



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

"Pre-Rational Energy Centers, Part 2" Excerpted from *The Spiritual Journey Part 2, The Human Condition*

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[Evolutionary Model and Existential Model Chart appears on page 2 of transcript.]

Jesus' message is incredibly strong at this point. Maybe you wonder why he speaks so harshly at times. What do you think he means when he says, "If your eye scandalizes you, pull it out! If your foot or your hand is the source of scandal (meaning of sin or of disregarding the needs and rights of others and your own true needs), then just take a knife and just cut it right off?" He certainly doesn't mean that literally. In the Hebrew text, the Hebrew language, its genius is its concreteness. It expresses hyperbole by the exaggeration of the terms in which it expresses a truth. And Jesus coming out of that culture and speaking to people so encultured, naturally uses that in his preaching as his device. When he wants to speak strongly, he says, "I tell you solemnly," or he puts it so strongly that you nearly drop dead from the blast of his wisdom. But remember this: that Jesus is above all a wisdom teacher and, hence, his sayings are speaking about experience much more than they are about morality as a kind of series of laws to which you conform. Remember that conformity morality belongs to the Mythic level and it's the price that we pay in order to belong, and to be accepted and approved by the group. And this group pressure is enormous. So that nobody wants to go against the general feeling or consensus of the group.

When Jesus says, "Cut your foot off if it scandalizes you," he means dismantle your emotional programs for happiness, even if it's as painful or as close to you as your hand or foot or eye. In other words, work at this stuff! If you know you've got a security center around which your life is revolving, manifested by the fact that you get terribly angry and upset whenever your emotional program is frustrated, cut it out! Cut it off! Get free of it! You're killing yourself and other people. You're destroying your potential for growth, the contribution you could make to your group and to the whole world, because it's people who have reached the freedom of the Gospel, the freedom to take full responsibility for their decisions, activity, behavior and others. These are the people who are pouring divine light and love into the world.

EVOLUTIONARY MODEL Chain of Being Evolution of the Human Family Soma	EXISTENTIAL MODEL Energy Centers And Individual Human Development Sarx
4. Mental Egoic Rational Person-hood, Full Self-Reflective Self-Consciousness, Industrial/Technological Culture, Nation-Co-operation	4. Age of Reason <i>Co-opted by the energy centers. Hence their programs are:-</i> a) justified, b) rationalized, c) glorified,
3. Mythic Membership Verbal, Socialization, Farming Culture, City-State/Nation/Race,	3. Group Over-identification Uncritical acceptance of :- a) parental, education, b) ethical, training influences, c) religious, cultural conditioning,
2. Typhon Magical, Emotional exchange, Hunting culture - clan, Formation of Body Self,	<i>Hence, preconceived ideas and pre-packaged values.</i> 2a. Power Center Power and control, 2b. Sensation Center Affection and esteem, Sexual energy/pleasure,
1. Uroboric Immersed in nature, food, shelter, matter Immediate fulfillment of needs.	1. Security Center Survival and security.

IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, YOU WILL LOSE IT

The message of Jesus is radical in approaching the problem exactly where it is: selfishness. Self-centeredness with its inevitable programs to preserve its symbols that enable it to feel secure, esteemed, and in control, *is* control. In death there's no control. If you give up the power struggle now, there's no hazard to death. There's no danger in death, unless it's a little physically painful. It's just the door into another, higher state of consciousness. Death is frightening to people who are hanging onto the false self. Hence, Jesus says, "If you want to save your life (the false self), you will lose it. If you lose this phony life for my sake, you will find true life." This is the dichotomy between the false self and the true Self that you see everywhere in the Gospel. And notice the harshness of Jesus is simply a wisdom saying to shake us up to realize. "Look, if you really are hung up or really have got to be secure to feel happy, then you've got to cut that out of yourself, even if it's as painful as cutting off your foot." That's what he's saying. Okay.

IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, FOLLOW THE CREATIVITY OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus has got a few words about these people at the Mythical Membership level. What do you think he means when he says, "Unless you hate your father and mother and sister and brother or children and property and your own life itself, you cannot be my disciples?" He doesn't mean not to love or take care of our parents. What does he mean? He means: dis-identify with anybody, including those you most love, if they stand in the way of following the Gospel, of freeing yourself from these hang-ups, or of locking you into a conformity morality that prevents you from following the creativity of the Gospel and creating new ministries and ministering wherever it's needed whether the people like it or not.

Now this is so important, it seems to me, to grasp the force. It doesn't mean that we hate our parents, but life itself changes our relation to them. As we grow, our relations have to change appropriately, and this involves our relationships to ourselves, God, and other people, and especially our parents. But, you see, we have absorbed at this period of four to seven, the values of the parents – so that their ideas of morality have gotten stuck in us and these may or may not be the result of a genuine conscience.

Every kind of unreal, oppressive or repressive kind of attitude that we picked up in childhood is meant to be released, relaxed, unloaded, put in the wastebasket as you become an adult. And I appeal to your own experience: recall the undertow of guilt feelings when you tried to break-out of the parental mentality or a religious instruction that was rather naive. Okay. So, when you start to grow up, then the guilt feelings pile up. But these are neurotic guilt feelings. True guilt, if there is such a thing, is the realization that we have gone against our conscious conscience; that is to say, that we have done something that is against our principles as a human person, our rational life. Now when you know that and regret it, the guilt feeling is very helpful because it tells you, "Brother, you have gone against your principles." You feel bad. Now as soon as that happens, and you regret it, you say, "My God, I'm sorry." If you've done something to trample on the needs of others, "I'll make restitution." Then you forget it! Any guilt that lasts more than half a minute is neurotic. It really is. Pervasive, prolonged, paralyzing guilt – that's the superego – that's our emotional judgment of what is right and wrong. and that's not a true judgment. That's not conscience. Conscience is the judgment of reason, not of emotion. Emotion says, "Damn you, you're guilty. Look what you've done. You're no good." And it usually registers a pervasive negativity. So that not only have you done wrong in this particular issue, you're just totally worthless. That's guilt – how it works. And that's this stuff when we don't measure up in our own judgment, then pride, neurotic pride, brings the verdict of guilty and we think God is saying, "You're guilty." He certainly isn't. He's saying, "You, poor fool. There's nothing wrong with you. Everybody makes mistakes. For God's sake, forget it!" That's what his feeling is. "I forgive you. Why don't you forgive yourself, for heaven's sake!" God is not vindictive. And yet, because of the childhood fear of the dark, of the unknown, and the bogeyman, or whatever, we easily project onto God, or inject into our emotional life, judgments about him that are really projections of these [lower] levels of consciousness.

WE PROJECT UNTO GOD MODELS OF HUMAN AUTHORITY

Because we haven't fully entered into the level of rationality (because we're under the influence of this stuff emotionally), our attitude to God is constantly being solicited to regress to these former levels of relating which are infantile, childish, unworthy of God. And so, we project on God the models of authority that we see around us. If we have a horrible father, then God becomes horrible to our emotions. If we think of God as a policeman, or as a tyrant, this is because we're projecting models in our childhood environment that are very painful to us, and since we don't know God directly, the closest things are the authority figures that we do know. And if these are horrendous, then it's very difficult later in life to relate to God as God is in himself, until we lay aside and process our emotional junk, which also enables [us] to reevaluate what we think of God.

Whatever idea we picked up of God at a pre-rational level had emotional overtones, and those emotional overtones remain in the memory banks, the nervous system and brain as a kind of parasite idea. So that whenever we think of God, that emotional wound or distortion, or the fear we had of God because of the way he was presented to us in early childhood begins to go off and so we find it difficult to emotionally put our trust in him. So, whenever you try to relate to God outside of the concepts, this fear, or this distortion of God as a tyrant, policeman, or judge about to bring the verdict of guilty, which is really the superego's judgment, descends upon one and one can't relax.

YOU HAVE TO TRUST GOD

If you're going to do Centering Prayer, you've got to trust God because it's just sheer surrender and if he doesn't pick you up or catch you, you're in tough shape. Centering Prayer challenges us, if we can't find interior rest, to find out why not, and this brings us to the kind of self-knowledge that is practical, and it may be helpful to get psychotherapy to begin to see how we're treating God from the basis of our early emotional life.

Here's a little story that might bring this home what I'm trying to say, and this is a true story, and it concerns a cardinal of the Church, no less. And I feel since it was reported in the press, that it's fair to repeat it here. And that is that when he was giving [Cardinal Hume] lectures to the bishops, a kind of retreat at Collegetteville some years ago, he shared with them this story. He said when he was a youngster from a very strict Catholic home (and the English can be strict), his mother insisted that the children not eat between meals, and that was part of their discipline, their religious discipline. She had a cookie jar in the kitchen. One day she gathered the family and she said to them, "Now, I don't want any of you boys or girls to put your hand in that cookie jar in-between meals. It's for dessert." And here is the sanction she gave them: "Because God is always watching you." So, here's a sensitive child whose love of God is just developing. Now, through the somewhat ill-advised, but, no doubt good-intentioned, offices of his mother, who's trying to train him, he now perceives of God as watching him to catch him in a fault in disobedience. And this, of course, with his tender conscience, a sensitive child – the most easy to wound in this regard – he decides he'll never put his hand in the jar. He'll keep the rule. Who's rule, for God's sake? Hers! She didn't have enough guts to take responsibility for her own sanctions. There are only

Ten Commandments. If you dare to add another one, take responsibility. Don't blame God for it, for goodness sakes!

Well anyway, he accepted this thing and took it seriously, and a little later, he entered the Benedictine order, where there are all kinds of rules, and, I suppose, he was keeping them for the same reason: God is always watching. God, have mercy on my soul for judging anyone, but maybe he entered the monastery for that very reason – it's safer there, so that now there will be less opportunity for God to be displeased with me. He apparently had been thoroughly terrorized by that situation.

Now some of this is my interpretation, please. If he sues me for libel, I'll realize that I overdid it. But anyway, he said (not I) to the bishops, "For many years, that was my relationship to God." But one day something happened (he didn't say what it was). He had an experience of God: "And I suddenly realized, and I've realized it ever since, that if, as a child, I had put my hand in the cookie jar in-between meals, and if God was truly watching and concerned about that situation, he would have said: 'Sonny, why don't you take another one?'"

Well, here is someone who was on the way to trusting God in a relationship, and through the ill and poorly psychological presentation of some aspect of discipline, she, without intending to, retarded that young man's union with God for maybe twenty or thirty years. That's how fragile the human situation is.

When Jesus said, "Hate your ...," he doesn't mean not to love them. He means dis-identify with their value system if it's not according to the Gospel and according to human growth into the divine life. Just love them in every other regard, but when they want you to do what they want to do, you say, "I'm sorry, Mom and Dad, I've got some other values going. See you later."

And the same thing goes for all the other groups, your peer group. The fastest way to lose your friends is to change your way of life because they're threatened by that. And so, it's a lonely road sometimes when you take the spiritual journey ... for a while. But in a little while, God will give you the most remarkable friends that you never dreamed existed in this world. He never takes anything from us except to give you something better. You cannot overdo trust in this God. He's infinitely compassionate and powerful, which means he can do something about it.

So, what this means is, if your family, nation, and group – anybody – stands in the way of your true growth, which is in the interest of the whole human family, then you have to know how to say politely, "No" and stick by the courage of your God-given attraction. And this, so that you can see that the Gospel is calling us out of this straitjacket, out of over-identification with the group, which is not to say anything is bad, but we've got to learn the right use of everything.