ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Creation Of An Authentic Spirituality for The 21st Century

PRIMITIVE EGO PSYCHOLOGY
THE JOURNEY FROM UNCONSCIOUS PRIMITIVE EGO
TO A SPIRITUALLY AWAKENED ADULT CONSCIOUSNESS

DICK RAUSCHER

A Stonyhill Publication
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of the gifted writers, teachers, individual and family therapists, and training supervisors that supported and encouraged me as I studied and practiced the technical skills to become an effective pastoral psychotherapist. I also want to dedicate this book to all of the clients who offered me the opportunity to be a part of their life journey. It was their vulnerability and willingness to let me journey with them as they healed and grew toward wholeness that taught me how to listen to the deeper story beneath their words… the true art of therapy and healing.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank all of the family, friends, and co-workers who supported me on the journey that led to the writing of this book… especially those who had to endure the less conscious and less enlightened periods of my life; the early days of my own spiritual growth journey.

This book could not have been written without your patience and understanding as I struggled to awaken from my primitive ego consciousness; a journey of self-awareness and growth that continues even today; but with what I hope is more grace than I was able to manifest in those early days. You taught me the meaning of patience, the importance of understanding, and the grace of acceptance. I thank all of you.

I also want to thank my good friend Rev. Gary Judson for the encouragement to sit down and put the ideas rattling around in my brain down on paper, and for presenting this book as a workshop to a small church in upstate New York. The feedback from Gary and the participants in that early workshop provided valuable insight on how to improve the first edition of this book. Subsequent workshop presentations based on the first edition of this book contributed to the improvements contained in this updated edition; an effective reminder that spiritual growth is always grounded in community; and the conversations that take place in community.

A special thanks goes to my wife and business partner Melinda Stanfield. Without her amazing computer skills, her ability in designing web sites, her weekly postings of the Stonyhill-Nugget newsletters on the internet, the hours of discussion and editing as I struggled over the years to gain clarity on the ideas presented in this book, and her saint-like patience as I struggled these last two decades to improve my writing skills; this book would never have become a reality.

Thank you Melinda for all of the times you returned Nugget drafts with the dreaded but helpful words…. ”you can do better, it’s too wordy, you have no voice in the article, it’s too long”. You helped me achieve my dream of becoming a better writer so I could offer my ideas on
Primitive Ego Psychology to the universe. I’m a far better writer than I would have been without your help.

There were also many times when I had to agree with writer Jane Kirkpatrick who said to me on one occasion “You should never become a writer... unless you have to”. She was right. Writing with clarity is one of the more challenging life skills I have attempted to learn. Good writing takes a lifetime of effort and practice, but I couldn’t imagine my life today without writing at the center of it.

And finally, I want to thank all of the subscribers and readers of the Stonyhill-Nuggets Newsletter community for your encouragement and supportive feedback over the years. Your engaged interest and ongoing commitment to the awakening and conscious evolution of our human species over the years is testimony that the evolutionary impulse to “become” is alive and well. You are proof of the simple reality that only as our individual values and consciousness change, will the values and consciousness of our human culture change. You are truly a 21st Century community dedicated to making a difference in the world. I am honored and humbled by your support.

We are all in this journey called life together. Consciously, or unconsciously, we choose the life we create for ourselves. Our collective triumphs, and our collective failures will ultimately define us as a species. Only as we mature and evolve our primitive ego, awaken our individual and collective human consciousness, and embrace an authentic, compassionate adult spirituality for the 21st Century, will we be able to contribute to positive change in the world, and the unfolding creation of our own futures. If this book contributes to that kind of growth, I will be well satisfied.

A special thanks to Todd Ainsworth for his generous time and effort editing this second edition. This is a better book because of his editing skills.

Let the journey continue.
Dick Rauscher
Redmond, Oregon 2014
CONTENTS

PREFACE ....................................................................................................................... 1

PART 1 .......................................................................................................................... 7

CHAPTER 1: GROWTH AND CHANGE ................................................................. 11
  THE NATURE OF GROWTH .................................................................................. 11
  HUMAN EGO ....................................................................................................... 12
  RELIGION AND CHANGE ............................................................................... 19
  NEW SPIRITUAL MAPS ...................................................................................... 25

CHAPTER 2: PRIMITIVE EGO DEVELOPMENT ........................................... 33
  EARLY CHILDHOOD .......................................................................................... 34
  PERSONAL BELIEFS AND CERTAINTIES .................................................. 35
  RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY ................................................................... 39

CHAPTER 3: GROWTH IN SELF-AWARENESS ............................................. 43
  PRIMITIVE EGO ............................................................................................... 43
  EMOTIONAL KNEE JERKS .............................................................................. 44
  BENT NICKEL BELIEFS .................................................................................. 46
  PRIMITIVE EGO AND RELIGION ................................................................ 49

CHAPTER 4 – BIRTH OF THE SELF ................................................................. 53
  PRIMITIVE EGO PSYCHOLOGY .................................................................... 54
  AWAKENING FROM OUR PRIMITIVE EGO ............................................. 57

CHAPTER 5 – COMMON ASPECTS OF OUR PRIMITIVE EGO .................. 65
  NARCISSISM .................................................................................................... 66
  DUALISM .......................................................................................................... 68
  BLAME ............................................................................................................... 71
  POWER .............................................................................................................. 75
PART 2 ........................................................................................................ 83

CHAPTER 6 – BECOMING AND CO-CREATION .................................. 85
  DUALISM .............................................................................................. 86
  CONSCIOUSNESS ................................................................................ 88

CHAPTER 7 – THE POWER OF BECAUSE ........................................... 93
  LOVE AND BECAUSE ........................................................................ 93
  BECAUSE AND RELIGION ................................................................... 97

CHAPTER 8: LEARNING TO ACCEPT THE REALITY OF WHAT IS ....... 103
  SELF-AWARENESS ............................................................................. 103
  RIVER OF LIFE .................................................................................. 105

CHAPTER 9: GROWTH IN SELF-AWARENESS IS AUTHENTIC SPIRITUAL
  GROWTH ............................................................................................ 113
  SPIRITUALITY .................................................................................... 114
  SELF CONSCIOUSNESS .................................................................... 116
  HUMILITY ........................................................................................... 117
  BEING PRESENT ................................................................................ 120
  PAYING ATTENTION .......................................................................... 123

CHAPTER 10: THE POWER OF STORY .............................................. 129
  HOLDING ON – LETTING GO .............................................................. 129
  RELIGIOUS STORIES ........................................................................ 131
  WHY STORY IS NEEDED ..................................................................... 134
  RELIGIOUS STORIES ........................................................................ 136

CHAPTER 11: - A MIDDLEPATH SPIRITUALITY ................................. 143
  WHAT IS MIDDLEPATH .................................................................... 144
  PLAYGROUND FIGHTS ..................................................................... 145
  EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY .................................................................. 149
  GROWING UP .................................................................................... 152

PART 3: ...................................................................................................... 157

CHAPTER 12: THE NEED FOR A NEW GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY .......... 157
  SELF IDENTITY ................................................................................... 158
  INTEGRAL SPIRITUALITY .................................................................... 160
CHAPTER 13: EVOLUTIONARY SPIRITUALITY................................. 167
CHANGING THE STORY.......................................................... 169
IMPULSE TO BECOME ............................................................ 170
SURVIVAL AND CHANGE ...................................................... 174
IDENTICAL STORIES............................................................... 176
INCLUSIVE SPIRITUALITY ......................................................... 179

CHAPTER 14: AN AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY FOR THE 21st Century..... 183
MIDDLEPATH SPIRITUALITY..................................................... 186
CONCLUSION .................................................................... 188
FINAL STORIES ................................................................ 189

APPENDIX A Limiting Beliefs Contained In Our Inner-Child’s Primitive Ego Thinking Process .............................................................. 193

APPENDIX B A Glossary Of Terms Used In The Book .................... 199

APPENDIX D: Common Bent Nickel Beliefs (Childhood Survival Skills) 213

APPENDIX E: My Personal Journey ........................................... 215

ABOUT THE AUTHOR .............................................................. 219

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................... 221
PREFACE

I originally wrote this book as a self-study course that offered a variety of psychological and spiritual insights on how we develop and grow both psychologically and spiritually as human beings. This updated edition of the book includes the insights and feedback I’ve received from workshop participants over the years and includes new material I felt would be helpful for readers committed to awakening their consciousness; spiritually and psychologically.

It is my hope the concepts and ideas offered in this book will help others avoid some of the struggles and roadblocks I encountered on my own journey from unconscious primitive ego to a more spiritually awakened adult consciousness. I have often thought how helpful it would have been if I had been taught some of these ideas in grammar school. Unfortunately, especially for those close to me on my life journey, I had to learn many of them the hard way; a constant reminder of the simple and basic truth that until we awaken our consciousness it is not uncommon to cause pain and suffering for both others and ourselves. As author Richard Rohr reminds us, pain that is not transformed through awakening will be transmitted or projected onto others.

The goal of the book is to offer the reader traditional and contemporary spiritual practices that can be grafted onto the roots of our existing religious understanding of ultimate reality. These spiritual practices are specifically designed to support the awakening of our consciousness through growth in self-awareness; a journey from the unconscious primitive ego thinking of childhood, to that of a spiritually awakened adult consciousness. You may choose to graft some of these
new ways of *seeing* onto your old beliefs. You may choose to set them aside for the time being and give them more thought at a later time. Either approach is fine. I do not offer the material in this course as absolute truth, but rather as invitations to enlarge the context of your consciousness and the depth of your spirituality.

A primary premise of this book is the belief that *authentic spiritual growth is achieved only as we grow in self-awareness and self-knowledge*. The opposite is also true. All growth in self-knowledge is by definition authentic spiritual growth. It was only when I began to study developmental psychology through the lens of spirituality and spiritual growth that I could see the powerful influence the primitive ego of our inner-child has over our adult consciousness. Only then was I able to fully understand how the accumulated habits and beliefs of our personal and cultural conditioning from childhood (the conditioning that resides in our unconscious primitive ego) works to aggressively resist change in order to maintain the status quo in our adult life. The power of our unconscious primitive ego to influence and ultimately control our adult behaviors and choices cannot be overestimated.

It was that shift in focus from developmental psychology to spiritual growth that led to my realization that authentic spiritual growth is learning to see the world with new eyes; the courage and willingness to journey within and expand our self-knowledge through intentional growth in self-awareness. Only through growth in self-knowledge will we develop the ability to openly explore and embrace new insights that can serve to deepen our spiritual life and an awakened connection with reality.

Spirituality is a *part* of religion and our religious beliefs, but the underlying purpose of this book is an invitation to embrace a spirituality that is the very *context* for your *life*; an authentic, 21st Century spirituality that defines *who you are* and *how* you choose to live your life in the modern world. Stated simply, the purpose of this book is not an attempt to change *what* you believe, but rather to offer new insights on *how* to live a compassionate life.

Unlike many books on spiritual growth, the focus of this book is not about *doing* compassion, but rather how to *become* compassion; the spiritual goal and teaching of every enlightened mystic and spiritual teacher in human history. When an authentic spirituality is at the center of our life, religion and religious beliefs become a *part* of our lived
experience, but they are no longer the only lenses we have available in which to see or know the deeper realities of the world we live in, and the unconscious shadows that reside in of the darkness of our human psyche.

Given that this book is designed to open minds, foster conversation, and offer new ways to understand what it means to grow spiritually and intentionally encourage spiritual growth, disagreement with some of the concepts presented will be normal and should be expected. Those having conversations regarding the ideas and concepts offered in this book are encouraged to drop dualistic, either/or thinking and embrace the middlepath concept that there is always truth on both sides of any discussion or conversation.

Social change begins with the courage to explore the beam in our own eye, and then the willingness to transform our individual consciousness. When that happens, growth in our collective social consciousness will follow. We see only what our mind is prepared to comprehend. It is my hope the ideas, concepts, and spiritual practices offered in this book are able to actively support and encourage growth in human consciousness. I believe growth in the spiritual consciousness of our human species is urgently needed as we struggle, both individually and collectively, to create a more compassionate, inter-connected, and evolved 21st Century global culture. Our spiritual growth needs to catch up with our technological growth.
“Everything has its shadow side. No person or institution escapes that reality. On the other hand, we are, like it or not, responsible for our shadow’s consequences.

As we mature both individually and as a species, we are summoned to recognize our shadows and remedy the problems they incur as best we can.

This process is fundamental to transformation.”

*Fields of Compassion 2010 by Judy Cannato*
PART 1

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PRIMITIVE EGO PSYCHOLOGY

The way that you think determines what you will actually discover.
If your thoughts are impaired you will never discover anything rich or beautiful within your soul.

*Anan Cara by John Donohue*

The concepts and ideas offered in this book are intended to provide individuals, and our world’s mainline religious communities, a logical step-by-step way to create a new understanding of reality; a new spiritual worldview. The goal of the book is to help us evolve our individual and collective consciousness, and awaken to a more mature and enlightened spirituality; a scientifically literate 21st Century spirituality capable of leading humanity beyond the moral and ethical conditioning, outdated worldviews, and spiritual limitations of humanity’s collective primitive ego consciousness.

**Ultimate Reality**
An authentic 21st Century spirituality cannot be created using frozen, hand-me-down religious beliefs that are based on primitive, First Century, scientifically illiterate, pre-modern levels of human consciousness.

Because there is nothing in the created universe that is not changing
and evolving, our human consciousness, our world’s religions, and our understanding of what it means to live an authentic spiritual life in a 21st Century world must also be allowed and encouraged to grow, evolve, and mature. That includes our understanding of Ultimate Reality. I avoid the use of the word God in this book only because the word “God” is burdened with two thousand years of human attempts to define and describe the mystery of Ultimate Reality chiseled in granite. In an evolving universe that uses change and the impulse to “become” to create new forms, we need to update our human understanding of Ultimate Reality and allow it to actively participate in the evolutionary process.

The purpose of this book is to encourage new ways to think about Ultimate Reality and what it could mean if we were able to enlarge our understanding of Ultimate Reality using a more awakened consciousness and the more scientifically literate concepts of reality available to us in the modern world. In that spirit, I will refer to Ultimate Reality in this book as the Creator, or the Creative Evolutionary Impulse of the Initiating Consciousness To “become”; the evolutionary spirit/impulse of the Creator immanent and incarnate in all of creation, that has been driving the evolutionary process for more than 13.8 billion years.

**Unconscious Primitive Ego**

A primary goal and purpose in writing this book is to help readers see with more clarity the presence and power of our inner-child’s unconscious primitive ego, and its ability to distort the interpretations of our sacred texts by insisting on a literal, black-and-white interpretation of the wisdom contained in our scriptural metaphors and stories. When our unconscious primitive ego insists on a literal, dualistic, either/or interpretation of scriptural metaphors and stories, the result is the creation of imperative absolute truth religion, religious bigotry, judgmentalism, and religious violence in the world.

The unconscious primitive ego of our inner-child is neither evil nor bad. It is simply the immature consciousness of a young child. Unfortunately, this un-evolved primitive ego consciousness is currently controlling almost every adult human on the planet today. Stated another way, the unconscious primitive ego of our inner-child is unconsciously controlling the majority of our adult knee-jerk emotions, impulsive decisions, and unconscious choices. Our thoughts and behaviors reflect a
child’s consciousness, not the consciousness of an awakened and evolved adult. This sobering reality is especially true whenever we are stressed or emotionally upset.

**Until we awaken to the presence of our unconscious inner-child and its primitive ego, our adult ego will continue to remain under the reactive, knee-jerk control of our unconscious, seven-year-old inner-child’s feelings and emotions, and the dark shadow material of our unconscious inner-child psyche.**

**Summary**
The Divine Evolutionary Impulse to “become” has been using change to create and evolve our universe for over 13.8 billion years. It is my hope that this book will help readers to more consciously and intentionally answer the divine evolutionary call to “become” that lives in all of creation, and in the heart of each of us. Our world needs to develop a fully awakened, authentic adult spirituality; a 21st Century spirituality that continues to become and evolve by openly embracing the spirit of change. The ideas and concepts in the pages that follow are seeds to help us develop a higher stage of human consciousness; an evolved human consciousness capable of creating a compassionate global human culture that reflects the enlightened values and ethics of a modern 21st Century spirituality.

Because our primitive ego wants nothing to do with awakening our consciousness or embracing change, the path toward spiritual growth is often filled with enticing distractions; distractions that encourage those on the spiritual path to travel a short distance and then take up residence in the first convenient Inn along the way. For those with the courage to answer the evolutionary call to more intentionally enter into the wilderness of spiritual transformation and personal growth, this book offers a variety of spiritual insights and spiritual practices that will be helpful on the journey toward an awakened consciousness.

The spiritual journey from the primitive ego consciousness of our unconscious inner-child psyche, to that of an evolved and spiritually awakened adult observing ego consciousness, requires courage and a deep intention to grow and evolve. Embracing new knowledge and ideas always requires the removal of old belief structures that support the self-identity of our primitive ego. Maintaining the status quo helps our primitive ego avoid the anxiety that comes with growth and new
worldviews. As a result, our primitive ego will aggressively resist all invitations that involve change and growth.

All new ideas are simply mental seeds that can grow and provide insight on the journey toward a more enlightened consciousness. My hope is that the ideas presented in this book become uncommon road maps that open new paths for spiritual growth for the reader.
CHAPTER 1: GROWTH AND CHANGE

It is good knowing that cups are to drink from; the bad thing is not to know what thirst is for.

*Antonio Machado*

THE NATURE OF GROWTH

**Growth Does Not Happen By Force Of Will**

Growth does not happen by force of will. Growth is a process that begins when the old ways of seeing the world no longer make sense and a new worldview emerges. Sometimes personal growth happens quickly, sometimes it happens slowly. But in either case, a new way of understanding reality can leave us feeling disoriented and fragmented for a while. Until a new worldview has filtered down and settled into our consciousness, the ideas, concepts, and insights that come with a new worldview can be anxiety provoking and quite unsettling to our primitive ego. Its very self-identity is at risk.

To say that the human ego does not like change is a significant understatement. We claim to like it, but we unconsciously resist it when it impacts us personally. What we actually like is the unchanging nature of the status quo. For example, it took human culture a long time to accept that the world is round, not flat. It took a long time to accept that the earth revolves around the sun, not vice versa. It took a long time to accept that the lights twinkling in the night sky were other suns, not holes in the firmament that allowed the light of heaven to shine through them. And we are only now dealing with racism, feminism, and homophobia. We still embrace the need for violence and war. We still live on a planet
where the majority of humans go to bed hungry; and many of those are children. We still tolerate authoritarian governments and religions. We philosophically agree these things should change... but only if the changes we need to make when dealing with those problems don’t impact us personally.

How Consciousness In Human Culture Evolves
When a new idea is proposed in a human culture, it is always resisted by one or more opposing ideas. It not uncommon for one of the opposing ideas to come from those who would have us return to the status quo of the past. When the struggle between the new idea and the opposing ideas leads to a compromise that a majority of the people in the culture can agree on, the consciousness of the culture shifts to embrace the compromise. This growth in the consciousness of human culture is slow and often very messy. It is not uncommon for a change in consciousness to emerge as the result of the fallout following a period of intense social conflict, or from the social challenges that result from an unavoidable crisis.

Like all things that evolve, growth in human consciousness uses the pressure of intense conflict and stress to create evolutionary change. Over time, as the new idea is debated and resisted, the compromise solution may begin to work its way into the culture and cause old ways of thinking and behaving to no longer make sense to a growing number of people living in the culture. When that happens, the consciousness of the culture itself begins to evolve. When the old ways of doing things, or old ways of thinking, no longer make sense to a sufficient number of people in the culture, the evolution of the consciousness of the culture will happen almost effortlessly. However, until that tipping point moment arrives, change will be passionately resisted. Human cultures evolve and grow when the consciousness of a sufficient number of individuals in the culture has grown and evolved.

HUMAN EGO

The Human Mind Contains Two Very Different Egos
To avoid getting too deeply involved in the psychologically complex subject of the human ego, we will keep our discussion on the subject limited to a somewhat simplified understanding of ego. For simplicity, we will assume that we essentially have two rather distinct egos. The
first being the primitive ego of our unconscious inner-child psyche; the part of our human ego that contains all of the unconscious conditioning and experiences of early childhood. The primary characteristic of the primitive ego is its passionate resistance to change. The other ego is called the adult observing ego; the ego part of us that has the potential to become a more intentionally awakened, consciously evolved, and enlightened observing ego.

To become a spiritually awakened human means we will need to understand how each of these egos functions, learn how to identify which ego we are using as we navigate through life, and most importantly, learn to develop the skills and insights needed to intentionally awaken and evolve the observing ego side of our consciousness; the part that is often referred to as the Observer or Authentic True Self.

**Primitive Ego**
The first ego is the primitive (young) ego of our unconscious inner-child psyche. This part of our psyche contains all of the experiences and conditioned learnings that came from the first six to seven years of our life. Most of our primitive ego memory is unconscious and is comprised of pre-verbal emotional templates, or what we call unconscious intrinsic memory. We use this unconscious early childhood emotional memory to construct our *life story*; the narrative story we used in childhood to create our self-identity. Our story is a statement about who we *think* we are. It is not uncommon for our story to be sad and depict us as somewhat helpless victims.

Until we intentionally awaken and work to become more conscious and self-aware, our primitive ego psyche and its sad story will continue to exert a powerful influence over our *adult* beliefs and behaviors. We will essentially live out our lives in sleepwalking mode convinced that our sad story, the false self we created in childhood, is who we really are. As we noted above, the primary thing we need to know about our primitive ego is that it resists any new information that challenges its self-identity. It is comfortable with the status quo and passionately resists change. And unfortunately, this is true even when we are depressed and unhappy with our lives.

**Observing Ego**
The second, or more potentially *adult* layer of our ego is called our observing ego consciousness. As we will see later in this book, our true
authentic self, the self we actually are, is pure observing consciousness. Thus if we are to live an authentic spiritual life, we must learn to intentionally awaken our observing ego, pay attention to the reality of the world around us, and then do the self-awareness work necessary to evolve and increase our observing ego consciousness. Until we do, our adult life will be unconsciously controlled by our inner-child’s narcissistic primitive ego.

Until we have the courage to intentionally grow in self-awareness and evolve our consciousness, we will continue to manifest the negative, emotionally reactive, narcissistic energy of our unconscious primitive ego. As we will discover, most adults alive in the world today are unconsciously controlled by the primitive ego of their inner-child psyche.
In Figure #1 we see that the unconscious primitive ego has little to no self-awareness. As we move upward on the chart we are slowly increasing our level of self-awareness and our overall level of consciousness. Until we awaken our consciousness and become fully aware of the presence of our unconscious primitive ego, our adult consciousness will remain under the emotional and cognitive control of our inner-child’s primitive ego. The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend, so until we awaken our consciousness and begin to intentionally grow in self-awareness, we will essentially use the majority of our adult life experiences to reinforce the conditioning that shaped our primitive ego in childhood. We see what we expect to see and we reject or ignore anything that conflicts with our existing beliefs, our personal conditioning, or our social conditioning.

*Essentially, anything that challenges our self-identity will be rejected, denied, or aggressively resisted.* This is especially true when it comes to our religious beliefs. Our primitive ego uses its childhood black-and-white thinking process to enthusiastically embrace the rigid, inflexible religious beliefs of *absolute truth* because of the ability of those beliefs to create a very solid sense of self-identity when we are young. Only our awakened and more evolved, enlightened observing consciousness has the ability to embrace change and thus create a more spiritually mature consciousness; a more enlightened authentic spirituality.

**Primitive Ego Psychology is teaching us that until we learn to tame and transform our unconscious primitive ego, it will be all but impossible to create an evolved authentic spirituality for the 21st Century. This is the enlightened spirituality that will be needed for us to successfully create a compassionate global human culture.**

In the chapters that follow, we will explore many of the insights that emerge from a study of Primitive Ego Psychology, and we will focus much of our attention on the primitive ego’s ability to unconsciously derail our ability to grow spiritually and create an authentic spirituality. We will examine in detail the skills and insights required to successfully journey from our unconscious primitive ego to that of an awakened, more enlightened observing consciousness. This observing consciousness is required if our goal is authentic spiritual growth and the creation of an authentic, unconditionally compassionate spirituality.
Our Primitive Ego Does Not Like Change

The basic characteristic of our unconscious primitive ego that we will continue to explore in detail is that the primitive ego of our inner-child psyche does not like change. Even the suggestion that we are going to begin a journey toward an awakened, spiritually evolved consciousness that openly embraces change will strike fear into the heart of our unconscious primitive ego and be strongly resisted. Our primitive ego does not like the evolutionary concept that everything changes and evolves. It likes the status quo.

Our primitive ego would like the world, and others, to change in order to conform to our expectations and beliefs, but it gets angry and aggressive when others expect us to change, or when others dare to challenge our beliefs. In other words, regardless of what we claim, the fact is our primitive ego doesn’t really like change. Our primitive ego thinks others need to change, but it sees no reason or need for us personally to change. Our primitive ego resists having to change any of its beliefs. When we consider the simple fact that the creation of our entire universe is based on the concepts of evolution and change, it is accurate to say our primitive ego is literally declaring war on the entire universe when it resists evolution and change! This is especially true when our primitive ego’s religious beliefs are not open to the possibility of change.

Without change, creation itself would not exist. As a result, there is nothing in the created universe that is not in a continual state of change. The war that our primitive ego is engaged in with the universe, because of its unyielding resistance to change, is not philosophic. It is real and personal. In fact, most if not all, of the stress, anxiety, unhappiness, lack of success, and sense of powerlessness we experience in life is the direct result of our primitive ego resisting the universal reality of change; resisting the reality of the way things simply are.

The Spirit of the Creator, or evolutionary impulse to “become” incarnate in all of creation, has been using change for 13.8 billion years to create and evolve our universe. Change is what we use to create and evolve our own lives. Change is what we use to create and evolve more compassionate human cultures. Everything in our universe is in the process of change and becoming. Thus, it will be important to remind ourselves that new worldviews or change that might emerge as a result of the ideas contained in this book will survive only if we grow and evolve.
even newer and more helpful ways of understanding reality. Our
worldviews, like all of creation, are in a continual process of change and
becoming. We call that human growth. From birth to death, we are
evolution in action.

When we reject new information that is logical and makes
intuitive sense... simply because it does not agree with one of our
firmly held and cherished ego beliefs... we are almost certainly
under the control of our unconscious inner-child’s primitive ego. We
may look like an adult; we might even sound like an adult some of
the time; but there is a high probability that the primitive ego of our
first grade, seven-year-old inner-child, is unconsciously running our
lives. All authentic growth begins by changing the way we think, the
way we behave, the values we use to define what is important, and
the choices we are continually making to create both our individual
and collective future.

Until we have the courage and willingness to change our ego
beliefs, our ability to grow and become the person we were born to
become will be an all but impossible goal for us to achieve. We can’t
always change the world so it functions the way our primitive ego would
like it to function, but when we have the courage to change the way we
think, the whole world begins to change.

An Awakened Consciousness Requires Paying Attention To Our Pain
The concepts and ideas contained in this book are best thought of as
seeds; seeds that will bear fruit as they mature. It can be a challenge to
fully understand the impact new idea seeds might have on our lives, but
all change begins with changing how we think. Every crisis that life
brings us; every painful or traumatic experience we encounter in our life
journey, encourages us to change the way we think about, or see reality.
There is a simple but powerful truth that it is not always courage that
enables us to take those first tentative steps in our personal journey
toward an awakened consciousness and authentic spiritual growth. More
often than not, it is pain. When the pain of where we are is greater than
the fear of the unknown, we know in our hearts we have to grow and
change. We have no choice.

For some, the moment of awakening might be the day we
consciously recognize for the first time the reality that most of the energy
we are sending into the world is negative and harmful to those around us.
ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Or the day we admit to ourselves that we can no longer control an addiction. Or the day we recognize that we are not living the life we want to live. For others it might be as simple as the recognition that we are not a kind person. Whatever the cause, the awareness that we are in pain wakes us up. Our awakening doesn’t always come as a flash of light or an earth shattering ah-ha that comes out of the blue. Sometimes it just builds slowly over time. But eventually we know the truth. We are in pain and we can’t put the knowledge back in the box and bury it in our unconscious again. The acknowledgment and acceptance of our pain is the moment of spiritual awakening; the humbling insight that can begin our inner journey. More than any other incentive to grow spiritually, pain gives birth to our desire to awaken and become the person we were meant to be. Pain encourages us to pay attention to our lives and who we are. Pain gives us the incentive to intentionally become more self-aware.

The ideas and insights presented in this book are the result of personal experience, the experience of past therapy clients, and the teachings of other writers in the field of human development and spiritual growth who were willing to share the painful details of their life journey; the insights that led them toward an awakened consciousness. The common thread that runs through all of their stories is the realization that we create pain for ourselves when we attempt to live an unconscious, un-awakened life. When we have the courage to embrace our pain, and use it to become more self-aware, it has the ability to provide the strength and motivation we need to change the way we think. When we have the courage to awaken our consciousness and explore the dark corners and shadows of our primitive, inner-child psyche, our ability to manifest compassion grows. Spiritual growth rarely comes from philosophic insights. It results when we have the courage to sit with and embrace our own pain. As we learned above, our ego does not like change, but it dislikes pain even more.

If an idea or concept in this book makes sense to you, trust your ability to intuitively know truth when you encounter it. And when you do, try to find ways to incorporate those truths into your life, and work to make them an integral part of your day-to-day life. Graft them onto who you are. Graft them onto the roots of your existing beliefs and pay attention to the fruit they produce. All growth requires change, and the changes in thought or behavior that you choose to embrace as a result of the insights and ideas presented in this book can help you if you use them
when you experience pain in your own life. They are the collected spiritual wisdom of souls who have encountered pain in the past. They are the spiritual ripples those souls had the courage to send into the universe. Our ability to evolve and develop as an authentic and unique human being can benefit from their courage and wisdom. When we are able to pay attention to our pain, it awakens us and tells us something inside of us needs to change.

RELIGION AND CHANGE

Our Mainline Religions Are Resisting The Evolutionary Impulse to “Become”

Our mainline religions are resisting the evolutionary impulse to “become”. Because they are unwilling to grow and evolve their scientifically illiterate First Century theological beliefs, it is becoming increasingly clear that the majority of our mainline religions are not speaking to the hearts and minds of our world’s 21st Century consciousness. Almost all of our traditional mainline religions are currently experiencing an alarming and significant drop in church attendance and declining membership. When two or more mainline church members come together, it is not uncommon for the health of the church to become a subject of discussion. This is true in virtually all of our traditional mainline religions and denominations. Our churches are dying. And yet, the number of people interested in spiritual growth is at an all-time high. This need to evolve spiritually is present and growing in almost all of our planet’s human cultures. The hunger to understand the why of life has become the question that’s driving the hunger for spiritual growth in the 21st Century.

Regardless of the nation or culture we call home, regardless of our religious affiliations, the number of people who intuitively know at a deep level of consciousness that our human species is not on a path that will lead us toward the creation of equality, freedom, peace, justice, sustainability, or global compassion, is growing rapidly. This rapidly growing spiritual community knows it is time for us as a species to embrace the deeper spiritual questions that would help us create meaning in the 21st Century. Why are we here and where are we heading individually and as a species?
ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

A recent report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences entitled The Heart of the Matter used the metaphor of a flower to describe the spiritual hunger we are experiencing. They described the STEM of the flower as science, mathematics, engineering, and technology. They said we are advancing quickly in our understanding of the stem. What we don’t understand as well is the meaning of the flower, the why that the flower represents. We see the flower. We even appreciate the flower. But what we fail to contemplate or understand is the importance of the flower and the impact and deeper meaning the flower has on our lives. The stem speaks to our head. We get that part of the flower. The truth, beauty, and why of the flower itself speaks to our soul. Unfortunately, our head tends to ignore that part because it doesn’t know what to do with the flower itself.

The Ranks Of The Spiritual But Not Religious
The largest and most rapidly growing spiritual movement that exists today is the number of people who describe themselves as spiritual, but not religious. This is especially true of the 15 to 30 year old population whether they define themselves as churched or unchurched. When asked what their spiritual hunger encourages them to do or be in the 21st Century world, they are often at a loss to come up with an answer. They know their spiritual hunger is somehow connected with the lack of meaning they experience and their inability to find a sense of purpose for their lives, but despite the reality of their spiritual hunger, they often lack a sense of direction regarding what it means for them to actually live a spiritual life. The outdated, scientifically illiterate theologies of ancient cultures that are currently being taught by our mainline churches are clearly not able to provide a 21st Century, scientifically literate consciousness with the meaningful direction they yearn for and need. Because they are reluctant to give up the sense of community that a church provides, there are many who consider themselves churched, but when questioned anonymously they report being spiritual but not religious. Because of their unwillingness to become and evolve, our First Century religions are rapidly losing their ability to provide ethical and moral leadership in the modern world… the meaning of the flower.

The more conservative, rigid, and fundamental our world’s religions are, the more they tend to shout loudly in the imperative voice of absolute truth, but they are so focused on escaping from this world they
are even less able to actually manifest compassion in the world, or speak meaningfully about the why of the flower. Their primary message is love and obey God… or else! The loss of compassion, and the inability to embrace the why of the flower that we are witnessing in conservative religious theology, speaks clearly to the inevitability of religion’s impending death. Stems can be talked about using words and scientific facts. Wisdom, compassion, truth, and beauty are flowers that cannot be defined using words. They can only be recognized and then held gently in the contemplative mind when encountered.

**A Grafting Metaphor**

The material presented in this book is not designed to replace traditional mainline theology or to recommend specific changes in the reader’s religious practices or beliefs. It is offered to help the spirituality of our modern mainline religions evolve and become a more vital part of the 21st Century; to reclaim their spiritual role as a compassionate, moral and ethical compass for all of humanity as we continue our evolution toward an inter-dependent 21st Century global culture.

We all have our own religious and spiritual roots; those beliefs and values that inform the choices we make and the behaviors we offer to the world and those around us. As you read the chapters that follow, you are encouraged to use the metaphor of grafting; to graft onto your existing religious and spiritual roots those insights and spiritual practices contained in this book that resonate with you as truths; those ideas and concepts that intuitively make sense to you. The ideas and concepts that intuitively make sense to us are the golden nuggets that when grafted onto our existing beliefs might offer the possibility for spiritual growth. They are the ideas and concepts that have the potential to open new spiritual paths for us to travel on; new insights that could awaken our spiritual consciousness and increase our ability to manifest greater compassion in the world.

Similar to the wings of a butterfly that can change the weather on the other side of the planet, the changes we choose to make in who we are and how we think, will send ripples of spiritual energy outward into the world. We have no idea how far they will travel, who they will influence, or how they might change the universe itself. That is not our concern. The universe will do with our ripples what it chooses to do with them. Our job is simply to awaken and evolve our own consciousness.
and thereby increase our ability to create compassionate ripples… and send them into the world.

**A Spiritual Practice For Taming Our Primitive Ego**

As we will learn in the pages that follow, the primitive ego of our unconscious inner-child has a lot of difficulty maintaining civility and using a compassionate, conversational tone when we are talking about our firmly held beliefs. Because our primitive ego loves to take everything personally, it’s not uncommon for us to send knee-jerk negative judgmental energy into the world when others don’t agree with our beliefs. If this book is used for a group study, a helpful spiritual practice is to suggest that *every time* someone speaks in a group discussion that they begin by saying “My name is *(first name)*”. Then have them continue with the words "*I feel*(their feeling)". Each time someone speaks, encourage them to share heart *feelings*, not ego beliefs and *thoughts*. Doing this is a good way to remind ourselves that what we are about to say is our own personal, subjective belief or feeling; not an *absolute truth*.

This spiritual practice was the secret to Mark Twain’s well-known ability to talk about emotionally charged issues and yet remain a respected friend of the person he was confronting. His approach was to always began with the words “Now I could be wrong, but it seems to me that *(his idea or thought)*”. Mark Twain made it difficult for others to argue with him because he told them right up front that he might be wrong. He wasn’t sharing absolute truth. Another spiritual practice along the same lines that can be helpful when talking with others about important personal beliefs is from author and philosopher Richard Stine in his book *The World of Richard Stine*.

"My experiment right now is to attempt to lessen the emotional complications by communicating as simply as I can. To try not to feel that I have to attack or be on the defensive when I have to deal with a tough situation, or a situation that challenges my beliefs. To just express the truth as I see it, and then let things develop the way they will, without trying to force them one way or another." *From: The World Of Richard Stine*

This simple quote is one of the most important and helpful spiritual practices on humility and compassion I’ve learned on my spiritual journey.
Changing The Way We Think Means A Willingness to Graft New Concepts Onto The Roots Of Our Existing Beliefs

The concepts, ideas, and insights offered in this book will undoubtedly challenge some of the reader’s traditional mainline religious beliefs, but for those willing to simply keep an open mind and explore new ways of seeing the world, these ideas and concepts can help us develop the tools and insights required to increase compassion in our interactions with others. They can also help us create a more compassionate global spirituality for our 21st Century world… the stated goal of all mainline religions. Again, the purpose and goal of the concepts and ideas presented in this book are not meant to change the reader’s existing religious beliefs or suggest what they should believe. They are simply ways to increase compassion and influence the how of our spiritual life… to shift our spiritual focus from what to believe to how to live a more compassionate life.

The Size of Our Human Tribe Is Growing: We Are Becoming A Global Human Culture

The 21st Century is growing and birthing a fully integrated global culture. We are becoming one large global tribe. This growth in human culture means our mainline religions will need to redefine what it means to be religious, and what it will mean to be spiritual as we move into the future. Teaching inflexible tribal religious beliefs is clearly not working. Tribal religion not only creates judgmental violence from the otherness it creates, it also isolates our mainline religions from the increasingly scientifically literate, complex global cultures that are rapidly emerging. As was pointed out above, the traditional ethnocentric spirituality of our world’s mainline religions is already giving way to a growing global movement in which people are re-defining themselves as spiritual but not religious. Our mainline religions are in decline because they are not willing to embrace change. They are unwilling to embrace the world’s explosive growth from the primitive tribal consciousness of the past into a scientifically literate, rapidly evolving 21st Century consciousness.

The scientific understanding of how our universe began and how it functions is growing exponentially. A rapidly growing percentage of the world’s population is no longer willing or intellectually able to embrace a mythic or traditional stage of religious consciousness that requires a literal interpretation of the metaphoric wisdom stories found in the
world’s religious scriptures. They are no longer able to believe in oppressive religious theologies that are frozen in a First Century consciousness and unwilling to embrace change. Returning to the conservative theological rigidity of the past as some would have us do is not the answer. A religion that has to harden its heart to a world that is evolving and struggling for spiritual guidance is a religion that is clearly in its final death throes. Resisting change is not the answer, and returning to the past is not possible. The consciousness of the human species and the cultures we create are, like everything else in the created universe, continuing to evolve and become that which has not yet been created. Despite the religious extremism we are seeing in the world, a growing majority of the world’s global cultures are moving in the direction of a more rational, modern, post-modern, integral/evolutionary worldview understanding of reality; a spiritual worldview that includes and integrates the wisdom found in all religions and all previous stages of human consciousness.

It is estimated that 5% of our global population is now at an evolutionary/integral stage of consciousness. And that number is expected to double in the next decade. That means the conservative religious theologies of our mainline religions are attempting to function at a level of human consciousness that is three to four stages of human consciousness behind the modern world. The world is not flat. God is not the Judgmental Emperor of the Universe. God is not a bearded white guy that sits on a throne in a place called heaven. God is not the sole property of any specific religion or ethnic group. God is mystery. Any religion that claims to know the mind of the Creator has clearly not looked at pictures from the Hubble Telescope and contemplated the unfathomable size and complexity of our expanding universe.

The question that we need to wrestle with is not what to believe, but rather how to create a compassionate world that peacefully embraces all people and all religious beliefs.

To reverse their decline into irrelevance, and stop the rapidly growing decline in church attendance they are witnessing, our world’s mainline religions will need to begin embracing a 21st Century spirituality that teaches unconditional love and compassion for all persons; regardless of their ethnic origins or faith beliefs. This spiritual transformation is rapidly becoming a vital and necessary goal for all of
our mainline churches. Until an authentic global or integral spirituality emerges that can be openly embraced by all of our mainline religions, there is a great and growing danger humanity will continue its movement away from membership in our world’s religious institutions. If this movement away from our mainline religions continues, our human culture is going to continue to lose access to the badly needed spiritual insights, wisdom, and ethical guidance contained in all of our world’s religions.

NEW SPIRITUAL MAPS

Changing The Way We Think Will Require New Spiritual Maps
The growing hunger to be spiritual but not religious is essentially hunger for an authentic 21st Century spirituality; a spirituality that speaks to our deep need to belong by creating a 21st Century integral spirituality that compassionately embraces all of creation, all peoples, all religious beliefs, and the planet that birthed us. To grow spiritually, we will need to change the way we think. We will need new paradigms; new spiritual maps that can show us how to develop an authentic global spiritually that offers guidance and insight for a 21st Century world that is struggling to find its moral and ethical bearings. We map the human gene. We map the roads of every nation. We map the stars and the universe we live in. Without increasingly accurate maps, human culture could not exist, as we know it. Accurate maps are essential if we want to find our way in a complex world.

For example, if we were planning to visit New York City, it would be helpful to have a current map of the city that accurately included new road construction. Without a good map, we would probably spend much of our time hopelessly lost in the complex roads, subways systems, and confusing Burroughs that together make up the Big Apple. But what if we were actually given a map of Chicago that everyone assured us was an accurate map of New York City? Not only would the map not represent the reality of New York City, we would be hopelessly lost if we actually tried to use it. It would not be long before we would know that the map we were given was totally useless. The same is true for spiritual maps. The ethno-centric religious maps designed to speak to ancient, pre-modern cultures, are no longer accurate or useful for the modern world of the 21st Century. It is becoming clear that the ancient
religious spiritual maps we are currently using do not accurately represent the 21st Century reality we are living in... and this is especially true when religious scripture is interpreted literally. The maps need to be updated.

To update our religious maps, we must return to the enlightened teachings of the founders of our world’s mainline religions. If we are to find a new spiritual vision, and create a new spirituality for the 21st Century, we are going to have to return to the basic teachings of humanity’s great mystics and spiritual masters; Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, St. Francis, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Moore, Confucius, and others. The wisdom we will be searching for will require that we return to, and re-examine, the compassionate teachings and the lives of history’s enlightened spiritual teachers. We will need to go back to a time that existed before the world’s religious institutions took the teachings of their enlightened founders and created inflexible theologies around those teachings. Theologies that were then taught to future followers of the religion as absolute truth.

Unlike the modern maps we’ve grown used to having on our smart phones and GPS’s, our new spiritual maps will not tell us how far we are from our goal, or how long it will take us to arrive at our goal. We won’t be offered the fastest route, or the most scenic route. Our new spiritual maps will often be revealed to us by trial and error. All of the great spiritual teachers taught a simple truth. If we want to update our spiritual maps we will need to embrace courage. They taught that the path to awakening the human consciousness, and becoming spiritually enlightened, would require us to journey inward; into the shadows of our psyche where the beams in our own eye reside. They encouraged us to become a light of compassion in the world. They taught us we would have to find the courage to shine the light of our consciousness into the dark shadows of our primitive ego psyche; that place where our fears, our embarrassments, our failures, our broken dreams, our shame, and all of the other difficult emotions reside; that place we would rather not visit. We deny its existence. We avoid it. We distract ourselves from its presence by the addictions we have with the shiny objects we find out in the world.

To protect ourselves from opening the door into the dark shadows of our primitive ego psyche, we create a false self for ourselves and change
ourselves in order to become the person we think others want us to be. But all of our great mystics and spiritual teachers warned, until we embrace the courage to journey into the dark shadows of our psyche we will not discover our true, authentic self; the true self we were born to be. Our new spiritual maps, those that will lead us toward authentic spiritual growth, will be revealed to us only when we are willing to intentionally become self-aware; when we are willing to shine the light of our conscious attention into the shadows of our mind and accept what we find there.

**Confucius And The People Of The Ren: The Spiritual Practice of Chung Shu**

For example, Confucius created a community of disciples called the People Of The Ren; a spiritual community known as the people of love. Each disciple was taught the concept of *chung shu*. Chung was the practice of self-awareness. Shu was manifesting compassion. Until the disciple was proficient in the art of *chung*, they could not be commissioned to go out into the world and begin their spiritual practice of *shu* or offering compassion to those they met while they journeyed from village to village. To achieve *chung*, Confucius would encourage them to look inward. If they shot an arrow and it missed the bull’s-eye, they could not blame the wind, the arrow, the fletching on the arrow, or the bow. They had to examine their own skills and ability to shoot. If they did not feel loved, they had to examine their own ability to love others. If they felt lonely, they had to examine their own ability to be in relationship with others. If they felt a lack of compassion from others, they had to examine their own ability to be compassionate. When Confucius was certain that the disciple had mastered the art of *chung*, or intentional self-awareness, only then would he or she be commissioned and sent into the world to spread compassion or *shu* to those they met. Confucius knew that the ability to sustain compassion would happen only when the disciple had mastered the art of *chung* or deep self-awareness. This is similar to Gandhi and Martin Luther King who taught people to respond with non-violent compassion to the anger and violence they encountered in others.

Throughout human history, the mystics and enlightened spiritual teachers have been pointing us toward the inner-path that leads toward authentic spiritual growth and enlightenment. Our primitive ego simply
chose not to understand what they were telling us because it was too frightening. Too hard. So we turned their teachings into theological religious beliefs and closed the door to the path that would have taken us into the dark and frightening shadows of our own psyche. We were thus able to keep the beams in our own eye hidden from our conscious awareness.

**The World Of The Mystics And What They Taught**

The enlightened mystics and great spiritual teachers did not teach us what to believe. They did not teach theology. They did not tell us how to be religious. They simply showed us *how* to live. They taught us the importance of awakening our consciousness to the realities of the world around us. They held before us the simple reality we are already living in a sacred world. All we needed to do was awaken from the bondage and illusions of our own ego and open our eyes to the miracles of creation that surround us.

Our world’s spiritual teachers were very clear in their teachings; the peace and compassion we are searching for will be found only when the spiritual journey takes us into ourselves. Like Confucius, they knew the wisdom that comes from authentic spiritual growth can only be accessed when we have the courage to intentionally shine the light of our awareness into shadows of our own ego and grow in self-awareness. They all taught the same spiritual truth. The insight that all growth in self-awareness is authentic spiritual growth.

They all taught that the path to compassion, peace, and happiness is an internal journey; a journey of intentional growth in self-awareness that leads us away from our attachment to ego and into the wisdom and self-knowledge that comes when we embrace not-knowing and an emptiness of ego. They all taught the simple reality that a happy life requires an awakened consciousness. They warned us that only when we know ourselves, would we have the ability to compassionately know and unconditionally love others.

In other words, until we know ourselves; the subtleties of the beam in our own eye and the shadows that live in our own unconscious primitive ego, most of the energy we send into the world will be negative, judgmental, and hurtful to those around us. We will also continue to create pain and unhappiness for ourselves. This is especially
true when we are emotionally upset or stressed. The power of this simple insight is the fact that we know it to be true. All we have to do is pay attention to the negative energy we send into the world whenever we are emotionally stressed, angry, upset, tired, overwhelmed, emotionally in pain, feeling criticized, feeling judged, or feeling threatened. And that includes those times when we find our negative emotional energy reactively knee-jerking out into the world when the only emotional threat is the experience of having one of our ego beliefs challenged or judged.

Jesus taught us to love one another. He did not say love others if they happen to agree with our own personal beliefs and ideas of right and wrong. He did not give us a formula for unconditional love; he simply said, “I am the way. Follow me”. In other words, he didn’t teach us who God is, he showed us. Buddha said, “Make a light of yourself.” Become a bodhisattva; an awakened, enlightened soul. Be a lamp unto yourself. Fill your mind with compassion. Each of our world’s mainline religions has similar examples of what it means to unconditionally love and extend compassion toward others. Unfortunately, the teachings of these great mystics and enlightened spiritual teachers, and the theology of the institutional churches that formed around these spiritual teachers, are not always the same. When we return to the original teachings of the founders of our world’s mainline religions we will not discover religious beliefs, we will discover the simple truth that they all encouraged us to awaken our consciousness; to journey inward.

When we begin to actively embrace the original teachings of these enlightened founders of our mainline religions, we will discover another simple truth; the violence and conflict embedded in our defensive theological discussions that focus on the theological differences that exist in our religions will magically disappear. We will discover that all of our mainline religions were essentially founded on the spiritual teachings of an awakened consciousness that was simply trying to show us how to live life with humility, gratitude, justice, equality, unconditional love, and compassion for all of creation. They tried to teach us that the path to enlightenment and compassion was simply a call to awaken and become self-aware; the willingness and courage to grow in self-knowledge. We can learn intellectual knowledge from the world, but if our goal is the attainment of wisdom, and the ability to embrace the energy of our heart, we will need to journey inward.
Summary
Until we are willing to shine the light of our attention into the shadows of our primitive ego psyche, our ability to embrace the teachings and wisdom of our world’s enlightened mystics and spiritual teachers will not be possible. No matter how authentic our desire or intention to be unconditionally loving and compassionate, those intentions will be hijacked by our emotionally reactive unconscious primitive ego.

An authentic spirituality for the 21st Century must begin by recognizing that who we are is pure observing consciousness, and each of us has the power to direct our conscious attention to whatever and wherever we choose to direct it. When we choose to direct it inward, our journey toward an awakened compassionate consciousness will have begun. A primary objective of this book is to offer the reader the spiritual practices and insights that support this inward journey.

In addition to supporting the inner journey, another primary objective of this book will include a focus on spiritual practices designed to help readers soften the way they share their faith beliefs with others in order to support the creation of a more integral and compassionate spirituality. There are many paths to the top of the mountain. Because someone takes a path different from our own, it does not mean they are not on an authentic spiritual journey. Until we find a more middlepath way of thinking, and learn to eliminate the black-and-white imperative, authoritative voice of absolute truth that our traditional, and more conservative mainline religions encourage us to use whenever we talk about theological beliefs, we will not see a reduction in the religious violence and conflict we are experiencing in the world.

An authentic spirituality for the 21st Century will require that we embrace the enlightened middlepath wisdom that truth can always be found on both sides of every issue. When our spiritual growth is authentic we learn to intentionally search for the truths contained on both sides of every idea, every concept, every issue, and every position or belief. No matter how strong our faith beliefs, we cannot insist they represent absolute truth about ultimate reality. The moment we do, our use of an imperative or authoritative voice will create a religious imperialism that will continue to force the world back onto the paths of religious intolerance and violence; the paths we have been traveling on and the violence we have been creating for thousands of years. As the
ancient rabbis warned… to claim to absolutely \textit{know} God stems from our primitive ego’s narcissistic claim to \textit{be} God.

Because our goal in this book is to embrace a new, \textit{world-centric} model of spirituality for the 21st Century, readers are encouraged to examine the difference between faith and absolute truth; a subject we will explore as we continue our journey from unconscious primitive ego to an awakened observing consciousness.

\textbf{Reflection Questions To Encourage Deeper Insights}

1. What do you feel are the three most important learnings from this Chapter, and why do you \textit{feel} they are important? Why do you \textit{think} they are important?
2. What are you looking forward to learning more about after reading this Chapter? Why does that interest you? Can you recognize your primitive ego? What behaviors do you recognize?
3. What parts of Chapter 1 resonate in you? What ideas in this Chapter make sense to you, or intuitively feel like truth?
4. What is the primary learning or insight you are taking away from this Chapter of the book? Why is that important to you?
5. In what ways do you see yourself resisting change?
6. What pain have you experienced in your life that led to a shift in the way you \textit{see} the world?