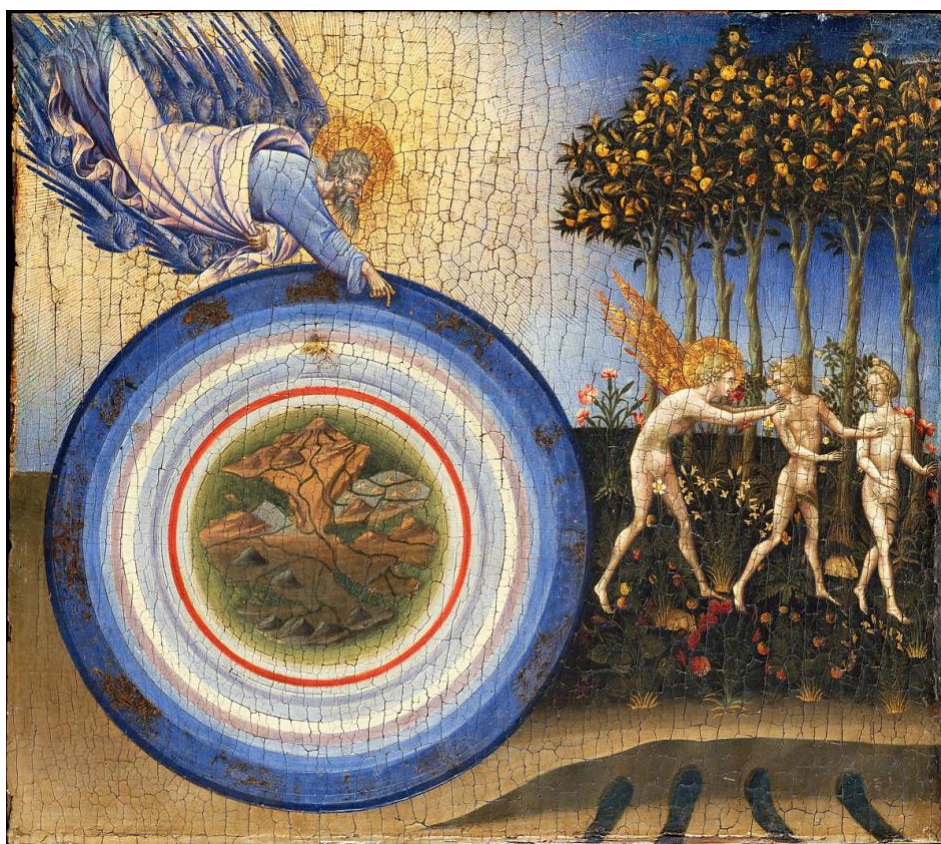




# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 15: The Human Condition: The Evolutionary Model, Part 2



Giovanni di Paolo, *The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1445

*The Lord God called out to the man, and asked him,  
"Where are you?"*

- Genesis 3:9

"At every moment of our lives, God is asking us, 'Where are you? Why are you hiding?' ... God is asking us to face the reality of the human condition, to come out of the woods into the full light of intimacy with him."

- Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition*

Facing the reality of the human condition begins with understanding how we got to where we are today innocently. Most of us got here without thinking about it too much. Or, if we tried to think about it, we didn't have a framework that made sense and especially one that wasn't full of blame and shame. We start out life looking to get our needs met and to experience happiness. What could be wrong with that?

"One of the biggest impediments to spiritual growth is that we do not perceive our own hidden motivations. Our unconscious, pre-rational emotional programming from childhood and our over-identification with a specific group or groups are sources from which our false self – our injured, compensatory sense of who we are – gradually emerges and stabilizes. The influence of the false self extends into every aspect and activity of our lives, either consciously or unconsciously."

- Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*

On the spiritual journey, the circumstances of our lives – the unexpected, the trials, the crises, our relationships – begin to uncover where we are in relation to God, ourselves, and others. We begin to look at our false self, our hidden motivations, and the influences that limit our freedom and potential. Though it may be uncomfortable and even painful to experience our powerlessness over habitual patterns of behavior and thought, we remember that this is a healing journey, a journey of transformation. The Light heals.

"The great gifts of the Divine Therapist let you know who you are and where you are, and under what motivation you are ... [which is] so important in the Christian journey in which motivation is absolutely everything."

- Thomas Keating, from video excerpt 15, "The Human Condition: Evolutionary Model, Part 2."

## **A Meditation**

"Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self. This is the [one] that I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him [her]. ... My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside the reach of God's will and God's love – outside of reality and outside of life. And such a life cannot help but be an illusion. ... The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God. ... I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in him. ... Therefore, there is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find [God], I will find myself, and if I find my true Self I will find [God]."

- Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

## **To Practice**

- View the video excerpt "The Human Condition: Evolutionary Model, Part 2." This excerpt is about 16 minutes in length.

- Imagine God looking upon Godself within you, loving what God sees. If distractions interrupt you, return your awareness and attention to receiving God's gaze. You might commit to seeing God's presence in someone or some creature this day (adapted from Richard Rohr's daily meditation, August 6, 2016).

## **Resources for Further Study:**

You may wish to read *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* and the Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 in *Invitation to Love* (20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition) and the Introduction through Chapter 6, in older editions.

**Notes and Reflections:**