

THE ORIGINAL FACE

Pulse of Spirit

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A number of years ago, we began using a phrase, a term, *primal spirituality*. It was new at Sunrise Ranch. I got some sideways looks about the use of it. Early on, we said that our primal spirituality is the spirituality we were born with. And that it is the original inspiration behind all the world's great faiths.

We said that as a matter of belief and conviction, with some evidence that it was true. And the more we've looked at it, the more we've studied it and taught it, the more the evidence has piled up that within the great faiths of the world, the great philosophies, there is the teaching that we are, as it's put in the Judeo-Christian religion, made in the image and likeness of God. The breath of life was breathed into us by the divine at the very beginning of things—at the very beginning of a human life. We were born with divine perfection.

Obviously, there's something else in the mix, both in terms of the world's religions and

spiritual teachings, and also in terms of the human experience.

We have a teaching of original sin that was invented by St. Augustine about 300 years after the passing of Jesus. In other words, it wasn't a teaching of the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived, and it wasn't his teaching. It wasn't a Hebrew teaching, it wasn't Moses' teaching. It is a teaching that has crept into Christianity. And like many of the spiritual paths of the world, there is something being taught other than primal spirituality. And certainly, our culture, generally speaking, teaches something else, whether it's psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, or religion.

The reality is that at the heart of every person is the Divine. And the adventure of a human life, the purpose of a human life, is to find that in oneself—to know it, to embrace it, to embody it, express it, and share it. And let it prevail in our life.

Yes, there is a legacy of tragedy. We have a world that has tragedy in it today. But there is a greater legacy that we have the opportunity to know and to own and be a part of.

We have the opportunity to let that true and beautiful legacy take over in our own life individually. We have a chance to let that happen for us collectively so that we become a continuation of that legacy, an expression of it into the world, so that the truth of who we are as human beings, individually and collectively, is claimed, expressed, embodied, and taught.

Do you see another answer for the world in which we live? There are many places we could look to for an answer. There are many wonderful things in the human world, from technology to art and architecture. It goes on and on. These days, there is artificial intelligence.

And yet how do we as humanity use those gifts intelligently if we do not know our own original nature, our own primal spirituality? In fact, it looks like those gifts have a good chance of using us if we are not in the authority of who we are, knowing who we are, knowing our authority as creators in the name of the one Creator, bringing creatorship to the planet.

If you look around the world, you will see the culture as it is, but you will see evidence of a history that, in usual scientific terms, is inexplicable.

We know of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. It is doubtful that we could build such a thing today. It is massive. People joke about Cheops' Law: get enough guys and you can do anything. But there is evidence that what was built was built out of a different technology

and another kind of knowledge. And then how is it that if you look around the world, there are ancient pyramids here, there, and everywhere—in Mexico, China, North America, Cambodia, and more. Was there some kind of master plan regarding pyramids that was spread around the world in ancient times?

If you visit Stonehenge, it boggles the mind. It is massive and beautiful just to look at. And then you hear the story that there were Neolithic farming people who built it. And the story is that some of the stones were dragged from the Preseli Hills in Wales, two hundred miles away.

We could get all the people in this room here at Sunrise Ranch—in fact, we could get the maintenance crew at Sunrise Ranch, strong and mighty, and we could not move those stones from Wales to Salisbury Plain where Stonehenge was built.

We could get everybody online today, and I don't think we could do it. We would have to have some kind of massive construction equipment to pick up those stones and then lift some of them up on the other stones. And these were Neolithic farming people with a primitive level of technology who accomplished this? What?

There was something else going on. Modern science thinks it's so wise. And yet it is not taking into account what is right before our eyes.

In South America, there are stone structures that fit together in such a way that you couldn't slide anything in between the stones. We couldn't build that structure today.

There is much in our culture that is of rather recent invention. And then some things we attribute to what we call *ancient times*. That goes back to Greece and Rome, at their height, and other ancient civilizations.

There is evidence that there is the ancient, and then there is ancient, ancient. And we tend to think of the people of the ancient ancient as Paleolithic people—hunter-gatherers who gradually came into agriculture and gradually came into metallurgy.

There is evidence that alongside those hunter-gatherer people was an enlightened culture in parts of the world that left their remnants in terms of archaeological structures, mostly ignored by science today.

There is a penalty in the scientific world for exploring such things. You don't get the grants, you don't get the professional appointments if you are exploring things that the scientific world has decided to shut down a long time ago. And yet there are brave researchers and archaeologists who are doing the work of uncovering a record of the ancient ancient.

At the same time, not only are there archaeological structures around the world that speak of an enlightened culture that was on this planet and that is our true legacy. There is also, in the literature of the world, evidence of that culture for those who have eyes to see.

We have our Bible as it has come down to us. And we think of that as coming from the time of Jesus in the New Testament and then the time of Moses, the Hebrews, and the Jews thereafter.

Yet within that ancient writing was also collected ancient ancient writings—writings that were picked up from an earlier time of an enlightened culture that was teaching not only science and poetry and spirituality, but was showing a way for humankind.

Just as we have the Great Pyramid to remind us of an ancient truth—to startle our minds and wake us up and bring us an awareness of grandeur and majesty—we have literature that does the same. That ancient ancient culture was at risk, just as enlightened thinking and enlightened spirituality is often at risk—unsupported and persecuted.

So, imagine. You were a member of an ancient enlightened culture. Would you not think of distributing around the world artifacts and records of the enlightened culture that you were living in, knowing that it is hard to understand that enlightened culture from unenlightened consciousness. The evidence of it is there around the world in archaeology and also in sacred scripture.

The Bhagavad Gita is such a remnant of a culture that was enlightened and spiritually alive. And the formula for being an awake and aware person and an awake and aware culture is there embedded in the Bhagavad Gita in metaphorical terms, powerfully presented, available for anyone in the world to read today.

In the Bible, you have the story of the Hebrew children who became the Jewish people, and then the story of early Christianity, and the initiation of it. We think of that as ancient. So, to some extent the Bible traces ancient history. But then there are these other things thrown in. Where did they come from?

There is the Book of Job. We tend to think of Job's boils, all his hard luck, all that he suffered, and all that he lost. But what is that story really about?

If you wanted to leave an inspirational story for the world that you saw taking a great loss of culture, a great loss of spirituality, and therefore a lowering in the level of human prosperity, what kind of a story might you leave humankind that would be a story of hope? A story of inspiration, and a showing of the way.

You might write a story like the story of Job. Job, who was a wealthy man, with all kinds of prosperity—family and possessions, and evidence of a high culture. And then he lost it all, all the way down to his own body. He didn't die, but he had terrible physical afflictions.

And still, he stayed true to what he knew—to what his life was about and what he served. He would not lose consciousness. He persisted through all the travails of the Book of Job until things came around right, and his kingdom was restored, his wealth was restored, his position in the world was restored. And why? Because he stayed true to his primal spirituality.

Could you think of a better story to leave for the world that was to go through what it has gone through—even up to today—than the story of Job?

There are certain of the Psalms that are of a similar ilk. Grace Van Duzen was our resident Bible teacher for many years here, a wondrous woman. And she talked about the Psalms. They are thought of as the Psalms of King David.

What she said was that there is so much beauty in the Psalms, but you go through about three quarters of the way through many of them and they turn dark. I guess David had a dark side.

The Psalms of David. Of course, they're all attributed to him as if he's the poet and author of them all. But there are some of those Psalms that rise above the level of the others—that don't feel like they were written in the time of Israel when David lived. They come from the ancient ancient.

There's the 23rd Psalm:

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

It's so epic and traditional that people tend to pass it off as old-time religion. And yet, if you can take that patina from your eyes and see what's being said, it's deep and profound.

I had a Catholic friend I worked with in New York, Rose Domilici. She was an Italian Catholic. I told her I was going to a community of ours up in New Hampshire that was named Green Pastures. And she started to laugh, and I asked, “Why are you laughing?” She said, “Well, because it reminds me of a graveyard.”

I guess the 23rd Psalm tends to be read at funerals. It's not a Psalm that's about dying. It is about the path of the restoration of the human soul. And you could meditate on the Psalm and go as deep as you want to go.

We could give a name to these messengers from an ancient enlightened culture. I don't know how much it helps, but I'll use a name that has been used here and other places. The name is the *Naacal Sages*. These were the

ambassadors of culture, science, and spirituality that went around the world to assist the world through what was going to be a very difficult time. They brought the message of our primal spirituality and a culture that was born out of our primal spirituality.

That original enlightened culture seems like a far distant time. But what I say is that in this day, with all we have going on in our culture and in the world, we need the Naacal Sages of today. We need those people who are teachers, speakers, poets, artists, scientists of that ancient reality which is present with us today. We need teachers of our primal spirituality, assisting people to come back to that in themselves, and then to come together with others who are knowing the same thing, so we may form a tribe of Naacal Sages for today—those who are actively taking it upon themselves to bring the message of primal spirituality to the world.

I'm not stuck on the name primal spirituality, but I am stuck on the reality of it. I'm stuck on knowing that for myself, claiming it for myself, with anyone else who wants to do that.

You could ask, *How do you know this is true?* There are voices in the world that tell us about our primal spirituality, and plenty of voices that tell us about other things.

There are people of science who claim that they have the answer when they don't. And they have great authority, but nonetheless teach and write things that don't make sense.

There are theologians who will tell you you are a sinner and there is nothing you can do about it, except hope you get saved so that in

the afterlife you will be okay. There are plenty of people who teach that.

So, how do you know your own primal spirituality? And how do you know it's true?

It is because when you find that place in yourself and you live from that place in yourself, it's self-confirming. It resonates with all of who you are.

Everything in you—when you discover that place and live into it and from it—says, *This is me. You tell me who I am.*

There is a greater reality that identifies us, as Keahi's song so beautifully says. *You tell me I am loved.*

Listening to the song, I heard something else. *You tell me I am love.* That is who I am. I have that reality to know, to be, and to bring to the world.

And everything within me resonates in a way that says, that is true. And we could look for some truth of the world around us, some expert someplace, or just live in La La Land in some kind of fog about who we are and why we're here. We could. Most people do, I suppose.

But there's another opportunity to find something of far greater depth—to know it and to live from it. So good to be doing that together.

The Original Face: *A Reading from the Wisdom of the World*

Before we speak of what we seek, let us remember what we are.

Across the centuries, across the oceans, across every boundary of language and culture, the deepest voices of humanity have risen with a

single testimony: that within every human being there lives something original, something sacred, something that no circumstance of life has ever touched or tarnished. We did not arrive here empty. We arrived here full — carrying within us, from the very beginning, the signature of the divine.

Let us listen now to those voices.

(From the Hawaiian tradition)

In the beginning there was darkness — but it was not empty darkness. It was darkness alive with intelligence, pregnant with the sacred. From the union of Papahānaumoku (*pah-pah-HAH-nah-oo-MOH-koo*), the Earth Mother, and Wākea (*WAH-keh-ah*), the Sky Father, the islands were born — and then, from that same divine parentage, came the first human being. Not fashioned from below. Born from above.

The ancient historians of Hawaii declared of that first ancestor, Hāloa (*HAH-loh-ah*): he is the *progenitor of all the peoples of the earth*.

You are of that lineage. The sky is in you. The earth is in you. And flowing through you, as it has flowed since the first morning of the world, is *mana* (*MAH-nah*) — the sacred life force that connects every living being to the source of all things.

You did not come into this world. You came out of it — as the island comes out of the sea.

(From the tradition of Islam:)

Fourteen centuries ago, the voice of revelation spoke through the Prophet and declared to every human heart what it most needed to hear:

"Fitra Allah (FIT-rah al-LAH) — the fitra of God, upon which He has created all people."

You were not born into confusion. You were born into clarity. Before culture shaped you, before the world named you, before you learned to doubt yourself — there was already something present. A sound nature. A pure orientation. A knowing, placed within you by the hand of God, that recognizes truth when it hears it, beauty when it sees it, the divine when it draws near.

The Prophet said: *every child is born upon fitra (FIT-rah)*.

Every child. Without exception. Not the righteous child. Not the religious child. Every child.

This is what you were before the world told you otherwise.

(From the tradition of Judaism:)

The Torah (TOH-rah) speaks with breathtaking simplicity:

"And God created the human in His image — in the image of God He created him."

Three words in the original Hebrew carry the entire weight of this declaration: Tzelem Elohim (TZEL-em eh-loh-HEEM) — the image of God. Not the image of a king. Not the image of a priest. The image of God — pressed into every human being without qualification, without condition, without exception.

The prophet Jeremiah heard the word of the Lord saying: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." Before birth. Before name. Before a single breath had been drawn — already known, already held, already purposed. This is not poetry. This is the declaration of a God who does not create at a

distance but breathes His own knowing into the very formation of a human life.

And the mystics of Kabbalah (kah-bah-LAH) went further still. They taught that the highest layer of the human soul—the Neshamah (neh-shah-MAH)—is not merely a reflection of the divine. The Zohar (ZOH-har) declares it to be a literal portion of God Himself, breathed directly from the divine interior into the human being. The word Neshamah shares its root with neshima—breath. What animates you at the deepest level is not your own breath. It is His.

What was breathed into you at the beginning was not borrowed.

It was given.

It is yours.

It is you.

Plato, in the *Timaeus* (*tie-MEE-us*), described the human soul as fashioned from the same substance as the World Soul — the rational principle at the heart of the cosmos. Within each person there is *nous* (*NOOS*): pure intelligence, a spark of the cosmic mind, the element in us most closely akin to the eternal.

And Plotinus (*ploh-TIE-nus*), his great successor, taught that the soul does not merely resemble its divine source — the soul *emanates* from it. We come from The One. We carry The One within us. And the whole of the spiritual life is what he called *epistrophe* (*eh-PIS-troh-fee*) — the return, the turning back, the homecoming.

He wrote of the soul's deepest aspiration as —

"The flight of the alone to the Alone."

Not escape. Not disappearance. Recognition. The drop remembering it is the ocean. The flame recognizing the fire from which it came.

(From the tradition of Buddhism:)

The great Mahayana (*mah-hah-YAH-nah*) teachers declared what may be the most radical statement in the history of religion:

Every sentient being carries within them *Tathagatagarbha* (*tah-TAH-gah-tah-GAR-bhah*) — the womb of the Awakened One. The seed of Buddhahood. Not as a distant possibility. Not as a reward for the virtuous. But as the present, living reality of what you already are at the deepest level.

The Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Huineng (*HWEE-nung*), pointed to this without apology:

"The nature of mind is originally pure."

Originally. Not eventually. Not conditionally. *Originally.*

And the Zen tradition has for centuries asked the question that cuts through every layer of acquired identity, every story we tell about ourselves, every fear and every pretension, and arrives at something that cannot be fabricated:

What was your face before your parents were born?

And now, from the beginning of all beginnings

Long before Buddhism or Islam, before Plato or the Torah (*TOH-rah*), before Hawaii rose from the sea—before all of it—there was a moment described in the oldest language of the human heart.

A moment in which the Living God leaned close to the dust of the earth—and breathed.

Not a doctrine. Not a command. Not a law.
A breath.

And the human being became a living soul.

This is the primal fact. This is the testimony that every tradition in this reading has been, in its own language and its own way, trying to say again:

You are not an accident. You are not a mistake. You are not a random arrangement of matter looking for meaning in the dark.

You are the breath of the Living God, wearing a human face.

You are the sky and the earth, remembering they are one.

You are fitra (*FIT-rah*)—the divine pattern, intact, beneath everything the world has done to you.

You are Neshamah (*neh-shah-MAH*)—a portion of God, placed here on purpose.

You are nous (*NOOS*)—the cosmic mind, made local, made personal, made present.

You are Tathagatagarbha (*tah-TAH-gah-tah-GAR-bhah*) — the seed of full awakening, already planted, already alive.

And your original face—

the one you wore before your parents were born, before this world gave you its names and its wounds, before you learned to be anything other than what you are—

that face is not lost.

It has never been lost.

It is, right now, the one that is listening.

Let those who have ears to hear, hear.

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