

COVENANT

For a Secular, Scientific, Spiritual Age

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For my children, Christian, Adam & Zoe
And all the children in the world.

Also, with thanks, to the Bucks County Free Synagogue
Torah Class.

Preface - God for Our Era

Do you believe in God? Do you believe in *covenant*?

You have your doubts? Good.

Your doubts are precious. Your doubts are real. Your doubts are little doorways to the Truth, waiting for you to open them.

But, these days, if you're like most people, your doubts may seem even more doubtful. They can no longer receive simple, pat, religious answers, like "just have faith", "it's a Mystery", "because that's what we believe", "it's tradition".

This is a different era than a few thousand years ago. This is a *secular* era.

Indeed, no matter who you are, no matter where you live, no matter what your religion or lack thereof, chances are, you live a secular life, myself included. We go to work in a secular economy. We rely on secular governments. We give our children secular educations. Our desires are secular desires: a nice home, vacations, and what not.

Our churches, synagogues, mosques, ashrams, humanist or atheist communities all seek stability, support, promotion and legitimacy within the larger secular world. Indeed, whether on the scale of individual life or community life, religious or not, we are all like little islands floating in a big secular sea.

Secular life has accomplished great things: great prosperity for unprecedented numbers of people; expansive education available to more people than ever before. Indeed, for some, especially those who mistrust religion because of its excesses in the past, a secular life can appear even more "from God", than religion.

Today, in our secular society, the ancient biblical assertion that each person has a direct connection to Divinity— or said in democratic language, that we have "rights endowed by our Creator"— is commonplace.

Freedom of conscience, including freedom to worship as one sees fit, is the societal *norm*. Most people strive to live good, clean lives. Not murdering, not stealing, not lying on witness stands, not committing

adultery– so much of core biblical morality– are all considered everyday commonsense.

What's wrong with a secular life? Nothing.

Secular life isn't perfect; there are problems, for sure. But then, religious life has problems too. Why apologize for being secular, and for having solid, secular doubts about religion?

However, today, we don't just live in a secular era. We also live in a *scientific* era.

In a scientific era, it is not "belief", "faith", "doctrine", "dogma", "philosophy", or "creed", or even "theory", which is the criterion of *Truth*. Truth, in a scientific model, has a *correspondence to Reality*; it is *real*. If something is true, such as "the sky is blue", it is *testable*; we can put samples of what we call "blue" in front of non-color-blind people; they will match the samples with the sky; they will fall into a certain range of wavelengths. The results of such an experiment are repeatable.

Scientific truth can be trusted. It is reliable. It is as dependable as flicking on a light switch, expecting light, and receiving light. Is religion this trustworthy?

Science is not just about Truth, but also about *Unity*; Truth and Unity are indispensable to science and mathematics; they would not exist without them. There is not one single scientific theory or mathematical theorem, which does not assume the notion of Truth and Unity.

In science, Truth is searched for, Unity is sought after, even though the actual existence of these "things" – "Truth", "Unity" – are *not proved*. Yet, Truth and Unity, as "experimental parameters" – faith? – have consistently lead to new discoveries that prove true and more unified. That's why we tend to *believe* in Truth and Unity anyway, even if we can't be certain they do exist as "things".

Faith in Truth? Faith in Unity? Once, these were hallmarks of faith in the "One God". They are no less articles of faith in today's "new religion", science.

Seeing Truth in our world . . . seeing Unity in our world . . . seeing Goodness throughout Nature . . . understanding, in stunning detail, the Order of creation– today's scientific discoveries are today's spiritual revelations!

What's wrong with science? Science isn't perfect. Science isn't always true. It's made plenty of mistakes. But, why apologize for scientific doubts regarding God? No reason!

Besides living in a secular, scientific era, this is also a *spiritual* era.

This is an era where we can explore our own destiny. We are free to experiment with existence, try on different lives, careers and lifestyles, come to our own unique spiritual understandings of “How Life Works”. We do not look merely to the “rules and regulations” of formalized religion (or any kind of government) to determine “right” or “wrong”. Indeed, because of the abuses of religions in the past, when individuality was squashed and creative independence was considered “rebellion” or “sin”, “old time” religion is, well, *very* old time.

In this incredible- amazing- vibrant- thoroughly *alive* spiritual era, individuals have access to more information than ever before. Today, patients go into doctor’s offices, already having diagnosed themselves off the internet. We can read hundreds of different religious and philosophical viewpoints, sift through them, weigh them, accept them, or reject them, depending on our own individual perspective. We are truly discovering the meaning of existence for ourselves as *souls*– a “metaphysical-placeholder” for “individuality”, and like other such placeholders such as “God”, not proved.

The spiritual *freedom* of our era is . . . never before! Never before in the entire history of the world has there been so much freedom of individuality for so many individuals.

What’s wrong with spiritual freedom? Sure, sometimes we can take such freedoms to extremes, and need to learn important lessons from them. But, are the doubts that arise from our mistakes *meaningless*? No. They are precious lessons about Life.

Are you an adventurer?

Would you like to open the doorways that your doubts can be?

Would you like to see beyond the doubts, to greater clarity: greater Truth, Unity and Goodness?

**Would you like some answers to whether God exists or not, that are *believable*?
Would you like an approach to healing your doubts that doesn’t disregard your intelligence?**

The approach in this little book came about after forty years in the wilderness, so to speak. I am a child of this secular, scientific, spiritual era. Without apologies.

Discovering at an early age the problems of religious claims that seemed more fiction than fact, I decided (or rather was inspired) to proceed in a very logical, scientific way.

I reasoned: If God exists, then *how* could I *demonstrate* that, to myself. After all, I cannot demonstrate that God exists, then the proposition "God exists" has no meaning for me.

So, I quickly came to a very radical conclusion: The only proof that could possibly exist must be an *experience*.

Can anyone know anything outside of one's experience? Is secular, scientific and spiritual knowledge learned outside of experience? Can I know that this computer I'm typing on exists outside experience? Can I know I exist, outside my experience of "me"?

If God exists, then, there must be some kind of *experience* of God.

That's the only way we can have any knowledge of God, any knowledge of *anything*: *experience*!

What kind of experience might be said to be an *experience-of-God*? Hint:

The word "God" is just a contraction for the word "good", something I will remind you of, over and over again, throughout this book.

After forty years in the wilderness, I have discovered that as I grow in Truth, and in Unity, within myself, between myself and others, and with all life and creation, I experience more and more *good*. I have an ever deepening experience of God.

I've noticed that this knowledge can be shared, in a mysterious way, with others, and they, sometimes without knowing it, can transmit it to others still. I've noticed that it can be transferred to groups, of all sizes, including— I extrapolate based upon my experience— whole nations, and all humankind.

What has emerged from my experiences is a permanent healing for the bad religious training of my childhood. What has also emerged, as a by-product of my painful search, because I did not seek it, is a simple, clear understanding of the meaning of *covenant*: that ancient Hebrew understanding of Reality which was passed to Jews, Christians, Muslims, and now lies at the historical root of virtually every single civilized nation in our rapidly-expanding global civilization.

Covenant: that living, historical relationship between human beings, all the nations on earth, and the supposed God of Creation? Might such an ancient view actually be true today? Might it have some correspondence to Reality?

Can covenant be described in a way that fits today's secular, scientific, spiritual era, satisfactory for secular, scientific, spiritual doubts?

Might such an approach even help today's religions make sense of themselves in this secular, scientific, spiritual era?

My experience says "Yes"! A resounding "Yes"!

Experience is the foundation of secular life. Experience is the foundation of science. Experience is the foundation of spiritual life. Experience is the foundation of religion, too. Experience is the foundation of everything we can know to exist.

What exists outside our experience of Life? Can we know? Is there actually a "God"? A Being that exists before even before we were granted consciousness, before we could experience?

I, for one, don't know. I'm just a human being, *human* from the same root word as *humble*.

However lacking my knowledge, nonetheless, may whatever knowledge I do have, be "*for good*"! That is my prayer, here.

May this book help you have your own experience of goodness in your Life. May you experience what old time religionists might have called "God's blessing".

However you describe it, good can be experienced. Goodness is real! If you wish, you may call that experience "God".

Introduction: Order

If I jump up I will come down, unless I neutralize gravity with wings on my ankles. This is a *living* experience. To the self-aware, conscious human being, who can learn from this experience, this is not just a living experience, but also a *spiritual* experience.

Based upon this living, spiritual experience, I can formulate the simple, spiritual teaching: *Don't jump unless you have ground underneath you.*

Such a teaching is *true*; it *corresponds to Life or Reality or Existence* (whatever you call it) as we can experience it on the basic scale of every day earthly life. It is "How Life Works", so-to-speak.

Such a teaching, if followed, will produce *harmony, unity or oneness* in Life: our human actions will not conflict with nature; our jumping and the earth's terrain will be in *alignment*. Our personal life, and the lives of future generations and society will not tumble into a chasm and die, so we can grow, evolve, prosper, flourish.

If I jump with ground under me, I will live to experience the fun of jumping again. If I jump without ground under me, I will never jump again. The teaching protects me and all life which is affected by my actions.

This teaching is obviously *good* or "from God", a contraction of the word "Good". Follow or don't follow this teaching and "God" might "bless you" or "punish you", to use guilt-ridden religious language; *good* might follow you or fail you. You'd (literally) fall; you'd (figuratively) "fall" from Grace, Protection for Good!

This spiritual teaching, although it may be said to be "from the God of all Creation", only functions on earth or some similar domain where gravity is pronounced. Therefore, it is not an absolute LAW: fixed, perfect, unchanging, applied to all people in all places in time, without requiring adjusting, modifying or updating. It is not *etched in stone*, but must be flexibly-sketched, depending upon circumstances:

On a spaceship orbiting the earth, this "law" would change because of new technological advances, cultural developments and environmental differences that neutralize gravity.

The law is still in effect for *bungee jumping*, provided, we act *in the spirit of the law*, i.e. for goodness' sake, by ensuring that strong, elastic ropes are used.

All our spiritual insights operate the same way:

Thou Shalt Not Murder . . . Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery . . . Thou shalt eat foods fitting for humans, etc. (and all their interpretations, variations and modifications over the centuries), all arose similarly, from real-Life observation and experience:

Murder, and someone will experience suffering and loss, and perhaps vengeance, causing more murder. Less good. Less God

Commit adultery, and someone will experience weakening of the family and society, causing more adultery. Less good. Less God.

Eat diseased food, and someone will get sick or die, causing more disease. Less good. Less God.

There is a reality-based, *cause and effect* nature to these biblical so-called “laws”. They are real. They are alive. They have a reason for being. They are Life-essential! They are not a plot by religious or governmental authorities to control us. They are not there to force cultic-obedience to leaders, religious or not, nor blind scripture-thumping adherence to the written word. They are not the edicts of some deity-dictator, forcing you to learn these under threat of extermination.

They are not essentially *religious* laws at all. They are critical lines, boundaries, relationships built into Life. Without them, Life would de-generate, de-evolve, decay, destruct, dissolve and die. *We will* suffer.

These teachings reflect the *Order* of our world or, if you prefer more religious language, God’s *commandment*. These teachings enlighten us on how our world is structured, organized, or designed, so we humans may interact with it and create good.(1)

Said simply, they are “the ropes we’ve got to learn” on earth, or we will get tangled and strangled in them. These teachings are *sacred*, because they are based on millennia of human experience about “How Life Works”; without them, life runs the risk of becoming *de-secrated*. They were framed as legal principles to help guide our lives and organize critical lines of society so we could live in harmony within the Order we inhabit.

Again– and worth repeating– they are not absolute, immutable, fixed-eternally, infallibly-so, ubiquitous for each and every living human being, under all places, times and circumstances, with no room for modification. This would be *fundamentalism*.

But, do not, for one second, take the so-called “liberal” perspective either, and consider them merely antiquated, meaningless, arbitrary, superstitious or culturally relative. Everything in Life is not “just relative, depending upon your point of view”. Do not, for one second, substitute “political correctness” for *real correctness*, i.e. How Life Works!

There is an Order here:

Pour toxic wastes in the ground, and we get sick.

(How is Life ordered, so it is incompatible with toxic wastes?)

Build an economy on defaulted loans, and the system collapses.

(How is Life ordered, so that dishonesty undermines long-term wealth?)

Overwork to provide for your family, and heart attacks happen.

(How is Life ordered, so that overworking, even for something “good”, is dangerous to one’s well-being?)

Declare an unrighteous war and financial devastation befalls a nation.

(How is Life ordered, so that wars, purely for selfish purposes, impoverish nations?)

There is an Order here! Life is “designed” a certain way; the “dice-of-Life” are weighted in a certain direction; our actions don’t take place in a vacuum: What we do, and how we do it, must take this Order into account: it must be respected in our politics, economics, religions, sciences, marriages and homes, whether religious or secular.

This Order is the foundation of everything that exists, and everything human beings can accomplish. So, any civilization– *human order*– arising within this Order, has certain *requirements*, if it wishes to stay alive, thrive and prosper, generation after generation, i.e. *be established in Grace*, as a religious person might put it.

We must all– all of us– learn how to form an *alignment*– a *covenant*– within this Order. We must learn how to act in covenantal cooperation and harmony with this Order– and all the orders that comprise it– so we may consequences to our actions that are *good* i.e. God’s blessings.

Tell the truth on a witness stand, and it strengthens the entire fabric of human society.

(Life is ordered, so that truth supports the vibrancy of human civilization.)

Honor your parents, and can learn valuable lessons from their experience the easy way, so your personal progress can become accelerated.

(Life is ordered, so that learning increases survival and evolution.)

Rest on the weekend, after a week's work, and the health of all living creatures, including humans, is safeguarded. More good. More God.

(Life is ordered, so that balance is necessary to safeguard health.)

If we wish to have peace, justice, loving-kindness reigning throughout our world, in nation after nation, covenantal knowledge of "How Life Works" must be learned and lived. Indeed, it must become common knowledge until *The Whole Earth is filled with its glory. (Isaiah 6:3).*

This is the essence of the ancient, glorious, spiritual understanding of *covenant*: the co-operation of human creativity and God's creativity *for good*. It is an understanding that, today, we need more than ever.

It is time that *covenant* cease to be a cruel claim which divides the world into warring camps.

It is time that *covenant* cease to be a vehicle by which one nation exalts itself over other people, who are considered less than and exterminable.

It is time that *covenant* ceases to be considered a religious doctrine, peculiar to Christians, Jews and Muslims, who share the essential Hebrew vision of the world.

It is time that *covenant* be intelligibly, rationally accessible to all peoples, religionists or atheists, humanists or secularists, everywhere in the world.

It's my hope this book will repair the cracked windowpane through which we've been viewing covenant, so we can all catch a glimpse of that Unity-of-all-Existence, that *human covenantal experience* which has been called "God".

It's my hope this book will help restore all good and noble religions in their world, so they may make a full contribution to our world.

It's my hope that this book will also help us discover new respect, and new illuminations, from within our scriptures. And to that end, despite the fact that this is a secular, scientific spiritual explanation of covenant, I have nonetheless included numerous scriptural references. In moving towards the secular, we should not leave the religious out, any more than in moving towards the religious, the secular should be left.

Lastly, and above all, it's my hope this book will teach us not just How Life Works, but also *how we should live*, so we create that sadly-rare commodity: *happiness*.

Are you happy? You should be. Happiness is the normal spiritual state of being human.

A warning though: Don't jump, unless you have ground underneath you. Please read each sentence, each chapter carefully, slowly. Go step by step. I've packed quite a lot into this little book, over 40 years of knowledge. It may take a little time to digest.

At the right time though, feel free to jump. Take a *leap of faith* . . .

Life will sustain you. You will experience truth, unity and goodness. You will have an *experience-of-good*– whether you believe in God or not, or whether God actually exists or not.

After all, the Order is the Order! It's the same Order for the atheist as it is for the believer.

The same rules apply. The same experiences can be had.

- (1) Whether our world is a "creation" of God, or not, is an important issue which we will leave for Chapter Nine. Nevertheless, our world has a certain "order"– a pun in the English for "commandment". The word "order" is more appropriate for an *impersonal* God of science, an "It". The word "commandment" is more appropriate for a "God of Creation" who is *personified* in the Bible as if "He" were a person making "commands" i.e. giving us the *order*. In the original Hebrew the word for "He" is the same word as "It".

Chapter One: The Natural Order

The word “natural” is fraught with peril. In fact, in the original Hebrew of the Bible(2) there is no word for what we commonly call “nature”, yet, it is a concept we use all the time in secular life.

The Latin word *natura*, which became our English *nature*, originated as the Greek word and concept *physis*, related to our words for *physics* or *physiology*. This referred to the innate characteristics of plants and animals that cause them to develop a certain way, as themselves.

Later on *natura* expanded in meaning to include our physical universe. Today, it might have to be further expanded to include all other existing universes, as contemporary *physi-cists*, have begun to suspect there are.(3)

In this book, when we say the word “natural” or “nature” with a small “n”, what we refer to specifically is *earthly nature*, nature as we experience it on earth, including our particular universe.

It also refers to *known nature*, the part of nature we can currently know, understand or theorize about, such as our universe. The reason for making this distinction will become clearer in the next chapter as well as later in Chapter Ten.

These days, because of the blessings of science, we are gaining astonishing insights into the workings of the natural order. Indeed, we have begun to understand, in great detail, the *nature* (its intrinsic qualities, in the original meaning) of this *natural order*.

Through the scientific study of *biology*, and its sub-branch, *ecology*, we witness an amazing *unity-within-nature*:

Animals eat plants. Plants provide oxygen for animals. Bacteria break down foods in animal guts. When excreted, this provides fertilizers for plants, which then provides food for animals, which provides “houses” for bacteria, which produces fertile ground for trees, which provides protection from sun, as well as homes for squirrels, birds and humans . . .

On a deeper, more basic material level: All life on our world is based upon the element *carbon*. We humans– all creatures great and small– are “just” little material sacks of

carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, with traces of other elements, minerals and metals thrown in.

On a still deeper, even more basic material level: All these substances, and hundreds more, burst into existence, when our sun– one of countless billions of stars– and its planets, including our earth– exploded into existence. Out of stardust was created earth dust, from which every inorganic and organic thing formed.

All is a unity-from-dust, so-to-speak, including us (*Genesis 2:7ff.*).

For example, within the dust of the earth's crust is the magnesium which is part of the *mitochondria* of our cells, its energy-producing organelles. This magnesium is essential for ATP production, by which our cells generate and store energy. It is not an exaggeration to say, that on some level, every organism is a solar battery.(4) After all, the energy on earth begins as solar energy, which later changes into different forms– mechanical energy like wind, thermal energy like volcanoes, chemical energy like ATP, and electrical energy like lightening, lightning-bugs or right down to our very bones.

Yes, our bones are electrical. The calcium apatite crystal from which our bones are made actually produces electrical energy when the bone is put under stress. The cells of our bones grow along these electrical stress-lines, so that more bone is deposited in the regions that receive more stress, permitting bones to do their job better.

From the genesis of our universe, right down to the feeling in our bones, our *experience* of nature, expanded through scientific *experiment* (The two words come from the same root.) reveal something which, even if understandable, remains no less miraculous:

Everything we observe in nature is deeply, intimately, dynamically *unified*. Everywhere we look we experience connection, inter-connection, meta-connection, on all scales of existence.

The galaxies affect the earth. The earth affects all life. All life affects the earth. The earth affects the moon. The moon affects the reproductive cycles of animals and the birth of new life, which affects the entire planet.

Nature, on every knowable scale, functions like a single *Creation*, to use a religious term. It is this fundamental insight into the unity of nature that leads one to a possible conclusion that there is *One, Singular, God*.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.(Gen. 1:1)

Whether or not you believe in God, whether or not God actually exists, whether or not the Bible is “God’s Word” or not, is not important at this point; we will speak of this more towards the end of this book.

What *is* important, is that you understand that we live upon the earth, surrounded by space, the sun, the moon, the planets, and seemingly unlimited worlds beyond. Everything in existence, all life on our planet, are *one- co-ordinated* (meaning *ordered together*) in a mutual, synergistic relationship *as if* they began *all together* all at once, which science currently believes they were. Indeed the word *universe* means “all together”.

In our universe, everything is changing, growing, and *evolving*(5) in a living, creative relationship to and with everything else. This is what the Bible means when it refers to Creation being “*very good*”(Genesis 1:31): Creation on earth is a living unity, where everything and every creature has its correct place in the natural order, deeply integrated, *harmonious*, good.

Obviously– it can clearly be *observed*– there is an *order* to nature. Obviously, this is the order that all creatures, including us, depend on to breathe and eat. Obviously, this is an order where there is an *inter-dependency of anything on everything!*

There is not one single thing, not one single creature, not one speck of Creation that is not in a mutual-dependency relationship upon, and within, the order of nature. The order of nature is a unity-of-inter-dependencies! This is an important spiritual principle, as we shall discuss.(6)

Because of this inter-dependency, it is also obvious, there are *requirements* for Life, if any organism wants to live, grow, prosper, multiply and thrive. We *must* have air. We *must* have water. We *must* have food. We must be able to circulate blood, reproduce our kind, and engage in the continuous flow of all our physiological processes.

The order of nature also dictates a certain *order* to our needs, in terms of *priority*. For example, in order to survival, air is more important than water; water is more important than food. No creature– possessed of a *physi-cal* body, i.e. possessing a “chunk” of *nature*, so-to-speak– can escape this built-in *order*. No creature determines this for itself; it is determined by the “whole” of which each of us are a “part”.(7) We will speak about this more in Chapter 7.

Our natural order requires us to *eat foods that are appropriate for us* (Genesis 1:29). Our natural order requires all living creatures to *rest* (Genesis 2:2-3). Our natural order

requires all creatures to *be fruitful and multiply* (Genesis 1:28). All these, and other requirements, are clearly *dictated* by the *order* of nature, or, if you are a religious person, you might say they're "God's *commandments* for Creation", "God's *Will* in Nature", "God's *Word*" or "*Design*". Whether you believe in God or not, the point is: this is not our *choice*. There is an *order* here, whatever word you use to describe it.

Living in *alignment* with the *order* of nature on earth, is the most basic– indeed, the very *ground*, pun intended– for a secular, scientific, spiritual understanding of *covenant*.

For most creatures, living in alignment with the order of nature, seems to happen "naturally"; they just seem to know "how to be" and "what to do"; it's their *nature*.

For the human being though, aligning to the order of nature, is much more complicated: a blessing, but sometimes a curse, because our nature is not totally natural.

- (2) The Hebrew Bible was the origin of the "Old Testament" which rearranged the order of its sections. Christian scriptures were then appended to the "Old Testament" to create the Christian Bible. All these scriptures are honored by Islam, which has its own, the *Q'uran*.
- (3) If "God" is that "Nature" from which all natures come, then, God might be considered that "Ultimate" or "Divine" Nature, the Originating "Creator" or "Creative Nature". In this sense, we might even consider Nature (with a capital "N") to be synonym for "God".

Some people capitalize "N" for nature, meaning, poetically, "Mother Nature", i.e. the *Entirety of Nature*, the *Womb of Creation*, the *Mystery* of Nature, not fully knowable to us.

Whether "Nature" is "God" is a complex question, which will be addressed in Chapter Nine.

- (4) You may have seen this concept in the popular movie *The Matrix*, where, in the absence of sunlight, a machine intelligence turned human beings into living batteries. Although science fiction, it is based on science fact.
- (5) *Evolution* is a hotly debated issue, I think it is terribly misunderstood by both scientists and religionists. Although a complete discussion of it is beyond the scope of this little book, please read footnote 33 for an important

discussion of macro-evolutionary advances which remove much of the religious controversy.

- (6) In the ancient world, prior to the Hebrews, other civilizations saw the world divided into warring “gods” or independent, un-integrated, often (un-good), “natural forces”. In an attempt to control these, they worshipped these separate gods/forces.

The rise of the One God, where everything was viewed as being inter-dependent and coordinated, was an ancient way of expressing today’s scientific view. One must stop and appreciate this extraordinary insight, when you consider this was 3-5 thousand years ago.

- (7) While I am using the words “whole” and “part”, this is not exactly accurate. In a nature or creation which is continuously growing and expanding, it is not a “whole”. New galaxies, new stars and planets, are constantly coming into existence. “The whole is more than the sum of its parts.” So, it would be more truthful to say nature or creation is a “unity” not a “whole”.

Chapter Two: The Supernatural Order

The human being is, in many respects, similar to other creatures. We breathe, drink, eat, bleed, reproduce, etc. As said in the previous chapter, we have an inter-dependency between ourselves, nature and all life, no differently than the tiniest bacteria or viruses. There is a natural aspect to us.

Yet, in spite of this natural aspect, we human beings often think of ourselves as being disconnected and apart from nature. This is *not* true, but, ironically, it also *is* true. A contradiction? Yes. Allow me to explain, with an illustration from natural science:

There are certain single-celled organisms called *planktonic algae*, which are known to generate a substance called *carbonic acid*. Overtime, this carbonic acid will build up and build up, creating huge geological changes in the earth. In fact, this is what is responsible for the famous White Cliffs of Dover in England.

Without the White Cliffs of Dover, England would never have had a strong, natural defense against invasions from continental European nations. The entire history of the world, including the founding of the American colonies, the gift that democracy has brought the world, and your very personal freedom, including your “right” to believe in God or not, might have been altered if planktonic algae had not been diligently working.

Do you see? The *order of nature* and something so *seemingly disconnected from it*– like human politics, the history of nations and our personal choices– are intricately linked.

Do not forget this.

Covenant is born from human awareness of the interconnections between all life and creation, including, and never apart from, human affairs.

Covenant is not understandable without this.

We human beings may think our civilization is completely disconnected from nature– living as we sometimes do, in human-made skyscrapers high in the clouds– like the biblical story of the *Tower of Babel*.⁽⁸⁾ But, just because it might *appear* we are disconnected from nature, doesn't mean it is so. Even orbiting the earth, we still need to

carry up little sacks of air and food. And yet, amazingly, the fact remains that we *can* leave the earth! No other creature in nature can do that!

Nonetheless, it would be absolutely delusional to think that, although we are deeply connected to the natural order like other creatures, that we human beings are *merely natural* creatures. In nature, animals are known to kill their young. Rape exists. Stealing exists. Torture exists. And yet we, somehow, have the capacity to rise above (or also indulge!) some of these more unsavory aspects of nature. We can promulgate laws such as *Thou Shalt Not Steal, Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery*, which hold us to a standard which is higher than ordinary animal nature. We will speak much more about this in Chapters Three, Six and Nine.

Although we share an inter-dependency upon nature and all life, human animals are—without a doubt—quite different. How best to distinguish animal nature and human nature? This is not always easy to do. But, I think another illustration from natural science can help:

Ants are capable of secreting a substance in their venom which provides them self-defense. This substance is called *formic acid*; in fact, the word for *ant* in Latin is *formica*.

Until more modern times, formic acid was not known except in ant colonies. No other natural supplier of formic acid existed in the animal kingdom. But then, the human being learned how to *analyze the structure* of formic acid, and learned how to *make it* in a laboratory. This says a lot about what makes a human, well, human:

We are conceptual.(8)

Unlike the ant, the human being doesn't secrete formic acid, as a by-product of our body chemistry. Instead, we fathom its structure, penetrating into the "mystery of nature" so-to-speak, to understand it's "concept" abstractly.

We are creative.

Unlike the ant, the human being is not stuck using formic acid for defense; we can use it as a preservative in livestock feed, in leather production, in cleaning agents or in any human endeavor where its properties might be needed.

We are individuals.

Unlike the ant, the human being is not bound to the cycles of nature, which, through the ant's body, govern when formic acid is secreted or not.

We have free will.(9)

Unlike the ant, we can manufacture formic acid, whenever, wherever, we want it; we have a *choice* whether we wish to make formic acid. (We are not just individuals. We are *cosmic individuals*, as we will discuss in Chapter Six.)

There must be some *unconscious* conceptual ability in the ant, or, formic acid wouldn't exist in nature; after all, it has a "structure", a material "concept" to it, delivered through the ant. There must also be some kind of unconscious creativity in ants, known, as they are, to be quite innovative and industrious. There must also be some semblance of individuality too, since individual ants, while they may appear to be exactly alike, are not on closer examination. And ants also seem to have some kind of unconscious free will too, as do many creatures; indeed, free-willed, creativity, (from the Creator?) is one of the fundamental forces behind evolution.(10)

Nevertheless, unlike the ant, that may be unconsciously conceptual, creative, individual or free willed, the human being is *consciously* conceptual, *consciously* creative, *consciously* individual and *consciously* free-willed.

Nature does not merely move through us, and goad us to be what we are. We can, in a way, *concentrate* and *individualize* the forces of nature, through our individual, creative, conceptual minds, acting independently (though never totally so) from nature, as *egos*.

This is the great gift of free-willed *technology*. This what the *Tree of Knowledge* story in the Bible is all about; developing individual conscious power over nature (*Genesis 2:17*), reflecting a Higher Nature.

Such a conscious power may have first emerged with flint arrowheads and bear knives, proceeding to organized agriculture and civilization. But, these days, our technological prowess has expanded to never-before-seen heights. Today, we are capable of rearranging the subatomic particles of elements, creating new elements that were not even birthed into existence. Imagine that! We just don't make what nature can make (with the help of ants), but now make what nature *never made!* Do you see how extraordinary we actually are? Today, in cyclotrons, miles beneath the earth's crust, we

can actually consciously fathom how the universe, out of which we were formed, began. How can we contemplate what existed before us? Is there any creature that does this besides us?

It is this extraordinary ability to act in a way that nature could not (and would not) without us– it is this extraordinary ability to peer into “God’s Mind”, so-to-speak, and fathom the organizational structure of our universe, and universes beyond– that permits us to say that human beings are not just natural creatures.

We are also *super-natural*: literally meaning *beyond nature*. And, of course, this is why we can sometimes feel a bit disconnected from nature, original separation or *original sin*, it is sometimes called by certain religions (often abusively.)

It is this super-natural ability of human beings that accounts for both our technological differences as well as our *moral* differences, as we’ll discuss in the next chapter.

Super-natural does not mean “spooky”, “psychic”, “weird”, “superstitious”, in its original meaning. Super-natural means we can do things that are not-restricted to basic every day earthly nature on earth; it is *beyond natural*.

Because we human beings have super-natural differences, this opens up the entire “issue” of “God” for a human being. After all, if we are super-natural, and we supposedly come from “God”, or from “Anything”, it is only logical to imagine that what we came from must also be Super-Natural, or we could not reflect that quality. Whether one believes in a deity or not, the fact is, our super-natural ability is something that is not easily explained, either by religion nor by biology. It is mysterious. It is a gift.

Now, there are other creatures who have some rudimentary super-natural (actually *supra*-natural, a little “above” nature) gifts. Chimpanzees have been known to take a twig, or “artificially” make a twig from an existing branch, and pry ants out of logs, past their formic-acid defenses, for a little afternoon snack. Such technology though, is quite restricted to an already-existing form in nature, the “twig”. But, what the human being can do is way beyond chimps and beyond nature:

Human beings can consciously create new metals that don’t exist, like bronze, an amalgam of copper and tin, not occurring in nature.

Human beings can consciously genetically-modify plants, and create whole new species, simply by moving around the position of amino acids.

Human beings can work for imagined ideals, which as yet don't exist, such as universal pure love, justice and peace, or, pure hatred, anarchy and violence.

Human beings can consciously create extermination camps that systematically wipe out whole groups of people.

While natural creatures living in the wild are restricted to their environmental niches, human beings are not restricted to any specific niche. We can live anywhere on the planet, in the tundra or in the tropics. We fly in the sky. Burrow in the ground. Explore under the seas. Journey between planets and galaxies. This is why, in the Bible, unlike those specific environments which “bring forth” animals like fishes or fowls (*Genesis 1:24*), human beings are not “brought forth” from any particular environment. Instead, we are made of “dust” with Life breathed into us by God (*Genesis 2:7*). Again, we are *cosmic individuals*, as we shall discuss in Chapter Six.

This is how the Bible describes the astonishing fact that human being possess a conceptual ability, creativity, individuality and free will– inter-dependent upon the natural order but also *transcending* the earthly natural order, penetrating deep into the dust, and deep into the cosmos, the stardust, deeper into the mystery of space-time itself.

This is the spiritual and scientific facts-of-Life for humans:

The human being is a bridge between what we view as “material” nature and the “thought” or “concept” by which nature seems organized. The way the Bible describes this, is that we are created in the image and likeness of God.(Genesis 1:27)(11)

Primitive tribes, largely savage, that existed before the Hebrews, thought of nature as being a war of “gods” and “goddesses”, trying to gain ascendancy over each other. They saw these forces-of-nature as conflicted, chaotic, confused; they huddled in fear, placating and petitioning these supposed gods in order to survive.

But, as the super-natural consciousness in human beings evolved, there emerged a more *unified* view: the “theory”, based upon real, super-natural *experience*, that there was “One God”– *The Super-Natural*– The Existence *Prior To* our existence. After all, how else could one explain the human being? Certainly, mere earthly nature itself could not

be our God! That makes no sense at all! It does not *correspond to Reality, our human reality*. It could not be *true*, or at least, the complete truth.

Today, if we remove some of the religious language and sentimentalisms, and update these concepts for a secular, scientific era, an astonishing fact remains: This fundamental insight into the nature of Reality, has not fundamentally changed! We clearly exist in some kind of *Unified Order*, and within this Order, human beings clearly have super-natural *dominion*: we are the dominant species over all the creatures that exist (*Genesis 1:26*) and now, even over the subatomic dust of the earth.

Here's the point:

If, as I said in the previous chapter, **“Living in alignment with the order of nature on earth, is the most basic– indeed, the very ground, pun intended– for a secular, scientific, spiritual understanding of covenant.”** . . . then, obviously, with the advent of the super-natural human being, such an alignment has just gotten very complicated.

A creature that lives in inter-dependency upon nature and all life, yet is, to an enormous extent, independent of nature and all life? A creature that is dependent and independent? A creature that has limitations and freedoms, realities and fantasies, basic necessities and unlimited possibilities, natural-freedoms and human-requirements.

(Ever wonder why life is so hard for us? Now you know.)

Such a creature– the *human*– opens up a covenantal can of worms, or, using rather ancient pre-biblical imagery, a *serpent*.

- (8) That human beings are conceptual is described the story of Adam naming all the creatures in the Garden of Eden. A “name” is a human concept, by which something is recognized. In a seemingly simple story, a huge acknowledgement of human conceptual nature takes place. *Genesis 2:20*.
- (9) Sadly, in my opinion, the notion of “free will” has been turned into some kind of good/bad moral judgment, based on seemingly arbitrary “religious laws”, so that it seems as if it's clergy and official-teachings that determine good/bad, let alone saved/damned. The true foundation of the meaning of “free will” has been lost, and it is my purpose here to restore it.
- (10) In classic Darwinism, “natural selection” took place through the individual organism. Another way to say this, is that the force of evolution depends (among other things) upon the *free interaction of any single organism with the environment*.

Although the organism may not have conscious free will, this does not mean free will does not exist somewhat, unconsciously.

Religious thinking in the past, has failed to recognize this, and often radically-separated the human being from the animal, and human nature from animal nature, in a way that was excessive. This has contributed, in my opinion, to much psychological illness and theological distortion.

See footnote 35.

- (11) In Hebrew, the word that is translated “image” means “reflection”. If the God of Creation is *The Super-Natural*, then, our technology is a reflection of *That*. The word that is translated “likeness” means “cut-off” or “parceled out” in the sense of our being an individual, with free will. The Bible may use unusual language, but it is hardly lacking insight and experience into the human being.

From a purely logical point of view, if human beings arise from Something, then, that Something must have some kind of super-natural quality or potential, or, we can not explain ourselves as existing. Then, in order to explain ourselves—we’d have to invent a “God” that could decide, suddenly, on a whim, to just make us, without any other consideration. Such a God would be decidedly human, seriously unbelievable for a secular, scientific, spiritual person (like me, too.)

It is, of course, one of the excesses of mainstream religious thought.

Chapter Three - The Moral Order

As already discussed in Chapter One, it is the nature of nature to exist in a living, creative relationship to and with everything else. Creation on earth is a living unity, where everything and every creature has its correct place in the natural order, deeply-integrated, intricately inter-dependent, what the Bible has God describe as *good*, indeed, *very good*.

However, since the human being is a conceptual, creative, individual with free will—*super-natural*—capable of bringing something into nature that nature itself wouldn't even imagine, this can complicate things. It can complicate things for *good*:

Human beings can consciously breed more beautiful and different varieties of apples than nature alone could do.

Human beings can use viruses to deliver new genes to heal congenitally ill patients.

Human beings can build a conceptual system called an “economy” that can feed, clothe and shelter millions of people efficiently.

Human beings can send communications satellites into orbit, uniting an entire world

However, it can also complicate things *for bad*:

Human beings can engage in reckless wars that cause needless destruction to life as well as economic paralysis.

Human beings can create automobiles that destroy the quality of our air.

Human beings can farm whole species out of existence.

Human beings can purchase supplies of fresh drinking water, and hold a thirsty world hostage, for a coin.

There is a natural order. There is a super-natural order. Human beings are a bridge between the two. We can add our goodness to goodness and create more goodness. We add our lack-of-goodness to goodness and create less goodness.

Covenant is about learning how to forge a living alignment between the natural and the super-natural orders. Covenant is about enjoying the goodness of the natural order and the goodness of super-natural, free-willed technology, so we receive the full measure of human potential. Covenant is about enjoying the goodness of the earth and physical life, as well as enjoying the goodness of our conceptual gifts. A religious way of saying this, is that goal of covenant is to experience “heaven” (the super-natural) on “earth” (the natural).

Learning how to bridge the natural and super-natural order, in a way that produces more goodness for ourselves, nature and all life is what *moral consciousness* is all about.

Let me drive, pun intended, this point home with the simple example of the automobile, a perfectly excellent example of a super-natural creation interacting with a natural creation:

An automobile is a wonderful, marvelous creation of human beings. It can bring families closer. It can speed people to hospitals for medical treatment. It can transport food and goods to millions of people, and help provide a super-natural quality of life, where we can actually have oranges in the dead of winter.

However, bring into nature an automobile, with an internal combustion engine, and, over time, we experience pollution and smog. Obviously, our super-natural technology, the auto, is not in complete *alignment* with nature’s creativity. Of course, we *do* have the ability to do this; nature does not stop us from doing it, because we are *super-natural*. But, there are *consequences* to our actions– sometimes unforeseen and horrible: we might love driving our cars, bringing our families close together for the holidays, and yet, if we are increasing the incidence of asthma and even cancer, this hardly a way to keep our families close, rather, it will tear them apart. Our *intention* to do good, can *miss the mark*, which is the classic religious description of what’s been called “sin”.

Now let me compound the injury. Let us imagine (actually we don’t have to imagine it), our super-naturally-conceived economic systems becoming *unaligned* to the goodness of the Order we live in. Corporate executives, concerned about garnering another super-natural concept called *money*, invent new forms of “investments” that are really disguised, defaulted debt. They then sell this disguised, defaulted debt, vigorously,

spreading the diseased investments throughout society, in essence *spreading debt and default* throughout the world.

This lack-of-alignment soon has its *consequences*, toppling the economic system, and even causing automobile industries to go into bankruptcy, threatening all the allied industries, such as tires, oil, etc, causing a rippling threat throughout all human nations, including increased poverty, hunger, destitution. Our un-alignment within the super-natural order compounds the already-existing problems with the automobile, on a scale that is immense.

What's a human to do? Is there hope?

Yes. Because our super-natural natures also provide us another profound ability, which is the very gift of *moral consciousness*: We can become consciously self-aware of ourselves and our actions. This allows us to experience the auto's *lack-of-alignment* to the order of nature and *relate it* to the suffering that ensues. This allows us to experience the economy's topple, and perceive it as a *lesson-in-Life*, i.e. having *moral meaning*:

Experiencing the suffering caused by our human actions, we experience non-good, what a religious person might call "God's punishment" for our "sin". Less good. Less God.

Unpleasantness and suffering— being great human motivators— then causes us to look at our mistakes in designing our auto and our investments. Reflecting upon our actions, we can then assess what we did "right" or "wrong". And, if we have a *good conscience*, (of which there is no guarantee since we have *choice*) we will then make a commitment to *change our ways*, "repent of our sins", to use religious terms.

For this reason, suffering has been described as "God's chastisement of love" i.e. we experience less good, for the purpose of learning to self-correct and morally improve. Indeed, one can say that the consequence of our actions is a "sign from God", i.e. an moral indication where good was present or lacking in the initial decision.

But here, we must emphasize a point, and emphasize it strongly, emphatically! Do not continue until you understand it fully.

This mechanism, by which we can witness the consequences of our actions, and understand its meaning, and self-correct, is not fundamentally a religious phenomenon

It is just “How Life Works”; it is a mechanism built-into the Order we live in, as true for the atheist, humanist or secularist, as for the piously-religious. It is true whether God actually exists or doesn’t actually exist!

We act and create, using our natural and super-natural gifts.

Our actions have *consequences*, or *effects*, which we then experience, for good and for not-good (or a bit of both.)

Unpleasant effects cause us to change and set ourselves on a better path.

Then, we can act again and re-create anew.

This is the fundamental *spiritual mechanism* to how moral conscience works. This is true for the individual, sowing and reaping. This is also true for the group (composed of individuals) sowing and reaping together– schools, companies, communities, nations. Our actions have consequences; our sowing has a reaping; we harvest what we seeded. We become aware of our harvests– for good or for bad. And (hopefully) either way– we choose to improve!

Build a nuclear reactor on a geological fault, because it was cheaper, and there are consequences: Loss of life due to an earthquake.

(Obviously, we should change our ways, and improve.)

Murder someone, because you are angry, and there are consequences; loss of life and destruction to community, perhaps vengeance.

(Obviously, we should change our ways, and improve)

Create a welfare system, that often breeds dependencies, and there are consequences: Loss of individual initiative, and excessive taxation.

(Obviously, we should change our ways, and improve.)

Explore natural gas by contaminating ground water, and there are consequences: Illness.

(Obviously, we should change our ways, and improve.)

The consequence of our actions is a moral “sign”, of what added goodness and lacked goodness. This is why the living, spiritual mechanism of moral consciousness, as it is often presented in the Bible, has been described as *measure for measure*. This means that our actions produce consequences in *direct and equal proportion* to our actions.(12) This is true for the invention of the auto, as it is for the invention of “Wall Street”, as it is for anything super-natural human beings bring into the natural order, as well as for theft, murder, adultery and many of the other classic biblical sins. They are all “just” actions with consequences; consequences which can be experienced, weighed *morally*, and learned from.

Because we are conceptual, creative, individuals with free will, we can become aware of what happens “outside us” due to our creative actions. We can also self-reflect and become aware of what was the cause “inside us” – on the level of thought, feeling, desire and behavior. We are then capable of *correlating* the two experiences, inner and outer, and conceptualizing, in general terms, how we human beings and our world, interact, what we “should” or “should not” do. This is the foundation of *moral law*, as we shall talk about in the next chapter.

In the ancient world, the ability to discern the meaning of the sowing-reaping experience, and *lead* others, who might not have such a gift, fell to prophets or prophetically-inspired priests, kings, etc. Such people had an *in-sight*, the ability, correlate their inner and outer vision, and give *meaning* to an event.

But, this self-reflective ability– consciously correlating the relationship between the inner individual with his/her effects upon outer world– is not just for prophets. It is what makes human beings moral beings. It is why the word “human” and “humane” are related.

We human beings don’t just live our lives and die. We can actually *live the meaning of Life personally*– for the sake of improving (more good) our life now, and in the future, for ourselves, others, future generations and for all nature and life. This is what covenant is about.

SO VERY PERSONALLY do human beings experience the consequences of our actions, it’s as if each of us is a *concentration*– a living *individualization* of nature and life– nature in individual form.(13)

For the sake of the *world-we-are*, we can act . . .

for good: There is birth in nature, but human beings can learn *how* nature works, individualize this knowledge, and save premature babies.

for bad: There is also killing in nature, but human beings can learn how nature works, individualize this knowledge, and then, sadistically, murder “just for fun”, on a worldwide scale.

for debate: There is miscarriage in nature, but human beings can learn how nature works, individualize this knowledge, and perform abortions at will.(14)

The moral choices become even more complex, as our individualization of future knowledge evolves:

for good: There are planets in nature, but human beings can individualize this knowledge and go *there*, eventually, *terraforming* Mars for an over-crowded earth.

for bad: There is power– massive power– deep within nature, such as *anti-matter*. We human beings can learn how nature works, individualize this knowledge, and because anti-matter “cancels out” matter, we can actually create *annihilation*.

for debate: There are viruses in nature, but human beings can learn how nature works, individualize this knowledge, and use viruses as delivery systems to change our genetic structure.(15) Why not engineer pianists, with seven long fingers, instead of five? Or slave laborers, with four arms?

Morality is a search. It is a search that never ends, because human beings can always grow, evolve, and invent new challenges to the Order in which we live, which require new learning and new moral questions. The idea that morality is a fixed, “religious” system of never-changing “laws”, simply cannot abide with what we know in a secular, scientific, spiritual era. You cannot have a constantly evolving universe with fixed morality!

In our never-ending search for learning how to *align* both the super-natural and the natural through us, new questions will always open up, as well as deeper, more existential, troublesome, heart-wrenching, *ancient* questions:

Is there true justice in the universe? We've seen some rudimentary justice, *measure for measure*, as our actions bring us consequences to contend with, as we reap what we sow. But, why do bad things happen to good people? Why does a little child get cancer? Did the child sow and reap this?

Is there true kindness in the universe? Is there love? Can human beings also learn how these work, and concentrate these forces? Can we achieve our hopes, dreams and ideals? This is the moral purpose that fuels human *history*, which we will discuss ahead in Chapter 5.

As an individual-concentration of nature, on earth and beyond earth– within our universe, and perhaps, one day, beyond our universe– we human beings truly bridge both the natural and super-natural orders. There is potential for enormous blessings. There is potential for enormous curses (*Deuteronomy 30:15*). There is also a lot of wrestling, struggling, debating, as we learn how to handle our power, and use it *wisely*.

As the conceptual, self-aware, dominant species on the planet, everything impacts upon us. As the conceptual, self-aware, dominant species on the planet, we have an impact upon everything.

The consequences of everything we do right ennobles us. The consequences of everything we do wrong cripples us.

This is the spiritual meaning of the *shame* which Adam and Eve felt after eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; they became individually aware of their spiritual power and its consequences (*Genesis 3:7*); they felt its effect deeply, personally.

With knowledge comes power. With power comes responsibility. Navigating the moral order is very intense, even overwhelming. It may take you time to fathom it all, if, in fact, you can ever do so. But right now, to help make it easier to continue learning about the inner-dynamics of covenant, let's summarize where we are.

So far, we've established, *three fundamental orders involved in covenant*:

1. ***the natural order*: nature as we experience it on earth, or within our known universe.**
2. ***the super-natural order*: human conscious independent creativity above and beyond nature.**

3. ***the moral order: where we become personally aware, of the effects of our actions upon nature, all life, and upon ourselves, and learn how to improve.***

Out of our experience in learning how to align these, the fourth order emerges:

4. ***the legal order . . .***

which we shall now discuss.

- (12) *Midah k'neged midah* is a Hebrew rabbinic phrase used to describe this spiritual mechanism. See: *Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 32:21; Numbers 5:11-31*, and many other citations too numerous to include. See: *Matthew 6:12; Matthew 7:1-2, Luke 13:1-5. See Q'uran 17:7.*

This concept is at the core of covenantal thinking, regardless how religiously-differently it is framed. In so-called Eastern religion, it is the principle called “*karma*” which means “actions indistinguishable from their consequences”, for good or bad. But, unfortunately, the emphasis on the negative has turned “*karma*” into a popular word meaning “punishments due to sin”.

All this apart, “measure for measure” is a mechanism built-into Life. It is “How Life Works”, so it transcends, yet includes, religions (after all, they operate within the same Order). This is another reason why this secular, scientific, spiritual interpretation of covenant can be helpful to “making sense” of religions that have forgotten the *living spiritual experience* which is at the foundation of their moral laws.

- (13) For this reason, in *Genesis 2:7ff*, all *humankind* (*Adam* in Hebrew), is created as a single individual, out of the dust, *before* the plants and the animals. The individual embodies earthly creation within him/herself. Or, said in reverse, the entire earth, and all life, has become concentrated and expressed through an individual. And today, we must acknowledge the fact that we’ve become a cosmic individual, as we will talk about in Chapter 6. For many Christians, this is core to their beliefs about nature of Christ.
- (14) On the simplest level, abortion is simply an issue of technology, and is, essentially
no different than any technology in how interacts with nature. However, the right use of technology– all technology– is a very complicated. I personally do

not think of the “abortion issue” in terms of either pro-Lifer or pro-Choice. Alas, there are some subject matters that are beyond the scope of this little book.

There are some who believe that abortion is banned in the Bible. It is not. In fact, it was proscribed, in an odd mystical way, by the ancient high priests, as punishment for a woman’s adultery. See *Numbers 5*, regarding the “Waters of Bitterness”.

- (15) Alas, a detailed discussion of genetic engineering is also beyond the scope of this little book.

Chapter Four: The Legal Order

As we've seen, the foundation of the moral order is a living, spiritual mechanism built into Life, by which we human beings, with our supernatural gifts, can sow and reap experiences and morally learn from them.

Because we are conceptual, these moral experiences can be *generalized*, in the form of succinct intellectual understandings. For example, continuing from the last chapter: After becoming aware of the suffering caused by the internal-combustion engine, we can *conceptualize* our experience and express it as a *general understanding*– a moral pronouncement, principle, teaching, discernment, judgment or *law*: “Thou shalt not pollute”. Similarly, in regard to Wall Street’s collapse, we can formulate the general moral law: “Thou shalt not lie about the investment”, or– one that’s proven very valuable over the past three thousand years– *Thou Shalt Not Steal*.

This ability to generalize our moral experiences and express them as a moral law, is the foundation of the legal order, the fourth order involved in covenant.

The ability to discern the sowing and reaping in Life and give clear-sighted moral direction– a *law of correct action*– for oneself and others, in a family, tribe, community nation or world is what makes a true *moral leader*. Everyone has this ability, but it is often not fully developed.

Only with someone who can actually judge right from wrong, who actually has true spiritual insight or *authority* regarding “How Life Works”, can there be a legal order in alignment to the moral, supernatural and natural orders, from which it is built up. The legal order, under the moral direction of a true *moral leader*– is the spiritual foundation of any good and moral *government* (*Exodus 18:13-27; Deut. 1:9*); we will talk about this more in the next chapter.

Moral laws are very special. Because they *are* very general and highly conceptual, they often seem to take on a *timeless*, even *eternal*, quality, as if they’re up on a mountain, guarding the entire earth: *Thou Shalt [never, ever] Murder*. This law is so pure that, by and large, it remains true, generation after generation after generation . . . (16) Thus, it has served as a moral cornerstone for countless peoples, nations, and societies, for millennia.

That's why such seemingly eternal laws have often been considered a religious *revelation*: a sudden direct transmission of knowledge from God to a human person, such as a judge or prophet like Moses.

Today though, in our more scientific era, such a literal biblical *revelation* is often not considered a *fact*, i.e. it actually took place.(17) Today, revelation is interpreted more philosophically, in terms of the concept of *Reason*:

Because the human is a *rational* being, we *can* formulate moral law.

We can, in a way, share the "Reason" by which "God designed" the Order of nature. So, we can understand "How Life Works", its laws.(18)

No other creature in nature can do this. No other creature can teach by exchange of concepts. No other creature can bridge thought/heaven and materiality/earth through Reason.(19)

Moral laws, once conceptualized, can be passed down verbally from generation to generation. This has an obvious benefit: If a person, a child for example, hasn't had a certain spiritual experience, they can still learn from the law. "Thou shalt not touch a lit candle"? Any child who doubts this will quickly appreciate their elder's wisdom. The knowledge has been *delivered* to them, the meaning of the root for the word *tradition*.

Often, when orally-transmitted traditions are broken due to death or foreign invasion, they are written down. When oral laws are written down, they form a *body of law*, such as scripture or a constitution.(20) Then, the living, spiritual experience of a legal *order*, becomes formal legal *code*. This is the foundation of a legal *system*.

Once imbedded into a legal system, a moral law such as *Thou Shalt Not Murder* has finished its remarkable transformation: from an experience-based moral insight, to a moral law and now, finally, to a fixed legal guideline or *rule*. This then forms the basis of what's called *rule of law*, by which most of today's societies, as well as our entire world global community, co-operates.

One disadvantage of a legal system, with its rule of law, is that laws are now fixed by language from previous generations, perhaps centuries past. There may no longer exist a living person aware of the spiritual experience which inspired the law, so the law cannot be interpreted properly. This is how knowledge, even when recorded, gets lost.

Another disadvantage of a legal system is that it can become morally-disconnected. Attorneys for example, even if they are defending someone who they *know* murdered someone, must, nonetheless, do their job defending and freeing the person, or the entire

system falls apart. The system requires duty to one's role, or, there can be no system, and chaos can result. The system must always be *ethical*– though that's not always moral.

Despite its disadvantages, there's still an amazing advantage to having a legal system. A legal system allows us to judge simply, easily, methodically, even automatically, and keep our society working! Enforcing a rule is advantageous in a situation where the majority people have not developed moral consciousness. Rules help maintain an "artificial order" until people learn to align to the true spiritual Order. We all need this help, or speeding limits on highways would not exist.(21)

Another extraordinary advantage of a legal system is that it helps stop people from making serious mistakes, sowing and reaping dangerous consequences to their actions. Knowledge of the general law, *Thou Shalt Not Murder*, can make one aware of one's own feelings and prevent one from acting out, dangerously:

A legal system can supply citizens with knowledge they might not otherwise have.

A legal system can protect citizens from dangers that their lack of knowledge might cause.

Ideally, the legal system should change and grow in living spiritual alignment within the natural, super-natural, moral and legal orders. It should evolve as everything else evolves.

Sadly, though, this doesn't happen, and the legal system can become ossified, incrustated, overburdened, and trapped in its own legalisms. When it does– like all things un-aligned– it reaps, *measure for measure*, some un-good consequence. This is a spiritual "sign" that the legal system needs to be re-examined and refreshed with spiritual understanding:

A legal system that prevents sick patients from receiving the only medicine that heals their illness, makes people sicker.

A legal system that makes poor people pay more than the wealthy, increases the poverty.

A legal system that taxes married couples more than single couples,

increases single lives, undermining marriages and new children, which then undermines the tax-base.

In all of the above, the natural, supernatural, moral and legal order are not properly-aligned through the legal system; indeed, they are undermined.

In the 19th century, good people were often thrown into prison because they were hungry and stole a loaf of bread. However, since no sowing goes without a reaping, it soon became obvious that the legal system had become spiritually unaligned: jails overflowed with so many people that eventually “felons” had to be sent away to form new colonies like Australia. After all, if they are in prison, not working, how are they supposed to earn the money to repay their debt? The laws, which were designed to protect wealth, actually diminished wealth (while costing a lot to keep them in jail).

In situations-gone-awry like this, even timeless laws like *Thou Shalt Not Steal*, can miss the mark (be sinful). Should we give the value of a buck more importance than the living right (designed by God or nature?) to eat? Is business more important than Life? Can one have a sustainable business, if it is compromising the lives of its workers?

Life comes before business. Nature comes before human beings and their activities.

Even if you don't believe the biblical account that “God created Creation first”, and then “God created human beings second”, this is obviously true.

We will talk about this and other critical priorities in Chapter Seven.

Such a terrible legal un-alignment surrounding *Thou Shalt Not Steal*, can be solved by reminding ourselves of another enshrined legal principle: *The Spirit of the Law*.

Every law in a legal system must always be *balanced* by a spiritual awareness of the *purpose* of the law. Every law must be balanced by a sensitivity to human weakness and extenuating circumstances. Yes, *Thou Shalt Not Murder*. But, what if it's murder due to *self-defense* or is an *accidental* murder? What if the person is being physically and emotionally abused and lashes out in sudden rage? The fixed laws of a legal system must always be balanced with a spirit of goodness and understanding in evaluating the laws.

If we fail to do this, it becomes very difficult to apply laws, because moral laws such as *Thou Shalt Not Murder* become too general.(22) They don't address specific human needs and circumstances.

However, in a legal system that's spiritually healthy, general laws such as *Thou Shalt Not Murder*, will always be challenged by specific cases, which cause us to re-think the law, and modify it. This leads to forming *legal precedents*, which can serve as a guide to interpreting the law in the future. This is how legal systems spiritually evolve.

Again and again, it bears repeating: the foundation of all law is life experience within the Order we live in.

Fixed laws always need to be modified by new experiences with the laws. No fixed law is absolutely fixed. No fundamentalism, whether religious or secular, can ever truly be fundamentalist.

Laws are sown; consequences are reaped; and this reveals to us, spiritually, whether they are moral or not.

Now, the whole point of this discussion can be rather frightening when you first begin to think about it.

What law is perfect? What is authority? What authority, be it a secular government, or a religious tribunal, has complete knowledge of the moral laws that are built into the design of Life? Is there any clergy, is there any government official, is there any mere⁽²³⁾ human being, that has absolute authority over "right" and "wrong"? Can any legal system be the absolute criterion of "good" or "bad" for an individual or the society they dwell in? Can we ever trust a legal system completely to solve our problems?

But, if the legal system is not the criterion of what's right and wrong, what *is* the criterion? Are we, as individuals, the judge of what's right and wrong? If so, why shouldn't we murder? Why shouldn't we steal? Is what's right and wrong just our opinion about right and wrong?

These days, we often see individuals defying "the system" to be more free. These days, we often see "the system" trying assert more control over the individual. This is epitomized in the terribly divisive debates over abortion and homosexuality; we rock back and forth between group repression and individual expression. In America this has been going on, full-tilt, since the *Sixties*⁽²⁴⁾

If neither the legal system nor individuals are the criterion of "right" and "wrong", then, how do we have a just, fair, spiritually-centered, government?

The alignment of the natural, super-natural, moral and legal orders are not sufficient. It takes something else: something very powerful; something more powerful than our

government; something more powerful than any and all individuals; something that embraces and transcends both:

History!

- (16) It is like another general, highly-conceptualized scientific law: $E=MC^2$. We do not know if it is true for every possible universe. Obviously, “Thou Shalt Not Murder” makes no sense in a world without human beings (or other beings that have the same super-natural qualities), or, for that matter, in the world without death. Once again, as we spoke about in Chapter One, a law may be *universal*, pertaining to nature on our known universe, but, not at all *ubiquitous*—corresponding to Reality on every single known possible scale of it.
- (17) Something which isn’t fact, can nonetheless have truth. If this weren’t true, then, we couldn’t read a work-of-fiction, such as Dostoyevsky, and glean great human truths.

For many religions, scripture has been considered to be a *revelation*, every word being a direct-transmission by God. In a more scientific era of modern biblical criticism, where we have studied the “seams” in the scripture, and can see traces of how it was compiled, scripture cannot be considered a direct revelation. Nonetheless, the super-natural ability to discern moral laws is indisputable. If such laws were written down in scripture or a constitution, then, there is a simple, logical reason why such documents have been revered, and why they might be given “weight” from the same Hebrew biblical root word as “holy”; they have a super-natural origin.

Scripture has often been claimed to be the result of “the holy spirit”. Whether or not there was, actually, a spiritual entity called “holy spirit”, there is no doubt that scriptures were compiled “in a spirit of seeking holiness”: with the intention of fostering goodness and alignment to the Order (God’s commandments) in Creation.

Nonetheless, we must distinguish an inspired *canon*— compiled by inspired people— from a *revelation* directly spoken by God. This confusion has led to extreme fundamentalisms in many different faiths.

- (18) The idea that human beings share in the “Divine Reason” by which the world was created, gave rise to the idea of *Natural Law*, the Enlightenment Philosophy, upon which the world’s great democratic constitutions, such as America’s, was

based. Our rights are “endowed by the Creator” with which we have a direct relationship-in-consciousness, “Reason”.

- (19) Not by happenstance, the human being is the only near-perpendicular animal, “bridging heaven and earth”. The form of our body is an expression of our super-natural distinction. This could not happen if there were not an Order which linked these various orders through the human individual. Yes, there is unity here!
- (20) We often forget that scripture has served as a constitution for a real nation. An example of this is *Deuteronomy*, which most scholars believe served as a kind of constitution for re-dedicating Judah during the reign of King Josiah, about 641 to 609 B.C.E./AD.
- (21) Speed limits on a highway are a very easy way to understand all the levels to law.

The spiritual experience of speeding, produces a death. Then, there is a moral insight, “Thou shalt not speed”. This can be an oral teaching, then a written law or fixed rule. This is then enforced by a legal system. However, being fixed, and generalized, this law does not include all possible problems that might arise. Do I not speed, if the person in the car with me needs to get to a hospital? Therefore, the written law requires a certain spirit of the law. This then produces precedents on how to interpret the law. All this is necessary until, the true spiritual awareness required is learned: Thou shalt not be so locked-in-one’s head, only caring about one’s own self, without considering the lives of others around you (driving on the same road.) Or, simply, “Life is bigger than each of us.”

- (22) This is a major reason for a lot of religious confusion these days over hot-button issues like abortion and homosexuality. The moral laws are so overly-generalized, they cannot be properly applied to every circumstance we experience in today’s highly individualistic and highly technological culture. Such issues are very complex, and beyond the scope of this little book.
- (23) I use the word “mere” here, with respect to those Christians (not all do), and other religious people that believe that a human being can actually *be* God, incarnate (in the flesh). Such a person would obviously be capable of absolute discernment of “right” and “wrong”.
- (24) We went from highly structured, sexually-repressed *Fifties*, to the individualistic, highly-sexual *Sixties*. This became extreme in the *Seventies*, wanton and libertine.

This was followed by an extreme neo-conservative, biblical movement in the Eighties and Nineties. Now, there is a Neo-Sixties return counterbalancing the Eighties and Nineties, and so forth. This horrible teeter-tottering is a spiritual problem, for which the answer is *true covenant*: not the confused “covenant” of centuries past.

Chapter Five: The Historical Order

There are many approaches to forging a spiritual alignment. Indeed, the world is filled with spiritual movements, all of which seek some kind of integration between the human being and the complex multi-level “Order of orders” in which we live.

Some spiritual movements emphasize an alignment between the natural and the moral orders, with the super-natural order, and its extraordinary technological possibilities, taking a very minor role. These movements seek a *natural spirituality*, an alignment of their society with basic, earthly nature, such as today’s “New Age”.

Often, this natural spiritual alignment is associated with one people, in one place, not openly engaging the world beyond its own borders– the entire planet, all humankind, in all places, for all times. These movements are often called *indigenous*, like the Cherokee, living on their sacred land. Sadly, some religions have often called them, cruelly, *pagan*, in a way that distorts pits original meaning.(25)

Other spiritual movements may seek an alignment between the super-natural and the moral orders through rule-of-law, with the natural order taking a diminutive or even discarded role. This *legal-moral spirituality* often takes the form of a governmental system, seeking to over-arch and unite the world into a single society and economic system. Such a movement can be described as *civilizational* or “*historical*” (not a complete historical as we’ll discuss.) Sadly, these have often proclaimed themselves to be *covenanted*, and the pagan (and their land), was often considered as getting in the way of their system and God.(26)

These two spiritual approaches reflect the battle inside us, between our super-natural and natural selves.

Once, nature was cleared, to make room for conceptual, creative, individual, free-willed human civilization and “history”. Today, our entire planet is so civilized, that nature has been destroyed.

Obviously, in this era, we have reaped a powerful spiritual lesson about the nature of covenant: we can see that we’ve been approaching spiritual-alignment in a way that splits “mind” and “body”, human “invention” and Nature/Creation, “civilization” and “earthly nature”. A psychiatrist would call this *dissociation*. Although we have sown and reaped wondrous human conceptual accomplishments, we have also sown and reaped

the experience of dis-association, division, duality, bodily-planetary destruction. We have missed the mark, sinned.

The mark we missed is a terrible misinterpretation of the true meaning of *history*.

History always embraces the natural. If one looks at the fundamental chapters in the Bible, it is all about the correct alignment between the human being and nature. The Bible is filled with moral laws, based upon the experience of “How Life Works”. These laws outline which foods produce the maximum health for the human being, with the minimal damage to other creatures (*Genesis 1:29*); how to farm in a way that does not deplete the land (*Exodus 23:10-11*); how to permit all life to rest and replenish itself (*Genesis 2:2-3*). Indeed, the entire story of *Noah* is about what happens when human beings act un-aligned to the unity and goodness intended within nature, so nature actually rebels, and seeks to contain human evil through a flood. (*Genesis 6:9*). (27)

History always embraces the civilizational or “historical”. However, the laws by which the Bible framed up civilization, including those regarding damages, lawsuits, murder, revenge, etc., as with all “civilized” peoples, were not laws which sought to impose a huge governmental-system, an empire, by which the entire world would be conquered “in the name of God”. Covenant is not about imposing an “spiritual empire” upon people. It is not about justifying some kind of cult-of-power, though sadly, this has been the case.

In a *true covenantal* sense, “history” is not what is usually taught in schools– the recanting of past events, ordering them sequentially by an arbitrary dating system. History is not at all about looking backwards!

History, in the true spiritual sense, is about moving forward:

History, in a spiritual sense, is the *living spiritual process* by which a complete alignment between all human civilizations, nature and life is forged.

History is about establishing a *dominion of goodness and unity (God)*, with the human being as its illumined instrument, for all peoples and all nations.

History is about advancement. Improvement. Harmonization. Evolution. Unity. Goodness. Progress. History is about the experience of increased-goodness or God, for all humanity, in correct alignment with nature and all life, including as well all our human-needed systems, legal, economic, social, industrial etc. This *complete* history is what we can legitimately call *covenantal* history– *true* history– *real* history– *a true*

civilization (devoted to Truth). It is not some covenantal-idea-in-our-mind that floats in some theological sky, separated from our bodies and the earth, which is pronounced, imposed, through some fanciful-faith, only to sow and reap its own mess.

True history is not theology nor religion. It is common sense. Obviously, we have minds. Obviously, we have bodies. Obviously, they need to work together. Obviously, we inhabit one world, with a lot of other creatures upon it. Obviously, the purpose of history must embrace it all, including human technologies and systems, and all nations.

True history is universal. However– a big “however”– true history, although universal, does not seek to violate the enormous diversity and individuality which is the very nature of the Order in we live in. True history makes a powerful contribution to each and every person and creature on the planet. True history helps ensure the survival of the human species and the flourishing of all life. True history ensures the healing and experience-of-good, for all. It is not some *ubiquitous* religious or government cult, “required by God”. Sadly, religions in the past became cultic. Sadly, today, “secularism”– runs the risk of repeating the same cultic error.

True history unifies. It doesn’t radically-exaggerate the separation between the supernatural and natural orders, misinterpreting Biblical *dominion* (*Genesis 1:28*) as some perverted “*right to dominate*” “pagans” and the natural order, to the point of extinction. True history would not label an appropriate ecological-movement– seeking to rebalance the excesses of industrialism and prevent dangerous planetary warming– by the popular-pagan-pejorative-word-equivalent: *tree hugger*.

Quite the contrary, true history, covenantal history, seeks to *remove* the troublesome disconnect that often takes place between the natural order and supernatural order. True history seeks to actively infuse, inform and integrate supernatural consciousness with the natural consciousness– so that human beings can be fully conceptual, creative, individual and free willed, with all our technological gifts, and yet still inhabit the earth as one of its many natural creatures. This is the meaning of the so-called “Return to the Garden of Eden”, which many religions dream about.(28)

True history is about the alignment of all the different orders involved in covenant, *personally*.

True history is about the alignment of all the different orders involved in covenant, *interpersonally*.

True history is about the alignment of individuals, with each other, and all others, and indeed, all nature and all life, for this generation, and all generations, *transpersonally*.

All these are *inseparable*.(29)

True history is best described in the Bible through the story of Abraham and Sarah. (*Genesis 12ff.*). As we follow the narrative, we progressively see an increased alignment that: 1) sets the beginning of a new civilization 2) clears out the messy errors of the past 3) renews physical health and reproductive fertility 3) forges a continuous, biological lineage that begins the force of covenantal history. 4) generates prosperity and wealth.

Such a complete, human alignment– embracing every desirous aspect of human life– is not just for the benefit of Abraham and Sarah, personally. It is also for their children, and their children’s children, and indeed, the entire world.(30) Whether or not Abraham or Sarah actually existed, or not, the principle of the story remains: True history is not merely “historical” or “civilizational”:

True history is *bio-historical*; a movement which fuses human abilities and biological needs, nature’s capacities and possibilities, for all nations and peoples in the world. This is the essence of covenant. (Remember our planktonic algae, from Chapter Two?)

True history is about the unification of all the different orders involved in covenant, not in some theoretical or theological way, but in way that is actually conjoins the spiritual and physical.

True history seeks to create a powerful, living, exemplary force-of-civilized goodness, rooted in a real, fleshly people, which is then transmitted to others in the world.

This is precisely why secular, scientific spirituality is so powerful in this era. It removes the religious complications and distorted biblical interpretations that lead to a mistaken notion of history, and restores us to the core heart of what true history is about. Healthy secular life reminds us of the innate simplicity of history, without cumbersome theologies and beliefs. Today, when we see people working in industry, taking care of their bodies, health and planetary ecology, while still holding firm to a vision of world peace, justice and righteousness for nations and peoples, we are witnessing through enlightened secular life, the basic, *simplicity* of covenantal history.

Life lived through true history, is truly quite simple:

It’s about happiness! A full and complete happiness!

Yes, history (and from now on, we'll assume this to mean *true* history) is about happiness! A happiness that is for ourselves individually. A happiness that includes our governments. A happiness that embraces all civilizations. A happiness that is for every creature on our planet (and perhaps, as we expand out into space, any other creatures we may meet.)

History is that transformative movement which spreads *knowledge of covenantal alignment*– knowledge of goodness and unity (God)– which, is necessary for achieving happiness:

**Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
(Proverbs 8:10)**

With such spiritual knowledge, deeply-owned, deeply-ingrained, becoming “second nature” to the human being, the future of the world looks bright.

**And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into
pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither
shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)**

Shall we, as this verse speaks, be rebuked by the consequences of our actions? Shall we be condemned by the reaping of our sowing? Shall– out of the pain and suffering we created– a new awareness arise– a deep, personal, planetary and historical awareness? Shall we put an end to the evil of our civilizations and re-align, covenantally, to the unity and goodness that is the nature of the Order in which we live?

This is not a prophecy about a “God” that divides people up into “naughty” and “nice”, like Santa Claus. This is not a vicious God that burns the “naughties” in hell or the whole world in *Armageddon*. This is not some “God of civilization”, a “God of false history” that inspires tangled, entrenched politics and unrighteous wars of conquest. This is an ancient prophetic vision of the shared human experience of “How Life Works”, the Force of Life’s Goodness (God) described as a “he”, the same word in the biblical Hebrew for “it”(31) This is the biblical “God of History”, who is also the “Creator”, the living, spiritual impulse towards goodness and unity, that inspires and includes human civilization, in a *bio-historical covenant*, embracing all human thought, and all human flesh.

**For then will I return to the people a pure language, that they may all
call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.
(Zephaniah 3:9)**

Is it so far-fetched that one day, we will stop lying to ourselves about our actions, and speak purely? Is it so far-fetched that, after repeated experiences of pain, we might wake up and realize (unless we're masochists), that we really have no other choice but to seek goodness, because that's how this world is designed, and our only alternative is to destroy ourselves?(32)

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

What is good, or from God, is that which produces good, not just for ourselves, but for all humankind and all life, and glorifies all existence, throughout time. This is history.

Can we know history's outcome? Beginning in some distant past, creating our present and our future, can we know where history is headed?

Some project some kind of *messianic age*(33) with all sorts of definite religious events that will take place. Others, like the vast majority of secular people, simply envision– with certain hope and faith– a future of enormous healing and goodness; in their own way they ceaselessly, relentlessly, work to bring it about, through the simple, ordinariness of day-to-day secular life.

Both religionists and secularists seek a future of truth, beauty, justice, prosperity, and living-goodness. Today, the spiritual meaning of history is firmly rooted in us all, Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other good and noble religions. It is no less rooted in all good and noble humanist perspectives, including the ethical-atheist.

This extra-ordinary root was planted thousands of years ago, through a mid-eastern desert tribe called the Hebrews. They simply did what we all need to do, and continue to do:

Wake up to *Something Larger*.

- (25) The word “pagan” comes from the root word meaning “land”. It has often been associated with so-called “nature religions”, like the Hindu, for example, as opposed to so-called “historical” religions, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, the word has been applied excessively in a way that portrays all “nature religions” as being, inherently, sinful and degenerate. This is hardly the case.

It is, however, the case for *degenerate* nature cultures, like the Hittite, Amelkite, Canaanite, where there was bestiality, child sacrifice, wanton cultic prostitution, the gratuitous destruction of life.

We must learn to distinguish the real meaning of *pagan*, especially today, when “pagan” religions, such as *Wicca*, which are generally-speaking, good and historical, have surfaced. The problem is the radical separation between “supernatural” and “natural”, “mind and “body”, in past theologies which still colors our thinking.

- (26) Western religions often were touted as religions-of-civilization *as opposed to* nature religions. There is a certain truth to that. We do have to oppose nature somewhat, if we are cutting down a tree to build a house. But, the extreme radical view that nature and physical life was an “opposition to God”, is obviously false if God is the Creator.

From my perspective, I believe this radicalism is caused by *Gnostic* contaminations that, through Persian and Greek thought, contaminated these religious viewpoints. Gnosticism, a movement that reached its height in the third century B.C.E./AD., often believed that matter was the cause of sin, and created a dualism of thought. It was condemned by many established religions for that reason, though it is experiencing a powerful resurgence in our era, as we reclaim an overly-banished nature, and an overly-banished “female”, in our theologies, and also as ancient Gnostic texts that are “Christian” have surfaced.

- (27) If one looks at the number of brutal storms that have taken place in the United States in recent years, since the Iraq war, one can truly wonder whether or not the weather, such as Noah’s flood, does not respond to our actions, for good or for bad.

To me, this is logical. We are, after all, each of us, a “clod of earth”, a piece of the planet and all life. When we attack human beings, we attack the planet and all life. Sowing and then reaping, must, logically, include the weather. This is how we explain ancient biblical scourges as “punishments by God”.

- (28) This disconnection between the natural and super-natural orders, which was briefly touched upon and to which we will return later, has been called *Original Sin*. It explains an obvious fact that human beings, when they disconnect from nature to build our houses and technological marvels, are not fully-aligned to

“the Creator”, meaning earthly nature, as in the Garden of Eden story. However, the concept of Original Sin has been grossly misused to portray us as being “evil” from birth. This is an evil in itself.

This excessively-disconnected theology has so seriously infiltrated religious thinking, that some believe the entirety of the earth must be destroyed to bring about a healing: *Armageddon*. Out of this idea, with its distorted notion of “dominion”, human beings are believed to have an unassailable right to decimate the earth’s resources, since the earth is going to be destroyed anyway. It has been called “dominion theology”, and is popular among certain evangelical groups.

In an extreme counter-balance to this extreme, others maintain that we should tear down technology and this world-system, and restore the earth to nature, where we give up our computers, our automobiles, and our super-natural inventions.

Both views have some truth in them. Both are hopelessly un-aligned. Both are not *covenantal*, nor *historical* in the true sense, which includes both the supernatural and natural orders. We are, after all, composed of both! We have minds *and* bodies.

- (29) An amazing abstract model of this can be found in the second chapter of *Genesis*, where, the human being is created first, out of dust, and then, all life, plant and animal, evolves secondarily. This frames the power and responsibility of human dominion; it shows how all life, including who we are, are intimately linked, through our moral choices.
- (30) To maintain awareness of this alignment, as a “sign”, Abraham is marked, through the ritual of circumcision. It is a reminder that he should devote the entirety of his natural self, to the purpose of history, so as to fulfill both. This is a bio-historical view. This is true covenant. For Christians, this is implicit in the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ, with its physical resurrection and ascension. Once again covenant is not merely historical but is *bio-historical*.
- (31) The so-called “impersonal God” of science and the so-called “personal God” of religion merge through *experience*. We can personally describe our experience of “God” as a “he”– or, for that matter a “she”. But, we can also describe God impersonally as “it”.

However one describes it, the response by “Reality” to our actions, interpreted as “God’s Will”, is what we are experiencing. We experience a reaping of our

sowing, as it takes place in the “rules” by which our Order operates: “God’s Order” or “Commandment”, the “design” of this world.

- (32) Of course, one day we might fly away to another planet to escape our destructiveness. Or, alternatively, we might have a soul that picks up a new body in some other world. Nonetheless, there is no escaping the consequences of who we are. We might as well learn what we need to learn here on earth.
- (33) The idea of a *messiah*, a word which means *anointed*, was originally a Hebrew notion whereby a King, of the lineage of David, would be restored to the throne of Israel after brutal military occupation by foreign nations.

Christians and Muslims believe this will be fulfilled by the second-coming of Jesus. Jews are still waiting to see. Nonetheless, the general concept of a messianic age, as an age of hope and healing, in the future, is held by-and-large by all people, religious or not, in our secular, scientific, spiritual age.

Chapter Six: The Cosmic Individual

Covenant is about *living large*.

Some live their lives by caring for their families. This is critical, because without this, there would be no human beings. This is no different than any creature that cares about its young. This is the natural order. It is large.

Others live their natural lives in pursuit of making their ideas, desires, fantasies, inventions, real. This is as it should be, because human beings have an extraordinarily large capacity to be conceptual, creative, individual and free willed. We can produce music, art, mathematics and sciences. We are not limited to the mere forms of earthly nature in our self-expression. We are not merely natural, but also supernatural.

Larger still is the amazing spiritual fact that each of us– without exception– are constantly interacting with our world, witnessing the consequences of our actions, the reaping of our sowing. We notice, through the experience of Life, “How Life Works”: what proves “good” or “from God”, and what proves “not-good”/bad or “not from God”. We glean the moral meaning of our actions, adjust our behaviors, change our previous ways, and *re-align* ourselves.

Even larger, we can express our awareness of Life’s moral boundaries legally. Such legal guidelines help us to maintain a balance between these orders, until we become spiritually-mature, so-to-speak. We create (hopefully) a safe, ordered society, that protects spiritual-children– of all ages– so we can grow and learn.

However, “large” is not a big enough word to describe what happens when we human beings begin to spiritually operate on the order of history. *Huge*, would, most definitely, be a better word.

With *history*, a huge transformation begins to take place. Now each of us is living huge! We are no longer living merely naturally, supernaturally, morally and legally, which virtually all human beings do, to some extent.

Now each of us is no longer merely one, single individual. Each of us now spiritually-coordinates our individuality with those of others. We become a collective-individual– an individual-together-with-others,

people-with-people, nations-with-nations– joined-in-shared-historical-purpose.

The purpose of this *communion*, as some religions might call it, is *empowerment*: We empower life on all levels, natural, super-natural, legal and historical. We empower human selves and civilizations. We also empower all life on our planet. We even empower the planet itself. Through living historically, we begin to take dynamic responsibility not just for ourselves but also for everything that falls within our dominion. We become stewards of life in our world!

And these days, the powerful dynamics of covenant have even begun to reach way beyond the third rock from the sun, into the far reaches of the galaxies. Our telescopes now peer into the mystery of creation. Our space probes blink home photos and information that challenge our earthly egos. Our mathematical tools unveil the inner structure of our universe, and possibly other universes beyond ours. We centrifugally penetrate into the heart of matter, woven within, if not of, the very fabric of time and space.

The huge transformation that takes place through history, is not just huge.

It is *cosmic*!

Covenant is not just historical. Covenant is *cosmic*.

Through covenant, con-joined to millions of others in the world, we become, separately and together, a single *cosmic individual*. We begin to truly function as a *spiritual-species–humankind– made in the image and likeness of “The Ultimate Cosmos”, “God”– or whatever your term for such a mind-boggling scale of human possibility.*

This astonishing vision of being a cosmic individual is abstracted and condensed into a very simple picture in the second chapter of Genesis. Here we see God creating humankind, male and female, together, as a single individual, *Adam*, before any of the other creatures, plants or animals, arise. The human is portrayed as the “earthly lord”, with dominion over all terrestrial life, with all other life *sub-ordinated, ordered-under* (in the correct meaning of the word “subordinated”, which doesn’t mean debased or dominated).

Now whether it is *fact* that God did create the cosmic human first and all other life last, whether such an account is actually what occurred, is debatable. But, what is *not debatable*, is the astonishing ancient self-awareness of how human beings reflect, embody and express all five orders. This little biblical story is, in a way, a “theory” or “model”

which describes how the human being becomes a bridge between the heavens and earth. Even if the story is fiction, i.e. never really happened, the second chapter of Genesis nonetheless contains an astonishing spiritual truth about our nature as cosmic individuals

Think about it. And take a deep breath, because it is spiritually breathtaking:

Do you realize that through life, matter (dust) has actually become aware, *alive*, capable of reflecting upon itself?

Do you realize that through human life, the cosmos has actually become individualized, personalized? Through the human being, the cosmos has become a self-aware personality, in and through each of us? That human beings can actually reflect upon the dust they are made of?

The discovery that we are a cosmic individual is what so-called “mysticism”, the “inner mystery” of religion has always been about. It is not mysticism. It is the reality of human spiritual life.

As we peer out into the cosmos, we're looking also at part of ourselves. As we peer into the subatomic dust we're made of, we're looking also at a part ourselves. We are self aware of that from which we arose. We can understand ourselves, which is why we can understand the cosmos.

When we human beings reflect upon ourselves, when we reflect upon our existence, this is both a personal event and a cosmic event simultaneously! We are truly a bridge between dust and the cosmos!

**There's a lot that is *in-volved* in earthly life.
There's even more that's *in-volved* in the human life.**

And that's precisely why Life and human life *e-volves*!

Life reaps what was sown into it. Life expresses what was impressed into it. Life evolves what was involved in it. There is an *involution* of cosmic potential, so there is an *evolution* of actual life! This is why the human being is often called “the height of evolution”, which is implied by the second chapter of Genesis.(34)

The cosmos involves itself into the human being, so the human being can evolve to express and become aware of the cosmos!

Covenant is not just historical, nor even just cosmic.

Covenant is evolutionary!(35) It is the force-of-evolution made conscious through humankind.

The human being is no small evolutionary advance. Though we look like a naked ape, we are so very much more than that.

However– a gigantic “however”:

Though the entire cosmos is somehow involved in us, though galaxies upon galaxies await the touch of covenant and the exhilaration of human potential, we all, humbly– very humbly– have to eat. We all, humbly, have to sleep. We all, humbly, have to protect our children. We all, humbly, have to muddle through the difficulty of relationships, of earning a living, of caring for ourselves into old age.

Our arrogant, but quite humble, legal, economic, social and military systems have hardly evolved to the fullest expression of their cosmic potential. Sadly, we– more humbly still– continue to sow and reap hunger, poverty, suffering, cruelty, injustice, homelessness and war.

You’d think such a cosmic individual wouldn’t have to sow and reap the same lesson, over and over again. You’d think such a cosmic individual wouldn’t need to re-learn what was *not good*, or “not from God”.

You’d think that instead of artificially bolstering the artificial security of our legal systems, that such a cosmic individual might, first and foremost, learn to build real *spiritual* security: learning how to forge an alignment of goodness and unity, through the natural, supernatural, moral, legal and historical orders.

Alas, cosmic individuals that we are, we’ve got some dirty work to do. Cosmic individuals that we are, it’s time to come back to earth.

We never left.

- (34) Of course, it is impossible to know if we are the “height” of all cosmic individuals, or whether there are other, more advanced cosmic individuals, out there, perhaps what we call “aliens”.

With great respect for the great Hindu teacher Sri Aurobindo, who introduced me to this concept in his brilliant book *The Life Divine*. I would add one *caveat*: It

can sometime seem that what is in-volved within human beings, and e-olves, takes place in a pre-determined way: what goes in is what comes out. This is not true.

While there is a pre-disposition that is pre-determined, there is not total pre-determination, but a spontaneous creativity which is also part of our evolutionary process. Many evolutionists balk at the excessive pre-determination which seems to be part of religious philosophies. And of course, it does not fit the data they observe in nature. Creativity is the nature of nature, though there are elements, once formed, which a pre-determined and essential for further evolution.

- (35) Evolution of the physical body, even if it does exist, still does not explain the fact that we can have super-natural abilities, i.e. mere earthly nature itself, does not account for the nature of human beings, which is, for lack of a better term, *spiritual*, i.e. beyond-the-mere-earth, super-natural.

A full analysis of evolution is not possible in this little book. However, recent advances in macro-evolutionary theory, such as *punctuated equilibrium* and *group-selection*, actually make evolution far more consistent with the biblical viewpoint, and vice-versa.

When Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species*, he asserted that evolution took place through *natural-selection* (the advantage certain traits provided in terms of survivability). Natural selection, over long, huge (geological) periods of time, he maintained, is responsible for the differentiation of species. God did not just “pop” species into existence as it sometimes seems in the Genesis account.

However, Darwin’s theory also maintained that natural-selection took place only through the individual organism; although he makes reference to a kind of “group selection”, he had no mechanism in his theory to explain how this happened. Darwin, because of this, was unable to explain the phenomenon of “altruism” or “morality”, in the human being; although he was the son of a minister, he could not reclaim the core of his father’s teaching in his theory. So, it is not hard to imagine that, from a spiritual point of view, his theory would have been considered threatening. Indeed, it could seem that “survival of the fittest” is what God wanted, and therefore “might makes right”, a fascist “Darwinian” idea, might be appropriated, as it was, by Hitler.

Today, we understand much better the mechanism of natural-selection, which now also includes selection on the order of groups, such as families, *phyla*, species or even *clades* (groups of species). Now that there is a Darwinian

mechanism for “group selection”, we now actually have a biological mechanism to account for how there might have been an Asiatic subphylum, such as the Hebrews, feeling “chosen”, or being aware of possessing better “natural selection”, better survivability, presumably from “God”. Indeed, the promise of abundant life and progeny in the Abraham story is the same promise as in Darwin! The biological and the spiritual are inseparable, which is what Hebrew thinking has always asserted, expressed through the “Incarnation” concept as well. Again, covenant is *bio-historical*, not religious!

Also, today, because of *punctuated equilibrium*, there has been a change in the view of time in Darwin’s theory. In punctuated equilibrium, evolution is seen to function through certain bursts of new life. Plateaus of new life are reached, followed by whole periods where evolution is not as pronounced. So now we have an explanation for the absence of the fossil record, which many religious-people have, correctly, pointed out. Moreover, punctuated equilibrium also accords much more harmoniously with the “phased” acts of creation, “day by day”, portrayed in Genesis. This is not to say the Bible is absolutely true, only that it is based on true experience and observation of real-life, no less than Darwin’s theory. Again experience is the foundation of all these insights, scientific or spiritual.

Lastly, recent advances have shown that new species form much faster than hitherto thought. Scientists have now noticed the separation of one species to another, in the wild. Sometimes this is accompanied without noticeable differences in the outward appearance of the animal, but, later on, this is accompanied by actual changes in the animal.

Evolution, in my opinion, is not a threat to true religion, but only a threat to false religion.

False evolution, however, is a threat to true religion. The issue here is TRUTH!

Chapter Seven: Correct, Inspired Living

In the fourth chapter, we spoke briefly about the need for a true moral leader who must be able to discern—through the *meaning* of any reaping to our sowing— a *law of correct action*. Based upon Life experience, such a leader must be able to spiritually guide him or herself, and guide others for whom they are responsible, in order to help direct human life towards the greatest goodness and unity, the experience of God.

Such a *true moral leader* must have *true spiritual insight*: insight that *spiritually-corresponds to Reality*.

Each of us— whether we're the leader of a nation or of a household, whether we lead on the job, or just lead ourselves day-to-day— must all learn to develop true spiritual insight. We must all learn how to discern, to the extent we need to, a law of correct action. This is a necessary part of having free will, so we can freely playing out our spiritual role in the world. This is no different than prophetic leaders in the past, such as a Moses, only the scale may be different, depending upon the spiritual gifts of the person, and therefore the scope of their responsibility.

Although we can be guided by the lessons of the past, legally-enshrined or not, we must still always approach Life, moment by moment, challenge by challenge, and spiritually discern the *correct way to go* for any situation which arises. Without the ability to spiritually discern the *correct way to go*, our cosmic potential will shrink.

But, what do we mean by the word “correct”?

The word *correct* comes from the Latin, *co-regire*, meaning to *govern together* or *co-govern*. When we live correctly, we always assess any situation we face with an eye to fostering the greatest alignment— cooperation, harmonization, seamless— between ourselves and all five orders involved in covenant. A law of *correct action* achieves just that! A true moral leader can discern just that: How to *co-govern* in any situation!

When we live correctly, we are not just co-governing according to the usual judgments of “right” or “wrong”. These are useful, even timeless benchmarks for sure, as we've discussed earlier. But, without the correct spirit, these polarizations often divide our minds, causing us to be too rigid and often condemnatory of ourselves and others. In so doing, we often sow and reap, in the name of goodness and unity, an actual destruction of goodness and unity. This is not governing together.

Living correctly means we have to learn how to combine law-full living, including critical benchmarks like “right” and “wrong”, in a living, spiritual dynamism that include a *wisdom* (which we’ll discuss below) *of the heart*. This is *inspired living*.

Correct living is inspired living. It includes, but goes way beyond, mere “right” and “wrong”. It is spiritual. It is heart-sensed.

It is living alive!

A simple secret to achieving inspired living is to learn how to make correct decisions. After all, any conscious action we will ever take requires us to make a decision first. Therefore, if we make a decision more correctly, we will more correctly sow, and more correctly reap.

It is through the simple day-to-day simplicity of decisions made, actions taken, and consequences experienced, that we human beings, living in a secular, scientific, spiritual era, develop *the consciousness of covenant: correct, conscious, inspired thinking.*

Two general examples: A parent’s instinct for protecting their child physically (natural) is always critical. But, it is, for human beings, incomplete, unless the parent can also provide the spiritual guidance necessary to awaken the conceptual, creative, free-willed individual (supernatural) inside the child. In addition, the parent must also teach the child how to discern the fruits of their actions (moral), and self-govern. The child must further learn how to cooperate within the group (legal), showing respect for any existing systems, even if they’re imperfect and in need of change. This will be necessary or the child will not be able to make his or her personal contribution to all humankind (history). This wide-angled approach to parenting is correct parenting: the maximum *governing-together*, in alignment with all five covenantal orders. This is parenting, inspired!

A business owner should always make decisions for the purpose of furthering the business and creating profit (supernatural). But, a business owner must also create a company that furthers the emotional and physical well-being of the employees (natural), or they will get sick (which will undermine the business). The business owner must always be alert to the spiritual consequences (moral and legal) of the company’s decisions, as they are sown, reaped and experienced. Indeed– in the spiritual Order in which we live– no company is ever just governed according to the “law of the land”. A company, like a person, is a living, breathing spiritual entity, capable of making a contribution not just for one generation, but for many generations (history). Taking this approach to business is correct, the maximum *governing-together*, in alignment with all five covenantal orders. This is business, inspired!

When one makes a decision to live *correctly, governing together* in a living alignment that embraces all five orders involved in covenant, then you are living not just spiritually, but also *practically*.

Now, at first glance, this will seem anything but practical. At first glance, it will seem overly-idealistic and complicated, because what is commonly called “practicality” is usually just an unenlightened, expedient way to temporarily make a decision to “keep the ball rolling”, usually to cut costs, and keep problems, including obstructive people, at bay. However, “practicality-as-usual” is not very practical because, as we’ve seen, what we reap is what we sow. If an action is not maximally aligned, then, we will sow a lesson in misalignment for the purpose of “waking us up” and realizing our mistake. Then, we will have to go through the process of “fixing the problem”, when in fact, had we correctly gauged the decision leading to correct alignment in the first place, the sowing would have produced a far better reaping.

So, practicality-as-usual, is not practical. It is usually impractical.

The most practical approach to life is living correctly, where the individual learns to make the decision which permits the maximum governing-together, the maximum correctness, with the least-harm, by evaluating the effect of the decision, *beforehand*.

It is impossible within the confines of this small book to go into detail about how to live correctly. Moreover, life is a spiritual process, constantly growing and changing and informing us. It is impossible to give hard and fast fixed guidelines that will, under all circumstances, prove true. We’ve already seen this in regard to our discussion about law; even something as seemingly-eternal as *Thou Shalt Not Murder*, still has to be nuanced for extenuating circumstances.

The best we can do in this little book is to provide some loose guidelines that can help you think, speak, and begin acting in a decided “direction-of-correctness”. This will help you begin the living experience of sowing and reaping *correctly*, setting this new experience of covenant into motion.

In order to gauge any decision correctly, one must first consider what I call *Relationship Priorities*. These are relationships, which must be included in any decision making process, in their correct order of priority.(36)

To make every decision correctly, consider, in the following priority:

Relationship Priority #1: Yourself

Relationship Priority #2:	An other
Relationship Priority #3:	All others
Relationship Priority #4:	Future generations
Relationship Priority #5:	All life and creation.
Relationship Priority #6:	Continuous improvement

Correct decisions in life begin with considering *yourself* first. This can seem a bit “spiritually shocking” at first, because we’re all schooled, in conventional non-spiritualized morality, to “put the other person before you.” But, the fact is– and if you sow this, you will painfully reap this understanding for yourself– when you do not take care of yourself first, you will not have the power to help others, and you will eventually exhaust and deplete yourself in the process.

The worst thing that can happen for anyone is to enter into a situation of false martyrdom, where you are sacrificing yourself for the “good” of something, at the expense of yourself. Except under life and death circumstances, where you must, for example, prevent a child from being hit by a bus by risking your life, martyrdom is never correct. It will undermine the experience of goodness and unity, starting with yourself.

Next, once you have given yourself personal spiritual empowerment, then, you can expand towards *an other*.⁽³⁷⁾ Each person is a mirror of ourselves. If we have difficulties with another person in a certain area, it is usually because we have a difficult with ourselves in the same area, and we will project our self-criticism upon the other. This awareness is how the scriptural guideline, “Love thy neighbor *as thyself*” (*Leviticus 19:18*) came about; remove the curse against yourself, and you remove it from your relationship with another. This is the spiritual experience fostered the heart of the “Golden Rule”.

After expanding spiritual empowerment from yourself to an other, you should also begin to make decisions that include *all others*. All others include groups of humans, in a home, in a corporation, in an institution such as a church, Congress, or a local PTA. Spiritually, it is always good to try to view a group of people as if they were a single individual.

Usually this makes it easier to discern whether they are going about their decision-making processes, as well as their sowing and reaping, correctly.

Spiritual empowerment must also expand beyond yourself, an other, and all others currently living, to consider even those who are not yet born, those who will belong to *future generations*. Indeed, one should always gauge one’s actions as to whether they will have a positive effect upon others in the future. Otherwise, your actions will be short-

sighted and not engage the fifth order, history. In general, *Relationship Priorities #1-4* are the essential guidelines for building correct community!

Now, after expanding correct relationships– from yourself, to an other, to all others and future generations– it also becomes critically important to consider the effect of your actions on *all life and creation*, our planet, and indeed the entire Order in which we live. Without a correct relationship with all life, we will not have food. Without a correct relationship with the planet, we will not have air and water. Correct human dominion, one that allows us to all govern together, requires us to have a very wide spiritual vision! These days, when we are being ecologically-threatened, this threat is simply the reaping of the sowing for not having included Relationship Priority #5 in our original decision-making processes.

Lastly, in making every decision correctly, we should always look at any situation with an eye for *continuous improvement*, indeed, continuous improvement upon continuous improvement.

No one is perfect. No mere human being sows and reaps perfectly. In an evolving world, there is always continuous improvement. In fact, because of this, if you are not seeking to improve, you will actually be living *incorrectly*– in a way that does not encourage governing-together– because you will be operating against the “flow” of existence.

All human beings, all life, all human systems must evolve: they must all improve and improve and improve, approaching their ideal. Seeking continuous improvement is actually your relationship with all *existence*! It is the Living God living through you, to use more religious terminology. It cannot be emphasized enough.

Seeking improvement can be conscious: as in devising new plans, and implementing better ideas. Seeking improvement, though, can also be unconscious: you don’t know (consciously) how to improve, so, you just open up, and sow the desire, “how shall I grow here?” Then, as with all things sown, you can reap: a new thought, a new idea, an inspiration. This is prayer!

Through prayer one calls forth the knowledge that’s built into existence, to enter through your unconscious, into your subconscious, and finally to your conscious mind. You are calling upon the goodness of all existence (perhaps God?), to show you how to improve, and what you are to do. You are, to use contemporary language, asking for a “download”, a “higher-operating system” of yourself, some 12.0 instead of 8.9. This is especially important when you feel blocked or stuck in a place, with no where to go.

Knowledge is always there! You’re never, ever truly alone. There’s always improvement or existence would stop!

Now that we've discussed *Relationship Priorities*, it's important to move on to what I call *Value Priorities*. These are values, which must be included in any decision-making process, in their correct order of priority.

To make every decision correctly, consider, in the following priority:

- Value Priority #1: Health**
- Value Priority #2: Peace**
- Value priority #3: Freedom**
- Value priority #4: Wisdom**
- Value Priority #5: Full Potential**
- Value Priority #6: Prosperity**

Values are critical for correct, inspired living. The reason we un-align to the Order in which we live, is usually because— usually unbeknownst to us— we are sowing and reaping values that are not in their correct priority, values unaligned to “How Life Works”. The reason “we don't get along with each other”, i.e. co-govern, is that usually “we don't share the same values”, as people are wont to say.

It is pretty obvious that *health* is Value Priority #1 in Life (after Life itself). Strangely though, most people put it last on the list, and they take health for granted until it fails them, or until they are too old to undo their errors.

After health, peace is critical, because without peace, we cannot have goodness and unity; “God” takes a vacation from our lives. When we don't have peace in our homes, or on the job, or in our community, let alone in our nation, we cannot be spiritually alive. The absence of peace, in the extreme, is war, which of course is dangerous to our entire well-being, as well as undermining all the Relationship Priorities above. Obviously, war should be avoided, in all circumstances, unless the war is absolutely essential for preserving goodness, unity, and Life itself (Most of the time, it isn't, and most wars are unnecessary.)

Once we have our health and peace, the expression of our freedom becomes essential. Without freedom, we are not living correctly, because we are not living as conceptual, creative, individuals with free will. Without freedom, there is no inspired living. Without freedom there is stultification, stagnation and often, emotionally, depression! Freedom is necessary for new ideas, new creativity and further expansion to emerge. Without freedom one cannot have continuous improvement, Relationship Priority #6. Our world does not evolve without freedom, well, at least not without a lot of suffering.

Block freedom, and sooner or later the force of freedom will build and build until it breaks through the block, and explodes it. This is called *rebellion* or *revolution*. Though the chaos that ensues can be terrifying, nonetheless these are oftentimes (when they are healthy rebellion and spiritually-motivated revolution) a re-balancing after the loss of wisdom! Rarely, though, if we are alert, must we go to such extremes to re-balance.

Wisdom, in fact, follows after health, peace and freedom. If we do not gauge our decisions for maximum wisdom, we will sow and reap a world where only the most selfish (or the dumbest) human contribution takes place. This, of course, will bring us back the most selfish (and dumb) reaping. Hardly a recipe for an inspired life!

There are, generally-speaking, three components to wisdom. Wisdom must always seek *truth*; truth truly sets us free. Sowing deceit reaps deceit. It undermines the credibility of our personal lives and the life we share together with others (Just look at some of our politicians.)

Wisdom always demonstrates *care*; we've discussed this somewhat, in regard to *Relationship Priorities*: care for yourself, an other, all others, future generations, all life and creation, with continuous improvement in care for them all.

Furthermore, wise decisions demonstrate *balance*. Many decisions we make require a difficult balancing between contradictions, polarities, excesses and all such extremes. Wise decisions, made correctly, seek an inspired balance which neutralizes the extremes in any situation. Wise decisions see the truth in both sides of any argument, and also how to balance and harmonize them, within correct boundaries, for the benefit of both sides. Wise decisions therefore, foster unity and goodness, the experience of God.

For example, these days, there is often a conflict over what is the ideal social system. A wise approach to social welfare, is one that provides immediate life-sustaining needs of the poor, such as food, shelter, clothing and basic life-sustaining funds. But, with this as a foundation, a wise approach to social welfare never fails to educate, spark, encourage and ever-increase the *enthusiasm* of the poor to help themselves. A wise social system teaches the gift of Value Priority #3, freedom. This way, the previous foundation, though critically important, never becomes an addiction.

Such an approach to conflicting views is not either/or, "right"/"wrong". It is unified and good. It is wise, i.e. expressing truth, care and balance. This is how our entire society should operate, in all matters: wisely! (Do we do that?)

After wisdom, it is important when making any decision, that we stay mindful of the next fifth Value Priority: *full potential*.

Everything and everyone has a potential. It's like a seed planted in them, which, with proper care (wisdom), can blossom! Every person has a potential which seeks full expression. If this potential lies dormant, or, is only partially expressed, the person is truly "less of a person", and has not expressed the full power of their spiritual gifts. This can cause someone to feel repressed, unsatisfied and frustrated, which does not contribute to the goodness and unity of Life.

To express one's full potential, one requires health, peace, freedom and wisdom, for sure. But one also needs to be *educated*– from the Latin word meaning *to draw out*. The purpose of an education is to draw out our inner talents and potential, so they do not slumber. The world needs, fully awakened, the gifts of everyone; all our gifts must be drawn out into the open.

Our institutions also have a potential, which needs to be fully expressed. Our legal, economic, social, military systems, all have potential for spiritual excellence, which, if ignored (reaping what we sowed), will cause them all to atrophy, undermining the quality of life of our entire society. Every department in our government has a full potential which needs to co-govern with the full potential of every other department, in relationship to the full potential of our entire society.

Expressing the full potential in everyone and everything, means releasing the spiritual-power within!

The Light in everything and everyone must always be let out, fully!

Lastly– and it *is* last, for a reason– after we correctly consider health, peace, freedom, wisdom, and the expression of our full potential- we should also gauge our decisions so we create the most *prosperity*.

Prosperity includes "all those things money can't buy". But– yes– it also includes money!

There is nothing incorrect or unspiritual about money. Money is a tool by which human beings *share* (certainly a spiritual quality) with each other on a personal and planetary scale! It is an enormous tool for spiritual evolution; there is hardly any other tool more powerful for directly spreading goodness and unity faster. Money is a blessing from God (used correctly, that is).

Yet ironically, there is hardly anything that plagues people more, day to day, than money. Money, and the entire system around it, often overwhelms us, burdens us. That's because we've become so dependent upon money and the human-invented economic system, that we often forget that the air, the food, and the materials we need

for shelter are “already given” to us by creation (perhaps “God”). All we human beings do is invent, manufacture, and distribute what is already here! While money is a powerful tool for prosperity, it is not the source of our prosperity! (What *is* the Source of money, or, for that matter anything? We’ll discuss this ahead in Chapter Nine.)

The most serious spiritual un-alignments around money come when Value Priority #6 is put prior to Value Priorities #1-5. Then, we sow and reap big problems for ourselves. For instance:

When we build a oil rig in the Gulf, and cut costs on safety for the sake of profit, lives can get lost, and wildlife is decimated. This is a spiritual lesson, sown and reaped, that we put profit before living beings.

When we overwork at the office, for the sake of feathering our savings accounts, we can wind up with a heart attack that eats up our savings. This is a spiritual lesson, sown and reaped, that we put profit before our very health.

The list of incorrect-nesses goes on and on . . .

With the help of all these powerful priority-guidelines– both *Relationship* and *Value Priorities*– you will find it much easier to make decisions that will help forge a covenantal alignment to the Order in which we live. That’s because these Relationship and Value Priorities are not arbitrary. They are based upon correct awareness and spiritual insight into how the natural, supernatural, moral, legal and historical orders interact through the living experience of covenant. They are based upon “How Life Works”– not just our viewpoints, opinions or politics, but Something Larger than us! (Remember, *humility*?)

You can witness (and learn about) these relationship and value priorities for yourself. Life, as they say, is our best teacher. It is also the teacher of any teacher, including myself. Anytime you reap any consequence of your actions, for good or for bad, you can actually “Sunday morning quarterback” the consequence. You will notice these Value and Relationship Priorities just “pop out” at you, especially now that you’ve become ever-so-slightly aware of them. You will be able to see which value and relationship priorities were missing, and which were prioritized incorrectly.

Over time, you will notice that decisions that are the most successful, were decisions that had the Relationship and Value Priorities in their correct order. You will also notice that your decisions that were not successful often had their priorities in the incorrect order. This way, you can quickly discern “what went wrong”. You will quickly notice when

you failed to continuously improve, when you put freedom before health or profit before peace, to name just a few *value and relationship conflicts*.

Indeed, take a quick look at your current life now– “what’s working” and “what’s not working” – and review it according to these twelve Relationship and Value Priorities. You will, very quickly, understand why Life’s going one way or the other. Value and Relationship Priorities are, like money, powerful tools for spiritual evolution. But, since money cannot operate correctly without them, they are even more powerful than money, which is really saying a lot!

Seeking goodness and unity (God), for yourself, an other, all others, future generations, all life and creation, with health, peace, freedom, wisdom, full potential, prosperity, and with continuous improvement upon improvement, is what it means to live *correctly*.

As you sow and reap decisions correctly, you naturally seed more goodness, naturally seed more unity, and therefore, you will, generally-speaking⁽³⁸⁾, receive more goodness and unity back in return.

This is practical spirituality, and spirituality that can be practiced. Moment by moment! Day by day!

This is inspired living! Living in Truth!

Now once again, this chapter is hardly complete instruction on the practicalities involved in covenant; it’s only designed to give you some of the basics. Nevertheless, these are powerful basics that will get you started on the living experiment of developing your *covenantal consciousness*.

As you begin living with inspired, covenantal consciousness, sowing and reaping correctly, continuously improving your alignment between all five orders, with the correct Value and Relationship Priorities in place, you will notice something amazing: Something out-of-the-ordinary (though it isn’t). Something that could legitimately (and not superstitiously) be called a *miracle*.

This spiritual experience is so inspiring, so thrilling, so powerful, it can even feel (at first) overwhelming.

But, once you experience it, you’ll be very glad that– after reading this chapter– you *chose* to live correctly!

- (36) See, *The Six Fix, A Simple, Spiritual Approach to Restoring America's Goodness* by Michael Shevack (Six Fix Press). www.thesixfix.com Drawing upon the Relationship and Value Priorities here, I show a very easy way to get our nation, if not the entire world, on a correct spiritual track.
- (37) I have written this "an other", and not "another" to remind ourselves that another person is not just "one more", but is, like you, yourself, "an other", another sacred individual. This was suggested to me by my dear friend, Mother Daniel Levi, a sister at the Abbey of Regina Laudis. See: abbeyofreginalaudis.com
- (38) I say "general-speaking", because it is impossible to completely track all the sowings and reapings that have already been set in motion. One can begin living covenant consciously, but, that does not mean there isn't a certain "catch up" that needs to take place. So, it can sometimes seem, even if you are spiritually improving, that "bad things can happen to good people", nonetheless. As your spiritual synchronization takes place, the result of previous sowing coincides more with your current reaping, and more and more, good things happen to good people. A full-length discussion of good and evil, is way beyond the scope of this little book; my apologies, I know how pressing this is for most everyone.

Chapter Eight: Chosen: The Covenantal Experience

Now you're ready for the experience of covenant. It is a marvelous, exhilarating spiritual experience. An amazing experience! You are about to experience goodness and unity—God?—through the powerful world-vision and movement called *history*, the Hebrew root of the Jewish, Christian, Islamic and today's entire world-global secular culture.

You are stepping upon a welcome mat to a life which is powerful, a life that's worth living, a life of meaning. You are beginning a life that is worthy—should you decide to have children in this age of freedom—of being passed down and built-upon, generation after generation after generation, gaining greater force, greater power, with each new child that comes into the world.

How did you get here? You expanded your vision for what is possible! You chose a more expanded way to live!

The covenantal experience begins when you consciously decide to govern together (act correctly) with Reality, aligning to the Order of creation.

Covenant is not “made up” or “in your imagination”. It's a real experience. It actually *corresponds to Reality*, i.e. it's true.

Through covenant, you will actually *experience Truth*.

Experience Truth? This is such a shocking idea at first, that one can *experience* Truth. Most of the time, we think of truth as some kind of *proposition*: The sky is blue, true, as opposed to the sky is black & white stripes, false. This why so many of us get lost in spiritual debates—this view *vs.* that—God existing *vs.* not existing; soon, we've divided our minds and lost the very unity that's the experience of God to begin with. The truth of covenant is not merely propositional.

The truth you experience through covenant is a *Living Truth*:

Covenant is an experience of living coherency. Covenant is an experience of living in lack-of-contradiction and harmony.

Through covenant, you experience the living order of our Order.

You feel directed towards what you should do next. There is a sense of “commandment” urging you towards your next step towards goodness and unity.

Your ego has been supplemented by a spiritual power or presence. You’ve gained a spiritual *ally*, so-to-speak. Indeed, you may actually hear actual guidance, a “still small voice”.(I Kings 19:11-13)(37)

The experience of covenant does not feel ordinary. It feels extra-ordinary, compared to how Life was lived before. The experience of covenant is transformative– a whole new level of “human”. It is stunning. It is beautiful. It is the essential stuff that scriptures record. You are living in alignment with the Order– the “commandment”, by which our world is organized, structured and designed.

You can sense the Intelligence that stands behind Life. You can sense the Purpose that stands behind Life. You can sense the Order that stands behind all the orders. Call this God. Call this whatever you wish. The experience is the experience.

Infusing the dynamics of covenant into the simple ordinariness of day-to-day Life, an extra-ordinariness begins to take place. Can the humdrum actually feel holy? Yes. Holy means “set apart” in the Bible. This is truly an experience apart!

You and Life seem to be co-operating: you in Life, and Life in you.

There is a moment by moment, a sense of peace, even in the midst of turmoil.

Life works through you, personally, to play your role in the task of the historical unification of the world.

You, personally and together with others, future generations, all life and creation, seem coordinated in a single spiritual force.

You witness yourself empowering the evolution of both earthly nature and human civilization, simultaneously, with no disconnect between the two.(39)

The beginning stages of the covenantal experience can feel like “everything’s going your way”. There is, to use a popular secular phrase, a *synchronicity* between your thoughts, words, actions and those of others. You may be thinking of something you need or someone you need to speak to, and they will suddenly appear or call. This is such a curious happening; some people describe it as *psychic*, from the Greek root word

meaning *soul*. It is your soul-connection, so-to-speak, within the Order. It is a sign that unity actually is fundamental to the nature of Nature, and that this is not just academic theology.

This wondrous experience is experienced personally. But, this wondrous experience is also experienced inter-personally and trans-personally. It takes place within any spiritually-aligned group to which you belong, whether it is religious or secular. That's because, living historically, you are not just an individual but also a group-individual, coordinated together, in spiritual-union: one mind, one spirit, one body, and yet with all the mental, spiritual and physical differences delightfully and creatively expressing themselves.

Religious people have called such an experience *Grace* or *Providence*. It feels as though God is the wind in your sails, blowing you and your spiritual-allies forward, guiding you towards greater, more evolving goodness, in concert with Life on all three covenantal orders. Your life is choreographed within the larger life drama which is taking place seemingly "outside" you, because it is happening also *through* you.

Together with others, living, breathing and experiencing covenant, the Grace and Providence can become profound. It can seem as if you are supported by the very laws of nature, that you and Reality are "on the same team": you are experiencing Truth. An enhanced ease and even buoyancy can often halo your every day activities. You can notice that all your activities, in all ways, including (if your priorities are correct) money, begin to prosper. There seems to exist a force which nurtures your efforts; all your efforts seem to become more powerful than they would be through your personal efforts alone.

Because you are so supported, so buoyed by goodness and unity, "loved by God", to use the religious expression, this can make you feel special, anointed by this extraordinary experience. This is the feeling described in the Bible as being *elected* or *chosen* (*Isaiah 44:2*).

Living in a graced relationship with the Order in which we live, harmoniously aligned to the laws of Life, you notice that you are functioning as a kind of spiritual *representative*, a herald, a point-person or "point-people", a *chosen people*. Through you, the living force of covenant seems to make itself known to others in the world. You give this force a face, so-to-speak. You give voice to it. You allow its impulse to direct your thoughts, words and actions, altering your behavior, which increasingly exemplifies goodness and unity. And, of course, you share this with like minded others, in the community or societal-dealings to which you are attracted and directed, perhaps your birth religion, perhaps not.

You will often notice that you are spontaneously living in greater moral harmony and legal clarity; the “law-of-your-life”, the law of the community, the law of the land, are all actualized correctly, without as much conscious effort; all the Relationship and Value Priorities just seem to fall into their correct places.

Because of this, you also notice that you resonate a transformative effect upon everyone and everything that comes within the range of your consciousness. You may become inspired on exactly the correct way to guide others, either persons or groups, even on the scale of nations. This is the fundamental spiritual experience behind what the ancient world called *prophecy*, whether embodied through a prophetic person or through a prophetic people, such as ancient Israel(40)

Warning!

It is not true that one is “chosen” in the simplistic sense, of some Deity up in the sky, who just happens to point a finger at you, pronouncing favor upon you and not upon others, whom He may then choose to exterminate.

While this concept is not uncommon in religious camps (and there’s some truth to it), it is not a suitable understanding for this secular, scientific, spiritual (and especially democratic) age.

Sadly, the experience of covenant, which is very real and undeniable, can, over time become lost. Then, what remains is the memory of the experience and its interpreted meaning. What may also remain are many spiritual laws that were perceived during the previously-active phase of this experience, which are then “revered”, without full-understanding of their meaning or origin, just because it is “tradition”. This has happened to many peoples and faiths over time. It’s how religion loses its light– though often, there is a counter-movement to re-embody the remnants of past knowledge, and consciously-evolve them to their next level of wisdom, so it does not stay lost. This is how many faith-traditions continue to exist, even lacking spiritual-insight.

Nevertheless, when the powerful, transformative spiritual experience fades, “chosen” can be reduced to an empty concept, even a superstition. Chosen can be reduced to some kind of “entry ticket”, a formal label “of conversion” between one people, church, and another. “Chosen” might also be considered some kind of preferred legal status.

“Chosen”, in the extreme, might be interpreted as “saved” as opposed to “damned”, so that, out of this marvelous spiritual experience, prejudice arises. This is one of the saddest things in the history of religion. The covenantal experience, and the state of

feeling/being chosen, instead of being a powerful, historical force of integration, leads to the dis-integration. Worse still, is that this disintegration may be considered “true”, pronounced “in faith”, in the name of God, so the prejudice is so covered up by religiously-flavored conviction, that one might not see the falsity.

Usually, when such a loss of covenantal Grace takes place, what has happened is that there’s been an accumulation of reaping from un-aligned sowing. This can reach a certain critical mass and, in a way, knock one off one’s pedestal. Indeed, that *is* usually the spiritual meaning of a “fall from Grace” as it’s been called– a humbling restoration of correct humility to balance the special-nature of being chosen. Then, one has to reflect upon oneself, correct one’s alignment, and the Grace can re-open: basic repentance. This can happen on the scale of individuals, or in whole groups of people, whether religions or nations.

However, seen through a lens of goodness and unity– such a “fall from Grace” is not a “punishment by God” (though it can be felt that way), but a dynamic aspect of the covenantal process whereby Grace perfects itself. One must go through the often tortured process of reflecting upon one’s own actions, self-correcting, and correcting the relationships of oneself with others. And usually, after this reflective process is finished, covenant can re-ignite, with renewed exhilaration.

Such a process of climbing, of plateauing, of falling, of climbing again, can take place for many years as the spiritual experience of covenant anchors itself ever more firmly. One can witness this, throughout the Bible, in the story of Israel as a nation. One can witness this, also through the characters in the Bible, such as David.

The more one acts correctly, making decisions correctly, the less small, repeated un-alignments will accumulate and “break through”, causing one to lose the Grace that has been established.

Indeed, as one becomes even more conscientious in deepening covenantal consciousness, should momentary impasses and un-alignments happen to take place, the “recovery time” will shorten, and the difficulties (and certainly the sufferings) will lessen considerably.

Now, however– a word of caution:

Although the experience of covenant, especially, when it first roots, can be wonderful, if not beguiling, do not think for a minute that it is all rosy. Remember, through covenant, you have devoted yourself to the healing and unification of not just you, but the entirety of humanity, as well as all life and creation. There is serious work that you have pledged

yourself to do. Sometimes, the *responsibility* of covenant, can lead to tasks– difficult tasks– that are very pressing, painful and can test everything you’re made of:

Covenant can, at times, bring you into confrontation with evil and require you to be a conscious balancing force in its rectification.

Covenant can, at times, require righteous wars, that protect the world from grievous acts of Life-destruction.

Covenant can sometimes express its goodness and unity through painful trials and suffering, which are necessary to bring about a higher level of goodness and unity!

We tend to forget this in our “cushy” era. A re-reading of the Bible, and a review of human history, can supply a healthy reminder.

From a spiritual perspective, it is important to keep in mind that most of the challenges that take place in the experience of covenant are rarely, ever, true life and death challenges. Should a challenge arrive– either to yourself personally, or to a covenantal group of which you are a member– before acting to deal with the challenge, stop! Don’t act! Reflect upon your own self! Virtually all of the time, the challenge, even one as grievous as war, is oftentimes a reaping of our sowing. The challenge, seen through a moral lens, can often be clearly interpreted as “God’s chastisement”– a lessening of good and unity– due to some un-alignment within ourselves that needs to be spiritually discerned, understood, and corrected. Then, it becomes transformed into “God’s blessing”.

Often, all it takes is some spiritual insight and lots of forgiveness for the other person/group and ourselves simultaneously– and this so-called threat can dissolve away!

Forgiving your enemy is tried and true spiritual knowledge (41). Treating a challenge as a mirror of your own conscience, thereby freeing yourself (and others) from any conflict is the correct front-line spiritual approach to covenant in this secular, scientific, spiritual era.

The experience of being chosen is not just biblical fiction; it is a human experience open to all those who seek the goodness and unity of Life, in correct alignment with the dynamic five-tier covenantal order we live in, with correct relationships and values based upon Truth.

As wondrous, mysterious, inspiring and fascinating as the experience of covenant is— as real as it is— still, a rather annoying question lingers:

What's God got to do with it? Does God actually exist?

- (39) There is no disconnect between them. But this does not mean there is no separation between the natural and supernatural orders, or between individuality and history. There are separate orders, but, in their separateness, they are coordinated, covenantally.
- (40) Prophecy does not mean, always, “seeing the future”, though that ability can be a part of it. Prophecy means being able to voice the impulse of covenantal force, and guide others as to “what it’s doing”; you become a “map” so-to-speak of the *Order*, or God’s *commandment*.
- (41) If one has any doubt that forgiving one’s enemy is practical, rather than pie-in-the-sky idealism, then one need only remember what took place in World War II. After War War I, the Allies gave Germany such a brutal punishment that it inspired vengeance in the German people, leading to WW II. After WWII, the Allies, learning their mistake, forgave Germany and Japan. It was this spiritual act which saved the world from WWIII, turning former enemies into allies! This is the purest of covenantal thinking, proof positive, that this was aligned to God’s Order.

Chapter Nine: God? Nature? Whatever?

Since Isaac Newton, we've had an enormous challenge to our way of viewing the world. Newton was able to show, quite neatly, that we live in an orderly universe, an *Order*, we call it here. Newton was able to mathematically demonstrate, with extraordinary precision, that our universe, as we observe it, operates according to very predictable laws.

As we observed the universe behaving according to predictable laws, another advance took place: human beings, playing with their mathematical models, coming to a certain conclusion on paper— often predicted something existing, even if it had ever been seen, thought-of, or discovered. For example, radio waves were predicted theoretically, even before they were discovered. These days, in the area of cosmology and particle physics, we, more than ever, explore our world through equations, which are, fundamentally, “conceptual microscopes and telescopes” (though a lot more).

These tremendous advances are what require us in our secular, scientific, spiritual age to re-think, re-understand, and possibly re-embrace what we mean by the word “God”.

This is no different than what was required in ages past, when new thinking about the world, through Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, Freud . . . challenged our view of God, by challenging our understanding of our world and ourselves.

In the past, God was thought of as some “Lord” who “ruled”, based very much on the most primitive view of human, largely male, power. This conceptual model has much truth in it. As you can quickly witness, should you walk the path of covenant, there is clearly an Order here, and indeed, there appear “rules” which one is lead to follow, and sometimes they can be quite strict and demanding— causing, if ignored, God’s curse, evil. Hence, a so-called “Wrathful God”.

But, when this law-demanding *theistic* model is taken to its extreme, and such a God becomes iron-fisted and deterministic, with no room for free will and human creativity, this model no longer functions.

As a counter-balance to the “Lord” model, there has often arisen a “Love” model. God is now considered “perfectly good”, loving and caring, unconditionally. This too, as one gains spiritual experience, also has a good deal of truth in it: act in alignment to the Order, and God’s blessing takes place. However, after a nuclear or human holocaust, the

question of God's so-called "Goodness", surfaces quite abruptly, if not terrifyingly, when "bad things happen to good people."

As an attempt to balance to both these models, one might, like Thomas Jefferson, delight in a different kind of model, *deist*, where God exists, but leaves us alone to handle our own affairs and struggle through our own mess.

But, what happens when we take this model as *permission* to create as much of a mess as we wish? What happens when we run rough-shod upon our earth, and destroy the environment, eradicate whole species and we notice that our very health and peace and well-being is undermined by our own so-called freedom? Then, this model also outlives its truth.

Running away from such an excess, these days, many are re-embracing a *naturalist* model, where "God is nature". This is partially due to the influence of "New Age" philosophies arising, in part, from "Eastern" naturalist religions, which are very popular as a counter-balance to authoritarian "Western" religions. This is also due to the rise of feminism, indigenous rights, ecological movements, and other "natural" movements, which are a severe reaction to the anti-naturalism that these same "Western" religions fostered. There is certainly a lot of spiritual truth in this model.

But, as we've already discussed in detail, a problem in this totally natural model arises: if nature is God, then, why can we destroy it? Are *we* then, *God* over God?

The notion that God is nature has been a very threatening to Western religious thinking, especially since Spinoza, in 16th century, formulated his famous dictum, *Deus sive Natura*, meaning that "God" and "Nature" were synonyms. But, notice the capital "N"! God is not nature, but Nature! This is a very important distinction and discussion these days, since, as Einstein remarked:

"My views are near those of Spinoza"(42) . . .

as are those of many other scientists these days.

Is God nature? These days, because of the ecological devastation, we tend to over-romance nature– "the good ole' days" before super-natural technology– and not remember nature's dark, sinister side, which the Bible knew all too well, and which inspired us *techno-historically* to begin with.

In nature, we can observe squirrels stealing nuts from other squirrels. We can also observe ants torturing other ants. If we are merely natural creatures, and God is merely natural, then, are the standards of nature, human standards? Why shouldn't we steal?

Why shouldn't we torture our enemies? Emphasizing the naturalness of the human being, exclusively, does not deal with human morality and conscience. After all, there is rape in nature, abortion in nature,

This is precisely the classic problem with an un-qualified understanding of Spinoza's God. Nature, alone, doesn't seem to be the origin of moral laws, such as *Thou Shalt Not Steal* or *Love your Enemies*. For many, Spinoza seems to declare *pantheism*, that everything and everyone is equally part of God or Nature. In such a model, one cannot justify a human moral order: a wolf has as much a right to kill me, as I have to kill the wolf. Apply this to human society, and it's "dog eat dog", with apologies to dogs, who are usually rarely quite as vicious as human beings.

These philosophical issues go to the core of biblical covenantal history. If there is child-murder in nature, where animals like polar bears, hamsters and spiders oftentimes kill (and eat) their own children, if there is rape in nature, should this be the behavior for human beings? When, in the ancient world, savage pre-Hebrew tribes, such as the *Moabites*, would burn their first born on a pyre, this was, in some respect, "natural", human beings, through their conscious individual minds, concentrating the worst in nature.

So, it is critical that, in this secular, scientific, spiritual era, even if we have certain discomforts with so-called "Western" *theistic* models, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, that we do not forget their critical spiritual contribution to the world:

In any understanding of God, we must never forget the separation between God and nature, or, human beings, and their civilization, could tumble to a level which could become *abomination- de-generate- in capable of sustaining and propagating life.*

All the laws, around incest, bestiality, adultery, etc. in the Bible, are designed to compensate and correct this terribly degenerate era, indeed, as a warning, lest it take place again.

However now, returning to Spinoza, what if God, while not nature, is *Nature*? With a capital "N"? There is a some truth to this model, too.

If God is the Creator- God would be that Nature from which any nature or natures are "created". Such a model might tend us to think that creation or nature is just a "thing" that's been birthed by God, but is outside of God, and that there might be a chasm between God and creation because of this, requiring some kind of Divine act to bridge us.

On the other hand, what if the Creation from the Creator, or the nature from Nature, were viewed instead, as “new limbs”, so-speak– new growth for a Growing God or Growing Nature. Then, nature wouldn’t be just a “thing” that’s outside God– a Creation; nature would also be “inside” God, an aspect, dimension or scale-of-God-within-God, a creation– small “c”. This would make perfect sense if, as the Bible notes, God is *Living*, i.e. some *Supreme Living Nature* or “*Living King*”.(Jeremiah 10:10) Moreover, it would mean that everything in creation would be intimately connected with God, like our cells are to our blood supply.

If God is living, and actually grows through creating, then, new creations are “simply” *more* of God. Saying that God is nature, i.e. earthly nature, is fraught with difficulties. But, saying that God *is* Nature, and Nature *is* God– with a capital “N” meaning the “Ultimate”, “Supreme”, “Total”, or “Divine” Nature, a Nature of natures– from which earthly-nature and all natures come, does not have these same difficulties.

And within such a Nature of nature, would exist our particular nature, universe or domain. In it, we humans are given the play of our free will: The discovery of the effect of our actions. The experience of moral discernment. And the understanding of law-full, behavior and historical-vision. Covenant just “pops out” of this model, without all the personification-problems of Bible.

Such a variation on Spinoza’s thinking is very popular model these days, *panentheist* some have called it: God is all, and in all, and all is in God, including our world and us. This model seems to harmonize science and religion nicely, as well as the theistic, deist, pantheistic and naturalist models.

After all, what is the difference between some Nature, Creator or Universe, or *Whatever* out of which other natures, creations and universes arise?

The only differences seems to be the words.

Many well-meaning religious and pious people, will be uncomfortable with any model which tries to accommodate *Deus sive Natura, God=Nature*. They will dig in their heels: God is not nature, nor Nature, nor any Nature of natures! God is Beyond Them All! God is Pure Being, far removed from any kind of creative activity at all! God is not just Nature or the Totality-of-Nature, but, is the *Originating* Nature! This Pure Being Stands Alone; He/She/It exists, Is Existence Itself, *before* any universe or any universe-of-universes exists!

Moreover, He/She/It has no divisions in It. No compartments or dimensions in It! And It is this Originating God, out of Its Pure Being-ness, That creates *ex-nihilo*— out of “nothing”, i.e. out of “no [existing] thing” other than God’s Own Pure Self! This is a philosophical extension of biblically-based theism, and it is the mainstay of virtually all good and noble religious philosophies.

But, philosophically, we must also ask: how can this Original Pure, Undifferentiated Being, which has no inner-dimensions to it, create something which has a scale to it, that is different than Itself? How can you get a universe which has a certain scale that is different from God, if God has no scales-within-it (unlike the panentheist model) to generate scale to begin with?

To explain this, religions have resorted to bridges, such as “the Word” to explain how God can be so Pure and yet still create. Jewish mystics have invented concepts that explain how God contracts, *tzimtzum*, to create room for creation. The use of angels and other “bridge-beings” is not uncommon. Blaming it all on us, *karma*, by which we have an *illusion* of existence, which isn’t really existing, has been another approach. All of these model-adjustments have a certain value for bridging a God-Beyond and a God-Here.

Ironically, this approach is similar to what takes place in certain physics circles, when scientists postulate in their *Big Bang* model, some kind of “inflation”— an period of rapid (if not reckless) expansion. This “inflation” acts as an energetic bridge between some near-non-existent “virtual” reality and some real, observable, reality. Do they know what this inflationary-energy is? No. They imagine it! They create this mathematical-bridge to make their model work, though it has not been proven to exist, as yet.(42)

At this point, all discussions break down. It is here that religions, philosophies and sciences all seem to stretch their models too far. And that’s the point of this entire discussion here:

Models of God are not God. Models of Nature are not Nature. A model may have a correspondence to Reality, but, nevertheless, it is still a model, a human understanding.

Models grow, change and evolve as human beings grow, change and evolve. This is true of theological models, scientific models, or any models, including the “cognitive model” upon which this book is based.

In the ancient world, the early prophets were very careful about what they worshipped. They did not worship posts stuck in the ground, or gilded statues. They did not worship

any particular “nature god”, some force-of-nature that was simply a “part” of the Larger Something. They did not worship any image they could paint of anything on heaven or earth! Indeed, this injunction against worshipping a human representation or model was considered so important, that it was included in the *Ten Commandments*, which are the cornerstone of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and today, virtually all the good and noble religions in the world, as well as our entire secular global culture. (*Exodus 20:4*)

Yes, it is true that we can fathom nature, and now, in an era of String Theory and advanced cosmology, we can model the Nature from which, within which, some nature or many natures may come. But, this does not mean that this model, while *corresponding to Reality*, IS Reality, Itself, i.e. God’s Very Being! There is a limit to our criterion of “what’s true?”– *correspondence to Reality*– that we’ve been using throughout. After all, can we know everything about Reality, and actually model it completely? However prodigious our understanding, humility is, once again, called for!

To worship any human representation or model of God or Nature AS

God or Nature, is what the ancient prophecies called “idolatry”.

Worshipping our models OF God AS God, is very, very dangerous!

We run the risk of worshipping ourselves!

As Einstein, put it, repeating and continuing the quote above, humbly:

“My views are near those of Spinoza: admiration for the beauty of and belief in the logical simplicity of the ORDER [emphasis added] which we can grasp humbly and only imperfectly.

I believe that we have to content ourselves with our imperfect knowledge and understanding and treat values and moral obligations as a purely human problem– the most important of human problems.”

Values? Moral obligations? Is this science? Or, is this spiritual? Or both? It is definitely about learning how to live in a alignment to the Order we live in, in order to create the experience of good, or God.

Well, what *do* we *do* with our fabulously, inspiring models? Do we use our religious models, to make people feel guilty, condemn whole populations to damnation, release religious terrorism, and justify destruction of the natural order in the name of human history? Do we use our scientific models, to torch and irradiate Hiroshima or some other

city in the future, release poisons into the soil that render children cancerous, and keep aggressive missile-firing satellites in orbit?

Suffering, pain, hunger, famine, injustice is not a model. It is an experience, of non-Good, "God's curse". Joy, happiness, prosperity, flourishing cultures and healthy vibrant nations, are not a model. It is an experience of Good, "God's blessing".

The whole point of "God" is not models or theories, whether scientific or theological; to think so, is an excess of both. The point of there being "Something-Larger", some "Living God" or "Living Nature" or "Living Universe" or *Whatever. . . is LIVING! LIFE!* The point of models, be they scientific or spiritual, is to focus our knowledge, own it, so we can use it to bring more good to *life!*

All our theories and theologies— true or false— proven or unproven— must always be applied for the service of all life and creation. This is the True Measure of Truth, though it's rather impossible to quantify this, or reduce it to an equation.

Why?

Because Life existed before our personal lives existed.

If you don't like the model of a "Living God" to describe this fact, find a different model to handle the same truth, some virtually-active *quantum fluctuation*, which existed before us, yet is within us.

This secular, scientific, spiritual age needs a warning against contemporary idolatry with its model/idol-making.

Can we go beyond models?

(41) See *Albert Einstein Creator and Rebel*, Banesh Hoffman, New American Library, 1972, p. 95.

(42) For two very easy-to-read books that will help explain two current models of "creation", one the "Inflationary model" (the classic "Big Bang") the other, the "Cyclical" model, both of which— awaiting definitive proof— seem true, i.e. corresponding to Reality (observed data), see:

A Universe from Nothing, Lawrence M. Krauss, Atria paperback, 2012

Endless Universe, Paul J. Steinhardt and Neil Turok, Broadway Books, 2007.

With personal thanks to Dr. Krauss and Dr. Steinhardt for their suggestions and chats.

Chapter Ten: God's Covenant with Humankind

None of us can know, absolutely, precisely, who or what God or Nature actually is. It is impossible for human beings to know the Totality of Existence, or The Existence that may have preceded any existence in which we are "locked".

In a very real sense, we are all a bit like Moses (*Exodus 33:21*). Asking to see God's *Glory*—the Totality of God's Living Nature—he is informed that he cannot see it; it is not for the living to see. However, God does suggest to Moses that he hide behind a rock, and peer out through a cleft, and God will cause all his *Goodness* to pass in front of him.

The personification in the story can be removed, and its truth remains. We are all like Moses.

We are, all of us, a bit blocked by a boulder, unable to fully see what Existence is. Bound by the limits imposed by our cognitive abilities— even if these are extended by remarkable tools, both technological and conceptual— we are all stuck in a cleft, looking out at only a sliver of what exists.

We cannot know if we are looking at some creation created by some Original "God" or "Nature". We cannot know if we are witnessing the actual Living Processes of God or Nature and we are some scale within It. We cannot know what we cannot know. And if we *can* know it, one day, we might not know it *yet*. We are stuck in a cleft.

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that some kind of Living Process is taking place, some progressive and propulsive force that is continuously generating a cosmos filled with galaxies and planets, such as ours. Suns are being birthed. Suns are dying. And we sons, and daughters, of existence, are doing the same. Indeed, universes upon universes beyond ours may be joining our mortal dance (or we are joining its) unbeknownst to us.

The world we see is the reaping of some sowing by a Mystery Beyond Us. God's Goodness passes by, and all we can do, like Moses, is see its *after effect*. We see the tree after the tree is already in existence. We taste the apple after the apple has grown. We peer at galaxies in telescopes, and receive an image that's millions of years old by the time the light reaches us. Like a seed planted in already-existing soil, we live within an already-existing nature or creation. Upon this past, is founded our present, and then our future. Our lives are built upon a Life-Beyond-Us-That-Precedes-Yet-Includes-Us.

We live in a slit. We observe through the slit. We study through the slit. We understand through a slit.

Nonetheless, there's still a quite a lot of knowledge that one *can* see through a slit. Like Moses, we can witness the effect of God or Nature. We can witness the *consequences* of God or Nature. We can witness the nature of God or Nature that is conferred to us, within the boundaries, range and scale we live in. We can know goodness, too. Is there anyone reading this who has never known goodness? We *can* know goodness! That's a spiritual fact!

We cannot be certain about God or Nature. But, we *can* be certain about goodness.

The promise of the Bible, and its God, is that Life is Good. There is an Order to this world. This Order is Good.

Everything and everyone– for relative good or relative evil– functions within this Order of good. Because it does, there are consequences which will increase good, or decrease good.

So, pragmatically, a relationship with “God”, is a relationship with God's goodness, which is the very design of our world.

Is this true? Is it true that a relationship with God is a relationship with goodness, as we have said continuously throughout this book? Don't look for an equation to settle your questing mind; you will be waiting quite a long time before we quantify the word “good”.

The only proof is your decision to embark on the adventure of covenant, and discover, for yourself, empirically– and objectively, i.e. together with discerning others– whether it is *true: corresponding to Reality (within certain, humble, experiential/experimental non-idolatrous limits.)*

Is Life Good? Is the fundamental organizational design or structure of our world Good? Did God's Glory– some Awesome(43) Force-of-Nature– generate a world that has a nature of *goodness*, pre-determined to be good?

The word *good* in the original Hebrew of the Bible means “whole”; it means “integrated”; it means “everything is in its *correct* place”, governing together for the benefit of each and the whole. Would you, who may be struggling with Life right now,

and doubting its goodness, wish to find out, personally, whether this is true? That Life is good?

In this secular, scientific, spiritual era, if we remove the absolute certainty of God, and the absolute knowledge of Who or What God or Anything is– which is only intellectually honest (for those who live in a slit)– this does not mean we must remove the certainty of covenant!

We need not dispense with the core biblical promise and purpose. We need not lose a 4,000 year old vision for human Life, and world civilizational possibilities.

Covenant *does not* depend upon God or religions. This may seem like a radical notion. But, as you progress in spiritual experience, you will discover that it is not radical, but *reasonable*. Indeed, you will be able-to-reason this for yourself.

Virtually every single major understanding that went into biblical knowledge, can reveal itself, through the personal *spiritual experience* of covenant.

As you live the experience of covenant, your questions about the nature of Life or God or Nature become answered, by the response of Life to you. Your questions about the meaning of scripture become grounded in Life, and your questions become answered by Life.

Perhaps your questions are never answered completely. But, then again, is creation ever complete?

Originally, in the Bible a covenant was a kind of a mutual non-aggression pack between kings and their nations. Even if some of the nations did not share the same God, they could form a covenant. (*Hosea 12:1*). Covenants, like the one in Deuteronomy, followed the structure of ancient Assyrian *suzerainty* treaties, between a Ruler and some vassal state.

The essence of covenant was for two parties to seek an *alliance*– from the same root word as *alignment*, indeed, the Latin root also used to translate the word *brit* (covenant) from Hebrew. Such an alliance or covenant, showed respect for each other's boundaries and powers, within the terms of the covenant.

The essence of this concept called “covenant”, was conceptually extended over time. It went from a covenant between kings and a covenant between a people and their tribal god, to a covenant between humankind and the God of creation, THE King of Kings, so-to-speak. But, its essence remains the same: *mutual alignment*.

You may have legitimate doubts about the existence of God, or, perhaps WHAT God is, if God does exist. But, upon entering the spiritual path of covenant– beginning the experience of alignment– naturally, supernaturally, morally, legally and historically– you will not have doubts. Alignment exists!

**The proof of God does not exist.
The proof of covenant does.**

The experience of God is the experience of covenant, at least on the scale of human historical life.(44)

The experience of God– of increased goodness within the five tiered relationship of which we are speaking about– is an experience that is accessible to *all*.

All means all!

This is a drastically different age. Covenant is no longer restricted to religion or religious perspective, though many devoted religious people might find this offensive. This, however, does not mean that covenant cannot be experienced *through* religion.

Long before “religions” were identified with covenant, covenant was just about a people, a tribal people, wandering through the desert, learning how to form a living alignment with the Order that existed, learning “How Life Works”, in relationship to earthly nature, human nature, and God or Nature Beyond.

Religious expressions, such as prayer, sacrifice, rituals, articles of clothing and architecture, were, in a way, *technologies*, that permitted the human being to focus and forge an alignment between all five tiers of covenant. But, the prayer, the sacrifice, the rituals, the articles of clothing and architecture were not, *and never have been*, in themselves, covenant.

This is the idolatrous error of past, non-scientific religion. They often mistook the tools for the integration and alignment of covenantal consciousness with covenantal consciousness itself!

However, no less mistaken, is a cheap secularism, that considers the experience of covenant to be “just religion”, and therefore primitive or superstitious.

Let’s never forget, the opening chapters of the Bible, do not mention religion. It is about God. It is about a creation which is called “good”. Indeed, seven times it is called “good”, though the seventh time, as if to emphasize it, it is called “very good”.

The opening chapters of the Bible describe this Order (or Commandment) of Goodness. The opening chapters talk about a fall out of alignment, due to our super-natural abilities, resulting in pain and suffering. The opening chapters also describe the beginning of an astonishing climb of humanity– through *history*– by which human beings come to master the multiplicity of powers within Nature: *know the One God, over, and including all other gods*. In this way, we become “reflections” and “individualizations” of Nature or God(45), i.e. *made in God’s Image and Likeness*.

So, there is absolutely nothing irrational about the framework for human self-understanding of the Bible. It is perfectly rational, although, it is clothed in ancient language, ancient stories, ancient imagery and ancient personifications.

All this book has done, is abstracted that framework, and taught it in less religious terms, and more secular, scientific and spiritual terms.

The beginning of the Bible frames the goodness of creation and the origin of evil. But, it does not stop here. The Bible then goes on to speak about *salvation*.

Admittedly, the word “salvation” can sound terribly nasty, filled with fire and brimstone, and a lot of sick, twisted religious guilt, hate and condemnation of others. Salvation, while contaminated with this psychological poison, is not fundamentally about this. It is about learning how to, after falling out of alignment due to our supernatural abilities, re-learn to align ourselves– *now, consciously*. It’s about learning how to re-forge this alignment, so we can be supernatural within nature, so we can be fully-human, with our special abilities, conjoining heaven and earth, and yet still inhabiting the so-called Garden of Eden.

Covenant is inseparable from salvation. Salvation is inseparable from covenant. Hate the word “salvation”? At least while we’re on the earth, viewing God or Nature’s Goodness from behind a rock, within a little crevice, you can readily replace it with the word

progress. Progress—spiritually, materially, and on all covenantal levels— is another way to describe covenant. And the goal of such progress? *Happiness*.

Covenant is about creating progress and happiness.

Covenant is a spiritual program, a map, a game-plan, for achieving progress and happiness for individuals, for the world-of-nations, for all life and creation.

Forging a covenantal relationship can take place in religious life or secular life. It has to do with our relationships to Life. One can have correct relationships in religious life; one can have correct relationships in secular life. One can also have in-correct relationships too.

Correct secular life is covenantal, correctly integrating all five orders within the secular culture.

Correct religious life is covenantal, correctly integrating all five orders within the religion.

Whether you are secular or religious, the *scientific* experience of covenant— the objective *knowledge* of God or Nature’s Goodness— awaits you. All it requires you to do is seek Unity and Goodness, in and through all things, slowly, carefully, aligning through all the levels I’ve attempted to outline, with, as best as possible, correct Value and Relationship Priorities. This is the basic sowing-reaping *spiritual path* of covenant.

Should an obstacle occur on that path: meditate, pray, seek a “download” of more knowledge. Seek more knowledge from the Knowledge upon which everything is organized. Seek God or Nature or Whatever that is Larger Than You.

When you do— without a doubt— you will experience inspiration. You will experience an Intelligence beyond you, that enters and supplements your own intelligence; you will discover the spiritual experience of being *made in the image and likeness* of That (Whatever it is), a reflection and individual expression of It.

You will discover your own spirituality!

You can describe this by religious terms. You can describe this by secular, scientific terms. You can describe this by atheist terms. But, you will notice, for yourself, that the experience of Providence and Grace, the experience of a huge, powerful, invigorating and inspiring Force of Salvation— *alignment— covenant— goodness— unity—* takes place. We

sow it. We reap it. Religious people. Secular people. All people. It's a human spiritual capacity. It's a world-purpose!

And, as you experience covenant and understand how it operates, you will begin— moral and legal creature that you are— to fathom the laws by which covenant is sustained. Then, with spiritual experience under your belt, you will (should you choose to) be able to go back to scripture and understand it, without all the religious paraphernalia and cultural expressions, getting in the way. You can also go back into your own faith-tradition, and sift through the rituals, ceremonies and symbolism, to sort out what *serves* today— in a dramatically different secular, scientific, spiritual age. Spiritually-awake, you can be a powerful herald of healing for your own faith tradition.

Or— no less powerfully— if you are not religious, and couldn't care less about religion— with profound covenantal experience under your belt, you will be able to wade into the myriad of secular laws, philosophies, scientific theories and international policies that cause our personal and world conflicts. You will be more able to discern what is good, what is aligned, what is *correct*. You will be more able to participate in the great challenges that face our global society, to govern *correctly*, i.e. *together*. You will be a true moral leader. God knows, there's a shortage of them these days.

Correct living?

With alignment to the Order of Goodness, in which we live?

Is it fact?

Or is it theory?

You must furnish your own proof.

I have furnished mine.

I assure you, your effort will not be in vain. Happiness awaits!

(43) The Hebrew word for “fear” is also the word for “awe”. For those plagued by religious guilt from a God that inspired fear, you might replace fear by Wonder, Inspiration, Fascination, and yes, AWE.

(44) It would be rather excessive to say that the experience of God is *exclusively* covenant, and that there are no other varieties of God-experiences. Nevertheless, the experience of covenant is so basic,

so built into the design of Life, that it is readily accessible to all those who live basic, good, lives in “the real world”. It’s practical spirituality.

- (45) If God exists Alone, outside of creation, and creation is not a dimension or aspect of God, but, is a “thing” separated, then, we are not an individualization of God, unless there is a separate act, such as the Word-God becoming Flesh, as some Christians describe Christ.

This difference between God OR Nature (either/or) is the critical difference between classic theology and today’s theology

A Personal Epilogue: Universal Judaism

To a certain extent, this book was written in reverse. Normally, if I were writing a book on a spiritual perspective, I would begin with this, assume its value, and then un-pack it, chapter by chapter.

I did not do this because what I am teaching in this book is not a “theology”, nor, is it a “religion”.

I am teaching a living, spiritual experience of *covenantal alignment*, a Relationship with Life, Nature, the Universe of universes, God, the Mystery-of-All. This is the Source of religion and theology, and so these come last– *correctly*– for the sake of *governing together in one world!*

This book is a call to consciousness. It is a call to *covenantal-consciousness*. This is the Hebrew gift to the world, expressing itself through all the different Hebrew-inspired religions– Judaism, Christianity, Islam– as well as all other contemporary religions, West or East, that now share this historical perspective.

It is, no less, a call to world secular culture, which, around the global, is becoming the dominant mode of contemporary life. It too is fundamentally historical, based upon prophetic vision.

So, while deeply rooted in the particular Hebrew spiritual experience, this book is nonetheless a call to the *entire world!*

Can you hear that?

Please, hear it!

Hear O World. The Lord our God. The Lord is One.(45)

Within this world, with many different faiths and peoples, I happen to have been born into one particular religion: Judaism. And, within this universal context, I'd like now to address the religion of my birth, with the hopes that it will help many others, Jew and all humankind, who are spiritually unsure, suffering, as I once was.

It is a great sadness that the *way of Life*– a great spiritually-dynamic way of Life– which the Jewish People exemplified, has lost much of its luster and spiritual power.

The great spiritual insight of the Hebrews is the *experience-able* fact that we live in a Living Order.

When living in relationship to That, we observe an Intelligence, a Living Process, the Guidance of Something Larger, moving us forward, evolving us, through time.

Such a relationship is not just for the benefit of us. But also, for the benefit of all humankind: *Covenant*.

However, sadly, because of great historical trials and enormous sufferings, Judaism became more of a system-of-law infused into an ethnic identity. So, over time, lacking spiritual vitality and inspiration, many Jews found God– good– more present in secular life than religious life.

Today, Jews- once deprived of the rights to participate socially, economically, governmentally in the larger world– now participate *so much* in the larger world, that we've forgotten our spiritual heritage. This "amnesia" is actually now desired in the name of so-called "modernism" or "freedom".

To a great extent, contemporary Jews, like many peoples, have become part of a secular global machine!

Yet, it is obvious, we ache for our spiritual roots!

Do a quick survey of the "Spiritual Supermarket" out there, you will find Jews (and many others) dabbling in mysticism, eastern religions, new thought movements, "New Age", quantum-philosophies, growth psychologies and all sorts of beliefs and programs whose purpose is to help repair the disconnect to that "Something Larger". It is shocking, and in fact, almost humorous, the number of Jews who are involved in these, and have risen through the ranks to prominence. It reads like a *Bar Mitzvah* invitation list! What we cannot get within our own ranks, we experience in the ranks of others.(46)

The same thing is occurring for many other people, born into other faiths, too. Christians, often raised in anti-natural religious philosophies, are experimenting with religions, like Hinduism, that emphasize the natural order. On the other hand, Hindus are attracted to Christianity because it emphasizes the supernatural and historical orders, which are traditionally missing from their philosophies.

Muslims, whose religion is based upon the will-full assent to God's authority, are often attracted to freedom-based secular philosophies. Yet, in a secular, freedom-based America, the popularity of Islam is at an all time high!

Women, recoiling from male domination are enjoying naturalist faiths, such as *Wicca*, connecting to circadian rhythms of their bodies and the planet(46). Men, who feel the pain of a distorted-masculinity due to industrialized domestication are enjoying indigenous faiths, beating drums, connecting to their primal vitality.

This experimentation is occurring on the broadest imaginable scale. Whole religions are now in dialogue with each other, worldwide; they are learning about themselves, reflected in the mirror of the other. We are all seeking to complete ourselves, balance ourselves, regain a sure spiritual footing.

We are all seeking to align ourselves to Universal Truth.

Either our faiths are expressions of Universal Truth or they are faithless.

This is the challenge of our secular, scientific, spiritual era.

From the Jewish perspective, this contemporary call to Universal Truth is ancient.

From the 2nd century B.C.E., there arose within Jewish ranks, a group of scholars who expanded spiritually, teaching well-beyond Israel's borders, seeking to bring the core of Hebrew spiritual thought to the entire world. Jesus of Nazareth undoubtedly learned from them.(48)

However, their efforts at open universalism did not last. In the first century, C.E. the Roman emperor Hadrian forbade Jewish teachers from teaching and preaching openly, under penalty of extermination. Jewish teachers thereafter, did not seek students openly. They only taught those who covertly (because it was very dangerous), sought instruction.

Over time, especially when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Judaism was often maligned as being tribal, provincial, and not universal. Christianity, and Western civilization resulting from it, saw themselves as being "universal", and Jewish thinking was "superseded" by them, spiritually backwater, surpassed.

This nightmare of prejudice lasted, essentially, until World War II, when the anti-Jewish tendencies—originally Roman tendencies which had infected Christianity and Western

civilization— reared its ugly head in the form of Nazism, itself an attempt by Hitler to resurrect the pagan Roman empire.

Today, we live in a kinder era. The vast majority of Christian religions have clarified their view of Jews and Judaism.(49) Virtually all good and noble governments accept the participation of their Jewish citizens. The ancient state of Israel has been reborn; the sin of ancient Rome, which exiled Jews from Israel, has been, at least partially, repented of, by the family of Christian (Western) once-Roman nations.

Yet now, there is much healing that needs to take place with Islam. They too had their confrontation with Roman-aligned nations. And of course, they're angry about the State of Israel which existed *also* on their land. The progress has been tumultuous, but steady.

From my perspective— 2000 years since the first Jewish scholars went beyond Israel's borders to teach their Universal Truth to the world— the un-alignments of the past are re-aligning. So. I think this is the time!:

It's time to reclaim the efforts of our great universally-minded Jewish scholars, and teach openly, once more!

It is time to teach the universal principles of Judaism to the world, for a new era, but without the lethal contaminations of the past.

It is time to re-frame Jewish teachings in light of Universal Truth, accessible to everyone!

You may not realize it, but so many of the problems we are experiencing in today's world are the result of the fact that Christianity, and consequently Western Civilization, chose to base their covenantal thinking upon Roman law, rather than Jewish law.

For instance, in Roman law, it was perfectly acceptable to own anything: mountains, trees, people. Today, our "free enterprise" system still has this Roman flavor. This is why, reaping what we sowed, we've noticed an ecological devastation taking place. This is just a "sign from God"— less good— of this ancient-modern Roman un-alignment.

In Hebrew law, the land, and life upon it, was considered "God's creation"; you could use it, not totally own it, and never abuse it. Animals could not be tortured or extinguished. Land needed to go fallow, periodically. Rest, for anything living, was required.

Another example: When Rome went to war, they felt the right to raze everything to the ground, setting it ablaze. But, when Israel went to war, they were commanded to not cut down a fruit tree, lest they compound the evil of war by starvation, misusing their power on an earth not created by them (*Deuteronomy 20: 19-20*).

Sadly, the figure and theology of Jesus Christ was often used as a justification for this kind of Roman domination, which distorted the innate Jewish nature of his teachings.(50) This led to quite a different view of covenantal viewpoint, to a great degree, at odds with the Jewish.

Jewish universalism is not Roman universalism.

Western Civilization, and our entire world global culture, needs to re-connect to its Jewish roots.

It is time to do a *repair*– a *tikkun*– of our world secular global culture.

It is time to put covenant back on track, by re-aligning it to the original spiritual intention of the Hebrews, upon which the world’s Abrahamic faiths, and the moral insights of today’s world secular culture are based.

This is my personal task. But, how to do it? This you have already read.

In keeping with this secular, scientific, spiritual age, instead of teaching a formal religion or formal religious-philosophy, I chose here to teach *cognitively*: to teach from the basic *spiritual awareness and experience* of our personal-shared Relationship-with-Life. I’ve discovered that this is the best and fastest way to get our covenantal thinking back on track, without getting stuck in a debate about belief: Does God exist? Or, not? If so, What is God?

Rather than present formal Jewish creeds or doctrines, such as “The whole of the oral and written laws were given to Moses at Sinai”, something which we know is not archeological fact, I decided to go back to basics, to universal spiritual experience, to the gleaning of insights and inspirations, which are the spiritual underpinning of Jewish teachings and laws.

I highly recommend to other religions, this approach. It *works*: it produces spiritual rejuvenation, covenantal vibrancy, respect for individuality, but without all the problems of “authority”, with its rigid “rights” and “wrongs”, that have destroyed credibility of the world’s religions in a secular, democratic era.

Hence, my contribution, and my life's purpose as a rabbi:

I call it *Universal Judaism* (though the term, for me, is a bit redundant; Judaism has always been universal).

***Universal Judaism* is the fundamental universal principles and spiritual insights of the Jewish People, which were discovered through their wanderings in the desert, and their wanderings throughout the hundreds of countries in which Jews have lived.**

***Universal Judaism* is at the foundation of Christianity, Islam and all good and noble religions and philosophies that share the goal of history.**

***Universal Judaism* is about the seeking of goodness, righteousness and justice, for all peoples, throughout the world.**

But, *Universal Judaism*, is based on correct knowledge of spirituality, not upon mere religious doctrines, inherited from the past.

My thinking is this: if we can spiritually renovate the first of the Hebraic religions, Judaism, then, we can go a long, long way to renovating them all, and the entire world which was based upon the historical, covenantal perspective. After all, it was from Judaism, that world history emerged as a single, powerful, one-focused movement!

**For mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.
(Isaiah 56:7)**

A correct- *governing together*- understanding of covenantal spirituality is essential, if we are to fulfill the ancient words of the prophet, and bring about a world of peace and understanding between all faiths and all peoples.

A correct- *governing together*- Judaism, with correct covenantal consciousness, is essential for peace in Israel, and in the Middle East, the *omphalos* (the navel, which nourishes) of world history!

A correct- *governing together*- Judaism, with correct Value and Relationship Priorities, are necessary if we are to heal the empty secular-ism and excessive un-natural capital-ism which is now the greatest "religious threat" to the world.

If you are interested in joining with me, go to www.universaljudaism.org
It is a new approach to ancient wisdom, open to all people, of all faiths, who are interested in re-rooting themselves upon solid, spiritual soil. There are no ritual requirements. No conversions needed. All are fully welcome!

Universal Judaism is open! Wide-open! For a more open era!

Thank you so much for having taken the time to read this book. If I can help, at all, on your path, please do not hesitate to call me.

Blessings to all seekers of Light, from all faiths, all philosophies, and all nations, God-believing or not.

May we all seek Unity and Goodness, together! And yet, remain uniquely ourselves!

May we have the experience of God! And build from there!

Amen

- (45) *Deuteronomy 6:4, the Shema, is considered the watchword of the Jewish People. It says, "Hear O Israel", not "Hear O World". One must remember, at that time, in this part of the world, Israel was the only people capable of hearing this message. The rest tended to be savages or brutal imperial empires. Times have changed, and this universal important of this message must be emphasized.*
- (46) *Traditionally, this has been considered the "gift"– God's purpose– for the diaspora, or the Dispersion of the Jewish people. This is God's "chastisement" out of love, to re-align ourselves, as we've spoken about throughout. Thus, this very non-traditional viewpoint here, is really quite traditional.*
- (47) *Although Jews and most Christians, still are divided as to the divinity of Jesus, more and more, we are both coming to realize that Jesus taught essential "Universal Judaism", though that phrase did not exist at his time.*
- (48) *The rhythms of the full-moon, the weekly ebb and tide that included the Sabbath, the natural-harvest festivals, the sanctification of menstruation, were all conscious devotions of the Hebrew people to God's creation. They are not a plot by an evil male-dominated patriarchy. They are what we'd call today "matriarchal"– though sometimes they were expressed in a way that was biased against women.*
- (49) *See: Our Age. The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding,*

Jack Bemporad & Michael Shevack (New City Press)

- (50) There is little doubt amongst the vast majority of credible scholars, both Jewish and Christian that Jesus' teachings were essentially *Pharisaic*, largely from the School of Hillel, which emphasized love and forgiveness. This sounds strange to Christians who have identified "pharisaism" as identical to "hardened legalists". Some Pharisees, in fact, The School of Shammai, did tend to be hardened legalists. Universal Judaism was what Jesus taught! Today, it simply needs to be reframed for our secular, scientific, spiritual age!