

Our “Original Mind” Meets “The Inner Light”

Robert Maynard
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The official name of the Unification Movement is the “Holy Spirit for the Unification of World Christianity.” One of the key doctrines at the foundation of the movement’s teaching is that of the “First Blessing” of “Individual Perfection,” where we are to become one with God by developing our “Inner Mind.” This is the first of the “Three Blessings” and is the key to the rest of the Principle, or as Christians would say, Logos. So, in essence, we are to be a movement led by the “Holy Spirit” whose main mission is to encourage people to realize the “First Blessing” of “Individual Perfection.” One of our main themes is that God wants to use America to reach out to the world and share his vision. More recently that theme has taken the form of “God’s Hope for America” rallies and prayer vigils. The early American Pilgrim settlers had a similar vision and what we call “Our Original Mind,” they called “The Inner Light.” Correctly, understood, this is at the heart of what has been come to be known as “American Individualism.” It is important that Unificationists come to understand this tradition if we are to ever have a chance of communicating our notion of “God’s Hope for America.”

The Image of God

One theme from American civilization that has attracted a lot of attention is the ideal of American Individualism. The modern notion that individualism equals selfishness has come about because we have lost sight of the biblical notion of the individual upon which the original American ideal of individualism was based.

The Christian view of the incarnation of God in an individual and the focus on the salvation of individual souls are what lead to the notion of the individual as ultimate (collective entities do not have souls or free will). As such, the notion predates the American founding. Americans simply revived an ancient Christian notion. In addition, biblical metaphysics and its view on the dignity of the human person are at the heart of the whole western notion of human rights in general and the view of human dignity that prompted the American Revolution. While numerous studies by various scholars could be cited to back up this claim, I would like to start with a book by Thomas Cahill from his series *The Hinges of History* entitled *The Gift of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels*.

Cahill points out on page 46 that in the “Primeval Religious Experience” rooted in the worship of the cyclical patterns detected in nature:

Human life was seen as a pale reenactment of the life of the eternal heavens and was ruled by a fate beyond the pitifully limited powers of human beings. The gods decided. The figures in the heavens, if interpreted correctly by those who had access to secret priestly knowledge and whom society supported in leisure, could give some indication of what would happen next in earthly affairs. But one’s fate was written in the stars and could not be changed.

This fatalism was widespread in the entire ancient world and was rooted in the view that humans were mere phenomenon in an eternal, divine cosmos, which was ruled by the cyclical laws of growth and decay, life and death. In this vast cosmic drama, human life had very little significance.

The Jewish rejection of this view in favor of the notion that the cosmos is a result of a creative act of free will and that human beings are created in the image of the Creator introduced an understanding of the dignity of the human individual that has had consequences in almost all fields of human endeavor from the idea of progress to the ideals of freedom and human rights.

Why make a big deal over this issue? It is all too easy to take the blessings that flow from the ideal of freedom for granted and ignore the source of that ideal, which is an endowment by God that makes freedom fundamental to human nature itself. As Jewish scholar Abraham Heschel points out on page 409 of his book *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, “the grand premise of religion is that man is able to surpass himself. Such ability is the essence of freedom”. In other words, we humans have the capacity to transcend the world of the cycles of the cosmos and its fatalism and enter into communion with the creative source of the cosmos. If we take away that ability and deny any reality that transcends the cosmos, freedom makes no sense and is not possible. Increasingly, this is what our modern worldview is doing.

In his book *The Theme is Freedom*, M. Stanton Evans quotes anthropologist Alfred Kroeber on page 71:

“Man, to every anthropologist, is an animal in the given world of nature; that and nothing more – not an animal with a soul, destiny or anything else attached beforehand, but an animal to be compared with, as to structure and function, other animals”. Mr. Evans draws out the practical implications of such a view by asking, “If people are really no different from the objects of the natural order, why not treat them accordingly? If human beings are mere phenomena, molded by forces that ripen corn or evolve baboons, why should they enjoy freedom? From such a perspective, indeed, the idea of freedom is an illusion, and a harmful one at that, since it gets in the way of “scientific treatment.” He goes on to quote psychologist B.F. Skinner on the same page: “the hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of the scientific method to human nature.”

The Human Person Seeks Fulfillment in Love

The book of Genesis mentions that God picked up the dust from the earth and blew into it and Man became a living soul. The individual soul, created in the image of God, above all seeks to realize the ideal of love. Love drives us to reach beyond ourselves to embrace another in an act of self-giving. The selfless act of self-giving is simultaneously an act of self-enlargement. This is the way Christian philosophers such as Augustine understood Jesus’ seemingly paradoxical statement that “he who seeks to lose his life shall gain it.” In the Christian understanding, the notion of justice is fulfilled by the ideal of love. The key is that this ideal must be manifested from each individual heart outward as an act of free will. Love and morality are intertwined and both presuppose the ideal of free will and the purpose of both is to realize a personal relationship with God.

What does this relationship mean to man? The early American puritan, Jonathan Edwards in particular, picked up on St Augustine’s view of man’s condition as one of being created in such a way that man seeks happiness. Happiness requires that man go beyond the natural to the supernatural. In Book I, chapter 1 of his *Confessions* Augustine wrote, “Oh God Thou hast created us for thyself so that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.” Similar thoughts can be found in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. That we seek happiness is a result of our incompleteness, our finitude. And because of the way we are created, we can only find ultimate happiness in a relationship with our Creator.

Thus man inevitably loves. To love is to go beyond oneself and to enter into union with the object of that love. This act of self-transcendence, which is also an act of self-expansion, is the foundation of all emotional, psychological and spiritual growth.

In the act of sacrificial love, we go beyond the limit of self. This is the hardest limit of all to break. Again the love of God comes first. In responding to the love of God as an act of faith, we go beyond our limit as temporal beings and embrace the transcendent. For a limited, temporal being, such an act is the most terrifying existential experience imaginable. This is something that we, as temporal beings, are not capable of doing alone. God first reaches out to us as an expression of love which Christians call grace. In order to complete the circle, we must respond in an act of trust, which Christians call faith. It is such a faith, responding to grace, which can deliver us from being torn between our finite nature and our infinite desires. The question is “How do we perceive the presence of God?” As the Bible says, God speaks in a “small and silent voice.” It is often the case that we perceive God’s presence in solitude and silence. Indeed, almost all of the Bible’s central figures had their most intense encounter with God in solitude. Abraham met with God alone out in the desert. Moses encountered God alone atop Mt. Sinai, and Jesus himself went alone out to the desert for forty days before the start of his ministry.

Again, our incompleteness makes it inevitable that we love. We can love things, such as other people or pets, but we will only find ultimate rest for our heart in the love of God. This is because the capacity of man to love is infinite and the only thing that can quench infinite desire is the infinite God. In a nutshell, the religious impulse, which is a capacity that separates man from the rest of nature, is an impulse that drives us toward completion. Yet this impulse must be properly directed to keep it from becoming destructive. This can happen when we look for ultimate happiness from the love of something other than God. Not that it is wrong to love other things; it is just that we should not expect ultimate happiness from the love of other things.

The love that comes the closest to ultimate fulfillment is the conjugal love between a man and a woman. As God says in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for man to remain alone.” The conjugal love between man and woman creates a bond where they become one flesh. Out of this bond new life is brought about on earth. In this small way we are able to share in the miracle of creating life. Still love of God takes precedent even over conjugal love. Even more so, it takes precedent over the love of the rest of the created world.

As mentioned previously, the physical universe is ruled by force and governed by pre-determined laws where there is no room for free will and choice, which are essential for a truly satisfactory experience of love. If man turns to the created world to satisfy his unquenchable passions, he will become a prisoner not only of the laws of force and determinism, but also of his own passions. It is for this reason that idolatry is the ultimate sin in the Bible. Biblical sin refers to a condition of being separated from God or

an act that separates us from God. It is idolatry that pushes us furthest from God because it redirects our love away from God and towards objects that can never satisfy that love. As the Apostle Paul said, “Because we worshipped the creation rather than the creator, God gave us over to be slaves of our passions.” The passions are not destructive in themselves; it is only when we become their slave rather than their master that they are destructive. We can only become master of our own passions when we direct our ultimate passion toward God, for only He can satisfy that passion.

The Influence of the English Separatists

The first “Pilgrims” who arrived on American shores were among a group of English Separatists who had given up any hope of purifying the Church of England and thus were intent on separating from it. Among the separatists were the Baptists, who were comprised of “General Baptists” and “Particular Baptists.” The General Baptists have been credited with developing the doctrine of the Inner Light, which was later embraced by Fox and the early Quakers. The General Baptists survived the Restoration (1660), but were kept under careful watch by the Crown due to a few radicals and potential troublemakers. Their doctrine of The Inner Light, or following “Christ within you”, tended to focus more attention on the conscience as a guide to the individual believer. Such views conflict with the notion of authority stemming from any other source than the bible or the indwelling presence of Christ.

The Inner Light views became prevalent in America. In his essay entitled *Baptist Individualism*, Charles W. Deweese writes in the very first paragraph:

God creates every person in his image; that injects eternal significance into the meaning and value of human individualism. Baptists affirm individualism in soul competency, liberty of conscience, voluntarism, regeneration, believer’s baptism, priesthood of all believers, equality, prayer, and other views and practices. Christ set the model: he talked and prayed with individuals, he called individual disciples, and he liberated individuals from sin, disease, and prejudicial treatment. He lived, died, and was resurrected on behalf of individuals. He was an individual.

Long before Thomas Jefferson was born, such understandings gave way to the ideal of religious freedom and the separation of Church and State as a check on State authority. This is not to say that the communal dimension of Baptist life was not equally important, but that it depended on the voluntary participation of the individual. In the second paragraph Deweese writes: “Of course, Baptists have a collective side: church, worship, congregational government, cooperative stewardship, missions, social action, among others. However, not one of these corporate ventures will work well unless individuals choose to participate.”

The Quakers took the doctrine of The Inner Light to an even more extreme conclusion. Guided by the inner light they rejected the need for either Church or State. The love of God expressed through the inner light of Christ within you was considered a sufficient guide to all of human life. Believers were to gather together in “brotherly love” solely as moved by The Inner Light without any institutional structure. In an article entitled *A Holy Experiment in Laissez-Faire*, Benjamin Hart wrote about the Quaker experiment in the colony of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania foreshadowed the ideals of the American Revolution. It was the first large state to permit citizens of various nationalities and religious faiths to enjoy equal protection under the laws. The success of Penn’s colony greatly interested the classical liberal philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries – Mill, Hume, Adam Smith, Madison, Hamilton, and Jefferson. It had proved under real life conditions that society could go a long way towards total laissez-faire before conditions began to decay into anarchy. Philadelphia with virtually no government came very close to achieving its ideal as the “City of Brotherly Love.” It was a vision of America to be, and would provide a fitting location for the signing of the U.S. Constitution in the fall of 1787.

Striving for Excellence

These themes were found in Puritan writing as well, but they were expressed as a realization of God’s sovereignty. By far the most prolific of the Puritan writers was Jonathan Edwards and he laid out this theme in his work entitled “Concerning the End for which GOD created the World.” That purpose, of course, was the realization and expression of God’s glory. Towards that end, God has communicated certain aspects of his own image to all humanity. Edwards agrees with the philosophers of benevolence that natural conscience possesses a prudential value in regulating conduct, that sentiments of symmetry and beauty provide insights into the nature of human morality, that pity and familial affection stabilize society, and that a natural “moral sense” reveals some truths about the ethical world. However, Edwards insists that the socially useful benefits of natural virtue fall far short of true virtue. For Edwards, the unshakable foundation of virtue worthy of the name is “that supreme regard to God, and love to him laid as the foundation, and all other virtues handled in a connection with this, and in subordination to it.” In sum, Edwards asserts for ethics what he had previously asserted for the inner spiritual life in his “Treatise on Religious Affections” (1746) and for conversion in his “Freedom of the Will” (1754) – no truly good

thing, strictly speaking, exists that is not always and everywhere dependent upon God.

In short, we are to pursue true virtue, or excellence as a means of manifesting God's image and realizing his glory. Edwards is known for his saying the true religion consists of holy affections. God governs us by "Sovereign Beauty" and focuses our affections on him so that they may result in true virtue. In his piece "Freedom of the Will," he insists that the will is free only in the sense that we choose one activity over another. The key is that our own choosing is conditioned by our affections. In this essay Edwards develops an understanding of human psychology based on the Pauline view stated in Romans 1:25-26 that "because we worshipped the creation rather than the creator, God gave us over to be slaves of our passions". Our will has become a slave of our affection or passions, and the only liberation from this form of spiritual slavery is to focus our affections on God. This view also expresses Jesus' assertion that scripture can be summed up in the twin imperatives to "love God above all else" and to "love our neighbor as ourselves". In essence, what is called for is a focusing of our passion away from the narcissistic love of oneself toward a love of God and our fellow man. Focusing one's passion inward on the love of self, leads to a contraction of the self, according to Edwards. On the other hand, focusing one's passion on a love for God and one's neighbor leads to an expansion of the self.

According to Edwards, human experience begins in feeling attraction and repulsion of interest that rational understanding later makes clear. Goodness that is not passionately embraced cannot refocus the energies of the heart or redefine the identity of the self. The aesthetic dimension of morality for Edwards includes both aspects of aesthetic. Values are experienced in emotion, and they appeal to agents through beauty, the most accessible manifestation of goodness. A person perceives moral beauty or deformity of intentions through the affections. The beauty of praiseworthy conduct lures the agent to appropriate action, and for those whose affections are true, particular values are more profoundly attractive because they reflect the ultimate beauty of reality as a whole. When the experience of beauty is most profound, it links moral and religious experience. In addition to moral beauty, there is also spiritual and intellectual beauty. In all aspects of human endeavors, we are to reflect the true beauty of God as a response to his expression of beauty.

Of course this is not easy since our nature has been corrupted by sin. As St. Paul points out in Romans 7:22, his innermost self delights in the law of God. In short there is a part of the image of God in him that responds to God's sovereign beauty. The problem is that there is another part of him that is captive to the law of sin. This captivity leads to the death of the soul. For Christians, this death is overcome by the death and resurrection of Christ. By accepting Christ we can share in his resurrection as long as we are willing to share in his death. The death of the old self and the sharing in Christ's resurrection is at the heart of the Christian notion of being "born again." Once a person has accepted Christ into his or her heart, God works a process of sanctification. The early Puritans referred to this process as "regeneration." Through regeneration God liberates us from the corrupting effects of sin and enables us to manifest his image.

Purification by Ordeal

By any reading of the Bible, it was clear to the early American settlers that the purification process God used to sanctify his people was usually a rough ordeal. Moses had to endure 40 years in the desert before he could liberate the Jewish people who had to wander collectively in the wilderness for another 40 years before they could enter the land of Canaan. Christians are to follow the model set by Christ at his crucifixion by picking up their own crosses and following Christ's example.

Given that the early American settlers considered themselves to be following in the footsteps of the ancient Israelites who escaped bondage in Egypt to enter the promised land, they expected to experience rough ordeals as well. The notion of being a second Israel was well covered in *The Light and the Glory* by Peter Marshall and David Manuel.

And experience rough ordeals, they certainly did. The trip across the vast ocean was just the beginning. Death and disease claimed its share of them even before they stepped foot in the new world. When they did arrive, it was in the middle of winter, which made food and shelter a problem. Add to these problems the fact that not all of the Indians were welcoming, and we have the material for a great many ordeals. Amazingly, they never seemed to see themselves as victims but always as being prepared to become God's people. One example of this attitude, which is little known today, is what was referred to in the colonial period as "Captivity Narratives."

This was a literary genre in early America that was inspired by the stories of the captivity of a single individual, usually a woman. The captivity was at the hands of hostile Indians who sometimes had destroyed the captive's village and killed their families. The narratives were actually a form of testimony that God had given them the strength to overcome the ordeal when they certainly would not have been able to do so simply with their own strength. Not only did they survive, but they were able to rise above the emotion of hatred for their captors and pray for them.

Some examples of such works are *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances (1697)* by Cotton Mather along with *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* and *Together, with the Faithfulness of his Promises Displayed Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) by Mary Rowlandson.

This heart-felt strength of inner hope in the face of insurmountable obstacles is at the heart of what we refer to as the American Dream. Many view the American Dream to be about striking it rich, however the original ideal was about emerging victorious after facing enormous odds. Essentially it is about the triumph of hope over reasonable despair. It is this ideal that led to the notion that Americans can do anything and that no matter how great the challenge we will emerge victorious. This trait has generated a tendency to view ourselves as potential victors rather than victims and is at the heart of our greatness. We often forget that its origins lie in biblically-based faith.

In summary, the American view sees the individual human person as having a destiny that is tied to his relationship with God. Though we have a communal nature, there is also a sense in which we stand alone before God as the bearer of His image. The fact that this image has been tarnished requires a process of regeneration in order for that image to be realized. This process can only be accomplished by God. The regeneration of the individual human person leavens the whole of society and is the starting point of any attempt to realize the public good.