremony of Christian churches of all denominations. John, giving us perhaps the pinnacle opinion, says that God IS love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. All are commenting on Jesus' own words: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.... You must love your neighbor as yourself," (Mark). It is comforting to know that my deepest urges are in alignment with what spiritual writers say is a divine or universal directive. I think the power of love is unfathomable. Trusting love in all

circumstances has moved me from being a seeker to a finder.

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The Final Discourse of Jesus reveals Jesus and us his followers ushered into glory without suffering or death. Before his death Jesus was highlighting the new pact he creates between God and man. This new covenant is to be interiorized and to be marked by the people's intimacy with God and knowledge of Him. The absolute use of I AM in the Old and New Testaments demonstrates the continuous presence of God in our world at all times. This indwelling is the source of any love that we have. All through the Last Discourse John stresses intimacy, indwelling, and mutual knowledge. Jesus laying down his life is an act of love that gives life to men. Love is more than a commandment; it is a gift. It is expressed in Jesus laying down his life, an act of love that gives life to men. John does not mention two commandments. There is just love.

John knew and saw that Eternal Wisdom had spoken Its Word into the temporal domain, expecting and awaiting an answer from us in time with its eternal repercussions. John understood and loved This. He wanted you and me not just to know IT but to feel and touch IT which requires the will, the dwelling place of love. He demonstrates with words that faith is not a fixed internal disposition or mental concept. And so he never uses even once the naked word faith (pisteuin in Greek); he employs the active or verbal form ninety-eight times in his Gospel to show that having faith is an active response: engaging,

trusting, committing. With God speaking and my answering, He first engages me. So will I trust? Do I trust enough to commit? I like to use the acronym etc. (engage, trust, commit) to simplify the stages of my response. Etcetera also indicates more to follow, the Mystery still to unfold.

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If all is one, and love is one, then God and the world are not two. Everything, every atom, every event, every person is unfolding and developing, which is already the same presence of God in all that is. A full grown tree is already hidden in the seed. I am one with everything. To realize this, of prime importance are watching, being present, and loving, which ends seeking and searching.

*"But the realization of unity is beyond mind. To me, nothing exists by itself. All is the Self, all is myself. To see myself in everybody and everybody in myself most certainly is love,"—Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, September 13, 2017.*

If I attempt to push God's button to see what He wants, it's like pushing the elevator button and waiting, waiting, waiting. My patience is measured by my degree of understanding the purpose of things. All of it shall be lit; not my way is OK. If I am in an uproar about the suffering in the world and blame God for it, that's a sure sign of how impatient I am and how little I understand God.

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I would like to quote here two emails I got from a good friend and teacher, a Theravada Buddhist monk, which drove home to me the power of love that is in every one of us. My wife, Helen, was about to undergo open heart surgery June 12, 2007, and I asked him and his community to pray for her recovery. This is how he responded:

*"I am so sorry to hear about your wife's open heart surgery. But I am pretty sure it will be perfect. I and our resident monks will be praying again and again on behalf her.....So, I believe that you have a great power now within your heart and mind through meditation that can radiate toward her. Turn it all in perfect love, and focusing that, let it heal her....Pure love has that power, but only when we are deeply in touch with our hearts. It is an ancient technique of self-healing too. We have not completely understood the real beauty of unconditional loving kindness yet."*

My friend then added a paragraph, for which I am ever grateful, for it is one of the best teachings I have found about the power of love:

*"If you develop love truly great, rid of the desire to hold and possess, clean love untarnished by lust, that love which does not expect to be repaid, that love which is firm but not grasping, enduring but not tied down, gentle and settled and diamond-*

*handed but unhurting, helpful but not interfering, giving more than taking, dignified but not proud, soft but not weak, that love which leads to enlightenment, that you will be washed of all ill will,"*  
—Yatinuwara Sankicha, July 9 and July 11, 2007.

I think what my Buddhist friends are talking about here is the warm sensitivity of the awakened heart. I believe we all have it, but unfortunately, that softness has often been hardened to create a shield of self-protection.

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One way I sought to develop love was in meditation to bring in love with each new thought that came to mind. It took a lot of doing to find something of love in whatever popped up. I could easily love my cat or football that came up as distractions. But sometime it was just to love that I could have a thought. I felt that in my attempts a new kind of conditioning was taking place.

Without intending it, during the day, when I had to do something, love would come to mind. If I was going to the supermarket, I thought of how I liked to drive, which is a type of love. With the groceries my wife asked me to get, I thought of how I loved the way Helen takes care of me. As to the fruit and vegetables I was buying, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's remark came to mind, which I quoted in chapter three,

*"Without the help of thousands of others,  
anyone of us would die naked and starved."*

I admired Roosevelt for his concern, and I was grateful for all the farmers sustaining me.

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I first read the following on retreat in 1951-52. I knew it came from the springtime of my spiritual journey, "the advent season of the soul," and for that reason I was not going to include it here. But upon reading it again today in September, 2017, I thought it had as much relevance today as ever. It is not for everyone but for those committed to Christ who said, "I am The Way." I will do some minor editing of this lengthy excerpt from THE REED OF GOD by Caryl Houselander:

*"Our Lord told his Apostles, 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'*

*It is the same for us. We know Him only by continually learning Him anew; we get away from false gods only by continually seeking Him; we hold Him only by losing Him.*

*He goes away from us because it is expedient for us. He goes away that we may seek Him. The sense of loss, the awareness of insufficiency, makes us long for Him as He is; it makes us willing to go out from ourselves and find Him where He is.*

*He wants us to seek, because He wants to*

*give Himself to us. It is an experience like the experience of emptiness: the emptiness must be there that He may fill it; and we must be aware of it in order that we may want Him to fill it.*

*We ought to let everything grow in us, as Christ grew in Mary. And we ought to realize that in everything that does grow quietly in us, Christ grows. We should let thoughts and words and songs grow slowly and unfold in darkness in us.*

*Sometimes the advent season of the soul is a painful experience. It may be that a soul brimmed with love becomes dumb, inarticulate, blind, seeing only darkness, unable to give things that it longs to give to a world of children asking for bread.*

*The light is shining in the darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it.*

*It is really difficult to realize that if He is formed in our life we are not beside Him but in Him; and what He asks of us is to realize that it is actually in what WE do that He wants to act and suffer.*

*It really needs to be practiced to be understood. We need to say to ourselves a thousand times a day: 'Christ wants to do this;' 'Christ wants to suffer this.'*

*Everyone offering himself to God must offer the glory of life in himself, whether it be through giving it up or rejoicing in it; through a renunciation or an embrace.*

*Love is most likely of all to spring from another's need of us, and the fact of spending ourselves for another, always generates new life in us."*

I would like to add my comment to Houselander's brilliant offerings. It was expedient for Christ to go away as he says, but not only for the reason that we should constantly be seeking him. It was necessary for Christ to go away so that the Paraclete could come. God is Spirit and we are spiritual beings. Jesus wants us living from within, from our own deepest nature, from where we can be one with him forever. In the companion book, UNCOVERING WHO WE ARE, I will delve into the role of the Spirit/Paraclete where Jesus himself speaks to us.

I do not have to be a Christian to enrich myself by what Christ offers. From a particular perspective, the life of Jesus is a historical way of describing how the Ideal, the Supreme, the Absolute can be lived in each of us. It is saying that our longing for a deeper, more intimate connection with reality comes from our own inner transformation. Jesus' words have led to heartfelt passion experienced by many of his followers. The statements in the Gospels and Paul on eating Christ's body and drinking his blood are a concrete and visceral pronouncement to become like him in heart, soul, mind, and strength. He

preaches the primacy of love, and in loving we are the same as Christ. Loving one another is the most important commandment, as he has said,

*"This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you."—John 15:12*

It is in loving that I can transform myself. No one says it is easy.

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## 8 WITNESSING AND LOVING

It seems proper here to explore what for me has been a drawbridge to the other world. For my meditation I was greatly inspired by Atisha (982-1054), an enlightened Tibetan Buddhist master. He wanted to show how different paths could be practiced together.

Atisha says, "*Grasp the principle of two witnesses.*" By watching the mind, the mind disappears. By watching the witness, he continues, the witness expands and becomes universal. The first step is negative to get rid of the mind. The second step is positive to get rooted in ultimate consciousness, called God, or Nirvana, or the Infinite, or the Supreme, or the All, or That, or the Nameless, or whatever one chooses. Watching the witness takes you to the door of what you really are!

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When I read these words and took them into meditation, I realized how domineering my mind was. For

a long time I could not get rid of thoughts. So following Atisha's instructions, I kept watching the thoughts roll by, coming and going, coming and going. But certain realizations took root, in and out of meditation.

Here is where I refer to a "Letter to Helyn" because I dwelt on this subject in chapter one. I am not what is in my mind. Neither am I the mind itself. Most of the time I think I am the mind. I just get carried away and identify with it. Once I start feeling I am the mind I cannot use it. The mind starts using me. It is true that I am focused there but "I" am not there. To show I am not the mind I can step back and watch the mind operate. The watcher is not the object watched. The sun cannot be the object it shines upon.

It's hard to leave the mind because it is not only useful and helpful but also necessary. From time immemorial it's our survival tool for living with nature and animals and our fellow man. It is basically a good instrument and necessary. Because it does so much and is so articulate, it becomes my ego. It is my "I." But this mind, this process of thinking, this ego, is just a part of me. It is a necessary part but still just a fragment of the total me. Where I get in trouble is when it tries to take over, to be my total self. It wants to rule and dominate not only me but everything it comes in contact with.

The mind is a wonderful instrument but a tyrannical master. It has swept away and buried men, women, children, nations and cultures. I must take wing to escape the mind's wild workings. I become a witness whose light

is already in me waiting, waiting to become a light that sees. Here is where I watch the witness. When I stay in the witness, light and peace come so that I love the stance I'm in.

The mind cannot stand the brightness of pure awareness. Watching is incompatible with thinking. I cannot watch and think at the same time. In pure witnessing the mind fragments, comes apart and disappears. I become aware of awareness itself. Awareness expands and become universal. And so do I.

Great power is in my own awareness, awareness that goes beyond consciousness to what I AM. What am I? I am God, not as He is, but as I am. Many have trouble accepting such an assertion. They may think of God as all-powerful, and knowing they are not that powerful, they conclude they are not anything like God. It reminds me of the passage from I Kings 19:12: *"After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper."* Once Elijah realized that the Lord was proclaimed in such a small way, he continued his mission. The episode tells me how I am like God. I must listen to the voice within me.

And what does God as me offer the world? Elijah had to learn that God extends love and mercy to his people. As being itself, I don't have to worry about myself. My concern has to be the other I AM's, to help them realize their destiny. That is love, and that is how I am God. Knowing I am God in my own small way, I realize that

thoughts and words are only symbols. I have to clothe them with my own actions, with my life as I live it.

It is helpful to see that I long for love, that I am in search of the perfectly lovable, so that I can give my heart and head to someone or something worthy of my love. And that is what Jesus shows that God is. God does all he can, not only to show us his love for us, but also to show us our worth in that He would die for us. God cares. There has to be a response from within to this offering. Estranged from my true Self, from my nature, we long for the Self that is not alone and at peace. That separation causes us to fear, and we don't realize that my self-sufficient being is free from all divisions and dissolutions. There is no separation because there is no duality. Different factors in my behavior point to the underlying love I have for myself, chiefly my search for pleasure and avoidance of pain. Once I catch a glimpse of my true self, I see that it is connected with all everywhere. The whisper of love in my heart needs to become like thunder for me to be God in the world.

The nature I have been given must be loved and trusted. Realizing that my nature is true makes self-surrender to truth easier. That nature has its own liberating power, and liberation is inevitable. Real happiness does not depend on circumstances but on activating what lies within. My struggle is really against limitations of any kind. I am drawn to possess or be identified with the greatest reality I can conceive without losing my identity. Atisha comments on it as the universal mind or ultimate consciousness or ecstasy or one's very being. It's something so brilliant it's blinding. Some call it the divine image within each of us or

the latent power of spirit that we hardly understand. Whatever name we give it, it is the hidden potential of the soul that has infinite resources for one's command. Once we clear our mind of self-doubt and negative thinking, we can instill a current of transformation that becomes a river that purifies and unfolds the soul's qualities.

It's easy to see that we want something. When I look into myself, I am aware of a constant movement toward something. The movement outward comes from within. This is what awareness drives home to me. From experience I know that external things, including people, bring us only temporary satisfaction. They have an end and some new attraction appears, till it also ends. It is love that is driving me to fulfillment. Nothing can be done without love. Whatever I do, it is always seen as good for someone or something. I cannot just love what my body presents to me. I need to love wisely, not just my body but my real being. My core being is love itself, and the multiple attractions I experience are but reflections of that abiding love that makes me what I am.

The secret is diverting attention from outward seeking, to where the mind usually wants to go, to an awareness of what's within. To the discovery of myself there can be no end. The more I discover, the more there is to uncover. It reminds me of the ever-widening circle of waves coming from a stone thrown into the still waters of a lake. The ripples keep getting wider and wider. I cannot see the true me unless I am at peace. The world is often too much with me, too often diverting attention outward. Things are not what they seem. My mind keeps making

something out of nothing, while my true nature makes somethings empty. So much more is always awaiting. I learn not to accept limitations but to challenge them.

The Synoptic Gospels tell me that love is greater than any sacrifice I can make, that it is greater than any law or teaching, that it is the source of eternal life. Then John enters and proclaims that God Himself is love and that abiding in love brings God into the world as me. For further ways that I can be God's love in the world, Paul gets very specific:

*"Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love does not come to an end. In short, there are three things that last, faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love,"—I Corinthians 13.*

These writers were either witnessing disciples of Jesus or historical narrators of their times. With minor variations in reporting, the concurring evidence is overwhelming.

I ask myself, "Can I or anyone love the way described?" Everyone has to answer for him or herself, but no one said it is easy. I think there is something of the hero in each of us. There are many examples of how love has

transcended all mortal limitations and transformed horrendous situations. Love is primarily in my intention. In working it out I try to listen to the still small voice within me, as Elijah did, beyond the "earthquakes" and "fires" that ensnare me as they almost consumed the prophet. An open and quiet mind is needed to see reality as it is.

Awareness is what I am, but I am also more. Before and prior to all mind stuff comes simple existence. I am. Here I'm concerned not with what I do but with what I am. Out of my pure being, awareness arises along with attraction. I am drawn. I am moved by what attracts me. It may be by love, by awe, by a sense of wonder. There is a loving openness within me before I can move out to anything. It has been said that awe is the beginning of wisdom. Awe encloses attraction. They are one. Consciousness unconditioned by the cares and concerns of the individual is love.

I am transfixed by the simplicity of pure awareness. I cannot see seeing or hear hearing. In me there is a center that makes all these perceptions possible. By going to that sightless, soundless, thoughtless center of pure watching or total awareness, there is a transfer to another level of consciousness. This knowing center cannot be known, but I can become it. Something drops and there is a radical openness in me to all, to become all.

All other voices are rendered silent as the Self emerges. I must be father, mother, savior, big brother to myself, to the reality identical with I am. I have great power, which means I also have great responsibility to

fulfill my own destiny. I am creator as well as destroyer, and that recognition can take away my fear. Everything is an expression of myself.

The mind silenced is the birth of expanded consciousness where the Self resides. The power of Self is like a whirlpool flushing out all thoughts so I AM may reign. There is a Self that allows experiences and is beyond all experiences. The term "mother lode" generally refers to the origin of something valuable or in great abundance. It is the rich source of what follows. The true Self, the I AM living in expanded consciousness, is that source, the mother lode. Another way to say it is that each one of us is an ocean in a drop. But I can know it only by being it. If I am open and alert, that mother lode will guide me. The search and seeking are over because I have found something of inestimable value, but growth progresses into continuing newness. Silence, peace, joy, tranquility, light at times flood consciousness and no words or thoughts are needed.

I word and think things like infinity, eternity, omnipresence, but I cannot understand them with the mind. To truly know something I have to become it.

Seeing something for what it really is will make it stay with me if it is good for me or it will drop if it is bad for me. In full awareness, goodness and truth manifest. Complete unto themselves and self-sufficient, they can fulfill me. The same can be said for beauty and harmony and tranquility. As ends unto themselves, I can experience them as part of my being. The energy goes from desire or fear to alertness, so in full knowledge I do not lust, nor do I

fear. My energy follows my attention. My being follows my love.

Am I afraid to enter the room of pure awareness? I have found that although I trust my knowing capacity, I want something more. Attraction comes and the desire to know. I am drawn to something which leads me out of myself. Just being aware, without the needs and pleads of ego, I have found that it includes a willingness to embrace what I know. I think it can be said that unless I begin with love in my heart I cannot truly know. Real knowledge is based on love with intimacy. I can truly know only what I am capable of loving. Separating knowledge from love divides my being and sends me on a dangerous path. Is that not how the world has gone from time immemorial? Separating knowing from loving? Their oneness in me dictates to making them one outside me.

Atisha calls each of the two principles a witness. One leads to focusing, the other to expanding. Others have named one the witness or observer, and the second the person. Life manifests as consciousness in its varied capacities, witnessed or witnessing. Names are unimportant and must finally be discarded. As long as we think that what exists always has name and form, the Infinite escapes us. And therefore, in that, the Ultimate does not exist. Ultimately what is real is nameless and formless. Thoughts and words cannot apply to it, but it IS, a mystery in our midst. Reality is one. In the deep darkness of silence, it can be experienced. The Supreme or Nirvana or the Infinite or God does exist but no name applies.

I entitled this chapter, "Witnessing and Loving," because I have found that joining them together has been a meaningful and powerful tool in my life. When the mind has fallen silent, unconditional love bubbles up. It happens because the mind is now free from fear and judgment. The needs and pleads of the ego have been surpassed. Life or being is simply knowing and loving. Pure consciousness is pure love. In other words, when I get to my basic nature, I am love.

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For some notions expanded in this chapter I am indebted to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's BOOK OF WISDOM, volume 1, which takes up Atisha's Discourses on mind training.

## 9 PET MARKS

I grew up with dogs in our home, and had to take care of them as a young boy. We had one at a time; for me it was feed and walk every day and bathe once a week. Blacky was a Labrador Retriever puppy that my brother, who was a sergeant in the army, brought home on furlough. He was all black except for a round white spot in the middle of his chest. One of the most shocking experiences I ever had concerned Blacky when I was ten. I was home from school for the Christmas break, and my dad with my older brothers had just erected the Christmas tree in our living room. I frequently played with Blacky, and one day I could not find him. I searched for him in every room and all over the cellar. Since I couldn't find him I decided to search more closely. I looked behind the furniture and in back of the sofa in the living room I found him. There he was on his back with all four legs straight up in the air shaking violently. There was white foam coming out of his mouth. I crawled over to him and saw something in his half-open mouth. I reached to take it out and got shocked in

my hand and throughout my arm. I immediately realized he was being electrocuted, so I went to the other end of the cord and pulled the plug out of the wall. Blacky's legs immediately went down and he stopped shaking. He was just lying there but still breathing for I could see his stomach slowly moving up and down.

When my dad got home he said he would call a friend who would know what to do. My dad was a councilman in our town and his friend was the chief of police. When I found out who he was, I started crying, afraid that he was taking Blacky away to shoot him. He assured me that he had other dogs in cells in his jail and he would try to nurse my dog back to health. There was nothing I could do except hope and pray for the best.

The weeks rolled by and one day about a month later he came to our door with Blacky under his arm. I reached out, grabbed him and hugged him. I started crying again, this time for joy. While playing with him I noticed that his ears stood straight up. Before the electrocution, Blacky's ears flopped in front. I got suspicious and thought that maybe they put Blacky down and got another similar dog for me. My parents assured me it was the same dog. They said that it was probably the electric charge that made his ears stand up. Blacky had that one round, white spot in the center of his chest, and this dog had the same. And when I held him and looked into his mouth, I could see that his gums had been burned, were scarred and still healing. I was content that this was my Blacky.

I felt a closeness with Blacky before, but nothing like what I felt after seeing him suffer and getting him back again. I was just a bundle of joy and grateful. It made me respect life and any living thing. I know how much he needed me before to take care of him, but that was nothing compared to what my family did and I could do for him now. I thought of how much these animals need us to look after them, and I was only too happy to do my share. Painful tears then tears of joy exposed how much I needed them.

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We never had cats because my mother did not like them. Soon after we married, my wife, Helen, wanted to adopt a Siamese cat that a friend offered her. Since I didn't care for cats, I said, "*Fine, if you want a cat, you take care of her.*" She agreed. The next day she came home from her teaching job, but not alone. She opened the front door and put down in the hallway a shiny silver bundle of fur. It was a Siamese Blue Point. Helen quickly gave her some water and a little dry cat food. Then she turned to me and asked me to give her a name. I thought for a minute; the kitten reminded me of a shiny trinket, like a sequin. So I said, "*Let's call her Sequin.*"

Her beauty dazzled me but also her affection when she put her head under my pants cuff and kneaded my ankle. In the evening when she jumped on my lap I petted her and loved to bring out the purr in her. Needless to say, in two weeks' time I was feeding her, scooping her litter box, petting her at every opportunity, and taking her to the

vet for her shots. She came from a household of multiple cats, and Helen said Sequin would be a happier camper if she had a soul mate. And so, another silver lining entered our life. This pure bred Blue Point Siamese we called Pewter. These two darlings were the beginning of a wholly new learning experience for me. It started with their big beautiful blue eyes looking into mine.

After fifteen years of love and sharing, Sequin died in our home and we had to euthanize Pewter when he became too weak to move. They were followed by Callie and Amber, two from the same litter. I loved petting Callie who arched her back up high into my stroking hand. When they passed on, we volunteered to take on Domino, a coal black cat we were told had leukemia. He was the most playful thing I ever saw, and would take the last four steps going downstairs in a single jump. With fore paws extended, he reminded me of a flying bat. He lived only two years with us. He got severely weak and we had to put him down in March of 2011. A friend took pity on us, saying, *"You have mourned enough."* She added that four cats in her home were too many and she could not take on another that hung around her house looking in her windows. She asked us to come down and see if we like her. She would bring her in for our meeting and pay for any shots if we decided to take her. She meowed when she saw me, licked my fingers, and butted her head into the palm of my hand. That is how Charmer charmed her way into my life in June, 2011.

I understand so little about God and how He/She/It works. As an example of my ignorance, and on a much smaller scale, I consider how little I know about cats. In ancient Egypt cats were worshipped as gods. They carried human spirits from this world to the next.

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What surprised me even more was what I learned about purring. It is unique to cats, and all members of the feline family except tigers purr. But that melodic sound indicates much more than pleasure, contentment, or affection. It's also a natural healing method when a cat is hurt or wounded, not unlike ultra sound treatments used on humans. Certain sound frequencies are known to have healing effects in feline bones and organs. I know how some music is relaxing and calming for me. I like to think of cats as having a built-in radio they can turn on when needed.

I feel that cats are connected to the universe and connect me to everything as no other animal can. When I look deeply into Charmer's beautiful yellow eyes, I am lovingly aware of the wonder of this animal and of the Oneness of all things. This Oneness tells me that the lines of communication are always open. That fact was driven home to me when I read stories of cats traveling hundreds and even thousands of miles to be reunited with their owner. Sore, half-starved, bedraggled, and paws bloodied, they would find their loved one months and even years later. Even more surprising was the fact that the owner had moved to a new home or state where the cat had never been

before! How can we explain it? Science has no answer. I think it's a validation of the power of love. We know how love transcends space and time between people who care for each other. Why can't cats be part of the equation? Edgar Cayce, previously cited in chapter three, the "Sleeping Prophet" and founder of the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), is recorded as saying that animals will stop killing each other when humans do the same. This appears to me as another confirmation of how we all are connected.

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A bumper sticker that I saw recently made me think more deeply about cats. The sticker showed the imprint of a cat's paw with the four pads up front and the heel behind. The inscription in the middle of the paw read,

*"Who rescued whom?"*

It made me ask,

*"Do I possess Charmer, or does she possess me?"*

I get my answer when she turns my tempting thighs into a sovereign seat for her majesty. I know that Charmer does more for me than I do for her.

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Cats nurture and may feel that we are theirs to take care of. Without judging, they feel and protect. I only gradually become aware of their healing power.

Cats love us and want to be loved back. They have many ways of getting our attention including meowing and purring. Their varied vocalizations tell us they are hungry, hurting, scared, or content.

I don't understand but seek to understand cat consciousness. They have a purpose in my life. Truth becomes feelings when I enter into a relationship with an animal. It teaches my heart so much.

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Charmer has full run of our house, including the attached garage, where she loves to scratch her back by wiggling against the rough cement floor. When I go to start my car and see her dusty paw prints all over the windshield, it tells me that she wants to embrace all of my life that she can. I start my car and turn on the windshield wiper, opening myself to her bidding once again.

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*"If a man could be crossed with a cat, it would improve the man but it would deteriorate the cat,"—Mark Twain.*

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*"Cats were put into the world to disprove the dogma that all things were created to serve man,"—Paul Gray.*

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*"If a dog jumps in your lap, it is because he is fond of you; but if a cat does the same thing, it is because your lap is warmer,"—*  
Alfred North Whitehead.

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*"No matter how much cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens,"—*  
Abraham Lincoln

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*"I have lived with several Zen masters, all of them cats,"—*Eckhart Tolle.

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For some of the material used here I am indebted to Brad Steiger and Sherry Hansen Steiger's book. CAT MIRACLES, Adams Media, Avon, MA, 2008.

## FINALE

*"Thus I  
Pass by,  
And die:  
As one  
Unknown  
And gone."*

*—Robert Herrick, English poet and cleric, died 1674.*

Although centuries old, the brevity and conciseness of the poem's opening lines match the hurried pace of our Internet times. Its powerful and universal message is an appropriate ending for this work.

We all die, but how long and how well will any of us be remembered?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom grew up in the Pittsburgh area attending strict public schools that had a mix of colors, religions and cultures. After high school, at the prodding of an older brother and a widowed mother, he entered the University of Pittsburgh to major in writing. Feeling lost and wondering what his own "purpose" was, he left after his junior year to enter the Catholic seminary. There he majored in philosophy, finding peace and order immersed in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and the mystics. He was ordained a priest and joined the Sulpician Society (S.S.) whose sole purpose is the training of young men for the priesthood. After two Bachelor degrees and a Master's degree in English literature, philosophy and theology, he was sent to the renowned University of Louvain, Belgium, to get his doctorate in theology.

Having successfully defending his doctoral dissertation on the Servant of God in John's Gospel, he taught theology and counseled seminarians for thirteen years in Seattle, Baltimore, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. at the Catholic University of America. Inspired by Pope John XXIII on a visit to Rome, and by the radical decrees on non-Christian religions the Pope fostered at Vatican II, Tom left the priesthood to mine the riches he felt lying in other pastures

which he studied. He visited and learned from masters at seven Buddhist and Zen centers from New York to Hawaii.

He married, became a general manager in a business venture, and counseled in a private clinic. Happily married over forty years to Helen, he lives in Dearborn, Michigan, with their cat, Charmer. As co-worker and true friend, his wife set up a website for Tom to continue his work: [www.findingoneness.com](http://www.findingoneness.com). His purpose: giving to others the riches he found in the world's spiritual traditions in the pursuit of the Oneness of everything. Tom sees spirituality inseparable from one's uniqueness. He joins this concept with the Eastern notions that oneness is a reality we can experience.

Tom's other books are: OCEAN IN A DROP, HONORING GOD WITHIN, FINDING ONENESS, The Power of Loving Awareness, THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY, MY STORY, Ramblings on Spiritual Journey, UNCOVERING WHO WE ARE and his whimsical fiction, SUPERSEED. They may be downloaded free at his website: ([www.findingoneness.com](http://www.findingoneness.com)) or for purchase at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).



