

## The Oldest-Time Religion (Part Two)

### *“The word is very near you”*

Reflection 29 in the series “A New World in the Morning”

So, yes, Scripture can be complicated. It’s not always simple. It lends itself to multiple perspectives and diverse understandings. Historical context matters. Yes, Scripture offers point and counterpoint driving us to synthesis, to taking point and counterpoint and from them finding the transcendent idea, the higher idea, and so learning to think, wrestling with the text, wrestling with God and God wrestling with us. And there is a moral trajectory to Scripture, a developmental flow from Genesis to the Gospels, from creation to Christ and beyond. So we see it not just for what it says as for what it morally implies over time, perhaps over centuries. On the level of doctrine, theology, dogma and metaphysics all of this is true.

Yet having said all this, what really matters in Scripture, what God wants from you, is “very near you.” It’s very near you. It’s in your mouth and in your heart. It’s what you already know to be true in your heart. God’s truth, when well understood, when understood in its living context, makes sense to people everywhere. What this asks of us is to trust our God-given and God-focused intuition. I was raised to distrust my intuition. I was theologically trained to trust only logic – the cold hard facts – never my heart. I was raised wrong. I was trained wrong.

I have over the years learned to trust my intuition, my God-given and God-focused intuition, that is, intuition that takes God into account. I do not mean by this that I trust my whims, or my casual desires, or my fantasies, and certainly not the things I get stuck on, the ways I get trapped in attachments, in those things, persons or outcomes that I have sometimes felt that I could not be happy without, that I have sometime felt that I just had to have. All those things are blindness and the very opposite of intuition.

But intuition is marvelous. It comes from stopping and looking and seeing, from seeing things as they really are and not just as I might wish them to be or feel they ought to be. It comes from God, and leads back to God. Ralph Waldo Emerson in his landmark essay on “Self-Reliance” (1841) laments that typically we dismiss without notice our own thoughts because, well, after all they’re just ours. And then, Emerson says, this is what happens: “In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts.” Yep! The intuitions we should have trusted. What good people everywhere know to be true in their hearts.

I believe all this is what Jesus was referring to when the night before his crucifixion he told his followers (in John 16:13) that the Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth. He was saying that: If we remain in him (John 15:4,5,7), if we embody him, if we learn to see things as Jesus saw them, if his words remain in us (15:7), if we remain in his love (15:9,10), if we love each other (15:17), we will be guided into all truth. We can increasingly trust our intuition, trust our “hunches,” trust our grasp of reality, and trust our hearts. And in the end, it will be love that will guide us into all truth.

On one moral issue after another, there are formulas that make ever so much sense in abstraction until you meet the real live person facing that issue. And those formulas by and large are not the truth, or at least not all the truth. The truth is what you do with those formulas after you begin to really love.

Do not miss that the heart is a very, very fine place to find truth, if you factor God in, if you act with integrity, if you go down deep enough, to the kind of knowledge the heart knows, like: What is really loving? What is really honorable? What is really driving me? What is really in the best interest of others? For that matter, what is really in my best interest? And if this were done to me, would I find it to be kind and caring?

It's all pretty basic stuff. It's for this reason that Jesus typically began his teaching with words that imply, "Who of you doesn't already know this?" It's very near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart. It's what you already know to be true in your heart. We know these things. We know what is kind and loving and caring and compassionate. We know when we are acting in kind and loving and caring and compassionate ways. We know when a piece of legislation is kind and loving and caring and compassionate. And we know when the teachings of the church are kind and loving and caring and compassionate. We know when circles of care and compassion are enlarging and when they're getting smaller. Every good heart knows these things and has known from the dawn of time. And when we realize this we stand on the threshold of a great global spiritual awakening.

Nothing less than a new world is being born. When we do what we know is kind and loving and caring and compassionate, when we work to enlarge circles of care and compassion, we will find people everywhere who agree with us and will work together for a better world. May you today grasp God's will, God's word, for you. It's not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It's not up in heaven. It's not beyond the sea. It's very near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart. It's what you already know in your heart to be true.

– Dale Pauls