



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

34: The False Self in Action, Part 1-Continued



Richard Irving Bowman, untitled

*I will place my laws within their hearts,
and I will write them upon their minds.*

- Hebrews 10:16

"So, you might think that once we begin the spiritual journey, then, and have bought into the values of the Gospel and the work and practice of the spiritual journey then we would be safe. Not at all. The abstract, intellectual, conceptual or decision to buy into the Gospel values doesn't touch the unconscious motivation which is firmly in place by the time we reach the age of reason and probably even firmer in place by the time we hear the invitation of the Gospel to repent; that is, change the directions in which you are looking for happiness. ...

"And God says, 'Won't you please remember that the purpose of prayer is not to get what you want or to change me – but to change *you*, dear heart!' ... [It] takes a long time to get that message. ...

"I assure you, when we begin the spiritual journey, there often is a period of great enjoyment and great reassurance, and freedom because the worst part of your life is kind of cleaned up and you experience a certain freedom. But this is only like pruning a few branches on a tree. You still have to deal with the root. And so, when the dust settles, you begin to confront your old temptations, worse than before, because now you're more honest, you're more open and vulnerable because of your sincerity and honesty to the truth. ...

"This is an invitation to a new depth of love, a new depth of relating to God, on a more spiritual level which requires a little scrubbing, a little emptying out so that we can relate or hear that marvelous communication, that transmission of divine life which can't come through if the noise of the false self is too strong. So, it really is a great gift."

- Thomas Keating, excerpts from Session 33 video

A Meditation

"Transformed in Christ, these blessed souls will live the life of God and not their own life -- although, indeed, it will be their own life because God's life will be theirs ... through a union of love. This is a great blessing. ... As he said in the Song of Songs: 'Put me as a seal upon your heart' (Song of Songs 8:6). ... The heart signifies the soul in which God dwells in this life as a seal."

- John of the Cross, *The Spiritual Canticle*

To Practice

- View the video excerpt "Divine Transformation," from *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ*. It is about 13 minutes in length.

- Reflect on Fr. Thomas' statement "The pervasive, non-possessive attitude towards ourselves is the establishment of the Kingdom of God in us, which is Christ-consciousness." What would a "pervasive, non-possessive attitude towards ourselves" look like for you at this time?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 7 "Unloading of the Unconscious" in *Open Mind, Open Heart* (20th anniversary edition), Chapter 9 in older editions.

You also may wish to read Chapter 4 "Divine 'Therapy'" in *Intimacy with God* (new editions), Chapter 8 "The Psychology of Centering Prayer," in older editions.

Notes and Reflections: