

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

Spiritual Discovery for the 21st Century

By Jim Chapman

*The problem of good and evil is solved as they are infinite
and one fits in the other – so the meaning of every infinite
spiritual word is good.*

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*When we learn that error is not real,
we shall be ready for progress,
“forgetting those things which are behind.”*

– Mary Baker Eddy

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Preface

My experience with this book suggests it may be most useful for spiritual thinkers who are “ready for progress,” as defined in the epigraph.

The main idea, that you may have already encountered on the cover, is also the first sentence of Chapter 1. This idea dawned on me in the late 1970s, and I’m still working on it.

This book was first drafted in 1982 and was self-published in 1994. In my view, with some qualifications addressed here in footnotes, the basic ideas have stood the test of time. In addition to the footnotes, this edition adds some punctuation fixes, a few grammar and spelling corrections, chapter numbers, and an Epilogue written on its tenth anniversary. The book was written about 15 years after my first encounter with the main idea, and the footnotes try to capture how that perspective has evolved since then.

I probably couldn’t write this book today. Much that I wrote back then is no longer in the forefront of my thought; but it is foundational, and I suspect it is more rigorous than anything I’ll write in the future. It presents a sometimes arduous thought-journey from street level to the top of the mountain, ever forward and upward.

It builds on a spiritual structure, first introduced in Chapter 5, that is referred to as levels of action or levels of thought. This basic structure may be as old as Genesis, where “a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.”¹

¹ Genesis 2:10, KJV

Preface

Comprehending this structure will enable the attentive reader to understand the discrete steps involved in historical and individual spiritual progress. While I was learning it, I would often draw a diagram to help me keep track of the parts, which I recommend.

This book was originally written without assuming the reader had any familiarity with the subject area. I didn't know whether a neophyte might be able to latch on to the basic idea and run with it. As a result, the approach is initially quite generic. Possibly due to my inclination to think in outline, it also moves in leaps and bounds, at least for the first half. In addition, I wanted to steer clear of comparative religion, since that gets into complicated nuances pretty quickly.

For those having some mastery in demonstrating spiritually minded thinking, the main message begins in Chapter 9, The Dawn. Up to then, it may be somewhat of a spiritual thinker's boot camp. The earlier chapters introduce the topics of spiritually-minded and infinitely-minded thinking, lay out the basic structure, foreshadow the destination, present some serious thought exercises, and create context for understanding the big idea.

- Jim Chapman
November 20, 2025

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The problem of good and evil is solved as they are infinite and one fits in the other, so the meaning of every infinite *spiritual* word is good.² This can begin to make some sense when you think of evil as the absence of good. Solving the problem of good and evil answers theological questions about our ultimate origin and nature. Insights from this solution can be applied to solve problems in everyday life.

The way to deal more effectively with evil is to begin by reaching out to learn more about good. One way to do this is to spend time thinking about pure goodness as spiritual and infinite. Before getting into this, however, it may be useful to consider what it means to think about things that are spiritual and infinite, and how that differs from thinking about other things.

The reason for thinking about infinite spiritual things is very practical, although it might at first seem impractical. Infinite spiritual ideas are uniquely valuable. In addition to providing a new vantage point from which to solve specific problems, thinking about spiritual and infinite things can be very useful meditation. It can expand thought and provide a powerful impetus for mental and spiritual growth.

In thinking about this subject, we will be hoping occasionally to glimpse the infinite's point of view. The theory is that reflecting the thoughts of the infinite can lead the individual to view some of its perspectives. If the infinite idea provides a theoretical basis for solving the problem of good and evil, perhaps something in perceiving this solution can be applied to whatever challenges we might face.

I have had many experiences where I have struggled to think my way through a problem of some sort. Every once in a while, my thinking process, or praying process, has resulted in a glimpse of the idea that my problem is already solved. Whenever I get this view, my problem is solved. This idea, of the thing we seek being already done, is a very special and exciting point of view. It breaks through limitations, as if short-circuiting time and utterly defying problems asserting themselves in the human dimension. That is one

² Originally, this read, “so the meaning of every infinite word is good.” I’ve added the word “spiritual” in this update to provide a little more insight into where this is going. Back then, my perspective was that “spiritual” is a given. Understanding this sentence and the resulting context is the main point of this book. It germinated from an experience described in “Spiritual Experiences – Case 5,” found at www.hyperthot.com/10_videos.htm.

reason we are interested in thinking about infinite ideas. In the world of infinite ideas our work is already done.

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This book is about religion, but not in any conventional or traditional sense. In the discussion here, we will be considering different types of beliefs and making observations about how they evolve and differ from one another. These distinctions are primarily to provide an orderly and logical framework for understanding a subject area that might initially seem amorphous.

This following discussion of infinite spiritual ideas is not intended to be scholarly or philosophical. Appreciating the subject may require deep spiritual thinking but not purely intellectual reasoning. Your best thoughts on the subject may not come from explicit statements found on the printed page, but from thinking and reflection, from reading between the lines, and from having the subject revealed to you from within.

While this book will include analysis of issues often addressed by religions, it will try to avoid explicit references to known religions or belief systems. In this field, distinctions may provide more clarity than comparisons. Looking at the spectrum of all human beliefs will lay the groundwork for considering the subject of infinite spiritual ideas. As if to illustrate a principle, it may be as helpful to know what this subject is not as to know what it is.

Infinite spiritual ideas show us how the problem of good and evil is solved, and we will look at the wholeness of that solution. Having attained a new mental standpoint, we will be enabled to look out on our world as if created anew. To get this view, we will begin by exploring some new ways of thinking. The first steps will be to go over some definitions and distinctions, to become familiar with a few of the concepts involved, and to develop a sense of order and perspective in the world of infinite spiritual words and ideas.

As you may know, physicists have been striving over the last decades to develop a theory to link the four physical forces of nature: gravity, electromagnetism, the weak nuclear force, and the strong. This search for a unified field theory, or theory of everything, has intended to arrive at an orderly concept of the whole. I suppose this quest has been motivated by an aesthetic inkling or hope, or perhaps just by the tantalizing

possibility, that the underlying conceptual engine of reality might be reducible to a single principle. Maybe we seek such things because, even while our mental tendencies make us relish differentiating among ideas, we still feel the impulse to integrate them.

Understanding the patterns in which human beliefs form, the levels of spiritual ideals we might reach for, and the special attributes of infinite ideas reveals a kind of unified theory for a larger world, a world whose substance and form spring from transcendent identity. Our inquiry here will uncover a comprehensive theory of the whole, a theory to give a sense of order and structure to the vast world of spiritual thought. This structure will be used as a context for understanding the peculiar differences between infinite ideas and human beliefs. Considering infinite ideas always leads to an orderly concept of the whole, because infinite ideas are all-encompassing and uniquely unifying.

Chapter 2 – Spirituality and Infinity

This discussion begins with what we will call a *spiritually minded* point of view and will proceed from there. This beginning point of view has been written about at length over the last 150 years, but it is still widely unknown. A few basic ideas on this will be provided here, and the rest should become apparent from the general context. There are two concepts that are probably prerequisites for understanding the theory of infinite ideas. The first is that ideas of spiritual goodness are a sort of substance - tangible, concrete, spiritually mental stuff; these spiritual ideas are an important part of what is substance in reality. The second is that you can cultivate a conscious sense of spiritual reality that can begin to predominate over a merely physical sense of things, as if infusing itself into the feelings and objects of everyday life.

Thinking based on spiritual principles is an important part of understanding spiritual reality, and we will talk about spiritual principles and spiritual understanding in later chapters. Spiritual understanding brings spiritual perceptions enabling us to improve the thoughts and beliefs that shape our experience of the world around us.

We tend to experience life within the context of our most deeply held thoughts and beliefs. The beliefs we experience as reality can be improved and shaped by the quality of our thinking and being. To understand this process, it is helpful to distinguish between the spiritual ideals or abstractions we might reach for, the concrete thoughts we may consciously seek to believe, and the actual beliefs we hold almost unconsciously.

The identity of a mind defines the extent of its ideas. To conceive of spiritual ideas, we have first to let a spiritual mind be ours. It is not so much a level of exertion that enables the spiritual thinker to reach new heights, as it is a matter of identifying with, reflecting, and showing forth the mind that is spiritual.

Spiritually mental activity generates scintillations of spiritual light that illuminate consciousness by degrees and enable us to improve our terrestrial beliefs. As we think our way through relevant aspects of spirituality, our beliefs can be regenerated and reordered. Thinking based on spiritual principles positions us to understand spiritual reality. To understand spiritual reality, we must engage ourselves mentally in its behalf. We must

take a mental stand for it. This standpoint enables us to perceive spiritual ideas that can be applied to harmonize, expand, and recast the beliefs we experience as the world we sense.

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The term *infinitely minded* will be used here to address something that may be a step beyond a basic spiritual point of view or maybe a step deeper into it. Spiritually minded thinking and infinitely minded thinking are closely related but distinctly different, not unlike walking and running. If you were to see walking and running for the first time, they might look somewhat the same to you, except for the speed. The real difference is, with running, your feet sometimes don't touch the ground.

Individuals may be spiritually minded or infinitely minded by degrees. We are spiritually minded by reflecting a spiritual mind, and then bringing its conclusions out in our beliefs and actions. We are infinitely minded by identifying with an infinite mind, having accepted the conclusions of spiritually minded thinking - that spiritual goodness is the essence of real substance, that actual mental conception is spiritual, and that spiritual sense is the source of our best sensations.

It is, today, a radical idea to base one's best thinking on an infinitely minded point of view. Our approach here will be nothing at all if not radical. In trying to identify powerful ideas to spawn improved beliefs, we will be reaching beyond the usual boundaries of human thinking. We will be climbing up to and beyond the most rarefied reaches of traditional human thought. Venturing beyond finite thinking, we will want to choose our footings well. We will want to find solid rocks in the world of infinite abstractions.

The contemplation of such a subject as infinite ideas may seem imprecise at first. The manner of its assimilation is not superficial. Your most important conclusions about such things will come to you as revelations. Thinking about infinite abstractions entails thinking at levels and dimensions beyond the finite pictures and concepts that comprise normal human thinking. This involves thinking beyond images. The only way to do this is to reach out beyond where you may have gone before and to accept a new and larger definition of your mind.

The nature of infinity as a spiritual concept is that it is uniquely unifying. This is one of the main points of this book. Infinity has peculiar and distinctive aspects. Just starting to think about these peculiarities can whisk our thinking off to points where traditional logic falls short. The peculiarities or apparent conflicts between infinity and the world of finite thought may account for much of the subject's fascination and value.

If you have not spent time thinking about the idea of infinity, your first conclusion might be that it is not something the mind can assimilate. There is something to be said for this. It is not hard to think about infinite things. It is just hard to picture them. If you really want to, it is quite possible and natural to have your best thinking based on the logic of the infinite dimension, but it may require some effort to get up to speed.

In considering the infinite, we may use familiar words, but at levels of infinite abstractions some words have whole new meanings. To encourage our thoughts toward new ideas, this book will avoid religious terms where possible. This is to enable us to use new words as fresh seeds for thought, to be freed somewhat from the confinements of past or limited associations.

When I am trying to get a new idea about something, I try to reach beyond my old idea and sometimes even reach beyond its name to some new word or string of words. If I succeed in getting a new thought about an old subject, I can then put the old name back, but then the old name has a new meaning. This can happen for you when you reach beyond old concepts that may have lost their luster, to refresh them and make them new.

This book may use substitute words or word groups for religious terms you may like. If you reach beyond your old thought of something, you may end up reaching for new words or ideas too. This can sometimes seem very bold, scary, or even irreverent, but it can lead to the perception of fresh views, after which old familiar terms may be seen in a new light and restored to use.

Many of the concepts, principles, and techniques relevant to the subject of infinite ideas can be learned from practice and experience with spiritual ideas. The modifiers infinite and spiritual are used here to identify thoughts we may reach for and have as our larger mental ideals. The two words together - *infinite spiritual* - form a string that compounds their meaning. In reaching for higher thoughts, our adjectives become all-important. When one of these two words can be used to suggest a desired meaning in this text, it will be used alone to make things sound simpler. When highlighting specific

differences between infinite and spiritual ideas, the two will be put in contrast. When not wanting to move too fast, the word spiritual will be used as a modifier instead of infinite. It seems like spiritual is easier to comprehend than infinite.

Let us begin to approach the terms infinite and infinity as spiritual words. Thinking of infinity as a spiritual word or infinite abstraction, we can reach out to it and find thoughts far different from our normal thoughts. For example, what would it mean for love or truth to be infinite? Would these be everywhere and fill all space? Were our idea of love truly infinite, would it displace every instance of its opposite and fill every situation where it seemed to be missing? How is the idea of infinite good different from simply having a good day? Are terms like infinite good merely irrelevant abstractions?

Abstractions can be more useful than we might think. They can be regarded in ways that can help bring new ideas to light. The world of abstractions can be viewed across many dimensions. One primitive level has to do with good and evil. At infinite levels of thinking, the elements of good and evil are like a binary language of infinite abstractions. They are like ones and zeros that combine in a very special way to define a greater whole.

Infinity is a concept used in astronomy and physics and mathematics. One definition of infinity says it is a set that can be put in one-to-one correspondence with any subset of itself. This points out an important aspect of infinity that is beyond the usual sense of it as being simply unlimited. Infinity is endlessly divisible without being diminished. If you had infinite children and infinite loaves of bread, each child could have bread enough to last forever.³

The field of mathematics has something called the Theory of the Infinite that deals with the application of number theory to concepts of infinity. This has turned up an interesting observation about infinite sets. It has been shown that the infinity of real numbers between any two integers, or counting numbers, is greater than the infinity of all integers. This means there are more points on the line between one and two than there are integers going on forever. From this, mathematicians are aware that some infinities are larger than other infinities, and that the infinity of integers is not truly infinite but is only infinite within a certain definition or within a certain boundary. The infinity of integers is

³ This sentence came from a conversation with a friend, where I shared recent my discovery of this definition of infinity, being the set that can be put in one-to-one correspondence with any subset of itself. Without hesitation, she said, "So that means, if you had infinite children and infinite loaves of bread ..." I'm still a little amazed.

called aleph-zero, whereas the infinity of real numbers, or definable points on a number line, is called aleph-one. Because these two "infinite" sets have been shown not to be truly infinite, but merely to be endless in limited dimensions, they are called *transfinites*. We will return to transfinites later.

When speaking of spiritual things, one can only really appreciate infinity from its own point of view. When you think from an infinite point of view, if only for an instant, you are reflecting infinity's view of itself. For this reason, you can't really think about things infinite without becoming involved in them yourself. Trying to think of the infinite apart from your true identity denies the nature of infinity. If you were to think of the infinite separate from yourself, it would be at least to that degree limited. Something would be left out - an important something.

Thinking about what it means for anything to be infinite may give rise to difficulties. If you illustrate your thinking with human analogies, you may find none that will completely make sense. At that point you can dismiss the subject as absurd or start thinking independently of human thought pictures, not an easy task.

It would be nice if this sounded more straightforward. It is one of those subjects that is straightforward mostly in retrospect, and even then it is still hopelessly elegant. But these things can be comprehended when one has the passion to do so. The basic theory can be easily assimilated. Understanding can come from thinking it through, and knowledge can come from experience.

Chapter 3 – In the Beginning

Do you enjoy a challenge? One kind of challenge is when an armed sentry hears your footsteps approaching his gate in the dark and calls out, "Halt! Who goes there?" Your answer can make all the difference.

A good way to face any challenge might be to begin by answering that question for yourself, "Who goes here?" It would not be a bad habit to ask that question whenever life's circumstances might say, "Halt!"

"Who am I?" What or who is the "I" that I am calling me? What do I want it to be? What is its quality and scope? What is its relation to my world?

If my answer is not good enough for the sentry, he will not let me pass. Other gates perhaps, but not his. Just between us, I am often at a loss for the right answer when I get to a new gate. Sometimes I thrash around for a while, trying different answers. Finally, when I get it, the sentry tries me until he knows I mean it. Only then will the gate clang open and let me pass. More often than not, I spend the night outside the gate even after I've found the right answer. But we do not need to find the right answers until we have been pressed by the right questions.

What is the feeling of accomplishment in having ascended to the summit of a great mountain? Each single footstep might have been unexceptional. The mountaintop is a single goal, but we do not attain it in a single footstep. Maybe it isn't obtainable in a mere ten thousand footsteps. Taken individually, the footsteps required to reach the mountain peak might be smaller strides than the ones I just used to get to the refrigerator and back. But all the small, summit bound footsteps have something special in common. They are all taken with the peak in mind. And so, over time, they

add up, sometimes through freezing wind and snow, until their magnitude and direction are equal to the mountaintop. Perhaps the greatest thrill is in seeing them all add up to one glorious whole. Without a peak in mind, the same number of footsteps could be in a circle or in countless trips to the kitchen. Without a peak in mind, they could be well-meaning, determined little vectors adding up to little or nothing.

Taking footsteps toward something of value brings challenges. The keeper of the treasures does not surrender them lightly. Perhaps they are kept safe for us until we show we care for them as they deserve. So where are we going here? What is our goal? Quite simply, our goal is to have the thrill of seeing it all add up to one glorious whole. The startling part is what is meant here by *it all*. It is meant quite literally. And when we learn to do it right, it should keep adding up forever.

To accomplish our consummation, once at the level of infinity, we will need to have brought two things with us: a conception of infinite goodness and an appreciation of infinite evil for the special case where evil is good's absence, pure nothingness. Then we will see how they fit together.

We will start with pure words, that we will hope to turn into ideas. This book will provide some of the necessary words and thoughts and thought pictures. Each of us can then bring to the reading a thoughtful environment in which the words we ponder can dawn as ideas. Spiritual ideas cannot be provided in books, but our affectionate attention to spiritual words can lift and align our thoughts so spiritual ideas will appear to us from within. This dawning process is often sublime and can leave us with a fresh sense of spiritual light. For this reason, what we may already know about this subject may not be nearly as important as our next discovery.

If we are looking for a dawn, do we need to begin with some darkness? We might be insensible to a dawn occurring at noonday unless, of course, the light were quite bright. Viewing a heavenly dawn can be a subtle yet exquisite experiencing of contrasts; while on earth we see the appearance, resolution, and disappearance of shadows as the light progressively appears.

Do we need a mind without form and void in which to let there be light? There is at least some precedent for this. But such a mind as this is hard to come by. Before encountering the void, let us first make sure we have a good handle on the light. Let us approach goodness as our only idea, suspending whatever disbelief we must and considering evil not even to exist. Having thus cleared our mental realm of opposition, we will be ready to send out words of good unopposed. Fancying ourselves at the beginning of creation, our light will be to say, let there be good.

But what is this about beginning? As a practical matter, it might seem that we are too late. The world is here, light and darkness, good and evil, all the rest. We have, at this point, neither a perfect void nor perhaps the confidence to light it. The darkness we see is much smaller than infinite. Up to this point, our demand for light may have been equally modest. As if with little footsteps leading to the rarefied summit, we will attempt to light many little lights and to have many little dawns. The plan is to have them add up, maybe even multiply.

In this world, light comes most often in one of two ways: either it dawns or we turn it on. This is true of ideas too. The dawn does not come through the increased volition of the sunlight, but by the changing relation of

our world to it. Changing midnight into high noon may simply require that our world be turned upside down.

Sometimes the light we seek is of a different sort. We could wait interminably for its dawn. When we know how to turn on the light we seek, we may have to do it ourselves.

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In some sense, the infinite cannot be approached in increments. To think of it rightly, it must be our starting point. It is problematic to take normal human thinking and gradually expand it to reflect the infinite. We almost have to move from the human dimension to the infinite in a single hop. The best way to get a clean start is to start over. You could imagine yourself going back before human conception, before the big bang, back before time. To get an idea of the infinite, you could go back before the beginning. You could go back in your mind, as if before the dimensions of space and time, back before the void. How do you get there? It is simple. You start there. You define an "I" that is where you want to be, and you let it be yours. It is one infinite I. There, you have started fresh. In the midst of nothing, I. That is a beginning. Please listen with me to infinity as it says, "I."

The important thing is to know the nature of this infinite I. What are its attributes and prerogatives? Before we associate with this I, we should find out what it might mean to do this. Is this going to be good for us, or will it lead us into difficulties? What if it does both? As a general safety precaution, we will not want to take a mental position whose outcome we do

not already understand to be good. Most of this book is dedicated to encouraging our understanding of the nature of this infinite I. Our interest is in understanding the word I as a noun before we use it as a pronoun.

It is interesting to consider the difference between our idea of God and the idea of infinity or of infinite spiritual goodness. Our conception of God sometimes falls short of infinity. A big part of what we are talking about here may simply be a way to better understand and unlimit our idea of God.

Even though we may be aware of the need to deal with an opposite of goodness, it is most effective to begin by seeking only the light. It is only from the perspective of the supremacy of spiritual goodness that we can properly begin to assess any nature of evil. Since we are trying to comprehend the idea of infinite goodness, let us approach goodness single-mindedly. Let us begin to address issues of creativity in a spiritual realm that we will define to be entirely good.

Chapter 4 – Seeds and Soil

There are many methods and belief systems that can teach us to improve our lives by doing something special with our minds. Whether it be through religious beliefs, peaceful meditations, or positive human thinking, there is widespread interest in the idea that our minds can help us. Some systems teach us to peacefully contemplate thoughts, some to actively exercise thoughts, and some to clear out our thoughts and meditate on nothing at all. Many of these can be helpful.

If you think about a beautiful sunset or if you remember some beautiful feeling or experience from your past, there may be something inherent in that image or picture that can give you pleasure or have a subtle positive influence on your mental state. Remembering or even imagining a lovely sunset, you can refresh your mind with pleasant feelings, perhaps with wisps of peace and beauty and grandeur.

Do such thoughts have some intrinsic quality or presence that radiates in the mind to improve our mental atmosphere? Or does the act of imagining and holding lovely thoughts engage us in a creative process, activate our thoughts in an affirmative way, and involve us in generating our own beneficial light?

If we want to attain a sublime point of view, if we want to radically improve the quality of our thought, we might try to think only of things that are good. If you have ever tried to think only positively about something, then you know it is not as easy as one might think, and its effects are not often all one might hope for. When we are finished here, we will be able to understand why this is so.

When we are looking for powerful thought seeds, it is useful to differentiate between the thoughts we can picture humanly and the more abstract spiritual ideas that are, at least initially, beyond imagining. Lovely thoughts we might hold as images or feelings have something essential behind them. They are representations of spiritual ideas. Let us consider the notion that a mental image is not a fundamental thought, but rather a derived thought, a thought conceived, a thought form. Behind every lovely mental image or feeling there are words and essence and spiritual identity. These are the earliest seeds of

thought. When we think in terms of images, whether of terrestrial images or even of relatively spiritual images, we are not using the earliest seeds of thought. Thinking in thoughts we can picture, no matter how exalted, is using thoughts that have already been to some extent conceived.

Every mental cause and effect relationship could be considered to involve seeds of thought. In the progression of thoughts from ethereal to concrete, each successive level can prompt the next. We will be looking to examine the earliest and most abstract seeds of thought. To think beyond images is to enter a mental realm of spiritual abstractions, of words and thoughts that may be seen in the mind's eye only as the faintest of wisps. This is where we can go to find the fundamental seeds of goodness. When we reach beyond human beliefs and beyond finite images, spiritual and infinite ideas can begin to dawn to us.

When spiritually mental seeds germinate, they give off spiritual energy. They give off light. One gets to see new spiritual ideas as they appear just at the point of conception. Not only does this enable us to improve the beliefs that make up our sense of things, but it enables us to do it with wonder.

If you wanted to witness the full growth process in your garden, you would plant seeds rather than buying small plants and putting them in the ground. If you planted seeds, you would see, as they germinated, new little plants that had never before existed, and they would have sprung into being right in your garden, perhaps right before your eyes. This is like the relative impact on your mind of using spiritual thoughts and infinite words to conceive ideas to improve your beliefs. When thinking based on spiritual principles or when reaching for words of infinite identity, you can reflect spiritual conception and occasionally sense aspects of it in your mind.

To hold thoughts or beliefs in the mind without the involvement of one's higher thinking is like buying little plants and plugging them in the ground. You may enjoy their fruits, but their germinating energy is released elsewhere. You will be dependent on others to provide you with their conceptions. The most significant transformation occurs during the emergence of conception. That is the process that generates the light.

Having fresh spiritual thoughts is important because the spiritual vitality of your thoughts will, to a large extent, determine their usefulness. It is not the generated images themselves that provide the impetus to move your thoughts and feelings in the right direc-

tion. It is their underlying spiritual content, their essential spirit, their accompanying light. It is the spiritually mental energy behind the ideas you conceive that gives them their power to do good for you. This is why it is so useful to reach beyond images in your spiritual thinking. This is not easy at first. It can be a struggle, like going from crawling to walking. But once you have exerted the effort to master it, it will make no sense to go back to the old way, especially when you want to get somewhere.

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What does it mean to solve a hard problem in life or to make some human situation better? A better situation has two distinct aspects to it. It involves identifying and getting more of what you like, of what is good, and identifying and getting rid of what you do not like, of what is not good. Applying this to yourself, it could mean being more of what you want to be and less of what you do not want to be. These two aspects, getting more of and getting rid of, involve conception and elimination. Conception is the process by which ideas are generated and brought into view. Elimination is the process by which obsolete or untoward mental images vanish or are vanquished. When conception and elimination take place in balance, they complement each other and result in new ideas of wholeness.

If it is true that we tend to experience life within the context of our conscious and unconscious beliefs, we would want to maximize our spiritually mental conception of what we would like and minimize, if not totally eliminate, our conception of what we do not want. In practice, we may need to address both the ideas we want to conceive and the things we want to eliminate.

It is simpler to find seeds we want to plant in our garden than to eliminate the ones we do not want. Just so we don't compound our problems, we will try not to plant seeds of thought, word, or action that could come up as things we do not want. We will not plant weeds or pumpkins in our tomato patch. It is pretty clear that the way to have only tomatoes is to start with clean soil, plant only tomato seeds, and then weed out anything else. There are numerous ways to obtain clean soil and to handle mental weeding. It sometimes seems far too simple to expect only fruits from the seeds we plant.

If we are thinking affirmatively, that is, if we are declaring positively for spiritual words and thoughts and beliefs in our behalf, there is a principle of displacement that can

come into play. Powerful positive spiritual thoughts may simply displace negative thoughts, and in this way conception and elimination can go hand in hand. If a thought seed is powerful enough to displace its opposite, it can provide its own empty space. It can make its own good soil.

Clearing one's mind of extraneous thoughts is another way to address the need for good soil. If we have touched the emptiness of the void, maybe that makes us receptive to the fullness of a new idea. Thinking only of goodness or meditating only on nothingness may be human extremes that have practical limitations. Ultimately, our seeds and soil need to be in some balance. When they are most effective, our spiritual seeds and soil complement each other as what we do and don't do, what we believe and disbelieve, what we know to be true and what we understand to be false. The goal of wholeness is realized when seed and soil, conception and elimination, positive and negative declarations, fit together.

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If we are trying to affirmatively maintain human beliefs in goodness or absolute spiritual thoughts, these can transform consciousness increasingly as they differ in a positive way from our settled way of seeing things. For this reason, it makes sense for us to define a maximum on the scale of positive and spiritual thoughts.

Like a vector having direction and magnitude, a thought can be described in terms of quality and quantity. Quality defines how good a thought is, and quantity addresses how big a thought is. The way to maximize our benefit is to seek out and work with the largest and best thoughts that can make sense to us. For quality, let us use the idea of goodness. For quantity, let us use the word infinite. That is at least a starting point. To help with our elimination, to help provide our soil, to make sure we are talking about nothing else, let us add something to say we are dealing purely with those two words. So now our word string has three elements - *pure infinite goodness*.

Instead of using a mental picture or human thought to play upon the mind, we have sought out to find an ultimate, an absolute essence of goodness. Most positive religious ideals are an attempt to reach for such a spiritual essence. They combine concepts of absolute goodness or power together with humanly conceivable thought pictures. In this

way the human mind can derive benefit from powerful extra-human ideas without having to enter an abstract mental realm that at first might seem too remote.

Sometimes we might get to a place where the thoughts or images or beliefs we have relied upon may no longer make sense to us or where, over time, they may have lost their freshness and force. If we are using finite images, those we can see in our mind's eye in pictures or those made up of human concepts, we will outgrow them. As we grow, our thoughts and ideas and images need to grow with us.

Our approach here will be to define and explore the highest levels of thought that we can. Each may then choose, using the perspective that comes from knowing where everything starts, whether to think at the highest levels or to use lower levels that may engage thought more directly with tangible beliefs and circumstances.

One challenge in dealing with such a word string as pure infinite goodness is that, at least initially, we may feel scant hope of comprehending it. Pure goodness, by itself, may seem to be an ethereal abstraction, but it does not seem too hard to define. When the word infinite is introduced, it brings us into a whole new dimension. Because the idea of infinity cannot be accurately pictured in human dimensions, which is a characteristic of things infinite almost implicit in their definition, it is sometimes a stretch for infinite ideas to make any sense. If you are used to having your thinking reinforced or echoed in your mind's eye by images, it may seem strange to be thinking about ideas for which it takes such great lengths to form visual representations in your mind.

Purely spiritual and infinite ideas may appear to the human mind as abstractions, but they can have a telling effect in the upper reaches of our thought. They may initially seem vague and intangible, and perhaps make little sense, to the lower levels of consciousness that characterize our normal human thinking. This may be a good thing. Our inability to conceive of an infinite abstraction in human terms does not diminish its usefulness. In fact, the striking difference between things infinite and the human dimension is one reason it is so beneficial for us to think about them.

On the other hand, reaching out to abstractions might leave us with thoughts so seemingly ethereal as to lack any efficacy whatever. Holding to such thoughts might be nothing more than mental escapism. The difference between contemplative escapism and deep spiritual thinking to solve real problems may be simply a matter of commitment or intent. What we are looking for here is not escapism, not dreamy contemplation of

abstractions, but the development and practice of more effective ways of thinking and being. Rather than escapism, infinitely minded thinking naturally leads to deeper involvement in the issues of life. What we would like to discover are infinite words to reach for, to think about and reflect upon, to be our thought seeds, to bring out new ideas, to transform and transport consciousness, revealing true identity and bringing regeneration.

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Bringing large scale thoughts into practical application requires linkages to the real world. Forging such linkages involves the exercise and embodiment of our best ideas at various levels of action. When our best spiritual thoughts are linked to our beliefs and actions, then optimizing the quality and scale of our thoughts improves and elevates our point of view, generates useful ideas and perceptions, and helps with everything related to our thinking.

Interpreting infinite spiritual abstractions into the beliefs of our everyday human experience can be useful and can give us a feeling that we understand the issues at hand. We need to be careful, however, that we don't hold finite pictures of infinite things too tightly, because this can lead to aberrations of the ideal. The tendency to do this accounts for some of the stilted aspects of human religious behavior. It is best to ponder infinite words and ideas at the least circumscribed levels of thought. There they can more nearly be themselves, and they can reveal to us their own images in their own time. The value of infinite ideas is rarely in their literal interpretation into everyday human life. Trying to drive my car or manage my checkbook as if they were infinite will get me into trouble fast. The value of infinite ideas is in the effect they have in the mind. They do not lend themselves to simple extrapolation into the human scene, and we should carefully examine any tendency to do that.

Infinite ideas entertained in consciousness, that ultimately affect the events of daily life, usually take a different route from the direct. After being contemplated at the highest levels of our thought, infinite ideas often seem to disappear, as if to go underground. Eventually they may reappear in good ideas, in inspirations, in common sense solutions to practical problems, and sometimes in even more.

The reason that infinite ideas, or any ideas for that matter, can affect our surroundings is that things around us are undergirded by mentality. Our surroundings are in some ways defined by individual and collective, conscious and unconscious thought. To the degree that you are able to believe your best thoughts, their quality and scale can contribute significantly to the quality and scale of your life. Thoughts that are causative, thoughts that can regenerate the waning and wanting images of life, are those with the quality and scale to make things happen. They can discover new things into being. These thoughts come in various shapes and sizes, and behind them all are infinite ideas.

Chapter 5 – Levels of Spiritual Action

In daily life, we can reliably apply spiritual action at four levels - obedience, belief, understanding, and knowledge. Each individual will tend to favor one specific level of action based on his or her relative stage of spiritual practice. Our individual beliefs establish the context within which we will perceive spiritual efficacy and exercise spiritual action. When numbers of these levels have been brought into play, they will tend to act in series. Learning about these four levels provides a basis for understanding the patterns in which human religious beliefs form, the stages of universal and individual spiritual evolution, and the different ways individuals perceive spiritual issues.

Human beliefs about spiritual things mirror or shadow, to a limited degree, aspects of absolute or ultimate spiritual truths. Like the shadow of a man's hand that we might mistake for the real hand, human religious beliefs often have a ring of truth to them. Upon examination, however, like shadows, human beliefs will be found to be missing some dimensions when compared to their infinite originals. Nevertheless, improved human beliefs can sometimes strike us as absolute truths. When better beliefs dawn from our spiritual progress, they are often very meaningful. It is not hard to get so wedded to an improved belief that we feel like holding on to it forever. But even the most inspired human beliefs are transitory and need to be regenerated.

There is a wide area of human interest in the spiritual that precedes the four levels of rational spiritual action. This early spiritual dimension comes into view as an undefined spiritual awareness. It can involve a sense of the mystical, a revered sense of the natural, or the pure desire for a higher good. This beginning phase of the spiritual dimension has a distinctly whole and undifferentiated aspect to it. Good and evil are not yet clearly delineated or easily separable. This stage of looking to transcendent things, where we have just started to pay attention, can lead the way to more evolved perceptions. Prior to analyzing the issues we see, there is no basis for determining a meaningful response. If this pre-rational phase of thought is put into action, it usually shows itself in ceremonies, rituals, and observances, and in exalting the natural.

While we may discern spiritual effects here, it is doubtful whether this level offers any reliable linkages to spiritual action. When our yearnings for goodness are stronger

than our attractions to the mystical, we will cross out of this mental environment, bringing us to the place where rational action can begin to empower our spiritual pursuits.

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The first level of rational spiritual action involves obedience, which often begins with simple following. Our analysis of spiritual issues can evolve into patterns that we may discern as spiritual laws. Obedience is an affirmative response to a spiritual imperative perceived in a word, thought, intuition, or law.

Obedience has to do with the relationship between perceiving a legitimate command and acting. It is a direct linkage. Before we are at the point to positively energize obedience as a type of spiritual action, our reason for obedience might be a negative one, the fear of punishment. At its best, obedience has nothing to do with reasons except that our reason for action is our love of obedience.

If we turn on the light switch, we expect the light to go on. There is a relationship described by laws. Obedience, as a type of spiritual action, is the relationship between word and action. The word is directly linked to action. What a word is this!

It makes sense that obedience would be the first level of rational spiritual action, because obedience brings out the most basic relationship between spiritual cause and effect. Obedience is the point where mentality embodies manifestation. If some cause and effect relationship exists in spiritual nature, that relationship defines a law. If A causes B, the command to do A will be enough to involve an obedient one in the cause and effect process resulting in B. As far as obedience is concerned, we do not even need to know about B to be involved in the process.

Obedience can sometimes be exercised as a completely internal activity. An internal commitment or resolution to obey, unaccompanied by an outward opportunity, can sometimes be as much an act of obedience, as far as the spiritual world is concerned, as an outward act. Even the desire or will to be obedient can sometimes energize the spiritual force of obedience.

Most religions, all but the most mystical or sentimental, have some recognition of the concept of spiritual law. Obedience to spiritual laws, ethical laws, and sometimes even to civil laws, can throw our spiritual weight into the right scale. The proportional value of

our obedience is related to the degree to which it embodies important spiritual issues and choices.

When discussing the value of obedience, the question can arise: Obedience to what? That is something we will have to figure out. Obedience as a type of spiritual action first becomes available to us when we relate to our spiritual ideal as a lawgiver, when we follow spiritual leadings, or when we perceive specific spiritual imperatives. Even if we are wrong in our interpretations, a sincere desire to be obedient to good sometimes has spiritual power to bring things around.

One thing that distinguishes obedience from the next level of spiritual action is that there may be no obvious association between our behavior and an immediate positive outcome. Actions associated with obedience sometimes look like they involve something called sacrifice. Expectations having to do with positive outcome involve belief, which we will discuss next. Obedience defines a level of spiritual action where authoritative words are directly linked to action.

Obedience to any command is not necessarily a good thing. Obedience to good commands will cause good, but not often otherwise. The degree to which obedience can be fruitfully activated depends on identifying proper authority, discerning directions with clarity, and carrying out actions successfully. In practice, I think the second part is the hardest.

Without valid authority, the concept of obedience is questionable. In this sense, obedience is relationship dependent. In speaking about recognizing authority, it is not meant to imply that authority comes from a person, although it is hard to imagine learning spiritual obedience without having mastered human obedience.

True authority could be experienced as spiritual law or spiritual principles, infinite word, infinite identity, or pure inspiration. A command needs to be evaluated to see if it comes from a reliable authority. Real authority for the spiritual thinker has very little to do with what other people say or think.

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The second level of spiritual action involves our beliefs. Beliefs are conclusions that we accept about our world. Our beliefs significantly comprise our sense of reality. They

largely determine how we feel about it. Beliefs form as we accept conclusions about what is true and what is real. They predispose us to expectations about outcome. Where obedience was an almost automatic response to a command, beliefs involve us in considered actions. When we hold to beliefs in goodness that go beyond appearances, that involves us in trust and faith.

If we are told that doing A will cause B, we may accept a belief about that to the degree that it is believable. The believability will be a net conclusion from such things as the reasonableness of the statement, the extent to which we might want it to be true, the consequences of our being wrong, and our trust or faith in the information source. Belief as a positive form of spiritual action comes into play when our sense of authority is felt to be a benevolent information source.

Awakening to the spiritual value of our beliefs, we also become aware of the concept of informed choice. With obedience, we had to respond correctly to a command. We could have been motivated by fear or loyalty. With belief, we are told how cause and effect are related. We can then choose actions associated with our desired outcome. If we want to do good, we need only decide if B is a good outcome. Then we can put A into action.

Believing in goodness makes us feel good and gives us confidence to take initiative and to overcome obstacles. Believing in goodness brightens our outlook and can open our thoughts to greater possibilities.

Belief is useful when it leads us into right actions, but beliefs need to be viewed with care. Had the one who informed us that A would cause B been mistaken or been feeling mischievous, we could have been told the wrong thing. Perhaps A really causes C, or perhaps A does not cause anything at all. There is little inherent in the mental process of believing that validates the belief itself. One who simply believes must assess the credibility of the source, the validation of experience, comparison to their principles, and common sense. As far as the mental action of believing goes, one can as easily hold a belief that is completely correct as one that is utterly silly.

Were we to take four small children and whisper to each one of them something different, for example, that two plus five equals six, seven, eight, and nine, they might then all have a belief about two plus five. Only one of them would happen to be correct, but the one who was told the answer was seven might be holding the correct answer by the same mental process by which the other children were holding the wrong answers with perhaps

equally earnest convictions. Without having understanding, the answers could only be held in their minds by belief, trust, or faith in the credibility of the information source.

Being relatively correct in one's beliefs is of value. However, one thing to remember about beliefs, besides their liability to being wrong, is that beliefs transferred from one person to the next may be relatively loosely held in the mind. If I could convince a child to accept on face value that two plus five is seven, I could perhaps, as easily at some later time, persuade the child that I was originally mistaken and that two plus five is really six. The child might accept this new belief if it came from a credible source. But if the belief continues to be changed or challenged, the child may ultimately realize that he or she has no idea what two plus five is. At this point the believer is likely to dismiss the whole subject as confusing and troublesome. This happens a lot.

Beliefs about the relationship between cause and effect settle in the mind as beliefs of law. These beliefs of law will be likely to guide our behavior relative to issues to which particular laws are believed to apply. Our beliefs of law predispose us to the expectation of consequences, of rewards and punishment. These beliefs may or may not effect anything. The weight we throw into the mental scale of belief is often way below the threshold where it connects with anything. When our beliefs in goodness solidify, however, they can supersede all manner of lesser beliefs.

The discussion of obedience was careful to point out that obedience includes no specific presumptions about the direct outcome or consequences of our actions. For our purposes, the level where one simply believes is defined to precede the believer having any understanding of the spiritual principles behind cause and effect. The believer has a belief that A causes B, but does not understand how or why.

While obedience is dependent on a relationship for the soundness of commands, belief is relationship dependent for the validity of beliefs. When being obedient, we lend our actions to words of authority. As believers, we lend our trust to explanations about the way things are. Obedience involves our response to authority. Beliefs involve our feelings about the message source and content. Feeling good about the source of a communication lends it credibility and helps us believe that things will work out.

In trying to assess the validity of a belief, if we have no understanding of the principles at issue, our assessment will be influenced by how we feel about the information

source. The source could be a book, a person, an institution, or our own feelings and sensations.

The way to find out if we are originating our thoughts primarily at the level of belief is to examine the degree to which we justify them based on reference to their source. If our thoughts are supported because they came from book X, person Y, institution Z, or from our feelings and sensations, then they are based on source credibility and originate in us primarily at the level of belief.

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If we sit down with the children to whom we had conveyed beliefs about two plus five, and explain what a two is and what a five is and, with so many bottle caps or beans on the carpet, illustrate the addition process, those having the required level of mental development can come to understand the process. Now the child need not simply believe but can think about and understand correct conclusions. With an understanding of the relevant principles, the child will be able to create his or her own beliefs, correct them, or expand them into new ones. Indeed, the child might soon be able to tell us what two plus three is or might be able to derive any other sums within the reach of the principles and numbers addressed.

As a result of understanding, the child will still have beliefs about sums and these will influence his or her behavior, one would hope, but the beliefs will be generated or at least reinforced from within. When beliefs resulting from understanding are challenged, the spiritual thinker can re-think the beliefs, not simply revert to old sources for justification.

One cannot truly understand something unless it is so, because understanding involves thinking from an underlying principle until a conclusion is reached. For this reason, it is not possible to truly understand a subject that is not based on principles. On the other hand, were one to accept thoughts without understanding them, one could not be sure to what degree one might be holding beliefs having no principle or basis whatever.

Were we to accept a number of basic principles, we could think through to conclusions that might eventually settle in our minds as beliefs. One could accept such principles as true, or one could simply say, I do not know if these principles are true, but if

I base my thinking on them, the following conclusions result. Having done that, one might then consider whether the principles were useful or seemed valid. To the degree that the principles upon which we base our thinking have in them seeds of discord or limitation, we could be supporting or promoting inaccurate, limited, or even discordant beliefs.

What is needed to regenerate beliefs is to have sound spiritual principles and to reason based on those principles. Were we to wish to improve or expand our beliefs through spiritual understanding, we could practice thinking expansively from spiritual principles pertinent to the matters at hand.

Where obedience involves a positive response to authority, and beliefs form through trust in the credibility of information sources, spiritual understanding comes from reasoning in accordance with spiritual principles. When addressing an issue, one could start with a spiritual premise and think out from it until a conclusion is reached. One could use this method to nurture spiritual understanding about a specific situation by thinking about the relevant issues using spiritual principles as a rule. The one who holds conclusions resulting from spiritual understanding will support them, not based on authority or source credibility, but based on their following from spiritual principles and from the striking sense of reality conveyed in the experience of spiritual realization.

Thinking based on spiritual principles introduces us to the idea of *science*. True science involves instances where knowing is generated from principles and the conclusions of understanding are validated in experience. Those who base their thinking on spiritual principles, and have their conclusions demonstrated in practical life, find their spiritual pursuits having the aspect of being spiritually scientific. Such pursuits seem scientific because this type of spiritual action gives one the sense of experiencing true knowing.

When something is understood, it is often accompanied by a brief glimmer in the mind not unlike a faint internal visual experience, an instance of seeing. Aha! Understood ideas are often at least momentarily seen or perceived in the mind. Since seeing is believing, especially seeing one's understood thoughts, the mental seeing that results from the spiritual understanding process can often be used to bring related beliefs into accord with the conclusions of understanding, the things seen. For this reason, a good way to develop or improve your beliefs is to understand and perceive the operation of spiritual principles through basing your thinking on them.

When you follow a line of thinking from the viewpoint of a spiritual principle, your conclusions will be in harmony with that principle. Your ideas will be reflections of that principle, and your relationship to your ideas will be like the relationship between the principle and its ideas.

If you are thinking as the principle of spiritual light would think, your ideas will be conceived and seen in that light. Spiritual enlightenment naturally accompanies the arrival of spiritual ideas. In this spiritual light, each emerging idea can be seen as it is. The illumination that comes with spiritual understanding can sometimes startle us with the natural perspective of goodness that encourages the spontaneous regeneration of our human beliefs.

Beliefs regenerated through spiritual understanding will be valid to the degree that they stem from valid spiritual principles. As our spiritual understanding progresses along any line, our corresponding beliefs can be corrected and updated, as new spiritual ideas are perceived. This is important, because the quality and scope of our life experience can be constantly improved as we apply spiritual understanding to regenerate our most deeply held beliefs.

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The relationship between spiritual understanding and belief is noteworthy. It involves the transition from levels of spiritual action that are primarily involved with investing in causation, to those that deal primarily with bringing out manifestations. We are often very aware of the feelings and emotions that we experience at the level of our beliefs. This makes our beliefs seem quite important to us. The level of spiritual understanding is more abstract and impersonal, but it is here that we can best employ spiritual reasoning to regenerate our beliefs, with their associated feelings and resulting sensations. Developing spiritual understanding can lead us to naturally believe the profound truths of spiritual goodness and to experience them in our lives.

We may occasionally be struck by wonderfully hopeful thoughts about prospects on the human scene. Sometimes these can be prophetic. More often, however, such beliefs want for firmer spiritual foundations. Human beliefs are sometimes like fresh fruit. They can be wonderful when we first get them, but their value may be confined to a narrow

time; after a while, we may need to replenish them. We can benefit greatly by regenerating our beliefs using our best spiritual thinking and being, by conducting an on-going reconstructive spiritual dialogue with our environment. If our beliefs are holding us back, less limited beliefs can displace them as the result of progressive spiritual thinking. It makes no sense to unthinkingly espouse a myriad of beliefs that may happen to imprint themselves on the mind. But to think deeply about what is true and to apply one's spiritual perceptions to generate better beliefs can make a real difference.

Beliefs not growing out of your own spiritual understanding do not have the benefit of having been seen spiritually. For this reason, from the standpoint of those having spiritual understanding, mere believing is often regarded as blind belief. Beliefs may be blind, not because they are wrong, which they may not be, but because they did not result from the seeing process. When you nurture understanding from spiritual principles, you will not only have the benefit of understanding your resulting beliefs, but you will be enabled to continually refresh them as time goes on.

More than any higher levels of our thought processes, our beliefs most often seem to govern our actions. This may be a matter of proximity rather than of fidelity. In any case, it is important to develop progressively better quality and less limited beliefs. Beliefs perform a critical function in linking our understanding to obedience through the visions and feelings that carry us into right action. Our beliefs spawn the commands for action to which we will most readily respond. Our beliefs constitute a significant part of the sentient environment in which we live and move.

Our belief or disbelief in concepts related to spiritual ideas will guide our inclination to apply them and to follow through. If a farmer is given what are said to be good seeds, and he does not believe they are good, he will be unlikely to invest the effort required to plant them. If his belief in the seeds recommends investment in planting them, his beliefs and actions might get the seeds in the ground. If they are slow seeds and he grows impatient waiting for them to germinate, he might lose faith, become discouraged, and stop weeding and watering them. In such a case, his resulting harvest might be the same as if he had planted no seeds at all.

If we have grown discontented with our beliefs about something, and we would like to engage in spiritual action, obtaining spiritual understanding on the subject can lead to our developing better beliefs. We will tend to act in accordance with our genuine beliefs,

and we will tend to believe what we have thought about to the point of spiritual understanding. As was stated earlier, our ability to hold beliefs may not be an indication of the validity of the beliefs, while spiritual understanding is to some extent self-validating. To the degree that understanding derives from valid principles, it serves as a check on the soundness of corresponding beliefs.

Because externally acquired beliefs are often loosely held in the mind, it is more reliably helpful to cultivate spiritual understanding than to gather improved beliefs from outside sources. Until we are ready to practice thinking based on spiritual principles, however, we can strengthen our beliefs by nurturing affection for positive thoughts and benevolent conceptions. We can benefit from listening to or studying from sources consistent with our spiritual ideals. The beliefs we may try to assimilate will need to be consistent with our general sense of things for them to be trusted and to act as useful beliefs. The more we love our beliefs, the more we will be apt to hold them. Beliefs held only at a distance are of little value, and they can lead us into confusion, indecision, and vacillation.

When you are willing to base your best thinking on spiritual principles, the process of harmonizing and unlimiting your beliefs becomes straightforward. You simply mentally stand up for relevant spiritual principles and apply them to your beliefs. The productive utilization of spiritual principles is not so much dependent on their availability from an objective source as on our investing the energy to apply them, bringing them to conclusions of conviction or realization, and then acting them out.

In practice, the levels of action we have just covered could be illustrated by a simple sequence. I could get up in the morning and feel the need to replenish my spiritual batteries. That means I am paying attention. I might then put aside some time and do some studying, praying, or spiritual thinking. That means I am being obedient and taking disciplined action. I might read some passages that are inspiring to me and make me feel good. That will appeal to me at the level of my beliefs. Then I might think deeply about some issue and exercise spiritual reasoning beyond my beliefs to correct or expand them. When I have come to a new conclusion that improves my beliefs, I may have experienced a fresh measure of spiritual understanding. When I have newly glimpsed an aspect of spiritual truth, my willingness to accept an improved belief is proof that I understand it. My resolution to act better in the future may indicate that my beliefs have improved.

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The fourth level of rational spiritual action involves knowledge. Knowledge is a level of knowing that is deeper than understanding. Knowledge is not theoretical. It is an embodied sense of knowing and being. Spiritual knowledge comes as we identify with our spiritual principles, understand them, embody them, and let them be infinite. By acting out our best thoughts, we eliminate any sense of separation between their source and our true identity. At the level of spiritual knowledge, the source of our principles is not separate from the spiritual mind and ego and will that we reflect. We are open to knowledge when we are willing to identify spiritual laws as our laws, spiritual beliefs as our beliefs, spiritual sense as our sensations, and infinite identity as our identity. We begin to encounter true knowledge when we let our spiritual principles be infinite. This level of apprehension goes beyond simply understanding the principles involved. The principles are part of what we call our identity.

Spiritual knowledge does not necessarily come from experience, but it never comes without it. Understanding and experience can work together to bring knowledge. If I do not understand something, however, and then I experience it, I may still lack both understanding and knowledge.

While I would like to describe knowledge more completely here, it will probably take the rest of the book to begin to do it justice. After all, the book is about knowledge.

The four types of spiritual action described in this chapter require the progressive identification of information sources that are lawful, good, spiritual, and infinite. Later chapters will build on these distinctions. Obedience is the direct connection between spiritual word and action. Faith is unqualified belief in goodness. Spiritual understanding is a mental standing based on a spiritual principle. Knowledge of the infinite comes from a commitment to wholeness, from thinking and being based on the logic of the infinite word.

Spiritual ideas can sometimes be pondered somewhat separately from ourselves. Infinite ideas do not quite make sense when thought about remotely. The infinite idea identifies the thinker with its own self. That is why simply understanding infinite ideas does not complete the process. Infinite ideas require us to have knowledge. They ask that we express them and that we let them express us.

This is beginning to sound pretty drastic. Why would one want to have this knowledge if it requires such an extreme measure of participation to get it? One reason is that knowledge of infinite ideas reveals our true identity; another is that it is the ultimate antidote. The usefulness of thinking from infinite words and ideas, compared to other levels of transcendent thought, is due to their unique character and extraordinary scale. Infinite ideas are different from human concepts in such a fundamental way that considering things in the context of infinity leads to radical transitions in our point of view.

In our individual experiences, moving through each level of spiritual action presents a significant transition from the last. One trying to live in obedience to spiritual laws may feel set apart from the rest of this world. Maintaining consistent beliefs and living by faith can require great trust in the unseen. The commitment to spiritually minded thinking can put thought at odds with the familiar senses. The viewpoint of infinitely minded being embraces all these, and, while bringing a greater sense of wholeness and peace, it is perhaps the most radical viewpoint of all. It is occasionally so radical as to seem almost absurd.

As was suggested earlier, it is not possible to ease from finity into infinity. To arrive at infinity, we must start there. Infinity defines ideas that are one, and such ideas acknowledge their source as infinite universal identity. In this way, infinite ideas naturally address the source issue. When you glimpse infinite ideas, you will be experiencing infinite ideas glimpsing themselves. Infinite ideas come from and dwell in the infinite mind that knows itself as the infinite I am. Even the infinite I.

It is natural to consider infinite ideas to be outside the human mind's ability to comprehend. In a sense, this is so. This does not mean you cannot comprehend them. It just recommends the exchange of one's finite, human sense of i for a larger one.

The four levels of spiritually mental action are increasingly more comprehensive and invite increasing levels of our involvement. Although knowledge of infinite ideas may be the ultimate manifestation of spiritual action, one need not always use the ultimate. As one progresses, obedience remains of utmost importance. It is one's sense of authority that evolves. The quality and scope of our beliefs become increasingly important, leading us to look for ways to make them ever more sound. The source for the individual's linkage to the process can be continually seen in new light.

Our level of preferred emphasis in spiritual action changes as we reach for higher spiritual ideals and act out our spiritual growth. In practice, this focuses our efforts on each level in succession. In our spiritual evolution, rational spiritual discipline predominates over attention to mysticism and observances. The development and expression of trust in good gradually supersedes legalistic expectations. Spiritual understanding makes us the master of our beliefs and involves us in their regeneration, and we no longer hold them blindly. Spiritual practice based on infinite identity reconciles apparent opposites, revealing a wonderfully new sense of wholeness.

The latter levels of spiritual action embrace the earlier levels as illustrated by the idea that we come to believe what has been understood, and we tend to act in concert with our firmly held beliefs. In our exercise of spiritual action, there can be a constant interplay between the different levels. One can progressively act from obedience to spiritual laws, have faith in sound beliefs as they increasingly come into accord with goodness, cultivate spiritual understanding and demonstrate the supremacy of spiritual sense, and ultimately think and be from the standpoint of infinity as identity.

In the chapters so far, we have been talking about definitions and structure. Spiritual content has been addressed only in the most general way. The next two chapters will address some of the process and give an example of the spiritual subject matter. This is to provide the perspective and light needed to go further.

Chapter 6 – Thinking About Pure Goodness

This chapter is about thinking based on spiritual principles and infinite words. Such thinking involves reaching beyond where we may have gone before, keeping our conclusions in line with spiritual principles, and being receptive to the infinite meanings of words.

The greater the content and scale of good we try to grasp in an idea, the further we reach from what we have already conceived, the more abstract and ethereal our starting point is bound to be. As we reach out farther on the scale from concrete to abstract, words capture more of the essence of the ideas that represent them, because they are less constrained by limited pictures.

Ethereal ideas can have enormous value. Relative to its size, a steam turbine can produce much more power than a water wheel.⁴ The more ethereal a given medium, the more useful energy can be produced through its exhaustion. However, compared to a pound of ice, it is more difficult to contain a pound of water, and harder still to hold a pound of steam. While the medium of energy transfer becomes more ethereal and consequently more potent, the technology for its use becomes more demanding. In the same way, it takes successively more persistence and ingenuity of mind to harness ideas as they become more abstract. In our attempts to conceive the infinite idea, we are not unlike those looking for the universal solvent. When we find it, where will we put it?

Because of the containment issue, we are initially more comfortable thinking about ideas we can picture than thinking about ideas that may be to some extent unimaginable. To conceive of an idea, we must start with its identity, origin, and essence. Then, we must provide a place where the idea can take shape and form, a place where we can experience its conception. The type and scale of the mind determines the type and scale of the thoughts it can contain. One can begin thinking about spiritual or infinite ideas by postulating a mind in which spiritual or infinite ideas are native. One can define a

⁴ I thought I was pretty clever coming up with this metaphor. A few decades later I noticed it, no doubt again, in Mary Baker Eddy's (MBE) The Peoples' Idea of God, page 10), which had surely planted the idea in my mind.

relationship with such a mind and then reflect upon that mind as one's own. This method can awaken whatever relation to a spiritual or infinite mind may be accessible to us.

If we want to increase the shapes and forms and feelings of goodness we encounter in daily life, we may find ourselves looking more into their essence and content. We will be happy to find that improved form and structure gradually appear as we assimilate more of spiritual essence and content. Being a spiritually minded thinker naturally results in our understanding the real essence of things. Being an infinitely minded thinker means having knowledge of the wholeness of ideas and of their relationship to us as identity. The most powerful thought seeds come from infinite spiritual identity and essence. As we glimpse the heart of pure identity and essence, new form and structure begin to dawn.

Reading about these ideas and thinking about them can be very useful mental exercise. It would be of real value to spend time meditating and thinking about topics introduced in the next chapter. I remember one time when I spent one hour just thinking about the word *Spirit* and all the things that it could possibly mean. I used a few different adjectives to help define my ultimate of Spirit, to modify it, elaborate on it, and to help me discern new meanings. I thought about Spirit as a name for deity, apart from any limitations of my senses, benevolent in its effects, powerful and unopposed, and boundless in its extent. It was challenging to concentrate on that idea and to keep thinking about it without having my mind wander for too long to the pictures on the wall or to the lovely day outside. Afterward, I could not have told you of any particularly striking ideas that I had, other than remembering a few of the faintest wisps of insight and having a page of jotted notes. And I remember the day after that, too. The whole world looked different to me. It was as if the world I saw around me had been infused with spiritual light. For days afterward, I had a palpable awareness of the presence and supremacy of spiritual goodness.

Reflecting on any spiritual or infinite idea of goodness energizes the principle of self-multiplication. When we affectionately ponder spiritual thoughts, they multiply themselves. They get bigger to our sight. Wisps of spiritual ideas gather like an invisible vapor collecting in thought. These pure ideas can accumulate in the rarefied reaches of mentality for only so long before they begin to appear to us as spiritual perceptions, like water vapor gathering into clouds. As the process continues, like clouds turning to rain, our spiritual perceptions condense into concrete ideas and beliefs that begin to lend their shape to our sense of reality. Then the spiritual substance we had collected and come to

treasure in what appeared as a purely internal and subjective arena, our innermost thoughts, is reflected back to us as what we see around us. It becomes as though our internal sense of spiritual goodness has turned inside out, and our outside world appears infused with, if not constituted of, the spiritual goodness we had cultivated within. This works, but it sometimes requires a lot of patience.

The idea of glimpsing invisible spiritually mental stuff may seem remote. You can come to experience such an idea, however, through the cultivation and exercise of spiritual sense. Spiritual sense is your awareness of the goodness and reality of the spiritual dimension. There are ways that you can occasionally see transcendent spiritual substance, in rare momentary glimpses, appearing to be more visibly tangible and concrete than the physical objects you now see around you.

Our entry into the contemplation of spiritual essences here will begin by using words to open our thoughts to spiritual ideas. We will try to think slowly about these words and let them magnify themselves and reveal more of themselves to our thinking.

Another useful technique is to form relationships between groups of words to see what new meanings or consequences can be implied by the relationships. In expanding our sense of goodness, we might begin with words we might define as being purely good, like love or truth or life. In the world of spiritual principles, every good idea is related to every other through common identity. Because infinity is one, it can always be said that truth is love or that life is truth or that love is life. This is a good way to get started in thinking disciplined by spiritual principles: to form a new relationship, imagine what meanings might be suggested by the relationship, and then put those new meanings into words, perhaps jotting them in a notebook.

When you are meditating in the realm of pure spiritual goodness, it does not take long for your thoughts to grow in a direction different from the way your world looks. That is one of the beauties of transcendent thinking. When holding thoughts at the level of absolute spiritual principles, the contrast with your worldly sense of things will soon challenge you to stop thinking independently and to go back to the level of merely observing your beliefs about the world. If you persist in reflecting on spiritual principles, your thinking will eventually lead you to challenge and re-think some of your beliefs.

As if thinking based on spiritual principles is not enough, this may sometimes involve having to think upstream. Starting to think along spiritual lines might at first seem

to be moving hard against a current. Whether this current is individual or collective, or whether it is inertial or aggressive, it can still feel like a pull in opposite directions. It takes no more daily practice and dedication to master this than it takes to achieve similar measures of success in athletics or music.

In contemplating pure infinite goodness, we could meditate endlessly on the words without conceiving ideas unless we have soil to go with our thought seeds. At early levels of practice, in energizing obedience to law, we try not to do things wrong. Trying not to do things wrong gives us good soil in which to benefit from doing things right. In the same way, making room for new beliefs requires clearing out the opposites of faith and trust and love, and it involves correcting instances where those may have been misplaced. Clearing away beliefs of opposition and false reliances makes mental room to serve as fertile soil in which to grow better beliefs. Withdrawing our volition from unprincipled thought makes room for spiritually principled thinking to seed consciousness. In each case, it is not just good seed but good soil that needs to be present. Vanquishing discordant or limiting beliefs and thinking from right principles can provide soil and seed so our spiritual meditations can germinate into spiritual ideas of wholeness.

Chapter 7 – The Idea of Infinite Goodness

We have addressed the value of using spiritual principles and infinite words as seeds for thought, and we have talked about the selection of pure infinite goodness as a possible thought seed. The next step is to apply this in our thinking. When we have identified a spiritual principle on which to build our reasoning process, we can apply spiritually minded thinking and reflection to any subject we might wish. We might learn to think in this special way about ourselves, about our relationships, families, jobs, cities, governments, and about our world. In this way, we can continually improve and regenerate our beliefs about all these things.

The main rule for this thinking and reflection process is that it must be consistent with the principle we choose. The principle we will use is not an elaborate axiom or a statement of human belief. It is simply a string of good words. When we use these words as the principle of our thinking and reasoning, we are enabled to think above and beyond our beliefs. Although we have defined our use of the word "infinite" to include the word "spiritual," let us include that word here explicitly, just to make sure we have not jumped over an important step. We will usually abbreviate this to fewer words, but in this following exercise our guiding principle will be this four-word string - *pure infinite spiritual goodness*.

If pure infinite goodness is our mental principle, every thought we might have in line with it will be good. Because it is a pure principle, all possible ideas about it must be purely good, with no impurities. Its purity suggests a level of soundness and a certain density. It is solid goodness without empty spaces or voids.

Since its goodness is infinite, there are no limits to its goodness. It is not possible to imagine limited good coming from this infinite principle. Within the realm of this principle, there is an endless supply of good ideas. The infinity of goodness defies exceptions to goodness; it is the affluence of pure goodness always spontaneously available. Because our starting point is good, we can think about it expansively without ever deviating from goodness. Within the bounds of this spiritually mental principle, there is never anything going amiss, and there are no untoward side effects.

Such a thinking process as this can start out as an act of mental discipline. It can evolve into love of spiritual ideas, reflection of spiritual creativity, and revelation of being. Using infinite goodness as the principle of our thinking energizes our thoughts, and they can begin to flow as if from the principle of spiritual goodness itself. The resulting mental impressions naturally show forth the character and nature of infinite goodness.

If you simply read these lines, you will have the benefit of whatever information may be present, which could seem somewhat abstract, or you might possibly be able to form some positive beliefs from the statements. To the degree that you seriously think about these things and follow your thoughts to their conclusions, you will be able to nurture spiritual understanding and to have wisps of insight into spiritual reality. I feel like I am getting to do the fun part, reflecting on the principle of pure infinite goodness and filling blank sheets of paper.

During this exercise, we will say that pure spiritual goodness is the only principle of our thinking; words of goodness will comprise the only principle of our mind. With our thoughts using pure spiritual goodness as a principle, our ideas will be ideas of this principle. As we think from the basis of pure spiritual goodness, we can come to know everything there is to know about its idea. Pure spiritual goodness is the founding principle, sole definition, and inexhaustible source of all its ideas.

In thinking about what it means for something to have a principle that is purely good, we see that ideas stemming from this principle are ordered and governed by pure goodness, that the rules of this game provide abundant spiritual goodness for all. For goodness to be the principle of its idea does not imply that the principle is imposed or superimposed on its idea. The idea springs from its principle. Every aspect of the idea has its origin in the principle. The principle defines its idea to be characterized by its pure infinite spiritual goodness. The only requirement on the idea is that it show forth the boundless goodness of its principle. Acting as a principle, the infinity of goodness is the immutable law of all its ideas. When we use infinite goodness as a principle, we can never lack abilities to express goodness.

Watching the emergence in our reflected thought of the idea of an infinite principle, we are at the standpoint of discovery, seeing new ideas come into view. What this pure principle causes to be, comprises its infinitely principled self. Pure goodness as an infinite spiritual principle reveals its idea to be an idea of itself.

As we engage ourselves in using infinite words of goodness as the principle of our thinking, we experience our thoughts as reflections of that principle. A mentality reflecting infinite goodness as a principle will find its ideas exemplifying the traits of that principle. The mental images coming into mind will bear likeness to their infinite spiritual principle. Reflecting infinite words of goodness as our principle will bring ideas that reveal original aspects of infinite goodness. In this activity, we experience the infinite principle of pure goodness as the infinite mind of pure goodness. While under the governance of its principle, all the reflections of this mind are wholly good.

The ideas of this infinite mind arise from its principle, so its appearing ideas are already understood. If the originating infinite mind were not acting as a principle, its ideas could not be understood. You can always understand a person when you understand that person's principle. The infinite person of pure spiritual goodness can be understood, not through observing its person, but through observing its source, through knowing the integrity of its pure spiritual principle. The principle of pure infinite goodness is the origin and destination of its idea. It defines the entire environment within which its idea is conceived.

The seed for our spiritual idea comes from the pure word we recognize as its principle. Our soil comes from realizing the things that cannot be true about an idea coming from such a spiritual principle. Because the principle of pure infinite goodness is purely good, no untoward thing can ever happen to its idea. Nothing outside the principle of pure goodness can ever intrude into the realm of this principle.

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The ideas we conceive are contained within the dimensions of the mind we use. To think spiritual thoughts, we reach out to, identify with, and reflect a mind that is spiritual. To conceive infinite ideas of goodness, we define a mind based on infinite words of goodness and reflect that mind as our own.

Our objective here is directed at more than thinking spiritual thoughts, as pleasant as that might be. Ultimately, we are seeking the revelation of a whole infinite idea, and this process includes a balancing of elements. Let us look at this process using a mind as our model. In fostering the germination process in our garden, we needed certain elements to

be present. When looking to conceive a spiritual idea, we need spiritual seed and soil, a pure principle to conceive as idea and a hospitable mental environment in which for it to grow. When seed and soil are chosen well, conception and elimination go hand in hand, and the spiritual idea begins to come into view.

Let us imagine a creative mind, an infinite spiritual mind, not defined in finite time or space. This mind will include three basic functions or offices of creativity. First, pure word is used as seed to provide the essence of its idea. Words within the definition of the creative principle are magnified to realize and individualize their infinite nature. Second, the emerging idea is developed within the environment of its founding principle. After initial words and essence are provided, the principle provides on-going spiritual logic to contain and guide the idea leading to its complete conception. Finally, the mind of a pure spiritual principle conceives its idea as a whole idea of itself. It is an idea showing forth its complete and whole spiritual nature. The idea is the manifest reflection of its principle. The idea in the mind is an idea of the mind. The whole idea is the offspring of its parent mind.

Because a creative mind acts as the principle of its thoughts, its whole idea of itself is its image and likeness. The spiritually mental offspring of an infinite mind of pure goodness manifests the attributes and nature of the mind from which it comes and within which it is contained. Because infinity is one, these three attributes of mind, initialization, containment, and idea, are somehow one. This illustrates how the infinite mind that is one mind includes the three basic offices of creativity defining father, mother, and child.

There is the mind that is able to identify and generate the spiritual substance and essence emerging into thought as pure word, as the beginnings of ideas. This aspect of creative mind defines its fatherhood. Then, there is the mind accepting and embracing the emerging thought. This part of the mind provides the perfect place to consider, develop, form, shape, nurture, and maintain the idea within. This creative activity defines the motherhood of mind. The third office is performed by the idea itself, which exists having been initiated into and now being contained in the mind. The conceived idea is the offspring, child, image, likeness, and object of the infinite mind.

In the infinite mind, all three aspects exist as one. These functions of infinite mind are not defined or confined in time and space as we know them. They exist in pure mind.

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Having described these offices or roles of mind, let us consider what it might mean for these to be infinite. We might begin by defining an infinite mental place to provide containment. We would want a place with nothing else there. Then, from identity, we would introduce into that place a word or essence to germinate into an idea.

It is most accurate to consider these functions initially taking place as pure thought. They are concurrent, and they are one. Pushing deep into the realm of pure mind, we can imagine these functions defined in pure word, before they take shape in ideas, images, feelings, and actions. The essence of an infinite idea is not separate from its source. It is concurrent with its origin and with the spiritually mental place providing its containment. The idea, or offspring, is the part we see and feel, while at-one with its word and place of origin.

To see what the infinite idea is not, to examine some limitations of a finite sense of it, let us consider our nearby sun and sunlight for a model. Let us consider the sun to be the source of the sunlight, space to be the place in which it grows, and the sunlight to be its expression. One could hardly consider all these to be one. We are interested in using the sun, space, and sunlight to describe the creative functions of mind so we can highlight a number of non-infinite things about this model. Knowing our need for seed and soil, we know it is as important for us to appreciate what the infinite idea is not as for us to know what it is. In our finite model, the sun is the source of the sunlight. In that sense, it fulfills the fathering function. Empty space fulfills the mothering function by containing the light. In this view, light is the offspring of the fathering sun, and it is contained in the mothering space.

The finite picture of sun, space, and sunlight seems to suggest the functions of mind and idea better than it does any spacial relationships. Our sun is not in any sense at-one with its sunlight. The light is clearly separate from its source in terms of its nature and position. Although one could say that the sunlight is one sunlight, it is, according to physics, quantized into countless discrete energy packets that have no link to one another except in kind. The sunlight is propagating out into dark empty space. The boundary of its wave front, traveling at the speed of light, is even now spreading into dark regions that are seeing its light for the first time. Beyond this dawning, as far as our sun's light is

concerned, it is still totally dark. Furthermore, this sun and sunlight model does not address the oneness of the father and mother functions.

The shortcomings of our limited thought model, the sun and sunlight, are important because they illustrate inaccuracies that always appear when we try to use human pictures to understand infinite relationships.⁵ If you ever think about infinite ideas and find some aspect you do not like, something that seems an undesirable limitation, that is because of a limited view, not a problem with the infinite idea but only with a finite conception of it.

Such questions of limitation will not appear when the thoughts we imagine are truly infinite, but they can arise to the extent we think of infinity using finite thought pictures. It is not necessary to avoid finite images, but just to know the difference between cause and effect and to appreciate the value of periodically reaching beyond images to seed thought from the realm of pure words. This means reaching out to infinite words and pushing thought beyond images, not using our ability to picture thoughts as the test for their presence. At length, those infinite ideas whose essence we are able to glimpse but faintly will reveal aspects of their spiritually mental images, and they will make sense to us. These things are not incomprehensible; they just take some gestation time.

If we are meditating on a spiritual thought we can humanly imagine, it is a limited thought, and dwelling on the finite cannot take us to the infinite. It is sometimes helpful to imagine finite thought pictures to illustrate infinite spiritual conceptions. They can give us a sense of at least partially understanding a remote subject. We might think of the infinite mind as a sphere holding the infinite idea within or as an infinite void filled with the reflected light of infinite individual spiritual consciousness. We might reach for the abstract essence of such words and not try to picture them at all. It is always good to get

⁵ Anyone familiar with Mary Baker Eddy's writings will recognize her use of this metaphor (where God is the sun, the totality of sunlight is the Christ, and we are individual rays of light), that I was taking on, in an attempt to point out a higher standard for oneness. I've come around to appreciating this metaphor more and find that it resonates with a spiritual perception I had in 1969, (Spiritual Experiences – Case 3, at www.hyperthot.com/10_videos.htm). I was objecting to the finite picture and spacial separations, which do injustice to the meanings of infinity and oneness. Also, in physics, a "ray" of light is an idealized concept without well-defined identity. My problem with "ray" as with "a drop of water ... one with the ocean ..." another of her metaphors, is that these don't have identity or object persistence. A drop of water in the ocean loses its individuality pretty quickly, as does a ray of light coming from the sun. Nevertheless, they speak to important ideas and can be elucidating and even comforting.

back to pure infinite words, to refresh and recast the thoughts we may have in mind. The mind of goodness has pure goodness as the core of its central identity. It is filled with the radiant goodness of its reflection. It has nothing else in it, and it is at-one with its idea, its image and likeness.

As you think about these words of pure goodness, watch to see if you become aware of thoughts that might try to contradict these statements or that might try to suggest or argue for an opposite of pure infinite goodness. As you continue to exercise the mind whose identity is good, your thinking will logically exclude contradictions and suggestions of opposition. The logic of thinking from a principle that is pure infinite goodness effectively precludes anything unlike itself. If you stay with the mind of pure spiritual goodness, it will bring your conscious thoughts into consistency with goodness, their rightful originating principle. Fidelity to spiritually principled thinking will keep this process going. The truly beneficial part of this comes when you apply spiritual conclusions to regenerate your beliefs.

We have looked at three basic offices of mind and considered their functions. Now let us consider some qualities that would be inherent in a mind of pure goodness and reflected in its idea. The creative activity of such a mind defines the activity of pure intelligence. An infinite mind must be infinitely intelligent. Spiritual intelligence is the actual substance of its idea.

Every quality of mind we might consider to be good is available to the mind reflecting pure spiritual goodness. The mind of pure goodness can be amplified in any direction of goodness. The mind we experience when using spiritual goodness as a principle always has the wisdom to choose correctly, because, to this mind, pure spiritual goodness is the only direction and the only choice. Because our idea of this mind springs from understanding a spiritual principle, our ideas will be solidly understood from their inception. Expressions from an infinite spiritual principle are always understanding, kind, compassionate, graceful, profound, and sympathetic.

The ideas of infinite mind are naturally available to this mind and appear intuitively and spontaneously. Infinite mind always has the right idea at the right time. Any aspect of this good mind we could ever need is available to us through identifying with, claiming, and reflecting its qualities of mind.

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We have looked at the relationship between the idea of infinite goodness and its founding principle, and we have examined the idea's origin, containment, and realization in the mind. Now let us consider what it might mean for that idea to be spiritual. The idea of a spiritual principle is wholly spiritual yet uncommonly tangible. It reflects the animus or divine spark of its originating principle. The idea of infinite spirit reflects all the characteristics of its source. Since its principle is pure goodness, every aspect of this spiritual idea reflects goodness. The idea of pure spiritual goodness has no standpoint from which to express a negative spirit.

The ideas of spiritual goodness put the reality of all infinite spirit's qualities into expression. The idea of spirit is vividly animated, and its disposition shows forth the soft brilliance of spiritual light. The infinite spiritual idea is infinite goodness at its essence. It reflects and embodies the spiritual substance of its originating principle. The spiritual idea expresses the heart and tenderness of the principle of pure goodness. The idea of spirit radiates the presence and energy of spirit. Spirit's idea is exuberant with joy and gladness. It manifests effortless spiritual dynamism and impulsion. Pure infinite word acting as a spiritual principle defines, generates, constitutes, and enlivens its idea. The substance of the idea of spirit defines the manifest reality of goodness. The idea of spiritual goodness sparkles and is always expressive. Through its idea, the principle of spirit shines, warming and illumining the universe of consciousness. Spiritual goodness manifests an easy elegance of expression.⁶ Spiritually mental thought is inspired, showing forth the natural precision and acuity of infinite spirit.

We bring out spiritual qualities around us by identifying with and reflecting the mind of spiritual goodness as our mind, by obeying the leadings of the spirit of goodness, believing in unbounded spiritual goodness in ourselves and others, putting our sense of affection on spiritual things, and embodying infinite spiritual goodness as identity. Expressing a good spirit exemplifies our principle. Spirit's offspring manifest the magnanimity of spirit coming from their infinite source. While our spiritual principle is infinite, we can have but one spirit. The infinitude of our thought model precludes its idea

⁶ This felicitous alliteration is not mine but came from a friend's grad school recommendation letter – but it fits.

from being fractured into separate, lesser, or finite spirits. In the realm of spiritual goodness, there is one infinite spirit endlessly declaring itself - I am.

When we are spiritually minded, it requires not so much that we be set apart from the world⁷, but that we have set apart in consciousness the spiritually mental reality of all that we could treasure. Cherishing the spiritual essence of all we love enables us to follow human events with calm equanimity, knowing that the spiritual substance of life's treasures is held safely within.

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The idea of infinite goodness, being a principled idea, is always true to its source. Truth defines the relationship between the idea and its principle. Because the idea of infinite goodness is true to its principle, truth must be a characteristic inherent in its origin. Within the bounds of its definition, the infinite principle must also be an infinite truth.

The offspring of goodness is naturally true to goodness, so the principle of goodness defines all its creations to be ideas of truth. This aspect of the spiritual creation as truth reflects the nature of its source as truth. The idea of infinite truth has infinite truth as its original and forever identity. There is nothing of falsity defined in the realm of infinite goodness.

Pure goodness is the absolute truth about everything stemming from the infinite principle of goodness. From this principle's viewpoint, only pure goodness is true. For the principle of infinite goodness, nothing is too good to be true. In fact, one could test something's truth by asking whether it was good enough to be true. In the world of infinite goodness, infinite goodness is the only reality that is good enough to be true.

Applying the four levels of spiritual action discussed earlier, we conclude that obeying the truth, believing in truth, understanding spiritual truth, and embodying infinite

⁷ From subsequent experience, this has become the sentence in the book for which I would most like a do-over, although the fine points are still being discovered. Increasingly, in practice, one does need to embrace an entirely spiritual paradigm, and to do it to the exclusion of all else. When that is done, one is positioned to embrace an infinite idea of that excluded world, as pure spiritual opportunity, leading to a higher conception of wholeness and oneness.

truth as identity, brings infinite truth into expression and evidence, which brings infinite goodness into expression and evidence. Infinite truth brings into evidence that which rightfully is, and precludes from evidence that which legitimately is not.

It has been said that truth has two sides, that there are two sides to every story, and this has validity even for one infinite indivisible truth. There is the truth of what is true and, by exclusion or displacement, the truth of what is not. From the standpoint of the principle of pure goodness, infinite goodness is true and everything unlike infinite goodness is manifestly untrue; this constitutes one whole truth.

The primary office or function of truth is to be the perfect origin of its expression or idea. Everything that emanates from truth is absolutely true, made perfect from the essence of pure truth. The second function of truth appears to be distinct in its consequences, even while it may be inherent in the first. Original truth manifests no falsity. The degree of perfection of truth is absolute. This perfection precludes its expression from ever going awry. The idea of truth so conspicuously embodies the integrity of its source that it visibly evidences its own forever perfection. Truth's inherent quality of goodness of origin is so severe that it necessitates the forever inviolability of its offspring. Truth creates its idea well and maintains this likeness well forever. The dual nature of truth as the perfect origin and forever protector of its idea reveals truth as the father and mother of its expression, idea, image, and likeness.

From knowing about the three offices of mind, I am reminded that there must also be a third office of truth. The third office of truth is as idea, or the child of truth, as truth's offspring, with original truth as its identity, as its family name. When I glimpsed, in a momentary vision⁸ some years ago, what is described in the last paragraph, I was so vividly aware of the original perfection and forever inviolability of what I saw as truth, that it was not until I tried to describe it in writing that I realized that what I saw was not the perfect two-fold origin of truth; what I saw was the offspring of truth. In viewing truth's offspring, my overwhelming impression was of the nature of its origin. It looked just like its parents.

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⁸ See "Spiritual Experience – Case 6," an audio on my website, www.hyperthot.com

Reflecting the principle of spiritual goodness as our thinking, our revelations spring into thought as mental creativity. The idea of an infinite principle is an original reflection of its own infinite self. This creative reflection shows forth infinity's procreativity. This pro-creation is not simply duplication; it is also re-creation. It is not a function of our spiritual reflection to simply duplicate a spiritual principle but to think of it originally. This activity of thought, reflecting the ideas of an infinite principle in original ways, multiplies, sustains, and nourishes its ideas and adapts them to their surroundings. The ideas of a spiritual principle live within the realm of their parent principle. While the infinite principle of pure goodness is reflected as thought, the ideas of this principle show forth life. Because its ideas have life, life must be a characteristic inherent in their originating principle. Since the principle is defined as being infinite, its ideas have infinite life inherent in their identity. The infinite idea of life is forever fresh and sparkling with the brand new brightness of spiritual originality.

The infinite principle of pure goodness is the life of its creation of ideas. We see active manifestations of the ideas of infinite life in what we call living things. Ideas, images, and objects in the mind are not the originators of life, but they reflect, evidence, and express the life principle of their creative source.

The whole idea of infinite life springs from one infinite principle. The infinite idea of life is endlessly divisible without being diminished. The complete idea of infinity is one whole idea. While it is sometimes useful or meaningful to think in terms of the infinite ideas of infinite principle, or even of the infinite ideas of infinite principles, the idea of infinite principle is one whole compound idea, showing forth all of infinity as one.

Reflecting thoughts from a spiritual principle continues to reveal them in improved ways. Spiritual ideas active in thought appear to grow. Spiritual creation naturally grows before us from our reflection and exemplification of the spiritual mind that is good. Not only are the creations of this mind intrinsically good, but the direction of their development is good. The appearance of good growing in the direction of good indicates dynamic higher orders of goodness. Higher orders of goodness are characterized by loveliness and sublimity. The infinite calculus of goodness brings higher orders of activity, growth, and progress to the economy of a principled life.

The originality of the creative process precludes pure goodness from becoming boring. A human or finite sense of spiritual goodness might seem sterile or dull. The infinite aspect of the creative process brings startling freshness and wondrous vitality to the activities of goodness. This aspect of life's spiritual principle delivers us from bland austerity or sensory deprivation. The idea of the infinite principle that is life is forever alive. Ideas identified with this spiritually mental life source have all life's attributes inherent in their identity.

In composing these statements, I am thinking about a principle of pure infinite goodness, reflecting upon it, and considering what it might mean for that principle to be life. Because the resulting ideas are reflected from their origin, I experience them as original ideas. That is not to say that someone else could not have already assembled these same words, but just that when we reflect thoughts from a spiritual principle, we see in them the qualities of originality. Originality describes a direct relationship with origin. The sense of newness and uniqueness that we associate with original ideas comes naturally from their origin.

If you simply read through these passages, some of the conclusions may seem obvious to you or even mundane. Some of the most profound truths look strikingly simple. If you reach out to pure infinite goodness and let it act as the principle of your mind, your resulting thoughts will be original, and you will at length become aware of your own reflection of that infinitely original mind that is your forever life.

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A mind reflected from the principle of pure goodness is an image of its originating principle. Through this conscious mind, the consciousness of its principle is shown forth. That reflected consciousness is of pure goodness itself. For such a mind to be conscious that it is, and of what it is, makes it infinitely self-conscious. For pure goodness to recognize and comprehend its nature as pure goodness constitutes its sense of self.

A complete image in the infinite mind is an image of the infinite mind. The image it sees is a conception of its own word, understood by its own mind, and seen as its own self. This describes the extraordinary occurrence of an infinite mind viewing its own self-conscious image, seeing its own self, and reflecting its own self-consciousness. It is as though,

when standing in front of a multi-sided mirror in a clothing store, you were to see your multiple images in the mirror, with each reflecting a unique aspect of your individuality, each image a reflection not only of your own visual image but of your own thoughts, including your own awareness of yourself as you. You would have created, by virtue of standing in front of the mirror, a host of offspring made in your image, each individually unique and self-conscious. Were infinite identity to ask itself which one of these images was itself, it might point to each in turn and say, this is myself, and this is myself.⁹ Or it could say, all of them are me, for I am one. Infinite mind looks out to itself and sees its infinite self reflected back as itself.

The idea of pure mind is so like its source that it appears to have pure mind as its own identity. This offspring mind is a manifested mind. The manifested mind may also be a manifesting mind. The child mind may reflect the prerogatives of the parent mind, resulting in an infinite consanguinity of good, timeless infinite individual being unfolding itself to itself forever.

Because pure goodness is self-creative and self-conscious, it defines all identity and individuality as part of itself. In this sense of individuality, pure goodness defines the idea of its own soul. Pure infinite goodness is its own infinite sense of soul. It is the definition of all the goodness and reality of soul there can ever be. In the realm of infinity there is one infinite soul. Anything appearing to have a soul of its own, or to have a separate soul or self, would be like your reflection in the multi-sided mirror suggesting, until you thought about it for an instant, that there was a you outside of or apart from you.

Infinite abstract soul creates its likeness within itself as its own visible soul. Its sense of this fresh original soul created within is its sense of its own creation, of its own self, distinct from, even while at-one with, its abstract knowledge of itself. This soul of goodness senses itself through its idea of itself, which it sees and feels, and through which it experiences the fullness of its pure goodness of soul.

Just as in the limited case of using the sun and space to represent the infinity of a creative father and mother mind at-one with its idea, a finite sense of soul, even a finite

⁹ L. Ivimy Gwalter's May 13, 1972 article, "Individuality and Identity," in the Christian Science Sentinel includes the following: 'Each idea is distinct, but never separate from God. Idea never declares, "I am an idea of Mind, and you are another." But Mind, the one forever Ego reflected in its ideas, declares, "This is myself, and this is myself." Thus, because there is only one Ego, there is never separation or a sense of separation between its ideas.'

sense of an infinite soul, does not represent the true idea. Soul and its idea or expression is one infinite soul, one whole soul, and although the infinite expressions of soul are discretely individual, they are also infinitely one.

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The mind reflecting the word and principle of infinite goodness experiences this creation as the idea of loveliness. In seeing this loveliness, identity is aware of the relationship between loveliness and itself. Its awareness of the loveliness of its creation, and of its relationship to itself, is not simply a theoretical recognition; it is a seen and felt recognition. It is a recognition of experience and knowledge; it comprehends and embodies the oneness of identity and idea. This embodiment is love, the embodied appreciation of the likeness of the infinite mind's idea to itself. Because the principle of love's action is infinite, love naturally embraces the full spectrum of thought and experience.

Love is the experiencing of kindred goodness. Love experiences the loveliness and likeness of its spiritual offspring. Infinite creative love defines all that it can experience. The experiential nature of love means that love is never merely remote or abstract but is always manifest, tangible, and concrete. When spiritual understanding embodies love, it brings out the knowledge of goodness.

Infinite love involves the simultaneous recognition of individual and universal love. It finds them to be in harmony and balance, never in conflict. Love's expression of itself as identity and opportunity manifests its love for its idea. Its idea is one infinitely individual likeness of itself. Infinite love's concept of loving one individual, each individual, and all individuals remains one infinite love.

If the principle of our love is grounded in the human dimension, it can sometimes become denominational when pushed. It can find itself challenged to choose or compromise between individuals, between groups, or between individuals and groups. Fractious polarities can result from the inability of limited thinking to grasp the dual nature of infinity, its being infinite and also one.

Because human thought does not easily assimilate the idea of infinite love as one, it does what it can; it often thinks of love as two. This limited sense of love can struggle to reconcile contending human factions. Resolution of economic, ideological, ethnic, and

racial tensions can come through our increased recognition of individual spiritual identity as infinite and as one. When confronted by human conflicts, we can find individual solutions and help with group solutions by being more infinitely minded about love. The wholeness of infinity, manifesting the harmonious integration of opposites, brings to the human mind improved practical beliefs that are increasingly more unifying and less limited.

To reflect the love of infinite love, not only must the focus and breadth of infinity be acknowledged, but its depth also. The depth at which love can be experienced to bring out knowledge of love is not finite, because love is not finite. This does not mean you need to start with your love as big as a house, but just that you never say no to love. Knowledge of love naturally grows out of acceptance of love as one's own identity. This means one has the opportunity not only to think about love but to think as love itself thinks. Thinking and being as love thinks and is redeems selfhood. Identifying with infinite love allows us to more naturally express love as love itself expresses love. Identifying with infinite love, we can increasingly feel love as love feels love and embody love as love itself embodies love.

A human or limited concept of love can sometimes seem a parody of real or infinite love. A limited sense of wanting to be loved or of wanting someone to love is replaced by the true idea when one identifies with infinite love. Infinite love knows it is all there is of love's source, and its expression is all there is of love's destination. Love never needs to look outside its infinite creation for love or to love. Love's idea regenerates its love by affirming its identity as infinite love. For the idea of infinite love to simply be magnifies and multiplies its love.

Infinite love defines the scope and quality of true love, and it loves its infinite likeness to its satisfaction and fulfillment. Because of the dynamic nature of infinity, infinite love is forever discovering new aspects of its creation to love, and it is, at the same time, discovering new ways and resources with which to love its discoveries, new abilities to manifest and enjoy its love.

Love cannot lack an object to love, because love is creative, and it creates its own objects, reflections of itself, its spiritual offspring, expressions of its own spiritual selfhood. Love is the conscious relationship of all love's ideas. Love provides the structure within which its infinite idea dwells. Love peoples the soul of infinity with gladness. Love loves that it is, and what it is, and who it is. Incidentally, this means that you can too. Love

appreciates the goodness of everything it creates. Love embodies the deep satisfaction and dignity of its being. Spiritual love loves all life's experiences.

You need not try to define the infinite idea of love to yourself in human terms. Let the infinite idea of love permeate and fill the attic of your mind and dwell there. Then, in time, human images and human experiences will present themselves to you as if conceived by love itself.¹⁰

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This chapter has given an example of thinking using pure infinite spiritual goodness as a principle. We might envision a whole new world within the bounds of this thinking, beginning with an infinite parenting spiritual principle and reflected in a joyous infinite compound idea as its offspring. Our recognition of the infinite nature of these two leads us to consider their oneness and infinitude. We might even imagine a state of thought that might try to content itself with contemplating only such a spiritually mental world of sublime goodness.

While we have concentrated on a point of view that considers infinite goodness to be the totality of thought, we know, from understanding the need for seed and soil, that to conceive the wholeness of our idea we need both conception and elimination. We need our understanding and knowledge of what is to be in balance with our understanding and knowledge of what is not.

From the world of observation we are confronted with a human sense of the negative. If the theory of the supremacy of spiritual goodness has any validity, other than as an isolated mental game, we should be able to apply it thoughtfully to our observations. Even after we have considered pure spiritual goodness to be infinite, theory and practice lead us to a question: What about evil?

¹⁰ MBE has a definition of God that says, "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love." In the previous chapter, when meditating on the word spirit, the qualifications made were based on the four adjectives. In this chapter, instead of quoting from Science and Health, page 465, as an authority, I'm showing how they might be logically derived starting from an originating Principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness.

Chapter 8 – What About Evil?

In the last chapter, we were thinking of an idea intended to make sense from the perspective of a principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness. We tried to forego discussion of an opposite to infinite goodness. We also put off questions raised by any sense of the negative. These issues need to be addressed.

Looking around, it is clear that we do not always experience the conditions of sublime existence enjoyed by the idea of infinite goodness. Instead of harmony and infinity we might sometimes experience discord and limitation. Instead of goodness we might sometimes sense an opposite, things we might call evils. Our presumption is that we would like to see and experience more of infinite goodness and less of limiting evils. If we postulate that consciousness filled with spiritual goodness experiences sensible good, what story do we have to account for troubling limitations, discords, evil?

If there is a spiritually mental energy responsible for bringing good into our lives, is there one we can count on to prevent evils? Can beliefs in evil simply be displaced by knowledge of infinite good? Would anyone ever think it might be good for evil to exist? If it were ever good to cause evil, would that then be a type of good? If something is good for you and evil for me, is that good? Is all this starting to sound like nonsense?

If we want to correct or prevent some untoward occurrence, a first question we are likely to ask is, "What makes this happen?" We intuitively sense the importance of causation, that understanding causation is closely tied to prevention and cure. When the cause of an untoward thing is discovered, insights and strategies can be developed so the causative factors can be avoided. Antidotes are more easily devised when the origin of something is known, because one knowing about the essence of a problem can often get into its core and undo it.

For the purpose of this discussion, let us loosely group causes for any negative sense under the term evil. A beginning definition might be to say that evil is anything we might wish to prevent or cure. One may question this definition, and some reasons for questioning it will be addressed. The term evil can mean the obvious, the actual phenomena of what we might call evils on the human scene: murder, cruelty, misery, brutality, terror, suffering, starvation, inhumanity, wretchedness, torment, and so on. The

word evil can also be used to address ethical, moral, spiritual, or mystical concepts. Definitions for evil may vary among individuals as much as would their ideas about what is truly good. For the sake of our current discussion, let us just use the term evil as is.

If we are thinking of something we might wish to prevent or cure, the most fundamental question about its cause might be a generic question about the origin of evil. Such a question may include some presumptions, because we have not established that there is any such thing as evil, and we have not established that it is something actually caused. For this reason, we will address the question of whether manifest evil has legitimate origin, and then we will see what happens after those conclusions.

If you have made it this far, you realize this analysis is focused at a fairly high level of abstraction. In asking about evil, we are not questioning whether there is any such thing as a train wreck. Rather, our question is, is there anything of mental or spiritual substance or essence behind things that give us the impression that they are evil?

Thinking about the origin of evil initially presents to the human mind a series of dilemmas - what might appear as equally unacceptable alternatives. Few of the answers seem just right, and some of the questions are not much better. Let us wade into a series of dilemmas and take them on one at a time. We will try each time to choose a conclusion that is slightly better or more correct or more desirable than its alternative.

Progressive human thinking must often employ the selection of successively less objectionable evils. Our choices in this and the next chapter will illustrate this, for we will be considering the relative merits of imperfect choices.

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Can events be objectively evil or is it the thoughts behind them that make them seem evil to us? Is cruelty more evil than an earthquake? Are some untoward events values-neutral? If a meteorite hits my apartment, is that evil or just bad luck? Religious theories have contributed much on the subject of evil. One religious view might consider the physical world and its sensations to be an evil discordant influence. A secular view might see religion as an evil of limitation that would separate people from full life experience through fear and superstition.

When we are drawn to wondering about the origin of evil, it is sometimes not because we want to know the answer, but because we seek relief from the mental perplexity that arises when the subject comes up. It may be a natural inclination of our minds to wonder about the origin of the world, of existence itself. Maybe we feel that knowing where the world comes from might help us figure out where it is going. At any rate, wondering where things come from has to do with causation and origin.

We know that eggs come from chickens, or is it the other way around, and we know that warm days are caused by sunshine. One could cultivate the view that everything around us comes from something - it all has origin or cause. We could see everything in the world of observation as the effect of something. This is not to say what our world might be the effect of, but simply that it could be seen as the effect of something. Our concept of causation might be physical, statistical, natural, mystical, whimsical, religious, spiritual, metaphysical, or some combination.

We will begin our examination of causation with its negative. What if creation, the noun, never resulted from creation, a verb? What if it just happened? This could have been an accidental occurrence, a chance, nonessential, incidental physical event, a physical universe coming into being without intent. This view looks at effects and sees in them causes; it involves the coalescing of everything out of nothing and nowhere. The theory has its merits.

If the world and the universe are entirely physical phenomena, the concept of causation can be categorized simply: all causation is physical and material. In this view, there is no divine creative impulse, no design or plan. In this view, it is natural to conclude that the universe and our world appeared through a process of spontaneous physical evolution. If you think the occurrence of reality is a statistical phenomenon, it will be reasonable to accept good and evil in accordance with the predictions of statistics.

In a purely physical universe, evil is defined in relative terms. Good is a term for things that feel good and promote survival. Evil is a term for painful things and things adverse to survival. In this case, animals might be as justified as us in having a sense of good and evil. A wholly material view of evil might use the word just to categorize things that seem bad. From this point of view, the word evil has no depth of rational meaning. Evil is simply a term for randomly occurring untoward events. The word might occasionally seem to be important when we have an emotional stake in issues of survival,

but we will be practical rather than profound in seeking antidotes. Based on this purely physical point of view, good and evil are just words that describe relative experiences in the physical world. They have no transcendent meaning.

In this material view, physical laws are inherent in the matter and energy they govern, or they exist in some other medium apart from matter and energy. In the physical world, as in the spiritual, man's first rational understanding of creation may have to do with recognizing its laws. The wholly material view of universal origin can be exalted to a kind of physical pantheism where material laws of science are viewed with reverence. We can look for the secrets to forever by discerning truths from minute particles as they disappear.

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Let us next consider the idea of a creator, that is, of some creative intent. Postulating the existence of a creator delivers us from the enigma of having an elegant effect with no recognizable cause. But this is only the beginning of our enigmas. The slightly transcendent thinker may face more puzzling questions than before. If creation is the outcome of a great Architect or Lawgiver, how does the concept of evil fit into the creative process and into the creation? If the creator is good, where does evil come from? And if the creator is not wholly good, well, what then? These seem like fair questions.

We could imagine that creative powers reside in nature, in departed spirits, or in the sun and moon and stars. If we are content to accept answers that are not supposed to make sense, we are open to the wide realm of mysticism. We can be spared the influence of rationality by wandering into the mystical, finding nonsense answers for all our serious questions. This attraction may not be altogether frivolous, but it is not on a rational path.

If we view the universe and man as being the result of a creative act rather than a random happening, we are bound to begin considering mental factors in the equation of creation. That may be due to an intuitive awareness that mentality is the primitive arena of creativity. If we imagine a creator, it is hard to imagine a creator without a mind. Is it in the mind that creative intent is first seen? If what we see as creation has not only a physical but a mental aspect, it is reasonable to consider that the idea of creation was originally conceived in a mind. One could hope there was a vision. Understanding the mind of the

creator should help us bring some understanding to our idea of the creation and to our sense of the negative.

Since we are used to thinking of what we call our own minds as minds that were created rather than as minds that reflect creativity in any bold sense, it is natural for us to begin thinking of the creative mind as a mind wholly apart from ours. We usually begin conjectures about the possible nature of a creative mind by considering it to be a separate supernatural or transcendent being. The premise that this mind is a being totally separate from ours is initially helpful. It makes qualities we might want to attribute to the creative mind only remotely associated with our own sense of mentality. We can then cultivate better beliefs about the creative mind that we would initially be unable to believe for ourselves.

Once we have postulated the existence of a creative being, we can suppose things about the creator and test our suppositions against standards of logic and sense. We can ascribe to the creator the attributes we would like it to have and then see if those seem reasonable. We can suppose that the creator is just, benevolent, all-powerful, and infinite. Or it could be capricious, malevolent, equivocal, and limited. Or somehow both. Which would you choose?

If we ascribe to our idea of the creator the utmost of good, questions about evil will naturally arise when we examine the local scene. Thinking about this brings on the dilemmas. The first one is, if there is a creator, either the creator created evil or it did not. Which is it? If we reason that the creator created manifest evil for no right purpose, then the creator has some explaining to do. We have laws against such mischief.

If the creator did not create evil, who did? If we decide the creator did not create evil and that something else did, then we have at least two players in the primal cause business - we have two creators, a creator of good and a creator of evil. All these conclusions do some injustice to the idea of a creator that is benevolent, all-powerful, and infinite, a sense toward which at least a portion of the mind seems logically and dispositionally inclined.

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One antidote to this dilemma is to suppose that the creator is simply one for whom issues of good and evil are not important. Much like the earlier view of the physical,

accidental universe, perhaps this creator set things in motion and then stepped back, either to watch or to go elsewhere on some other project. Due to its absentee status, this creator could be regarded as an indifferent creator. The universe having been created, we were then left to our own devices. Looking around, it might sometimes seem reasonable to conclude that the creator has fled the scene. If the creator has been watching us, one might conclude that this creator is either powerless to help us or is not so disposed. We do not hear too much about the theory of the indifferent creator, because believers in an indifferent creator are likely to be indifferent to their creator in return.

The indifferent creator is not interested in ethical or moral distinctions. Whether pleased or not, this creator is finished with us. There would be no reason for us to expect any providential influence in the daily affairs of men. Having provided physical laws, biological driving forces, and ordering principles, and perhaps having given us the concepts of right and wrong as social survival aids, the creator has finished and left.

One problem with this theory is that any human suffering or misery we might experience must have been a possibility inherent in the creation as it was established. The creator is to some extent responsible for this. To create such a creation and then leave us would not have been a nice thing to do. I could not in good conscience set up and then forsake a situation where the rules of the game allowed for misery and suffering with no apparent reason, purpose, or intent. It would be cruel.

Call me an idealist, but I have to think that the creator of the universe is at least as nice as I am. I suppose this could be debated. No doubt it could be damning by faint praise. The idea struck me as intuitively obvious some years ago, and I have used it as a major principle ever since. I hope it makes sense to you. It is important to the resolution of our dilemmas.

Based on this principle, I will naturally disbelieve the idea of an indifferent creator as soon as I realize I would not act like that myself. This illustrates an important point: our acceptance of progressive concepts about the creator of the universe, with the laws and beliefs that accrue, is closely tied to our recognition of the same attributes expressed in ourselves. Having proceeded to this point, we know we are at least not completely indifferent. Our consideration of causation, so far, has not given us much insight into the nature of evil, that is, unless you think indifference is not a stellar quality to have in a deity.

The next theory, which appears in the beginnings of religion, in pagan and materialistic worship and elsewhere, is that good and evil are defined, but they are somehow natural, intermingled, and undifferentiated. The resulting theories identify groups of deities, spirits, or governing forces - sometimes good and bad, sometimes competing among one another - or they might describe a slightly confused deity. Such early religious leanings are based on temperamental deities and indistinct transcendent sentiments. The concept of evil at this level is arbitrary and mischievous rather than related to any ordered sense of cause and effect. Such beliefs are mostly mystical and pre-rational. They precede the useful levels of spiritual action.

The mystical view is mentioned here for completeness, but not because such ideas have any relation to rationality. Awareness of them is useful in analyzing thought, however, because the intermingled and undifferentiated character of these beliefs can be seen by degrees in some prominent religions. As spiritual awareness begins to dawn, before we have made any rational distinctions, we are confronted by a sense of the whole. This beginning sense of the spiritual dimension can be comprised of hopeful, mixed, and malevolent sentiments without the reliable means to separate them. While the quasi-spiritual nature of this phase of thought can intrigue us, it can sometimes offer up to us the sting of malice or spite. At its best, this level of human thought is characterized by tendencies toward the good and transcendent without any settled sense of spiritual law, faith, or understanding.

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Let us move on to the idea of creation from a rational creator. Here we have to consider the possibility that the creator created evil for a reason. Why would anyone want to create evil?

The first answer might be so it could be used to enforce spiritual law, for punishment, to exact payment for wrong doing. Were this the case, our experiencing of evil could always be correlated with our doing something wrong, with some violation of law. Another reason for creating evil might be for contrast, to make life more interesting, because one had too feeble a sense of good for its merits to be obvious without comparison to an opposite. Whose idea was that? Talk about a good idea gone bad.

If evil befalling us is legitimate punishment for wrongdoing, it will not appear to be invoked arbitrarily by the creator. If a rational creator is anything at all, it is just, for that is the essence of the relationship between cause and effect. The law describes the relationship. The relationship defines the law.

While in this frame of mind, evil's occurrence will be correlated with laws being broken, with punishment being sentenced as if by a judge. The concepts of law and justice are the first things we discover when coming out of mysticism and considering a rational creator. Such a realization of spiritual law will be of genuine comfort to us if we have been fearing capricious punishment. We will finally have a sense of order and justice in our lives. If we correlate the existence of evil with law and punishment, at what we will for convenience call *level one* of rational spiritual development, it will be natural for us to believe that when laws are no longer being broken, evil will no longer be visited on us.

The progression here illustrates some of the evolution of early religious systems. Some religious belief systems with older historical origins are built on ritual observances and obedience to spiritual law. Rituals come from the pre-rational level, and obedience to spiritual law comes from the first rational level. When these two are combined, taking the form of obedience to rituals, it is hard to keep them straight. The pre-rational level brings with it the undifferentiated character that is naturally intermingled and confused.

A belief system that relates evil to divine punishment will make its adherents feel guilty for their sense of the negative. Even if we are not the ones breaking the rules, we can still feel guilt by association. Some religions are big on this. Someone broke the rules, and now we are all subject to punishment. This is not a very happy thought.

As long as I do what I think is wrong, it will be natural for me to regard evils that befall me as just and proper punishment. I will regard evils happening to others likewise, as their just desserts. Even if I stop doing what I think is wrong, if I stop breaking what I think are the rules, I may still be liable to the idea of associative guilt.

But associative guilt is not fair. If I am not dealing fairly with others, I will not expect to see fairness in my creator. If I am relating to my creator through an agent or a group, collective guilt will seem reasonable to me. When I take spiritual responsibility for myself and relate to my creator as an individual, that will awaken in me the expectation of fair treatment as an individual. When I refuse to be unfair to others, when I lift from my fellows any blanket sense of condemnation for the negative, my major principle will come

into effect. My creator is at least as nice as I am. If I am trying to be fair to the individual, I know my creator is at least as fair as I am.

When I am striving not to do wrong, and when I have refused to be unfair to others, I will not be able to believe that untoward events happening to me are just punishment from a loving creator. That will simply not make sense to me. If we seek out a benevolent creator and practice obedience to spiritual law, we will gradually disbelieve that we are under a sentence of divine punishment. At this point, any evil we might experience will not look like punishment to us. We will have obsoleted that belief for ourselves. Then we are naturally set to wondering again about our sense of the negative, about what evil is and where it comes from. When we have obsoleted the just punishment theory, we can go forward or lapse backward. When our hearts and minds are ready to embrace the concept of a loving law, we will move beyond a merely legal and mystical sense of spirituality.

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If I accept the idea of a creator that is good, and strive to obey its laws, this will bring my beliefs and my behavior under the general influence of goodness. If belief in goodness is the greater part of my spiritual ideal, my expression of loving kindness will go with it. Eventually merciful wisdom will win out over simple justice. At this point, I will not condone my doing evil intentionally, and I will not condone meting out evil to punish someone else. I will have little instinct to exact payment from another by making them suffer. I might want to forgive them instead. I could no longer justify an act where I would be actually creating evil, suffering, or misery for another. To act out revenge will be unthinkable.

When I can find no legitimate reason or disposition to intentionally cause evil, my beliefs about my creator will be at least as good. I will not believe my creator would do something that would be beneath my ideal.

I might grudgingly admit that evil, suffering, misery, or punishment might have some temporary justification or value on the human scene. I might consent to the idea of a temporarily necessary evil. I might reason that although I would not create evil, others are free to do so. I might concede that others should be able to express their free will to choose. Having evil around might somehow show forth the triumph of good over evil, as

people make more enlightened choices. But all that would be a grudging acceptance, not a willing participation, on my part. I might allow that people create their own evil, and this naturally provides negative reinforcement to lessen evil. One or more of these reasons might lead me, not to create evil myself, but merely to consent to the idea of it, just to allow for the possibility that manifest evil might have some value. Or I might not like evil one jot. I might just feel powerless to do anything about it. And in my powerlessness I might somehow rationalize evil's existence.

Some significant theological evolution has moved, as we just did, from the idea of evil being directly caused by the creator to the idea of evil being *allowed* by the creator. The idea is that some subsidiary portion of the creator's work went awry and caused evil, and the creator allowed this or was powerless to prevent it. The theory says that evil exists because the creator allows for free will. This allowance permitted an adversary to come into existence within a creation that was originally intended to be good.

At this *level two* of rational spiritual progress, our conception of creative principles has evolved from strict justice to now include benevolence. Our personification of this moves from a supreme being who is a stern lawgiver to belief in a benevolent personal savior. With the creator now represented to us by a loving spiritual person who would not create evil, we can put our trust in good, strive to embody the ideals of forgiveness and merciful love, and wait for our deliverance.

To have less evil in this scenario we must continue to strive to follow the rules. We must make sure that we exercise our free will correctly. But now, instead of simply needing to follow spiritual laws, we have come to realize that what we believe is important too. Now we seek to believe more of the primacy of spiritual goodness, even as it goes beyond simple justice. Because beliefs are source constrained, addressing what we believe is soon translated into determining who we believe. For symmetry with our benevolent information source, our sense of the negative is now personified as a malevolent adversary who is trying to trick us into doubting our beliefs in goodness and breaking the rules we had hoped to obey. Since the source of our problems is seen as an adversary, it is natural for us to look to an advocate to deliver us. The creator itself is somewhat above the fray, watching the advocate and adversary compete for our souls. The creator is allowing this situation for its educational or corrective value, or maybe it is outside the creator's jurisdiction or power.

It seems that we made our lives more complicated when we decided the creator did not directly create evil. We selected the lesser of apparently imperfect choices. Now it may be too late to go back. One who has come this far in their spiritual thinking and being would be unlikely to go back to believing the old way.

Let us now say that we find ourselves in a situation where we see someone suffering from their own ignorance, stubbornness, or stupidity. If we consent to this in our hearts, allowing for the educational value of their suffering, we will be comfortable thinking of our creator as having the same point of view. However, if we find ourselves moved by merciful compassion to reach out and do what we can to deliver those suffering even through their own venality or stupidity, our embodiment of that quality of love will push us toward the next level of belief.

This struck me once when a canine neighbor of mine was causing herself grief due to what looked to me like stupid willfulness. After I tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to persuade and drag her out of her predicament, I got fed up and walked away. She was not in any real peril, but it wasn't an ideal situation. My last thought was that it was her own fault, and maybe the suffering would teach her a lesson, and I'd come back later anyway. As I walked away, the question came to me: How would I like God to treat me if I were being that dumb? I went back and lifted this large, rambunctious sheepdog up in my arms and carried her away from the problem.

When we find ourselves motivated to confer merciful deliverance on the ignorant or undeserving, we are in a position to realize, again, that our creator is at least as nice as we are. At this point, we know that our creator has the will to confer, even on the most seemingly unenlightened of us, merciful deliverance from all suffering. When we withdraw our mental consent from the idea that people need to suffer until they get smart enough to stop sinning (breaking whatever we or they think the rules are), then we will no longer believe an intelligent and loving creator would establish a creation that allowed such a process as a legitimate part of life.

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Our human progress is not unlike the inchworm's. Reaching out far ahead and stretching our thoughts toward our ideal, we then bring up the rear as close as we can.

This simply positions us to reach out again. Our rear never catches up with our reach, but we keep making progress anyway. When our spiritual ideals are well ahead of our beliefs, they can help us realize progress in our thinking and being. When we realize some of the progress we seek, our deepest beliefs about ourselves and others, and about the creator and creation, will progress with us.

As our embodiment of justice and obedience wins exemption from belief in evil as punishment, so our commitment to forgiveness and universal love does away with belief in evil as a divinely allowed educational tool. When our love, at least in theory, knows no legitimate grounds for exceptions, then our love begins acting like a principle. If our spiritual ideal acts like a principle rather than a person, it takes on the aspect of being an absolute, principles being more reliable than persons. At this point, our concept of the creator evolves from a supreme being who is a divine person to one that is a divine principle. If we are thinking of the creator as a benevolent person, we can imagine that person being opposed to the existence of evil, but powerless to prevent it. If we look to the creator as a conscious spiritual principle from which creation springs, our idea of the creation will be its reflection.

At this point, we again encounter the situation where our conclusions have rendered obsolete our old theories and beliefs. Through exemplification of our spiritual ideals, we have come to the point where we cannot believe the creator would create or allow evil. We do not believe there is more than one creator. We believe the creator must have enough power and jurisdiction so that something neither created nor allowed by the creator would not have been actually created. So now we are ready to ask again: Where did evil come from?

We are ready to move to the next level of belief and to confront a new series of dilemmas. Our conclusions so far have followed from the progression of our thinking and being, but what do they mean? How can we interpret them? Is there any context in which these latest conclusions can make any sort of sense?

Looking from the viewpoint of the principle of pure spiritual goodness, from the previous chapter, our conclusions at this point are just starting to make sense. If the creator has the attributes of a spiritual principle, a divine Mind rather than a divine Person, then legitimate creation could be wholly spiritual. We have, for the first time in this discussion, begun to consider a belief framework that is nearing compatibility with an

idea of absolute goodness. If we conclude that the creator, acting as a creative principle, did not create evil and does not allow it, then there is no evil defined for our creator or its logical creation.

Looking around, however, we make some observations. The world, it is the old world yet. What do we do with our sense of the negative? It may still seem quite real to us. At this level, we may see through the lens of our beliefs that the physical world does not look to be completely good. The world of our senses still appears to be detached and physical rather than subjective and spiritual. It may even be that sometimes our identification of ourselves, our thoughts, beliefs, or actions, might not promote a sublime world of goodness. Is there any way to reconcile our spiritual ideals with practical appearances in a way that fits our conclusions?

We arrive at this point by reaching out to the creator as a loving divine Principle, going beyond a personal sense of goodness as a benevolent savior. We can continue to proceed rationally from here when we define legitimate creation as spiritual and are willing to question the *reality* of our sense of the negative. After all, isn't that the only problem here? Our problem with the creator is pretty much solved. Having no complicity in the creation of evil, the creator is no longer any part of the problem. At this point, our only sense of evil is a sense of the negative appearing through material sensations. If we define these to be unreal, haven't we solved our logical problem?

Knowing that the creator acts as a loving principle brings the realization that manifest evil was neither created nor allowed by it. At this point, we no longer revere a sense of the reality of the external negative more than the supremacy of the internal positive. Now we seek to believe in the reality of our spiritual sense of good more than any material sense of evil.

When we have sufficient sympathy for spiritual goodness acting as a principle, its primacy will dominate our sense of what is real and unreal. Reaching out to the creator as a divine Principle, beyond a personal sense of the divine, we can for the first time have a vantage point for understanding that conscious spiritual goodness is the basis for true conception.

When we glimpse the truth of the supremacy of spiritual goodness, logic initially compels us to view our material sense of the negative as an error, as an unreal sense. If there is only one creator, only one divine Mind in which the spiritual man exists as

reflection, image, or idea, then a mentality that experiences evil through the senses will be seen to be outside that Mind and therefore mistaken, a false sense of mentality or selfhood. At this level, the problem of evil appears to have its roots only in the selection of the mind we identify as our own.

It seems that the closer we get to understanding the infinity of goodness, the more abstruse our theories about evil become. The more good makes sense to us, the more incredible become our explanations of evil. This is the way it should be. As the mind knowing only the reality of spiritual goodness is increasingly identified as our conscious mind, any seeming reality to our negative sense of things fades away.

If we give no legitimate place to evil in the mind of the creator, evil cannot be part of reality, as far as the creator is concerned. Evil is then without legitimate origin. In this sense of reality as spiritual, a sense of our thinking apart from goodness is not considered to be right reflection of mind. It is viewed as falsity, as error, as mistaken belief. When we think of the mind of the creator as the principle of goodness, any sense of the negative, whether of mentality or feeling or experience, will not be believed to have been created, in any legitimate sense. From the standpoint of a creator who is the mind of spiritual goodness, we will have to say that anything out of harmony with spiritual goodness stems from an unreal sense of things.

If we are exercising spiritually disciplined thinking, like we did in the last chapter, this approach can bring our thinking into peaceful accord with our spiritual ideals. At this level, our problems may remain to our human senses, but they are less frightening, since we no longer see them as divinely ordained or allowed.

We attain this *level three* of spiritual progress by seeking the creator as a divine Principle rather than as a benevolent divine Person, and by demonstrating our identity as the reflection of that Principle, through the practice of spiritually minded thinking. Affirming the truths of spiritual reality and denying the suggestions of material falsities brings out conception of the spiritual idea and elimination of its opposite. This combination of seed and soil results in the spiritual idea understood. This involves us in the progressive redemption of our beliefs, from the standpoint of the spiritual idea of wholeness.

Our statement of the problem of evil at this level, where we say it is unreal, defines evil as a problem to be rid of more than as a problem to be justified or explained. If we

have a really good explanation for evil, perhaps we will be stuck with its effects forever, which is certainly not our goal. At this level of belief, one is inclined to keep conscious thoughts in line with spiritual principles and to correct contrary beliefs. One would come to see the good things in daily life as representations of spiritual ideas, while untoward things would be seen as representing false beliefs needing to be corrected and replaced through spiritual understanding.

When you spend time thinking about a divine Principle and its spiritual idea, and it makes sense to you, your new resulting sense can supersede your old sense of things quite literally. The cultivation of spiritual sense, the mental apprehension of wholly spiritual things, through spiritual reflection, can gradually attain more value in your thought than objects observed through the external senses. This happens as reasoning from spiritual principles is brought to closure in regenerated beliefs and actions.

At this level, the antidote to a sense of the negative is found in recourse to an absolute sense of spiritual goodness. This says that any intrusive sense of evil is an unreal sense, not really being sensed at all by your true being, by your true mind. Interestingly enough, you can bring this out in practice.

Now we have come to view our sense of the negative as less menacing than before. It is no longer a legitimate part of creation but an unreality, a false belief we are gradually able to dispel. As we would expect from symmetry, however, our sense of wholly legitimate reality may now seem similarly ethereal. At level three, we are willing to be somewhat detached from the good offered by our human senses so we can conceive the spiritual idea and realize the promise of dramatic freedom from our sense of discord. As far as evil goes, we would like to leave it as an error, as a false belief being vanquished, and not give it any further justification or credence. It has too much as it is.

With the creator as a divine principle, and spiritual creation coming from a principle beyond persons, we can peacefully reflect on our spiritual thought of creator and creation. Our practice is based on spiritual thinking and being, on putting off the old mind and putting on the new, rather than on blind belief in spiritual persons, justification through laws, or adherence to repetitious rituals.

But something in us wants to ask the familiar question. Even as abstract as this new sense of evil's essence is to us, we must still ask, "Where did it come from?" The right answer here, if we are being faithful to the principle of spiritual goodness, is that it doesn't

exist, and so it did not come from anywhere. This answer is consistent with where we are going, and its acceptance, perplexing as it might be, is vital to our being able to function effectively at level three, where we are striving to mentally reflect the creative divine Principle. Successful practice at this level can brook no exception from the supremacy of Spirit. Once we have accepted another answer, we are stuck with believing in something we wanted to be rid of.

But to be intellectually honest, to satisfy our legitimate need to be comprehensive, we will make the least out of this that we can and still satisfy human logic. Since this sense of evil is an error, not even created, but simply supposed, we will call it that, simply a false supposition. Did we do the false supposing? No. It happened before our watch. Were Adam and Eve the first false supposers? No. It was even before that? An original false supposer itself is a false supposition. We could leave this as an original false supposer and false supposition, an ethereal adversary at best. Or we can just stop supposing and walk away from this. For now.

In this chapter, we have followed the progression from physical, remote, and mystical theories to three rational levels of human belief corresponding to the first three levels of spiritual action - obedience, belief, and understanding. At each level, we can have some sense of spiritual efficacy. Obedience connects us with spiritual laws of cause and effect. Belief is converted to faith through trust in good and the exemplification of love that transforms our beliefs. Spiritual understanding is wrought out through spiritually minded thinking, putting consciousness in resonance with the reality and supremacy of Spirit.

Chapter 9 – The Dawn

When the thinker identifies and reflects the mind of spiritual goodness as his or her own right mind, the thinker becomes gradually dissociated from any hypothetical sense of an erring mortal mind or sense of falsity. When our reflection of spiritual principles becomes what we call our thinking, this reflected spiritual thinking realizes its reality. It becomes clear that no mental activity apart from spiritual goodness has substance. The previous level of belief loses its mental hold as our human belief of reality.

As we gain the mental confidence to look to spiritual reflection for all our sensations, fears associated with losing good sensations, or having negative ones, fade away. Looking to spirit for its sensations, identity comes to regard its sensations as spiritual, and this includes its sensations of itself, of its surroundings, and of its sense of substance and existence. The loving embodiment of our spiritual sense brings us into a new level of human belief. Declarations of the allness of spiritual goodness, that we held as our ideals at level three, become our human beliefs now at *level four*. Matter, most recently viewed as an erroneous perception or mental error, now no longer presses itself on our thought. Thoughts that used to be seen as matter are resolved into discord and limitation, neither of which have a mental aspect as reality. Mental discord disappears from consciousness, leaving human limitation as the only negative.

At level four, we do not see a human world made of spirit and matter, of truth and error. The mental makeup of our human world is seen to consist of spirit and nothing, of spirit and empty space. This level of belief is logically consistent with the ideal of spiritual substance as the sole reality of creation.

At this point, it appears palpably that spirit and spiritual ideas are the only mental substance. From this vantage, it becomes clear that there could never have been any essential beginning to mental discord. There never could have been a false mental creation or actual mental misconception. There never could have been a false supposing, and there is no false supposition to explain.

What we are talking about here is still a phase of human belief. At this fourth level of belief, we may have obeyed, believed, and understood our ideas of law, goodness, and spirituality. Nevertheless, the world of observation appears objectively like it is. It has a

brighter hue, but it is the same world as seen by everyone else. This world still has its problems, and we could still call the world's problems an appearance or sense of evil. It is just that the problems seem different than before. They have a different mental aspect. At this level, we see the world through a different lens of belief. What is behind this?

At this point, we have obsoleted our old beliefs again. Now we need to come up with another theory to explain our sense of the negative. We need a new theory to explain what may be our new sense of evil, even if ours is a sense of evil as nothing at all.

We are getting closer to having beliefs about our everyday world that are in harmony with the earlier ideas about the principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness. As we reach for words of infinite spiritual goodness as our mental principle, we no longer conceive of the spiritual idea independent from our reflection of it. When we let our sensations be spiritual, and unlimit our love to win out over superstitious fears of nothingness, we set the stage for the disappearance of any real seeming to discordant thinking. Now we have arrived at a state of mind where we identify spirit as the only actual substance, reality, feeling, and experience. Our sense of the negative is simply a sense of it as empty space, a sense of it as nothing at all.

At this level of belief, the reality of what we see before us is spiritual. In a sense, your hand before you is Spirit. It is the spiritual idea of a hand reflected in the mind of spirit. It is a finite representation of the hand of the infinite. But we need to make some fine distinctions here.¹¹

While we have a finite sense, the world of observation is not totally spirit, in the sense of being infinite spiritual goodness. At this level, the world we see is a mixture of spirit and nothing, of spirit and empty space. To look about ourselves in this world and say it is all spirit might be pantheism. That is not what we are talking about. We may still see a problem here, and we could still call it a problem of evil. But now we see it not so much as something wrong, but as something missing.

¹¹ This comes from a biographical document by Adam H. Dickey where he relates a meeting with MBE and a subsequent hallway conversation with Laura Sargent, where she tells him, "Mother was trying to give you her highest teaching." In "Unity of Good," page 18, line 2, she writes, "Rather, think of God as saying, I am infinite Spirit ..." In that frame of mind, look at your hand. I don't claim to understand this completely but wanted to put it on the record for completeness and for future discovery.

At each stage of our progress we gain a higher sense of the prevalence and power of pure goodness, and evil becomes less legitimate to us. In each case, after we finish thinking about the essential nature of good and evil, we have to come up with an explanation, however flimsy, for our remaining sense of the negative, even as it fades from view. Now, again, we have articulated a new sense of the nature of good and evil - good as spiritual reality and evil as spiritually mental empty space. Now we have to come up with a new theology to have such an interpretation make at least temporary sense.

At this level, we have become comfortable regarding things as thoughts, differentiating between the spiritual identity that makes things appear and our sense of the things themselves. The thoughts to which we knowingly lend our volition are all on the side of spiritual good. Now it is clear that to be spiritually minded is to really live, to feel all life's feelings, and to know all life's joys.

Our new theory is based on recognition that the underlying reality of every good thing is the essential substance provided by the creator: spiritually creative thought declaring itself - I am. It naturally appears to us in this frame of mind that any appearance of evil is not the result of some evil act, incarnation, or mind. Apparent evil is not backed up by some evil mentality, essence, or illusion, real or imagined. It is simply not backed up at all. At this level of belief, the appearance of any evil is not seen to be precipitated by bad mental substance, but simply by the want of mental substance. Apparent evil is simply a sense of some not-knowing of spiritual truth. It has an aspect of pure spiritual opportunity.

At this stage of our practice, we see everything that actually exists as good. Any sense of evil can be likened to darkness. It can be observable while we know it is not actually something. What is darkness? You can see it, but you have no doubt that it is not stuff. You do not even think of darkness as unreal stuff, like a level three view. You know it is simply the appearance to your sense of some not-shining of the light.

A small child might not understand that darkness is not something.¹² He might see the dark as a fearsome reality, a negative sense that is something, rather than a negative sense that is nothing. Were one not to understand its nothingness, darkness would be

¹² In an earlier draft, this began with a family anecdote, where, at no older than three, the author declined to go out in the yard at night to retrieve a favorite toy, famously protesting, "But the dark will get all over me."

something to prudently avoid. It might have a foreboding mental aspect, if one did not know that what appears to the senses as light and darkness are not two opposite substances, but that light is the presence of illuminating energy, and darkness is its absence - simply a sense of the want of light.

To transfer the light and darkness analogy to ideas of truth, one could say that the light of infinite truth, or the spiritual substance that the creator consciousness causes to be, could be simply dawning to, or even as, individual and collective thought. Any appearance of evil could be regarded as simply a compounded sense of that which is not, some not-yet-knowing of the truth of infinite spiritual reality.

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We have moved a few steps forward, and now we must take the usual step backward. While we are trying to have our spiritual ideals replace our human beliefs at level three, it is easy to be unaware of the background beliefs that base our actions. But spiritual progress requires us to gradually accept improved human beliefs before they are replaced altogether by the spiritual and infinite. We need to be unafraid to accept the better of still imperfect human choices. A belief that spiritual truth is dawning unopposed into empty space is a lesser evil than belief in evil as a mortal mind, a divinely allowed educational tool, or as divinely ordained punishment.

To embrace an improved belief at this new level, we need to consider that the creation, conception of its spiritual idea, or at least its exposure to us, had at some point a small beginning. We need to embrace the idea that spiritual creation was once little. Perhaps in this we lovingly embrace our own humanity and receive spiritual creation as a little child. Having embraced this little idea, our new human belief is that spiritual creation is not unlike a point of light that grew from some tiny peep to become a tidal wave of spiritual revelation traveling through space and time and all dimensions.¹³ This belief is not our ideal; it is not the infinite principle we reach for; it is just a more progressive interpretation of our human sense of things.

¹³ It is more correct to emphasize, "its exposure to us," since the infinite Principle and its idea is complete and timeless. MBE wrote, "Is not this a revelation instead of a creation?" (S&H 504:14) Thus, we are introduced to the concept of infinity unfolding infinitely forever.

This theory suggests that the dawn of spiritual truth is even now progressively filling voids, giving form to formlessness, dispelling spiritually mental darkness, and vanquishing sensible manifestations of discord and limitation from consciousness and universal experience. In this state of belief, the conclusion that things are always getting better is inescapable. This can be a comforting thought.

For this theory of the spiritual dawn to make sense, we must understand that spiritual substance is the essence of everything real and that there is no opposite mentality. This enables us to overcome our fears of embodying existence closely enough to have it integrated. Love of the infinite makes it silly to have a frame of mind where spirit and matter, truth and error, good and evil, real and unreal, are practically at odds with each other. This level of belief can support some very buoyant human philosophies.

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If the fundamental aspect of aggressive human problems appears to us as erroneous belief or as mesmeric mortal mind, our human beliefs are anchored in the "false supposing" theory of evil, at level three. If we view the essential aspect of problems as inadequate spiritual expression, our beliefs are rooted in "the dawn," at level four. Both types of belief are finite, but the dawn theory is more progressive and less frightening.

Implicit in the false supposing theory, and in less metaphysical theories of "the fall," like Adam and Eve in the garden, is the possibility that it could happen again. If the explanation for one's beliefs about the origin of evil, or even the origin of error, includes the proposition that once something bad happened in a world created good, then there is nothing in that logic to keep it from happening again. This theoretical susceptibility is an element responsible for some of the superstitious fears latent in human religions.

If a jot of one's theology is based on the notion that something bad once happened to something good, that mental position makes one's beliefs vulnerable to the conscious or latent fear that it could happen again. This fear, that one could do something wrong or not do something right and therefore fall into darkness, is inescapable for all belief systems before level four.

We might illustrate this issue graphically by viewing the traditional religious theory of creation (of good, with some sort of fall, moral or metaphysical) as a line beginning at

unity and taking a plunge from its original goodness. If we accept this idea, this fall, we have bought into logic that must admit that the line could be a sawtooth. Even if we are successfully working our way upward, our spiritual growth or even collective human spiritual progress could take a plunge again at any moment. If we believe any of “the fall” or “false supposing” theories of the origin of evil, our logic will be unable to prevent us from fearing that our own or the world's progress could be a sawtooth curve.

This latent theoretical susceptibility is inherent in all religious systems grounded in level three and before. That is why some more secular appearing human philosophies, with but subtle spiritual underpinnings in level four belief, can result in superficial belief systems that are much less fearful than those more devoutly held at earlier levels in human religions.

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Infinity is creative, and its creativity results in it continually conceiving of itself anew. It may be that creativity needs to be seen in a new way. Since infinity is boundless, maybe the appearance of spiritual creativity is subjective to the observer. Maybe what we see as creativity is the discovery of aspects of infinity we had not yet seen, our forever discovery of what already is.

Let us go back and remember our old friend the principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness. This infinite spiritual principle tells us we need not wait to receive the present fullness of spiritual goodness. Our work is already done. As long as we think like it, the principle of infinite spiritual goodness will keep pulling at our human beliefs, and we will keep progressing at the edges of our beliefs. It may be that this theory of the dawn, where problems are seen as spiritually mental empty space, gradually filling with spiritual light, is one of the last humanly conceivable conclusions. After all, the only missing element in the dawn theory is the idea of infinity.

It may be that the idea of infinity is at odds with any human sense of things, even our most sublime sense of finite concepts. The difference between the viewpoint of infinite spiritual goodness and this fourth level of human belief is that, with the dawn, it just looks like all the good we seek has not yet arrived. Our present human sense of spiritual reality

just looks like a partial shipment. At this level, any human assessment of our problems can begin by realizing their solution is only a matter of time.

In the last two chapters, we addressed seven cases of causation and interpretations of evil consistent with each case. In each case, the idea of creation mirrors the concept of creator, and the idea of good has a logical symmetry with the explanation for evil. There were three cases before rational spiritual levels: no spiritual causation, indifferent causation, and mystical causation. Then there were four levels corresponding to what we have called rational spiritual action: (1) creation of good and evil; (2) creation of good, with allowance for evil; (3) creation of spiritual good, with evil as false belief; and (4) dawn of spiritual good, with evil as spiritual empty space.

Reaching out to pure infinite spiritual goodness as identity can bring you from wherever you start to the end of these stages of human belief. While working out your spiritual progress, your patterns of growth will tend to evolve along these steps of being, thinking, believing, and behavior.

What we believe will be determined by a number of factors. The range of our thinking will be determined by our starting point. It will depend on how deep and how far we reach into the infinite. Casting out to reflect infinity as identity may be the ultimate engine of our progress. Thinking based on spiritual principles brings spiritual understanding and opportunities to sort out and improve our beliefs. Changes in our beliefs bring out changes in our words and actions. How far we reach to seed our spiritual thinking may not be the only pacing factor determining our progress, but it is a most powerful impetus.

When trying to work out our spiritual growth, we sense the value of keeping our idea of identity, our thoughts, our beliefs, and our actions linked together. Since we see what we believe, our actions tend to be consistent with the world as we believe it to be. When we are thinking ahead of our beliefs, we will at length perceive the consequences of our thoughts. This seeing promotes the transformation of old beliefs until they correspond to new and better ways of thinking.

The conclusion of these last two chapters is that all human beliefs related to transcendent being, to creator and creation, are by definition limited beliefs. Insofar as they are limited, they are, from the viewpoint of infinity, inaccurate at best. In fact, they

are all fatally flawed. Thoughts made out of human concepts and their accompanying dimensional pictures misrepresent the idea of infinity.

To think about things humanly, to use finite concepts and dimensional pictures for our very best thoughts, is to employ a logical framework within which all the manifest ills of humanity can be justified. To be infinitely minded about the objects and events of life is to begin to truly understand them, and it is the ultimate antidote.

Chapter 10 – Infinitely Defining Evil

Now we have left the scale of the human with its finite levels of belief. We may want to look back to the chapter where we considered the idea of infinite goodness. When infinite goodness touches our thought, it seems like there is no such thing as evil. Any sense of the negative becomes simply a sense of its nothingness. When we have worked these things out, evil as an abstraction will have lost its fearful mental aspect, and we will not be afraid to handle it analytically, up close. We have been preparing ourselves to address an infinite idea of evil. In talking here about evil, I hope you will pardon me for not belaboring its ugly aspects. There will be time for that. In working out this problem in theory, the most ethereal sense of evil is the best level at which to defuse it. Evil as an infinite abstraction is more tractable than as a concrete confrontation. If we are good at dealing with evil seeds, perhaps we can minimize the extent to which we will have to deal with evil fruits.

As a prelude to getting serious about defining evil, let us review definitions of evil implicit in the points of view we have discussed so far. At the totally material level of human belief, no one is interested in the concept of evil. With no justification for ascribing mystical significance to untoward events, we define evils loosely as things against human survival or well-being. Any rational vehemence on the subject of evil would only refer to its appearance as phenomena without considering spiritual dimensions.

When a mystical concept of evil is introduced, evil is interpreted to be the result of capricious or malevolent forces or angry gods. Undisciplined spiritism can fall into believing that mysterious powers of darkness are lurking about causing all sorts of mischief. Since this doesn't make any sense, we deem it to be a pre-rational level of belief and move on.

The first level where things can start to make sense to the rational thinker is introduced by the concepts of monotheism and law. Evil is seen as punishment for wrong doing and for contrast to good, so life doesn't get too boring. At this first level of human belief, good and evil are inherent in the creator and also in man; they are certainly inherent in this theory.

At the second level, evil is not believed to be created or ordained by the creator but by an adversary internal to the creation and allowed by a creator unwilling or unable to prevent it. The creator has not provided ground rules to reliably eliminate evil. Evil is embodied in a personal devil, and good is embodied in a benevolent personal deity.

At the third level, evil is not seen to be created or allowed by the creator, but is viewed as a mortal error. The origin of this error is addressed by saying the error is unreal and, therefore, has no origin. Reluctantly, this false belief is said to have begun as a false supposing. Evil is believed to be a mesmeric mental influence from which humans can gradually demonstrate their freedom. The creator is seen as a divine principle having no association with evil, and man's true selfhood is seen to be spiritual.

At the fourth level, the human explanation for evil is that it is spiritually mental empty space. The creator is entirely spiritual and good, and has no opposition, real or imagined. This is a state of human belief the only error of which is limitation.¹⁴ The explanation for this view is that our awareness of sublime spiritual creation began little and is continuing to dawn.

Reaching for the spiritual idea in level three can lead us to reach for the infinite idea in level four. None of these views of good and evil are without flaws. The fourth level of belief may present the lesser of evils, but it sacrifices the idea of infinity to its logic. And that is not good.

In each of these cases, there is a symmetry of sorts. Good and evil are logical opposites. As thought progresses, however, good and evil are increasingly less balanced in the scales of our beliefs. As our sense of good evolves toward its allness, our sense of evil diminishes in progressively more abstract phases of its nothingness. As our sense of spiritual good becomes more tangible, our sense of evil becomes more ethereal, until it becomes a pure abstraction, a term for that which is essentially nothing at all.

When spiritual progress has readied us to cross from one level of human belief to the next, the crossing is often stalled by our trepidation. Every significant step we complete is welcomed by a sense of relief as there emerges both a brighter world and an accompanying lessening of superstitious fears. Until we are ready to move ahead, however, each next step will seem too hard to comprehend, too impersonal or abstract in its

¹⁴ See Science and Health, p. 585:21

appeal, too expansive or hopeful in its possibilities, and somehow irreconcilable with our sense of things.

Given the option to define evil once and for all, we might want to do better than these flawed choices. None of these choices, not even the ones giving us quite a lot of freedom from fear, will give us reliable practical relief from a sense of evil as something or even as nothing.

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It is useful to recognize that what we believe may be different from what we think and from the way we may be trying to think. I may look around me and see my perceptions of sense evidence characterized by level four beliefs, but I will try to spend time and effort thinking in better ways than that. I know that thinking beyond the level where I am believing provides the impetus for grasping new potentials and for bringing more radical transformations. Reaching out beyond my beliefs provides the vital inspiration that nourishes the rest of the process.

Thinking at the level where we are believing can involve interpreting and re-interpreting what we see. It can help us put our sense evidence into the best light. Affirmative thinking to recast and unlimit our sense of things can help clear out discordant beliefs and open up our thoughts to wider prospects for good.

The peculiar challenge when we have beliefs at level four is that no humanly dimensioned positive or spiritual thoughts will contrast significantly with our beliefs. When we are in a level four belief about things, we need to reach outside the human dimension altogether to find thoughts that are ahead of our beliefs. That is one reason we are addressing the subject of infinite ideas.

As one practices spiritually principled thinking about oneself, about one's fellows, and about the universe, one's sense of the reality of spiritual goodness becomes more palpable and one's sense of evil diminishes. Our analysis of evil evolves from chance to indifference to caprice to punishment to adversary to error to nothingness, with each belief of evil presenting a less formidable mental aspect than the last. But why evil at all? Is there anything good about evil at any level? Do we want to vanquish even the word evil and never think of it again?

How could we define evil infinitely and have it be less than the level four belief of it where it is a sense of nothing, simply a sense of spiritually mental empty space? Since you read the first sentence of this book, you may have guessed what we are going to do with infinite evil. What are we going to do with an infinite empty place? After all this trouble, do we simply want to make it go away?

Let us be practical. Let us come up with a definition of evil that we will be delighted with, one that will have significant value. What definition of evil could help us with conception of the infinite idea? Since the word is here, is there a definition of evil that we could feel good about having forever?

The reason we asked the question about evil in the first place was to help us resolve our sense of the negative. We were able to think about pure infinite goodness in a way that created a concept of reality that almost seemed totally complete and sublime. But it did not fit with our world of observation. It was unable to address a sense of discord or limitation. If thinking about the infinite aspects of good gives us the greatest sense of goodness, what might we conclude from thinking about evil as infinite, once we have concluded that it is nothing at all? What would that mean, and how would that fit into our scheme of things?

You may remember that throughout this book we have left some issues untreated. In an early chapter, we considered conception and elimination, that making things better consists of having more of what we want and less of what we do not want. We tried to put aside the question of what we did not want by saying we would not plant bad seeds and would start with clean soil and would not let the wind blow anything into our garden. We said we would not plant seeds we did not want. We deferred talking about mental weeding and getting rid of unwanted seeds latent in the soil, by saying we would not have them. Where can we find virgin soil so clean that we will never have to weed it?

Later on, we talked about types of spiritual action, looking only at the types of action in line with goodness. We talked about exercising obedience, belief, understanding, and knowledge to make good things happen for us. Since we had no interest in making bad things happen, we did not address opposite mental action. Perhaps we need to find ways to deal with negative action. What do we do with accident, abandonment, malice, disobedience, doubt, misconception, and delay?

Then, we used words to create a spiritual thought model, but we did not reconcile that spiritual model closely to our world of observation. We could have simply called that mental world our reality. We relied on the discipline of our logic to define an idea of pure infinite goodness for which no opposite was defined. Having done that, we then returned to our world to apply the standard of goodness to the question of evil's origin. Until now our discussion has deferred serious consideration of a definition for evil, except to say what it, according to our evolving spiritual logic, is not or cannot be. We have proceeded to a level of human belief where all that is left of evil is pure limitation.

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For good to prevail, evil must be dealt with in whatever form it appears. In the wholly material view, evil is simply a random event. The subject of evil is dealt with humanly and does not come up as a spiritual issue. In the next frame of mind, we are indifferent to evil, until our theory transitions to another. While involved in human mysticism, we might attempt religious practice to combat evil, but it is too confusing to be effectual. Let us group these three pre-rational theories as *level zero*. At the first rational level, evil is avoided through obedience and dealt with through law. At the second level, evil is overcome as faith and love triumph over doubts and fears. At the third level, belief in evil is dispelled through understanding the supremacy of Spirit. At the fourth level, evil is seen as spiritually mental empty space, made insensible by our expression of the idea of infinite goodness.

Where does this progression go? Is there an end to it? Is there anything to be done with evil to antidote it once and for all? Are we ready to do that? One thing is clear, ignoring evil is not the answer. Dealing with evil – abstaining from it, overcoming it, understanding its nothingness, and displacing it – is part of the process by which room is made for higher conceptions of good.

Although the idea of pure infinite spiritual goodness can define the substance and content of good, more than a finite sense of evil needs to be cleared out to enable the infinite idea to appear. With the words of infinite goodness, we have the good seeds we need. Now our need is for better soil.

Let us start with a fresh piece of paper and see if we can define infinite evil to make it serve a purpose. Have we outgrown our need for punishment, adversary, illusion, and human limitation? What is our real need? Is there any such thing as a necessary evil? If knowledge of evil is knowledge of empty space, maybe it is just an empty space to receive the essence of good, to make it room.

When our thinking is based on the principle of pure infinite goodness, our jurisdiction is uncontested within that realm. Might we ever need jurisdiction over mental space not subject to infinite goodness? Could there be other jurisdictions in the infinite? We have used spiritually principled thinking to try to conceive ideas of pure goodness. Is it possible that we could use some negative seed, some upside-down thought model, to render certain undesirable words inconceivable? Is there a thought we can hold affirmatively whose effect will be to make some specific things not happen? Would this be a form of negative knowing?

Consider a situation where you are about to enter a dark unfamiliar room. You ask, "What is in the room?" You are told, "The room has a carpet on the floor, a sofa and two chairs, a lamp, a table, and a large bookshelf filled with books." Is that information enough for you to know it is safe to enter the room? Do you know if the floor is strong enough to hold your weight? Do you know whether there are any snakes slithering about on the floor? No, but you presume it is safe. Unless, of course, someone already asked you about the snakes.

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Consider a situation where you are staying the night alone in a cabin in the woods. You have no telephone, and the nearest road is three miles away. Just as you are about to go to sleep and have blown out your candle, you hear a rustling sound outside. What goes through your mind? Could the sound be caused by the wind, or a bear, or a prowler? What are you likely to assume? Is it good? Can your sense of goodness displace your fears?

In these last two situations, you know certain affirmative facts, but these facts themselves say nothing about the possibility of untoward events. In considering these situations, however, you may have a sense of uncertainty about them. Are you certain these situations are safe? What do you really know? These two situations are intended to suggest a mental region that may exist between what one knows and what one knows

nothing of, a middle ground where the mind is left to wander, to assume, to suppose, and possibly to be afraid.

In situations where we are not at risk, where there are no potentials for loss or concerns for safety, we can usually tolerate a fairly high degree of uncertainty in our lives. There are plenty of times when we might be content to be uncertain. As might be expected, however, when issues of safety arise, our tolerance for uncertainty becomes less and less. We might wish to have two locks on the door and have one of them be really big. When the stakes are very high and the issues of life and death are present, our willingness to take unnecessary chances is rightfully diminished.

When the human mind does not know something, and feels uncomfortable not knowing, it sometimes tries to create a sense of knowing through the process of supposing. Someone who has supposed something has entered into a state of belief that may bear no relation to the facts. As was stated earlier about belief, likewise with supposing, there is nothing in the nature of one's ability to hold a supposition that bears on whether it is true. Sometimes we suppose just to quiet our fears. Other times supposing makes our fears worse.

Let us consider what the special nature of infinite ideas can offer to such issues. To human belief, there are things that are clearly good, things that are clearly bad, and sometimes gray areas in between. Religionists and others may differ on what the gray areas are. We sort through gray elements, and depending on our level of perspective we sometimes resolve gray issues to one side or the other. The infinite idea resolves gray areas and reconciles black and white. The infinite idea does not need a human belief or interpretation to tell it where to put thoughts; it puts them where they belong, and it puts them there to best effect, naturally. How does it do this?

From the viewpoint of infinity, one can translate good and evil events into those that are possible and inevitable and those that are impossible and inconceivable. These distinctions constitute primal order in the infinite realm. When you experience this in practice, you will appreciate the easy precision with which life at this level is ordered.

At the level of infinity, one realizes the truth of the common, if pessimistic, wisdom that if something can go wrong, it will. If something is possible at the level of infinity, it becomes an infinite possibility - it becomes a virtual certainty. The corollary, which obtains at the level of infinity, and from time to time elsewhere, is that if something cannot

go wrong, it won't. If something is unlikely at the level of infinity, it is then infinitely unlikely - this thing is not going to happen. Because infinity tends to take things to their extremes, it takes all thoughts and shows their true colors.

Stepping off from a level four view of evil, if evil is spiritually mental empty space, an infinite idea of evil is infinitely empty. If evil is nothing, an infinite idea of it is infinite nothingness. Because of this aspect of the infinite idea, an unusual level of certainty accompanies an infinite apprehension of evil. In a sense, it is a negative certainty. It is a certainty about what is not. Infinite uncertainty becomes a kind of certainty.¹⁵ It becomes a kind of knowing. Infinite identity naturally resolves good and evil, real and unreal, into their essence as something and nothing. Working with any given word, we do not even need to know which it is going to be. Infinite identity conceives of such opposites as present and ever available or as forever absent, inconceivable, and unthinkable.

Another special attribute of the infinite idea is the degree to which it embraces experience. There are many abstract or spiritual ideas we can ponder that might allow us to remain remotely contemplative about them, but not the infinite idea. The infinite idea embraces all that is real, and it also embraces infinite abstractions whose unreality has been resolved into nothingness. The infinite idea does not have anything real or imagined conceivably outside of itself. One identifying with the infinite idea may be led into experiences confirming that evil is not only unreal at a spiritual level, but can be experienced as nothing more than empty space on the human scene. The experiential validation of evil as empty space confirms the supremacy of spiritual goodness and makes room for new conception.

Were it widely rumored that the moon was made of green cheese, some would swear it was a fact. Some might have doubts; others might have misgivings; some might have hope, while others had faith. Some might have real confidence, conviction, scientific understanding, or even absolute certainty. All such states of mind are not to be compared to knowledge gained from experience. We would not use words like conviction, faith,

¹⁵ In this and the next chapters, the term *infinitely uncertain* is somewhat likened to infinitely unlikely. Upon further consideration, it seems that infinite uncertainty doesn't have to do with whether an event will take place or not – it has to do with what we can know about it. Therefore, infinite uncertainty does not make something improbable, it makes it unknowable, perhaps to similar effect.

understanding, or certainty to describe the point of view of one who had been to the moon and returned. If we were the ones to have traveled to the moon, found it to be green cheese, nibbled on some of it, brought some back to earth, and used it to make salad dressing, we would not need to assert that we were certain.

Having been there, our viewpoint would not need to be supported by a conscious or affirmative mental position on the subject. We would simply have knowledge. While others might be afraid to entertain a doubt on the subject, for fear of losing their beliefs, any who had been there would not feel so threatened.

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Let us follow another line of thought by addressing the nature of truth insofar as truth defines what is true and what is not. A witness asked to give testimony in a court of law is sometimes asked if they will "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Have you ever wondered why they do not simply ask the witness to tell the truth or not to lie? The reason for asking such a complicated question to get a straight answer has to do with what it takes to know the whole truth.

At the level of infinity, it could be said that the truth is one idea. However, that one idea has implicit in it three parts: there is the truth about what is, the truth about what is not, and the recognition that these two parts constitute the whole of truth. Because of what it takes to really know the truth, one cannot really know the truth without knowing what is true, what is not, and that these two fit together forming one whole truth.

In the illustration presenting the unfamiliar room, we had no way of knowing whether the room was filled with snakes. Truths were stated about the contents of the room, but we did not know if those constituted the whole truth. If we had asked whether there were any slithery things in the room, the truthful answer might have kept us from wading ankle deep into snakes.

This is not to suggest that we should ask a thousand questions about what is, what is not, and if anything has been omitted. In normal human living we are content to have a reasonable level of uncertainty. As spiritual thinkers, however, our true knowing conveys a sense of legitimate reality that is directly linked to our beliefs. The spiritual truths that we

are able to truly *know* unveil the reality of spiritual goodness at hand. In dealing with good and evil, we can know infinite good, but how can we infinitely un-know evil?

In the human dimension, negative knowing is very different from not knowing. If there was a bear outside your cabin at night, perhaps you would rather not know about it until you saw its tracks in the morning. But not knowing about the bear is profoundly different from knowing that there is no bear.

We are not addressing things about which we would like to be humanly ignorant, but things we would like to know, about which we may have some uncertainty. If you know what is, if you know everything that is true about spiritual reality, cannot someone always come up to you and ask, "Is there anything else?" Could something possibly go wrong? Are you sure it is really safe? Will it ever happen again?

Were we to imagine an allegorical serpent who asks a lot of tricky questions, would the truth about spiritual goodness silence such a serpent? Understanding the truth about spiritual goodness might enable us to answer this serpent, but we might have to keep answering its pesky questions over and over and over. We may be able to attain a high level of certainty about goodness, but what do we know about evil? What is our level of expertise regarding the most subtle of serpents? Can they get to us? When knowledge of the infinite idea answers a questioning serpent, that question is never heard from again.

Knowledge of the infinite idea is all-inclusive of what is and all-exclusive of what is not. Knowledge of infinite good's allness and of infinite evil's nothingness constitutes one whole idea. The one who has knowledge of the infinite idea does not feel a twinge of uncertainty when asked to consider, "But what if...?" What is it about having knowledge of the infinite idea that makes us like the space travelers with all the cheese?

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If an infinite uncertainty is not going to happen, if infinite doubt is total disbelief, if infinite risk is total failure, perhaps a use for such concepts can be found in the spiritually mental realm. We may want to be certain that evil will not happen, but until now we have only defined certainty for good things happening. To deal with evil, perhaps we need to have some negative certainty - we need to know what is not. Where can we find negative certainty in the mind of pure goodness?

Conventional wisdom says that it is hard to prove a negative. Perhaps we cannot be negatively certain, but only infinitely uncertain. Maybe, like having two locks on the door, we can have infinite certainty of good and infinite uncertainty of evil, both at the same time, flip sides of the same coin. Is uncertainty the symmetrical opposite of certainty and somehow to be associated with evil? Could it be that part of the antidote for evil is to have an infinite idea about it? When we are infinitely uncertain about evil, perhaps we are home free. If this is valid, the abstraction of infinite evil could be extremely useful, perhaps by being infinitely useless. It would be nice to have an infinite set of words for all the things that should never sensibly be.

We have talked about how an event that is infinitely uncertain will not happen. Carrying this idea a little further, infinite weakness is so puny as to be totally powerless. Infinite lack defines all the things we will never have. Infinite delay defines nothing ever happening. Infinite void defines a place absolutely clean of everything.

An infinite idea of evil can bring out the opposite of any human sense of it as something. This can be found with every word we could ever associate with evil. Each human step toward the realization of evil's nothingness brings palpable relief. When finally seen to be nothing, the words we might associate with evil can be elevated to an infinite idea the consequences of which must be entirely good.

While the most elevated human belief of evil, even as apparent spiritually mental empty space, does not conflict with all sorts of human suffering, the infinite idea of evil makes the idea of sensible evil totally inconceivable. It becomes nonsense. For this reason, the specific infinite idea of good and evil can antidote any adverse human sense of evil.

We have discussed the idea that infinite spiritual goodness defines the nature of everything that is real. We also know that the whole truth must include not only the truth of what is, but the truth of what is not. This latter aspect of truth is what is meant by the infinite idea of evil. The infinite idea of evil is inconceivable.

The idea that evil is the absence of good has been around for centuries.¹⁶ Working with the idea of evil as the absence of good and making that infinite, brings out interesting

¹⁶ Online sources say this idea is generally attributed to St. Augustine from around 400 A.D, although the founding Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus introduced the idea about 150 years before.

practical possibilities. If evil is a word whose essence is that it is ultimately inconceivable, the infinite idea of evil defines precisely and exactly that which is not.

At level three, where we first defined evil as unreal error, we were just at the beginning of understanding it. We declared evil to be nothing, but even then we did not fully comprehend what that meant. When we said it was unreal, we didn't mean some fancy infinite abstraction, but just that we had spiritual grounds for banishing its manifestations from consciousness. Now we learn that infinite evil is like a list of all the words that can be known to be inconceivable in the light of infinite spiritual thinking and being.

Perhaps when we have knowledge of the infinite idea, evil becomes a category for all the things that can never happen to us. If we have knowledge of infinite evil, perhaps we have knowledge that evil is something rightly experienced only in its absence. Then like returned lunar space travelers with green cheese on our breath, with knowledge of the infinite idea, we can go beyond belief, beyond understanding, having been there.

What may appear as scary evils on the human scene can be increasingly overcome as we embody the infinite ideas that antidote them, and translate our sense of the negative into the infinite words that make it inconceivable. Now we are ready to stop wondering why providential intervention has not delivered us from evil. Perhaps it already has. Maybe the principle for evil's vanquishment is at our disposal, and we just have to work it out. If having to work it out is the bad news, the good news is that infinite truth is retroactive, which says that when we finally get things together, we will realize they have always been that way.

The one who has knowledge of infinite evil finds sensible evil to be inconceivable. A finite conception of evil, as by the human mind, is not a true conception but a misconception. Now let all our misconceptions be infinite. As we let spiritual conception displace human supposition, our ability to humanly misconceive fades away. Then we can no longer conceive of evil as a reality or misconceive of it in any sensible way.

Evil's ultimate antidote lies in infinite creativity, which renders, at once, the forever conceivability of good and the inconceivability of evil. If you can conceive of good, you can have it sensibly - it will make sense. To have knowledge of evil at the highest level of apprehension, its being inconceivable, makes it also insensible.

Words of infinite good and infinite evil would almost suggest an infinite writer of nonfiction and fiction. Its nonfiction is of things that are knowable, of goodness, love, life,

and happiness. Its fiction is of opposite words. Because these things are fiction, they are all the things that become inconceivable to us as we reflect the infinite idea.

What evil may be to our senses often has little to do with its essential nature. Spiritual understanding of goodness dissolves beliefs of evil as obtrusive discord. Knowledge of the infinite idea of good and evil vanquishes the last observable remnants of evil, at their essence, as pure limitation.

Having made so little of human beliefs of evil, it is prudent to say something about the compounded phases of nothingness we might see as evils on the human scene. As a safety precaution, one would not want to encounter evil at any level of belief where it is regarded as something, but only at a level that knows it is nothing. Even though the idea of sensible evil is invalid, a belief in its validity could make it seem real to our mentality, and we would rather not have to deal with it at that level. If we see evil having a mental aspect as something, we should address it based on how it looks to us.

The basic office of evil is to define that which is not.¹⁷ For this reason, evil wants to pretend it is not there; it wants to hide, and when uncovered it wants to disappear. Because true knowing must comprehend both what is and what is not, any aspect of evil needs to be recognized by its particular name before that specific phase of it can completely disappear. Only in this way can we have a knowledgeable inventory of all the things that can never be.

It is fine for evil to appear to thought as an abstract empty space with a name. And it is fine for us to have knowledge of it by experiencing its oneness with the infinite idea of good. But if evil appears to us as accident, indifference, malice, vengeful justice, evil personality, mortal belief, or fatal limitation, it is unwise to lend our thought to it, to consent to it, to conceive of it, or to reproduce it. Sentient evil will eventually disappear from consciousness, and we do not want to be identifying with it in any finite way when it goes. In addition to simply disappearing, a more genteel way of saying that evil destroys itself, disappearing evil often brings out things that are aesthetically unpleasant, so they can disappear too.

¹⁷ More precisely, the office of evil is for us to realize its nothingness, for it to be infinite and disappear, to be the principle of its own impossibility, to define an impeccable empty space and void, providing perfect place for new conception, as an indivisible and indispensable element of oneness.

When one is at a level of human belief where evil appears as something that is nothing, rather than as something that is something, one should be especially alert not to be humanly careless. There are no rewards in this life for being dumb. As an infinite idea, evil is an inconceivable abstraction. Entertaining a human belief in evil as something or even as nothing could lead one to accept evil's appearance on the human scene, which is all that is required to open the way for unfortunate manifestations.

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Let us consider ourselves at a picnic luncheon looking for the salt. We are told there is a salt shaker with salt in it. What do we really know about this? Assuming that the statement about the presence of salt is truthful, we know there is salt. Based on that statement alone, we do not know how much salt, and we have no information about whether there is anything else in the shaker. We know that by being salt, the substance in question is not pepper. But to have the whole truth about what is in the shaker, we need to know more. We would really need to know more about this salt shaker were we to have our lives depend on it.

The mind that knows only what is, is open to suggestions from the remainder. Before we shake this salt on our cosmic mashed potatoes, we may want to know, not only what is in the shaker, but what is not. It might be salt mixed with rat poison for all we know. This might seem to be a silly distinction, and in most cases it is. But if our universe is to become the image of our knowing, we will certainly want to know what is real and what is to be excluded from sensible existence. Using the four levels of human belief and a level beyond the human, let us consider different observations about the salt shaker. Please pardon the strained analogy.

At level one, we look in the salt shaker and see salt and rat poison. We want to have the rat poison there, for some reason - to get rid of rats, perhaps. Because we want it there, it makes sense that the one who filled the shaker put in both salt and rat poison. We need to pick our way carefully among the specks. We cannot help wondering which ones were intended for us. No wonder we feel guilty.

At level two, we look in the salt shaker and see salt and rat poison. We know the one who put salt in the shaker did not put in the rat poison. Someone else did that. You can finish the rest of that story.

At level three, we look in the salt shaker and see salt and rat poison, but knowing that no one would have put rat poison in the shaker, we conclude that our observation must be in error. It is only our false belief that says it is there. Realizing this, we look again and, yes, our illusion of rat poison has disappeared. All we see is salt. However, at this point we have lost our appetites.

At level four, we see clearly that the salt shaker is half full of salt, nothing else. This would not be a problem ordinarily, but today we are at the end of a very long line. We are afraid that by the time we get to the front of the line the salt will be all gone.

As infinite thinkers, we see the salt shaker completely full of lovely white salt. In this case, we may even feel like we washed the salt shaker and filled it ourselves. The idea of rat poison is, to us, inconceivable. Having heard a rumor of rat poison, however, we are amused and comforted by the idea that all that salt fits in a perfectly empty shaker.

Observations about the salt shaker and its contents represent the different steps of our evolving beliefs. The contents of the salt shaker is like the contents of consciousness. Our individual levels of belief determine how we will be likely to perceive issues and approach solutions. It is only as infinite thinkers that we become aware of the value of starting with an empty shaker. Reaching for identity beyond human dimensions nurtures our knowledge of infinite fullness in infinite emptiness, and this brings the ultimate comforts.

Chapter 11 – Male and Female

Male and female are opposite attributes of origin that complement each other and result in our conception of wholeness. In everyday usage the words male and female most often refer to gender categories in which human beings appear. We may associate certain characteristics with the terms male and female from our conclusions about the masculine and feminine natures that we observe in people.

From a spiritually mental standpoint, male and female represent groupings of spiritual qualities. Since each individual is identified by infinite creative Principle as its self-expression, the qualities and prerogatives of all the spiritual aspects of infinity, both female and male, are available to each individual. Because of the limitation of human conception, that says a coin in the air may have two sides but can only land heads or tails, the completeness of individual identity is manifested humanly, in a limited way, by individuals generally showing forth physically either the characteristics of male or female.

The wholeness of the infinite idea makes it natural for every individual to experience the oneness of the male and female. This provides the impetus for close relationships between males and females, for the realization of completeness and satisfaction in individual identity, and for social progress that increasingly recognizes the natural equality among individuals of all genders.

Because individual identity is at its core a likeness of the spiritually creative mind, each individual's spiritual identity includes all the qualities of male and female. This spiritual fact is increasingly experienced as humanity grows in its apprehension of spiritual identity.

To say that gender is an infinite idea and that there is one infinite gender is not to imply that we should all become androgynous. Such a conclusion would be a good example of the strained consequences of using human reasoning to directly implement infinite ideas. The male and female qualities of the infinite are inherent in the spiritual identity of every individual woman and man.

We have observed that male and female are required to be present for conception of wholeness and that they have to do with spiritual qualities. What is it about male and female that relate to their value in conception of wholeness? How are concepts about male

and female related to spiritual principles? Do the distinctions of male and female exist in the spiritual realm and in the infinite? Is there any infinite basis for issues that relate to males and females as they appear on the human scene?

An understanding of the infinite idea of male and female builds on ideas from the last chapter, on knowledge of what is infinitely true and knowledge of what is infinitely not. The principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness enables us to imagine all the good things that are true. Our knowledge of the infinite nothingness of evil addresses all the things that are rightly apprehended only as nothing.

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There are normal everyday words that, when we try to define them, our first inclination is to describe what they are not. Can you think of some words like that? I call these "not-words," because their job is to describe something that is not something. For example, consider the word "peace." How would you define it? Is peace the absence of war? Take a few seconds and define peace for yourself. At first you may find yourself saying what peace is not or using other not-words, like calm, quiet, or tranquility, to describe peace. It may take a while to get to the point where you can make a positive statement about what peace is. Is quiet the absence of noise? Is grace the absence of coarseness? Consider these other not-words: soft, gentle, tender, serene, innocent, and pure. It is not important whether any particular word is a not-word or not. It is only important to be aware that there are some very important ideas whose positive aspect to our thought is primarily as the absence of something.

Not-words illustrate a principle. Let it be called the principle of the paradoxical negative. This principle says that something that is primarily the absence of something can, by virtue of that fact, be very lovely. We might also call this the principle of the sweet nothing.

We could have used such a word in the previous chapter when we were about to enter the dark room (which really didn't have any snakes in it). Imagine that, having had reason to be on the lookout for reptiles, you were given additional information about what was in the room in a word that meant *no-snakes*, a word that meant there were absolutely, positively no snakes in the room, nor could there ever be. Some word. It would be a sweet

comfort to have the assurance provided by such a word, to have specific information about what was permanently not there.

Considering some fine points of practice, if we are trying to overcome a phase of evil appearing to us at level three, we are often helped to arrive at our goal of wholeness by denying, or overcoming by argument, what might appear as evil suggestions or erroneous beliefs. When encountering evils through the lens of level four beliefs, we dwell on the allness and infinity of goodness and feel little need to deny evil beliefs, because at this level they have no mental aspect as something. To deny evil assertively at level four is to box with a shadow. When we are in this frame of mind, denying human beliefs of error will not provide the symmetry we need to arrive at wholeness. The infinity of good is our seed, and because of our need for soil, our need to define what is not, we will be on the lookout for an affirmative negative. When we say no to a limited belief at level four, it leaves us with a human sense of nothingness defined. This is fine for level three, where it makes sense to make nothing of false beliefs, but such denials have no effect when errors are already seen to be nothing. At level four, we can best deal with our enemies by loving them and letting them be infinite.

Infinite negatives may be our penultimate spiritual tools for negative knowing, our affirmative negative, a way of knowing what is not. We considered, in the previous chapter, the usefulness of negative knowing and the possible value of negative abstract thought modeling, the need to have words that would be actively inconceivable to our minds. That is what knowledge of infinite evil is. It is a way to be affirmative about the negative, to affirm what cannot happen. Infinite words of goodness fill our thoughts with the promise of wonderful things. The knowledge of infinite evil gives us certainty of its nothingness, a kind of certainty of all the things that cannot be.

As was mentioned earlier, an event with infinite uncertainty is not going to happen. A problem that is infinitely latent will be asleep forever. Things in infinite disorder will be so incapable of coming together as to be forever abstractions. Infinite limitation is total prevention. Infinite evil provides the ultimate not-words.

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The infinity of good is one, and the infinity of evil is one too, but that one is a zero. Before the real one becomes wholly conceivable, a zero is first needed as a place holder. After the one appears, the zero exists as an abstraction that says an empty place for the one preceded the one itself. In this sense, place can be a not-word, if by place one means room to put something. If you were about to conceive a certain amount of stuff, you would first need to have a place where at least that amount of stuff was missing.

When we were considering the salt shaker from the viewpoint of the infinitely minded thinker, our apprehension of what the shaker was full of and what it was empty of existed simultaneously. A glass full of water consists of two parts, an empty glass and a certain volume of water. Since water takes the shape of its container, without the container, the water would have no form and would dribble off on the floor. A limitation on the water would be its containment, a physical barrier that said "stop" to the water's tendency to have no shape. One could say that every full container consists of an empty container with an equal amount of stuff fitting in it. One could say that everything that completely fills something fits in something that is otherwise completely empty.

Astronomers have had difficulty defining an infinite universe because they lacked an infinite empty place in which to put it. It is the same with the infinite idea. If you are to turn on an infinite light, you must first find an infinite dark place. If there is a little candle somewhere in the expanse of endless darkness, its lone presence will preclude your light from being all the light there is.

If we picture the combination of infinite light and darkness as light zipping through endless empty space, this is a level four thought picture. Infinite spiritual light doesn't zip through space; it already fills space. With infinite light shining in infinite darkness, the darkness is insensible, although it might exist theoretically to define a place for the light.

Having defined evil, in the last chapter, as that which is not, could we not imagine infinite evil as an infinite empty space? In fact, like the astronomers looking for a place to put the universe, wouldn't we like to find a nice clean infinite empty space within which to conceive our infinite idea? Could not infinite evil be used as a theoretical abstraction to define across all dimensions an infinite opposite of good, to define that which is inconceivable to us, fathomless forever empty space? While empty space is inconceivable to infinite good, it is clear that infinite empty space is necessary within which to have our conception.

We must eventually define a place where all things are inconceivable, to successfully envision our waiting idea of the infinite spiritual principle. Maybe when we get it all sorted out, when evil no longer assaults our sensibilities, when it has vanished into sweet nothingness, we will find out what the word is for. Maybe part of our problem has been that, while we have recognized the value of good seed, we haven't sufficiently appreciated our need for good soil. You may remember, from the parable in another book, that the distinguishing element was not the quality of the seed, but of the soil.

At the level of infinity, with evil as the ultimate not-word, we find we can love the abstraction of infinite evil as it defines the soft dark void where nothing is. We can love a fleeting sense of infinite evil, perhaps just long enough to kiss it good-bye. This makes a pure place for the infinite idea to be born.

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Beyond the idea of place, we need to define the idea of time. Having an infinite universe to enjoy will be of no value to us if we have no time in which to enjoy it. The infinite negative must represent the negative of time as well as place, to be a time and place for us. We must have an infinite place and an infinite time in which to experience infinity. In the case of time, one manifestation of human limitation is delay, and now we can have infinite delay. To have time enough for everything, perhaps we must begin with infinite time defined for nothing at all.

If you had a full warehouse load of stuff, and you wanted to put it in my warehouse for a while, I might say my warehouse would be completely empty next week. But I might also say it would have to be empty again six months later. This could possibly suit your schedule. But if you called up and needed a place for the idea of infinity, you would need a place that was not only completely empty, but one that had been empty for some time back and one for which there were no immediate plans. It would have to be empty for infinite time - from always, now, and forever. Simply empty.

Only upon finding that the infinitely empty place was available for an infinitely empty time could your conception of the infinite idea be feasible. Otherwise, your infinite idea might hit the walls or limits of past or future time. This is all the limitation it takes to constrain an infinite word, to bring it to a finite, limited conception.

This discussion of space and time is in a way metaphorical. Concepts at the center of issues of infinity are not actually space and time as we comprehend them in the human dimension. They have something to do with the infinite spiritual ideas of space and time, but those are probably not like what we think they are. It is as if there is an anteroom before space-time and before words themselves. It is not defined in space, in time, or in finite language. This is the place in pure mind where infinite reality and infinite unreality exist as one in pure abstract identity. It is there that the pure infinite essence of the word dwells before it is defined.

We are talking in terms of space and time because that is the best way to draw familiar conclusions about these abstractions. The concepts of space and time are meant to suggest a theoretical realm in which negative knowing establishes mental space, a place in logic, a logical possibility or impossibility, within whose context the infinite idea is conceived.

Since infinite good exists as an idea and fills all space, infinite evil (infinite empty space) must exist concurrently and simultaneously, like the infinitely minded view of the salt shaker. The lighted room I am sitting in could be said to contain light and darkness simultaneously, if you define darkness as simply the absence of light. If you define darkness as a sense of the absence of light, you could only say it was dark if I had simultaneously a sense that it was light and a sense that the light existed in a dark place. I could only feel a sense of darkness in a lighted room if I were in a whimsical mood, appreciating an abstraction that was practically absurd. One does not actually sense the darkness in a lighted room; it is just a mental wisp. My only sense that the light exists in a dark place is a logical awareness of that abstract idea.

The darkness that was in the room before the light went on is, in an abstract sort of way, still present when the light is on. The darkness simply becomes insensible when the light arrives. It was nothing to start with and it does not change.

In an everyday sense, of course, the idea that light and darkness coexist wherever there is light is nonsense. It is a pointless distinction. But if we translate this idea out of the metaphorical use of light and darkness into the words, ideas, and facts of infinite good and evil, it becomes important. This distinction, far from being trivial, may hint at the oneness of infinite being and not-being.

When we sense darkness, it says two things: we have a sensitivity to a dimension defined by the presence and intensity of light, and our current reading on that scale is zero - there is no light there. Although we are quick to be aware of things that are present, the concept of something's absence is more subtle. It takes longer to appreciate the concept of not-knowing than of knowing.

It takes more mental acuity to apprehend the nature of darkness as sensible non-stuff than of light as sensible stuff, perhaps for the same reason that the concept "zero" was the last of the numbers to be discovered. People knew when they had three peaches or four peaches, but when they were out of peaches, it took centuries for them to realize that they had zero peaches.

If you do not have zero peaches and I give you one peach, you do not have only one peach. This is important at the level of infinity where the most useful denominations are one and zero. As in the field of mathematics, so in the field of spiritual thinking, the concept of nothing is much more subtle than the concept of something. It seems we have been ignorant of the value of nothing for the longest time.

Remembering the tomato seeds from before, we wanted to plant seeds but were helpless to deal with possible weeds, except to wait until they came up and pull them out. Now we can see that knowledge of infinite evil, which is knowledge of its nothingness, can prevent bad seeds latent in the soil, blowing seeds, and seeds planted by others at night. Understanding infinite nothingness helps us define good soil, where our infinite idea is conceivable, and bad soil, where all our dark words are inconceivable and come to naught.

Infinite evil defines the time and place where everything is not, which exists in perfect union with the infinity of good that defines everything that can ever be. It is the same at the standpoint of infinity with good and evil, real and unreal, peace and war, right and wrong, ad infinitum. At the standpoint of infinity, each two work together, one defining a home for the other, a safe place where no untoward thing can intrude, a place and time where infinite self-creative goodness manifests its infinitude. It is an infinite empty place and time in spiritual logic and in all dimensions, at-one with the one creating reality and at-one with the reality created within. It is one infinite knowledge, one infinite I.

A while back, we considered the mathematical concept of different sizes of infinity. You may recall that aleph-zero and aleph-one are the infinity of integers and the infinity of real numbers, respectively, and that the second is bigger than the first, albeit they are both immeasurable. In another chapter, we worked out a thinking process based on a principle of pure infinite spiritual goodness. Given the qualifications we made, our statements about the totality of good are still valid. There is no evil in the infinity of conscious goodness. Viewed separately, infinite good and infinite abstract evil are transfinite, like our alephs. As long as infinity has a modifier, it is to that extent a transfinite. Infinite good, infinite evil, infinite ice cream, infinite bowling balls, infinite earthquakes, are all transfinite sets. They are the infinity of whatever they are modified by, and their modifiers determine the extent to which other infinities are included in them. The infinity of ice cream covers all flavors, but the infinity of ice cream is smaller than the infinity of desserts, which includes it. Infinity itself includes everything. There is only one infinity.

Spiritual understanding of the reality of goodness and the unreality of evil are flip sides of the same spiritual coin. Like males and females differing in polarity, when knowledge of infinite good and knowledge of infinite evil are together, they fit perfectly. They do not actually come together as two pieces. It is not like trying to fit two halves together. They are one whole spiritual knowledge from the beginning. It is only our human apprehension of them that sees them as two. Their starting point is one whole infinite identity. There is no separation between the infinity of knowing and not-knowing. They are one knowing. One truth. One self-knowledge. They fit together perfectly, and their oneness reveals the wholeness of the infinite idea.

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If we work with the idea of infinite spiritual goodness, logic will preclude us from encountering anything unlike good along the lines of our thinking. If we open our thought to embrace infinity itself, we will encounter contradictions that might seem to rebut or deny the totality of infinite goodness. These contradictions do not come from within but from outside the idea of infinite goodness, and our antidote is simply to let all these things be infinite.

Infinite goodness knows no reality outside itself. Infinity knows there are other words than those of infinite goodness, and for good reasons. The important thing is to learn everything in order. At every level, you will want to be well schooled in goodness before having to face and make nothing of evil. If you ever encounter finite evil appearing to be something, begin with its denial. Seek out infinite spiritual goodness, and let its allness uncover the nothingness of anything unlike good. You will never need to seek out the opposite of good. To be confronted by not-knowing before having spiritual knowing might be a frightening experience. One might be left with a sense of nothing at all. On the other hand, the emerging infinite idea will unearth knowledge of infinite empty places (already filled) through the knowledge of what it is not.

As we comprehend and embody more of good, infinity provides opportunities to put evil into perspective as being illegitimate, powerless, nothingness, empty space, or as the sweet comfort of infinite not-knowing now disappeared from sense. Opportunities appearing in our individual experiences will be seen in the context of our own level of progress. Infinity reveals evil only to make nothing of it.¹⁸ Obviously, one would not want to consent to evil while believing it to be real. Infinite evil is an abstraction of negation, infinite not-knowing, best experienced in the knowledge of its sweet nothingness.

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This chapter has been discussing the male and female aspects of knowledge as they relate to infinite conception and elimination. While religions have historically tried to address the male aspect of the spiritual idea, they have understood little about the female aspect until fairly recently. The discovery that spiritual truth acts as a principle reveals the spiritual idea of fatherhood and motherhood. Revelation of the essential nothingness of evil, first appearing with level three beliefs, ushers into human consciousness the spiritual idea of womanhood with its promised comforts.

The infinite idea of male is relatively easy to comprehend. The male aspect of infinity provides the word and substance of creation. It provides pure word for that which is. The female aspect of infinity defines perfect place and forever time. It gives shape to

¹⁸ To make room for new conception of wholeness.

reality and defines that which is forever not. The masculine ego is able to provide the essence and words of good. Feminine will and willingness define a safe place, give form to infinite conception, and enforce knowledge of what must be forever missing. In this oneness of seed and soil, we find the wholeness of the infinite idea. The infinite idea includes the simultaneous conception of good accompanied by the experienced inconceivability of its infinite opposite. The knowledge of good fits in the sweet knowledge of evil's nothingness, and they are one. This infinite knowledge of oneness is the true sense of being.

As we remember from paragraphs on the three offices of truth, in an earlier chapter,¹⁹ the offspring of truth is created well and remains well. Inherent in what it is, one can also see what it is not. It is never anything but the perfection that is its original identity. This aspect of the expression of truth, the recognition of what it is not, evidences the mothering and maintaining quality of its forever source. Its inherent quality of goodness of origin is so severe that it mandates its conspicuous forever perfection. This upside-down use of the word severe, to mean something severely good, introduced in that earlier chapter, is an important example of the paradoxical negative.

The idea of truth is seen as truth's likeness. Truth as likeness looks like truth as origin. And truth as origin has inherent in it both what it is - perfect, and what it can never be - anything but perfect. These two are clearly distinct mental impressions, but they are one infinite integral spiritual idea. Unmodified infinity is one, and it speaks to consciousness as the wholeness and oneness of being.

¹⁹ Chapter 7.

Chapter 12 – Wholeness

Reaching beyond even the infinite idea to pure abstract infinite identity, we approach the source of infinite conception and elimination as one. Our realization that the opposite of the infinite idea is inconceivable provides the safe place and time for the infinite idea's conception. When the infinite idea is seen, it is seen filling space and time.

The opposite of any infinite idea of good is twice inconceivable. It is first inconceivable as defining empty space, and it is second inconceivable because, where the idea of good is conceived, there is no place left for an opposite conception. Infinite conception is preceded and followed by infinite elimination. In that sense infinite evil's nothingness has a double meaning. The door of the infinite has two locks on it, and they are both really big.

Every problem solved, everything accomplished, involves action of conception and elimination. If you are looking for a needle in a haystack, you can either figure out where the needle is or get rid of all the hay. Either way will work. In the spiritual realm, conception and elimination performed to completion work in tandem. Ultimately, they are one.

When you look closely at a picture in a newspaper, you see lots of little dots. The lighter parts of the picture are made of tiny little black dots on white, and the darker parts look like tiny little white dots on black. The patterns of black on white and white on black convey to your eyes the form and outline of the picture.

Black ink appears dark to your eyes because it absorbs light. When we see black, we are not really seeing something; we are not-seeing something. This experience we call seeing black. The white parts of the newspaper picture reflect ambient light back to our eyes, so our seeing white results from the arrival of light to our eyes. Seeing white is seeing something. Our perception of the newspaper picture, made up of white and black dots, is the result of our simultaneously seeing and not seeing, our awareness of the reflection and absorption of light. Were the picture entirely white, we would in a sense be seeing all content and no form. Were the picture all black, we would in a similar way be seeing all form and no content. Both such pictures would not be pictures at all.

We experience a world whose presentation to us is an intricately woven combination of seeing and not seeing, of being and not being. There is a relation between the white and black, between knowledge of what is real and unreal, that gives form and texture to our world. In the infinite idea of these we find permanent harmony.

In the finite case of the newspaper picture, it is easy to see how light and dark come together to constitute a picture. What may be a subtler point is that infinite truth is comprised of the simultaneous recognition of the truth of what infinity is and what it is not. At the level of infinite consciousness, these two do not form a combination of light and dark in any normal sense. They do not form gray or alternate speckles like in the newspaper picture. To infinite sense, spiritual light fills darkness. Infinity has one sense that is the congruence of light and dark, of what is and what is not. These two form into something that is not sensibly two elements combined but a single element that is distinctly one.

Black and white dots are used here to suggest affirmative and negative aspects of infinite identity making up our idea of the whole in spiritual logic. The infinite negative provides conceptual containers that define logical space in the infinite, disembodied, and abstract realm of pure mind.

At the standpoint of infinity, being and not-being is one. To be and not to be, that is the answer. The oneness of being is both what it forever and always is, and what it has never and can never be. This oneness is experienced as a combination, an interweaving, an integration of sensible and insensible infinity. Oneness includes the allness and onliness of good, and it naturally includes knowledge of the nothingness, the inconceivability of evil. As with black dots in the newspaper picture, knowledge of the inconceivability of evil defines what is not and helps give form to reality. It defines boundaries and gives edges to infinity.

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Because of oneness, the primary viewpoint of infinity is to think as the infinite first person. The first person infinite includes the knowledge of the positive infinity that "I am" and the negative infinity that "I am not" as one infinite "I." This recognition that "I am" is a transfinite recognition. Infinity's recognition of "I am" includes its knowledge that what

the I am is, is what we are, what you are, what he or she is, what and who they are, and so forth. These aspects of the I am, aspects of the I that are conceivable, are entirely good. They are pure infinite goodness.

Infinity experiences and senses all that exists and does not exist as oneness. Here infinity's viewpoint departs from a human picture of things. There is no outside to infinity's sense of oneness. Infinity shows forth an infinite kaleidoscope of individuality and identity. In trying to reconcile our human picture of things to infinity's viewpoint, what may appear to be outside our individual spheres is either something good reflected from inside or a sense of that which is properly unreal, which can be correctly found to be inconceivable.

When infinity is alone, it is alone with all and as all, with everything and everyone conceivable within it. Infinity finds infinite companionship when it is one. Infinity knows that, when it is one, no one it loves is outside of it. Infinity peoples its own soul with infinite ideas of strength and loveliness. A correct standpoint from which to think is not simply to consider what good is, but what I am, not to consider what love is, but what I am. This is meant in the sense that true consciousness knows, "I am love." Love is the principle of reality. A correct apprehension of what "I" means could have one declare, "Love am."

Having introduced the theme of reflecting the infinite first person as our thinking, we need to make two important distinctions. These are needed so we don't mistake a disappearing finite sense of selfhood for our emerging reflection of true identity.

First, it is important to keep straight about cause and effect. While we may reflect the infinite I as our own, it would be silly to think that we were personally the source of the infinite idea, in any human or personal sense. The infinite I we reflect is not to be confused with a finite concept of human mentality or personality. The infinite I am is not the finite personal self-concept, although it is expressing itself as your true identity. This first person I am is pure infinite goodness. It is important to keep clear about the difference between infinite words of identification and human beliefs of self, will, and ego. The primary attribute of the latter is that when exalted they come to naught. In this regard, be bold, but keep the ideas straight.

Second, it is important to remember that spiritual truth is universal. Whatever of infinite spiritual goodness you declare, claim, assert, or believe for yourself about your true spiritual nature, you should also declare for everyone else, for all of humanity. Because

infinity is universal, every thought by which it identifies itself has universal application and validity. Human concepts of manifestation are not linked to the infinite ego in any private or privileged way that could exclude other individuals. Giving specific attention to the universal aspect of spiritual and infinite identity can unleash wonderful new views of reality. Ignoring the universal nature of truth or trying to have some private claim to it is a sure way to stop one's progress in its tracks.

Keeping these guidelines in mind is important if you are going to push on infinite spiritual thoughts. The easy tendency for human aberrations will be curbed. Maybe these two points are a contemporary statement of issues addressed in the two great commandments.

The description of the idea of infinite goodness in an earlier chapter was presented primarily in the third person, only occasionally touching on the second. In considering the idea of an infinite spiritual principle, statements were made about what the idea of pure infinite goodness is and what it does. These statements were written that way to be relatively more easily grasped. You may eventually want to consider such statements as if reflecting the infinite first person. Beginning with the first person view as idea, and growing to include the view from the principle itself, and then from the union of them, the first person view is the standpoint of right reflection.

One might find an initial reluctance to associate with spiritual or infinite ideas in the first person, to work with the idea that infinity is the source and substance of individual identity. Such reluctance would most likely come from superstitious fears or from unwillingness to part with a finite sense of self. If we find ourselves unwilling to progress, let us simply be infinitely unwilling.

When you subvocalize in the name of the infinite I, be mindful of the reflection and the original.²⁰ The infinite I always understands infinity. That is what it is and what it does. Any sense of I that is unable to declare and accept that it understands infinity is not the I. It is not your real actual I, but a limited and temporary belief of i. Any conception of such a little i is not your real identity. The I that understands infinity is your rightful I.

²⁰ Thirty years later, I found a good example of this in "Unity of Good," by Mary Baker Eddy, p. 18:4, where she writes, 'Rather, let us think of God as saying, "I am infinite good, and therefore I know not evil." ' This idea, of thinking of God as saying, may be the portal to right reflection. My only change to this would be, I know not-evil.

When you claim it, exercise it, get it up to speed, so to speak, you will realize it is yours, and you will see its self-conception revealing your true selfhood.

The infinite individual is the embodied knowledge of infinity. To the I, knowledge of infinity is self-knowledge. To have knowledge of infinity is to be at-one with infinity. It is to reflect infinity's knowledge of itself as your knowledge of yourself. Infinity conceives of its idea, it sees its likeness, it senses its reflection in its knowledge of the oneness of infinite good and the sweetness of infinite evil's inconceivability. This one whole infinite idea shows forth the male and female of God's creation. Infinity brings all good things together and reveals infinite fullness in infinite empty places.

Infinity's expression appears faintly in us as our still too limited conception of everyday life experience. From time to time, expressions of goodness can touch our lives in ways we do not humanly comprehend. When the wholeness of the infinite idea comes into focus however briefly in the here and now, it can sometimes seem like having five pounds of light in a four-pound bag. Such an occurrence is a close relative of oneness and wholeness, but it is an idea whose essence is that it is bigger than human dimensions. Because it does not fit within the bounds of rational humanhood, it is not well understood. It is an idea sometimes remotely regarded with superstition or approximated through affectation. This special idea of wholeness represents an integrated sense of things, combining seed and soil in balance. It makes things happen when it occurs in the human realm, because it is defiant of human limitations. It results in the appearance of the transcendent in the immediate realm, a divine coincidence between the finite and the infinite. It may not be able to exist in any permanently conceivable way or in any fixed form of expression on the human scene. When this sense of wholeness appears to us in the human realm, we experience holiness.

It is not useful to affect a sense of holiness humanly. Such efforts usually result in silly parodies of the true idea. Holiness appears through right identification, through right thinking, loving, and living. It unfolds itself to us in the union of being and not being, knowing and not knowing, where they fit together as one. Then it appears and transforms all our surroundings into holy places.

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We have talked about how infinite something dwells in infinite nothing, for all things to fit. In the same way, infinite conception exists concurrently with infinite elimination. At this point, however, when these two fit together, a third element is present. Conception represents the awareness of what is. Elimination represents the awareness of what is not. Sensible and supersensible wholeness, holiness, represents the singular awareness that these two cover the whole ground as one idea. The congruence or union of these two transfinities emerges when our perception of the infinite idea is not of two pieces, or of three pieces, but when it is one.

Whole relationships throughout human life are often reflected in three views. In the relationship of father, mother, and child, the child evidences the oneness of the father and mother. In the relationship of parent, child, and observer, the observer witnesses the fundamental relationship of parent and child. We are usually most aware of the two opposites or complementary views indicating a whole relationship. The third viewpoint, often that of stranger or observer, is not at first so obvious, but it serves as the witness to wholeness.

Relating this concept to the infinite idea, the third-party view is not only seen as holiness, but it is seen by holiness, for holiness is the one watching, as if as an apparition. When infinite conception and infinite elimination are seen together, which is the way they occur naturally, their distinctness is ~~almost~~ eclipsed by their union. When you think in terms of the oneness of infinite cause and effect, parent mind and spiritual offspring, spiritual principle and idea, your viewpoint is as the third party, the observer of wholeness.

The three points of view could be illustrated in these three voices: the parent says, I am the parent mind and I love my idea, created perfect in my likeness; the child says, I am the idea of mind, held in mind, perfect as my father-mother mind; the observer of wholeness says, I see the lovely union of perfect mind and idea, forever one.

From moment to moment, the mental standpoint of the "I" can be any or all of these three points of view. We can see ourselves as the manifestation of the infinite word; we can stand as the infinite word that looks out at its reflection; or we can be the observer and consider the relationship, the oneness, of the infinite word and its expression. Because of the wholeness of infinity, these are all one. One whole I.

Chapter 13 – Compounding

Whenever spiritual logic obsoletes old conclusions about the nature of creator and creation, a world of brighter conclusions is ready to emerge. In the progression of human thought, our acceptance of a world of brighter conclusions is followed by a new set of questions. At each level, thought is turned, if only briefly, to satisfy logic and consistency, to the world of appearances, to develop a sufficient explanation for whatever sense of the negative might remain.

Evil appearing to human sense goes from a first recognition of it as untoward material phenomena to its last human appearance in level four belief as spiritually mental empty space. One reading these last few chapters could conclude that infinite evil is an inconceivably wonderful abstraction that can make us all feel safe and warm because we know about all the bad things that can never happen to us. Well, if this idea of infinite evil is so wonderful, what is the explanation for all the obviously rotten things that may go on in our world, things we might call evils?

One could suggest that apparent evils on the human scene are like so many balls of tangled string. When confronting a hopelessly tangled ball of string, it is sometimes a surprise to be able to pull the string, carefully and patiently, until all the tangles disappear. One could sometimes unravel an entire tangled ball of string and find no knots. If there were no knots in the string, how could it have looked so hopeless? Even with no knots at all, if you do not pull on the string, if you yank too hard, or if your string pulling is not done with intelligent sensitivity, you can still have a tangled snarl. Knots or no knots, if your string looks tangled, you have to work it out.

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In chemistry, there are mixtures and compounds. A mixture is like salt and pepper poured together. They are together in physical proximity, but they can be separated through simple means. A compound, on the other hand, is like the salt itself. Salt is a compound made of sodium and chloride atoms joined in a chemical bond. When a com-

pound is created, it has characteristics and properties that may be far different from the properties of the original materials.

When you have money in a savings bank, the value of your money can increase over a period of time due to compounding of interest. This compounding is a form of fractional self-multiplication. If left compounding for long enough, your money can double or even triple in value.

If a bone is broken, it can be a simple fracture or a compound fracture. A compound fracture is where not only the bone breaks, but the broken bone breaks through the skin. It is a bad situation gone worse.

If you are working on a project and you make a mistake, you can correct the mistake or you can ignore it. A mistake may often be quickly and easily corrected if it is detected early. For instance, if an engineer is thinking about a design for a bridge and he makes a simple math error in his head, he can detect that error and correct it even before writing the incorrect calculation on paper. If the engineer does not detect his error, he may commit it to paper. This will compound the error.

The consequences of making a mental mistake are not so much related to the enormity of the mistake as to whether the error is corrected before it is compounded. The most monumental mental error we could possibly imagine would cause no problems if it was corrected before it was compounded.

In the case of the bridge engineer with the math error, were his mistake to go uncorrected for several months, its correction might require the redoing of countless calculations or scores of drawings, or the generation of volumes of change orders for materials purchases.

Were such an error to go uncorrected during construction, and if its consequences were not observable during final inspection, the error might be detected only after the bridge collapsed carrying rush-hour traffic during a storm. By the time this mathematical mistake, an abstraction, is detected at the level of full manifestation, it is too late to correct it. At this point, correcting the error by building a new bridge is an insufficient remedy.

A simple error can compound, and its consequences can compound, and the cost to correct it can compound. As errors compound, certain resulting losses can appear seemingly irreversible.

There are some errors that are not related to other events, errors upon which no other things are dependent, and they tend not to compound. An incorrect spelling on the memorial plaque on the new bridge might be an error that would not compound.

The reason compounding is mentioned here is to suggest that there is no point in taking infinite words that are inconceivable and turning them into human beliefs that are frightening. If instead of thinking correctly from spiritual principles, one merely supposes and assumes and believes, one could become involved in an unfortunate compounding process.

As with the bridge, the consequences depend on what mistakes are left uncorrected, how we carry them into action, and what their position is in the chain of events leading to causation. If we live by flawed assumptions and act on them, if we energize negative beliefs and exert our will in wrong directions, we might have a case of taking nothing at all and compounding it into serious problems.

Our abstract awareness that compounded nothingness can never be more than nothing might be comforting. But the one who does not correct the arithmetic problem in his head is not absolved, when the bridge collapses, by saying it was only a silly mistake and he knew the right answer all along. Culpability may not be so much in making the mistake as in letting it compound.

We know that the only right sense of evil comes from the infinite idea of it as abstract nothingness already filled with goodness. The infinite idea of evil does not exist alone; it exists in an infinite compound with the idea of infinite goodness. The compound they form is the whole idea of infinity, an idea whose union is greater than the sum of the parts, an idea experienced as sensible and supersensible wholeness.

To lend one's mental weight to a human sense of evil, to energize thought or action based on a limited sense of evil as finity, mentality, belief, law, or substance might begin to compound an easily correctable error.

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Since infinity is true identity, compounding at other levels than the infinite might lead to aberrant and undesirable beliefs of identity. To the degree that the ideas providing

impetus for our thoughts and actions are in harmony with the infinite idea, the resulting beliefs will be proportionately free from unwanted side effects.

If one attempts to employ mental action with bad seed, it will eventually come to nothing. Worship of the negative always comes to nothing. The forms that any compounded aspects of human nothingness might present, during their resolution into abstract nothingness, can range from the monstrosly horrible to the laughably ridiculous. If we experience beliefs from incorrect compounding, they will tend to have a mental aspect consistent with our individual level of perspective.

We may be able to take some very good human ideas and compound them into wonderful things. This will be possible to the degree that our actions, beliefs, and principles reflect their infinite originals. The process of finitely compounding evil might go through a progression from finite concepts, to material misconceptions, to fears and doubts, to wrong actions. These might appear to result in human limitations, material discords, evil adversaries, painful punishments, or worse.

As always, the infinite idea about everything is the ultimate antidote. Just as the infinite idea of evil provides us with the not-knowing needed to preclude sensible evils, the antidote to fear of false compounding is appreciating the infinite idea about it. Compounding an infinite idea of evil defines a larger sense of place within which to conceive the infinite idea of good. Compounding the idea of infinity compounds holiness. Compounding holiness is infinite identity compounding itself. It is the natural activity of infinitely minded being.

The right sense of compounding as infinite spiritual activity can help correct, replace, displace, and dispel any false or limited sense of it. A most powerful standpoint for the infinitely minded thinker is to consciously and affirmatively be. At the standpoint of the infinite I, simply being results in right compounding, wholeness, and revelation.²¹

²¹ I've mentioned a few times that, as we progress, we sometimes need to come up with new explanations for any remaining sense of the negative, as it passes through discreet phases of becoming more remote or abstract. The idea of "compounding" was what I came up with 30 years ago, but it is not my thought about it at this writing. That would be in my audio update mp3 on "The Wholeness of the Infinite God Principle," on my website at: www.hyperhot.com/Wholeness.mp3. The goal, of course, is to get to the point where the whole idea of a sense of the negative would be nonsense.

Chapter 14 – Nonsense

I remember the day I first clearly understood some basic spiritual ideas I had been thinking about for a few years. This came out of a discussion with someone who gave me good answers for my hard questions. After getting what seemed like a good answer for my standard hard question, asking how the universe could be both infinite and material, we got on to other things. As our discussion went on, I tentatively accepted the explanation that the real substance of the universe is not matter, which one physicist described as "nothing, moving swiftly." For some reason I then grasped the idea that spiritual love is the actual substance of reality. Not only did I understand the words, but I saw them, I sensed their actuality.

In an earlier chapter, we discussed the idea that spiritual seeing is believing. Well, it was for me. Ever after that day it has always been clear to me that, no matter what things look like, Love, Spirit, is the only real substance.

In this same discussion in my youth, I understood that it followed as a consequence of logic that if Spirit is real then the opposite of Spirit is not. My next question dealt with origins. I asked the obvious question. If matter and material error are unreal, where did this unreality come from? The answer was simple. If matter is not substance, if it is unreal, then it is not here. If it is not here, then it makes no sense to ask where it comes from; it didn't come from anywhere. The answer was obtained by making the question go away.

In a sense, this was a ridiculous answer. There was something absurd about it. The answer had followed as a logical consequence of our conclusions, but in a certain way, in trying to reconcile it to my familiar senses, it made no sense at all. It only fit perfectly with a sense of wholly spiritual logic. This conclusion was at once completely logical and yet, in another way, it was absurd. Being a teenager at the time, I decided it must be the right answer. I loved it.

The acceptance of those conclusions was vital to my having a solid foundation in what has been here called level three beliefs.²² I will refrain from elaborating on those ideas, because they are not my subject. It is just an example.

²² This experience is included in my Spiritual Memoir and is also available in an audio mp3 as "Spiritual Experiences – Case 2," found at www.hyperhot.com/10_videos.htm.

The example is appropriate to the subject of nonsense. Looking back on this experience, I have always attributed my acceptance of those concepts not only to my grasping the substantiality of spiritual love, but also to an appreciation, a delight, an affection, for an idea that in a funny way made no sense at all. I liked the nonsense aspect of it as well as the logical part.

Understanding those spiritual concepts was very important for me, and the beliefs that grew out of them served me well for years. But the reason I mention this at all is to bring up the important subject of nonsense.

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Just as certain ideas are sensible, they make sense to us, so some ideas are nonsense, they make no sense at all. That is good because there are some ideas we would like to have become sensible to us, so we can sense them, and others that we would like to have become nonsense, so we may have no sense of them whatever.

This is not simply a play on the word sensible. When we are thinking thoughts that make sense to us, we are led to generate beliefs that we tend to live by. When spiritual ideas make sense to us they become our things. We possess them and experience them. Spiritual sense becomes our actual sense. Spiritual reality becomes our stuff.

When, on the other hand, certain thoughts become, to our reflected spiritual understanding, so ridiculous as to be completely and fundamentally unbelievable, they can no longer enter our lives. Spiritual sense makes nonsense of material discord. Infinite sense makes nonsense of human limitation. Our new sense obsoletes our old sense and makes it nonsense.

Some evils on the human scene are so extreme that we actually describe them as being unbelievable or inconceivable. Some outrageous evils we even call mindless, senseless, or meaningless acts. Our terminology in such cases stems from our subliminal yet intuitive sense that these are cases of evil drawing close to its essence. Our human concepts of the unbelievable and senseless need to be elevated to that which is infinitely unbelievable and infinitely senseless. Then we will no longer believe in things humanly senseless, and our untoward sense of them will fade away.

Consider what it would mean for the activity of infinite love to so permeate human consciousness that cruelty and inhumanity became to the peoples of the world utter nonsense. What would happen if our knowledge of spiritual wholeness so improved our beliefs that human disease and impairment became laughably ridiculous, or if we became so imbued with the affluence of infinite spirit that the idea of human impoverishment became actually absurd?

I am not suggesting that we should see humor in the sufferings of humanity or that anything is to be gained by us all becoming comedians. But there is no reason why we cannot become so filled with the knowledge of the infinite idea that untoward things will be rightly regarded as nonsense. And then they will be gone. And that is nonsense.

To be comfortable thinking about the infinite, really thinking about it, you have to have some tolerance or maybe even an affection for aspects of nonsense, for some things absurd. Most every aspect of infinity contrasts with human thinking in ways that involve nonsense. The infinite idea of evil is inconceivable nonsense. Infinite good is sensible. Infinite evil is nonsense. Infinite wholeness is the totality of the infinite I am and the infinite I am not. Infinite sense in infinite nonsense, one infinite I.

Realizing that the basis of untoward things is nonsense at its essence gives us a unique standpoint from which to work things out. In working for good and vanquishing evil, our work should have a certain no-nonsense quality to it. Understanding the infinite principles involved makes it easier to work things out.

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Our earlier discussion of spiritual causation focused on the four levels of human belief related to rational spiritual action. The analysis was intentionally dismissive of what was termed level zero, the pre-rational level of human belief. At level zero, there were three categories described: accidental, indifferent, and mystical. There is a fourth category that puts the irrational levels in some symmetry with the rational levels. It is an agnostic human condition stemming from the premise that we are basically without a clue. All these four have something to be said for them, but not as human beliefs. Because each of these viewpoints has an undifferentiated character to it, that is, because good and evil cannot be reliably separated, each is rightly apprehended only as being infinite. If you are

going to cherish and exalt notions of the natural or supernatural, of mystery, ritual, and ceremony, let them all be infinite.

In mathematics, there are real and imaginary numbers, and they are both important. Decimals can be rational or irrational. An irrational decimal is one that, without ever repeating itself, goes on and on forever. The spiritual principle behind this is very important, but let all our irrationality be infinite. Let all our nonsense be infinite. To put our mental weight on a human sense of these things is to engage ourselves in beliefs at a level where we cannot effect the goodness of their outcome.

Chapter 15 – Signs of Progress

Infinity is revelatory in nature. It is always unfolding to itself new aspects of its infinite idea. This characteristic of infinity is the driving force for all true progress on the human scene. Having gained some appreciation for the idea of infinity, it is reasonable for each of us to be cultivating larger expressions and expectations of spiritual goodness in our lives.

As we work out the infinite problem of being in everyday life, however, appearances are not always interpreted as a source of continuous happiness. We may experience ups and downs, periods of progress and what might feel like stagnation or even regression. This sense can be traced to the notion that spiritual reality sometimes reveals itself to us in seasons. Human concepts relating to seasons derive from the infinite idea about seasons. As with any finite concept of an infinite idea, finite concepts about seasons include aspects of limitation. The following observations about seasons are not about the infinite idea or ideal, but about things we see and feel, about our beliefs, about our human sense of things.

It is important to recognize familiar aspects of the seasons that relate to spiritual progress. If we can interpret the seasons correctly, we can better determine what to do and when. We would not expect a farmer to be successful if he could not tell the difference between spring, summer, fall, and winter. It is helpful for one toiling in spiritual fields to be able to recognize mental seasons.

When considering seasons from the standpoint of the farmer, it is clear that there is a time to plant. If you do not plant seeds, no crops come up. It works the same way in the spiritual realm. When the time is right, it is important to prepare soil, to plant seeds, to think, to plant infinite words, to stand for things, to show forth better beliefs, and to act them out.

Planting is very important. But one need not be planting all the time. One might find such satisfaction in the planting process as to feel it necessary to be planting continuously. This is not the way to do it. When the seeds have been planted and all the ground has been covered, the planting season may be over.

The season that follows planting time is the summer. During the summer one should keep one's fields weeded and watered and free of pests. Then one should play or go

to the beach or go camping. At the right time, play can be an important part of spiritual progress. It can release light-hearted expressions of creativity, and it is sometimes a needed manifestation that we are unafraid.

After summer comes the fall. Having planted and weeded and watered, there will be a harvest to take up. It is good to take up and enjoy the harvest. If one is planting straight through summer, when it comes time for the harvest, that one may just keep on planting. One cannot take up the harvest while hell-bent on planting. If one is not going to harvest and enjoy, what is the point of planting? As with the tendency of some to plant continuously, so there is a school of thought that holds out for continuous harvesting. That doesn't work either. If one does not plant, and tries to harvest, that one may at first harvest wild crops or the fruits of others. After a while, however, those who keep harvesting without planting will start to harvest dirt. That is all there will be in their fields.

One of the most noteworthy phenomena of the seasons comes in the fall after the harvest has been gathered and the leaves have begun to drop. The falling of leaves represents a crumbling process where the old gives way to make place for the new. In the spiritually mental realm, the dawning of new ideas often makes old beliefs crumble.

In the late fall, when crumbling is in full swing, it is not hard to become depressed or even discouraged, if we were enjoying the planting and harvesting process and now, all of a sudden, all we see is barrenness. When all our fruits have been harvested, we sometimes want to keep on harvesting, because it gives us such a tangible sense of well-being. Because crumbling may follow right after the harvest, things can start to look pretty bleak just when we had thought they were going so well.

When we see that we can no longer harvest, the first instinct is to start planting again. Plant. Plant. Plant. But now that does not work either. It does not even feel like the seeds are getting into the soil. No wonder, the ground is frozen like a rock. It is winter.

It may come as a shock, having been successful sowing and harvesting in the spiritual realm, when we suddenly come to a lull where nothing seems to work anymore. When that time comes, recognize that it is winter, and stop trying to plant and harvest. You are not a failure. You have your harvest to carry you through. Relax. Get a hot cup of something and sit by the fire, even if it is the fire of your old beliefs going up in smoke. Do something that brings you joy. Rest assured that springtime follows the snow.

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Some earlier chapters discussed conception and elimination and how the infinite idea drives the conception of good and the elimination of evil. The linkage between conception and elimination brings up an important subject that you should know about. This topic has been addressed elsewhere as purification, although there may be more to it than just that. In any case, you should be able to recognize the process. If you think about this book much, you will doubtless have the opportunity to experience it. When it happens, and when it is not seen for what it is, it can be disturbing, and it could tempt you to become discouraged.

If you apply heat to a pot of molten ore, gold, silver, lead, you name it, several things will happen. The ore will continue to melt and liquify; impurities will rise to the surface; and the ore itself will become progressively more refined.

One's reflection of infinite truth as their mentality acts the same way. In the case of your own thought, impurities are like little bubbles of empty space that surface so they can be seen as nothing and be relegated to infinite empty space. If your perception of empty space is compounded at some lower level of belief, you may see these little bubbles of nothingness as terrible little somethings. Or they could surface as terrible little nothings. In any case, they will eventually claim to be you, your thought, your identity, your self.

When you encounter these and they appear to be part of your own mentality and character, you may start to feel unworthy and inadequate. You may see bad things claiming to be you. At this point, even if you have really been pouring the heat on and progressing well, you might stop and, notwithstanding your efforts and progress, start to feel like you are really an awful and utterly unredeemable person. This is normal, and it is a good sign.

It is an interesting process. Thinking at the level of infinity reveals the elements of good and the nothingness of evil, and these two are reconciled. The key to dealing with the process of purification is to continue to identify yourself correctly. Keep on with your progressive spiritual thinking. The impetus that brings impurities to the surface will ultimately cause them to be eliminated, to vaporize, to vanish - poof. When you persevere through and master these experiences, you will come away from them with a new and larger sense of wholeness.

If you are reaching for the infinite idea from level four beliefs, you may get to see the most awful things surfacing and claiming to be you. Some very bad words. When you see of what you are capable, just let it be infinite. If you are to be awful, simply be infinitely awful, and get on with it.

If you are working with spiritual truths and all of a sudden everything looks like it is turning to mush, keep on letting the truth unfold itself to you. Sometimes the only way to get through a stage of progress is to pass through seasons of crumbling or the process of purification. It is always easier and more pleasant when you recognize it for what it is.

Chapter 16 – Conclusion

Identity determines who and what things are. In the sequence of creativity, identity is at or near the very beginning. It may even be before the beginning. Identity determines the nature of the thing to be conceived. It may be the ultimate abstraction you can reach for, before it is born in idea. In the world of the real, the infinity of good is true identity. It is yours and mine. It is I. The oneness of every good thing is inherent in your spiritual identity. The manifest idea of true infinite identity is you. It is us.

At the level of infinite abstractions, the whole of identity is more than simply what the "I am" is. Infinite identity also includes the specific identification of what "I am not." From the viewpoint of a finite sense of identity, I am not my opposite. From the viewpoint of infinite identity, I am my infinite opposite. The I declares itself to be infinite holiness and infinite unholiness, fit together as one. It has a transfinite voice that declares, I infinitely am, and one that says, I infinitely am not. If you think about these things and get a wisp of meaning, that is doing well.

In accepting my opposite as part of infinite identity, I can show forth an affirmative negative - a sweet nothing. The infinite opposite of the light we seek is infinite darkness already filled with light. You can listen to the voice that says, I am infinite darkness. I am infinite nonsense. I am all the infinite expletives. I am redeeming every dark word. To proceed here you need to stay connected to your source, love your enemies, and let them all be infinite. The identity of infinite goodness speaks as the divine spark in you and says, I am that I am. Infinite identity says, I am the infinite love that I am.

The *I am* and the *I am not* constitute the wholeness of the infinite holy "I." That is yours. That is ours. This "I" is true identity. It is timeless collective individual universal identity. It could be said to be the infinite "I." But even that might be modifying it, in a sense, limiting it. The ultimate "I" may be infinite and finite, fit together in perfect harmony.

True identity is holy. It is an infinite unholy hell. It is infinitely righteous and infinitely unrighteous, infinitely simple and infinitely complex, infinitely clean and infinitely unclean. It is its infinite affirmation, declaration, and assertion. It is its infinite denial, contradiction, and opposition. Let all these be infinite.

The "I" is an on-going revelation of the wholeness of infinity. It is going on forever. It makes perfect sense. It is nonsense. It is one. The part that gives us pause is that we cannot steer this mind with our own. When we know enough about it and are ready to trust it, we can only let go and let it be ours - I.

True identity is infinite whole and hole fit together as an ever larger whole. One, forever defining a perfectly safe place and time for itself. Invisible identity and abstract opportunity parent the infinite idea. This child is a cross between the infinite I am and the infinite I am not. It is a lovely cross, and its name is wonderful. It is a little terror. It is not a human cross but an infinite cross, an infinite idea conceived from the holy identity of the infinite I.

We reach for the "I" not the "i."

I.

That is the word. We know what it means. Having ascended to the highest peak, we can sense both the rarefied atmosphere and the granite beneath our feet. Now at our highest point, we do a pirouette. Perhaps this peak is only the tip of the iceberg. In time, we must go back down and put our vision to work. But we know where the peak is, and we can always stand here to see it all fit together. If you try this, remember the two great commandments.

Reaching into abstractions of infinite identity, we avail ourselves of thoughts that make up the whole. From the standpoint of the I, invisible substance and form are one, and we can begin to see the wholeness of the infinite idea. The infinite idea is first assimilated within as pure information. It is a message from our infinite identity about our infinite identity.

This I looks for our worshipful adoration. It looks for us to seek it as the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. It looks for us to reach out to its wisdom, to fall before it in humble submission, to take its name and identity and authority and prerogatives as our own, to use it as our very ego and will and mind and being, to be triumphant, to be one.

• • •

Having completed the process of differentiating evil from good, separating it from ourselves, and realizing its nothingness, we are ready to find a bigger sense of wholeness. We have rejected evil until it faded into empty space. It has been dissociated from our mental world. While any sense of evil still appears in our beliefs as empty space we bring out that it is already filled with the idea of infinite goodness. When we hear its name, we let it be infinite and integrate it, but not as something. Now we relish letting infinite goodness make sweet nothing of evil to provide place for our conception.

When thinking about infinity in the first person, a more integrated sense of things begins to appear. Because of infinity, there are not two contending or separate halves representing the knowledge of good and evil. The infinite words that bring your renewal and the sweet comforting silence that welcomes them are not two halves that were parted. It started as one, and that is how it is speaking to you.

There is no isolated idea of good and separate idea of evil, even if evil is nothing but empty space. Infinity mandates that all things exist as one, that all be reconcilable to each other and to itself. The idea of infinity inspires a new dynamic in our spiritual growth. As our idea and sense of the infinite grows larger, the empty space it fills grows larger too. The more is learned about the infinity of good, the more is brought to light of the infinity of evil, not a sense of it as real, but a sense of it as nothingness, as opportunity, and ultimately as a sweetly inconceivable abstraction. The idea of infinity presents the knowledge of infinite good and evil as one, with recognition of the supersensible wholeness of that one. This union is filled with light and is defiant of human limitations.

The progression from undifferentiated observation to final integration appears to form a complete cycle. If we were to picture such a process symbolically, it might look like something happening slowly in pond water seen under a microscope. Perhaps this cycle illustrates human spiritual evolution over the last thousands of years or the spiritual growth of a single individual or of a single cell. It may be a process ever taking place on the frontiers of revelation as new aspects of the infinite idea dawn in thought, a sort of spiritually mental metabolism. It is a pattern beginning and ending with wholeness. It goes from wholeness to differentiation and self-division, to separation from within, to disassociation and exclusion, and finally to reconciliation and integration, forming a new sense of wholeness. Maybe this goes on forever.

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Having risen to the heights of infinite abstractions, we now find the need to come back down to earth, so to speak. Knowledge of the infinite oneness of things provides a new and better standpoint from which to work things out. Dealing with opposites of goodness at the highest levels equips us to practice more effectively the four types of spiritual action, handling things as they appear. Having worked out the problem of good and evil at its essence, we are now ready to apply our conclusions, gradually and gracefully, to the issues of everyday life.

We can hold thoughts of pure infinite goodness and love as consciousness without subtle fear of contradiction. We know about contradiction and denial and all those things. When they appear, we will simply let them all be infinite, embody them, and let them vanish from consciousness. Having new insight into the ultimate nature of all dark things, we can analyze and antidote them, gain the perspective to face human problems confidently, and work out their solutions in practical ways. Returning to our familiar levels of spiritual action, we can now find them somewhat supercharged. The spiritual being, knowing, faith, and discipline that prepared us for our high destination now welcome us back from the mountaintop and give us human comforts and human hands.

Our distinctions about the levels in which human beliefs stratify give us a preliminary structure for understanding the spiritually mental realm. Familiarity with the words and conceptions that comprise our spiritual ideals helps us sort out thoughts and choose the best. The idea of infinity solves the theological problem of good and evil, resulting in a new idea of wholeness.

An understanding of spiritual issues begins to blossom as we exercise our thoughts from a spiritual principle, and it continues with thinking and being from the standpoint of infinite identity. Earlier levels of spiritual action are still important. They are best worked out by individuals doing their own thinking and identifying themselves correctly. Using this process, spiritually or infinitely minded thinking can regenerate all our thoughts and beliefs. Reaching out to a spiritual principle or to the pure word of infinite identity enables us to begin this process.

Because the world of transcendent thought could appear disconnected from the rest of the world, it is especially important that the thinker, pondering spiritual and infinite

things, stay connected to reality and to common sense even as they are transformed. Our best thinking needs to be applied to regenerate our beliefs about the world. Only in the real world is the process completed. This is the place where infinite spiritual energies transfigure our beliefs and actions. Participating in the world provides us with experiences that are food for thought and help us make new room for spiritual progress.

Although this book might seem to be mostly about thinking, thinking is not a solitary end in itself. It is just the beginning. At the standpoint of infinity, thinking and living are one. One cannot be thinking fully if not living fully, and one cannot be living fully if not thinking fully. To work the thinking process in seclusion, to conclude that one could thrive in an atmosphere of dreamy isolation or contemplative musing, does the process an injustice and stagnates. Knowledge of infinite ideas, more than any other level of spiritual action, requires our involvement in the issues of life. The process that begins with radical infinite spiritual thinking naturally results in fully involved living.

We can continue to find new connections between our best thinking and the ways we live day-to-day. The individual thinker can determine how best to do this. There is no need for anyone to prescribe human courses of action for the spiritually motivated thinker who is listening for the infinite word and watching for the infinite idea. Rules for living are best the outcome of sound beliefs, and beliefs are most progressive when they are freshly generated from within rather than obtained secondhand.

It is not always easy to maintain a progressive spiritual thought-life together with a life of full worldly involvement. These two spheres sometimes seem to conflict. They may sometimes seem irreconcilable, but they can and must be reconciled. We must keep them connected. Keeping one's thinking and living connected sometimes takes work. It takes energy. It costs self. The energy required to maintain the connection between thinking and living is love. The range of our loving establishes the bounds of our conception. Infinite love is forever extending itself, ever more fully showing forth its nature as infinity. Love embraces the whole of thought and experience, and love provides for the natural union of opposites in a harmonious one.

Identifying with the infinite I solves the ultimate problem. It is the ultimate relationship. It reveals the integration of thinking, loving, and living into one whole infinitely minded being. It reconciles opposites into an infinite holy one. Infinity reveals itself to us as our identity. It unfolds itself to us as our source. It is our infinite forever **I**.

Epilogue

(Written ten years later²³.)

What is God?

A New Definition.²⁴

God is so much bigger than the human dimension that correct definition by humans must be a combination of definitions that only truly fit together as one in the realm of the infinite. All concise human definitions for God are incomplete because God is infinite, and infinitude is almost the opposite of the human dimension.

Glimpsing a wisp of God's infinitude startlingly supersedes the logic of the human dimension. This doesn't put the understanding and knowledge of God out of our reach, it just requires us to lift our thoughts out of human limitations into the spiritual realm of the infinite, by reaching for higher altitudes and embracing higher abstractions of thought.

We can consider aspects of God, during meditations on God's infinite nature, that can lead to revelations of His marvelous and extraordinary oneness. A glimpse of God's true nature leads us towards comfort and healing, because that is the natural and inevitable effect of the true idea of God touching consciousness. I hope the following discussions will help you see why this is so.

God is One.

The first thing to know about God is that God is one.

²³ The more obscure references included in this section were obtained from Beliefnet.com. One conclusion from these various quotes, and part of my reason for including them, is to illustrate the fact that spiritual truth, when traced back to its source, is not denominational.

²⁴ Part of the spiritual journey I encountered between 1977 and 1994 when this book was first self-published, involved getting a higher idea of God. Simply put, I needed to grow beyond my sense of God as Love, Truth, and Life, etc. to recognition of the invisible, ineffable, and if you will, abstract, Principle behind that sense – parenting and undergirding it. For this reason, the word God occurs only a few times in the book. As a counterbalance to that, this Epilogue, written on the tenth anniversary of the original completion, is intentionally all about God – as ultimately is everything.

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This is the whole truth. There is no god but God. It is God who is the Mighty, the Wise One. Say: 'People of the Book, let us come to an agreement: that we will worship none but God, that we will associate none with Him, and that none of us shall set up mortals as deities besides God.' (The Koran 3:61)

Translation by N.J.Dawood, Penguin Books, 1993

Individuals and civilizations often learn of God through a sequence of steps, beginning with God as lawgiver and then as loving and merciful. Most of us aren't too familiar with comprehending these as spiritual principles, so there is a human tendency to personalize these qualities of God, especially the ones we find comforting. We need to be careful, however, because prematurely personalizing attributes of God tends us back into aspects of polytheism, as we imagine human theologies to explain the breathless expanse of the divine. When we worship human conceptions of the divine, we can't help but inadvertently fracture the purity of God's oneness into lesser modes amounting to personal idolatry. Holding to such images blinds us to better understanding the true idea of God. God is one, period.

God is Beyond Images.

I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (KJV, Isaiah 42:8)

To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isa 40:18, 25)

In order to think about God, you may compare him with other beings; but remember that he is incomparable. In this way you will live in the house of truth.

-Ibn Arabi, "Fusus al-hikam"

From "366 Readings From Islam," translated by Robert Van der Weyer. Copyright 2000; John Hunt Publishing, United Kingdom.

The outward form of things passes away, but the essence remains for ever. How long will you be besotted with the shape of the jug? Cast aside the jug, and seek the water. If you look too closely at the

form, you miss the essence. If you are wise, you will always pick out the pearl from the shell.

-Rumi, *"Masnavi"* (Ibid)

God, the supreme being, is neither circumscribed by space, nor touched by time; he cannot be found in a particular direction, and his essence cannot change. The secret conversation is thus entirely spiritual; it is a direct encounter between God and the soul, abstracted from all material constraints.

-Ibn Sina, *"Kitab al-Najat"* (Ibid)

Our minds naturally imagine things. At our best, we reach into the realm of words and beyond, and then see (abstract) images form in our minds (appearing as pure spiritual information). When we reach beyond our conceptions for the idea of God, we are in the right place. When we gain a mental image from this process, that image is not God; it is manifestation; it exists in the realm of man, and not mortal man but spiritual man. Appreciate the images you conceive, but don't worship them, because they are the fruits of your thinking not the seeds.

True Worship.

Worship God only. As monotheists, we forsake worship of nature and mysticism. More subtle is the need to go beyond personal conceptions of God such as an anthropomorphic father figure, the mother of God, the saints and angels, the son of God or the personal Jesus (our great exemplar). Worshipping finite personal conceptions of the divine must be outgrown if we are ever to know the only and true God, the infinite holy One.

Talk as much philosophy as you like, worship as many gods as you please, observe ceremonies and sing devotional hymns, but liberation will never come, even after a hundred aeons, without realizing the Oneness.

-Sankara

"The Wisdom of the Hindu Gurus," edited by Timothy Freke, published by Godsfield Press.

It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony - in the pure and sincere love in the heart. Unless a man is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping Shiva is useless.

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The prayers of those who are pure in mind and body will be answered by Shiva, and those who are impure and yet try to teach religion to others will fail in the end. External worship is only a symbol of internal worship, but internal worship and purity are the real things. Without them, external worship would be of no avail.

-Vivekananda

"Teachings of the Hindu Mystics," (c) 2001 by Andrew Harvey; Shambhala Publications, Boston, www.shambhala.com.

Righteousness does not consist in whether you face the East or the West. (The Koran 2:177)

Translation by N.J. Dawood, Penguin Books, 1993

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall we do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. (Luke 18:19)

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
(Rev 22:8,9)

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23,24)

Understanding Infinite Love.

Our ability to accept or understand progressively more righteous, benevolent, spiritual, and infinite definitions for God advances as we progress spiritually. In this progression, we pass through levels – spiritual awareness, obedience to a lawgiver, faith in a loving God, spiritual understanding of God as living supreme Principle, and recognition of God as Infinite, as our only and ever-present I am. Each of these levels of revelation can involve magnificent spiritual insights; they are the indispensable stepping stones towards understanding the infinite holy God, the infinite I.

Two modern definitions of God, written by Mary Baker Eddy at the end of the 19th century, can help us understand God as divine Mind, supreme Spirit, and infinite Love:

God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love.

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (S&H) (465:9)

GOD. The great I AM; the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-acting, all-wise, all-loving, and eternal; Principle; Mind; Soul; Spirit; Life; Truth; Love; all substance; intelligence. (S&H 587:5)

Meditating on these definitions, amplifying the words through devout study, and putting them into practice in your daily expression will bring spiritual understanding that acquaints you with the power, presence, and loveliness of God embracing your life.

The Twoness of Oneness.

Once you get comfortable with these definitions, leading up to understanding God as infinite Love, you may find out there is more. Understanding the spiritual allness of God must be accompanied by gradual demonstration of the spiritual nothingness of evil. These two move forward in tandem.

For now, let's call this particularly interesting aspect of God the twoness of God's oneness. Let's further this idea by considering the interesting symmetry of opposites at the end of these two Bible verses:

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isa 45:22)

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me. (Isa 46:9)

God's oneness has crisp conceptual edges, in the world of ideas. Knowing God is not just about monotheism, it is radical monotheism; it is out of this world. It is not just the affirmation of God, but the denial of anything else. That is an aspect of the twoness of God's oneness, if you will. That is why God's truth is as a "two-edged sword." It cuts two ways. This aspect

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of God's nature reveals that God isn't just good, but that the creative power of God's goodness bristles with such extraordinary quality that it assertively precludes any reality of evil forever; a Love so immense, that it precludes any existence of hate; a Life forever fresh and new, that precludes any sense of death; and so on. It is this "and there is none else" aspect of God's nature that provides the ultimate comforts.

The infinite singularity of God's oneness includes God's definition of atomic action - the action of true oneness - "defiant of error or matter."

Last phrase in quotes from Miscellaneous Writings, by Mary Baker Eddy, p. 190:1

In the view of the infinite, the negative is never more than a sweet absence making room for new conception. It may be that the real value of understanding the twoness of oneness is so you can have the joy of witnessing the oneness of twoness.

That which has form emerges from that which has no form; that which has no form emerges from that which has form. Therefore the path of supreme spirituality cannot be sought in being and cannot be fathomed in nonbeing; it cannot be lost through movement and cannot be gained through stillness.

- Ming-Chiao, "Five Houses of Zen"

This human idea of twoness grows out of God's oneness, and is definitely subsidiary to it. If this doesn't make any sense to you yet, go back to God's oneness and stay there. All true understanding and wisdom unfolds from God's oneness. Some of the sayings of great spiritual seers seem almost intentionally indecipherable, as if someone were trying to make the knowledge of God beyond our reach. Recently while reading the New Testament, I got that familiar feeling, that fulfilling all the spiritual demands is just plain impossible. Jesus addressed this concern: "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." (Matt 19:26) The answer, as always, is to turn whole-heartedly to God, and by waiting patiently on God, and serving as best we can, we will find everything we need to guide us in the way of God's plan.

The Threeness of Oneness.

These two elements of spiritual understanding, the divine positive and the sweet negative, converge in the wholeness of the Infinite. This is a beginning approximation of God's infinite point of view. The simultaneous recognition of the wholeness of these harmonious divine opposites brings to human consciousness a glimpse of true holiness.

When wholeness is realized from the simultaneous recognition of the fatherhood and motherhood of God, this realization brings a third element to oneness, as if their oneness had spawned an observer apart.

These three offices of supersensible oneness can be illustrated as the truth of what is, the truth of what isn't, and the recognition of their wholeness as One. Several millennia of religious history have involved debating whether this represents three persons or one person. But this isn't about persons in any finite sense. In a court of law, when you swear "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," how many truths are there? There is only one truth, even if it takes the human mind three different angles to pin it down.

Additional Food for Thought.

These passages from the world's great religions were selected to show the central pattern within God's oneness. I like that these great seers of religious history have all seen glimpses of the same thing.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. (Isa 43:10,11)

Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (Isa 44:6)

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: (Isa 45:5)

The wealth of this world consists of treasures to which there are keys. But blessed is the one whom the Almighty makes a key to the world of good, but a lock to contain evil.

Epilogue

-The Prophet Muhammad, as reported by Sahl bin Sa'ad

Hadith translated by Aneela Khalid Arshed. Copyright 1999; The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York.

Tibetan lamas often say: "Not seeing is the perfect seeing." Strange words, perhaps, but they have a profound meaning. They describe the advanced meditator's experience of spacious, universal reality, the experience beyond dualism.

-Lama Thubten Yeshe

*"Introduction to Tantra" Copyright Wisdom Publications 2001;
From "Daily Wisdom: 365 Buddhist Inspirations," edited by Josh
Bartok, Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA;
www.wisdompubs.org.*

There is a sphere where there is neither earth nor water nor heat nor air, for it is beyond the field of matter; nor is it the sphere of infinite space, or consciousness, for it is beyond the field of mind. There is not the condition of nothingness, neither is there the state of this world or another world, nor sun nor moon. This is the uncreated. This condition I call neither arising nor passing away, neither dying nor being born. It is without form and without change. It is the eternal, which never originates and never passes away. To find it is the end of sorrow.

-Udana Sutta

*From "Buddha Speaks," edited by Anne Bancroft, 2000;
Shambhala Publications, Boston.*

Honesty can be cultivated by transforming your inner language. For example, you might think: "I am no good" or "They are not good." Is this true? For some strange reason, people want to wallow in the idea of being either the best or the worst. What is true in this moment? How close can we get to the reality of our experiences?

-Martine Batchelor

*"Meditation For Life" Copyright Wisdom Publications 2001;
Reprinted from "Daily Wisdom: 365 Buddhist Inspirations," edited
by Josh Bartok; Wisdom Publications.*

One man believes in existence,
Another says, "There is nothing!"
Rare is the man who believes in neither.
He is free from confusion.

-Ashtavakra Gita 18:42

*"The Heart of Awareness: A Translation of the Ashtavakra Gita,"
by Thomas Byrom, 1990; Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.*

"The formless Absolute is my Father, and God with form is my
Mother." God reveals Himself in the form which His devotee loves
most. His love for the devotee knows no bounds.

-Ramakrishna

*"Teachings of the Hindu Mystics," (c) 2001 by Andrew Harvey;
Shambhala Publications, Boston.*

By honest conduct one achieves honorable eminence,
While corrupt conduct brings one nothing but blame.
Good conduct is the seed in virtue's field;
Wicked conduct's harvest is never-ending sorrow.

-Tirukkural 14:137-138

*Excerpted from the Tirukkural, translated by Satguru Sivaya
Subramuniyaswami. Copyright Himalayan Academy
Publications, www.himalayanacademy.com*

O Krishna, it is right that the world delights and rejoices in your
praise, that all the saints and sages bow down to you and all evil
flees before you to the far corners of the universe. How could they
not worship you, O Lord? You are the eternal spirit, who existed
before Brahman the Creator and who will never cease to be. Lord of
the gods, you are the abode of the universe. Changeless, you are
what is and what is not, and beyond the duality of existence and
nonexistence.

-Bhagavad Gita 11:36-37

*Excerpted from The Bhagavad Gita, translated by Eknath
Easwaran, copyright 1985; Nilgiri Press, www.nilgiri.org.*

Epilogue

View all problems as challenges. Look upon negativities that arise as opportunities to learn and to grow. Don't run from them, condemn yourself, or bury your burden in saintly silence. You have a problem? Great. More grist for the mill. Rejoice, dive in, and investigate.

-Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, "Mindfulness in Plain English"

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Final Thoughts:

O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen the in the sanctuary.

Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou has been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. (Psalms 63:1-8)

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:15)

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