

Love of neighbour

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To the Desert Fathers and Mothers human relationships are considered to be foundational to living in the presence of Christ: *Abba John the Dwarf* said, “A house is not built by beginning at the top and working down. You must begin with the foundations in order to reach the top.” They said to him, “What does this saying mean?” He said, “The foundation is our neighbour, whom we must win, and that is the place to begin. For all the commandments of Christ depend on this one.”

In our present world most of us seem to have lost sight of this important foundation to our life. We tend to live as if we are independent objects jostling for position. It is interesting how in our time some scientists are changing our view of reality. In Quantum Physics experiments have right from the beginning proved that electrons are in perpetual motion – not only constantly interacting with other particles but also with a vast underlying ocean of energy that supports all. The existence of this connecting principle, this energetic force called the Zero Point Field, was ignored as irrelevant to practical applications of Quantum science and left out of the equations. Now scientists interested in the philosophical implications of quantum theory are drawing attention to it. The discovery of this Quantum Field constitutes definite proof that we are all integrally connected and part of the web of life with our fellow human beings, all of creation and the

cosmos, for we too are made up out of atoms and their essential constituents, electrons. We too are packets of quantum energy interlinking and exchanging information with this sea of energy.

This is not only true at the energy level but consciousness too is closely involved. David Bohm, an important quantum physicist said: *“Deep down the consciousness of humanity is one.”* Our sense of separateness is an illusion, however powerful it may be, but it is still only an illusion, created by the ego and its left-brain circuit focused on survival. We are interconnected meaningful parts of a whole.

If we really took this thought on board, it would change our whole attitude to the human family and to our planet. Everything we do has an effect on the whole. What happens to others happens to us. We need to take the focus off ourselves and meditation is the key discipline to do so.

Because of their life of contemplative prayer the Desert hermits were experientially aware of this interconnectedness and to them the ultimate virtue is a self-emptying of all personal desires leading to a self-giving love, following in the footsteps of Christ: *“St Anthony had prayed to the Lord to be shown to whom he was equal. God had given him to understand that he had not yet reached the level of a certain cobbler in Alexandria. Anthony left the desert, went to the cobbler and asked him how he lived. His answer was that he gave a third of his income to the Church, another third to the poor, and kept the rest for himself. This did not seem a task out of the ordinary to Anthony who himself had given up all his possessions and lived in the desert in total poverty. So that was not where the other man’s superiority lay. Anthony said to him, ‘It is the Lord who has sent me to see how you live.’ The humble tradesman, who venerated Anthony, then told him his soul’s secret: ‘I do not do anything special. Only, as I work I look at all the passers-by and say, ‘So that they may be saved, I, only I, will perish.”*

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