

TRUE SELF, FALSE SELF

7th Core Principle: True religion leads us to an experience of our True Self and undermines my false self. (ultimate direction)

The True Self is who you are because of the divine indwelling, the Holy Spirit within you (Romans 8:9). This is the solid basis for human sacredness, and it cannot be violated without "grieving the Holy Spirit who has marked you with his seal" (Ephesians 4:30). We are all *tabernacles of God*, says Paul (1 Corinthians 3:16-17), which for a temple loving Jew was quite an affirmation. What happened in the Christ, the Anointed One, is an announcement of what is happening in all of us too. We are sons and daughters of heaven and earth, both at the same time. Much of the work of enlightenment is to put those two identities together, just as Jesus did.

The putting of the human and the divine together is what it means to be "the Christ" (Colossians 1:17-20), and what it means for us to be "the new Adam [and Eve!]" (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). Ephesians could not make it much clearer: "You too have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit that was promised—this is the pledge of your inheritance" (1:13b). Notice I am using a lot of Scripture here, because most Christians have never been seriously taught about their inherent union with God, and will find all kinds of self hating reasons to deny it. The false self feels very inadequate, and it is in many ways, which is why we call it false! Only the True Self can dare to believe the Good News of the Gospel.

The false self is characterized by separateness, which it then trumps up with all kinds of false self-sufficiency. The false self is who you think you are, and thinking does not make it so. It is your identity privately concocted by means of culture, education, class, race, family, gender identity, clothes, and money. That's all that Adam and Eve have once they leave the Garden where they first walked with God. Don't feel too bad for them. It seems that you *have* to leave the Garden. You have to create a false self to get started. The only trouble with this false self is that you take it far too seriously. It is always passing away, it is going to die. Only the True Self is eternal. We all suffer from a terrible case of mistaken identity, which conclusion is agreed upon by almost all of the world religions.

In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," William Wordsworth says, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." I think that's why we're so fascinated by babies, because we suspect that they still enjoy their primal union. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," Wordsworth goes on to say. We all start in the garden, we leave the garden and "make a name for ourselves"—but it is not our original and true name. We slowly learn to shed our manufactured identities and fall back into the solid identity we had all along. That is why true conversions are so often described as homecomings, re-discoveries, or as Jacob put it, "You were there all the time, and I never knew it!" (Genesis 28:16). That is what we all would say when the false self eventually falls away and the True Self stands lovely and revealed.

Simply put, the false self is the disconnected and autonomous self. In that sense, it does not even exist. The Judeo-Christian tradition calls this state of disconnectedness "sin." When you're disconnected from your deepest Being, you're in the state of sin, or what some modern thinkers call the state of alienation. You do not naturally belong here or anywhere and you look for all kinds of false and addictive ways to fill up your emptiness. God just patiently waits and is most eager to forgive, saying what he said about those who killed him, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). The false self is not really the bad self; it just does not know that there *is* anything like a True Self. Your false self is basically the state of unconsciousness. Your True Self is full consciousness, but it does take a while to get there.

The True Self is characterized by communion and deep contentment. It's okay, right here, right now. The True Self is the realigned self. It has to do with participating in a Universal Being that is beyond yours. *Your life is not about you. You are about life.* Now, that doesn't mean you stay in the True Self 24-hours a day. Life is three steps forward and two steps backward. But once you know the big picture, you will never be satisfied with the little picture again.

The true you, the True Self cannot really be hurt. There's nothing to prove or protect with the True Self. It is indestructible. It's your eternal soul or your identity in God. It's the Great I AM (Exodus 3:14), continued in you and me. Yahweh asks Adam and Eve, in the midst of their shame, "Who told you that you were naked?" And soon God "makes clothes for them which they put on" (3:21). After God first creates them, Yahweh's second action is to protect them and take away their naked shame.

The false self easily feels almost constant shame and guilt. It is inherently insecure and afraid, and must dress itself up in all kinds of unworkable ways, even self-destructive ways. This is why it is called sin, and why we are so warned against it. As Paul puts it, "When I act against my own will, it is *not my true self* doing it, but sin which lives in me" (Romans 7:20). So, even Paul uses this term to make the very same points.

The main purpose of religion is to lead you to an experience of your True Self, who you are in God and who God is in you. That's why, as disappointed as I get in religion, I can't give up on healthy religion; because it alone is prepared to point you beyond the mere psychological or personal—to the cosmic, to the universal, to the Absolute. Only healthy, great religion is prepared to realign, re-heal, reconnect all things and reposition us inside of the biggest possible picture. Basically, when you say you love God, you are saying you love everything. No exceptions. That is precisely what it means, and we must begin to make that clear.

God loves the eternal Christ, the anointed one, the Christ child in you; and God can only love you. It is similar to parents' love for their children, which is often even more intense and passionate when they see that child self-destruct.

That part of you which has always loved God—and lets God love you—is often called your soul. I also call it your True Self. Once the problem is solved deeply inside me, and I can recognize and honor the divine image in me, then I can honor the inherent dignity of everyone else too. It is a free gift given to me and given to them. Henceforth, I find inherent value based in an objective True Self, and all the disguises of all false selves fall away as relative and passing—my own and everybody else's too.