



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 18 – Formation of the Homemade Self: The Existential Model, Part 1-Continued



Gustave Doré, *Paradiso Canto 31*

*At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert,  
and he remained in the desert for forty days,*

*tempted ...*

- Mark 1:12

"The first part of life is to enter into through particular experiences, to develop that self-identity as thoroughly distinct from all the other identities. Then comes the opportunity to translate that experience back into the higher values of the spiritual potentiality of the human being with the new brain, the left hemisphere being the basis for it."

- Thomas Keating, ending of the video "Formation of the Homemade Self: The Existential Model Part 1"

"The struggle between the old and the new self is a constant theme in the New Testament. The false self easily adjusts to the circumstances of the spiritual journey as long as it does not have to change itself. Thus, it manifests its radical self-centeredness in various expressions of human activity: in material pursuits such as wealth and power; in emotional satisfactions such as relationships; in intellectual goals; ... in social goals such as status and prestige; in religious aspirations such as fasting and acts of piety; and even in spiritual commitments such as prayer, the practice of virtue and every form of ministry.

"The Gospel calls us forth to full responsibility for our emotional life. We tend to blame other people or situations for the turmoil we experience. In actual fact, upsetting emotions prove beyond any doubt that the problem is in us. If we do not assume responsibility for our emotional programs on the unconscious level and take measures to change them, we will be influenced by them to the end of our lives. As long as these programs are in place, we cannot hear other people and their cries for help; their problems must first be filtered through our own emotional needs, reactions and prepackaged values. No amount of theological, scriptural or liturgical study can heal [us], because as long as our emotional programs for happiness are firmly in place, such studies are easily co-opted by them.

"Jesus appears in the desert as the representative of the human race. He bears within himself the experience of the human predicament in its raw intensity. Hence, he is vulnerable to the temptations [and yet shows us how to confront them]."

-Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

*This is the time of fulfillment.*

*The Kingdom of God is at hand.*

*Repent, and believe in the Gospel.*

- Mark 1:15

## **A Meditation**

"Christ began his teaching not with any literal commandments but with a psychological idea -- the idea of *metanoia* which means change of mind. ... This word, *metanoia*, awkwardly translated as repentance, means a new way of thinking about the meaning of one's own life. ... That is its starting point: to feel the mystery of one's own existence, of how one thinks and feels and moves, and to feel the mystery of consciousness, and to feel the mystery of the minute organization of matter. All this can begin to effect *metanoia*. The contrary is to feel that everything is attributable to oneself. The one feeling opens the mind to its higher range of possibilities. The other feeling closes the mind and turns us downwards through the senses."

- Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*

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"The heart of the Christian asceticism ... is to face the unconscious values that underlie the emotional programs for happiness and *to change them*. Hence the need of a discipline of contemplative prayer and action."

-Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

## **To Practice**

- As we move through various models and ways of looking at the human condition, the terminology may be unfamiliar and take some getting used to. It may be helpful to view video presentations more than once in order to grasp their implications, especially as they relate to the spiritual journey.

You may wish to view "Formation of the Homemade Self: The Existential Model-Part 1" again.

- Reflect upon how these models of the "human condition" have informed you. What has come to meet you?

## **Resources for Further Study:**

You may wish to read the Introduction and Chapters 1-5 and 7 in *Invitation to Love* (20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition), the Introduction through Chapter 6, in older editions.

## **Notes and Reflections:**