



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

"Human Evolution"
Excerpted from
God Is Love: The Heart of All Creation

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Evolution is possibly only at the beginning of its possibilities. Such thinkers as Teilhard de Chardin who propose this evolutionary development as God's way of creating suggests that the divine plan is moving humans as the most developed of rational beings and, hence, capable of knowing, as the great saying I think of [Julian] Huxley: "In humans the universe becomes conscious of itself."

Teilhard's thought is that biological evolution is really complete as a project – that now there are enough people that the commandment to increase and multiply and fill the earth has shifted to the spiritual plane or to the level of higher states of consciousness. So that the new thrust or focus of evolution is on the human being and its capacity for wholeness which is a term that seems preferred to some of the others. Humans then are at the threshold of a capacity as a race, and not just as individuals, to move into this higher aspect of God that seems to be anticipated in some of the scriptural discussions of apocalyptic discoveries or the New Creation that is described in the Book of Revelation.

That puts a great human focus on the main issue or obstacle to moving on in evolution to this focus on higher states of consciousness and the capacity to see God in everything, to respond to every situation according to God's will rather than our inclinations or our particular cultural inclinations.

The spiritual life as it's been called until now is the most important thing there is to do in life and it doesn't just mean our salvation or our healing or our wholeness or our redemption or whatever the word is for the healing of the human condition with its limitations and faults and openness to evil, as well as good. Here is where the contemplative dimension of life which is aimed at prayer and practice to further this capacity for transformation and to realize in the future somewhere the New Creation that Jesus spoke about and the Book of Revelation speaks about and which has been found to be the experience of a significant number of human beings who are sort of pioneers in this area of spiritual evolution, as it might be called.

That project now can draw on the evidence of sociology, biology and psychodynamics because we know that everything in the universe is interconnected and interrelated – that our energies when we pass on will be returned to the universe for some other use.

Relating is what being really means so that just being born is to be in relation with every other member of the human species – past, present, or to come – and with all creation because we've depended on all the other levels of evolving creation to have the necessary physiological tools and capacities to function on the human level. We really see ourselves then as a macrocosm in which all the major expressions of God's creation are somehow united in a single consciousness which itself then is capable of enormous growth beyond anything that we can imagine. And so, as Jesus prayed, "that they may be one even as we are one" suggests a oneness and unity that is almost infinite or can't be beat, to put it that way.

The question: What is a human being? Or, more specifically, "Who are you?" begins to emerge into prominent light and each one of these realities requires our consent to open to the next possibility.

Here's one example of how theology is enriched by science. We now know that the human species has a oneness that transcends all differences and that we really are everybody else as well as ourselves and that when we greet someone we're really greeting ourselves on one level. Besides that, everybody has the Divine Presence in them and is saturated with God. We know as Teilhard says every sub-atomic particle is Christ and we're trillions of them. Our very bodies are just saturated with Christ all the time and manifesting in all the organs in more specific ways. All reality can be subjected to quantum physics, and so on. Is God manifesting or close to us or relating to us in everything that happens and in everything that we meet? And to live in that world is a very different situation from one of competition and of goals that are really based on infantile programs for happiness such as the three first energy levels of security, power/control and affection and esteem.

It's also that unity of the human race that makes it possible for God to become human in such a way that in taking one person to himself he takes everybody to himself so that we become, if we consent, certain incarnations of Christ – limited, of course, and not complete expression of God's Son that Jesus was but, nonetheless, united with Christ in so far as we consent to this process of transformation and imitate his example.

God then is trying to bring us to a new place – an extraordinary place. And it requires effort and yet it's the place where we were originally created according to the insight of the Book of Genesis; namely, we're made in the image and likeness of God.

That God wants us to be perfect, I think, should be affirmed over and over again. The love of God is trying to make us equal, in some respects, to himself, at least from the psychological perspective – in other words, to have the same freedom, the same peace, the same infinite sense of well-being, security, the same love. That's what God is asking us to accept.

The Christian contemplative perspective moves things a little more firmly in that direction than the natural state of human beings in virtue of their evolution up till now because the Gospel is really a profound thrust. Transformation, I don't know, or movement, a revolution...it's not just evolution in the direction of deification as the

Greek Orthodox spiritual writers call it – that is, grace is a participation in the Divine Life and is always present, always available.