“When I looked at things for what they are, I was fool enough to persist in my folly and found that each photograph was a mirror of my Self.” - Minor White

“When you approach something to photograph it, first be still with yourself until the object of your attention affirms your presence. Then don't leave until you have captured its essence.” - Minor White

Ralph Hattersley in Discover Your Self through Photography

“Mr. Hayes [Esquire Managing Editor] told me: ‘Shoot some really controversial Christmas pictures. Really shake people up.’ When I returned with the pictures, he said they were the best I had ever done. He paid me for them but Esquire never printed them.

At the time I photographed the assignment, I was studying under Mr. Eli Siegel, a poet-philosopher who had developed the system of thought he calls Aesthetic Realism. Mr. Siegel’s teaching had a profound influence on me, which continues to this day. One of the things he told me at the time was that I wasn’t doing a good job of seeing my wife accurately. He said that I wasn’t relating her to enough things. Instead, I was encapsulating my perception of her, seeing her as less that she actually is. He insisted that human beings have large dimension and that a way of seeing this largeness is to relate it to many, many things. Refusing to make these relations is a way of lessening a person. The reasons for this diminishing are less than respectable. We compress our notions of others in order to feel superior to them or to stuff them into convenient mental cubbyholes so that we don’t have to think about them anymore.

When Mr. Hayes gave me the assignment, I struck on the idea of applying Mr. Siegel’s teaching to our thinking about Jesus. I formulated what I wanted to do, then boiled down my concept to a single phrase: the Christ in all things. The idea here is that if Christ is as great as Christians claim he is, we should then be able to see Him or His influence in all things. This is another way of expressing Siegel’s notion that the larger a thing is the more it should relate to everything else...

Here was a simple answer to the problem of shake-up and controversy. All I had to do was to begin to restore Christ to his real size. Assuming that such a figure relates to everything else, all I had to do was show Him in a visual relationship to a few things which He is not normally associated. I figured that devout ‘Christians’ would then rise up in the thousands, claiming that His memory had been desecrated and that my pictures where an abomination before the face of the Lord. I reasoned further that the only things which would actually be desecrated would be the unreasoned narrowness of contemporary Christian vision. I don’t want Christ in full dimension as He is much easier to cope with in miniature.

The Christian unwillingness to relate the Christ to all things is at the root of the crisis in churches. Young folk look at Christianity and see it as irrelevant to their central concerns in life. The same factor is also at work undermining adherence to other faiths. Indeed, it has always been at work in all religions. When the founder of a great new faith passes on, his work is invariable taken over by lesser beings who narrow its scope to fit their comprehension and comfort. As time passes, the once vital faith relates to fewer and fewer of the things people are interested in.

I think the Siegel formula is an excellent one: If you want to see the largeness of something, see it as related to everything else. Not only will this help you see fully, but it will also help you discover if you have a deeply ingrained reluctance to see large. For example, a Christian should be willing to relate Jesus to everyday things, like a half-eaten lamb chop or a worn-out shoe. If he rebels, he has a hang-up somewhere which has made him lessen Jesus. Of course, he interprets his reaction as opposite from what it actually is; he thinks that by clinging to the habit of relating Jesus to
practically nothing at all, he is serving Him well. Broadening His relatedness he sees as sacrilege. He doesn’t see that the motive behind his narrowness of view may be that it enables him to escape trying to lead the kind of life Jesus asked him to lead.

...It comes to this: that anyone trying to see better is on the Way. It doesn’t matter if he calls himself an atheist or an agnostic. The law is that the closer one is to good seeing, the closer he is to God...What is it we do that makes this process holy to atheist and believer alike? First of all, we try with all our might to tune in to a faintly heard vibration in ourselves. In modern times, this could be called the wave length of aesthetics. A sophisticated physicist-metaphysician would say the higher we move on this band, the closer we come to God.”

Home “Play”

1. Think of a symbol that has had particular meaning for you on your spiritual journey. It could be a cross, an icon of the Virgin Mary, the peace sign, a Buddha, etc. Look for that symbol in unusual places and photograph the juxtaposition of that familiar symbol in unusual surroundings. You may also stage some photographs to create juxtapositions. Release effort. Let the image come to you. ♦ Additional thought: If this project in no way speaks to you (neither energizes nor challenges you), then you may choose to photograph a love one (person or animal companion) in unusual settings to expand your way or perceiving him/her.
2. Pick one of your photos and reflect on how it enlarges your understanding of the symbol/person and how it enlivens and informs your own spirituality. What do you sense is God’s invitation for you in this photo? What healing or opening or possibility is ready to emerge?
3. Write a haiku or other short piece about what that photo evokes within you. A haiku is a three-line poem: 1st line is 5 syllables; 2nd line is 7 syllables; last line is 5 syllables. Do not feel tied to this exact number of syllables per line or even to writing a haiku. The goal is to express the essence of your experience with an economy of words.
4. Write a few sentences, a very short story, or haiku about what one of the photos is stirring within you. If you choose to write a haiku:
   ♦ A haiku is a three-line poem: 1st line is 5 syllables; 2nd line is 7 syllables; last line is 5 syllables. ♦ Do not feel tied to this exact number of syllables per line or even to writing a haiku. The goal is to express the essence of your experience with an economy of words.

1. Email one photo and whatever you write to scottquinn.net@gmail.com by by 10 am Thursday.

Zoom 101:
• The first time you may be prompted to install zoom. Click "YES". You do not need a zoom account to attend. In the future, when you click on a zoom link, you may be asked if you wish to allow Zoom to open. Click "Allow".
• When prompted if you want to use audio, select "Join with Computer Audio".
• Click "Gallery View" in the top right of your screen to see everyone. Or you can choose “Speaker View”, which will automatically show on your screen whoever is speaking.
• In the bottom of your window, is a "Mute" button and a "Video" button. Please check to see that the video is on so we can see you. If it is not, click the "Video" button.
• We will begin with everyone on "Mute" and encourage you to keep "Mute" on so that we are not distracted by background noises in each other’s homes.
• When it is time to share, click "Unmute" so that everyone can hear you while you speak.
• Click "Mute" again when you are finished speaking. You can also hold down the space bar to “unmute” and then release the space bar to go back into “mute” mode.