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An Even Balance

Let me be weighed in an even balance, that
God may know mine integrity.

Job 31:6

The basic fears of mankind inherent in human consciousness have never been satisfactorily resolved. Consequently fear is the climate in which most persons live today. Even when they do achieve a measure of safety, love, understanding, wholeness, completeness, peace, or joy, there is always the fear of losing it, so a life lived without fear, secure in the essential goodness of life, eludes most persons. Is that not because they are looking in the wrong place, looking for their good outside themselves and putting their faith and trust in some particular thing or person? And does not dependence on human beings and material possessions turn out to be a false reliance which usually fails in the end? As long as persons rely on what is visible, on what they can see, touch, and handle, their every effort is directed toward drawing what they think is their good to themselves.

Since the visible exists only in limited amounts, it naturally follows that what is already in existence must either be divided among the people of the world or be subtracted from one person to give to another. The fear thus generated results in strife not only on a personal level but on an international scale, bringing with it frustration, disappointment, unhappiness, and an increase in mental illness.

Much research has been done in an attempt to determine the overriding cause of nervous disorders. Why not reverse that?

Should not psychiatrists and social scientists be carrying on more research as to why it is possible for some persons to go through traumatic experiences, face the most difficult problems, endure the greatest catastrophes, and yet emerge untouched? Could it be that those who are able to weather devastating experiences and come through them unscathed have an enduring sense of values?

Enduring values can never be found in any material thing or even in a person, because both things and persons have a way of disappearing or eluding us. Enduring values can be found only in that which goes beyond the visible, that which can never be known with the senses and yet is more real and tangible than the material world, that from which a person can never be separated because it is an integral part of his being.

Throughout the centuries there have been a few who have sought satisfaction and fulfillment, not in the outer world, but in an entirely different direction. In their seeking they have started on a long journey which will take them to the heights of consciousness.

The first turning away from the frustrations of life nearly always comes with the realization that there must be something better than the everyday struggle and strife. This realization is an awakening to the Presence within, a barely perceptible crack in the hard crust of humanhood. It is like a little candle shining faintly in the dark world of human consciousness with its separate life to be preserved and with a self that fears, struggles, and battles. But even with that faint glimmer of light, attention for the most part stays riveted on the things of the world. Thus when the satisfactions of life begin to come, they are soon consumed and wither because they are still dependent on the transient trappings and values of the visible world.

Maintaining a Spiritual Balance

Despite the almost insuperable barriers to the search for that which is beyond the visible, the seeker, led on by the expectation

that there must be something permanent, enduring, and true, tries to find a way to realize what at first may have seemed but a vain hope. The way is called by many names and has many labels, but essentially it is a path that leads through the maze of conflicting theories and beliefs right to the heart of reality.

So difficult is the Path to travel that it has been called "the razor's edge." We can think of that Path as a narrow road leading up to the summit of a towering mountain with a deep chasm on one side, stretching far below like a bottomless pit, and on the other side a vortex of water. To travel that perilous road, the seeker must not look at the dangers lurking below but must keep his attention fixed firmly on the summit to be reached.

Following the Path may also bring to mind the familiar picture of a tightrope walker, navigating the distance from one point to another on a rope stretched so high above the ground that a single misstep could mean disaster. The tightrope walker, however, keeps his eyes fastened upon the goal, which to the onlooker seems quite a short distance but which to that performer, as he sets out on his hazardous course, must seem an eternity away. He does not look down at the danger below. He does not count the cost. He keeps his eyes straight ahead and goes steadily forward.

What is it that makes such an achievement possible? We, too, might attempt it, keep our eyes on the goal, and still not succeed. Only one thing makes it possible: perfect balance. If we are going to walk the razor's edge, we will need an even more perfect balance than that required of the tightrope walker or the mountain climber.

The spiritual aspirant must be able to live effectively in the world, meeting his human responsibilities, yet retaining an inner area of consciousness devoted primarily to spiritual attainment and open only to the spiritual impulse. How many times do students on the spiritual path appear to others a little bit odd, crackpots? Perhaps that reputation has been earned because of an inability to maintain the spiritual balance which makes it possible to be in the world, functioning efficiently and effectively, and yet not be of it.

To what extent can we stay in the marketplace, surrounded by the competition, struggle, strife, and jealousy characteristic of the business or professional world, and yet maintain an awareness of a Power, a Presence, and a Realm unknown to the materialistic world-consciousness? It takes spiritual balance, the ability not to veer to one side or the other but always to blend the outer and the inner in one harmonious whole. To do this our whole day cannot be given over to worldly pursuits, but neither should it be given over entirely to meditation. True, we meditate many times a day to maintain an awareness of the Presence, but then we must go out and live this awareness by meeting the daily challenges and opportunities the world provides. It is possible to be in the world and yet live apart from it if we understand spiritual principles which help to maintain that necessary balance.

The mystical way is one of intense inner stillness in the midst of incredible outer activity. Certainly no one will deny that Christ Jesus was a great mystic. Yet he went out into the bypaths of the world, up and down the countryside, healing the sick, comforting those who mourned, raising the dead, and supplying those in need. Jesus was a man of action, even though unattached to the world.

To attain the awareness which transforms consciousness calls for a nonattachment to the things and persons of the world. If we were to be completely nonattached, however, we would float in a kind of vacuum with no base on which to rest. Some attachment is necessary, and it must be to something real and eternal. This can be found only in the Spirit within, which becomes our anchor. Then, as a deeper awareness of that Spirit, which is all-presence, all-power, and all-love, increases so that we know that we are inseparable and indivisible from It, we become less and less attached to the ephemeral, constantly shifting and changing pictures of the human world. Eventually we will be able to see right through them to the reality which lies beyond. This is the balance of the spiritual path.

It is folly for anyone to attempt to live beyond his attained state

Of consciousness. We would all like to reach a state of consciousness which would enable us to prove our spirituality by walking on the water, but we recognize that we have not attained the consciousness of a Christ Jesus. So we take a boat. Each one on the Path must have enough perception and wisdom to assess his degree of developed consciousness and not let the go push him into trying to "walk on the water" before he is ready.

There is an eternal balance in the universe: the earth moves in its orbit according to fixed law; the planets maintain a right relationship one to another; all the activities of nature follow a law of divine order except where man has stepped in and upset the balance of nature by polluting the air and water. The balance of the planets thus far has not been upset. Perhaps that is because man did not think he was quite capable of trying to change that, even though his conceit might surely tempt him.

Is not every difficulty we face, in a sense, a matter of imbalance? If we begin our journey on the Path by remembering the importance of spiritual balance, keeping our perspective with the vision always before us, with our heads in the clouds and our feet on the ground, we may be able to walk the razor's edge and attain the goal.

Toward Illumination

It takes perseverance. Anyone who aspires to walk the straight and narrow path to illumination must have the courage to continue in the face of all obstacles. Paul said, "I press toward the mark of the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let us also press forward, step by step, to gain that prize, for it is well worth every effort. It is reported that Socrates once told a traveler who asked him how to reach Mount Olympus, "Make every step you take go in the right direction." As we make every step we take lead us toward that awareness which will transform our entire experience, we draw closer to the spiritual goal. We

must not be like Pliable and Obstinate in Pilgrim's Progress who gave up the journey to the Celestial City because they ran into a bog that dragged them down.

Yes, not only is effort required and persistence in that effort, but no one can tread the razor's edge without the requisite spiritual balance. As we contemplate the divine Wisdom, It* reveals whatever is necessary for us to do and gives us the strength and courage to press on. Then we walk the way with confidence and assurance, knowing that we do not walk alone, but That within us goes before us, ever leading us forward to peace and fulfillment. "This is the way, walk ye in it."

This straight and narrow path takes us right to the Center of our being. When we touch that Center, it is as if a light had been turned on inside of us. As awareness increases, that very dim light grows and expands until one day the whole universe is encompassed by the light in which we are now living. Thus the straight and narrow path becomes a broad highway.

It is a glorious way but nonetheless difficult, because when the light shines on all the rubbish lodged in our consciousness that rubbish must be cleared out. If, for example, we were to go into a room in which there was no light, the room might be filled with all kinds of old papers, dust, dirt, and broken-down furniture which we could not see in the darkness. But when even a flickering candle is lighted in that room, we see the cobwebs and the dirt and begin the process of cleaning it out.

This is much like what happens on the road to illumination. The light shines in the dark places of consciousness, and those dark places have to be cleared away. Just as it takes work and effort to clean up a dirty room, it takes ten thousandfold more effort to clean out a mind that has been cluttered with all kinds of beliefs - beliefs to which the world remains in bondage.

In fact, everyone is living under a measure of bondage. With

* "He" and "It," "Himself" and "Itself," and "Me" and "My," when capitalized, refer to God.

some it is a bondage to lack and limitation with no sense of inner security. Others with much of the world's goods are still in bondage to their pocketbooks and persist in holding on to their possessions. Still others live in bondage to a body or to the constricted and limited life that fear engenders.

The Choice

Those who have set their feet upon the spiritual path, however, have embarked upon the road to the only real freedom there is, a freedom not dependent on exterior forms or conditions. They have caught a glimpse of the Center within and live out from that instead of living on something external to themselves. Gradually they relinquish the idea that any situation or any person has power to act upon them either for good or for evil. That is a startling idea. Who has not thought that his good came from some person, or that the evil he was experiencing came because someone had directed evil toward him or had withheld something he felt was his?

Even a small measure of awareness reveals that we are not the victims of persons or circumstances. If we want to enjoy more peace and harmony, a quietness, a confidence, and an assurance, however, we must nurture a growing awareness of That within which is more powerful than anything or any set of things in the world. To do this calls for an about-face because heretofore our attention has been directed toward getting, achieving, and obtaining.

We have a choice. We can climb to the top of the mountain, where the vision is clearer, by that steep, straight road that takes us directly there, or we can meander around for another dozen lifetimes. Someday we will arrive, but the swiftness or speed of our journey will be determined by our dedication and consecration.

Those who engage in mountain climbing as a sport are willing

to face every hazard along the way as a challenge, not as something to dread but as a hurdle to be surmounted. As we scale the mountain, let us look upon every experience that comes to us as one of those hurdles which we leap over to go on beyond. A challenge is an opportunity. For us it is an opportunity to surrender every human dependence and to rely entirely upon the Withinness, thereby losing the human sense of life in the Divine.

Total surrender does not mean resignation. Resigning oneself to enduring endless problems is a negative approach. Surrender is a giving up of the negative so that the perfect will of God may be revealed and expressed. It is hard and painful only because most of us cling to the personal sense of self and resist surrendering it.

A knowledge and workable understanding of the principles of construction are necessary for an engineer planning and supervising the building of a bridge or a highway, and for an architect drafting the plans for a building. So, too, for us to rise to the heights of spiritual awareness, a thorough working knowledge of the principles of spiritual living and healing is required. We all like to float on Cloud Nine, or better yet, on Cloud Ninety-nine, and rest there. But a cloud is not a very solid resting place. If we were flying in a jet plane above a beautiful white cloud, and if the engines failed, we would not take much comfort in the cloud because it could not possibly support a falling plane. So if those moments of heightened awareness come to one who is truly seeking but who has no background of specific principles, he may find himself tumbling down, down, down, right into the valley, where he has to begin the ascent all over again.

But when we have certain principles as a foundation, they serve as a basis from which we can climb to the very heights of consciousness. If we have no foundation on which to rest, it is very difficult to attain and maintain that higher consciousness which can see beyond the immediate situation or problem.

To climb the mount of spiritual awareness by an uncharted path can be a very difficult, hazardous, and tortuous job. But

when the way is well marked by principles discovered by those who have gone before, many of the hazards and difficulties are removed or lessened, though the way may still offer its full measure of challenges.

The Spirit pushes and pulls us toward Itself until one day, when we are done with all our toys and games, weary of the struggle, the toil, and the unfruitful labor, we wonder if there is not something greater than ourselves. It is in that moment that we are called to a spiritual way of life.

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