

(nonviolence), *dhira* (sobriety), no wealth without work, and *brahmacharya* (chastity). These are four cardinal principles of ascetic morality. Christian love finds expression in these four principles as love-mercy, sobriety-self-control, purity-chastity, and integrity-truthfulness. Asceticism helps humans attain to these Christian perfections through the principle that abstinence from certain activities allows the development of opposing virtues. Virtue makes possible the realization of personal and social good. Believers are to cultivate the higher taste for goodness, which leads to holiness in spiritual maturity.

God's love for creatures is experienced in the healthful goodness of His holy benevolent order. Thus, believers are called to rise above an animalistic level of existence. God loves us all just as we are, but base behavior can harden our hearts toward one another, creatures, and God. Moral discipline gentles and civilizes us, making us more able to respond to God Who Is Love in a reciprocating loving manner. Asceticism can prepare us to be filled by the Holy Spirit, responding optimally to God's grace.

For the virtue of mercy to be cultivated, unnecessary killing and flesh eating should be avoided. Sobriety and self-control cannot be attained until gross and subtle forms of addictive intoxication are overcome. Holy love and the virtues of innocence and purity are destroyed by illicit exploitative sexual activity. Good stewardship, truthfulness, and integrity are undermined by all forms of unnecessary risk-taking and gambling, futures speculation, usury, the desire for wealth without honest work, and so forth.

The Kingdom of God Within and Defilement Without?

Sins of violence, intoxication, exploitative sexual activity, and gambling mark a society lost in the dark ignorance of anti-asceticism. Societies that revel in such internally self-polluting activities typically care little about polluting the outer world around them. How can those who carelessly poison their own bodies be expected to care about poisoning somebody else?

For enlightening discourse on the nature of societies in the polluted "mode of ignorance" (*tamo guna*) I recommend studying Vaishnava scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gita*. By comparison, the Gita describes societies in the "mode of goodness" (*sattva guna*) as characterized by compassion and nonviolence, control and orderliness, holy love and purity, truthfulness and integrity. Clearly Eli-Jahu's people are called to the ascetic morality of *sattva guna*. Jesus Christ still desires His beloved to clothe herself in the beauty of holiness and arise from the animal level of existence to claim the