

Aligning the Will of God and Man Through the Character of the Soul

Martin Lasater

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To my friends, Mark and Elizabeth Prophet

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Introduction

The goal of this book is to present a practical guide on how to reconcile and align one's personal will with the character of the soul and the higher potential of human evolution. The book is not a religious text nor a philosophical inquiry. It explores how a partnership between man and his soul, God, and nature might expand goodwill and thereby bring benefit to the majority of mankind. The essential argument of the book may be summarized as follows:

- None of us know the will of God in its entirety,¹ yet most people believe in either a Supreme Deity or a universal spiritual presence that flows through and around us constantly.²
- Almost everyone believes that human beings have free will, which means that we have a choice in our decisions and thus have moral accountability for the ends, means, and results of those decisions.³
- Human beings have a remarkable mental capacity to shape their character and to interact with various dimensions of existence.⁴

¹ There are hundreds of names of God that people have conceived of over the centuries of human existence. For a brief overview, see "Names of God" in Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God. Most of these names are associated with divine attributes with which mankind identifies. No single definition of God is accepted by all peoples, so knowing what the will of God is in its entirety is a near impossibility. Knowing what God's will is for us individually, however, may be within human capabilities – especially in specific situations, as demonstrated by conscience. See the interesting research essay on "Conscience,"

<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~korsgaard/CMK.Conscience.E.Ed.pdf>

² The Pew Research Center found in a 2009 survey that "about half of the U.S. public (49%) says they have had a religious or mystical experience, defined as a 'moment of sudden religious insight or awakening'." See, "Mystical Experiences," December 29, 2009, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2009/12/29/mystical-experiences/>. A 2012 Pew study found: "Worldwide, more than eight-in-ten people identify with a religious group. A comprehensive demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84% of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion." See, "The Global Religious Landscape," December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

³ For an overview of how free will is seen from different perspectives, see Peter Gooding, "The psychology of believing in free will," July 2, 2018, <http://theconversation.com/the-psychology-of-believing-in-free-will-97193>.

⁴ See, "Blue Brain team discovers a multi-dimensional universe in brain networks," *Medical press*, June 12, 2017, <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-blue-brain-team-multi-dimensional-universe.html>. Also, Hannah Osborne, "Brain Architecture: Scientists Discover 11 Dimensional Structures that Could Help Us Understand How

- There is a source of goodness within ourselves that can be explained as being either the character of our soul as created by God,⁵ or an evolutionary instinct related to empathy and altruism.⁶
- Through reflection on the source of our goodness, we can identify a specific quality of goodwill that can serve as a moral guide to our personal, professional, and social behavior.
- As we seek to express more of our inner quality of goodness, we naturally begin to reconcile and align our free will with God's will and in the process contribute to a positive direction in humanity's evolution.
- Therefore, expressing the goodwill found within ourselves helps to balance the material and spiritual aspects of our life, improves the quality of society, and strengthens humanity's chances for long-term survival and transcendence as a species.

The principal point being made in this book is that man's will and God's will can be reconciled and aligned when individuals use their free will to express the character of goodness found within their soul. The character of one's soul is very similar to the concept of a person's highest

the Brain Works," *Newsweek*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/brain-structure-hidden-architecture-multiverse-dimensions-how-brain-works-624300>.

⁵ "Neurotheologians argue that the structure and function of the human brain predispose us to believe in God. They claim that the site of God's biological substrate is the limbic system deep within the brain, which has long been considered to be the biological center for emotion." See, René J. Muller, "Neurotheology: Are We Hardwired for God?" *Psychiatric Times*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychiatristimes.com/cultural-psychiatry/neurotheology-are-we-hardwired-god>. (This article does not download, but can be found on Google by searching "Muller" and the title of the article.)

⁶ Adrian F. Ward, "Scientists Probe Human Nature--and Discover We Are Good, After All," *Scientific American*, November 20, 2012, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientists-probe-human-nature-and-discover-we-are-good-after-all/>. Altruism is defined in zoology as behavior of an animal that benefits another at its own expense. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. The expression of compassion in human beings and other advanced species has given rise to the empathy-altruism hypothesis in socio-psychology. See, "Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis," *Psychology*, <https://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/prosocial-behavior/empathy-altruism-hypothesis/>.

virtue, an inner quality of each person viewed by philosophers throughout the ages as being critical to the good life.⁷ These influential thinkers have commonly concluded that the greatest goal in life is to be happy and that the best form of human happiness comes when individuals find and express their highest virtue, and thereby become their true self.⁸

I understand that the existence of the soul, like the existence of God, is difficult to prove by a materialistic-based science, in part because God and the soul are spiritual rather than material. We have plenty of anecdotal evidence for the existence of a spiritual world, but scientific proof might have to await the further development of modern sciences such as quantum physics and astrophysics, which explore the universe on scales far smaller and far larger than the scale on which most material science has been built.⁹ Understanding the relationships between the spiritual and material universes is also being advanced through research carried out in centers for the study of consciousness found in several universities.¹⁰ These centers are exploring questions such as what is consciousness and what are the links between consciousness and perceptions of God?

The brain's ability to function in dimensions beyond length, breadth, height, and time might help to explain why so many people have spiritual experiences. Whether the brain's multidimensional capability is a reflection of evolutionary processes to help ensure the species' survival through

⁷ For a comparison of Greek and Chinese approaches to this goal, see Karyn Lai, Rick Benitez, and Hyun Jin Kim, eds., *Cultivating a Good Life in Early Chinese and Ancient Greek Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

⁸ For a discussion of belief in the true self, see Art Markman, "The True Self," *Psychology Today*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ulterior-motives/201709/the-true-self>.

⁹ See, Philip Ball, "Quantum Physics May Be Even Spookier Than You Think," *Scientific American*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/quantum-physics-may-be-even-spookier-than-you-think/>; and "NASA Astrophysics," *NASA Science: Universe*, <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics>.

¹⁰ Examples are programs such as the Center for Consciousness Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, <https://www.ciis.edu/research-centers/center-for-consciousness-studies>; and the Center for Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson, <http://www.consciousness.arizona.edu/>.

transcendence of limitations, or nature's method of providing mankind with sensory and processing means for perceiving and interacting with different levels of material and spiritual existence is a matter yet to be proven.

We often refer in this book to evolution and how mankind can use its processes to improve conditions in life and help development of the soul. This requires some clarification on what is meant by evolution, which most scientists define as being either biological evolution or socio-cultural evolution.¹¹

The theories of biological evolution, as reflected in the work of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), seek to explain the survival and emergence of certain species, including *Homo sapiens* which first appeared about 200,000 years ago. Biological evolution, based for the most part on genetic variation and natural selection within given environments, is usually thought of as a long process which can span thousands of years. Socio-cultural evolution, on the other hand, has been increasingly used to explain how human beings are able to change from generation to generation due to the passing on of certain socio-institutional, technological, and cultural achievements. Socio-cultural evolution is said to have begun in earnest about 10,000 years ago, when human culture started to move from hunter-gatherer societies to agriculture and livestock breeding societies, which in turn lay the foundations for civilization.¹²

Empathy and altruism appear to be related to biological evolution, since those forms of goodness are hardwired into the consciousness of many species, including human beings. Most other

¹¹ For an interesting overview the forces influencing human evolution, see Gregory Carey, "Chapter 13: The Five Forces Behind Human Evolution," http://psych.colorado.edu/~carey/hgss/hgsschapters/hgss_chapter13.pdf. Carey was Professor of Psychology at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

¹² See, Jurgen Kluver, "The socio-cultural evolution of our species: The history and possible future of human societies and civilizations," European Molecular Biology Organization, EMBP reports, Vol. 9, 2008, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3327546/>.

discussions of evolution in the context of this book are aligned with socio-cultural evolution. Socio-cultural evolution includes such things as greater understanding of natural and social phenomena, as well as the impact on humanity from refinements in religion, worldviews, and moral values. Socio-cultural evolution also includes the development of social structures and the rules that govern interactions within society.

The importance of biological evolution in this book's argument is that the basic genetic, instinctual foundations for goodness in mankind are millions of years old. The importance of socio-cultural evolution is that human beings can determine, to a great extent, their own social and cultural future. Because of man's free will choices, socio-cultural evolution can be in either positive or negative directions. In other words, mankind can create golden ages or he can self-destruct.

A non-scientific theory of evolution is spiritual evolution. Spiritual evolution involves the growth of the individual soul and the gradual refinement of the social and cultural institutions within which the soul evolves during its many lifetimes on earth. As defined in Wikipedia, spiritual evolution is:¹³

“...the philosophical, theological, esoteric or spiritual idea that nature and human beings and/or human culture evolve: either extending from an established cosmological pattern (ascent), or in accordance with certain pre-established potentials....The concept of spiritual evolution is also complemented by the idea of a creative impulse in human beings, known as *epigenesis*. Within this broad definition, theories of spiritual evolution

¹³ See, “Spiritual Evolution” in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_evolution.

are very diverse....One can regard all of them as teleological to a greater or lesser degree.”¹⁴

The theories of spiritual evolution are closely related to the Indian concept of karma, an impersonal system of moral adjudication whereby human actions that are good for the soul are rewarded and actions that are harmful to the soul are punished.¹⁵ Another way to look at karma is through the eyes of the Buddha, who once said:

We are what we think,
having become what we thought.
Like the wheel that follows the cart-pulling ox,
Sorrow follows an evil thought.

And joy follows a pure thought,
like a shadow faithfully tailing a man.

We are what we think,
having become what we thought.¹⁶

The spiritual evolution of the soul through karma and the impact on mankind’s material existence through biological and socio-cultural evolutions all have the common critical factor of man’s free will decisions. To the extent that we can learn to make better moral and evolutionary

¹⁴ Epigenesis is the theory that human beings have a natural creative impulse that causes them to seek to create in order to improve themselves and their environment. Teleology is the theory that human beings are oriented towards some internal or external goal, the achievement of which is the driver in their socio-cultural and spiritual evolution.

¹⁵ A yogic definition of karma may be found here: “Karma,” *The Yogic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.ananda.org/yogapedia/karma/>.

¹⁶ From “Ten Twin Verses,” *The Dhammapada*, trans. P. Lal, 1967, p. 23, <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/B%20-%20Theravada/Suttas%20I/The%20Dhammapada/The%20Dhammapada.doc>.

choices, we increase the probability of benefitting ourselves personally, socially, culturally, and as a species.

The paradigms associated with spirituality and evolution are linked in many ways, and they would seem to be able to co-exist within the concept of God being the Creator of the universe or the singularity behind the Big Bang.¹⁷ From this holistic point of view, God could be seen as a spiritual force permeating all energy and matter, life and consciousness – somewhat analogous to the unseen matter and energy behind (and interacting with) the visible universe.¹⁸

I am inclined to accept the holistic view and therefore look at mankind's relationship to God (however named) from both spiritual (the soul) and material (evolutionary) perspectives. Within this holistic paradigm, if God exists and if God is good, then man by following the character of his soul and his instincts for empathy and altruism will likely align his behavior with what God intends mankind to do. There is, in other words, a plausible and natural alignment between God, the soul, mankind, and certain positive potential futures found within evolution.

This paradigm enables individuals to build an ethical framework to assist them to make best-choice decisions based on their free will. If individuals know their inner quality of goodness and make decisions that are aligned with (1) what they believe to be God's intentions, (2) what they believe to be the character of their soul, and (3) what they believe to be positive contributions to the evolution of humanity – then individuals are doing all they can in this world to bring

¹⁷ See the article by Arjun Walia, "If the Big Bang Started the Universe, What, or Who, Started the Big Bang? What about the Multi-Verse?" *Collective Evolution*, August 27, 2017, <http://www.collective-evolution.com/2017/08/27/if-the-big-bang-started-the-universe-what-or-who-started-the-big-bang-what-about-the-multi-verse/>.

¹⁸ "It turns out that roughly 68% of the universe is dark energy. Dark matter makes up about 27%. The rest - everything on Earth, everything ever observed with all of our instruments, all normal matter - adds up to less than 5% of the universe." So explains NASA in "Dark Energy, Dark Matter," <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-is-dark-energy>.

goodwill to all. That, to me, is fulfilling the purpose of the soul on earth, because such decisions reflect the proper use of free will.

Our concepts of God will likely be limited until we have much greater understanding of the totality of the universe. However, our personal relationships with God, our soul, and even evolutionary processes do not depend on our complete understanding of God. We simply need to relate to God at the level of our understanding at a given point in time and space. Simply put, we do not have to be perfect here on earth before we try to align our will with our understanding of God's will. We only have to do our best with our current abilities within our present circumstances.

Although we may not fully understand God's intentions or have the ability to accurately predict the future of mankind's evolution, we can know the predominant character of our own soul with a fair degree of confidence. One way to know that character is to meditate on the source of goodness one feels inside of oneself.¹⁹ Another way is to act, think, and feel in ways reflective of the goodwill that one senses within. It's like pulling on a thread: eventually you get to the source. By whatever approach one takes, gradually knowing the character of one's soul and expressing its goodness reconciles and aligns one's personal will with God's will and with nature's higher potential.

In addition to this introduction and a brief concluding statement, the book is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the character of the soul. We consider how the soul might have

¹⁹ I discovered the character of my soul while puzzling over the contrast between my outer personality of expediency and a persistent sense of inner goodness. One evening I tried to trace that goodness to its source, and I found in meditation a point of teal green light radiating the quality of honor and integrity. Sensing its spiritual purity and unlimited potential for expression, I instinctively knew that this was the character of my soul. Because people are different, their experiences in this kind of meditation will likely be different as well.

evolved from the moment of its creation to the present time. We offer an explanation as to why the soul embodies on earth, and explore the relationship between the soul and its various embodiments. We further consider some of the obstacles the soul might face as it seeks to fulfill its purposes on earth, and we note several techniques that people have used to help develop their contact with the soul.

Chapter 2 explores how we might better understand the will of God in the context of our own lives. We identify several ways in which God's will can be intuited by us, and reflect on some of the challenges we face in trying to do God's will once it is known. A few suggestions are offered on how to overcome these challenges, including developing trust, strengthening moral courage, reinforcing self-control and self-discipline, and utilizing the reasoning power of the higher mind.

Chapter 3 examines areas of likely correlation between divine and human interests on earth. We discuss how to identify these possible areas of mutual interests, which include the evolution of the soul and the human body, the wellbeing of the person individually and socially, and the protection of other parts of life and the preservation of the environment and ecosystem on which we all depend. Examples of personal and social goals to advance these interests are also offered to illustrate the practicality of aligning the will of man and God.

Chapter 4 explains why goodness and goodwill are logical common denominators in the mutual interests of God and man. Several ways to increase goodness and goodwill are discussed, including identifying the good in oneself and reflecting on the source of that goodness, considering the implications of humanity as a whole possessing a character of goodness, expanding goodness within the self and society, building and sustaining one's personal character of goodwill, and participating in communities of like-minded people who value goodness and goodwill.

We begin our discussion in Chapter 1 with an examination of the soul and its critical role in mankind's relationship with God and nature.

Chapter 1: The Character of the Soul

The critical link between God and man is the soul. In the context of our discussion, the soul is the spiritual vehicle carrying the spirit of God individualized in a single human lifestream.²⁰ The soul, by whatever name it might be referred to in different cultures, is the individualized life force occupying a human body.²¹ The soul is not made of material substance. It is a spiritual presence that exists before our current embodiment on earth and will exist after the death of our physical body. The soul thus exists independently of the human body.

The soul can embody in human form over and over again, through a process called reincarnation. The spiritual purpose of these successive embodiments is for the soul to utilize an appropriate human body through which to learn the proper use of free will in the dimensions of time and space. The soul is in a constant state of evolving, from the time of its infancy as a newborn creation of God to the point where the mature soul returns to God with the fruits of its endeavors. Where the soul resides at a particular time in the various planes of existence is largely determined by its karma and dharma.²²

²⁰ "Lifestream" is defined as the current of life that is one's existence. Just as an adult is connected to himself as a child, so too is one's current embodiment connected to all previous lifetimes of one's soul. The continuity of our life that begins with God's creation of our soul to what we are today and will be tomorrow is our lifestream.

²¹ The soul, or something similar to the soul as the spirit occupying the body and giving it life and individuality, is referred to in different religions and spiritual traditions. Some of these similar terms are the Greek *psyche* and the Latin *anima*. Other terms include the Egyptian *ka* and *ba*, the Chinese *hun*, and the Hindu *atman*. See, "Soul," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/soul-religion-and-philosophy>.

²² As noted earlier, karma is the law of moral cause and effect, whereby we receive what we have given to others, whether good or bad. "Dharma" has several definitions. It is the duty of a soul in a particular embodiment, sometimes referred to as one's mission in life. It can also be defined as the overall mission of a particular soul carried over through many lifetimes. Dharma can also refer to the mission of a group of souls (or mandala) working together through various lifetimes. "Reincarnation" is the rebirth of a human soul in successive embodiments as the soul reaps the karma it generated in previous lifetimes and works to fulfill its dharma. These concepts are common in many spiritual traditions. The ancient Hindu story of the *Bhagavad-Gita* offers a classic explanation of these principles through Krishna's lessons taught to Arjuna. See *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin Classics Paperback, February 25, 2003), translated by Juan Mascaro.

When we speak of the character of the soul, we are referring to the unique quality of individuality given the soul by God at the moment of the soul's creation. God is by definition "good" in an absolute sense. The character of the soul given by God and shared with the soul's extension into human form is "good" in a partial sense.²³ Because God is infinite, the varieties of goodness reflected in souls can also be endless. For example, a certain kind of goodness is expressed by doctors who heal, and a different kind of goodness is expressed by soldiers who protect society. The character of goodness in different people can be different; however, each form of goodness can contribute to the overall wellbeing of society. Thus, all types of human goodness have value and ought to be considered as human virtues. The character of an individual's soul is the individual's greatest value and highest virtue.²⁴

In considering how to approach the complexities and variations of goodness found in the character of souls, it is instructive to view God's plan as an ecosystem. All things existing within an ecosystem – biologically and environmentally – have roles to play in sustaining the ecosystem. In this way, all things are interconnected.²⁵ Like other parts of the planetary ecosystem, we have, individually and collectively, roles to play in fulfilling the purposes of our species and contributing to the proper functioning of our earthly home. The character of our soul,

²³ The absolute goodness of God can be associated with visible light; the partial goodness of man can be associated with a partial frequency of that light, such as what is seen when sunlight passes through a triangular prism. Visible light itself is but a small fraction of electromagnetic radiation. See, "The Electromagnetic Spectrum," *Imagine the Universe*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, <https://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/science/toolbox/emspectrum1.html>.

²⁴ That each individual has value is a foundational concept on which political systems and governments ought to be built. If that value is not recognized and respected, then the principles on which the political system rests are incomplete and possibly flawed.

²⁵ Cosmically, this is illustrated by the fact that our bodies are comprised in part of material originally found in collapsing stars in distant galaxies. See the interesting interview with authors Karel and Iris Schrijver by Simon Worrall, "How 40,000 Tons of Cosmic Dust Falling to Earth Affects You and Me," *National Geographic*, January 28, 2015, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/01/150128-big-bang-universe-supernova-astrophysics-health-space-ngbooktalk/>.

which is a unique quality of God's goodness, can contribute to global wellbeing if we use our free will to express that character. Doing our part to improve the quality of life on earth will benefit not only ourselves but also contribute to humanity's positive evolution. It is through this uniquely human role of creatively expanding goodness that God's will for mankind is fulfilled.

Since the character of our soul is a unique aspect of goodness, if we can identify that inner quality then we can construct a personal moral standard by which to live our lives. Our soul's character does not usurp our human free will, nor stifle our creativity. It establishes in our consciousness a pattern we can use to align our behavior with God's will and to maximize our contributions to a higher trajectory of human evolution.

It is important to keep in mind that the character of our soul is the spark of God-goodness given to our soul as its individuality at the moment of the soul's creation. The maturation process of the human soul involves the soul becoming increasingly aware of the vast potential of its character, as well as the soul growing in understanding of how that goodness might be expanded through creative activities. The link between our soul and our body is that our material body is the vessel of our spiritual soul. The soul and body are part of who and what we are. Our soul uses our body to learn how to function in the dimensions of time and space. This is part of the evolution of the soul and why it is embodied in the first place.

The soul has a consciousness, which might be considered as the higher consciousness of ourselves in embodiment. In normal waking life, our consciousness is our outer awareness. Our subconscious is also part of our total consciousness. These "layers" of consciousness co-exist at all times within our minds. With a little practice, we can learn to move our conscious awareness between these various levels of consciousness. This skill is useful because there are circumstances in which the outer mind and the consciousness of the soul need to be

synchronized. For example, the person in embodiment can best make difficult moral decisions if the person is aware of the character of his or her soul. Knowledge of the fundamental character of goodness within oneself makes it easier to make proper decisions when much is at stake.

Becoming acquainted with the goodness in one's heart is especially important in the modern era, because mankind is rapidly developing the technology enabling major alterations of the social and natural world. Socially, global communications facilitate rapid cultural change for good or for ill. In the natural world, human activity both decimates existing species and leads to the genesis of new species.²⁶ The alteration of genetic code has become an established science with wide ranging applications in healthcare and in other fields such as de-extinction of certain extinct species.²⁷ As we expand our role in the evolution of the planetary ecosystem, we need to have moral standards by which to judge the appropriateness of manipulation of the natural order of things. The best moral standard we have, individually and collectively, is the character of our soul.

The Soul in Evolution

The belief that individuals should use the highest virtue of their character to guide their behavior is not new. Since people have free will, they can always choose this approach to life. However, when we observe the behavior of people, we see that an evil side sometimes shows itself.²⁸ If our

²⁶ "Humans artificially drive evolution of new species," *ScienceDaily*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160628221714.htm>.

²⁷ See, "What kinds of gene mutations are possible?" *Genetics Home Reference*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, <https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/primer/mutationsanddisorders/possiblemutations>. Also, Elizabeth Quill, "These Are the Extinct Animals We Can, and Should, Resurrect," *Smithsonian.com*, May 2015, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/these-are-extinct-animals-we-can-should-resurrect-180954955/>.

²⁸ That there is evil in the world is attested to by the many atrocities committed by man through the centuries. For example, "the communist probably have murdered something like 110,000,000, or near two-thirds of all those killed by all governments, quasi-governments, and guerrillas from 1900 to 1987." See, R. J. Rummel, "How Many Did Communist Regimes Murder?" <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/COM.ART.HTM>. The Nazis are said to have "killed 6 million European Jews in concentration camps, or pogroms, or ghettos, or mass executions in what we refer to today as the Holocaust," Lorraine Boissoneault, *Smithsonian.com*, December 12, 2016,

soul is inherently good and all men have a soul, then why do our actions sometimes fall short in a moral sense?

One explanation is that our soul is in a state of spiritual evolution. Presumably, at the time of our lifestream's creation by God, our soul was perfectly innocent and naturally good, much like an infant child. As our souls experienced life over many embodiments, our outer consciousness became aware of its ability to choose between alternative methods to advance our interests. We learned to use expediency and deception, cruelty and terror to achieve our goals when methods of goodwill seemed inadequate to the task.

This is where the great teacher of karma comes into play. Functioning in a world of duality and making wrong decisions for wrong reasons usually results in a life of unfavorable conditions. By experiencing the results of our actions, our souls learn to make proper choices, just as a child learns not to touch a hot stove. Our souls could learn the same lesson if we had listened to the advice of others; however, people are independent and often want to prove things for themselves.

That we have both free will and a soul with a character of God's goodness suggests that mankind is not intended to be a slave or a robot, but rather a co-creator with God in the expansion of goodwill in that portion of the universe where we have authority to make decisions. In this sense, human beings can correctly see themselves as creative partners with God in the unfoldment of His plan. Each of us is a builder and the designs we can work with are found in the character of our soul.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/first-moments-hitlers-final-solution-180961387/>. Genghis Khan "was responsible for the deaths of as many as 40 million people," Evan Andrews, "10 Things You May Not Know About Genghis Khan, *History*, April 29, 2014, <https://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-genghis-khan>.

For souls in embodiment to balance their karma, learn the proper use of free will, identify and express their inner qualities, and become creative partners with God takes a considerable length of time, often over many lifetimes spanning different civilizations and cultures. Given the progressive evolution of our souls, we ought not to become complacent or impatient. We ought not to be complacent, because gaining self-mastery is a process that requires our constant engagement and improvement. We ought not to be impatient, because it takes time to learn how to express our full potential and thus become our true self.

[The Relationship between the Soul and the Human Body](#)

The key link between God, soul, and man is the character of the soul, which presumably reflects an aspect of God's own character of goodness. The character of the soul is the source of individuality for the soul and for its extension as a human being in embodiment. A person becomes his or her true self by expressing the character of their soul. When the character of the soul is expressed by the individual in embodiment, then the will of God, the will of the soul, and the will of the individual become reconciled and aligned.

It is important to remember that God wants us to use our character of goodness in creative ways to bring goodwill to all mankind and life in general. God provided our soul with a portion of His own character. How we use the character of our soul is up to us, although God and His prophets may ask us to do certain things, such as obey the ethical guidelines found in the Ten Commandments or other divinely inspired codes of conduct.²⁹

²⁹ One of the persistent issues found in Christianity and other religions is how mankind is to balance the need to follow God's will with the free will every man possesses. Answers to this question vary widely from those who feel they should consult with God on where to park their cars to those who go through their life living as they want with the attitude of letting God "sort it all out" at the end. In this book, I suggest that God intends for man to use his free will in a creative way to express the goodness found within his own soul.

There is a certain logic here that explains the relationship of our soul to our human body. If God created the soul and gave the soul its unique identity as an aspect of God's own character of goodness, then the embodied person carries within himself this character of God's goodness as well. This is because the soul is the spirit of life within the human body and the embodied person is an extension of the soul. The soul and the person are essentially one human being, with the same basic character of goodness.

Nonetheless, this intimate connection between body and soul is not always clear to our outer minds. Partly, this is because the meandering currents of our consciousness distract our attention from our higher selves. Sensing and understanding the connection between God, our soul, and our outer self-awareness requires that our minds be sufficiently attentive to this reality. Such perception is possible, however, because the human brain and mind are remarkably capable in being able to move between multiple dimensions or different levels of consciousness.³⁰

From a spiritual perspective, the human body is the soul's instrument for its expression of God's goodness in the world of form. The soul's experience in the material world helps it mature and become more effective as a co-creator with God. Ideally, the person in embodiment is aware of his or her soul and acts in ways aligned with the soul's character. In practice, however, the range of human awareness of the soul is influenced by such things as the karma and dharma of the soul's embodiments past and present, the natural and social environment in which the person lives, the health and education of the individual, the type of career chosen, and a host of other spiritual and material variables. The complexity of these factors makes it almost impossible for

³⁰ There is considerable scientific interest in how to define and accurately describe human consciousness. One study, for example, argues that "levels" is not an adequate way to conceive of different states of consciousness. Rather, these researchers suggest that "Global states of consciousness...are best understood as regions in a multidimensional space." See Tim Bayne, et al., "Are There Levels of Consciousness?" *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, April 18, 2016, [http://www.cell.com/trends/cognitive-sciences/fulltext/S1364-6613\(16\)30002-X](http://www.cell.com/trends/cognitive-sciences/fulltext/S1364-6613(16)30002-X).

most of us to judge the relative maturity of anyone's soul or their level of spiritual attainment – including our own.

Where it can be achieved, it is very beneficial for the outer consciousness of the individual to have contact with the soul. This contact enhances the ability of the soul and embodied person to coordinate and maximize the outer self's activities to advance the soul's purposes on earth. The coordination between the material and spiritual sides of human existence represents an integration of self-identity that can lead to a sense of wholeness and satisfaction in life. This sense, in turn, can provide a psychological foundation for the establishment of more ideal societies whose members are cooperative, trustworthy, and share a common desire and determination to bring goodwill into their communities.

Achieving a sense of integration, and thereby becoming the true self, are highly relevant to the alignment of man's will with the will of the soul and the will of God. Integrating one's consciousness and becoming the true self also helps to increase the probability of a higher evolution for mankind. This is because expressing goodwill within society makes human social institutions and relationships stronger, enabling greater cooperation on achieving significant breakthroughs to help resolve or manage complex global issues. This higher level of cooperation on a global scale increases the likelihood that humanity will move in a more positive direction than if such cooperation did not exist.

[Overcoming Challenges to Become One's True Self](#)

Part of becoming one's true self means the person in embodiment develops a greater awareness of his or her integration and interdependency with other parts of life. As that sense of integration becomes established more deeply into outer consciousness, the person begins to feel more in balance and in harmony with things the person wants to accomplish. A parallel can be found in

the Zen approach to archery, where this feeling of oneness between self, bow and arrow, and target is considered by many as a spiritual ritual.³¹ One of the greatest challenges in achieving this integrated level of consciousness is how to balance the needs, desires, and interests of our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves. Achieving this balance requires a certain degree of self-discipline and self-mastery, an effort often compared to a charioteer gaining control over his horses.³²

The Karmic Clock as a Tool for Self-Improvement

Karma is a rational system of spiritual justice. If properly understood, individuals can use the system to advance the learning of the lessons karma is intended to teach. One of many tools to assist people overcome their negative karma and replace it with positive karma is the “karmic clock,” also known as the cosmic clock in some schools of thought. The clock is used to identify certain kinds of negative motivations and then to replace those motivations with positive attributes of God’s goodness. As a result, the soul in embodiment is able to more quickly master the proper use of free will.

The concept of a karmic or cosmic clock is not a perfect replication of the karmic process, and several variations of the visualization can be found within spiritual communities.³³ Following the model of the cosmic clock as depicted by the Summit Lighthouse, the positive and negative traits on the 12 lines of the clock are shown in Table 1.

³¹ See Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 1953, http://www.ideologic.org/files/Eugen_Herrigel_-_Zen_in_the_Art_of_Archery.pdf.

³² The analogy of the charioteer, chariot, reins, and horses is a common one in philosophy. See a comparison of Plato’s and the Upanishad versions in Elizabeth A. Schiltz, “Two Chariots: The Justification of the Best Life in the ‘Katha Upanishad’ and Plato’s ‘Phaedrus’,” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 2006), pp. 451-468, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4488037?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

³³The varied applications of the cosmic clock are taught by the Summit Lighthouse spiritual organization. Search “cosmic clock” on the Summit’s home page: <https://www.summitlighthouse.org/>. According to these teachings, the explanation of the cosmic clock was given to Elizabeth Prophet in a dispensation (or spiritual blessing intended for all mankind) from Mother Mary.

Table 1. Positive and Negative Traits on the Cosmic Clock

Positive Attribute of Goodness	Negative Motivation to Overcome
God Power	Criticism, condemnation, and judgment
God Love	Hatred and mild dislike
God Mastery	Doubt, fear, human questioning, and records of death
God Control	Conceit, deceit, arrogance, and ego
God Obedience	Disobedience, stubbornness, and defiance of the laws of God
God Wisdom	Envy, jealousy, and ignorance of the laws of God
God Harmony	Indecision, self-pity, and self-justification
God Gratitude	Ingratitude, thoughtlessness, and spiritual blindness
God Justice	Injustice, frustration, and anxiety
God Reality	Dishonesty, intrigue, and treachery
God Vision	Selfishness, self-love, and idolatry
God Victory	Resentment, revenge, and retaliation

In many ways, the negative traits identified on the karmic clock are similar to the cardinal sins spoken of by theologians for centuries.³⁴ If we engage in any of these activities, negative karma almost always results. The positive attributes in the above table are prefaced by the word “God” in order to convey its deeper spiritual meaning. For example, the concept of God love has a much broader connotation than the concept of human love.

As an example of how to use the cosmic clock, suppose you identify in yourself the tendency to feel criticism, condemnation, and judgment towards other people. To help overcome these negative feelings and motivations, you could meditate or think about the goodness found in God’s power or the power of God’s goodness. When we thus reflect upon that aspect of God’s

³⁴ The seven cardinal or deadly sins are usually identified as pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. See, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins.

goodness, it helps to fortify our mind and feelings so that our actions tend to express goodwill rather than to criticize, condemn, or judge someone.

Assistance from the Spiritual Hierarchy

There are many such tools and techniques freely available on the Internet or taught in the several schools of spiritual thought found around the world. One of the other ways to advance the evolution of the soul on earth is to seek assistance from the spiritual hierarchy who serve God. In virtually every religion, there is thought to be a hierarchy of heavenly beings ministering to the needs of humanity and life in general. Different names are given to these gods and goddesses, world teachers, saints, masters, angels, archangels, and Elohim. However, their functions across most cultures are similar.³⁵ If you accept the existence of God, then acceptance of a spiritual hierarchy assisting God is not outside the realm of possibility.³⁶

Members of the spiritual hierarchy have specific functions and are organized in a hierarchical fashion, reflecting their level of spirituality and mastery in some attribute or quality of God's character. In many ways, the spiritual characteristics of these divine beings are similar to the character of our own soul. The fact that we have historical figures who are members of the spiritual hierarchy, such as Jesus, Gautama, and the saints, gives credence to the idea that we, too, may have a larger spiritual contribution to make to God's plan after we have mastered the proper use of free will in time and space.

³⁵ A short listing of how angels are referred to in various religions can be found in Sonya Hudson, "How Angels Are Viewed by Different Religions," *Lifebodysoul.com*, 2017, <https://www.lifebodysoul.com/how-angels-are-viewed-by-different-religions-2/>.

³⁶ According to a CBS report from December 2011: "A new Associated Press-GfK poll shows that 77 percent of adults believe these ethereal beings are real." See, "Poll: Nearly 8 in 10 Americans believe in angels," December 23, 2011, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-nearly-8-in-10-americans-believe-in-angels/>.

Anecdotal evidence for the existence of a spiritual hierarchy is found fairly widely around the world, especially in the form of prayer and supplication.³⁷ It is an interesting fact that scientific research has shown that, while there are many kinds of prayers, they have similarities that go back thousands of years across almost all regions and cultures.³⁸ Widespread belief in a spiritual hierarchy is not scientific proof that a spiritual hierarchy actually exists. Nonetheless, there are countless instances of people who have recorded benefits from trying to work with God's spiritual representatives over the centuries. If we believe in God, then it seems entirely appropriate for us to ask for spiritual blessings now and then along the path of life.

Benefits of Expressing the Character of One's Soul

While the rewards in heaven may be great for a soul upon graduating from the earth's schoolroom, there are also practical benefits for the individual who knows and reflects the character of his or her soul while in embodiment. How people can find fulfillment in life has been a topic for philosophical discussion from ancient times to the present.³⁹ Philosophers over the centuries have often agreed that individuals need to discover and become their true self, if they are to achieve balance and happiness in life.⁴⁰

³⁷ "More than half (55%) of Americans say they pray every day, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, while 21% say they pray weekly or monthly and 23% say they seldom or never pray.... 45% of Americans – and a majority of Christians (55%) – say they rely a lot on prayer and personal religious reflection when making major life decisions. The same survey found that 63% of Christians in the U.S. say praying regularly is an essential part of their Christian identity." See, "5 facts about prayer," <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/04/5-facts-about-prayer/>.

³⁸ See, "Forms Of Prayer In The Religions Of The World," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/prayer/Forms-of-prayer-in-the-religions-of-the-world>.

³⁹ The modern philosophers that come immediately to mind are Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. MacIntyre believes that Aristotle's ethics of virtue best describes the reality of human nature, in that these virtues are essential moral qualities needed to fulfill the potential of man. Taylor believes that we should view self as a moral agent, because we essentially are ethical beings related to God in some way. See, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 3rd ed. (Norte Dame, IN: University of Norte Dame Press, 2007), and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ In addition to MacIntyre and Taylor, a few of the philosophers following this quest for the good life include Confucius, Lao Tzu, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, al Farabi, Mill, Gandhi, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Rawls, Kant, and many other well-known political, ethical, and theological thinkers.

In this book, the best part of a person is defined as the person's inner quality, which can be viewed as either the character of the soul or the essential goodness derived from empathy and altruism found commonly among many species. It is important to note that the inner quality can be discovered and expressed regardless of one's spiritual beliefs or personal philosophy. The key is finding something of great value within oneself and then, most importantly, taking accountability and living according to its standards.

Chapter 2: Understanding What Is Meant by God's Will

Understanding the will of God in its entirety seems impossible for mankind, if only because of the vastness of the universe.⁴¹ Furthermore, the universe is mostly composed of dark energy and dark matter, of which we have very little understanding.⁴² The universe also appears to be multidimensional.⁴³ The human brain itself is theoretically able to process information in up to 11 dimensions.⁴⁴ When we factor in the possibility of various spiritual dimensions, we are left with a universe of astounding complexity.

Complexity in itself does not prove or disprove the existence of God. In the absence of absolute proof, the existence of God can only be accepted or rejected by each person individually. For me, the proof of God begins with the question of whether I have a spiritual side to my being. My experience in discovering a source of goodness within my consciousness, which cannot be attributed to anything material that I am aware of, strongly suggests to me that there exists a spiritual side of myself. If I have such a spiritual side, then others must as well. And once you

⁴¹ Consider these facts. The Milky Way is one of an estimated 100 billion to 200 billion galaxies in the universe, and there are an estimated 100 billion planets in the Milky Way alone. See, "100 Billion Alien Planets Fill Our Milky Way Galaxy: Study," *Science.com*, January 2, 2013, <https://www.space.com/19103-milky-way-100-billion-planets.html>. The age of the universe has been calculated by NASA's Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe to be 13.772 billion years, with an uncertainty of 59 million years. The European Space Agency's Planck spacecraft estimated the age of the universe to be 13.82 billion years. See, "How Old is the Universe?" *Space.com*, June 7, 2017, <https://www.space.com/24054-how-old-is-the-universe.html>. The diameter of the observable universe is a sphere of around 92 billion light-years. See, "How Big is the Universe?" *Space.com*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.space.com/24073-how-big-is-the-universe.html>.

⁴² About 68% of the universe is dark energy and dark matter makes up about 27%. The observable universe makes up less than 5% of the universe. NASA, "Dark Energy, Dark Matter," <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-is-dark-energy>.

⁴³ See, Matt Williams, "A universe of 10 dimensions," *Universe Today*, December 11, 2014, <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-universe-dimensions.html>; and Donavan Mason, "The Physics of Everything: Understanding Superstring Theory," *Futurism*, September 10, 2015, <https://futurism.com/brane-science-complex-notions-of-superstring-theory/>.

⁴⁴ Andrew Masterson, "How your brain works in 11 dimensions," *Cosmos*, June 13, 2017, <https://cosmosmagazine.com/mathematics/how-your-brain-works-in-11-dimensions>. The scientific paper explaining the mathematical model of this may be found in Michael W. Reimann, et al., "Cliques of Neurons Bound into Cavities Provide a Missing Link between Structure and Function," *frontiers in Computational Neuroscience*, June 12, 2017, <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fncom.2017.00048/full>.

accept a spiritual side of life, then consideration of whether and how to align one's will with the will of God becomes relevant.

The Science of Karma

In seeking to understand God's will, an understanding of the operation of karma can be helpful.

The science of karma is most easily expressed in terms of variants of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. To have a positive outcome of karma requires that individuals engage their free will to make the best moral choice they can under the circumstances they find themselves in.⁴⁵ By definition, such morally correct choices are in alignment with God's will. Because of its cause and effect sequences in rewarding good choices, karma is often considered the soul's greatest teacher in learning how to properly use free will.

As shown in the earlier discussion of the karmic clock, there are ways to use the science of karma to speed up the learning of lessons in life. One alternative method to learn these lessons is to meditate on the lives of the saints and great teachers of mankind, thereby gaining insight into proper moral behavior in all kinds of earthly conditions and experiences.⁴⁶ Another method is to reflect on God's goodness from different paradigms. For example, try meditating on what is meant by the goodness of God's impersonal impersonality, impersonal personality, personal

⁴⁵ An interesting article on the Buddhist concept of karma can be seen in Barbara O'Brien, "The Role of Karma in Buddhist Morality," *Rethinking Religion*, February 10, 2017, <https://rethinkingreligion-book.info/the-role-of-karma-in-buddhist-morality/>.

⁴⁶ One of the classics in this approach is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

personality, and personal impersonality.⁴⁷ Similar to *Zen koans*, such exercises stretch the mind and allow insights to flow into one's consciousness.⁴⁸

A more psychological approach in speeding up the learning of moral lessons is to focus on specific spiritual virtues shared by groups of souls. These categories of virtues have sometimes been referred to as "rays" of God.⁴⁹ In essence, knowing one's ray or character-type helps to identify certain common tendencies found in personality groups. This knowledge can assist the person in understanding himself, which can result in making life-choices that are often more productive, self-satisfying, and more attuned to his or her soul than if the person had little or no knowledge of self. Understanding the spiritual and material aspects of ourselves helps us to better understand those portions of God's will that have a direct bearing on our lives.

A ray of God is an identifiable divine attribute or general virtue. Different people have different virtues; however, many virtues share common characteristics and can be grouped together in a specific ray. People on different rays tend to find it easier to approach God through specific paths. For example, some people feel closer to God as they worship with others in a church; some people feel closer to God as they walk alone in a forest or desert; some people feel closer to God when they look at art; some feel closer to God as they look into the eyes of a child. Some

⁴⁷ I have not been able to find the original source of this concept of God, but it appears to have its origins in ancient Vedic literature. There, Brahman is given the personal and impersonal attributes of God. See, Swami Mukhyananda, "The Vedic Concept of God in all its aspects," *eSamskriti*, November 2002, <https://www.esamskriti.com/e/Spirituality/Vedanta/The-Vedic-Concept-Of-God-In-All-Its-Aspects-1.aspx>. For a related discussion of what God is from the theosophical point of view, see "The Impersonal Divine," *Theosophy*, <https://blavatskytheosophy.com/the-impersonal-divine/>.

⁴⁸ For a delightful collection of *Zen koans*, such as the sound of one hand clapping, see "Zen Koans," <http://www.ashidakim.com/zenkoans/zenindex.html>.

⁴⁹ A brief history of the esoteric tradition of the "Seven Rays" can be found in *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_rays. A large library of material explaining the various rays and their spiritual and practical application can be found among the publications of the Summit Lighthouse: <https://www.summitlighthouse.org/>. Use the site's search engine to explore material discussing the "seven rays."

people do not identify with God at all, but rather are uplifted spiritually when they feel the movement of the Tao flowing everywhere around and through them.⁵⁰

Here we will consider nine commonly identified rays of power, love, wisdom, purity, truth, ministration, justice, freedom, and integration. Again, the objective in our discussion is not to be definitive or inclusive, but to examine some of the ways individuals can gain greater alignment with the will of God through attunement with the character of their souls. What follows is a brief explanation of the rays' virtues and how they might be expressed in practice.

- **Power.** An individual following this ray would often approach the alignment of their will with the will of God through action, that is, putting into tangible efforts and results their interpretation of God's will. Common activities include holding positions of leadership, public service, policy making, security, and management. Finding, identifying with, and expressing the power of God is the motivation of the soul within this person. An example of the proper use of power: Be a good leader concerned with the wellbeing of those for whom one is responsible.
- **Love.** An individual following this path would likely seek to align his or her will with the will of God because of devotion to the Creator of all things. Expressing that love by doing what he or she feels God wants them to do would be characteristic of this kind of person. Having deep feelings of love are often as important as the expression of love. This individual is usually sensitive to the needs of others. Example of proper use of love: Love God and all of life as one would love oneself.

⁵⁰ See the classic Chinese book by Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, from the 6th century B.C.

- **Wisdom.** A person pursuing this path to align one's will with the will of God would most likely focus on gaining knowledge and understanding of reality. This kind of individual matures spiritually by gaining wisdom and thereby an expanded awareness of man's relationship with God. Having gained that insight, the individual can retain it or share it; however, the most common way is to share one's wisdom in order to benefit society and mankind as a whole. Example of proper use of wisdom: Seek to gain greater understanding of the workings of the universe and then share that knowledge freely with all.
- **Purity.** An individual pursuing this path to align his or her will with the will of God is often characterized by a need for discipline in order to empty oneself of all negative thoughts, emotions, memories, and actions. The goal of the person may be to become a crystal-clear chalice ready to be filled with God's own purity of consciousness. This person seeks to become a clear prism through which the pure light of God can flow for the blessings of all mankind. Example of proper use of purity: Discipline the body, mind, and feelings, so that one can be a pure vessel for the flow of God's blessings to everyone.
- **Truth.** An individual on this path seeking to align his or her will with the will of God would primarily be interested in facts, not fiction, myth, or unproven theories. This person seeks to expel ignorance and error and to replace these with true perceptions of reality. The goal of the person often is to understand reality as it is and as it ought to be, in order to gain greater insight into God's will. Example of proper use of truth: Seek truth in all things and do not hide that light under a basket.
- **Ministration.** An individual seeking to align his or her will with the will of God through this approach would seek above all to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and minister unto

those in need. It is through these actions that they serve the will of God and demonstrate their love of life. Many saints have walked this path, and they are among the best of humanity because of their self-sacrifice in helping others. Example of proper use of ministration: Care for those in need, as all are precious in the eyes of God.

- **Justice.** An individual using this path to merge his or her will with the will of God would often focus on bringing justice and fairness to the world. Justice and fairness are among the noblest of social goals, because such conditions enable civilization and culture to take root and flourish. A person on the ray of justice would sense an internal need to try to ensure that every man, woman, and child are properly honored, respected, and fairly treated. Example of proper use of justice: When asked to do so, judge all things with a view toward truth, fairness, and mercy.
- **Freedom.** An individual pursuing this approach to align his or her will with the will of God seeks above all to ensure that all humanity are free to pursue their divine destiny on earth. This person almost always believes that God gave the soul free will and that it is up to the individual in embodiment to learn how to master and properly use that free will in every aspect of life. This lesson can only be learned if one is free from all forms of tyranny. Example of proper use of freedom: Treasure freedom and opportunity in your heart and strive to convey those gifts to all people so they may become their true selves.
- **Integration.** An individual seeking to align his or her will with the will of God through this path is motivated by a deep desire for merger between God, the soul, and outer consciousness. This person perceives and treasures wholeness and completeness in life, and believes in the free flow of energy between spirit and matter, as through the Holy Spirit. The path of integration blends many of the other paths together. Example of proper

use of integration: Seek to understand and act on the merger of spirit and matter in personal and social life.

It is important to keep in mind that, even though there are pragmatic and rational ways to enhance one's spiritual knowledge and abilities, the amount of negative karma we have generated individually and collectively throughout history is immense. To seek to balance all of this karma on our own – while possible for certain individuals – can seem to be an insurmountable task for many of us. We should do our best to bear our own burdens, to carry our karmic weight so to speak. But let us never forget that God is merciful and that God's representatives are willing and able to assist us whenever possible. The universal sense of wanting to help others is the essence of the spiritual community of goodwill which has inspired countless visions of ideal political systems since at least the time of Plato's *Republic*.

Challenges in Knowing and Doing God's Will

Knowing what God wants us to do in a given situation, as well as actually doing it, can be challenging for a least three reasons: (1) individuals often have limited control over their outer consciousness; (2) many people fear that doing God's will might stretch their human capabilities to the breaking point; and (3) people are concerned that God may want them to do something that runs counter to their own notions of what is right and wrong.

In the case of the first challenge, the problem stems largely from the fact that many individuals do not have sufficient control over their wandering mind. Meeting this challenge is mostly a matter of developing greater self-discipline so that one's consciousness can be managed.

Learning various techniques of concentration and meditation can help one gain greater control of the mind. Many of these techniques can be found on the Internet and are taught in most schools of spiritual thought.

The second challenge has to do with fear of being hurt while doing God's will. While fear is a natural instinct, it can be largely controlled through knowledge of the situation. In the case of fearing God's will, knowledge of the true nature of the soul is important, because the soul is timeless and indestructible from a human perspective. Meeting this challenge, therefore, is mostly a matter of gaining understanding of one's true self.

The third challenge is caused by a disruption in the person's predetermined notion of what is the proper thing to do.⁵¹ Because God has a wider view of reality than human beings, His guidance may at times seem at variance with what we ourselves would prefer to do. Meeting this challenge can be achieved by trusting that God's intentions are good and having a high level of faith in the ultimate fairness of God's plan.

When we look at the challenges that stand in the way of aligning our will with the will of God, we can see that they largely stem from two factors. First, our spiritual understanding is limited; and second, our sense of self-identification is too strongly connected to our material existence. These conditions cause us to overestimate the power and value of our human attributes and to underestimate the power and value of our spiritual attributes. Because we know the limitations of our material existence, we tend instinctively to draw back from situations in which our personal comfort zones are threatened. By not having a correct understanding of the proper balance between our material and spiritual sides, we often miss the larger picture of reality which would

⁵¹ The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) touched on this issue when discussing man's spiritual dilemma when his personal morality is seemingly contradicted by what God wants him to do. He illustrated this by the story, from Genesis 22:1-18, of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. See Kierkegaard's book *Fear and Trembling*, in which he argues that ethical belief embedded in social institutions do not always deserve our obedience. He concludes that some things, such as obedience to God, on occasion may be the highest moral mandate for individuals.

clarify our moral challenges and enable our responses to be better aligned with the character of our soul and the will of God.

Self-Identification and Self-Improvement

There are several things we can do to expand our sense of self-identification and thereby improve ourselves. These include trusting oneself and God, strengthening moral courage, developing greater self-control and self-discipline, and widening our understanding of reason and rationality.

Developing Trust

In improving oneself, it is important to have trust in God and trust in ourselves. Trust and faith complement each other. We need to have faith and trust in God that His ultimate purpose is not to harm our soul. We need to have faith and trust in ourselves that we will not stop trying to improve materially and spiritually. If we have faith and trust, then we can roll with the punches when life gets rough and be resilient enough to rebound when opportunity arises – as it almost always does. If we trust God and ourselves, then we can make a stronger personal commitment to more closely align our will with the will of God. This commitment actively engages our free will and enables us to more confidently face each day's challenges with the conviction that eventually we will become our true self.

Strengthening Moral Courage

Nature has given us evolutionary instincts to both survive our challenges and to rise above them through personal, social, and species transcendence. Survival and transcendence both require moral courage to try to do what has not been done before, to step into the unknown, to risk present comfort for potential benefit. We need to strengthen our moral courage to improve alignment between our will and the will of God, because such alignment often requires adjustment in some areas of our lives.

Reinforcing Self-Control and Self-Discipline

Although there are conditions, such as living in a totalitarian state in which hope and freedom can be crushed out of individuals, it is more often the case that it is we ourselves who determine whether we will succeed in our soul's purposes on earth. To succeed in aligning our will with the will of God requires that we not only love God, but that we also bring our thoughts, memories, emotions, and physical actions under control so that we can function with goodwill as our principal moral standard. Self-control and self-discipline are what enable us to properly use free will to improve ourselves and society.

Enhancing Reason and Rationality

One of the defining characteristics of humanity is our ability to use reason and rationality to address challenges and uncertainties in life. Our minds automatically look for patterns of cause and effect, because recognizing those patterns enables us to function more efficiently. As useful as this capability is, the downside is that our mind's ordering of reality makes us vulnerable to biases and misperceptions.⁵² To limit the influence of these biases and misperceptions, we need to learn to use the brain's inherent capacity to process multiple dimensions of reality. Using the higher mind in this way expands the horizons within which reason and rationality function. The net result is that we see the nexus between our material and spiritual sides more clearly, thus improving our understanding of self so as to better align our will with the will of God.

⁵² As an example of how these biases impact the analysis of national intelligence, see Richards J. Heuer, Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999), especially Chapter 11: "Biases in Perception of Cause and Effect." Available in pdf at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/psychology-of-intelligence-analysis/PsychofIntelNew.pdf>.

Chapter 3: Human and Divine Interests

A comparison of human and divine interests is not often found in the literature; however, one area of common interest would presumably be the expansion of goodness and goodwill within the domains of human existence. We reasonably assume that God is good, and from observation we can also assume that most people have a fundamental character of goodness.⁵³ Mankind's goodness appears to originate from two possible sources: the character of the soul and the evolutionary traits of empathy and altruism. Given the opportunity, most human beings will try to improve themselves and frequently ask for God's assistance in doing so.⁵⁴ When man works to expand goodness in his world, the interests of God and the interests of man are parallel and the alignment of God's will and man's will becomes more likely.

Mutual Interests between God and Man

Without being exhaustive, reason would suggest that there are at least two important areas of common interests between God and man:

1. The progressive and positive evolution of the soul, reflected in the expansion of human goodness for the blessing and wellbeing of all life.
2. Sufficient protection of the earth and the natural environment to allow for continuation of life on the planet.

All human activity which seeks to advance the evolution of the soul and body of man in a positive direction, which seeks to improve the wellbeing of individual and social life for people,

⁵³ See, Adrian F. Ward, "Scientists Probe Human Nature--and Discover We Are Good, After All," *Scientific American*, November 20, 2012, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientists-probe-human-nature-and-discover-we-are-good-after-all/>.

⁵⁴ See the Pew Research Center survey conducted in December 2017, in which only about 10 percent of Americans do not believe in anything spiritual, while 75 percent try to talk to God or a higher power in the universe. "When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?" *Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life*, April 25, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/04/25/when-americans-say-they-believe-in-god-what-do-they-mean/>.

and which seeks to protect the environment and treat other forms of life with respect for their roles in the ecosystem – these activities would appear to be in the mutual interests of God and mankind. Included within these broad categories is a vast scope of human endeavors within virtually every aspect of individual and social life.

The existence of these common interests suggests that it is possible to establish a partnership between God and man, whereby the spiritual and material interests of both are served. God does not want or need us to only worship Him. God wants us to cooperate with Him to expand goodness to our fellowman and other parts of life. Engaging in this partnership with our free will not only benefits us individually and collectively, it also puts our species into greater harmony with the natural environment.

[Outcomes and Goals to Serve Human and Divine Interests](#)

From the above discussion, we can speculate that mankind in a partnership with God could focus on three key outcomes:

- Advance the evolution of the soul and body of man in a positive direction.
- Improve the wellbeing of individual and social life for people everywhere.
- Protect the environment and treat other forms of life with respect and a gentle hand whenever possible.

These projected outcomes address the key issue of how to improve conditions of life on earth. They are not ideological or partisan; they do not advance the interests of one country over another. They are logical derivatives of what a partnership between God and man might accomplish in the expression of goodness and goodwill on the planet. Within these broad goals, certain objectives and aspirations come to mind.

Advance the Evolution of the Soul and Body of Man

Objectives and aspirations to advance the evolution of the body and soul of man are based on considerations of the soul's purpose for being embodied in the first place. If the human body cannot sustain its existence on earth or becomes severely mutated in a negative way, then the vehicle for our soul's evolution is inadequate. This means that mankind ought to do everything possible to ensure that the soul has a suitable physical, emotional, and mental platform through which to learn its lessons on the proper use of free will in time and space.

This fundamental goal can be implemented through activities in politics, society, culture, ethics, religion, and personal behavior. We do not want to harm our own evolution spiritually or materially; we want to strengthen and improve our evolution. The most basic requirements for strengthening the positive evolution of mankind are ensuring humanity's survival and improving mankind's ability to overcome significant challenges to our wellbeing.

Advancing the Evolution of the Soul

To advance the evolution of the soul on earth, mankind should remember that the purpose of the soul's sojourn in embodiment is to learn the proper use of free will in the dimensions of time and space. This purpose is achieved when individuals identify the character of their souls and express that character to the best of their abilities in daily life. To learn the proper use of free will, people need to have as much personal and social freedom as possible. Freedom of choice is needed because the laws of karma facilitate the individual's learning the positive and negative results of their actions. If people have very limited freedom of choice, then the operation of karma is of limited use in learning how to make proper decisions.

As an overall objective, humanity ought to encourage political, social, and cultural conditions supportive of the evolution of the soul on earth. Examples of objectives and aspirations to advance this purpose might include:

- Ensure that all people have freedom of religion and the right to hold personal spiritual beliefs, so that individuals may pursue their relationship with God in whatever fashion they consider to be most beneficial to themselves and others.
- Encourage the expression of one's personal spirituality and celebrate within society various religious festivals and holidays.
- Do not discriminate against those who belong to a different religion or who follow a different path towards spirituality; do not wage war because of differing religions or cultures.
- Educate the youth on spiritual traditions around the world, so they may understand the different ways of looking at God and maintaining man's relationship with the Creator.
- Include representatives of the various religions in policy discussions related to the wellbeing of man, so that all viewpoints can be expressed and better understood by everyone.
- Maintain a careful balance between church and state in society and politics, so that both institutions can play their essential roles in the spiritual and material evolution of humanity.
- Acknowledge the validity of divine revelation and integrate these insights with civil law in ways that are rational and beneficial to individuals and society.
- Always ensure that justice, fairness, and mercy are part of all adjudication.

It is important to remember in this context that the goal is to create conditions on earth so that the soul can evolve efficiently by learning how to use free will through its embodiment in time and space. These conditions are best met when religious freedom is allowed and human beings are encouraged to become better acquainted with their own spirituality.

Advancing the Evolution of the Body

The material side of man plays a vital role in the spiritual evolution of the soul, because the physical body is the instrument which enables the soul to learn mastery of free will in time and space. Like a team of wild horses, the various dimensions of the body (physical, emotional, mental, and etheric) must be brought under the mind's control to ensure the body's alignment with the character of the soul. As the character of the soul becomes more of the predominant character of the individual in embodiment, the true self begins to emerge in the world of form. Therefore, the primary objective in advancing the evolution of the human body is to enable the person to become his or her true self through the expression of the character of their soul. We ought to ensure that our body is healthy and appropriate for the soul's use during its embodiment. Some practical steps to help achieve this objective might be:

- Encourage the adoption of government policies and social traditions that respect and promote proper care of the body.
- Provide for the body's nourishment and wellbeing to ensure that, to the fullest extent possible, the bodies of citizens are healthy and able to be a good instrument for the expression of their souls.
- Train individuals on how to expand their consciousness through greater self-mastery of the natural capabilities of the brain and mind.
- Continuously work to improve the protection of individuals, communities, societies, and culture from preventable harm, whether natural or manmade.
- Support the development of science and technology to expand the horizons of mankind's knowledge so that people's lives can be improved in as many ways as possible.

- Establish many centers of excellence to study the higher potential of mankind and to freely bring to everyone knowledge of how this potential might be developed.
- Sponsor fellowships and establish facilities to enable researchers to find solutions to mankind's most harmful health issues.

These and similar social goals can assist individuals to maintain a proper lifestyle and healthy body so that a positive evolution of the human species is made more probable than if the human body was weak and unhealthy.

Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals and Society

The quality of life both individually and socially is very important to the development of the soul in embodiment. A supportive community can encourage and assist the individual in learning to master free will in ways that are safe, free, and helpful. To enable the soul in embodiment to mature in a proper way requires support from the community as well as sufficient personal freedom to make consequential decisions. Making such decisions balances karmic debts and helps the person learn to make correct choices in life. Some of the steps that might be taken to advance the goal of improving the wellbeing of the individual and society include the following.

Improving the Wellbeing of Individuals

All people possess a distinct individuality that is reflective of the character of their soul. They also possess powerful minds and manipulative skills that can help them create myriad things with matter, energy, and time. Individuals also possess a strong need for freedom of choice which they instinctively want to use to make personal decisions in life. Possessing and expressing these natural capabilities and needs are essential to the soul striving to learn the proper use of free will on earth. Personal and social guidelines that could enhance these capabilities and serve these needs include:

- Recognize and acknowledge the unique qualities and value of each person.
- Respect the individual and his or her contributions that can benefit society.
- Encourage the individual to develop their good character to the maximum extent possible.
- Advocate the need for each individual to live a balanced, productive, and positive life based on the principle that people should use the talents and opportunities given them to help make the world a better place.
- Ensure that social institutions exist to provide advice and assistance to help individuals overcome temporary difficulties, while at the same time affirming that no one should take advantage of the system in order to live off the efforts of others.
- Implement thoughtful and effective policies at governmental, social, and cultural levels to help protect the individual from outside sources of harm, empower the individual's self-expression in a constructive manner, and provide to the extent possible ample opportunity for the individual to freely explore and expand their capabilities for the benefit of self and society.

An individual's wellbeing can be greatly influenced by the type of society and government in which he or she lives. In general, societies and governments that allow citizens to enjoy as much personal freedom as possible seem better able to meet the needs of modern, educated people than societies and governments that seek to limit individual freedom and creativity. The reason for this is not ideological or philosophical. Human beings are part of nature, and nature is constantly evolving in response to laws of physics and biology beyond the power of man to control. In this dynamic universe, the full potential of individuals can only be realized if they are free to explore and express the material and spiritual sides of themselves.

Improving the Wellbeing of Society

People are individuals, but they are also members of various communities, societies, and cultures. Because people are social as well as autonomous beings, their social environment is highly important to their material and spiritual development. The goal, then, in improving the wellbeing of society is to create and sustain a social environment that enables the soul to learn the proper use of free will in both an individual and social context. This is a critical lesson in the soul's evolution, because to be in a creative partnership with God requires the soul to be able to assume responsibility as an autonomous agent as well as to work well with others.

The goal for the wellbeing of society is not to make its institutions permanent but rather to make institutions flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the soul in embodiment. Some of the aspirational guidelines that can be used to improve the social environment of the individual are as follows:

- Promote and support the family as the basis of society; encourage parents to teach their children the highest moral standards and the need to discover and express their best self, as well to become respected and responsible members of society.
- Institute programs honoring mothers, fathers, and children to acknowledge and celebrate the key roles they play in society; train children in proper cultural and social mannerisms, so they will be equipped to engage effectively with society and to feel comfortable with various groups and cultures.
- Ensure that social institutions do not become ends in themselves but rather serve the needs and interests of citizens; ensure that representatives of social organizations have a place at the table for policy discussions on how such organizations can best support the people.

- Sponsor research to study and understand social influences on the lives of individuals and communities, and apply this understanding to improve society's support to its members based on solid scientific evidence.
- Encourage individuals as part of their civic responsibility to join social groups and to contribute to the success of worthy projects, including philanthropy; encourage all citizens to be responsible for their own conditions and not to depend on society's handouts.
- Ensure that laws and regulations are clearly defined and enforced fairly and expeditiously; ensure that elections are fair and open to all citizens, and hold all government officials accountable for their activities and performance in office; limit the power of special interest groups, so that the few cannot control or take advantage of the many.
- Promote a culture of excellence in all things and encourage everyone to do their best in all that they do for the interests of self and society.

The most important principle behind these prescriptions is that society ought to focus its attention on benefitting the people, not on preserving the power of leaders, institutions, or organizations.

Protect Other Parts of Life and the Environment

The third large area of mutual interests between God and man is the need for humans to do what they can to protect other parts of life and to sustain the environment on which all depend. It is important to protect other parts of life, because all lifeforms have roles to play in the interdependent ecosystems within which we live. Although processes of natural selection take place constantly within evolution and cataclysmic events do occur periodically which are

destructive to virtually every living creature, human beings have the unique ability to decide whether to preserve or destroy other species. At the same time, our understanding of the interdependencies of life is not sufficient to determine what the impact of our activities will be when we attempt to alter the balance of life on the planet.

Neither is mankind's interaction with the environment well understood, as illustrated by the uncertainties surrounding the role of humans in climate change. Rather than assuming it is acceptable to stress parts of the planetary environment thought to be inexhaustible or non-essential, we ought instead to protect the environment and the global ecosystem to the greatest extent possible, while still allowing societies to advance in the best way they are able. Some of the goals we might adopt to help preserve other parts of life and to help protect the environment are listed below.

Protecting Other Parts of Life

To protect and preserve other parts of life serves the pragmatic interests of mankind. Human beings will always leave a big footprint on the natural world; however, our species ought not to engage in the wholesale destruction of other forms of life for sport or greed, or out of ignorance or indifference. The goal in this area of mutual interest is to develop within mankind a recognition that all lifeforms have roles to play in the planetary ecosystem and therefore have value.⁵⁵ We ourselves are part of and not separate from the natural world. Some of the policies and objectives that could advance this recognition of mutual interdependence are as follows:

⁵⁵ The close relationship between all forms of life and the physical environment in which they live is described in Carolyn M. Malmstrom, "Ecologists Study the Interactions of Organisms and Their Environment," *Nature Education Knowledge Project*, <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/ecologists-study-the-interactions-of-organisms-and-13235586>.

- Research the interconnectivity, interrelationship, and interdependency between human beings and other parts of life, so that policy designed to protect life on the planet is based on science and proven fact.
- Institute laws and regulations to limit unnecessary destruction of animal and plant life, with a goal to achieve a balance between the needs of mankind and preservation of the essential ecosystem.
- Inculcate a culture of respect for all parts of life, reflected in a sense of moral responsibility to do what we can to protect life, preserve the natural environment, and help maintain a proper balance in nature.
- Teach children to appreciate the preciousness of life, with a view toward seeing themselves as part of the whole of life rather than a separate entity standing above all else.
- Establish scientific, research, and governance organizations at regional and international levels to support activities beneficial to the preservation of the natural environment for the benefit of both humans and other species.
- Encourage all governments, societies, cultures, and peoples to live in harmony with other parts of life and to limit destruction of the natural habitat.

The goal of these and similar suggestions is to develop well-conceived policies, laws, and regulations designed to protect life on the planet from unnecessary harm.

Protecting the Environment

Closely related to protecting life is protecting the environment and the ecosystem on which all life depends. This is a practical and ethical obligation for all mankind, because the resources of the planet are vast but not unlimited. As demands on the earth's resources increase over time,

there needs to be agreement among mankind on how best to use natural resources in a balanced, fair, and carefully managed way. If this is not done, then demands from some countries will exhaust the diminishing supplies of certain critical resources. Such conditions have in the past led to sharp conflicts between nations and peoples. Some of the objectives and aspirations that might be adopted to help protect the environment and better manage the ecosystem are as follows:

- Educate government and the private sector on the importance of the environment to the sustainability of everyone on the planet.
- Promote citizen responsibility to do what they can to not waste resources or ruin the environment through excessive exploitation and needless pollution.
- Encourage governments to establish large regions within their jurisdiction to protect the natural environment from over-development, so that future generations can enjoy nature and develop their societies with the continued availability of resources.
- Support the development of advanced technologies that limit the human footprint on the environment even while improving the quality of life for people everywhere.
- Commission in-depth and objective scientific studies on the effects of climate change on societies around the world and translate their findings into actionable policy at every level of government.
- Promote awareness of mankind's interconnectivity with all of life and nature so that people will have greater love and respect for their planetary home.

Protecting life and the environment are preconditions for the spiritual and material evolution of the soul on the planet. If individuals develop proper respect for other parts of life and the larger ecosystem, then individuals will have a benevolent attitude toward life in general. Human beings

have the right to use the world's natural resources, but no one has the right to destroy vast segments of the natural environment in their quest for short-term personal benefit.

Idealism and Pragmatism in Public Policy

The objectives, aspirations, and policy guidelines listed above are just a few examples of the direction mankind might take in aligning the will of man with the will of God through personal and social commitment to a few common goals. These goals are to advance the evolution of the soul and human body, improve the wellbeing of individuals and society, and protect other parts of life and the environment to the practical extent possible. These goals are not onerous, irrational, or unprecedented. Many of the policies and objectives are already being considered or implemented by governments and societies around the world. They are restated here to show that is indeed possible for mankind to work with God and the higher potential of human evolution with relatively little change in human attitudes and behavior. Indeed, these goals are natural to most of us, because they reflect our conceptualization of how our true self should act in the world.

In considering idealism and pragmatism in public policy, it is worth remembering that, spiritually speaking, God intends for man to have a good life because the wellbeing of individuals is conducive to the evolution of their soul. The soul is not the enemy of the body; nor is the body the enemy of the soul. Moderation, balance, healthy food, rest, exercise, control of destructive emotions, avoidance of depression, and decent political and social policies – all of these are good for the body of man and helpful to the soul as it learns the proper use of free will here on earth.

Chapter 4: Increasing Goodwill

Variations in the human condition are vast, making it almost impossible to capture in a few words how the will of every person can be brought into alignment with the will of God. One common denominator in almost all approaches to this alignment, however, is an individual's feeling and expression of goodwill. But why should we be good? The simple and logical answer is that we should do good things because it makes us feel better about ourselves. This is a scientific fact. Research psychologists have found that people feel happier when they help others.⁵⁶

One of the reasons they feel happier is because doing good things activates the neurochemicals endorphin, oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine through the limbic system of the brain.⁵⁷ The release of those chemicals is a natural phenomenon related to mankind's basic survival instincts: we do good things because under normal conditions it helps us to live better as individuals and society. By contrast, the "fight-or-flight" response is for emergencies or highly stressful situations.⁵⁸ Below are a few steps I have found which can contribute to an increase in personal goodwill.

Identify the Good in Oneself

There are many reasons why we should act with goodwill whenever possible. We are taught to be good by our families, schools, churches, sports and coaches, friends and neighbors, bosses and colleagues. However, being good because we are taught to do so is not the same as being good because we are expressing the goodness within ourselves. To be able to express goodness

⁵⁶ Melinda Wenner, "Study: Doing Good Makes You Feel Good," *Live Science*, May 4, 2007, <https://www.livescience.com/4443-study-good-feel-good.html>.

⁵⁷ "Boost your natural 'feelgood' chemicals," *Psychologies*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.psychologies.co.uk/self/how-to-boost-your-natural-feelgood-chemicals.html>.

⁵⁸ See, "Understanding the stress response," *Harvard Health Publishing*, Harvard Medical School, May 1, 2018, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>.

in more than a rote fashion requires that we find the source of goodwill at the core of our sense of selfhood.

It is a worthwhile exercise to spend some moments each day to ponder the question: Where does goodness originate in my consciousness? When you do this exercise, I suggest you peel away layer after layer of explanation: family, friends, education, culture, and so forth. What you are looking for is the wellspring of goodness within yourself: a point of origin in you. In my case, I discovered that origin as a point of light that radiated certain qualities of goodness. Your discovery experience may be the same or different; however, the moment of discovery will probably forever change you.

[Reflect on the Source of Goodwill](#)

After you have found the point of original goodness within, it is useful to try to understand why that source of goodness actually exists. You can ask: Why, at the core of my self-awareness, do I sense a spark of goodwill?

Philosophers and scientists have pointed to at least two explanations. The first is spiritual: the spark of goodness is the character of one's true self or soul. In this explanation, the sense of goodness could be seen as a gift of God to human beings. The second explanation is evolutionary: the spark of goodness is probably genetically-based, a sense commonly shared among more advanced species such as human beings. That sense is empathy and altruism, which play important roles in social bonding to help mankind better survive the challenges of life from within a group.

Personally, the discovery of the source of my goodwill appeared to have a spiritual quality because of its purity and infinite potential of expression. I interpreted the source to be the character of my soul. On the other hand, I can understand and accept the rationality of the

empathy-altruism explanation. After thinking about this – two equally valid explanations for the source of inner goodness – I concluded that they were not contradictory at all and that both were probably true. This seemed reasonable, because God would certainly not only have spiritual expressions but also material expressions as well. So I decided to call the character of internal goodness within myself the “inner quality” to include both explanations.

Every person will probably have their own explanation for the inner quality. There is nothing wrong with that. The most important thing is that the inner goodness be recognized and then thought be given as to why it exists. Thinking about its source will help anchor goodwill into conscious awareness, where it can become a factor in decision making. Awareness of our internal goodness will help us gain greater self-control over our actions, thoughts, and feelings.

[Consider the Implications of Goodwill](#)

After having identified a rational explanation for goodness inside of self, one of the first considerations is whether you are the only person with an internal source of goodwill. To answer this question requires observation of the behavior of others. Although people can do despicable things, I believe most of us have experienced goodness from others or observed it as a third party. If most human beings appear to have a good side of their character, then what are some of the implications?

Having an inner quality of goodness across humanity suggests there is hope for mankind, both individually and collectively. If people naturally feel happier when they express goodness, then there is individual and social incentive to try to improve ourselves across the scope of human activity. We should also remember that wise men over the course of many civilizations have tried to define principles of morality to help us differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. There are, for example, important moral guidelines found in the Ten

Commandments and other ethical systems that remain valid today. It is a profitable exercise to read some of those texts to help identify a set of moral standards suitable to ourselves.

If individuals have an inner quality of goodness, then it is possible for each person to derive a personal code of moral behavior to guide them through life. The cumulative effect of citizens following a personal moral code is a strengthening of social ethics. A morally strong society is supportive of citizens working together for the commonweal in areas such as education, entertainment, the arts and sciences, and the solving of problems at all levels of complexity. In such a society, governmental policies and regulations are likely to be well conceived and fairly administered, and both leaders and citizens more likely to be respectful of each other's roles in society.

Another implication is that, if a core of goodness exists in every individual, then everyone has certain intrinsic value as a human being. Government, society, and culture should respect the value of individuals and allow their unique virtue of goodness to have free expression to the extent possible. If the creative energies of all citizens can be harnessed for the good of society, then great cultural, scientific, and technological achievements are possible within that society. This is one way that civilizations can be sustained over long periods of time.

[Expand Goodwill within Oneself](#)

Goodwill residing within everyone helps to advance and make real an ideal vision of the future.

However, we all know that the good and the bad are intertwined in society and that this has been the case throughout history. The duality in human character always stands in the way of moving forward in a positive direction, because good or bad motivations can change in a matter of moments. We can never control the motivations of others. We can only control to some extent

our own motivations. The issue, then, is how do we ensure that goodwill becomes our predominant motivation most of the time?

A first step is consciously determining to expand goodness inside of ourselves. We need a reason to make that kind of commitment. And the reason varies between individuals. Some may want to become a better person in order to serve the interests of mankind. Some may want to become a better person in order to please God or someone who is deeply loved and respected. Some want to become a better person because they feel a burning ambition to fulfill their potential as a constructive force in the world.

Whatever the reason one has to expand goodness within the self, the reason has to be sufficiently strong to engage one's commitment and determination to go the distance. Here we are talking about deep feelings in our consciousness. The first of these feelings is appreciation of one's inner quality; the second is the desire to express that inner quality of goodwill; and the third is a firm personal commitment to achieve one's goal. All of these feelings combine to create in one's mind a strong determination to become a better person.

Build a Character of Goodwill

A person's character is related to one's values and beliefs, and character can be changed with effort.⁵⁹ A character expressing one's inner quality of goodness can be made more permanent by using one's free will to constantly strive to express the inner quality. For those, like me, whose belief system mostly centered on the principle of expediency, this change in character can take time. However, if one is diligent and determined to base one's thoughts, feelings, memories, and actions on goodwill, then goodwill becomes the predominant motivation in a person's decision

⁵⁹ For a comparison of character and personality, see Alex Lickerman, "Personality vs. Character," *Psychology Today*, April 3, 2011, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/happiness-in-world/201104/personality-vs-character>.

making. Gradually, one's character becomes anchored on the goodness inherent in one's inner quality.

When a person's character is based on their inner quality of goodness, then the inclination of the person in virtually all circumstances is to try and find the best possible solution based on his or her sense of goodwill. An individual's commitment to goodwill requires a free decision and a determination to move in that direction. In order to maximize the positive potential of humanity's material and spiritual evolution, both individuals and societies need to adhere to a high standard of goodwill whenever possible.

Participate in a Community of Goodwill

The process of discovering and expressing the inner quality is deeply personal, because it involves the self-identification of the individual. For many, becoming the true self is an easy process; for others, it is a difficult path. Regardless of the difficulty, however, the individual quickly discovers that the seed of goodness within themselves is also found in others. People of goodwill seem instinctively to recognize each other and to be drawn to one another because of a common sense of value. They are generally willing to cooperate to bring about good things in their community. Finding and working within a community of like-minded individuals of goodwill is an important step for most people who are striving to maximize their full potential.

There are two basic types of such communities: those that focus on promoting a particular system of belief, and those that focus on enabling people to discover and express their own inner qualities. Each type of community serves a purpose for the evolving soul, and both types have their advantages and challenges organizationally as institutions and personally as members.

Within all communities of goodwill, there will be differences of opinion over how best to move forward on commonly accepted noble goals. However, as long as people of goodwill keep their

common goals in mind, there will almost always be solutions to the challenges that emerge.

Learning how to work together for the common good helps the individual soul mature and can powerfully contribute to the building of successful societies, cultures, and civilizations.

Conclusion

The main argument of this book is that the alignment of the will of God and man is a natural process that can be accomplished by individuals using their free will to make decisions that are compatible with their best character of goodness. The best character of an individual can be defined in two basic ways. One way is that man's best character is the character of his soul, which is referred to in this book as his highest virtue or inner quality. When we deliberately make an effort to act, think, and feel in ways congruent with the inner quality of goodness in ourselves, we are in the process of reconciling and aligning our will with the will of God.

Another way to define the best character of an individual is to view goodness from an evolutionary perspective. Goodness is reflected through the evolutionary development of empathy and altruism, natural instincts which strengthen social cohesion and hence better the chances of human survival as a species. In this sense, expressing goodwill benefits individuals in a social setting and, at the same time, advances the positive evolution of mankind as a whole.

Whether one approaches goodness from a spiritual or evolutionary perspective, the conclusion is similar. Being the best person you can be improves your life and the lives of others both individually and collectively. It all boils down to a simple formula: take what God and nature have given you, and do something good with it.