

In September of 2018, Brigadier General (retired) Zanetti was asked to be the keynote speaker at a “Salute to Heroes” banquet honoring those who had died in the line of duty. Initially he hesitated. He told the organizers he would accept, but only if he had something of value to say. Otherwise, he would give them time to find another speaker.

That night, at 4:00 AM, BG Zanetti was awakened and heard these words. “You will speak of the hollow man.” Startled, BG Zanetti responded, “Lord, the hollow man? What do you mean the hollow man? What do you want me to say?” But there was only silence.

What follows is the General’s speech. It offers a stark alternative to the ethnos vs. ethnos view that is gripping the world today.



Hollow Man Speech...November 16, 2018

I believe we have been taught in error. From our earliest days, we have learned to view the world through lenses such as culture, nationality, race, religion...maybe even, political party. I have come to believe those lenses are warped----like those funny mirrors you find a carnival. Tonight, I am going to offer you a different—and I hope clearer—lens.

Then, as free men and women you can choose to either accept or reject what is ultimately just one man's opinion.

So, let's begin.

Have you ever met a man who seems to have it all? He may be wealthy.... or hold a position of power. Perhaps he is handsome; and he seems to glide effortlessly through life.

Yet, there is something about him that makes you uncomfortable. You can't quite put your finger on it, but something is off. There is no reason for this feeling. If you happen to know him personally, he has always been nice to you.

Still, some invisible hand seems to push you away. And, once *outside* his orbit, you breathe easier.

Then, there is another kind of man. He has neither wealth, fame, nor power. Heads don't turn, and people don't whisper, when he enters a room. Yet, when he looks you in the eye, or shakes your hand, you think, "I really like this fellow. I'd like to spend more time with him."

Here, the invisible hand draws you toward him. And, once *inside* his orbit, you breathe easier.

The first man I described I will call the Hollow Man. The second man, I will call the Noble Man. And, this

evening, the Hollow Man vs. Noble Man lens is the lens by which I will ask you to consider viewing the world.

And, for those of you wondering why I am focused on the word “man”, the reason is simple. I am not a woman. So, I will not presume. *(Laughter)*

So, let us first examine the Hollow Man.

If you study Hollow Men, you will see commonalities emerge. Hollow Men do many of the same things wrong. Tonight, we'll look at only five.



First, the Hollow Man values money over integrity.

Often his wealth is not earned by means of hard-work and enterprise, but rather through cleverness--- or gaming the system. The tricks are old. He skims a little from the many. Without conscience, he readily resorts to bribes or threats. He twists and contorts laws to gain unfair advantage.

When his methods are called into question, he will calmly state, “It was all done legally,” which may be true, but it was almost never done morally or ethically.

This is not to say all wealthy men are hollow. That paints with too broad a brush. Plus, wealth is a relative thing. The richest man in a poor village can be equally hollow should he achieve his status in dubious ways.

Now, as the Hollow Man’s wealth increases, he struggles with how to employ it. Initially, he focuses on

frivolity and sensual pleasure. But soon he finds power and control and are far more satisfying.

Thus, his life's work begins in a never-ending loop of money, to power, to control---all leading back to more money.

Thus, the first trait of the Hollow Man is he is greedy.



The second trait of the Hollow Man is his need to subjugate women.

For many Hollow Men, dominating women is the power they cherish the most. The Hollow Man does not embrace the idea that two should become one. That would require acknowledging some weakness on his part ----and strength on the woman's.

Therefore, refusing to become one, he goes through life as a half.... then secretly wonders why he isn't fulfilled.

He equates manliness with dominance...and this often manifests in verbal or physical abuse. Sometimes both.

You will know you are in a culture dominated by Hollow Men when women as a group are dismissed as unneeded. And, with half the society's talent held captive and oppressed, progress stops.

Societies dominated by Hollow Men first decay, then fossilize, and eventually die...unfortunately, taking many innocent victims with them. Thus, the Hollow Man is at best a chauvinist and worst a misogynist.



Third, the Hollow Man embraces words over action.

He values persuasion over truth. He uses words to dazzle those easily impressed...and adoration follows. He likes that.

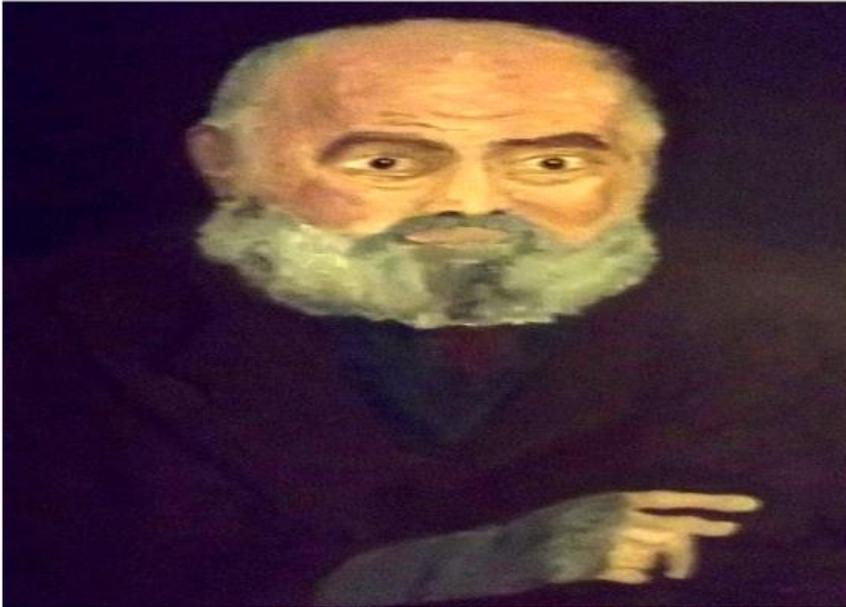
Yet, perversely, he holds his admirers in contempt. He thinks, “How could they be so foolish to believe my nonsense?” Eventually, impressing the trusting and the naïve bores him. So, he sets his goals higher.

The hallowed halls of academia become his challenge. There he comes to believe man's mind can conquer all; so, he seeks to intellectualize everything. Soon his thoughts and philosophies drift away from objective reality. Absolutes no longer exist. All becomes grey. Lies and truth merge. Of course, this leads to pessimism and cynicism---and soon his heart becomes stone and his conscience numb. Eventually, Pontius Pilate's rueful lament of, "*What is truth?*" becomes his guiding principle.

Nothing is then worth fighting for. And, his power to act dies.

Thus, the Hollow Man will not engage in a bar fight even as his wife is being accosted by a drunk. Nor will he grasp his sword and shield even when the barbarians are at the gate

Thus, the Hollow Man embraces comforting lies over harder truths.



Fourth, the Hollow Man refuses to take responsibility for his actions.

Taking responsibility would require acknowledging fault, therefore, blame must be directed elsewhere.

Yet, oddly, the Hollow Man nurtures his own personal cult of victimhood. He believes he wrongs no one. Yet,

somehow, he is always wronged. The ubiquitous “they” are to blame for his unhappiness.

His maturity level thus arrested, he easily succumbs to anger and outburst---demanding loyalty from others---but loyal to no one in return.

He is prone to pervert justice; and will torture logic and reason to ensure others bear the burdens of his sins.

Apologies are thus rare, but punishments swift and sure.

Thus, the Hollow Man is a shirker.



Finally, number five. If you are looking for the defining trait of the Hollow Man ...it is this. The Hollow Man worships himself. He is the arbiter of his own spiritual truth.

And since there is no greater authority than he, to question him is tantamount to questioning God.

Predictably, what follows is the belief that, if there is an eternity, that eternity is devoid of any consequences based on earthly behavior.

Thus, untethered by any accountability to a higher power, and absent any eternal consequences, he is now free to do as he pleases.

Remarkably, though, the Hollow Man often takes on airs of spirituality. He has no compunction about using Bible quotes to make a sale---or garner a vote. Or, he may meditate and chant all the while ogling the girl in the yoga pants in front of him. But, connection to the divine is never his real goal. The opposite is true.

He raises his fist toward God and believes himself emancipated from old and withered superstitions, never seeing he is imprisoned by the ancient chains of pride and arrogance. And thus, his so-called enlightenment is nothing more than a warmed-over promise uttered by a serpent thousands of years ago.

Thus, the Hollow Man substitutes gauzy spiritual flimflam for the hard-work of confession, repentance,

and transformation. He trades the eternal for the temporal---- and sacrifices all things sacred for a bowl of stew or thirty pieces of silver.

Sad really.

Sad or not----never forget the Hollow Man is a dangerous man. And, when your family, community, or civilization enshrines the Hollow Man, know your fate is sealed.

So, why lay bare the traits of the Hollow Man on an evening where we honor heroes---the men and women of substance? That answer is also simple. To really appreciate the worthy man...the Noble Man... one must be aware of the alternative.

The good news is, just as there are similarities with respect to the Hollow Man, there are similarities to the Noble Man. And, as you might guess, Noble Men tend to do the same things right.

Let's look at five.



First, the Noble Man believes he is first and foremost a spiritual being. Yes, he consists of a body and a mind.

And yes, the spirit part is hardest to prove. But, to him it is the most real. He believes there is a Creator who placed a divine spark within him. He is therefore accountable to this higher authority.

Oh, and there is an eternity---- that can either be very pleasant or very painful.

Therefore, the Noble Man is neither careless with his words nor his actions. He rejects the ever-changing moral and ethical standards of the prevailing cultural zeitgeist.

Yes, there are ambiguities in life, but right is right and wrong is wrong. And, these standards were written into men's consciousnesses and hearts from the beginning.

The Noble Man understands his place in universe. He is above the animals, but below the angels and, no, he will never be God.

By bending his knee, he somehow becomes taller. By acknowledging weakness, he somehow becomes stronger.

Far from perfect, he falters and falls. His character slips. Still, he rises. He vows to remember and not repeat.

Theologians call this repentance; and it is integral to the character of the Noble Man.

Therefore, there is often a hint of sadness to the Noble Man. He sees past failings as scars on his soul. In reflective moments he winces and thinks, “I wish I would have”, or, “How could I have?” He would like nothing more than a do-over but recognizes if given that chance he would likely just make different mistakes.

Thus, the first trait of the Noble Man is he believes in God.



Second, the Noble Man takes responsibility for his actions.

Blaming others is repugnant to him. When he errs, rather than pointing fingers, he places his hand over his heart and acknowledges fault for all he has done and all he has failed to do.

He believes in the concepts of duty, honor, & loyalty.

Duty is bearing responsibility for others. Honor is bearing responsibility to higher ideals. And, loyalty manifests as responsibility to those in his charge and to

God above. Therefore, if anyone kneels before him, he is quick to say, “Arise.”

Thus, the Noble Man is accountable.



Third, the Noble Man prefers actions to words.

It's not that words don't matter...they do. But those who talk too much make him suspicious. A man's yes should be yes and his no a no. Truth and integrity are simple concepts to him. He sees telling a lie as cowardice—for lying is the fear of facing truth. And,

though truth is an unbending taskmaster, the Noble Man believes it is better to submit to truth than to rule over lies.

With respect to education, the Noble Man understands the value of the classroom, but also understands there are multiple ways to demonstrate intelligence and mastery. He will readily abandon convention and use whatever is available to overcome an obstacle. Should one method fail, he tries another. And, from his experimentation, genius often results.

The Noble Man also anticipates. While others stare at the darkening sky and argue about how big the storm will be, the Noble Man quietly rounds up the horses and puts them in the barn.

He believes in adventure and discovery. To him---men should know how to ride fast and shoot straight.

Quests are to be encouraged, but always for a higher

purpose—that being to make life better for those who will follow.

The Noble Man does not seek conflict or battle but has no illusions about the world. He knows most bar fights are won by those who punch hardest and first. And wars are won by spilling the enemy's blood. He lives the old adage---actions speak louder than words.

Thus, the Noble Man lives a life of purpose.



Fourth, the Noble Man respects women.

Clearly, women have strengths he'll never possess, and he is not threatened by that obvious fact. When a woman speaks, he listens. He may not always agree, but he attempts to understand.

In a perfect world, the words "fair and equal" would define the male-female relationship. But the world and relationships are complex things, so that ideal is rarely achieved. Still, the Noble Man has a well-calibrated ethical scale that does not tip unfairly based on an X or Y chromosome.

In matters of love, the Noble Man sees a woman as beauty to be won. That requires a higher standard of behavior from himself. Maintaining that standard can be a challenge as his desire for discovery and quest are not always compatible with refinement and decorum. Still, he is aware, and is thus slow to anger and quick to apologize.

The Noble Man believes it his duty to defend women, not because they are weak, but because two becoming one makes sense to him. He desires not to be a half. And, he knows if God is included with the two, then a three-braided chord—not easily broken—is formed. And, that is worth defending.

He understands friction is natural between men and women. He sees this as the way both are strengthened and refined. Love then conflates with patience and kindness...and, love becomes neither boastful nor proud. And from this understanding, comes an increased capacity to forgive. And, by such, he believes men and women help each other get to heaven.

Thus, the Noble Man trusts women.



Finally, money—the Noble Man values integrity and honor over money and wealth.

It's not that he disdains money; he merely sees it as a tool. He's convinced if he can see how a man spends his money, he will know all about him in under five minutes. Is he buying expensive suits or giving to the poor? Casinos or college funds?

To the Noble Man, means should have meaning...regardless of amount. He loans money

without interest and holds no grudges if it is never repaid.

Thus, the men and women he admires are those who are the excellent teachers, the dedicated nurses, the able mechanics, the honest policemen, and the retired marines. Their bank accounts aren't stuffed with digits, but he sees their contributions as having far more value than that of yachts or jets.

In fact, to the Noble Man, excess money often leads to selfishness and idleness. Decadence and degeneracy follow---and decadence is, at its core, a moral and spiritual failing that money reveals, but does not cause.

Thus, the Noble Man embodies integrity.

So, know this, when your family, community, or civilization enshrines the Noble Man, greatness follows.

And, it is here our comparison ends.

So, to summarize my case. I do not believe the history of mankind is defined by culture, nationality, race, religion, or even, political party. No, the common thread of human history is the struggle between the Hollow Men aspiring to divide and conquer in the horizontal ---vying with the Noble Men aspiring to connect and unify in the vertical.

But, again, this is only one man's opinion.



Now, with all this said, if in some way this all seems a bit unsatisfying, you are not alone. For there is a

foundational injustice to my lens. It is difficult to watch the Hollow succeed while the Noble suffer. And, it is equally difficult, to reconcile why Hollow lives are so often long, while Noble lives so often cut short.

To those of you who bristle at these injustices, I understand. But, please allow me to offer another view. But, before I do, please know...for what I am about to say, there is no empirical evidence. This is merely the movie in my mind.

I believe at death, there is the slightest of moments where a man hovers between this world and the next. In that instant all the truth of a man's life is revealed to him. There is no escaping it. There is no debating it. Rebuttal is not possible.

As the Hollow Man looks down at his, yes, hollow, lifeless, mortal shell, the truth will terrify him. He will think, "What have done? Pride and ego blinded me. I

lived only for myself and now it is too late.” Then, an all-encompassing blackness will settle over him and he will cry out in anguish and as he sinks into his just eternity. And, appropriately, his last thoughts will be consistent with his earthly obsession, “What will become of me?”

Conversely, I believe as the Noble Man hovers between this world and the next, he will think, “I hope the people I saved are OK. I shall greatly miss my family. I hope they know I loved them. I wish I had contributed more.”

And, with his mind transfixed on others, the purest of lights will envelope him. He will feel unimaginable peace, love, and joy. And in a blink, he will find himself in the throne room of heaven. And, there, absolute holiness will overwhelm him. Startled by its power, he

will do what any Noble Man would do...he will drop to his knees, clasp his hands and bow his head.

And then, seemingly from nowhere...one wounded hand will reach out and grasp his shoulder, the other wounded hand will be placed gently upon his head.

And the Noble Man will hear, “Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into my Kingdom.”

(At this point, BG Zanetti, acknowledged the heroism of firefighter John Cammock (pictured below) who died in the line of duty fighting the Nara Visa fire in eastern New Mexico. By the accounts of all those who knew him, Mr. Cammock led the life of a noble man.)

