February 20, 2020 – Good Householder  
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**A close up of a sign

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Tonight, we’ll be talking about Good Householder and ideas related to it. The Work defines Good Householder as someone who has engaged life, learned skills, who responsibly takes care of their duties, but does not believe in life; and is the level we need to be at in order to enter the Fourth Way. The Work also describes three other categories of people at lower levels of consciousness: Tramp, Lunatic and Hasnamous. These are described in this month’s *Mark*, but briefly, the Tramp is a person who doesn’t feel any responsibility for anything and hasn’t learned any useful skills to engage with the world. A Lunatic believes he or she can DO, and so tries to change outer life, believing that if everyone did things the way he or she does, everything would be the way it should be. Hasnamous, a term Mr. Gurdjieff created, refers to someone who uses other people for their well-being while not caring at all about them. Rebecca Nottingham puts it this way: “[Hasnamous] refers to a person who is smart enough to see that he can gain power over people by using tricks, machinations, and lies.” The current political situation here and in the rest of the world might suggest a few such characters! But as much as I might like to point my finger at those others, I have to remember that when I do, there are three fingers pointing back to me as well! Just as with men Nos. 1, 2 and 3, I have the Tramp, Lunatic and Hasnamous within me as well. We all do. And if you think you don’t, you will learn that you do if you continue on the journey long enough! Take a moment. Can you find the Tramp in yourself? How about those ‘I’s that are lazy, don’t want to take responsibility, resent those who are successful in life? And the Lunatic? Where do I think that my way is the best and only, and try to convince everyone that it is? When it comes to the Hasnamous, doesn’t that bring up the “that’s NOT me!” ‘I’s? Well, look deeper! Remember that there’s scale in everything. A Hasnamous might be easier to spot on the world stage, but I can see how in the past I used tricks and lies to get my children to accomplish my agendas. It might be far from the motivations of a dictator, but it's on the same stick, so to speak.

So back to Good Householder…Maurice Nicoll divides Good Householder into two: Good Householder, and Good Householder that doesn’t believe in life. Rebecca Nottingham in her book, *The Work*, distinguishes the two a bit differently: Good Householder *without* Magnetic Center, and Good Householder *with* Magnetic Center. Magnetic Center is that ability or faculty within us that can distinguish horizontal life influences, which are called A influences, from B influences, which are those coming from higher consciousness, and that point the way to deeper, spiritual truth. I find Nottingham’s distinction of two different Householders useful. However, I would amend them to Good Householder with or without *awakened* Magnetic Center. Since there is no way for me to verify if anyone else has a Magnetic Center or not, it feels more true to me that everyone would have one. We have a loving God who created us with a core of goodness after all! Now whether Magnetic Center awakens or not, is a different question. Anyway, we each probably know people who take care of their duties and responsibilities very well, are good and caring, and yet seem to have no attraction to self-knowledge or the spiritual journey. So we could say that they seem to be Good Householders without awakened Magnetic Center. Good Householders with awakened Magnetic Center, also take responsibility for their lives, fulfill their duties, but *do not believe in life*. In other words, they don’t see life aims, such as having a family, creating a successful business, taking vacations, acquiring wealth, etc. - which are all good things in themselves - as the ultimate aim and meaning of life. They are instead drawn to seek higher truth, know themselves, and serve God’s will in the world.

Now what makes Magnetic Center become awakened or activated in the first place, and brings us to not believing in life? It’s an interesting wondering question even though we can’t

know for sure. For me, all I know is that what I believe to be Magnetic Center, just woke up one day - I didn’t do anything to make it happen. I grew up in the Episcopal church, and when I was 12 or so, I was confirmed. During the rite, after the bishop had laid his hands on us, we had returned to the pews prior to receiving our first communion. Suddenly for no reason, I was filled with an overwhelming sense of deep joy, and I broke into a big smile and quiet laughter. The feeling was so delightful; I had never felt anything like it before or since. I think Fr. Keating describes this kind of experience God placing a big kiss in the center of our being. Whatever it was, I took it in deeply as proof of the existence of God, and it was my touchstone for years. A seed was planted in me that took root and grew over the following decades, until in 1990 I began the spiritual journey in earnest; not in the Fourth Way at that point, but Magnetic Center had strongly awakened in me, and I became a seeker, and lover of God and all things spiritual.

So as Good Householders we don’t believe life to be an end in itself. And yet we hold life to be our teacher, so at every moment we can know that it truly serves our transformation. This is the way to take care of the responsibilities of our lives, and learn about ourselves through the Work, at the same time. However, with some of the original languaging in the Commentaries, it’s possible to pick up an attitude of needing to Work *against* life and our personalities. But I’ve come to see that the exact opposite is far more fruitful. When I work *with* life, *with* the personality, welcoming the events, sensations, feelings, and thoughts that arise, with love and gentle inquiry, I gain a deeper understanding of my motivations. I am able to non-identify, self-remember, and move to external considering of others in my life and the world, much more easily. Byron Katie teaches that we *can’t* let go of our thoughts and beliefs - *they let go of us -* when we understand them. That feels right to me. Have you ever tried to just let go of something you’re really identified with? Does it work? It doesn’t for me! If someone tells me to “just let it go” or “get over it”, it’s not helpful, to say the least. But when I re-contextualize the thoughts and beliefs behind the identification, as parts of me that were never acknowledged or heard, my heart opens to hearing their truth. Katie describes each stressful thought, feeling and sensation as a temple bell that is a merciful reminder that we’re not aligned with our true nature, and that it’s time to Work. Holding our inner and outer experiences in that way allows the Second Force, or force of resistance in the event, or internal experience, to become our teacher through the Third, or Reconciling Force of the Work. And the manifestation that comes through that triad is understanding - and even revelation. And as a Good Householder, I wish to engage with both my inner life and the outer world in a kind, loving and peaceful way. Resisting life events, internal or external, or seeing them as a struggle or fight, keeps me in a First Force - Second Force polarity, and the only thing it reveals is that I have a belief that says resistance and violence is the way to peace and understanding. I’d want to know that, but it sure doesn’t make any sense! So to summarize: as Good Householders, we take care of our lives responsibly, and through holding life lightly with delight and gratitude for what it teaches us, the possibility opens up for our orientation to shift from life to Life guided by Spirit.