

**ABBA'S CHILD** - Brennan Manning

**1 - COME OUT OF HIDING** - 13

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We can easily **PROJECT** onto God our own attitudes and feelings toward ourselves. "God made man in his own image and man returned the compliment." Thus, if we feel hateful toward ourselves, we assume that God feels hateful toward us. 15,16

We cannot accept love from another human being when we do not **LOVE OURSELVES**, much less accept that God could possibly love us. 16

"Today the **HEART OF GOD** is an open wound of love. He aches over our distance and preoccupation. He mourns that we do not draw near to him. He grieves that we have forgotten him. He weeps over our obsession with *muchness* and *manyness*. *He longs for our presence.*" 16

When I relapsed, I had **TWO OPTIONS**: yield once again to guilt, fear, and depression; *or rush into the arms of my heavenly Father* - choose to live as a victim of my disease; *or choose to trust in Abba's immutable love.* 17

This **BROKENNESS** *is what needs to be accepted.* Unfortunately, this is what we tend to reject. Here the seeds of a corrosive self-hatred take root. This painful vulnerability is the characteristic feature of our humanity that most needs to be embraced in order to restore our human condition to a healed state. 17

"Come to me *now*," Jesus says. "Acknowledge and accept who I want to be for you: A Savior of boundless compassion, infinite patience, unbearable forgiveness, and love that keeps no score of wrongs. Quit projecting onto Me your own feelings about yourself. At this moment in your life is a bruised reed and I will not crush it, a smoldering wick and I will not quench it. *You are in a SAFE PLACE.*" 19

Many Christians... find themselves defeated by the most psychological weapon that Satan uses against them. This weapon has the effectiveness of a deadly missile. Its name? **LOW SELF-ESTEEM. SATAN'S GREATEST PSYCHOLOGICAL WEAPON** is a gut level feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, and low self-worth. This feeling shackles many Christians, in spite of wonderful spiritual experiences and knowledge of God's Word. Although they understand their position as sons and daughters of God, they are tied up in knots, bound by a terrible feeling of inferiority, and chained to a deep sense of worthlessness. 19

Over the years, I have come to realize that **THE GREATEST TRAP IN OUR LIFE** is not success, popularity, or power, but **SELF-REJECTION**. Success, popularity, and

power can indeed present a great temptation, but their destructive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voice that calls us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, "Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody." My dark side says I am no good... I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned. *Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the **Beloved**. **BEING THE BELOVED** constitutes the **core truth** of our existence.*

*We learn to be gentle with ourselves by experiencing the intimate, heartfelt compassion of Jesus.* 21

"Often **BREAKDOWNS** lead to breakthroughs." 22

**MY DESIRE** to be perfect (or my desire for *anything*) can easily transcend my desire for God. 22

Quit **KEEPING SCORE** altogether and surrender yourself with all your sinfulness to God who sees neither the score nor the scorekeeper *but only his child redeemed by Christ*. 24

God not only forgives and forgets our shameful deeds but *He even turns their darkness into light*. All things works together for those who love God, "even," Augustine of Hippo adds, "**OUR SINS**." 24

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## 2 - THE IMPOSTOR - 29

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**IMPOSTORS** are preoccupied with acceptance and approval. 30

**CODEPENDENCY** as a disease characterized by a loss of identity. It is to be out of touch with one's feelings, needs, and desires. The impostor is the classic codependent. To gain acceptance and approval, the false self suppresses or camouflages feelings, making emotional honesty impossible. Living out of the false self creates a compulsive desire to present a perfect image to the public so that everybody will admire us and nobody will know us. The impostor's life becomes a perpetual roller-coaster ride of elation and depression. 31

The **IMPOSTOR** *is* what he *does*. 31

The **IMPOSTOR** prompts us to attach importance to what has no importance, clothing with a false glitter what is least substantial and turning us away from what is real. The false self causes us to live in a world of delusion. 31

"If we claim to be without **SIN**, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8). 31

**VANITIES** kidnap my attention away from the indwelling God and temporarily rob me of the joy of God's Holy Spirit. 33

The **IMPOSTOR** convolutes *esse quam videri* (to be rather than to seem to be) so that *seeming to be* becomes his *modus operandi* (A method of operating or functioning; A person's manner of working). 33

Merton's notion of sin focuses not primarily on individual sinful acts but on a fundamental option for a life of pretense. "There can only be **TWO BASIC LOVES**," wrote Augustine, "*the love of God unto the forgetfulness of self*, or the love of self unto the forgetfulness and denial of God." The fundamental option arises from the *core* of our being and incarnates itself in the specific *choices* of daily existence - either for the shadow self ruled by egocentric desires or for the *true self hidden with Christ in God*. 34

*The way I am with others every day, regardless of their status, is the **TRUE TEST OF FAITH***. 35

"From now onwards, therefore, we **DO NOT JUDGE** anyone by the standards of the flesh" (2 Cor 5:16). 37

As **WE REALLY ARE**: vulnerable, afraid, terrified, and unable to let our real selves emerge. 37

We even refuse to be our true self with God - and then wonder why we lack **INTIMACY with HIM**. The deepest desire of our hearts is for union with God. From the first moment of our existence our most powerful yearning is to fulfill the original purpose of our lives - *to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, follow Him more nearly. We are mad for God, and nothing less will really satisfy us.* C.S. Lewis could say that he was *surprised by joy... gripped by a desire that made everything else that had ever happened insignificant in comparison. Our hearts will ever be restless until they rest in Him.* Jeffrey D. Imaach, in *The Recovery of Love*, wrote, "**PRAYER** is essentially the expression of our heart longing for love. It is not so much the listing of our requests but the breathing of our own deepest request, to be united with God as fully as possible." 39

The **IMPOSTOR** *must be called out of hiding, accepted, and embraced*. He is an integral part of my total self. Whatever is denied cannot be healed. To acknowledge humbly that I often inhabit an unreal world, that I have trivialized my relationship with God, and that I am driven by vain ambition is the first blow in dismantling my glittering image. The honesty and willingness to stare down the false self dynamites the steel trapdoor of self-deception.

*Peace lies in acceptance of truth.* Any facet of the shadow self that we refuse to embrace becomes the enemy and forces us into defensive postures. 40

*As we come to grips with our own selfishness and stupidity, we **MAKE FRIENDS with the IMPOSTOR** and accept that we are impoverished and broken and realize that, if we*

*were not, we would be God. The art of gentleness toward ourselves leads to being gentle with others - and is a natural prerequisite for our presence to God in prayer.*

*Hatred of the impostor is actually self-hatred. The impostor and I constitute one person. Contempt for the false self gives vent to hostility, which manifests itself as general irritability - an irritation at the same faults in others that we hate in ourselves. Self-hatred always results in some form of self-destructive behavior. 41*

The **ACCEPTANCE OF ONESELF** is the essence of the whole moral problem and the epitome of a whole outlook on life. That I feed the hungry, that I forgive an insult, that I love my enemy in the name of Christ - all these are undoubtedly great virtues. What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ. But what if I should discover that the least amongst them all, the poorest of all the beggars, the most impudent of all the offenders, the very enemy himself - *that these are within me, and that I myself stand in need of the alms of my own kindness - that I myself am the enemy who must be loved - what then?* As a rule, the Christian's attitude is then reversed; there is no longer any question of love or long-suffering; we say to the brother within us "Raca," and condemn and rage against ourselves. We hide it from the world; we refuse to admit ever having met this least among the lowly in ourselves. 41,42

*Jesus is the **SAVIOR** who saves us from our selves. 42*

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### 3 - THE BELOVED - 47

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Thomas Merton began to see that *the highest spiritual development was to be **ORDINARY**, "to become fully a man, in the way few human beings succeed in becoming so simply and naturally themselves... the measure of what others might be if society did not distort them with greed, ambition, lust, or desperate want." 48*

We ourselves are the greatest obstacle to our own nobility of soul - which is what sanctity means. *We judge ourselves unworthy servants, and that judgment becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We deem ourselves too inconsiderable to be used even by a God capable of miracles with no more than mud and spit. And thus our false humility shackles an otherwise omnipotent God.*

Eagan, a flawed man with salient weaknesses and character defects, learned that *brokenness is proper to the human condition, that **we must forgive ourselves for being unlovable, inconsistent, incompetent, irritable, and potbellied, and he knew that his sins could not keep him out from God.** They had all been redeemed by the blood of Christ. In repentance he took his shadow self to the Cross and dared to live as a forgiven man. In Eagan's journey one hears echoes of Merton: **God is asking me, the unworthy, to forget my unworthiness and that of my brothers, and dare to advance in the love which has redeemed and renewed us all in God's likeness. And to laugh, after all, at the preposterous ideas of 'worthiness.'**" 49*

The **HEART** of it is this: to make the Lord and his immense love for you constitutive of your personal worth. *Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. God's love for*

*you and his choice of you constitute your worth. **Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in our life.***

The **ORDINARY SELF** is the extraordinary self... 49, 50

While the impostor draws his identity from past achievements and the adulation of others, the **TRUE SELF** *claims identity in its belovedness. We encounter God in the ordinariness of life: not in the search for spiritual highs and extraordinary, mystical experiences but in our simple presence in life.* 50

*We give **GLORY TO GOD** simply by being ourselves.*

God created us for union with Himself: This is the original purpose of our lives. And God is defined as love (And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him; 1 Jn 4:16 ). *Living in awareness of our belovedness is the axis around which the Christian life revolves. Being the beloved is our identity, the core of our existence.* It is not merely a lofty thought, an inspiring idea, or one name among many. It is the name by which God knows us and the way He relates to us. 50

At L'Arche, it became very clear to me that I had totally misunderstood the **CHRISTIAN FAITH**. *I came to see that it was in my brokenness, in my powerlessness, in my weakness that Jesus was made strong.* It was in the acceptance of my lack of faith that God could give me faith. *It was in the embracing of my **brokenness** that I could identify with others' brokenness. It was **MY ROLE** to **identify with others' pain**, not relieve it. **Ministry was sharing, not dominating; understanding, not theologizing; caring, not fixing.*** 52

**SILENCE** is not simply the absence of noise or the shutdown of communication with the outside world, *but rather a process of coming to stillness. **SILENT SOLITUDE** forges true speech.* I'm not speaking of physical isolation; *solitude here means being alone with the Alone, experiencing the transcendent Other and growing in awareness of one's identity as the beloved. It is impossible to know another person intimately without spending time together.* Silence makes this solitude a reality. It has been said, *Silence is solitude practiced in action.* 55

"Now watch the **WATER** as I pour it into the basin," he said. The water splashed on the bottom and against the sides of the container. It was agitated and turbulent. At first the stirred-up water swirled around the inside of the basin; then it gradually began to settle, until finally the small fast ripples evolved into larger swells that oscillated back and forth. Eventually, the surface became so smooth that the visitor could see his face reflected in the placid water. "That is the way it is when you live constantly in the midst of others," said the hermit. "You do not see yourself **AS YOU REALLY ARE** because of all the confusion and disturbance. You fail to recognize the divine presence in your life and the consciousness of your belovedness slowly fades."

*It takes time for the water to settle. Coming to interior stillness requires waiting. Any attempt to hasten the process only stirs up the water anew.* 56

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isa 43:1 Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you. Isa 43:4 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. Isa 54:10 57

**SILENT SOLITUDE** makes true speech possible and personal. *If I am not in touch with my own belovedness, then I cannot touch the sacredness of others. If I am estranged from myself, I am likewise a stranger to others.* Experience has taught me that *I connect best with others when I connect with the core of myself.* When I allow God to liberate me from unhealthy dependence on people, *I listen more attentively, love more unselfishly, and am more compassionate and playful. I take myself less seriously, become aware that the breath of the Father is on my face and that my countenance is bright with laughter in the midst of an adventure I thoroughly enjoy.*

*Conscientiously "wasting" time with God enables me to speak and act from greater strength, to forgive rather than nurse the latest bruise to my wounded ego, to be capable of magnanimity during the petty moments of life. It empowers me to lose myself, at least temporarily, against a greater background than the tableau of my fears and insecurities, to merely be still and know that God is God.*

Anthony Padovano commented, "It means I don't figure out and don't analyze but I simply lose myself in the thought or the experience of just being alive, of merely being in a community of believers, but focusing on the essence or presence rather than on what kind of pragmatic consequences should follow from that, merely that it's good to be there, even if I don't know where "there" is, or why it's good to be there. Already I have reached a contemplative stillness in my being."

As a fringe benefit, practicing silent solitude enables us to sleep less and to feel more energetic. The energy expended in the impostor's exhausting pursuit of illusory happiness is now available to be focused on the things that really matter - love, friendship, and intimacy with God. 56, 57

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#### 4. ABBA'S CHILD - 61

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*Live in the wisdom of* **ACCEPTED TENDERNESS.** 64

If you could answer with gut-level honesty, "Oh, yes, me Abba is very fond of me," you would experience a **SERENE COMPASSION for YOURSELF** *that approximates the meaning of tenderness.* 65

Incident on the subway... 68, 69

The **HEARTFELT COMPASSION** that hastens forgiveness matures when we discover when our enemy cries. 69

"Stop passing judgment and wait upon the Lord's return." The sons and daughters of Abba are the most **NON-JUDGMENTAL** people. They get along famously with sinners. Biblical scholars say that **PERFECT & COMPASSIONATE** can be reduced to

"be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate." **Conclusion:** To follow Jesus in His ministry of compassion precisely defines the biblical meaning of being perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.

"Besides," I continued, "I am reluctant to push God off His judgment seat and take my place there to pronounce on others when I have neither the knowledge nor the authority to judge anyone. No one at this table has ever seen a motive. Therefore, we cannot suspect what inspired the action of another. Remember Paul's words after his discourse on homosexuality in Rm. 1. He begins ch. 2, "So no matter who you are, if you pass judgment you have no excuse. In judging others you condemn yourself, since you behave no differently from those you judge." Leo Tolstoy: "If the sexual fantasies of the average person were exposed to view, the world would be horrified."

"It is precisely among those who take their spiritual life seriously that the greatest danger lies," Alan Jones. *Pious people* are as easily victimized by the tyranny of homophobia as anyone else." 71, 72

*Living in the wisdom of accepted tenderness profoundly affects my perception of reality, the way I respond to people and their life situations. How I treat my brothers and sisters from day to day, regardless of their culture; how I react to the sin-scarred wino on the street; how I respond to interruptions from people I dislike; how I deal with ordinary people in their ordinary unbelief or an ordinary day will speak **THE TRUTH OF WHO I AM** more poignantly than the pro-life sticker on the bumper of my car. 72*

I have tried to deny, ignore, or repress racist and homophobia **PREJUDICES** as utterly unworthy of a minister of the gospel. Moreover, I felt that to acknowledge their existence would give them power. *Ironically, denial and repression are in fact what gives them power.*

***The impostor starts to shrink only when he is acknowledged, embraced, and accepted.*** The self-acceptance that flows from embracing my core identity as Abba's child enables me to encounter my utter brokenness with uncompromising honesty and complete abandon to the mercy of God. As Sister Barbara Fiand said, "*Wholeness is brokenness owned and thereby healed.*" 74

"What is required is to **BECOME THE BELOVED in the common places of my daily existence** and, bit by bit, to close the gap that exists between what I know myself to be and the countless specific realities of everyday life. *Becoming the Beloved is pulling the truth revealed to me from above down into the ordinariness of what I am, in fact, thinking of, talking about, and doing from hour to hour,*" Henri Nouwen.

The betrayals and infidelities in my life are too numerous to count. I still cling to the illusion that I must be morally impeccable, other people must be sinless, and the one I love must be without human weakness. But whenever I allow anything but **TENDERNESS & COMPASSION to dictate my response to life** - be it self-righteous anger, moralizing, defensiveness, the pressing need to change others, carping criticism, frustration at others blindness, a sense of spiritual superiority, a gnawing hunger of vindication - *I am alienated from my true self.* My identity as Abba's child become ambiguous, tentative, and confused.

*Our way of being in the world is the way of tenderness. Everything else is illusion, mis-perception, falsehood.*

The compassionate life is neither a sloppy goodwill toward the world nor the plague of what Robert Wicks call "chronic niceness." It does not insist that a widow become friendly with her husband's murderer. It does not demand that we like everyone. It does not wink at sin and injustice. It does not accept reality indiscriminately - love and lust, Christianity and atheism, Marxism and capitalism.

The way of tenderness avoids blind fanaticism. Instead, it seeks to see with penetrating clarity. *The compassion of God in our hearts opens our eyes to the unique worth of each person. "The other is 'our self;' and we must love him in his sin as we were loved in our sin."* 73

This insistence on the absolutely indiscriminate nature of compassion within the Kingdom is the dominant perspective of almost all of Jesus' teaching.

What is **INDISCRIMINATE COMPASSION**? "Take a look at a **ROSE**. Is it possible for the rose to say, "I'll offer my fragrance to good people and withhold it from bad people?" Or can you imagine a lamp that withholds its rays from a wicked person who seeks to walk in its light? It could do that only by ceasing to be a lamp. And observe how helplessly and indiscriminately a tree gives its shade to everyone, good and bad, young and old, high and low; to animals and humans and every living creature - even to the one who seeks to cut it down. This is the first quality of compassion - its indiscriminate character." 76

*What makes the Kingdom come is **HEARTFELT COMPASSION**: a way of tenderness that knows no frontiers, no labels, no compartmentalizing and no sectarian divisions. Jesus, the human face of God, invites us to deep reflection on the nature of true discipleship and the radical lifestyle of Abba's child.* 77

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## 5 - THE PHARISEE & THE CHILD - 79

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**LEGALISTIC RELIGION** - making primary matters secondary and secondary matters primary. 82

Whenever we place **BLAME**, we are looking for a scapegoat for a real dislocation in which we ourselves are implicated. *Blame is a defensive substitute for an honest examination of life that seeks personal growth in failure and self-knowledge in mistakes.* Thomas Moore stated, "Fundamentally, it is a way of averting consciousness of error." 85

"If I have a message to my contemporaries, it is surely this: be anything you like, be madmen, drunks.... but at all costs avoid one thing: **SUCCESS**," Merton. Merton is referring to the cult of success, the pharisaic fascination with honor and power, the relentless drive to enhance the image of the impostor in the eyes of admirers. 87

The Pharisee who pardons himself is condemned. The tax collector who condemns himself is acquitted. To deny **THE PHARISEE WITHIN** is lethal. *It is imperative*



*that we befriend him, dialogue with him, inquire why he must look to sources outside the Kingdom for **peace & happiness**. 88*

**EMOTIONS** are our most direct reaction to our perception of ourselves and the world around us. Whether positive or negative, feelings put us in touch with our true selves. They are neither good nor bad: ***They are simply the truth of what is going on within us.** What we do with our feelings will determine whether we live lives of honesty or of deceit.* When submitted to the discretion of a faith-formed intellect, our emotions serve as trustworthy beacons for appropriate action or inaction. *The denial, displacement, and repression of feelings thwarts self-intimacy.*

My indwelling Pharisee has devised a way to disembowel my true self, deny my humanity and camouflage my emotions through a fraudulent mental maneuver called **SPIRITUALIZING**. My mind's clever tap dance into religiosity shields me from my feeling, usually the kind I am afraid of - anger, fear, and guilt. I distance myself from negative emotions, intuition, and insight with one foot and hop-scotch into rococo rationalizations with the other. 92

If we continue to focus solely on the sinner / saint **DUALITY** in our person and conduct, while ignoring the raging opposition between the Pharisee and the child, spiritual growth will come to an abrupt standstill. 88

True self, authentic self, in-authentic self, psychoanalysis... 90 To ignore, repress, or dismiss our **FEELINGS** is to fail to listen to the stirring of the Spirit within our emotional life. 90

**THE PHARISEE** grows fearful when an underling swipes his baton, cynical when feedback is negative, paranoid when threatened, worried when anxious, fitful when challenged, and distraught when defeated. The impostor caught up in the power game lives a hollow life with considerable evidence of success on the outside, while he is desolate, un-loving, and anxiety-ridden on the inside. King-baby seeks to master God rather than be mastered by Him." 96

Inner child, childhood... 96

The positive qualities of the **CHILD** - *openness, trusting dependence, playfulness, simplicity, sensitivity to feelings* - restrain us from closing ourselves off to new ideas, unprofitable commitments, the surprises of the Spirit, and risky opportunities for growth. The unself-consciousness of the child keeps us from morbid introspection, endless self-analysis, and the fatal narcissism's of spiritual perfectionism. 97

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## 6 - PRESENT RISENNESS - 99

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I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, Phil 3:10 100

The most radical demand of Christian faith lies in summoning the courage to say yes to the **PRESENT RISENNESS** of Jesus Christ. Christianity is lived more in the valley than on the mountain top, that faith is never doubt-free, and that the surest way to know God is as utterly *unknowable* (Thomas Aquinas). 100

The **PRESENT RISENNESS OF JESUS** *as life-giving Spirit* **MEANS** *that I can cope with anything*. I am not on my own. "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms... [Eph 1:18-20]." Relying not on my own limited reserves but on the limitless power of the risen Christ I can stare down not only the impostor and the Pharisee, but even the prospect of my impending death. "Christ must be king until God has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:25-26). 106

"I am not my feelings." 107

**A HARD DAY**, yes. Rattled and unglued, yes. Unable to cope, no.

How does the life-giving Spirit of the risen Lord manifest Himself on days like that? In our willingness to stand fast, our refusal to run away and escape into self-destructive behavior. Resurrection power enables us to engage in the savage confrontation with untamed emotions, to accept the pain, receive it, take it on board, however acute it may be. And in the process we discover that we are not alone, that we can stand fast in the awareness of present risenness and so become fuller, deeper, richer disciples. We know ourselves to be more than we previously imagined. In the process we not only endure but are forced to expand the boundaries of who we think we really are.

"The mystery is Christ among you, our hope of glory" (Col 1:27). Hope knows that if great trials are avoided great deeds remains undone and the possibility of growth into greatness of souls is aborted. Pessimism and defeatism are never the fruit of the life-giving Spirit but rather reveal our unawareness of present risenness. 107

*We are able*, as Etty Hillesun, the Dutch Jewess who died in Auschwitz on 11/30/43, wrote, *to safeguard that little piece of God in ourselves and not give way to despair*. We make it through the night and darkness gives way to the **LIGHT OF MORNING**. *The tragedy radically alters the direction of our lives, but in our vulnerability and defenselessness we experience the power of Jesus in His present risenness..* 108

**CONTEMPLATION** is gazing at the unveiled glory of God in the risen glorified Christ. *Contemplative prayer is above all else looking at the person of Jesus*. The prayer of simple awareness means we don't have to get anywhere because *we are already there*. We are simply coming into consciousness that *we possess what we seek*. Contemplation, defined as looking at Jesus while loving Him, leads not only to intimacy but to *the transformation of the person contemplating*. 113

Our impulse to tell the **SALVATION-STORY** arises from listening to the heartbeat of the risen Jesus within us. It simply means we share with others what our lives used to be like, what happened when we met Jesus, and what our lives are like now. 115

"The only reason for doing **THE RIGHT THING** is that it is the right thing to do; all other reasons are reasons for doing something else," F.M. Cornford. 115

The **AGNOSTICISM of INATTENTION** - the lack of personal discipline over media bombardment, shallow reading, sterile conversation, perfunctory prayer, and subjugation of the senses - the awareness of the risen Christ grows dim. Just as the failure to be attentive undermines love, confidence, and communion a human relationship, so inattention to my true self hidden with Christ in God obscures awareness of the divine relationship. As the old proverb goes, *Thorns and thistles choke the unused path*. A once verdant heart becomes a devastated vineyard. 116

When I shut Jesus out of my consciousness by looking the other way, my heart is touched by the icy finger of **AGNOSTICISM**. My agnosticism does not consist in the denial of a personal God; *it is unbelief growing like lichen from my inattention to the sacred presence*. ***The way I spend my time and money and the way I interact with others routinely testifies to the degree of my awareness or unawareness.*** 116

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## 7 - THE RECOVERY OF PASSION - 117

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"I first learned the Word of God when the Great Rabbi held me silently against his heart." 123

"The **HEART** has her reason about which the mind knows nothing." 123

- There is no fear in love. But **PERFECT LOVE** drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 Jn 4:18 125
- Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29 128
- Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4,5 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. John 15:9 128

**THE PRIORITY** of disciples. One's personal relationship with Christ towers over every other consideration. What establishes preeminence in the Christian community is our response to Jesus' question, "***Do you love Me?***"

The love of Jesus Christ alone establishes **STATUS** and confers **DIGNITY**. If authority is given, *it must be based on the love of Jesus*. 129

Christian Leadership see 129

The biblical characters, however clean or tawdry their personal histories may have been, are **NOT PARALYZED BY THE PAST** *in their present response to Jesus*. Tossing aside self-consciousness they ran, clung, jumped, and raced to Him. Peter denied Him and deserted Him, but he was not afraid of Him.. 131

Would guilt, self-condemnation, and self-hatred consume you, or would you jump into the water and swim a hundred yards at breakneck speed toward Jesus? Haunted by feelings of unworthiness, would you allow the darkness to over come you or would you **LET JESUS BE WHO HE IS** - *a Savior of boundless compassion and infinite patience, a Lover who keeps no score of our wrongs?* 131

Manning's life has not been an unbroken spiral toward holiness. He has experience great pain and difficulty... 133

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). The way He related to Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene is the way He relates to us. **THE RECOVERY OF PASSION** starts with re-appraising the value of the treasure, continues with letting the Great Rabbi hold us against His heart, and comes to fruition in a personal transformation of which we will not even be aware. 133

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## 8 - FORTITUDE & FANTASY - 135

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The **DOMINANT SIN** in my adult life has been my cowardly refusal to think, feel, act, respond, and live from my authentic self, because of fear of rejection. 136

*When we freely assent to the mystery of our belovedness and accept our **CORE IDENTITY** as Abba's child,* we slowly gain autonomy from controlling relationships. We become inner-directed rather than outer-determined. The fleeting flashes of pleasure or pain caused by the affirmation or deprivation of others will never entirely disappear, but their power to induce self-betrayal will be diminished. 137

"Of what **VALUE** is **LEARNING** *that does not turn to love?*" 137

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (Mat 14:27) assures that our **SECURITY** rests in having no security. When we stand on our own two feet and claim responsibility for our unique self, we are growing in personal autonomy, fortitude, and freedom from the bondage of human approval. 140

The **POVERTY OF UNIQUENESS** is the call of Jesus to stand utterly alone when the only alternative is to cut a deal with the price of one's integrity. It is a lonely *yes* to the whispers of our true self, a cling to our core identity when companionship and community support are withheld. It is a courageous determination to make unpopular decisions that are expressive of the truth of who we are - not of who we think we should be or who someone else wants us to be. *It is trusting enough in Jesus to make mistakes and believing enough that His life will still pulse within us.* It is the un-articulated, gut-

wrenching yielding of our true self to the poverty of our own unique, mysterious personality. 138

**BEING & DOING.** 140 Suppose you have a keen dislike for the used car salesman who knowingly sold you a lemon... You still dislike him and disapprove of his shady tactic. When you lay your head on the pillow that night, why should you dwell on your dislike and disapproval of him on the fact that you did a *stupendous ACT OF KINDNESS* (taking him cookies & get-well card while he is in the hospital) that transcended our feelings? In this case, *what you do matters more than who your are.*

"What we do can be much more versatile and worthwhile than what goes on behind the scenes of our psychological life. And it may be of greater significance for our being in God, because it may express his true purpose, even while it does not express anything we could clearly call our own purpose," Simon Tugwell.

Visiting the salesman in the hospital is the "**TRIUMPH of DO-NESS** over is-ness." 142

The one who acts really means business and has more claims on our attention. If I want to be a person who really believes, *I will do what I say.* 143

Jesus remains Lord by being a *servant.* 144

**SERVANTHOOD** is not an emotion or mood or feeling; *it is a decision to live like Jesus.* It has nothing to do with what we feel; it has everything to do with what we *do - humble service.* 145

When I get sprayed by the **STORMS of LIFE** and find my faith has faltered, my course has gone south, I often turn to Mt 14:22-33. Jesus sees the disciples caught up in a squall. It is between 3 and 6 a.m. He comes walking toward them on the water. They are terrified. "It's a ghost," they cry out in fear. He says, "**Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid!**"

I find comfort (perhaps persevere pleasure) in knowing that the rock on which Jesus would build the church sank like a stone. 145,146

It does not matter whether you are now working in the field or grinding corn, whether you are a priest or a professor, a cook or a port, or an old age pensioner. **WHAT MATTERS** is *how your life looks when you hold it up to the light of the gospel of the God whose nature is to love of all humankind.* 148

"If I ever get out of here I will be no man's judge... not to judge, not to be superior, not to exercise power, not to seek, seek, seek. *To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only THIS MATTERS.* All power is sin and all law is frailty. *Love is the only justice. Forgiveness, reconciliation, not law.*" 150

The engaged mind, illuminated by truth, awakens awareness; the engaged heart, affected by love, awakens passion. This essential energy of the soul is not an ecstatic trance, high emotion, or a sanguine stance toward life: *It is a fierce longing for God, an unyielding resolve to live in and out of the truth of our belovedness.*

*The love of Christ* (not our life for Him but His love for us) *impels us.* The integration of mind and heart shapes a unified personality living in a state of **PASSIONATE AWARENESS.** 156

"The greatest sin is to lose the **SENSE OF SIN,**" Paul Claudel. 158

The **ESSENCE OF SIN** lies in the enormity of our self-centered-ness, which denies our radical contingency and displaces the sovereignty of God with what Alan Jones calls "our sucking two-percent self." Our fascination with power, prestige, and possessions justifies aggressive self-assertion, regardless of the damage inflicted on others. The impostor insists that looking out for Numero Uno is the only sensible posture in a dog-eat-dog world. "Those unwed mother made their own bed," shouts the false self. "Let them lie in it!"

The evil operative within us resides in relentless self-absorption, in what Moore calls "our inescapable narcissism of consciousness." 158

When Jesus told us to love our enemies, He knew that His love operating in us could melt the hardened heart and make the enemy our friend. This applies supremely, H.A. William's writes, to **THE ENEMY WITHIN.** *Or our own worst enemy is always ourselves.* 161

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength... (Isa 30:15). Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! (Isa 30:18). 164

**THE CROSS reveals that Jesus has conquered sin and death and that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of Christ.** Neither the impostor nor the Pharisee, neither the lack of awareness nor the lack of passion, neither the negative judgments of others nor the debased perception of ourselves, neither our scandalous past nor our uncertain future, neither the power struggles in the church nor the tension in our marriage, nor fear, guilt, shame, self-hatred, nor even death can tear us away from the love of God, made visible in Jesus the Lord.

*Listening to the faint heartbeat of the dying rabbi is a powerful stimulus to the recovery of passion.* It is a sound like no other.

The crucified say, "*Confess your sin so that I may reveal Myself to you as lover, teacher, and friend, that fear may depart and your heart can stir once again with passion.*" His word is addressed both to those filled with a sense of self-importance and to those crushed with a sense of self-worthlessness. Both are preoccupied with themselves... Both claim a godlike status, because their full attention is riveted either on their prominence or their insignificance. They are isolated and alienated in their self-absorption. 160

I grieved over time squandered in self-indulgence and my **DIFFICULTIES**. A priest said, "*Rejoice and be glad. You will have a heart of compassion for those who walk that lonely road. God will use your brokenness to bless many people.*" As Julian of Norwich said, "Sin will be not shame, *but honor.*" The dualism between good and evil is overcome by the crucified Rabbi who has reconciled all things in Himself. *We need not be eaten alive by guilt.* We can stop lying to ourselves. **THE RECONCILED HEART** says that everything that has happened to me had to happen to make me who I am without exception.

Thomas Moore adds this insight: "*our depressions, jealousies, narcissism, and failures are not at odds with the spiritual life. Indeed, they are essential to it. When tended, they prevent the spirit from zooming off into the ozone of perfectionism and spiritual pride.*" 163

The impostor does not want to come out of hiding. He will grab for the cosmetic kit and put on his pretty face to make himself "presentable."

Whom dare I tell that I am benevolent and malevolent, chaste and randy (lascivious; lecherous; of or characterized by frank, uninhibited sexuality; ill-mannered), compassionate and vindictive, selfless and selfish, that beneath my brave words lives a frightened child, that I dabble in religion and in pornography, that I have blackened a friend's character, betrayed a trust, violated a confidence, that I am tolerant and thoughtful, a bigot and a blowhard, and that I really hate okra?

The greatest fear of all is that if I expose the impostor and lay bare my **TRUE SELF**, I will be abandoned by my friends and ridiculed by my enemies. 163,164

**OUR SALVATION** and **OUR STRENGTH** lie in complete trust in the Great Rabbi who broke bread with the outcast Zacchaeus. His meal-sharing with a notorious sinner was not merely a gesture of liberal tolerance and humanitarian sentiment. It embodies His mission and His message: *forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation for all, without exception.* 164

**BEFRIENDING the IMPOSTOR & the PHARISEE** within marks the beginning of reconciliation with myself and the end of spiritual schizophrenia.

In the Rabbi's embrace our evil impulses are converted and transformed into good. Just as the unbridled lust of the sinful woman in Luke's gospel was transformed into a passion for intimacy with Jesus, so our possessiveness about money metastasizes into greed for the treasure in the field. Our inner murderer becomes capable of murdering homophobia, bigotry, and prejudice. Our vindictiveness and hatred are transformed into intolerance and rage at the caricatures of God as a petty accountant. Our chronic niceness is converted into heartfelt compassion for those who have lost their way.

And the meaning of the Rabbi's word, "Behold, I make *all* things new," become luminously clear. 165, 166

**LEARNING BY HEART** is another matter entirely. The rhythm of relentless tenderness in the Rabbi's heart makes loving terribly personal, terribly immediate, and

terribly urgent. He says, "I give you a new commandment; it is My commandment; it is all I command you: Love one another as I have loved you." Only compassion and forgiveness count. Love is the key to everything. Living and loving are one.

Heart speaks to heart. The Rabbi implores, "Don't you understand that **DISCIPLESHIP** is not about being right or being perfect or being efficient? *It's all about the way you live with each other.*" *In every encounter we either give life or we drain it. There is no neutral exchange. We enhance human dignity, or we diminish it. The success or failure of a given day is measured by the quality of our interest and compassion toward those around us.* We defend ourselves by our response to human need. *The question is not how we feel about our neighbor but what we have done for him or her. We reveal our heart in the way we listen to a child, speak to the person who delivers mail, bear an injury, and share our resources with the indigent.*

An old anecdote is told about a farm boy whose one skill was finding lost donkeys. When asked how he did this, he answered, "I just figure out where I would go if I was a jackass, and there it was." Turning this in a more positive direction, ***listening to the Rabbi's heartbeat, the disciple hears where Jesus would be in any given situation, and there He is.*** 169