

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

I'm very fond of a quote variously attributed, that "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty." This month's essays urge being more than merely the logical result of negative influences.

Anyone may be the door through which new possibilities enter and begin to heal every injury.

Denying Denial

After more than thirty years of doing all the good I can and receiving viewer response from five continents, I never quite know how to respond whenever I encounter someone attempting to deny I was ever here at all. Does anything I've done matter? I suppose you would have to ask the individuals who've grown in some way because of the creativity I've shared, rather than base anything upon the opinions of the deniers, because my intent has never been to be popular, famous, or financially successful.

The best answer I can consequently give is to keep working especially when it makes no sense to do so. The work thus becomes an act of faith, affirming a meaning and substance beyond the present moment of experience. Only Godde knows how far its effects will go.

Denial is the reasons to concede defeat; faith is the reasons to persevere and persist. Denial leads to death. Faith leads to life.

In choosing to avoid denial, therefore, one chooses life--but life that is persistently and even stubbornly unpredictable. Within its oscillations between sorrow and joy, deeper meanings are ever and always able to be found. The end result is more than is apparent, but only for those who understand--much like being real, as described by the skin horse within the literary classic, *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

It is nonetheless within the response of denying denial that truly living is to be found, which is virtually never the easier choice. Those who wish to avoid spirituality, specifically due to its invisibility, indirectly abandon their faith to material distractions unable to support the

weight and dimensions of a soul. In choosing one's soul, conversely, one's substance will always be more than is superficially apparent or easily seen and understood.

It is a daunting challenge, because while one invites a lifetime of not being understood, the other generally leads to a regretful lifetime of nothing at all. This is why it became apparent some time ago that one's life and work may be most truthfully directed toward future generations not yet born, who will be eternally grateful for the investment previously made--even as the current population would do well to be thankful to those upon whose shoulders they may be consciously or unconsciously standing. No one is the end or beginning of life, but rather potentially a point of transition in negative or positive directions.

One can either encourage the fracturing and separation to spread or conversely be an agent of healing and ever greater wholeness. Denial aligns with the former. Alternatively embracing truth, moves wholeness from mere idea to a sort of manifested reality that can be shared.

So it is not only one's own life which has a stake in denying denial, but countless others whose lives depend in various ways upon what can be learned from those who have preceded them. One might even contemplate those named within history books, who specifically went against prevailing societal pressures of their times in order to accomplish what they did. They may not have been significantly different from one's self or others within the current time.

The only failure to fear, consequently, is being unwilling to learn and grow, perhaps because of the difficulties doing so might encompass. Those who seek easy or happy lives, consequently, do not truly live at all. The joy and accomplishment that are earned, conversely, have value that is likely to extend across multiple generations with no final effect beyond which they do not matter.

Such challenges must nonetheless be chosen in ways analogous to alternative paths, hiking trails, and ski runs one passes along one's way.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Abandoning Abandonment

Anything done twice has the potential to become a repetitious pattern. Conversely, persistent misfortune is insufficient reason to resign one's self to a metaphorical cage. An ongoing battle lasting longer than anticipated is likewise an inadequate reason to surrender.

As tempting as dying during the fight may sometimes seem, it must never be the choice one actually makes--no matter how exhausted one might become. A final contrasting action may be the one that changes the direction in which the battle's outcome is headed. So the answer to the question of how long one is able to persist must always be, "At least one more."

The last seven years of my life have included a few major accomplishments, but also many terrible and tragic losses. It would consequently be easy to mentally and emotionally dwell on the myriad of instances that trust was betrayed, love was withheld, and my discovery was only of how little I mattered to those to whom I had given great amounts of assistance. Yet were I to relive those earlier times, I would still do what I could to help, simply because of who I am.

I did not extend compassionate assistance in order to guarantee future success, but rather only because actions of love seemed the only decent answer at the time. Abandoning anyone within an hour of need, never crossed my mind, although I was sometimes forced to recognize when I had nothing more to give. The essential point within myself was simply that I had in fact done what I could.

Were any of those who abandoned me to request further help, there is a good chance I would do whatever my abilities allowed, simply because I choose to persist in being myself rather than morphing into a reflection of them. It may be they will never learn by my example, but I must be sure the reason they didn't was not because no example was available. So, even if a bit of time and effort are required, I must seek to abandon conscious consideration that they previously abandoned me.

This is different, however, than recognizing someone who wishes to habitually use me in a devaluing manner. In that case, doing so would not be an act of mercy toward someone in need, but rather a form of enabling an individual to avoid any development of healthier symbiotic

relationship. When I help someone in need I affirm the interconnectedness of all life, but when I assist a narcissist I normalize disconnection.

This begs the question of whether in fact the dynamic of abandonment is a common method within narcissistic behavior. In some instances, sadly, such patterns may even be normal within one's family of origin, such that part of reaching adulthood is emerging as a survivor and building healthier ways of interacting with love. Among its signature qualities is that love persists when it is neither convenient nor comfortable to do so.

A world without loved ones is not something one is willing to risk, if any method of prevention is available. Trading one loved one for another, likewise questions whether any genuine love was involved. Finding one's self abandoned thus asks whether one was loved at all, but being valuable doesn't depend on being valued.

Even if one doesn't value one's self, the mere fact of ability of any kind, insists there is a need for one's self somewhere within the world. It is within abandoning abandonment that the search for that place can begin. When that place is finally found, others already there will rejoice to meet the one able to answer their need.

Yet if all one perceives is abandonment and not opportunity, numerous unspoken invitations might slip by unnoticed. Abandoning this is thus inseparable from finding new ways to look and listen. Sometimes it is even perception itself which is experiencing a need to grow.

All that being said, there is often a patronizing and perhaps even hypocritical dynamic within any sort of pretended interaction that is purely superficial. What must therefore be abandoned are expectations. Being honestly present yet without specific expectations, invites creativity.

In many instances, this likewise invites a deepening of relationships and of interpersonal understanding. The empowerment that occurs is thus not merely of the individuals, but also of the community. Possibility itself is increased.

So a perhaps unlikely result of abandoning abandonment is greater interpersonal connection with other unique individuals, which may likewise provide new directions in which to grow. It is essential to remember, however, that the gift of new potential may arrive within unconventional and unusual packaging.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Opposing Apathy

In a very real sense, feeling nothing is analogous to not being alive and failing to act is a form of not truly believing what one may have otherwise professed. The question was posed rhetorically during the time I was a student within a youth ministry training program, "If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" This could obviously be applied to a great many other descriptors as well.

Apathy suggests there would be insufficient evidence for virtually any meaningful assertion at all. From one perspective, one would have enormous freedom and could be anything, but from another there would be virtually nothing to testify to having ever been there. At one time, "What is your passion" was a common question of personal reflection, but the unstated built-in assumption was that everyone has one.

Some couples likewise claimed to have no arguments, leaving one to wonder whether they ever discussed topics about which they held strong opinions. If one cannot discuss any specific topic, however, it is likely that understanding in that area fails to experience any further growth or development. In a similar way, it is possible that those who cannot separate the Divine from religion or, for another example, disagreement with their opinions from being judgmental, it is possible that they have likewise become locked within an ideological space that allows for no further growth.

More concisely, apathy opposes growth, which also does not occur within an absence of struggle. I would nonetheless prefer a more manageable amount than my life has more often encompassed. I have thus never agreed that God does not allow more trouble within an individual's life than one can manage.

Sometimes one is others' opportunity to learn. I can only hope that their education is successful, because of the high cost at which it comes--which points to another characteristic of apathy. It doesn't want to pay for anything.

"Apathy is always oriented to death rather than life."

– Sister Who

From one perspective, this makes apathy a most insidious thief--always taking and giving nothing in return. From another, this also identifies apathy as parasitic. It has no capacity to be symbiotic.

A misleading quality of apathy is that it is often camouflaged within creating distractions that serve its central purpose of preventing growth. Bringing discussion back to a central focus and leaving tangents for later discussion is thus among its constructive adversaries. The tactic of guiding every discussion to positive conclusion from which additional growth is likely, is even more desirable yet.

The perhaps tedious aspect of combating apathy is that it never ends. Doing so always requires exertion and is never comfortable or convenient. This is not significantly different, however, in comparison to every flower that grows, which must begin by pushing through the heaviness of often stony earth.

What increases the difficulty is that it is often a solitary effort unsupported by surrounding persons--some of whom have been blessed with far greater resources. The result is nonetheless that each will thereby demonstrate what sort of person one is. I cannot imagine that the Divine will easily forget the truths thus revealed.

My opposition to apathy is consequently among a quality I want the Divine to remember, whenever I come to mind. My commitment to love is likewise a quality I want the Divine to remember--even or especially when others make choices I would not (and vice versa). If they were not free to make whatever choices seemed individually appropriate, any claim to believing in freedom would be hypocritical.

I am nonetheless puzzled when I seem to respect their choices more than they respect mine. Yet my choices are based upon my beliefs more than upon their behavior. That I do make my own choices, is a further indication that I thoughtfully oppose apathy.

Actions of love demonstrate that I am an enemy to apathy. A placid world would not be one that demonstrates love, nor would a world without needs be one within which symbiosis would be anywhere apparent. Popular notions of heaven thus overlook that it is characterized by interactive loving relationships.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Reinstating Relationship

Given opportunity to act upon what they say they believe, it's surprising to me how many will not. Perhaps it shouldn't be, considering how compromise is generally more rewarded than integrity. Integrity, conversely, is usually more oriented to integration than sacrifice.

When integration feels difficult, it's usually because one is being prompted to grow. Any pre-existing notions will most likely need to expand. It is not true, for example, that slavery no longer exists within the United States.

What is conspicuously absent within slavery and central to freedom is the freedom to choose. Choosing between personal integrity and satisfying basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing, however, is not a respectable choice that any would place upon another--yet this happens every day. If freedom is not merely for one's self, but for everyone, then the search for ever-better and ever-more-inclusive solutions must never end--and must not be decided by purely economic values.

I do not help someone in need because it financially benefits me to do so, but rather because within the larger picture of life, that individual is a member of my family. I do it because love requires it. If I am without love, there is no more tragically broken individual.

It is a bit of a misnomer to speak of reinstating relationship, because fundamental interconnection is already there. Yet so many have forgotten how interconnected and interdependent the individual members of humanity are and how much each of them matters. Their relationships to their natural environments have become equally strained as individuals attempt to control that for which their wisdom is insufficient.

Hence I persist in encouraging all to think in terms of personal contribution and stewardship instead of control and conformity. It really does require all to work together, to make the world work. Exclusion and bigotry will only ensure that the best possibilities are never realized.

Helping another to reach maximum potential unavoidably lifts one's self toward a more relational maximum potential as well--which makes everyone a winner, but in diverse ways.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

Uncertainty seems to be a signature quality of the current time and this is as true for me as for anyone else. Consequently, any trustworthy person or entity interested in being the guardian of resources this ministry has created, is urged to make that interest known. This includes the portable chapel, the television production set, and other ministerially oriented pieces.

My hope of course is to again utilize all such resources, but nothing is presently as uncertain as the specific future any will encounter. I thus surround all such resources with prayer, while intuition insists they will again be utilized within ministerial activities, but my body is mortal so they must at some point go somewhere. As a time-worn witticism encourages, "Pray for sun, but row toward shore."

All that being said, a neurologist recently came very close to diagnosing me with multiple sclerosis. I responded that I thought such a conclusion was premature, but perhaps this sheds a little light on recent struggles. I'm still more inclined to point to environmental pollution in my current residence, but that is uncertain.

What remains certain is my commitment to this ministerial work. Accomplishment can only truly be measured in lives thereby affected. I do my best, nonetheless, to ensure all effects are good, whether or not they are generally noticed.

The book manuscript telling more of my story continues to move toward publication, but is not quite there yet. Hopefully that will be very soon, because many are eager to read it..

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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Sister Who a.k.a. Rev. Denver NeVaar, PhD
POB 16074, Golden, CO 80402
E-Mail: dn@SisterWho.com
Internet-Website: www.SisterWho.com

Additional websites:

www.GodSpaceSanctuary.org
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