

The Bible depicts God as a king who lives above the sky. “The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind.” That was the ancient Hebrew concept of God, which then became the Christian view. But times have changed. We’re living in a different day and age. We now have spacecraft that travel far beyond the Earth’s atmosphere, and telescopes that see much farther than that, so we now know that God isn’t up there. But we don’t know where God is. So it seems time to ask— If God exists, then where is God?

PD Shoemaker

Chapter 1

ANCIENT BELIEFS

Coming to a realistic answer to that question is the purpose of this little book. And knowing where God is will give us some indication about who or what God is. So let's begin by looking at some traditional beliefs about God, how they were formed, and how they're changing.

Long ago, ancient minds looked out at the world and tried to make sense of what they saw. They saw the land and the sea, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and they wondered what these were

and where they came from. They looked for explanations, and they came to conclusions. They formed beliefs, although primitive ones. They formed beliefs about the world around them. They formed beliefs about the cosmos. They formed beliefs about that which they could see and also that which they could not see. This occurred in virtually all ancient civilizations, including the ancient Hebrews who wrote our Bibles.

And civilizations came in contact with one another. They influenced each other, although often under hostile conditions. A portion of the Hebrew population was exiled in Babylon for seventy years, so they were inundated in that culture. Archaeological discoveries indicate that the ancient Hebrews were influenced by Babylonian beliefs (which may have been influenced by the older Sumerian culture).



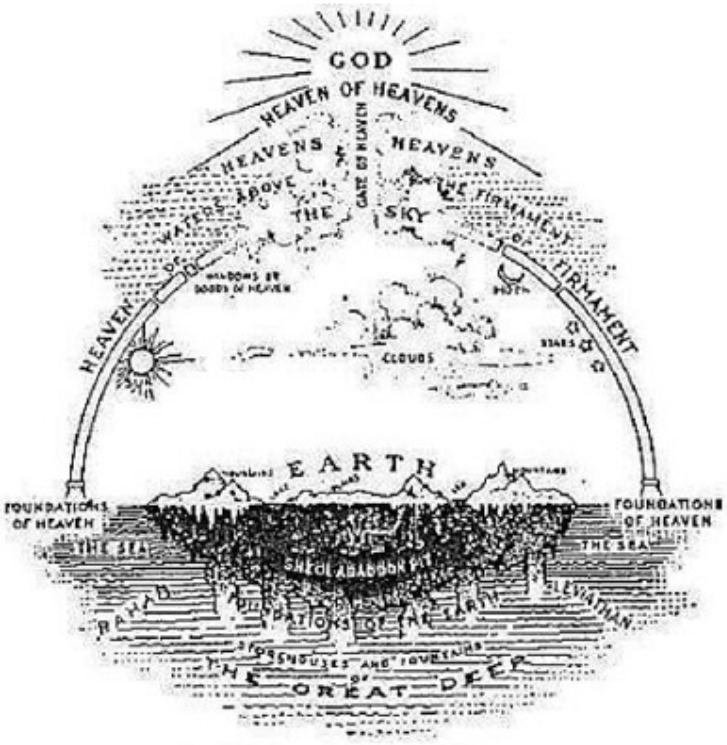
Babylonian Map of the World
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The Babylonian Map of the World was discovered in Iraq in the 1800s. It depicts known geographic locations and also primitive beliefs about the cosmos. It shows water surrounding the earth, with regions extending beyond the water, inhabited by godly beings. The *Babylonian Epic of Creation* was also discovered in Iraq. It's carved on clay

tablets. It says the world was created when two gods mixed their waters together. The original title of the story is *Enuma Elish,* which means *when on high*, in the Akkadian language.

And the ancient Hebrews had some similar beliefs about the cosmos. They also believed that the world was surrounded by water. The Bible speaks of the water above the earth and the water below the earth. They believed the world had been created when God moved over the water, as stated in the opening lines of Genesis 1. But the Hebrews also had some unique beliefs. They believed the water above the earth was held back by a dome, or vault, or the firmament, as it was also called. This was their understanding of the sky. They believed the sun, moon, and stars were lights that were attached to the dome, attached to the sky, and they believed God dwelled above the dome, above the water, as stated in other chapters of the Bible.

An internet search of the phrase, *three-tiered universe* will bring up several visual illustrations of the ancient Hebrew beliefs. I've included one here that was hand-drawn in the early 1900s. It's in public domain, which is the main reason I chose to use it rather than others, but I also like its artwork. Notice the circular shape similar to the Babylonian map. Notice the dome above the earth, and the water above the dome. Notice God on high.



Biblical Model of the Universe

George L Robinson

Chapter 2

REVERED WRITINGS

The Bible portrays God as a king who lives above the sky. Most people no longer believe this, but the concept of *God above* is still with us. God *on high* is still with us. It's with us in the Christian religion. "The Lord himself will come down from heaven," says the New Testament. And it's still present in Western culture. We hear it in our language. We hear it in songs. Yes, *The Big Man Upstairs* is still up there. And how did that happen? How has that belief been perpetuated for so long? And the answer is— because it was

written down. It was written down and joined together with other ancient writings that eventually became the Bible.

The first biblical writings were written on papyrus paper and rolled into scrolls. Then gradually, through the centuries, writings were merged with other writings, and eventually, they were merged into a single collection of *books,* as they were called. The word *bible* means books. This collection included writings from many authors, from different communities, and living in different eras. This process took a long time. It took about a thousand years. Scholars believe it was completed in the first century CE (AD). And by then, these books were revered. They were the covenant with God. They were considered authoritative and not to be questioned. They were considered unchanging and unchangeable, and thus was the birth of the Hebrew Bible, or at least that's the simple version of it. So the ancient belief in God who

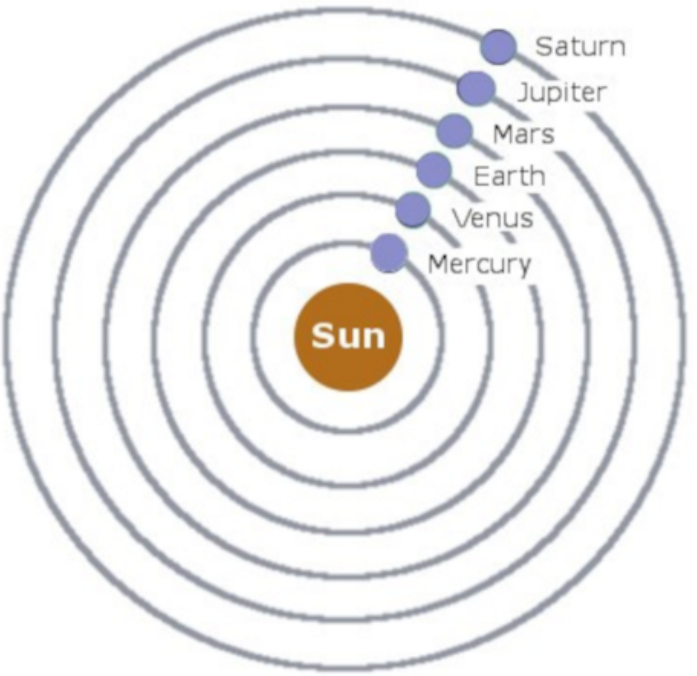
dwells above the sky was recorded in the sacred scriptures of the Hebrew religion. (The Old Testament of the Christian Bible is essentially the same as the Hebrew Bible.)

Then also in the first century CE, the Christian religion developed as a branch of the Hebrew religion. It started small and humble, but soon spread throughout much of the Mediterranean region. In the year 380 CE, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire and therefore gained a great deal of political power. But like the Hebrew religion, there were Christian communities with their own specific writings and beliefs that were often in conflict with other communities, so it was necessary to unify writings in order to unify Christianity. So through a process of debate, councils, and edicts, Christian writings that were believed to be authentic were merged into a separate collection of books. This process concluded about the year 400 CE, although

debate continued afterward. And these books then became revered by Christians. These books were believed to be the new covenant with God, the new agreement, the New Testament, it was called. And these books were also believed to be authoritative and not to be questioned. They too were believed to be unchanging and unchangeable, and they were joined together with the books of the Hebrew Bible, and thus was the birth of the Christian Bible, or at least that's the simple version of it. So belief in God who dwells above the sky was also recorded in the sacred scriptures of the Christian religion.

Then throughout the Middle Ages, from about the year 500 to 1500 CE, Christianity spread throughout Europe and parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and this concept went with it. It went viral. It was recorded in scripture, established in doctrine, invoked in churches, and enforced by governments. In Europe, wherever Roman armies

conquered, Christianity was established. So by the year 1500, Christianity had become the dominant European religion, therefore belief in God who lived above the sky became the dominant concept of God.



Copernican Model of the Universe

Chapter 3

TIMES CHANGE

But times change. Beliefs change, both scientific and religious. By the year 1500, European civilization was emerging from the Middle Ages (the Dark Ages) unto a new cultural awakening— The Renaissance. Astronomers were beginning to grasp the planetary movements of our solar system. Nicolaus Copernicus theorized that our solar system was very different from ancient Hebrew beliefs. Copernicus theorized that the sun was the center of our solar system, not the Earth. He theorized that the Earth moves around the

sun, along with other planets. Therefore, his model was contrary to the Bible. So Christianity was opposed. “The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved,” says the Bible. Therefore, his theories were denounced by all three branches of Christianity: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. His writings were officially banned by the Catholic Church for about three hundred years, his and those of Galileo who followed him.

But eventually, the truth prevailed. Eventually the scientific evidence became too obvious. In the year 1608 the telescope was invented, which gave astronomers a much more vivid view of the cosmos. They could present compelling proof. So eventually, religion was forced to accept the truth of the Copernican model of the universe. Eventually the ban on the writings of both Copernicus and Galileo was lifted, but not until the early 1800s.

And as the truth about our solar system became more widely accepted, some people began to envision God in a different way. Some new beliefs developed in America and in Europe. Writers like Emerson and Thoreau were influential. New Thought Christianity began. But change is slow. Most people and religious institutions simply pushed God further out. Further out in space. More vague. Out there somewhere.

Then came the 1900s. Then came industrialization. Then came technology. Then came computers, space travel, and the Hubble Telescope, and now the James Webb Telescope. Life on Earth has changed dramatically. So in a short period of time, human minds have gone from believing that God is up above the sky, to peering at galaxies light-years away. We now know the universe is vast. We now know there are countless planets, stars, and solar systems. So it's a dilemma. We now know that God isn't up above the sky, or

anywhere out in space that we can see, but we don't know where God is. We recognize the error, but we haven't fixed it. So let's work on that. Let's look at another place where God could be. Let's look at another possibility, and for now, let's be logical. Logic has its limitations where God is concerned, but hopefully it can give us some direction. Hopefully it can point us in the right direction. Hopefully it can point us to reality.



ESA, Hubble & NASA

Chapter 4

LOGICAL SOLUTIONS

And here we shift from focusing on the past to focusing on the present. And the future. Here we shift from focusing on how our beliefs were formed to forming new beliefs. God isn't up above the sky like ancient scriptures say, and God doesn't appear to be anywhere else either, at least not in the physical universe.. We may recognize the presence of something greater. We may behold the wonders of the universe, the marvels of creation, but there's no specific being we can point to and say— "That is God."

Yes, it's true that we haven't looked everywhere. Maybe God really is farther out, beyond the reach of our telescopes, or through a black hole, or in a separate universe. But there's no evidence of these theories. However, we do know of one other place where God could be. We do know of one other possibility.

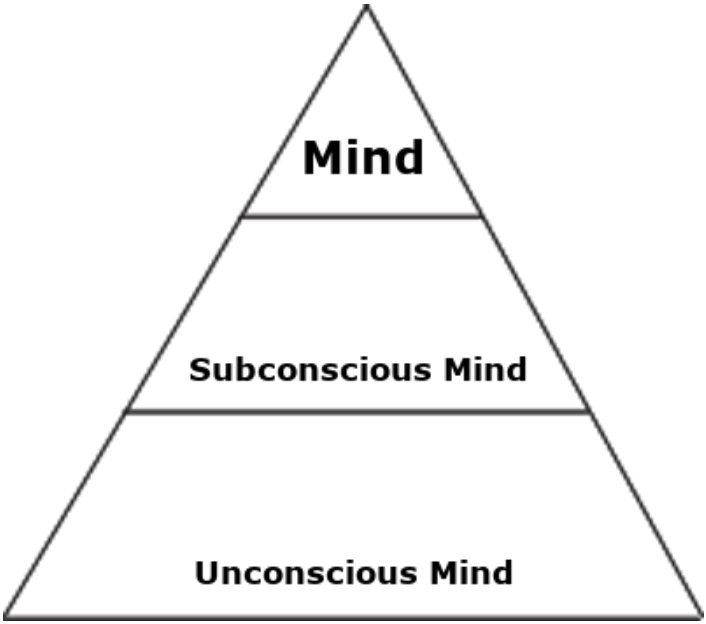
There are two realms of existence that we humans know of, the physical and the mental. All things are one or the other, or at least that's how they appear. Physical things are made of physical matter or energy. Planets, people, and molecules are physical. The physical realm consists of physical things in three-dimensional space, according to classic physics. (Quantum physics is different.) We humans typically live our lives according to this physical view of life. There's a reality to it. My desk is real. My coffee tastes good. If I bump my head on my desk, it hurts. We perceive this reality through the five senses— sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

Mental things are different. Mental things have no physical substance. They're not made of physical particles or energy. Thoughts, emotions, and memories are mental. Cognition and imagination are mental. They're not perceived by the five senses. I don't hear my thoughts with my ears, I don't feel my emotions with my hands, or see my memories with my eyes. Mental things are in the mind, although the mental realm interacts with the physical. If I bump my head, my brain processes the nerve impulses, but the hurt is in my awareness of it. My consciousness of it. The brain is physical. The mind is mental.

So, since there are only two realms of existence that we know of, it seems logical that if God isn't in one of them, then God must be in the other. If God isn't in the physical realm, then God must be in the mental realm. That seems rational. If God isn't *out there,* then God must be *in here*. God must be in our mind, rather than an objective place.

So what's going on in your mind? What's going on in there? For me, there are these thoughts I'm thinking. These words I'm typing. Operating my fingers. Correcting my mistakes. Staring at the computer screen, then glancing out the glass doors to the river behind my home. Breakfast suddenly appearing! Thank you, Sabrina! But I don't see God. God doesn't seem to be in my mind. Not really. Not actually. Not tangibly.

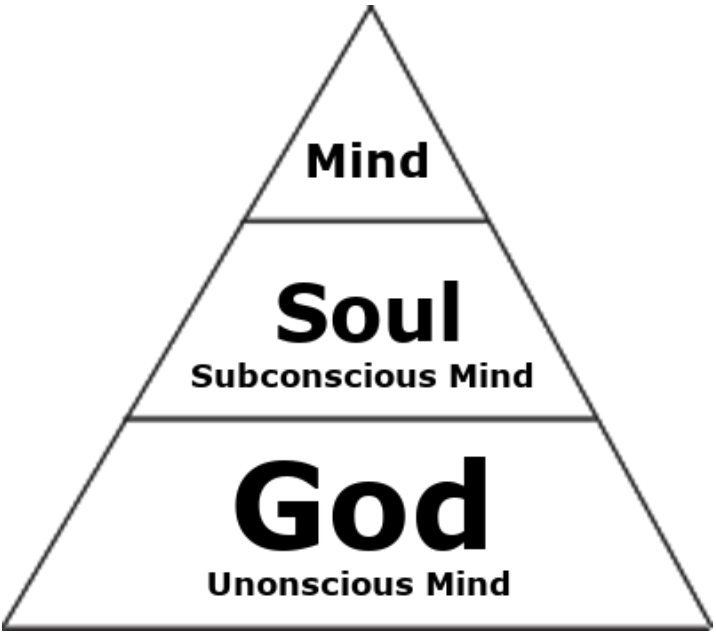
However, there are levels of our mind that we're not aware of. There are deeper levels. There are levels other than our everyday consciousness that we're so familiar with. The following is an illustration of these deeper levels. You've probably seen it before, or an illustration similar to it. In this model, our conscious mind is like the tip of a pyramid. Underlying functions occur beneath the surface of awareness, in the subconscious or unconscious mind. Unknown to us. Like this—



These are the three levels of mind as perceived by psychiatrists in the early 1900s. And multiple levels of mind are also found in other schools of thought, like Eastern religions, New Thought Christianity, and classical philosophy. The third-century Roman philosopher, Plotinus, perceived that the universe *emanates* from deeper levels of the mind. Like nineteenth-century psychiatrists, he also perceived that there are three levels of mind, which he called the Intellect, the Soul, and

the One. The One was the deepest layer of the pyramid, in his view. The One is the source of the other two.

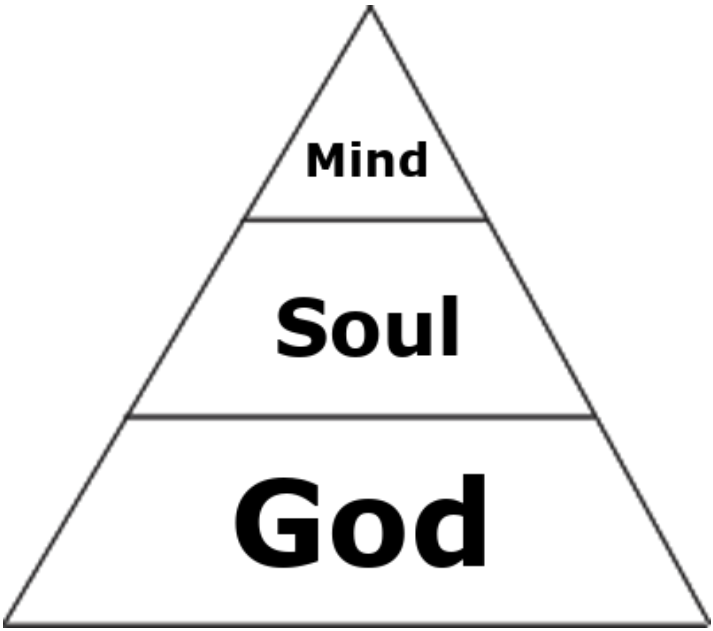
So, applying some logic to this idea of multiple layers of mind, it seems we can come to the following conclusion— If God is in our mind, then God must be in a deeper level. God must be in the deepest level. Something like this—



And in this model, the tip of the pyramid is our everyday conscious mind, the mid section is the subconscious, our soul, and God is at the base of the pyramid, the essence of all. The subconscious levels are not usually conscious to we humans.

So, we now come to a possible solution to the problem of where God is. My logic here isn't proof, of course. It's not absolute, but it does what we set out to do. It gives us some direction. It points us in the right direction, I believe. God must be within us. And that may sound familiar to you. You may have heard it before. It's biblical in some Bibles. "The kingdom of God is within you," are words attributed to Jesus in English translations of the Bible. (Many newer translations, starting about 1950, use different words, changing the meaning.) God is within us, in the depths of our being. In the soul. In the subconscious mind. In a place that is hidden most of the time. And there are parables of Jesus that seem to illustrate

this same concept, such as the parable of a treasure buried in a field, the parable of a valuable pearl that a merchant found, and the parable of fishermen who cast their nets into the sea and made a great catch. In each of these illustrations, there is something valuable that is hidden and then discovered, or caught, and it's the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, in biblical terms. We could call it the domain of God in computer lingo, and it's apparently not a physical realm. It's a non-physical realm. It's a mental realm. A spiritual realm. The word *spiritual* means *non-physical*. That's its definition. And in addition to the previous words of Jesus, it's also written that he said, "God is spirit."


Mind
Soul
God

"Let us settle ourselves,
and work and wedge our feet
downward through the mud and
slush of opinion, and prejudice,
and tradition, and delusion, and
appearance ..... till we come to a
hard bottom and rocks in place,
which we can call reality, and say,
"This is, and no mistake."

Henry David Thoreau,
Walden



C Welch

Chapter 5

MY JOURNEY

But this is a different perspective of God than most people are accustomed to. So it's a process. It's a process to reprogram ourselves to think of God in a different way. It's a process to reprogram ourselves to think of God in a way that's different from our religious tradition, in a way that may seem strange to us at first, in a way that will probably require us to change our mental image of God, our concept of God, entirely. And for me, there were certain events that triggered this process. There were certain events that brought

about this change and that eventually brought about a unique experience later in life. And because it's relevant to this little book, here's how the process occurred for me. My journey.

I grew up in a religious home. My father was a Baptist pastor in the Christian religion. Christianity was very important to my family, but not over-bearing. My parents were wonderful people. For a preacher's kid, I grew up quite normal. We lived on a small farm, then a couple of small towns in Kansas and Nebraska, USA. I was one of eight children. There was me and my seven sisters.

I went to college on athletic scholarships, and in my junior year I was riding on a team bus that was involved in a serious accident, which made me start thinking. It made me start thinking in a serious way. It made me start thinking about life and death. It made me start thinking about God.

And I wasn't particularly religious during those college years, so at first, I turned back to my Christian roots. I recommitted my life. I stopped partying. I began attending a Bible study, however, in spite of my conviction, I was more of a lost soul. My life had no particular direction. My years as an athlete were coming to a close. I wasn't too thrilled with my college major, electronics technology, and really, I just wanted to travel. I wanted to see new places. So I didn't return to school the following year. Instead, I worked some, traveled some, and then during the winter months, I rented an old house in a remote area near my hometown in Kansas. And by this time, my recommitment had faded. My Christian faith had faded. It was short-lived.

And I certainly wasn't a hermit, but my solitary time in that old house reminded one of my friends of the classic book, *Walden,* by Henry David Thoreau, and I was given a copy. The book tells

of Thoreau's solitary time in the woods in the early 1800s. It also dives deep into his thoughts. It dives deep into his beliefs. I opened the book, and it opened my mind. It opened my mind to a new perspective on life. It opened my mind to a new perspective on religion. It opened my mind to a perspective that allowed me to question and even encouraged me to do so. So there in the silence and solitude of those four worn walls, sitting in front of an old wood stove late into the night, I continued my serious thinking but with newfound freedom. I began to question everything. I began to question my Christian beliefs. I took nothing or faith. I began to question God. I began to question everything I'd ever been taught. Why do bad things happen, I asked? Why did God create a world in which that was even possible? Couldn't God have done differently? Couldn't God have done better? To blame it on the humans doesn't seem fair. And why can't we see God? *Where is God?* Not up above the sky, apparently.

And what really happens when we die? Is there really a heaven? Is there really a hell? And why would God create hell? Eternal torture seems quite cruel for a God of love. And I knew the traditional answers to these questions, but they just didn't make sense anymore. They just didn't seem right anymore. And if they weren't right, then what is right, I asked? So I began seeking other answers, and I began coming to other conclusions.

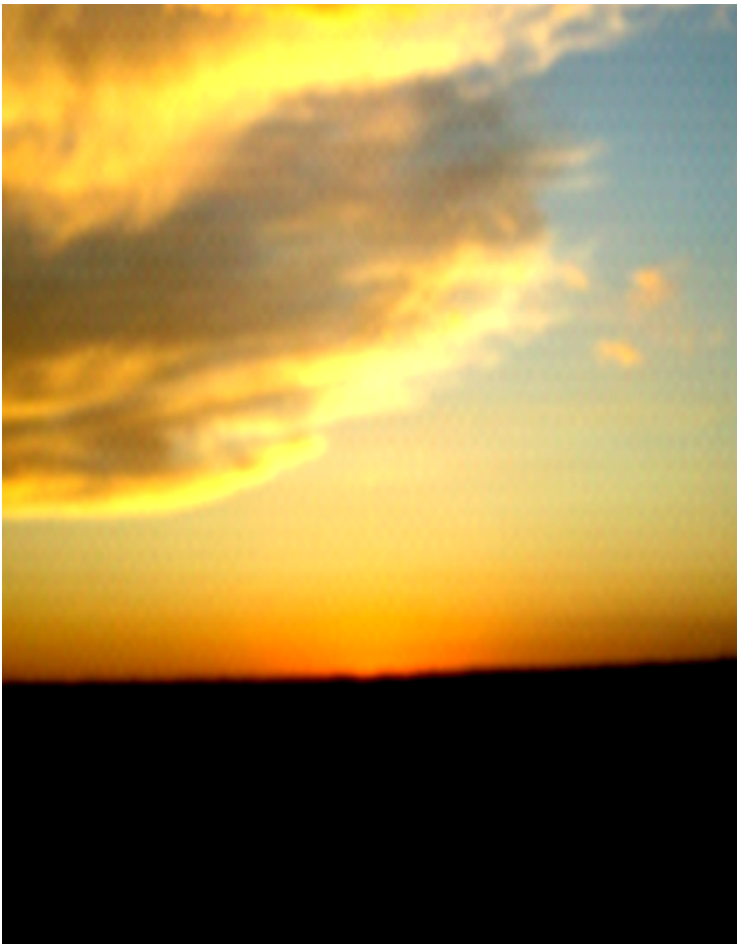
And so began my search for truth. I left the old house in the spring and returned to school in the fall in Atlanta. I played my final year of college basketball and changed my major to philosophy, and during that time I had an awakening, an awakening to a new perspective of reality. An awakening to my inner self. This process occurred partly through my college classes, but mostly through my own reading. I was passionate about it. I learned about Eastern religions. I read about

the Christian mystics. I read the writings of William James, Richard Bucke, Meister Eckhart, Plato, Plotinus, and others, and through these writings, I began to form a very different concept of God, very different than that of a king on a throne in the sky, very different from my traditional beliefs. During that time I came to believe that God is within me.

That was the first part of the process. But for me, it was also just the beginning, because then I came to believe I could find God there. Within me. I came to believe I could experience God there. In the depths of my mind. In the subconscious realm. In my soul. Through meditation. And I was passionate about it, but not necessarily wise. Quite the contrary, in fact. So after two years in Atlanta, six hours short of a philosophy degree, I made the rather unpragmatic decision to move back to Kansas. Back to the country. Back to an ascetic life. A life of mental discipline,

although in a different old house in a different part of the state.

But things didn't go according to my plan. Reality soon set in. I didn't really know what I was doing, or trying to do. I was immature. I had no structure. I was still just a free spirit, mostly, and then there were the little issues of how to make a living and the persistent desire for companionship. So a couple of years later, I moved on. On to adulthood, marriage, family, more education, and a career, but the longing for that spiritual experience never really left me, and apparently a seed was sown, because about forty years later, long after the passion had simmered, I did have an experience with that inward realm that I had tried to find many years before. I didn't see God there, however. I didn't go that far. I didn't go that deep, although I did visit the place I believe God to be.



Chapter 6

NEW HORIZONS

I didn't see God, but I did visit the realm of God, I believe. It's a deeper level of our mind. It's the source of our conscious mind, and our conscious mind returns to that deeper realm after the death of our physical body. Back to our source.

The following experience occurred about twelve years before this writing. There were a couple of things leading up to it that triggered it. First, a person very dear to me had recently passed from this life. My sister Elaine. And even though I had

worked as a hospice counselor for several years and had consoled others who had lost loved ones, I was grieving. I was struggling with it. And I was thinking about death, and reading about death experiences, and true to my nature, I was questioning my own beliefs.

That was one thing that was going on. The other thing was, that due to my work, I was in a daily routine of sleeping from about 4 AM till 10 AM, then taking a nap in the afternoon. And when napping, I would typically fall asleep in the following manner— I would lie on my back with my eyes closed and slow down the flow of thoughts in my mind, striving simply to be aware, aware of my inner self, which is meditation for me. Then after a while, I would typically drift into a brief sleep, have a quick dream, awaken, ponder the dream for a few moments, then start the process over. This would usually occur three or four times, then I would fall into a deep sleep for about an hour.

But on one occasion, something quite different occurred. On that day, I went through the same process, lying on my back, silencing my thoughts, but then I immediately fell asleep. There were no dreams. There was a brief time I don't recall, then gradually I began waking. In a sense. Very slowly, I began awakening, but I was in a deeper realm of my mind, although I didn't realize that at first. I didn't realize anything at first. My cognitive ability was dormant. There was just awareness, with no distractions. It was like a trance. Like being hypnotized, I think, although I've never been.

Then as the experience continued, I perceived a sense of space around me, although I still wasn't able to think about it or reflect on it. There was darkness in the distance, but pleasant lighting around me. Then after a while, I could see a horizon in the distance, glowing faintly from a light that was shining beyond it, out of sight. I was

gradually moving toward the horizon. I was gradually moving toward the light. It was a state of serenity. It was a state of clarity.

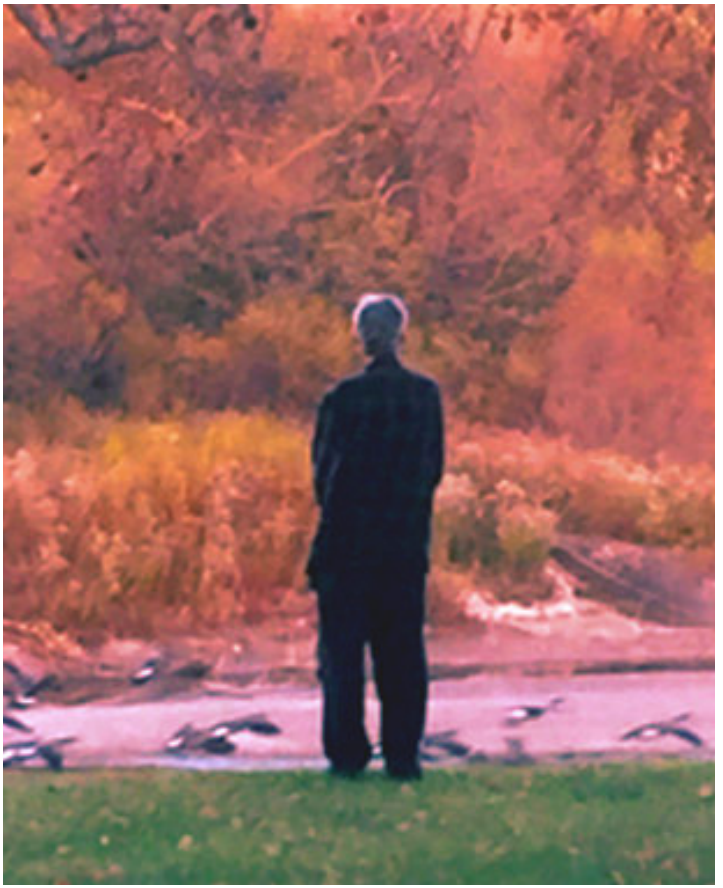
But it didn't last long, because soon the silence was broken. Or shattered. Because suddenly, from behind me, a voice calmly said to me, "This is what it's like to be dead." And in that moment, the meaning of those words didn't have much impact, because it was simply the sound of the words that jolted me out of my reverie. My cognitive ability was suddenly engaged, and I was wide awake, although still in the subconscious realm. It was a rude awakening. It was chaotic. I was desperate to get my bearings, but at the same time, I knew where I was. It was familiar, but I wasn't supposed to be there. And then I started waking to the outer world.

Or more like traveling there, because that was a unique part of the experience also. It felt like the

rush of riding on a jet plane as it's taking off, except going backward. It felt like I was being sucked back into the physical realm. Back to my room. Then suddenly there I was, lying on my bed, staring up at the ceiling, mystified by what had just occurred.

"Think not that here is a dream like the former. I say a "dream," because there the soul seems to be as it were asleep, though she seems neither fast asleep nor yet quite awake. Here, however, she is thoroughly awake to God, though fast asleep as to worldly things and to ourselves; for in truth, during the short time that this lasts, she is almost senseless and unable to think of anything, even if she wished."

Teresa of Avila,
The Interior Castle



Chapter 7

IN RETROSPECT

And in retrospect, it was just a glimpse, although it was a meaningful event for me. It was my mind descending unto my soul. It was like being immersed in the spiritual realm. Like being baptized. Maybe that was the original meaning.

Some people may think it was just a dream, and it did occur in the place where dreams originate, but it was very different than a common dream. It was similar to a lucid dream, however, in which a person is fully conscious as they dream.

And it was also similar to a near-death experience. Like those reported by some people who have died and then been medically revived.

The experience was triggered by thoughts and emotions about death that I had been consumed with in previous weeks, and I now believe the words I heard were truthful. I believe they were literal. I believe I experienced what death will be like. For me. Initially. I believe I was in the same *place* that I will be at the time of death. In the spiritual realm. The subconscious realm. The realm of God. It's where we all *go* when we die, but the experience is different for everyone. It's subjective. It's a subjective realm, as opposed to the objective world that we presently live in. Studies of near-death experiences illustrate this. People report both similarities and differences in them according to their personal beliefs and expectations. Two very important people in my life have had near-death experiences that they've

shared with me. They were remarkable for both, but different from each other, and different from my experience. One person saw the gates of heaven, which was natural for her. The other said it was like going through a door into a place of perfection. And it was a place of perfection for me, also. And I didn't see the gates of heaven, but I did see a horizon in the distance, glowing faintly from a light that was shining beyond it.

I think my experience lasted about two minutes, but it made a lasting impression. It changed my perception of life and death. It's given me a sense of peace and certainty, and I'm thankful for it. There was a fulfillment that came along with it. It affirmed my belief that God is within.

And concerning the voice. First, I wonder what I may have seen had the voice not spoken to me. Would I have seen the light? Would I have seen God? But the voice had something to say, although

I don't know whose voice it was. Was it the voice of God? Not in the traditional sense. Was it my subconscious mind speaking to my conscious mind? Perhaps. Or was the voice just part of the experience, like seeing the horizon, but audible rather than visual? I don't know. It seemed to be the voice of a more enlightened being speaking from a more illumined point of view, and that's all I can say about it for certain.

In my present moments of meditation, I recognize the same pure consciousness that I experienced in that spiritual realm. It's who we are, although I have yet to return to that deeper level. And there must be more to that deeper level. There must be more than I witnessed, more than those having near-death experiences have witnessed. What happens when we don't come back? Different people have different beliefs, but no one knows for sure. Our religions don't know for sure. We may have great faith in our religious beliefs, but

they don't provide proof of that which occurs beyond death. In the Christian religion, the general belief is that people either go to heaven or hell. Judaism and the Muslim religion have similar concepts concerning heaven and hell, although different theological doctrines. Eastern religions typically believe in rebirth. They believe a soul will incarnate on earth many times before attaining enlightenment. So, no, we don't know for sure what happens after death, once you go past the point of no return.

"The being of God is being-itself. The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others."

Paul Tillich,
Systematic Theology

Chapter 8

REVISIONS

Realizing that God is within was a new perspective for me. It was a new awareness. And as my beliefs about God changed, other beliefs had to change also. It was inevitable.

Some revisions were blatantly necessary. As my beliefs about God changed, my beliefs about heaven had to change. If God is within me, then heaven must be there too. In the spiritual realm. In the subconscious realm. To me, the spiritual realm itself may be considered heaven. It was

heavenly. It was serenity. It was clarity. It was different than the Christian concept, but I believe it was the *place* that Jesus was referring to when he spoke of the *kingdom of heaven* or the *kingdom of God*. But yes, there has to be more. I believe the ultimate heaven is the experience of God, the soul merging with God. It's oneness with God. It's the beatific vision.

And naturally, questions about heaven invoked the question of hell? If heaven is real, is hell real also? Well, in spite of my initial doubts about the reality of hell, according to my present view, it does, but not in the traditional sense. Rather, it's the same process at work. It's the natural thing. We all go to the same inward *place* after death, but we all experience it differently. We experience it according to our nature. We reap what we sow. So for a corrupt soul, the experience may not be too pleasant. It could be quite unpleasant, in fact. It could be hell.

But in my view, hell doesn't last forever. And neither does heaven. They're states of mind. The journey goes on.

And to me, religion should be about growth. It should be about seeking the experience of God. It should be about transformation. Religion should inspire us to care about each other. It should inspire us to treat people as we want to be treated. It should even inspire us to love our enemies, even though that's difficult. And these are some of the most important principles of Christianity, although they don't get much attention today. These are some of the most important teachings of Jesus.

And concerning Jesus, I believe he was a man who experienced the *union with God* while living in this physical realm. I believe he truly was *one with God* during his spiritual experiences. And he probably did speak in parables about the spiritual truth that he perceived, and he probably was

crucified for it when he defied the established religion. Jesus is mentioned in some historical sources in addition to the Bible. But Jesus is not God. God is the essence of all things. God is the essence of all people, including Jesus.

But there seems to be a wild nature about God. The same God that created us humans also created spiders and snakes, tornadoes and earthquakes. God scatters seeds wherever they may fall, apparently. There seems to be a randomness about it. The creative energy manifests itself in infinite ways, some beneficial and some not. And so nature is telling us about the nature of God. The creation is telling us about the creator.

The world has changed since the first Bibles were written. Life was much more primitive back then, and religion was too. Thus, some of the Bible is relevant today, and some isn't. Religion is slower to change than other fields of knowledge and study, but it does change, although stubbornly.

In the present day, old religious beliefs are re-asserting themselves, aligned with political purposes. But an underlying change is occurring. The momentum is shifting. New beliefs and attitudes are growing. The world doesn't go backward for very long. As the American patriotic hymn goes, "Glory, glory hallelujah, truth is marching on."

"So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed– We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men (all people) are created equal."

Martin Luther King Jr.



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Chapter 9

FOR ALL PEOPLE

The name *God* is a name that I grew up with. It's a word that comes naturally for me, although the meaning is very different now from what it used to be. Today, it's a name I use for ultimate reality. It's a name I use for my inner being. God is the *I am* that we are. God generates the soul, which generates our conscious mind, you and I. And if that's true, then it's true for all people. (No matter how we look at it, it's true for all people.) We all come from the same source and in the same way, so in that respect, we're all the same.

The realization that God is within, is vital to the development of our mind. It's vital to our growth. It's vital to the development of our soul. And the realization that God is within all people, is vital to the development of our world. It's vital to the development of civilizations. It will make us more civil. The realization that God is within all people reinforces the American ideal that *all people are created equal,* although people have a wide range of abilities and inabilities. God is our essence. Equally. This realization can break down barriers that divide us. It can break down racial barriers. No race is a privileged race. It can break down religious barriers. God is in Christians. God is in Muslims. God is in Buddhists. God is in atheists. We're all connected to God, so we're all connected. So the realization that God is within is a crucial one. It's crucial to our world as we enter a new millennium.

Yes, the realization that God is within will make us more compassionate. However, that doesn't

mean we excuse bad behavior. That doesn't mean we tolerate those who harm others or infringe on the rights of others. We don't. We shouldn't. Thus we have laws and ethics that are intended to shape human behavior. We have a sense of moral conscience, most people do. We have the ability to make decisions, and decisions have consequences. Good decisions are good for ourselves and good for people in our lives. Good for the world.

But it's a chaotic world right now. Some folks are makin some very poor decisions, and I've certainly made my share of them too, but at my present stage of life, I'm getting better at doing the right thing. But life is complex. We get confused about what the right thing is. There are influences, like religion and politics. Some influences are intentional and are meant to confuse, like politicians who don't tell the truth. And some influences are primordial. Like racism. It's the old law of the

jungle. It continues in prejudice and hatred that gets passed down from generation to generation, so the influence is deeply ingrained. So the chains can be difficult to break.

But they can break. They do break. They break as people grow. They break as we grow as minds and souls. They break as we grow as societies. Life can change quickly on this old earth. My dad lived from 1916 to 2015. (Almost made it to one hundred.) His generation saw tremendous change in industry and technology, which transformed our world. But the world still has issues. Presently, we have a huge cultural divide here in America and other parts of the world. There's the left and the right and very little compromise. So what can we do about that? How can we change that? I'd say, by realizing that God is within. By realizing that God is within all people. By treating people as we would treat God.

Chapter 10

CLOSING THE FILE

So let's bring this to a close. Let's recap. Long ago, the ancient Hebrews believed the earth was a stationary landmass that was surrounded by water, like in a bubble. They believed the sky was a dome holding back the water above the earth. They believed the sun, moon, and stars were attached to the dome, and they believed God was a king-like creator who lived above the dome, ruling over the earth below. Those beliefs were likely influenced by

neighboring cultures. Those beliefs were written down about two thousand five hundred years ago, and then those writings were joined with other writings that eventually became our Bibles.

However, down through the ages, those ancient beliefs gradually yielded to scientific evidence. We no longer believe that the sky is a dome. We now have spacecraft that travel far beyond the Earth's atmosphere and telescopes that see much farther than that. We know the sky is an illusion, and there's no sign of God sitting on a throne. There's no sign of God in outer space. There's no sign of God in 3D.

But there is another place where God could be. There is another possibility. There are two realms of existence that we humans know of, the physical and the mental, so if

God isn't in one of them, then God must be in the other. That's logical. That's certainly possible. If God isn't in the physical realm, then God must be in the mental realm. If God isn't out in space, then God must be in our minds.

But God doesn't seem to be there. God doesn't seem to be in my mind, and I suspect you can say the same. But there are levels of our mind that we're not aware of. There are levels that are hidden from us. There are subconscious realms. Therefore, if God *is* in our mind, then God must be in a deeper realm. God must be in the deepest realm.

And if that's true, then God is in every one of us, regardless of our many differences, regardless of who we are on the outside, regardless of our race, religion, political af-

filiation, sexual orientation, abilities, disabilities, or any other differences we may have. God is the creator of all people. We're all leaves on the same tree.

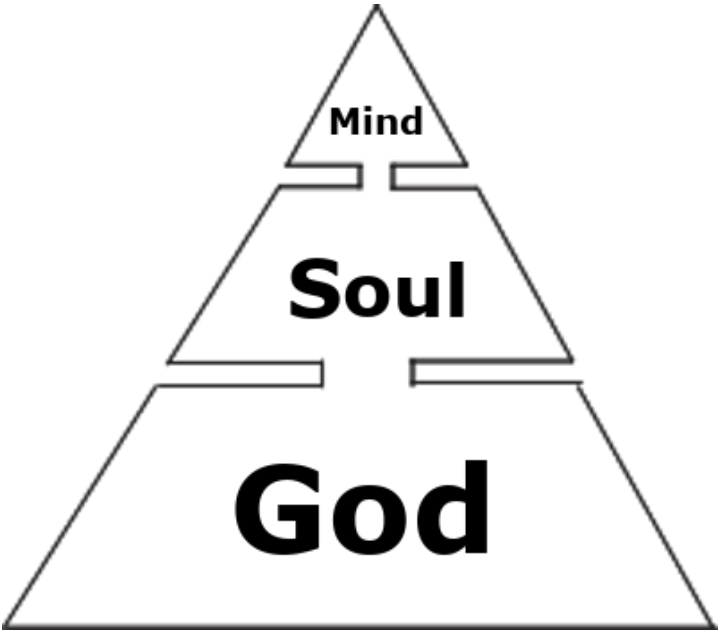
But some children are misbehaving. Some are being cruel. Some are being deceitful, so our world is in chaos right now. But hopefully that can change. But how? What can we do? How can we make the world a better place? Pray? Visualize? Work for social change? Run for public office? Spread the gospel of love? All of the above? Probably. And realizing that God is within. God is within all of us.

We're all in this together, you and I, we're all living this life. We're all conscious minds residing in these physical bodies, and the mind and body are two separate things, or at least that's how they appear. But they're

connected. They're interactive. Our experience here in the physical world actually occurs in our mind. It's our consciousness of it, so there's an illusion to it. At the time of death, however, the illusion fades, the connection with our body is severed, and our conscious mind merges back unto the soul from which it came, unto the subconscious realm.

There are accounts of persons who have experienced that realm prior to death. There are accounts of near-death experiences. I visited that realm through meditation and sleep, coupled with circumstances I was experiencing at the time. But I didn't see God, and the experience of God is the ultimate experience. It's the union with God, the light shining into our soul. It can occur beyond death. It can occur in this lifetime. The experience can be pursued. "Seek first

the kingdom of God." It's a discipline. Be a disciple. It's learning to be still. It's learning to control our thoughts. It's the growth of our mind, the evolution of our soul. It appears to be a slow process, however, one that appears to take longer than this lifetime on the earth. But we don't know for certain. We don't know for sure. We don't know how the process works. We don't know the works of God. No, we can't say much about who God is, or what God is, but we can come to a realistic conclusion about where God is, which is the purpose of this little book. If God isn't *out there,* then God must be *in here*. If God isn't *above us,* then God must be *within us*. All of us.


Mind
Soul
God

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Version 2000

An Update on the Nature of God

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