

# **The Holy Gobbledybook**

Being The Handbook for Integrational  
Polytheism

by Calum A Carlyle

## FOREWORD

Religions are about rules, partially. You will find some rules in this document, but not a lot. There are some guidelines too, but they are not rules.

Another thing that a religion has, and i think a lot of people forget this, is they have a *philosophy* as well. Generally, a religion exemplifies a particular way of looking at, and reacting to, the world we live in. This religion does have a philosophy too. The philosophy of this religion is simple. Perhaps it is so simple that volumes have been written about it. Volumes already have been written about it. The central pillar of Integrational Polytheism is this: be good. Do good things that make you and others feel good. The more people being good, more of the time, the more happiness and general good times everybody's going to have.

And don't make a big deal of it if you let yourself down. Not everybody can be good all the time. You're not superhuman. i **do not** say this **in any way** to justify doing bad things, things which will harm or adversely affect another living being, but i say this because it is better to put your energy into enjoying life and helping others enjoy it, than it is to put your energy into worrying about the bad times. This may make the bad times worse, it may make them last longer. Time only travels in one direction, the direction we live in, and we must live our lives as fully as we can, doing things which are of benefit to ourselves and others while we live it.

Everything else in this document is secondary to that philosophy. The philosophy is not unique to Integrational Polytheism, i believe it is also the philosophy of the Quakers, many Buddhists and also i think it is the philosophy of the Christian gospels of "Thomas" and "Q". It's probably the philosophy of many other schools of thought also. The rest of this document tells you a bit more about Integrational Polytheism and indirectly, about me. You can be an Integrational Polytheist if you want, but it is not something you can use to distinguish yourselves from others. If you're an Integrational Polytheist, you're not "in" something that others are "out" of. We're all in this together. i hope you enjoy Integrational Polytheism and i hope it gives some sort of structure if you need that, or freedom if you need that. Most of all, i hope it helps you to enjoy and i hope you ultimately enjoy to help.

## INTRODUCTION

This is a document written by me, Calum Carlyle, to outline the philosophy and intentions of Integrational, or Inclusional, Polytheism. It lays down the basic criteria that you should fill in order to be called an Integrational Polytheist and it sets out guidelines for understanding the world around us with open eyes, an open mind and an open heart. It might be noted that i do not consider these words of mine to be sacred (even though i jokingly called this document The Holy Gobbledybook) and i do not consider myself to be particularly sacred either. Do not make the mistake of thinking i have access to anything special that is not available to everyone else. i am simply defining the term of Integrational Polytheism. i do not make claims about the importance of being an Integrational Polytheist, or about those who choose not to be Integrational Polytheists. Neither do i claim that this text is more valuable in content than any other religious or philosophical text. The words you read here are to be considered actively by the interested reader, not to be taken as absolute truth. The document is currently in three parts, not counting the foreword and this introduction:

Part One deals with the origins and general shape of Integrational Polytheism. The religion is defined here in simple terms using the two principle rules of Integrational Polytheism.

Part Two is a selection of questions people sometimes ask about Integrational Polytheism, and my answers.

Part Three is mainly a collection of discussion points. These can be used to gain a different vantage point from which to look at an issue or for many other contemplative purposes (arguing for example!).

## PART ONE

### Integrational Polytheism - A New Point of View

<sup>1</sup> Integrational Polytheism is a new religion i started. More or less. To be fair, many others have come to this way of thinking on their own, so rather than being an amazing innovation, it seems that Integrational Polytheism is simply an idea whose time has come. It doesn't actually add anything of substance to the religious question. It does not advocate extreme action such as righteous terrorism. Integrational Polytheism simply advocates a new point of view, and openmindedness in all things, specifically in religion, spirituality and freedom of word, thought and deed.

<sup>2</sup> If you are an Integrational Polytheist, you will agree that all religious and spiritual beliefs are in some way true (this requires a fairly open idea of what "truth" is), and you will also believe actively in a person's right to say, think and do whatever they want, so long as it harms no other.

<sup>3</sup> That's basically it. There are no regular ceremonies to attend unless you wish to go to the ceremonies of other religions (which i do recommend) and there are no libations to be offered up (although i do recommend making offerings as you feel inclined). There are no special commandments to keep other than those already mentioned, although i think you will find that those are all that are required anyway for responsible living, and there is no requirement to convert those around you or to treat them in any special way if they do not believe as you do!

<sup>4</sup> I might add that i'm not looking for converts. If you do decide to be an Integrational Polytheist, it would be nice if you could let me know using whatever means are at your command, but it's entirely your choice. Integrational Polytheism is not something that you have to have in order to attain salvation. It is my personal belief that open mindedness may be something we need more of as a species, or a society, but there are many roads towards that goal, of which Integrational Polytheism is only one.

### Integrational Polytheism - Who It Is and How It Came To Be

<sup>5</sup> Religion is usually a fairly exclusive thing. You don't usually get 'religion enthusiasts'. What i mean by that is, if someone is enthused about one religion, they are often pretty closed about any other religions. If you go, for example to a website about food, you might expect to see items about many kinds of foods and if you visit a website about amphibians, you could reasonably expect to find information about a wide range of different creatures. Not so with religions. If you visit a religious website you will usually be confronted with one set of doctrines, one set of rules and one pantheon of gods (or more fashionably just the one god).

<sup>6</sup> The development of Integrational Polytheism took quite a few years for me in actual fact. It has been put to me that my religion is a fad and that it is easy for 'some guy' to start a religion, but that it takes a different sort of calibre to have faith in one. These comments and others have led me to believe that people don't really know what Integrational Polytheism is all about. Perhaps, i thought, i should let people know how the idea of Integrational Polytheism started. Maybe then they would start to see the idea through my eyes. So, here it is - the 'genesis' of Integrational Polytheism. First lets quickly explore what i actually mean by Integrational Polytheism and then i'll quickly let you know how i personally came to believe in using Integrational Polytheism to frame my spiritual outlook.

<sup>7</sup> The word 'polytheism' refers to a religious belief system which allows for the worship of several gods. This idea is not, of itself, a new one. In fact polytheism has probably been around longer than monotheism (a system where the followers believe that only one god exists). The ancient Greeks had a polytheistic religion, as did the Norse and the Romans. All these civilisations were eventually "converted" en masse to christianity (a monotheism) in one way or the other. Hinduism is an example of a polytheistic religion that is still upheld in many parts of the world. Religions which cast heavenly bodies or natural phenomena as divine spirits are polytheistic as well, since they allow for the worship of more than one entity.

<sup>8</sup> Integrational Polytheism takes the concept of polytheism one step further than other polytheistic religions. These religions, while allowing for more than one god, and in some cases allowing for the discovery of even more new gods, still may not allow for the existence of all gods, although it seems as though some modern and reconstructionist paganism and polytheism type belief systems take a more liberal approach to this sort of thing than some religions may have done in the past. Now lets hear the personal testimony of how i came to Integrational Polytheism...

<sup>9</sup> When i was a little kid (yes, it's one of those stories) i had a variety of confusing religious influences in my life. To begin with, both my parents were agnostics, with my dad possibly erring towards the atheist side. This situation convinced my grandmother (a protestant, but one who belonged to a highly unusual congregation of the tambourine waving, speaking in tongues type) that i needed some sort of religious guidance. She introduced me to the church she was a part of. This gave me the original basis for forming religious opinions of my own. Apart from this i grew up in Orkney where there are plenty remnants of the Norse empire and of another prehistoric people who built many henges and tombs about which we now know very little.

<sup>10</sup> The next significant event was that when i was nine, my grandmother died, so it goes, which was a great shock to me, and also meant that i no longer was taken to any christian meetings (at this point i am a "born again" christian, however i never felt comfortable with being baptised, and so i never have been). My mother shortly afterwards became a christian, and joined the same church my grandmother had been part of, later defecting to the Church of Scotland (a protestant denomination) due to certain denominational differences regarding the church's attitude towards women (derived from the letters of St Paul). My dad, in the

meantime, had an uplifting experience in a forest with a rain spirit, which converted him into what he calls a "born again pagan". As far as i can make out, this involves believing in all the elemental spirits and having a generally reverent attitude to the natural things in his vicinity.

<sup>11</sup> What with all this religious change going on around me, i began to wonder what sort of things i should be believing in. It seemed too important a thing to just leave to habit or circumstance. The main concern for me was the idea that my eternal soul depended upon making the "right" choice, and if i chose "wrong" then whammo! that would be my fate sealed for eternity. This was a harrowing concept for an eleven year old. i also had to consider the fact there were many other religions in the world. What if one of them turned out to be "right" and both of the religious persuasions that i was familiar with were "wrong"? All the religions seemed to have their own complete rule book, like a long contract that you had to agree with to join. i was certain that i would not agree with all of the rules of whatever religion i ultimately chose. This did not seem ideal to me. However, i chose, after some deliberation and a divine experience or two, to join my grandmother's ex-church again. i think this may have been largely as a way to put some sort of order and continuity to the whole affair. Whilst all this was going on, my mother gradually became a Quaker (officially known as the Religious Society of Friends, and a very friendly bunch they seem at that!).

<sup>12</sup> This was not the end of the story though of course, i stopped being a christian some time after i left home, and the reason was that i could not find a christian denomination whose doctrines i properly agreed with. i tried several but all the denominations seemed to come with an entire set of things that you also had to agree with to truly fit in. Of course, all of these rules were different from the rules of most of the other denominations, and in addition, christians from all denominations had what i perceived to be a pompous certainty that they were "right", even in things totally unrelated to religion or spirituality. This was unacceptable to me and seemed to run contrary to the spirit of christianity, and indeed religion, so i did not attend any more christian meetings, although i still considered myself a christian. You could say that the church drove me away from god, by straining gnats whilst it passed camels. At this time, i also had a lot of friends who had their own versions of paganism, based on various different theologies or philosophies, and they (and i) would constantly be discussing various aspects of spirituality. This community promoted active debate and discussion about the nature of the world, the spirits that live therein and thereon and generally anything which there could be discussion about was discussed openly. This was directly in opposition to the christian position that the bible was ultimately correct and that no argument or discussion could be allowed without accepting the final authority of the bible (or more importantly the church's interpretation of the bible). This promoted in me a questioning mindset that, i think, christianity could not really satiate.

<sup>13</sup> This story's getting quite long but we've got to the important bit now, having finally dispensed with the backstory. The last nail in the coffin for me and christianity came one night when i saw a TV programme. Now i don't and didn't watch very much TV and i think i had not watched a programme the whole way through for a few months when i saw this particular documentary. It was a two hour program about some small pieces of evidence which had

been found throughout the last two thousand years, but mainly during the twentieth and late nineteenth centuries. The gist of the evidence was that christianity had originally been pioneered by St Paul and St James. In a nutshell, St James' following fizzled out early in the second century, according to the TV show, while St Paul's following became what we now call christianity. It turned out that James was a blood relation of Jesus (and so might have had a better idea of what christianity was all supposed to be about) while Paul seems to have had a lot of political agendas and may have been bending the philosophy of christ to suit his own ends (all altruistic i am sure, but not pure, or at least this was the feeling i got) such as uniting the Jewish people against the hated Romans. St Paul never met Jesus in fact, and claimed his authority to teach from visions he had had where Jesus appeared to him. The TV show came to the conclusion that the original idea behind Jesus' teachings was not to recruit an army of righteous sinners who were all absolved from blame but subjugated under god's heel (which is how i view modern christianity) but rather, the whole point of Jesus' words, ironically, may originally have been an attempt to get people to be tolerant of each other.

<sup>14</sup> At this point i realised just how fickle religion truly was. One twist of history and christianity could have been completely different (and at many other points in history too! think of Cromwell, or Augustine, for example), another twist and christianity may never have existed at all. i felt that St Paul had cheated me and many others, and that his very teachings would protect the evidence of his misinformation from backfiring on his idea of christianity. To summarise, St Paul (the "managing director", if you will of early christianity) may have been a very good political campaigner, but he was not, in my opinion, a great spiritual leader.

<sup>15</sup> So now what? In my mind this had proved that there was something "out there", but it was something that was willing to let humanity do its own thing, kill each other and tell each other convincing lies, without any definitive divine intervention. People of all types of religion claimed to have seen god, and angels, who was i to say that one or other of them was more right than the rest? i have had more than one enlightening religious experience myself, and so have some other people i know. The snag is that all of these experiences were "real" to those who experienced them and yet these experiences seem to be representing different, and apparently incompatible, religious philosophies. This clearly wasn't right. If these religious experiences were all valid (which i have no reason to doubt), then these religious philosophies must also be real, and so this means that in the universe there must be a system whereby all of these religions has its truth. It is common for popular religions to disclaim other religious positions as being wrong or mistaken. This is understandable, given the human desire to know the details of any story literally. We have a tendency as a culture to imagine that once a version of events has been nailed down in words on paper, that there is no other possible interpretation of events which can be true without our own account being automatically false. Also, disclaiming other religions is a good way to gain prominence in the public eye. If you can stir up a bit of righteous indignation among the faithful, based on something the heretics have claimed which is incompatible with your religion's doctrine, then you may well end up swelling the ranks a bit. Religion is all based on advertising.

<sup>16</sup> So to get to the point, i started my own little religion in my head, where i kept an open mind as well as i could. I'll probably never know, i thought, what the real truth is, and if i die and meet my maker, at least i tried my best to keep an open mind. A maker that does not look kindly upon that is no maker i want to have much to do with, and besides, keeping an open mind is a good idea while we are still on this world anyway so what harm can it do?

<sup>17</sup> Some people may to think i started this religion and published a website about it just to draw attention, or for a laugh, but that is simply not true. The story you have just read is the truth of the matter, from start to finish. i made up the religion for me and me alone (although i have later learnt that many others have done the same, more or less), and this document is for informational purposes primarily. i am not aiming to convert anybody. This is not a fire and brimstone religion of apocalyptic consequences. It contains no threats to the unbeliever. Neither is it a cult. It does not reexamine some smaller point of another religion in order to create a new doctrine. You can be an Integrational Polytheist if you like, and if you do, then i will not command you to do anything, or tell you who to be or how to live your life. There will not be a holy zero-hour when i start handing out the poisoned kool-aid and lead everybody into the desert. At the end of the day, you are an Integrational Polytheist because you are who you are, and not the other way around.

### Literary Influences

<sup>18</sup> It might also be of interest for you to know what i was reading through all this, since my reading formed my thoughts in the order they ended up being arranged in. First and foremost, *The Sandman* by Neil Gaiman has been an enormous influence on the actual way i imagine Integrational Polytheism to be set up. It was originally published (as far as i know) as seventy six comic books, three short stories and two illustrated novels. It is currently available as eleven or twelve books and is published by DC Comics Group in the USA and by Titan Books in Britain. This series explores human consciousness, particularly dreams and stories. It manages to explore the idea of multiple gods very well along the way however. "Smoke And Mirrors", a collection of short stories by Neil Gaiman is important reading, as it explores the nature of multiple truths and mythmaking, amongst other things. Another highly recommended book by Neil Gaiman is "American Gods". It was published in 2001 and it is a novel which uses Integrational Polytheism as one of its main themes (although obviously it doesn't use any of my terminology since Neil Gaiman has never heard of me or my religion!). It is very important to mention that this novel probably predates my concept of Integrational Polytheism. Neil Gaiman, as far as i know, has never heard of my brand of Integrational Polytheism, and he has himself been inventing it himself as a literary concept for years. i strongly recommend you read Mr Gaiman's work

<sup>19</sup> Of course there are a lot of other books and texts i should mention, for example Aldous Huxley's "The Doors of Perception" which begins as an account of an experiment, where Huxley imbibes a quantity of mescaline in a glass of water and writes his personal account of the experience. The book very quickly moves on to discuss many aspects of the

world and of consciousness which Huxley has been prompted to see in a new light since his mescaline experience. Slightly less relevant but no less illuminating is Huxley's "Brave New World Revisited". Really, you should read "Brave New World" first, since "...Revisited" is a nonfictional essay written twenty or so years after "Brave New World" was published, analysing how accurate or inaccurate the original (fictional) novel was in its predictions about future societal development. Reading it now, another fifty years down the line, provides an extra dimension of insight.

<sup>20</sup> Philip K. Dick has written some excellent novels, some are relevant in a way to Integrational Polytheism. I particularly cite "Ubik" and "Clans of the Alphane Moon". The former reminds us very well of the fragility of reality, while the latter asks us to question why we view some things as right and some things as wrong, it also raises the question of how much power one can wield purely through beliefs.

<sup>21</sup> Kurt Vonnegut Jr has written some relevant books too. Most notably "Slaughterhouse Five", which deals with the difference between the reality in our minds and the reality in the minds of others, and "Cat's Cradle" which asks how a religion which admits it is completely false can have so much influence and power.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Heinlein's "Job: A Comedy of Justice" addresses the concept of a 'Jehovah' type god, as part of a much bigger arrangement of godly figures. It explores an unusual course of thought for its subject matter. "Eye In The Sky" by Philip K Dick is another good one along similar lines.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Moorcock has been writing fiction for decades. He continues to turn out seemingly unrelated stories, however when examined closely, all of his novels tie together in an ethereal type of supernatural way. Moorcock refers to this as his multiverse. As far as I can tell, everything that could ever happen has happened in the multiverse, and any point in it could be affecting any other points. You could read his novels to find out what I am going on about, and I recommend it, but be prepared to read at least a couple of dozen before you start to figure it out. A good one to start with is "The Dreamthief's Daughter". Most particularly though, I strongly recommend that you read "Behold the Man" which is Moorcock's Hugo award winning novel about the life of Jesus Christ. It contains a uniquely original account of the gospel story.

<sup>24</sup> Other books which I rate very highly are "The Prophet" by Kahlil Gibran which contains a lot of sensible wisdom, and things for contemplation and "The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins" by Burton L Mack. It is inevitable that Integrational Polytheists will be challenged by Christians. This book presents the results of extensive research into the New Testament to illuminate the facts behind the formation of Christianity. An Integrational Polytheist must acknowledge the possible 'rightness' of the Christian position of course, however the attempts of Christians to convince others to join up as Christians themselves means it is best to be informed beforehand. Thus Burton L Mack's book is very good reading, as are the various books in the New Testament. The Gospel of Thomas is also a highly

recommended read. It appears to show a very different outlook of early christianity, often using familiar Jesus sayings from the new testament to make some very unfamiliar points. For that matter all holy and religious texts of dead or living religions or philosophies should be considered valid starting points for thought and discussion. And let's face it, they might all be right!

<sup>25</sup> I would also recommend familiarising yourself with the stories, legends and background associated with various world cultures and religions (such as, but not limited to, Australian aboriginal, ancient Greek, Roman, Norse, Celtic, Maori, ancient Egyptian, Asian or indigenous North and South American beliefs. These are usually very interesting to research, since they come from different cultures with different attitudes. The more you read from different sources, the more informed you will be to make your own choices.

### The Doctrines of Integrational Polytheism

<sup>26</sup> Integrational Polytheism has what i personally feel is a unique position as regards policy and doctrines, since one of the main points of Integrational Polytheism is to avoid having people be told what to do! This means, of course, that any doctrines and rules i lay down here should rightly be taken as my personal opinion, and not as commandments or conditions. You yourself will have to decide what you agree with and disagree with as far as my "teachings" are concerned (and, by the way, a good place to express your personal opinions on those "teachings" is the Integrational Polytheism discussion forums on the website). i will lay out guidelines to illustrate my personal idea of what Integrational Polytheism is about, and it should also be remembered that unless you accept that everybody might be right, and live by the code of not hurting anyone, then you can't technically be called an Integrational Polytheist. This is no big deal for anybody concerned, but it is a helpful definition of terms.

Okay then, here we go, Guidelines and Talking Points for Integrational Polytheists:

<sup>27</sup> **Think what you like and believe what you want.**

I think this one needs a little bit of explanation. What i mean by this is that you must think about new information that comes to you, and decide for yourself what your opinion about it is. You, as an Integrational Polytheist, may have a different set of beliefs from any other Integrational Polytheist on the face of the planet! This is purely because you will have tailored your beliefs to fit in with your personality.

<sup>28</sup> This doctrine is simply a way of saying that you have freedom of choice, and you should use it whenever you can. In my opinion, a lot of people want freedom from choice rather than freedom of choice, but then Integrational Polytheism is not for everybody.

## **Allow others their freedom of choice, and give them a chance**

Now this one may pour a bit of cold water on the whole affair for some people. Basically what this means is that it's alright for any person to say they are an Integrational Polytheist, but this means that person can no longer criticise someone else's religion, philosophy or lifestyle as being untrue. If you are an Integrational Polytheist, you must always keep an open mind to the possibility that everybody or anybody could be right or wrong about anything. For example, at the moment there is a lot of anti-Muslim thought in the Western world, however an Integrational Polytheist cannot be of the opinion that Islam is somehow less right than any other religion because this is simply not fair. The religion itself cannot be held responsible for the actions of individuals.

<sup>30</sup> An Integrational Polytheist must also allow for the possibility that any religions can have "the answer". Even "primitive" tribal religions have as much relevance in today's world as any other religion. Even long dead religions with no living worshippers have relevance, and it may be that there are some crucial points being overlooked within such religions purely because they are not the religions which are currently fashionable. An Integrational Polytheist must accept, then, that wisdom can come from any source whatsoever. The most important piece of wisdom that you might receive in your entire life may come from the mouth of a four year old child, the shape of the clouds, or something you hear on the radio. This is why it is important not to dismiss anything out of hand, and since we can never know everything about anything, we must keep an open mind at all times.

<sup>31</sup> This also means you accept the existence of any and all gods and goddesses, even ones which you consider to be silly or joke gods. After all, what's the difference, ultimately, between a real religion and a joke religion? (joke answer: joke religions are supposed to be funny!) The true answer is that it's entirely in the minds of those involved whether something is a joke religion or not. It costs nothing to treat other religions with respect, and so this is what I urge, even in the case of allegedly humorous religions. You can still have a joke about them, but after all, they could be right.

<sup>32</sup> Happily, this setup also allows you to never have to make your mind up about anything. Integrational Polytheists can always change their minds about something in light of new information, a new perspective or just because they feel like it. There's no shame in changing your mind. Nobody expects you to know everything. If you did know everything, there would be no point in keeping an open mind! In fact if you look around you, a lot of the people who do not have open minds seem to think that they do know everything.

<sup>33</sup> So that's it. You just have to consciously consider any assumptions you might be making in the course of your life and keep your mind and attitude open about everything. A healthy interest in assorted religions and philosophies will also help you gain the skills to live by these doctrines, but it is not necessary. Of course, as I have been saying throughout this whole page, anybody is more than welcome to be an Integrational Polytheist, or not to be one, whichever they prefer.

## Being a Responsible Adult in Trying Times

<sup>34</sup> By the very nature of the fact that i “started a religion”, i adopt a "leadership" type of role. I'm not too comfortable with that but i can't deny it, as several people have pointed out. Basically, what i say in writing will be read by people, and they may act on it so i have to take responsibility for it. That's fine. Taking responsibility for our actions and words is something that i want to be an integral part of Integrational Polytheism anyway, but this does pose a quandary of sorts.

<sup>35</sup> You see i thought that predominantly, people would read what i have to say, then think about it and then make their own mind up about what they wanted to think or believe, or more likely they would make the decision internally on a semi-sub-conscious level. Maybe that is what has been happening but to my delight, people have come back with many thoughts and opinions using what i write as their starting point, and one of the things they have been saying is that i need to be careful in what i say (and take responsibility for my words) because now i am the leader of a religion and my words might influence others' behaviour!

<sup>36</sup> Well, that's all true i suppose and it comes with the territory, and as you know i have been trying to be responsible anyway, but there's always some way to be misinterpreted in the end. All i can do is try not to be misinterpreted. i would hate for Integrational Polytheism to become one of those religions or cults that results in hardship, bullying or even death. That's exactly what Integrational Polytheism is not about.

## Take Responsibility With You Wherever You Go

<sup>37</sup> So anyway, since starting the website, i am finding that people sometimes really misunderstand what i am saying (in my opinion). Resultantly, i have tried to be as clear as possible on the website, hammering out the details on the discussion board and amending the pages on the site itself as necessary, but at the end of it all, people will still find a way to misread something if they really want to. Just look at the Qu'ran, the Bible, the Torah and the Sutras for example! i will just have to accept this fact and i try to keep that effect to a minimum by being as concise as possible. When it comes down to it though, if i have a following of sheep (in the judeo-christian sense) instead of true thinkers then i have failed. In this context, Integrational Polytheists have to think. They should be like puppets who, when their strings are cut, they must be capable of moving around the stage all by themselves. So many religion-joiners these days want to be followers but i would like Integrational Polytheists to be leaders, of themselves, and to take what i say myself only as a starting point. To a good extent i think this is indeed what is happening judging by some of the feedback i have received.

<sup>38</sup> So there it is, i think the religion of Integrational Polytheism is fine as it is, because people are sceptical about things they read on the internet which proclaim that they are a new

religion so there are not a lot of people reading the site who blindly and simply accept it at its apparent face value. Even if there were, i don't tell people to drink poison or sacrifice their parents or anything, so we should be relatively safe...

## PART TWO

### Frequently Asked Questions about Integrational Polytheism

Each person is unique and so each person will have different questions about Integrational Polytheism. Here are the answers to some of the questions i have been asked about Integrational Polytheism:

1. "Is this religion a joke?"

No it isn't. It's the religion i believe in myself. i don't need to convert anybody so if you don't want to be an Integrational Polytheist, then don't expect me to try and force it upon you, or to justify my own personal position on any issue beyond the degree to which i think it is necessary.

2. "Believe what you want and do what you like'? Aren't you advocating anarchy?"

Am i? Well, if you define anarchy, then maybe i'll be able to answer the question! If your idea of anarchy involves people having a terrible time due to a lack of organisation then, no, that is not what i am advocating. This is a religion, not a political movement. If, on the other hand, you see anarchy as a relaxing of the rules, a situation where people are allowed to be themselves without fearing that they will not be seen as normal, then that is exactly what i am advocating. People should be allowed to express themselves freely. True anarchy means law in the hands of the people. This can only happen when the majority of people are responsible, and can be trusted to deal with "criminals" fairly and justly.

3. "What? So people can do what they like? What about murderers, rapists and child molesters? Surely you don't think they should be allowed to do what they like?"

No, i do not think that people should be allowed to do all those hideous things. As i said, people should be allowed to express themselves freely. i think if you murder somebody or rape them, then you are infringing their right to be freely themselves. Killing and raping, stealing and hurting are all totally against all that Integrational Polytheism stands for. Let me make this clear. Integrational Polytheism is completely against the concept of people harming each other in any way.

People should be able to do as they like unless that involves stopping other people from expressing themselves. People who stop others from harmlessly enjoying and being themselves go against the policy of openmindedness and tolerance which all Integrational Polytheists should adopt. Personally i think this system, if it were law, would be a stricter system by far than the one we currently have in place.

4. "Okay then, so why do you call it a religion? So far all you've been talking about is law and order."

I'm glad you asked that. Most other religions i have encountered have two things that i am not too keen on. Firstly, they often insist that you disown all religions other than them as heresy or blasphemy. This strikes me as conceited and insecure. Secondly, many religions, even if they do allow you to keep an open mind, still require you to adhere to a set of beliefs and doctrines that you do not fully agree with. Some religions happen to think that women should accept their 'proper place' for example. What if you are a woman, and you are open to accepting your 'proper place' in the religion you plan to join? You may join and quite soon you may discover that the 'place' allotted to you is not the place that you expected. Even worse, you may feel that the sacred texts that are being quoted to keep you in your place actually mean something entirely different. You see the problems that can arise? With Integrational Polytheism you are not obliged to assume any 'place' or to accept any particular slant on reality. This seems to be something no other religion can offer, and so that's why Integrational Polytheism exists.

5. "Well if you can do what you like, then why can't you just do what you like without being an Integrational Polytheist? What's Integrational Polytheism got to offer?"

Well as i said, you can do what you like, and in that case you wouldn't need Integrational Polytheism, fair enough. Go for it in fact, be my guest! However there is some substance to Integrational Polytheism which i will try to explain to you. Basically, if you choose not to be part of another religion because it is telling you to shun 'false gods' then you will probably be open to the idea that many gods exist. Integrational Polytheism in fact is a religion that insists that all gods exist. You must, if you are an Integrational Polytheist, believe that all the gods that were ever conceived of, or that ever could exist, do exist in some way. This is the same thing as believing that everybody might be right. It is not a conceptual thing, where everybody has the possibility to be right, but only one religion ultimately is. It is actually a very real belief thing, where everybody's religion not only could be right, but is right in some way. To put it succinctly: "Everything's always all going on, all the time". This isn't everybody's cup of tea, but there it is. Take it or leave it. Obviously since Integrational Polytheism has more gods by far than any other religion (by definition!), i hope its followers will be more diverse than the followers of any other religion. It's quite possible that somebody will be an Integrational Polytheist without knowing it. All i am doing is putting a name to this point of view which is already existing in some people's minds and hearts.

6. "Wait, so you believe that all gods exist (or at least might exist)? What about atheism? Do you believe in that too?"

Well now, atheism doesn't have any gods of its own, same with agnosticism, however i don't think atheists and agnostics are out of the loop! Most 'atheists' have got some sort of religious or philosophical viewpoint, most of them have reasons for not being involved in a formally accepted religion and that in itself is a religious opinion! So basically, if they have

their own opinions then they could be right! After all, if there were no possibility of those opinions being right, why would those people hold them? On the subject of whether or not atheism is a religion, true, atheism has no gods of its own, but then neither does Integrational Polytheism, and it claims to be a religion!

7. "So to be an Integrational Polytheist you have to believe all gods exist in some way... and that's all?"

More or less. As i say, the essence of Integrational Polytheism is about keeping an open mind. This means that people must be considerate to each other and not be prejudiced against each other and so on, as well as just accepting each other's beliefs in an abstract way. These are the real requirements of Integrational Polytheism. You have to treat other people with consideration.

Also, i think that the sort of people who are ready to believe that all gods do actually exist are usually people who are interested in the hundreds and thousands of interesting gods, religions and stories that are out there. To this end, the lore and history of Integrational Polytheism includes stories and legends from many different places and times, and it's up to you what you take from the different avenues which you choose to explore.

8. "Do you believe in the resurrection / rapture / reincarnation / Greek or roman gods / anything else?"

Yes. i do. As mentioned above, i will believe in anything's inherent ability to be true. More specifically i believe in the existence of all gods and goddesses, as well as any spirits and so on which have had any sort of cult or following. i also think that the teachings, rules and guidelines of those gods and goddesses are valid too, in some way or context.

9. "Is Integrational Polytheism a form of syncretism?" or "What about syncretism?"

Integrational Polytheism doesn't take a syncretic stance, no. It does however accept syncretism as a valid way of making sense of everything, and of course an Integrational Polytheist will always keep an open mind to the idea that the syncretist might be right. Syncretism attempts to place all beliefs into a bigger working system reconciling conflicting truths to achieve a holistic picture of how it all works. This is fine, but Integrational Polytheists don't need to know what the big picture looks like in order to believe in something. You can believe that Allah created humans in his own image, and you can believe simultaneously that Odin, Vili and Ve created the first humans, Ask and Embla, from logs, whilst simultaneously believing that Baiame created humans from the dust of the ridges. Maybe all these things happened in their own respective parts of the world.

Maybe they happened figuratively, or maybe the truth of each account is truest within its own sphere of reality. Imagine a huge jewel, cut with many facets. Turn the jewel in the light and you are looking at a completely different sight, and yet it is still the same jewel. This

analogy could describe syncretism. It could also describe Integrational Polytheism. The general idea of Integrational Polytheism is that you don't rule anything out as a possibility. It's not a matter of saying "right then, let's get all these gods sorted out, for a start", it's a case of honestly entertaining the idea that any of the factions (or more than one of them, perhaps all? who knows?) might be right.

10. Where does Integrational Polytheism stand on the subject of polygamy, or vegetarianism?"

These are weighty issues indeed. This starts to get deeper into the tenets, foundations and basic assumptions of a religion, in this case Integrational Polytheism. I'll say first of all that Integrational Polytheism is not big on actually stating something outright on an issue other than belief or freewill. Those are the basic platform points for Integrational Polytheism. With these in mind, i will briefly comment on both of the above issues.

With regard to polygamy, to me this qualifies as a live and let live issue. Basically if everybody's consenting and understands what's going on, where's the problem? The main problem i see is legislative and societal. As always, people practicing polygamy should be aware of the situation around them so they can avoid causing harm to anyone. In practice, i note that polygamy often causes harm to people.

Regarding vegetarianism, this is also a live and let live issue. Those who eat meat are not living and letting live. As i see it vegetarianism (and ultimately veganism) is the best way for our society to go over the long term, and it is also the only way to truly live and let live with regards to your diet. I'm not saying that you must adhere to a specific dietary regime in order to be an Integrational Polytheist, but what i am saying is that i would imagine that Integrational Polytheists will come to the same conclusion using their own logical faculties. Also, there are uncountable health and hygiene reasons for not eating animal products, but i won't go into that here.

11. "What about creation and evolution? What does Integrational Polytheism say about that?"

Nothing at all! Personally, i am a recent convert to the position of evolution, however i do not think this is any basis to state that other possibilities might be alternatively or concurrently true. Unlike many other religions, Integrational Polytheism allows you to believe what you like about the origins of the species', and the world(s) so long as you admit that other people's views may be right.

## PART THREE

<sup>1</sup> This section comprises sayings, phrases and other material which i (Calum) think are appropriate for inclusion in this document. i won't include sayings here by people who are not involved in Integrational Polytheism in some way. You should be seeking those out and reading them in their original contexts anyway. The sayings in this part do not constitute solid rules. They are to be taken in context with part One, which contains the real "rules", and part Two, which talks about these "rules". Part Three is completely open to interpretation. (Everything is completely open to interpretation!) The contents of this part are all fairly relevant to the concept and practice of "how to live in the world" and do indicate an Integrational Polytheistic standpoint in general although the sayings will often reflect my personal opinion, or something similar to it.

### A Summary of Integrational Polytheism

<sup>2</sup> Basically there is little organisational structure within this religion, which is why i think people struggle with it. People who look for a religion, i am finding more and more, are looking for internal structure and organisation. By contrast this was one of the things that rankled me about religions since i do not like having to accept a "package deal" religion that i may not 100% agree with. i don't think Integrational Polytheism will ever need an organisational structure either.

<sup>3</sup> Integrational Polytheism is simply an attempt to allow people to have a religion, but also to choose their own beliefs, and change them as they themselves have new experiences and grow as people.

<sup>4</sup> The basic foundation is that everyone could be right. This includes Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and worshippers of all other religions and/or gods, including all polytheists, monotheists, agnostics, pagans, or whatever spiritual people choose to call themselves. To rephrase this, the first "rule" of Integrational Polytheism is that you cannot proclaim someone else's beliefs to be wrong.

<sup>5</sup> The second cornerstone of Integrational Polytheism is that you must allow people to practise in real life what they believe in their head, and they must allow you the same freedom. This means that people can do whatever they like in the name of their religion, except for infringe someone else's right to do the same. For example, if my religious beliefs call for me to partake of a particular infusion or other herbal preparation (notably peyotl, psilocybin or marijuana for example) then i can do so, usually, because this will not step on anybody else's metaphorical toes by preventing them from doing their own thing themselves (unless i am resultantly rendered incapable of doing something that i promised to do etc). However if my religion calls for the slaughter of people or animals then this will impair the ability of those people and animals to do their own thing, and in fact it will inhibit their ability to

do anything at all except die and go on to whatever they have in store for them afterwards, if anything. This is intrusive and it does step on somebody else's metaphorical toes.

<sup>6</sup> This second one is a lot more ambiguous than the first and for it to work it requires cooperation and communication, two things i think we could do with more of anyway.

<sup>7</sup> Those two foundations are more or less it. As to which gods you choose to honour, worship, give gifts to, mourn or celebrate is up to you. When you do it, how long for, and so on, is totally up to you. How seriously you take it is up to you. Personally i have respect for many different gods and i adopt a casual and occasional timetable of respect and honour towards them when and where i can. This may change over time, or it may not.

### Observations and Expostulations

<sup>8</sup> Once when i was on my way home, the sun struck a particular tuft of grass and it made me realise that darkness and shadow are nothing but an absence of light. If a place is in shadow, then adding light will make everything easy to see. By contrast, if a place is in the light, it is not possible to add shadow or darkness, in order to make the place appear dark.

<sup>9</sup> Death is a part of life. We should contemplate it freely in the same way as other aspects of life. We should not wait until death arrives in all its splendour before we address, in our minds, the issue of death.

<sup>10</sup> True friendship is not measured by actions, or by gifts. True friendship is measured in genuine feeling from one person to another. True friends will support each other and will remain reasonable and accommodating when circumstances change unexpectedly. Friends will not deceive one another. If people are doing these things to each other, they're probably not friends.

<sup>11</sup> I scorn pity because pity loses you the respect of others, and of yourself.

<sup>12</sup> Piety and strict religious adherence should not be considered a worthy goal. Neither should it be scorned or derided. Being better than others at the practice of a religion or faith does not make a person better than anybody else in any other way. One's choice of religious position does not make a person better or worse than anybody else either.

<sup>13</sup> Conflict is totally acceptable. Conflict of ideas stimulates free thought. It is perfectly healthy to discuss openly and heatedly on many subjects since many sides of an issue will come to light. This kind of conflict is not the same as physical conflict, or international conflict. Physical conflict and oppression are totally unacceptable to an Integrational Polytheist. Any kind of violation, forced occupation or invasion of a region, country, territory or people clearly violates the policy of not harming others. An Integrational Polytheist will not support the idea

of a peace-keeping force or any sort of military action. Instead, she or he will say "live and let live".

<sup>14</sup> Who am i to tell other people what to believe? Who are you to tell other people what to believe? Make up your own mind and allow others to make up theirs.

<sup>15</sup> The reason we've had so many wars and general cultural misunderstanding over the millennia is that people are too quick to make their own list of what's true and right at the exclusion of anybody else. Everybody's truth is different.

<sup>16</sup> Sentience is the mother of morality. Without conscious choice (ie free will), there is no concept of right or wrong. Once sentience has given birth to a sense of morality, it cannot be disowned.

<sup>17</sup> I really don't think science ever disproves itself, i think many people use contrary data to come up with differing theories on what's correct. Then instead of saying they are theories they say things like "of course the earth is flat", "of course heavier things fall faster than light things", "of course we all evolved from fish", "of course we can/can't travel faster than the speed of light!" etc. In fact humans are so confusory that they frequently have different sets of humans get their hands on the same data and then each group comes up with radically different conclusions. In these cases, the humans are the ones who are varied, not the scientific facts themselves. In fact some might think that science is having a good old laugh about it all. Perhaps the gods have got something to do with how science always seems to be blowing raspberries at us as it disappears around the next metaphysical corner

<sup>18</sup> I advocate keeping the head and finding evidence rather than closing our minds to other possibilities. Openmindedness rather than blinkeredness is the only way into the future, unless we are aiming for a cultural dead end.

<sup>19</sup> Justice is imaginary. i believe in justice and its application, but it must be remembered that justice resides only in the minds and hearts of the people involved. Justice is different for every situation, and all attempts should be made to avoid forcing one person's justice onto someone else. i believe that communication and cooperation can reduce the problems caused by trying to make everyone happy in an unjust world.

<sup>20</sup> I also say (unlike so called "hard" polytheists) that it is possible that each god is like a facet of a many faceted jewel, turning the jewel slowly in the light will highlight different facets and give a different overall impression of the jewel. Each god may have many facets of their own, or may be a facet of some larger thing, or both or indeed neither! There may be many unique and distinct jewels, each with many facets. We just don't know.

<sup>21</sup> Tobacco smoking is expensive, unhealthy for the smoker and unpleasant as well as unhealthy for those in the vicinity, it has no noticeable mood related effects and as far as i

know it is not useful in any spiritual or religious ceremony. This isn't a commandment against smoking or anything, but i just thought you should know those things about it.

<sup>22</sup> Integrational Polytheism is really about letting people know that they can make up their own mind about things. Take all the issues and think properly about them, and you will have your own honest opinion. Everything's possible. Be openminded and fair. Maybe i'm just crazily optimistic but i think true freedom of choice would be a step in the direction of real peace.

<sup>23</sup> You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it think

<sup>24</sup> We are what we are and we do what we do.

<sup>25</sup> Largely i think you will find that rather than saying "do what thou wilt is the whole of the law" i am actually saying, in the words of Bill, "be excellent to each other". (And in the words of Ted, "party on dudes!")