

CHAPTER 6

THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

In the previous chapter the upper half of Wilber's full-spectrum approach was discussed. This included the individual holons. The upper-right represents the exterior, whereas the upper-left signifies the interior. The lower half of this model covers the social or communal holons and is about a 'worldview' or, as Wilber (1995:120) termed it, 'a common worldspace' – the collective. Both of these lower levels have an interior (the lower-left) and an exterior (the lower-right) and are plural. Shared worldviews do exist, 'and these shared worldviews are simply the inside feel of a social holon, the inside space of collective awareness at a particular level of development; it is not just how "I" feel, it is how "we" feel' (Wilber 1995:121).

Within such a shared worldview, people are faced with similar experiences. Individually, and certainly collectively too, people share ideas about the concept of God and world religious teachers such as Jesus (chapter 6). Another shared interest is the issue of death and dying. To understand the social and cultural aspects of some of these collective challenges, Fox's religious thoughts on death, dying, reincarnation, the end times (chapter 7), and his method of biblical interpretation (chapter 8) will be discussed within Wilber's four-quadrant model.

6.1 LOWER-LEFT QUADRANT: INTERIOR COLLECTIVE (CULTURAL)

All four quadrants are inextricably intermeshed. The example of a thought was used in an earlier chapter to demonstrate the interplay and correlation that are involved between the upper-left (thinking) and the upper-right (actual brain activity). When I share the meaning of my thought with you now, it becomes a shared cultural worldspace (lower-left). As Wilber (1995:137) states, the meaning of one's thought 'is itself sustained by a whole network of background practices and norms and linguistic structures existing in our shared culture'. And

this shared cultural workspace is necessary for the communication of any meaning at all. Thus the question is not one of truth (upper-right) or even truthfulness (upper-left), but of ‘cultural fit, of the appropriateness or justness or “fitness” of my meanings and values with the culture that helps to produce them’. It is a question of whether ‘I am intersubjectively in tune, appropriately meshed with the cultural workspace that allows subjects and objects to arise in the first place’ (Wilber 1995:137–138). One’s meanings and values are not reducible to this cultural fitness, but they do depend on its background. The criterion for validity in the lower-left quadrant is ‘whether you and I can come to mutual understanding with each other. Not objective, not subjective, but intersubjective’ (Wilber 1995:138).

Wilber includes certain patterns in consciousness that are shared by those who are ‘in’ a particular culture or subculture: shared values, perceptions, worldviews, semantic habitats, cultural practices, intersubjective moral and ethical understanding, interpretative understandings, collective and group identities. This quadrant does not refer to ‘I’ or ‘it’, but to ‘we’, for ‘we’ have to come to a mutual understanding. With regard to humans, the lower-left quadrant, which studies the shared interior meanings that constitute the worldview of social or communal holons, runs from archaic to magic to mythic and to the mental.

6.2 LOWER-RIGHT QUADRANT: EXTERIOR COLLECTIVE (SOCIAL)

Just as the consciousness of the mind produced a thought, which had an objective and scientific reaction within the brain, so cultural perceptions have objective correlates that can be empirically detected. The lower-right quadrant is thus about cultural patterns, which are registered in exterior, material and observable social behaviours. In other words, ‘all the physical components of a social action system, all the aspects of a social system that can be seen empirically or monologically’ belong within the lower-right quadrant. These include ‘food production, transportation systems, written records, school buildings, geopolitical structures, behavioral actions of groups, written legal codes, architectural styles and the buildings themselves, types of technology, linguistic structures in their exterior aspects (written or spoken signifiers), economic forces of production and distribution’ (Wilber 1995:138).

Within this sector, ‘the criterion is not the truth of objects’ (upper-right), or ‘the truthfulness of subjects’ (upper-left), or ‘the mesh of intersubjective understanding and meaning’ (lower-left), ‘but rather the functional fit or the interobjective mesh of social systems’ (lower-right) (Wilber 1995: 138–139). The exterior forms of the social holon run ‘from the Big Bang to superclusters to galaxies to stars to planets to (on Earth) the Gaia system to ecosystems to societies with division of labor to groups/families ... With reference to humans, this quadrant then runs from kinship tribes to villages to nation-states to global world-system’ (Wilber 1995:123). Like the upper-right, this quadrant can be seen, and it represents all the exterior forms of social systems – forms that are empirical and behavioural.

As in the upper half of the model, the two dimensions of the lower half are in intimate interaction and correlation with each other. However, neither can be reduced to the other. In emphasising the correlation and differences between the two sections, Wilber uses the example of a person who visits another country but does not understand its language. He then becomes part of the country’s social system and hears the vibrational tones of its language (lower-right), but he is not part of its culture – the words and tones of the spoken language have no meaning for him. He cannot understand a word (lower-left). Thus, ‘You are in the social system, but you are not in the worldview, you are not in the culture. You hear only the exteriors, you do not understand the interior meaning. All the social signifiers impinge on you, but none of the cultural signifieds come up. You are an insider to the social system but an outsider to the culture’ (Wilber 1995:125).

In the following review of the lower halves of the all-quadrant model, the arrogance and thoughtlessness of reductionism can be seen in which one aspect of the whole is singled out from its broader context. The opposite view is also accentuated in which the importance of correlation, mutual honour and respect among all quadrants (or holons) is acknowledged. Emmet Fox does not explicitly consider these individual quadrants; neither does he describe his teaching according to them. However, his interpretation of concepts such as God, Jesus, the Christ, his biblical exegesis, his insight into death and the end times, as well as his views on social activities such as attending church, tithing and dying, are already meshed into one

stream of thought. The following subdivisions will examine his religious thinking with reference to these quadrants.

6.3 THE GOD CONCEPT

The opening words of Wilber's (1996:3) *Up from Eden: a transpersonal view of human evolution* state: 'Nothing can stay long removed from God', and 'history is the story of men and women's love affair with the Divine'. 'Traditionally [he continues] the great problem with viewing history in theological terms has been not a confusion as to what history is, but a confusion as to what God might be.' In finding the meaning of history, one assumes a pointing at something 'other' than itself, and this 'great Other', Wilber (1996:3) says, 'has often been assumed to be God, or Spirit, or the Ultimate'. This ultimate wholeness lies at the base of humanity's consciousness; however, it is not consciously realised by the vast majority and thus became an 'Other'. It is not an ontological Other, as Wilber (1996:14) would maintain. 'Rather, it is a psychological Other – it is ever-present, but unrealized; it is given, but rarely discovered; it is the Nature of human beings, but lies, as it were, asleep in the depths of the soul.'

Addressing the matter of why humans need visible god figures, Wilber answers that they have forgotten that they themselves are Atman. To return to the discussion of Wilber's great chain of being model (see chapter 4), in it he reminds his readers of the evolutionary process in consciousness. This refers in particular to the shift from the subtle realm (the Sambhogakaya – level 6), with its one God with whom one can commune through sacrificial awareness, to the causal realm (the Dharmakaya – level 7 and beyond), where the path of transcendence goes even further and one does not merely commune with the oneness, but one actually becomes that oneness.

A further reminder of this debate is the reference to the one God (monotheism), where the belief is that it is 'our Father who art in Heaven', over against the next consciousness of

knowing that 'I and the Father are One'. This one God of the subtle realm (or level 6) is what Valentinus¹ refers to as 'master, king, lord, creator, and judge', whereas the God of the causal realm (level 7) is seen as 'the ultimate source of all being – the depth' (Pagels 1981:38). Wilber agrees with the distinction between the two gods. The first is the creator God of the subtle level – the demiurgos,² who is a lesser divine being, and the God of Israel, the God of Moses, the God the Father, the lord and creator who gives the law and passes judgement on those who violate it. And the second is the void-source God of the causal level – recognising this 'true source of divine power – namely, "the depth" of all being' – is what gnosis is all about. To achieve this level of consciousness (level 7) is to go beyond God the creator (the god of level 6, the god that makes false claims to power, such as 'I am God, and there is no other'). Valentinus states that: 'Whoever has come to know that source simultaneously comes to know himself and discovers his spiritual origin: he has come to know his true Father and Mother' (Pagels 1981:44).

This going 'beyond' is to find the nothing as well as all things of levels 7 and 8 – not that the void is featureless, rather seamless; it transcends but includes all manifestation. Behmen (in Wilber 1996:259) expresses it as: 'Whosoever finds it finds All Things. It hath been the Beginning of All Things; it is also the End of All Things. All Things are from it, and in it, and by it. If thou findest it thou comest into that ground from whence All Things are proceeded, and wherein they subsist.'

Bearing in mind that the Big Three (*I* – art, *We* – morals and *It* – science) of the all-quadrant model split into separate paths, unable to find a way of integration, the left-hand paths (the subjective and moral spheres of the interior) and the right-hand paths (the objective and empirical exteriors) all pursued their own courses in isolation. Although each path made its own unique discoveries, they never seemed to communicate with one another. This resulted in The Big Three being reduced to The Big One. In other words, the interior paths (*I* and *We*) were decreased to the exterior one (*It*).

Industrialisation and capitalism were some of the reasons given for the flattening or collapse of the Kosmos. Nevertheless, 'The vertical and horizontal holarchy of depth and span was

ditched in favor of merely a horizontal holarchy of span alone'. 'Depths that required interpretation were largely ignored in favor of the interlocking surfaces that can simply be seen (empiric-analytic) – valueless surfaces that could be patiently, persistently, accurately mapped: on the other side of the objective strainer, the world appeared only as a great interlocking order of sensory surfaces, empirical forms' (Wilber 1995:418). Thus the great chain was tipped onto its side – 'an infinite within and beyond was ditched in favor of an infinite in front of and ahead, and the West began to scratch that itch in earnest' (Wilber 1995:419).

This all started when the Ascending Ideal was promised in the West. It was presented like the omega point, but it never delivered. Thus a spiritual hunger remained. Then the Age of Reason went over to the Path of Descent, where one has a visible God, an itch that can be scratched. And this is how the infinite above became the infinite ahead – the God of the right-path was born (an exterior and scientific approach). As the higher ascent or transcendence became impossible, even a sin of pride and considered a crime, the Descent God became increasingly prominent. This ultimately led to the empirical flatland interlocking of surfaces, exteriors and right-hand components. With modernity and postmodernity came the challenge of the integration of The Big Three (the interior or subjective worlds and the exterior or objective worlds – or the integration of the noosphere or ego and the biosphere or eco). The interior maps provided by the idealists³ were available for this return process.

Wilber believes that the modern and postmodern mind had and still has two choices: remaining at a mythical level of development (ascent); or evolving to rationality (descent). Finding solutions to Gaia's major problem, 'lack of mutual understanding and mutual agreement in the noosphere', is to focus on the interior. 'The real problem is how to get people to internally transform from egocentric to sociocentric to worldcentric consciousness, which is the only stance that can grasp the global dimensions of the problem in the first place, and thus the only stance that can freely, even eagerly, embrace global solutions' (Wilber 1995:513–514).

Then, after two thousand years, says Wilber (1995:521), the ascenders (ego) and the descenders (eco) are still at each other's throats – 'each still claiming to be the Whole, each still accusing the other of Evil, each perpetrating the same fractured insanity it despises in the other'. On the other hand, all the basics are already in existence. The roads (present but untravelled; paths cut clear but not chosen) are open to us. The question is whether we can embrace these roots. Can we say, 'My me is God' (like Saint Catherine) and 'See! I am God! See! I am in all things! See! I do all things (according to Dame Julian)? Then, 'this Earth becomes a blessed being, and every I becomes a God, and every We becomes God's sincerest worship, and every It becomes God's most gracious temple' (Wilber 1995:523). It is true that evolution stops for nobody, as each stage passes into a larger tomorrow.

Theology, which is God-talk, is not just another academic discipline, it is a cultural event, and therefore necessitates an explanation within these quadrants. The concept of 'God', and the subsequent discussion about it, is of course far more complex, for 'it carries many meanings' (Krüger 1989:1). We make our own conceptions of God. New Thought scholars Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:39) state that we believe that God has made us in his image. Taking this one step further, they suggest that, 'at least in a tiny way, we also help to make God what he is'. Because there are so many kinds of god, they ask which one we believe in, for 'one cannot consistently believe in all the conceptions of God that are available' (Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:39). They remind us that our ideas about God have evolved and expanded over time: from the concept of many gods to the one God, then to a transcendent God, followed by the belief in the immanent nature of God. This continued into the concepts of pantheism (all is God) and panentheism (all is in God).

Anderson (1991:6–8) offers the student a scheme of various breeds of God, as well as the competing conceptions of God's nature.⁴ It includes The Archaic Terrorer, 'who is capricious power' (the atheist's favourite); The Yapping Heel-Nipper, 'who is judgmental, ethically demanding, insensitive' (primitive theism: ID-God); The Purebred High-Nosed, 'who remains aloof' (classical theism: OU-God); The World-Woofer, 'who is everything, yet nothing that we can know' (pantheism: IUD-God); and The Mixed Breed, 'who puts it all together' (panentheism: IOUD-God). It is this last breed that we will focus on.

Paradigm shifts throughout history have included the important revolutions of one's understanding and ways of living. It is interesting to mention in part Huston Smith's (in Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:89) summarised version of the various worldviews, including the Christian, the modern and postmodern aspects. The way of salvation, in the Christian view, does not lie 'in conquering nature but in following the commandments that God has revealed to us. The path to human fulfilment [according to the modern view] consists primarily in discovering the laws of nature, utilizing them where it is possible, and complying with them where it is not.' The postmodern view maintains that: 'Perhaps there is no way of salvation or fulfilment, except for our own idiosyncratic satisfactions in the midst of a world of intellectual deconstruction.' This resulted in Smith's observation: 'For twenty-five hundred years philosophers have argued over which metaphysical system is true. For them to agree that none is, is a new departure.'

What are the alternatives to postmodernism? Anderson and Whitehouse suggest primordialism or perennialism and process philosophy. These authors refer to Ken Wilber as 'a noted expositor of primordialism' where the paradoxicality of the ultimate is emphasised. Primordialism claims that the ultimate is impersonal. The ultimate reality for this perennial philosophy is The World-Woofer, where there is nothing but God, or all is God (pantheism). The problem with this view is that it robs one of one's realities of existence as part of the whole (Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:89–91).

The second alternative to postmodernism is process thought or positive postmodernism, where the interrelatedness of everything in the universe is highlighted. This is seen as an alternative to the primordial tradition. Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:94) base process philosophy on certain facts:

(1) the world is changing, developing; (2) everything is related to everything else; (3) we can live only in the moment, and have to deal with everything in little chunks of time and space. If we also believe (4) that there is a divine guiding intelligence that enters our lives, and that (5) memories and other influences from the past play important roles in contributing to what we are ...

This process is sometimes called panexperientialism because of the emphasis on experiences as the only reality. 'What we call things are really collections of momentarily existing experiences.' Its proponents also state that: 'All past experiences are present in every new experience, though some are far more relevant and in effect more powerful than others' (Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:94–95). This line of thinking seems to point towards Ken Wilber's holonic ladder of consciousness. The idea that all later experiences are aware of all previous experiences, which New Thought refers to as the law of mind, or the law of cause and effect, or merely as karma, is a reflection of Wilber's lower holons, which, because they become part of the next whole, can affect that level – even pathologically infect it.

In clarifying the conceptions of God, the theistic God is the personal God who has created the world separately from himself. 'God and the world are distinct. One is the Creator; the other, his radically contingent and dependent creation' (Krüger 1989:91). In pantheism 'all is God'. This undivided and omnipresent God seems to individualise himself as one, a meaningless claim according to Anderson. If God is present everywhere, then where does this leave the individual with his or her interaction, growth and existence? One still comes across a separation between creator and creature. Does one find a parallel to this in Wilber's level 6 with its 'our Father who art in Heaven?'

The concept of panentheism affirms that 'all is in God and God is in all'. Matthew Fox (1988:50), former Roman Catholic and Episcopalian priest, as well as a mystic, elaborates: 'Divinity is not outside us. We are in God and God is in us.' He utilises the symbol of a droplet. 'When a drop is merged into the ocean, how is it to be seen as distinct? When the ocean is submerged in the drop, who can say what is what?' This panentheism is expressed by Krüger (1989:2) as 'God's organic involvedness in the world' and according to Anderson (1997b:83) 'God and we are a one made up of many'.⁵ Whereas there was a remnant of dualism in pantheism, panentheism 'melts the dualism of inside and outside', according to Matthew Fox (1988:57). 'Like fish in water and the water in the fish, creation is in God and God is in

creation.’ This statement seems to correspond with Wilber’s level 7 where ‘I and the Father are one’.

The affirmation that there is only one power and one presence prompted Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:98–99) to challenge New Thinkers to make this statement from a panentheistic perspective. In other words, it implies that ‘the whole and the part are present in each other’ and that ‘all unity is a unification of the many’. Once again there is an illustration of Wilber’s worldview, which honours the web of life – not a hierarchy where the one is greater or more important than the other, but a holarchy of holons.

To conclude this discussion we return to Anderson’s (1997b:84–85) philosophy. He associates the words ‘process’ and ‘personalism’ with panentheism. First, ‘process’ ‘holds that reality is activity, energy, experience’: it is dynamic and in constant change. Second, ‘personalism’ ‘considers personality the supreme value and the key to the meaning of reality’ – this person is a self, which is an experience. God is such a person – ‘not a human being, but a person. It is personality that makes him meaningfully God, the ultimate unity’ (Anderson 1984:88). Whereas God represents the complete person, we are the fragmentary ones. ‘In emphasizing the personality of God we affirm, not the likeness of God to man, but rather the likeness of man to God.’ That ‘complete and perfect personality can be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being’ (Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:93).

All of this has to do with love, because it is also process-relational. This concept emphasises that ‘nothing exists in isolation’, but all is in relation to one another. Because to love requires at least two, to love completely, an ‘other’ is needed and this ‘other’ ‘is within God, yet never separated from God, never identical with God’ (Anderson 1997b:86–87). The ‘other’ is another perspective and not identical with something, for then it is the something. To return to Wilber’s chain of thought, the part is a part of the whole – and although a part, it is yet not separated from it. But this part that had become the whole (which is a part again of the higher or next whole) is not identical to the whole. It shares sameness, although it is simultaneously different. The more fundamental and less significant holon (lower rung of the ladder) becomes the less

fundamental and more significant holon (higher rung of the ladder) as it transforms and ascends in evolution.

Horatio W Dresser (in Anderson 1997b:93) expands on the idea of oneness: ‘the idea that we are one with God in the sense that there is nothing of us that is not God’. Dresser’s approach does not embrace pantheism, but states that the oneness of life ‘is the truth that God lives with us, in every moment of existence, in every experience, every sorrow and every struggle’. Thus man is not divine and God is not the sole reality ‘in’ the self. He affirms ‘that Man then is not “one with” God, but ... may be led into unison or conjunction with the Lord ... by the operation of the Divine love and wisdom through (not as) us’. Dresser’s argument is thus not merely about God (pantheism), it is about God, the universe and man (panentheism). Therefore it includes both the part and the whole – it is the synergy between the two – then there is ‘yoga’, the union.

6.3.1 To define God

Emmet Fox, like so many others, is aware of the difficulty of discussing a concept such as ‘God’. However, he believes that one can gain insight into and understanding of the nature of God. ‘God is infinite, but we, as human beings, while we cannot of course grasp the Infinite, can yet acquaint ourselves with many different aspects or attributes of His nature’ (Fox 1994:117). It is like visiting the Capitol building in Washington – one knows that one cannot possibly see it all at once, ‘but that does not mean that you cannot become very well acquainted with it’ (Fox 1994:116). In attempting to understand the concept of ‘God’, he approaches it in the same manner as the building. To him, the only way of approaching God is through prayer, which is thinking of God.

To capture the nature of God is impossible. Fox (1979d:63) stated that ‘God is infinite and you cannot define God’, just as Spinoza said that ‘to define God is to deny Him’. Emerson (in

Paramananda 1985:52) remarks that man, at some point in his life, may be aware of the pure nature; however 'language cannot paint it with his colors. It is too subtle. It is indefinable, immeasurable.' Ramdas (1974:245), in conversation with some students, told them: 'Friends, Ramdas cannot prove to you by mere arguments the existence of God, nobody can. Ramdas from his own experience can boldly assert that there is God. Until you yourself get the experience, it is natural that you should deny Him.' Emerson (in Paramananda 1985:46) confirms this continuous search for an explanation of God and soul. Like Ramdas, he believes that those who have experienced the light, such as the sages and mystics, still 'cannot reveal it to others who have not the same light. Every man's words who speaks from that life must sound vain to those who do not dwell in the same thought on their own part.'

Blavatsky reflects on the restricted ways in which those with limited senses attempt to comprehend something that is infinite. She remembers 'the difficulty of finding terms to describe, and to distinguish between, abstract metaphysical facts or differences'. She is also aware that we 'give names to things according to the appearances they assume for ourselves ... yet we recognize fully that our perception of such things does not do them justice' (Blavatsky 1952a:126). Charles Fillmore also acknowledges that the One, the origin of everything, is known by various names. He is not so concerned with the various labels that are applied to God, but 'the important consideration is a right concept of its character' (Fillmore [sa]:10).

6.3.2 The personal God

Theologies are thus attempts to discover and explain this nature of God. Emmet Fox (1992:64) does not perceive of God in a physical sense as a venerable sort of person sitting on some distant throne in the skies 'meting out punishment or favors as He saw fit'. Neither does this God have a face like a person (even if the Psalmist says 'Seek ye my face'). Nor does he believe that the earlier cultures thought of 'God as a kind of great spirit dwelling perhaps in a lofty mountain'. Instead, God is 'pure Spirit, Infinite Creative Life, Infinite Mind, Infinite Intelligence, God is pure, unconditioned Being' (Fox 1979d:64).

Although Fox believes in a personal God, this is not a person in the anthropomorphic sense of the way, for no finite person could have created the boundless universe, only a God who has every quality of personality except its limitation. Ernest Holmes, who started the New Thought movement known as Religious Science in 1927, supports the idea of the 'personalness' of God. He states that 'personality cannot emerge from a principle which does not contain the inherent possibility of personality' and adds that 'spiritual evolution should make the Infinite not more distant; but more intimate' (Holmes 1938:89). Emmet Fox is also aware of the practical difficulty in finding a suitable pronoun with which to discuss God. The words 'he' and 'him' are misleading as they suggest that God is a man or something of male origin. On the other hand, calling God 'she' or 'her' is just as misleading. And to use the word 'it' is absurd, for the word seems to lack reverence and suggests an inanimate and unintelligent object. Fox (1994:116) refers to God in the masculine gender, but he asks the reader to bear in mind that these references to God as 'he' or 'him' constitute 'an unavoidable makeshift and that the reader must correct his/her thought accordingly'.

There is an absence of feminine symbolism for God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam – a 'striking contrast to the world's other religious traditions' (Pagels 1981:57). In texts discovered at Nag Hammadi, the Gnostic sources use sexual symbolism to describe God. However, 'instead of describing a monistic and masculine God, many of these texts speak of God as a dyad who embraces both masculine and feminine elements' (Pagels 1981:58).⁶ 'Esotericism, pure and simple', on the other hand, 'speaks of no personal God' and therefore its proponents are regarded as atheists. Then again,

... in reality, Occult Philosophy, as a whole, is based absolutely on the ubiquitous presence of God, the Absolute Deity: and if IT Itself is not speculated upon, as being too sacred and yet incomprehensible as a Unit to the finite intellect, yet the entire Philosophy is based upon Its Divine Powers as being the Source of all that breathes and lives and has existence (Blavatsky 1952d:462).

Fox contemplates the God-concept in a very personal way. To him 'God is your best friend. God is always present, and you can always turn to Him for help and guidance; and He never fails' (Fox 1984:148). No matter what happens in life,

God can heal you. God is stronger than anything 'awful'. God will always 'be in business'. If the burdens of the world become too much to bear, then 'Leave something to God. After all, it is He who is responsible for the world, and not you' (Fox 1979b:90, 105–106).

From another perspective Fox stresses that:

We are what we are because of the thoughts we habitually think, for these are the beginning of expression or manifestation in our lives. Therefore if we choose to think God-thoughts – positive, constructive, creative thoughts – we will express health, harmony, and prosperity in our lives' (Fox 1992:70).

Other reminders of this line of thought are, for example, that we create our worlds through our thinking; that healing manifests when one unthinks the error by knowing the Truth; that to change the outcome of one's experiences, one has to change the cause, which is the mind; that if you want anything to happen, you must bring about a change in your own mental outlook, whereupon your outer experience will automatically change to correspond; and that one's destiny depends entirely on one's own mental conduct.

The previous two paragraphs express two distinct views regarding Fox's thoughts on the concept of God – or at least that is the impression he gives. This seems to be a paradox in Fox's thinking. On the one hand, he states that man does not need to do a thing, as God is his helper and the one that will provide everything and anything. Then, on the other hand, he emphasises the power of thought, which the individual brings about through a positive choice, and the manifestation of a miraculous healing of such an action. In another example Fox (1992:88) states that: 'As children of the Most High we have a divine heritage and therefore a right to expect that God will take care of us in every way. We should expect him to heal us when we are sick, to furnish us with abundance when we are in need, and to bring us peace and harmony when we are filled with fear.' This statement leaves one with the impression that there is a god out there (transcendent and separated from us), but one with whom we share a personal bond (his children) and therefore we have the right to expect his intervention in our lives. Then again, we hear Fox enthusiastically stating the power of thought, which brings about the manifestation (the individual's responsibility) – the idea that God is not someone out there who bestows upon us any goodness, for goodness is already within us as part of our

divine origin (immanent and at-one-with us). Is Fox contradicting himself, or are these so-called differences part of his method of teaching?

Although at times it seems that Fox may be taking this personal concept of God too far, one does arrive at the conclusion that this may be a deliberate choice on his part. In other words, he uses well-known terminology (more traditional), something his readers of that time could identify with, and simultaneously he introduces another perspective to his students. Yes, God is your Father and he will help you in any situation, if you only ask, but remember, you, as a divine being already enjoy the power because of this relationship and whatever you think, you will manifest.

According to my interpretation, whenever Fox uses the word 'God', he really means the 'inner self', or the 'Christ-within', or the 'word/thought'. ('In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' (John 1:1)). Consequently, when one thinks of God, which is prayer, it really means that one becomes aware of one's divine power and inheritance, and therefore one can begin to entertain divine and good thoughts, and thus the manifestation (the answering of prayer) will be positive and good.

If God is first cause, then it is correct to say that God is always there: however, not as an entity, but as an essence. And if everything begins with thought, then the logical conclusion is that when one changes one's thinking or one's cause, then God will be the demonstration. That's why it seems to us that God has done it (pantheistic: God is all). However, in retrospect, it is not God who is doing anything. This divine intervention (God is helping or saving me) is the direct result of me taking control of my thoughts, my actions and myself. When an individual realises his or her divine power, then, according to Fox, one is at-one with God (panentheistic: all is in God and God is in all). In that case, this thought or realisation brings about the healing. It is thus true according to some of Fox's statements that one has the power to heal oneself or to change the reality of one's world. And for Fox this can only happen through the divine (which everyone is), which he calls 'God'. In conclusion Fox gives the impression that he is contradicting himself. However, from further insights into his teaching

and religious thinking, it appears that he brilliantly interweaves these two evidently opposing thoughts. Then again, it is the same thing to him – this ‘thought’ and ‘God’.⁷

Other New Thought leaders reveal the same response. According to the principles of Divine Science (considered the third largest New Thought group), God is universal mind ‘and man’ is ‘a thought in that eternal Mind’ (James and Cramer 1957:40). It is this thinking mind or God that creates through the actual word or thought, according to Holmes. Charles Fillmore (1949:93) expresses his opinion as ‘God is Mind, and man made in the image and likeness of God is Mind, because there is but one Mind, and that the Mind of God’. Emerson (in Paramananda 1985:14) maintains this line of thought: ‘There is one mind common to all individual men.’ New Thinkers believe that if everything is from one mind, and one is a creation of that mind, whatever is true of the whole (God) must then also be true of its parts (humankind). This idea directs the argument about our own importance as God manifestations. ‘We should understand that we are not separate or insignificant but the vital, important, integral parts of a mighty whole. Man is not a thing of small beginning but of infinite beginnings’ (Fillmore 1949:61, 136). James and Cramer (1957:44) declare that ‘I am because God is’ and therefore ‘I cannot be something that my source is not’. Judge Thomas Troward (1917:55), British New Thought leader,⁸ states it differently: ‘We cannot express powers which we do not possess.’ This line of reasoning leads Fox to the statements that, as with all in New Thought, one can be transformed by renewing one’s mind and the individual is responsible for the outcome of his or her life.

6.3.3 The seven main aspects of God

We cannot begin to grasp the idea of an infinite being; nevertheless we can acquaint ourselves with the many different aspects or attributes of his nature. Fox (1994:118–141) has chosen seven aspects (below) to describe God’s nature. He feels these are the most important and that all the others are built up of combinations of them. They also answer the questions most frequently asked by individuals seeking spiritual guidance: What is God like? How are we to think about God? What is his nature? What is his character? Where is he? Can we really contact him, and if so, how?

The first main aspect is *Life*. God is Life and life is existence or being. Joy is one of the highest expressions of God as Life – it is a mix between life and love. The realisation of one's divine heritage brings about the experience of joy and healing. Acknowledging divine life within a person is a wonderful healing method.

The second aspect of God is *Truth*. God is Truth – absolute and unchanging. Truth is the great healer as knowing the truth of any situation will heal it.

The third aspect of God is *Love*. God is Love – this is the most important one for us to practise. There is no condition that enough love will not heal (1 John 4:16 and John 13:35). You cannot love completely if you fear. When you love enough, from the inside, you can heal any situation. Fox says that if you love God more than your sickness, then you are healed. If you have love in your heart, you can heal others by speaking the word once. Fox advises people to protect their own rights, to take wise steps in dealing with criminals and other delinquents, to regret or condemn an action or a wrong, but never to hate or condemn the wrongdoer. In protecting one's rights, it must always be in a spirit of divine love. Knowing that love heals and that fear and condemnation damage and destroy, Fox suggests daily love treatments. These involve watching one's thoughts, tongue and deeds, so that nothing contrary to love finds expression there.

The fourth aspect is *Intelligence*. God is Intelligence. In an intelligent universe there is no disharmony, as all ideas must work together for the common good of all. This intelligent aspect of God is important in its relation to the health of the body. The creation of the body is an act of intelligence; however, the carnal mind considers its limitations, which result in early decay and even death. To pray, or think about God, a certain amount of intelligence and knowledge is required. The seven aspects of God help man to attain this, which again can help one to think 'rightly' about his nature and to overcome these limitations.

The fifth aspect is *Soul*. God is Soul. This means he is able to individualise (undivided) himself without, so to speak, breaking himself into parts. As God can individualise himself as man, man is really an individualisation of God. Because God can do this, he is nevertheless in no

way separate. Matter can be divided, not God – he can only be individualised. Fox believes that this way of thinking of God can be quite new to many people, and suggests that they think it over until they understand it. Our real self, the Christ-within, the I Am, or that divine spark, is an individualisation of God. It is said that ‘you are the presence of God at the point where you are’. This does not mean that man is an absurd little personal God – just an individualisation of the one and only God (John 10:34). Man cannot be separated from God in reality, but he can be separated in human belief. When the belief in separation occurs, the belief in death follows in greater or lesser degree.

The sixth aspect is *Spirit*. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Spirit is that which cannot be destroyed, damaged or hurt, or degraded or soiled in any way. Spirit is the opposite of matter, which can deteriorate. Spirit is substance. Because spirit was never born and can never die, so it is with our true selves. We are eternal, divine, unchanging spirit in our true nature. The universe, too, is spiritual, but we see it in a limited way as matter. Distortion (including damage, decay, sin, sickness and death) arises from our seeing things wrongly – like looking at the street and passers-by through fluted glass. Everything seems to be distorted, but we know that it is the type of window that makes it so. This false or distorted vision about life and death is what the Bible refers to as the carnal mind. When something is beautiful, it is not the matter that is beautiful, but the spirit shining through. If the veil of distortion is thin, the object can be seen more clearly and is therefore more beautiful. If the veil is thick, the inner beauty becomes distorted.

Fox knows that many people will not be able to grasp and understand this way of thinking and he encourages them by suggesting that they should ignore the facts for a while. In the meantime they can at least try to practise some of the exercises. He knows that when they experience a demonstration, they will look at the whole process in a different light and it will not be so different or challenging any more.

The seventh aspect is *Principle*. God is Principle. According to Fox, this aspect is the least understood by people. He gives many examples to explain what principle means. One is that matter expands when heated; another that the angles of any triangle always add up to 180°.

These principles were true a billion years ago, and still are. They cannot change, because a principle cannot change – it is always true to its essence. And therefore God is principle of perfect harmony and cannot change. We experience problems in life because we have tuned out from God or the divine principle of our being. However, if something is principle, it stays unchanged – forever!

Fox also provides advice on the use of the various aspects of God for certain circumstances for which one would like to do a treatment. He believes that if one is aware of the various aspects and their corresponding power, our demonstrations from scientific prayer could be much clearer and more fulfilling. He reminds us that God is all of these aspects all the time. Like a rose, which has colour, weighs a number of grams, and has a certain shape and fragrance – the rose is all of these all the time. So it is with the nature of God. Fox emphasises three of these attributes of God: God as Soul – he individualised himself as man, but is not separate from him; God as Spirit – the one that cannot be destroyed; and God as Principle – the unchangeable. This line of thinking is similar to the idea that all things are interrelated and that there is a fundamental unity behind the various forms in the world of the senses. It is also a recurrent theme in the Eastern religions, both the mystics and esotericists express it, it is suggested in the Bible ('He in whom we live and move and have our being') and in the Kabbalistic concept of En-Sof (out of whom all creation is projected), as well as other ancient writings of wisdom. What is more, it has been made very popular by modern physics.

Fritjof Capra (1980:69, 189), the modern research physicist who links modern physics and Eastern mysticism, recapitulates the physicist's approach:

All particles can be transmuted into other particles; they can be created from energy and can vanish into energy. In this world, classical concepts like 'elementary particle', 'material substance', or 'isolated object' have lost their meaning; the whole universe appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns.

The particles of the subatomic world are not only active in the sense of moving around very fast; they themselves are processes! The existence of matter and its activity cannot be separated. They are but different aspects of the same space-time reality.

His observation that 'material objects are not distinct entities, but are inseparably linked to

their environment; that their properties can only be understood in terms of their interaction with the rest of the world' (Capra 1980:195) is a reflection of Fox's (1979a:72) statement that 'God always acts through us by changing our consciousness' and 'that God never does anything to us, or for us, but always through us'. This concept appears to confirm some panentheistic thinking on Fox's part.

God's attributes can only be known and experienced in their interaction with man. They may take on different forms for different people, but, as Emerson affirms, 'the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one'. Elsewhere he states: 'Essence, or God, is not a relation or a part, but the whole' (in Paramananda 1985:40, 48). Blavatsky (1952a:125, 320) believes that when things (such as hydrogen and oxygen) are in union (forming water), then the parts ceased to exist on one level as they became something else. Yet they have not ceased to be, for 'they must be there all the while'. She also describes the 'one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence in the Universe' as it 'thrills throughout every atom and infinitesimal point of the whole Kosmos, which has no bounds'.

6.3.4 The names of God

Shifting the subject matter for a moment to the various names of/for God, Fox states that a name means the nature or character of someone or something. To know the name of God is to empower an individual, for the 'knowing' is the identification of the true nature of God, and the more one knows the nature of God, the more one will understand one's own true nature.

Fox states that God is the creator and the beginning of everything and all things that exist are his expressions. He then remarks that 'in Bible idiom the word "God" does not always stand for God in the sense of the Universal Creator. It may mean your own Indwelling Christ, or True Self, which, of course, is the Presence of God at the point where you are, for in your True Self you are an individualization of God' (Fox 1994:50–51) and this permits one to share in this power.

It is rather obvious that Fox does not have a specific theology. However, he does make a distinction between the names Jehovah and Elohim. He states that when the Bible speaks of the 'Lord', it means one's concept or idea of God and not necessarily God as he really is.⁹ It is his notion that the key to the name of the Lord is to be found 'in what we call Jehovah, the personalized God of the Old Testament'. It is here, he says, that one gets 'a sense of God expressing Himself as Man'. In other words, the 'pure, unconditioned Being – I AM THAT I AM – has now become differentiated as men and women' (Fox 1993:208). It seems that the 'One' became the 'many' or the 'separated'. The word 'Elohim' (or simply 'God'), on the other hand, is used when he is referring to the true God.

Others also believe that Jehovah is the God of Israel. Dr Jim J Hurtak (1996:581), social scientist and futurist, comparative religionist, archaeologist, philosopher and author, as well as founder and president of the Academy for Future Science, maintains that it is 'the Greek accepted form of the revealed God of Our Father Universe; Ye-ho-wah is the manifested embodiment of YHWH to be known and loved as "the Sovereign Lord" directing the programs of salvation in our universe'. Jehovah is regarded 'as one of the Elohim' (Blavatsky 1952c:85), 'a family or even a race of Gods', but certainly not and 'nowhere pretends to be, and nowhere is pretended to be the Universal Spirit', as Le Poer Trench (1960:29, 31)¹⁰ states.

Blavatsky (1952b:187) points out that those nations that accused the ancient sages of superstition 'accept to this day as their one living and infinite God, the anthropomorphic "Jehovah" of the Jews'. In an argument with those who accuse the esotericists of 'believing in operating "Gods" and "Spirits" while rejecting a personal God', Blavatsky (1952b:215) says 'we answer to the Theists and Monotheists: Admit that your Jehovah is one of the Elohim, and we are ready to recognize him. Make of him, as you do, the Infinite, the ONE and the Eternal God, and we will never accept him in this character'.¹¹

'Elohim' means 'gods', the plural form. However, it is not clear from Fox's writings whether he ever regarded 'Elohim' as being plural in form or as indicating many gods. According to his writings, 'Elohim' refers to what he terms the true God. The following people in their arguments all share the same objective, that of referring to Elohim in the plural form. Brinsley

Le Poer Trench (1960:27) points out that the Hebrew version of the Old Testament ‘uses the word Elohim instead of God in Genesis, and that Elohim means Gods’.¹² Blavatsky (1952d:198), too, insists on the Elohim being plural (seven in number): ‘In the first chapter of Genesis the word “God” represents the Elohim – Gods in the plural, not one God.’

Hurtak (1996:573) defines ‘Elohim’ as ‘the plural splendor of the Creator God ... for it is the “Creator Gods” who have created the world by the will of Yahweh’. He has also ascertained that this name in its plural form appears frequently (over 2 500 times) in the Old Testament. Another interesting remark from Hurtak (1996:573–574) is that Elohim is used for the higher creation and it was ‘only after Enoch as a “father” gave birth “in time” (Gen 5:21), and “walked with the true God” (Gen 5:22) that the Hebrew expression ha-Elohim, however, is introduced in the Bible, as applying to the revealed Creator Divinity behind the veils of creation’. Could this be a reflection of Fox’s true God (Elohim) that became the Lord (Jehovah), man’s concept of God – the individualised and personalised God? It seems possible that through translations (faulty ones, according to Blavatsky), we have arrived at different and even diverse interpretations and therefore numerous perspectives. Possibly Fox shared a similar view to that communicated by ‘The Christ’ (1986:33): ‘Many of your holy books and written scriptures tell you that there is an omniscient, omnipresent, and ever expanding force, source, or energy which is called by many names in many languages. “God” will do.’

Fox stated previously that God, the I AM THAT I AM, was differentiated into men and women. I AM is the lost word and secret Name of God in us. It is our ‘true identity’; our ‘real name’; it is ‘Divine Spirit’, which is our ‘real eternal self’; it ‘was never born and will never die’ (Fox 1993:209, 213). Knowing this final name of God, says Fox, is what gives one power, because it identifies one with the true nature of God. He remarks that a statement such as I AM elicits the question, I am what? This requires a qualification, and when one completes the sentence, one limits it. An answer such as ‘I am a man’ ‘means you are not a woman’ and such qualifications ‘limit the expression in one way or another’ (Fox 1993:209–210). However, the qualification of I AM THAT I AM does not limit any expression. It states the absolute ... God! Fox (1993:210) maintains that ‘God is unlimited, I AM THAT I AM, unexpressed, creative power, Divine Mind waiting for expression’ and man is God’s expression. It is man’s oneness

with the divine that empowers a person and allows one to attach the I AM to all the attributes of God (such as freedom, joy, health, success and abundance). I AM always connects one with divine power because we are the I AM of the I AM THAT I AM. 'It is the presence of God in you. It insures that you can go direct to God, that you do not need any intermediary' (Fox 1993:210). This last statement relates well to an earlier observation in which Wilber distinguishes between the God of the subtle realm with whom one can bargain for one's salvation, and the God of the causal realm where all communication is transcended, for one actually becomes that oneness.

Fox then points out that the name 'Jehovah' was given to the people and was later written down in the Bible as a reminder of our oneness with God and that he is always present and of assistance. 'It is the knowledge that the love of God shines through and says, "I am your God and you are my people. I AM THAT I AM but you are I AM, my beloved son in whom I am well pleased".' In a closer look at this remark, as well as interpreting Fox's thought, I obtain the impression that if God had only said, 'I AM God', it would indicate a pantheistic belief (God is all). But because God said, 'I AM THAT I AM', and if the last 'I AM' points to man, then it looks more like a panentheistic point of view – not only God, but God is all, and all is God – the interaction between God and The All. Hurtak (1996:572–573) also refers to this sacred union or interplay between the divine identity and the individual identity as the I AM THAT I AM. It is the 'balance between the human/God partnership [or the] covenant between the human self and the Christed Overself, and a knowing of one's true identity, one's destiny, and the keys to the higher thresholds'.

On the other hand, Fox (1984:228–229) understands pantheism as giving 'the outer world a separate and substantial existence and says that it is part of God – including all the evil and cruelty to be found in it'. This, he states, is not metaphysics. He continues: 'The truth is that God is the only Presence and the only Power, that He is entirely good, that evil is a false belief about the Truth; and that the outer world is the out-picturing of our own minds.' I assume Fox means that pantheism includes in God all the bad of the outer world as well. And this is not what he teaches. He insists that God is The All, but not separate from the world, for man is the I AM of God and therefore part of the greater whole. It is because man is the individualised

expression of God that man is in essence also of this nature. I admit that it looks as if my interpretation of Fox is more panentheistic than what he says himself – unless of course the panentheistic view has been his intention all along?

Fox repeats that by using I AM one is bringing the power of God into one's life. What one brings will depend on how one uses the I AM. If one affirms that 'I AM sick', then disease or bad health would be the demonstration. However, if one declares 'I AM Mary Jones, the Christ',¹³ then an identification of oneself with the Eternal and the good is taking place. He encourages his readers, even if it may sound a little strange to them, to affirm over and over again their true nature rather than focus on the problem. He concludes by highlighting that 'I AM THAT I AM is the Great Name, and I AM is the greatest name short of that (Fox 1993:214).

6.3.5 A jealous God?

Addressing the matter of God being a jealous God, or a God that punishes and threatens people, Fox is convinced that God does none of these things, for God is Love. A verse such as 'The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart' becomes confusing to one who believes in a loving and trusting God. If God does not bring these things upon people, then 'punishment is the natural result of thinking wrongly, acting wrongly – perhaps not intentionally, maybe through ignorance – and the law carries it out' (Fox 1979d:71). 'The Christ' (1986:170) agrees that 'God does not punish.' 'You punish yourselves by non-loving behavior, dear ones.' Elsewhere Fox (1993:170) maintains that suffering in life is the natural working out of the law that 'for every action there is a corresponding reaction'. He suggests that we replace the word 'Lord' with 'law', for that is what is meant, and one will realise that God cannot do anything to anyone, but our wrong thinking will bring about the necessary result for that is the law. Neither can God be jealous, but the Bible uses words that we as humans can relate to.

Fox also believes that through orthodox theology we made idolatrous images of ourselves and then called them God. He refers to instances in the Bible when God changed His mind, or was disappointed, or wanted to test someone's faith. If 'the true God is infinite and unchanging Good', these things cannot 'be really true of God' (Fox 1984:78). Fox interprets Abraham's

willingness to sacrifice Isaac, not as God testing his faith, but as being 'Abraham's idea of God that led him to prepare to kill Isaac, and it was his higher self, his indwelling Christ, that saved him from that tragedy'. Similarly, in the story of the flood: 'It was the wickedness of mankind in the antediluvian world that brought on the flood as a natural consequence, just as the fears, hatreds, jealousies, and greed of mankind over the many years have brought on the present war' (Fox 1984:78).

Commenting on whether trouble and suffering are the will of God, Fox (1979b:9) insists that the will of God for us is life, health, happiness and true self-expression and it is only in connection with these things that we can say 'Thy will be done'.

6.3.6 Closing thoughts on God

To conclude, Fox builds his whole understanding of metaphysics on certain basic principles. One of these principles is that 'God as Cause is perfect, that he individualizes Himself as man, and that man by the exercise of his free will, can create or think good or evil'. Thinking good thoughts would naturally lead to harmony with divine law and the result would be good. On the other hand, if man were to think erroneous thoughts, he would limit himself as an expression of God, and so would experience evil. To explain the nature of man and how he can change, Fox comments that 'good, which is the expression of God, is unchanging and eternal; whereas error thoughts, though they cause pain and suffering for the moment, have no true substance (or to use a technical term, "reality"), and therefore can be destroyed, or made to cease to exist'. Fox, through the correct use of metaphysical science, does not deny the existence of the physical world, but feels that it teaches us that our understanding of it is limited, faulty and changing. He believes that it is our duty to work on our own consciousness 'until we produce a correct understanding which will mean for us the end of sin, sickness, and death' (Fox 1992:50).

To return to Wilber's holonic structure, one may ask, 'Where is God?' Is he more fundamental and less significant or less fundamental and more significant? Does he fit into the lower or the upper parts of this holarchy? Or is he the holarchy itself? If God fits into any specific part –

let's say he is the fundamental building block of the universe – and is then taken away, all the other levels 'above' it will also cease to exist. On the other hand, if God is the basis of all, then there is no existence above or besides this, anyway. From a superficial glance, Fox's religious thinking about God does not fit into any of the quadrants in Wilber's four-quadrant model. However, these quadrants are not isolated portions of a greater whole, but, as Wilber has repeatedly stated, form an interconnected web, integrated into a theory of everything. Nonetheless, all four of the quadrants are present within Fox's concept of God.

To return to Wilber's example of a visitor to another country (above), hearing a concept about God (lower-right) does not necessarily mean that it is understood in its original sense (lower-left). In other words, one could be part of a social system and its beliefs, and still be an outsider to its culture and its true meaning. Wilber explained that the ultimate wholeness lies at the base of humanity's consciousness, but because we do not understand it, or have not consciously realised it, it becomes something 'outside' us – an 'Other'. That is why, he says, humanity needs an external or exterior and visible God to worship.

Fox and Wilber agree on the differentiation between the creator God, the God of Israel or Jehovah, and the void-source God, or Elohim. God, to Fox, is everything all the time. Fox separates God into various aspects and attributes (cf 6.3.3), which may even appear contradictory at times, but he sees God as all the parts coming together into the One.

It appears that Fox's thinking about God – the Elohim, the true God – fits into the upper-left quadrant. The upper-right, with its exterior and analytical approach, is where Fox's true God is becoming the personalised God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. The social system in which he finds himself believes that God is male, the only God, a transcendent God separated from humanity and a father God doing things for his beloved children. In trying to fit into the exterior social quadrant of the lower-right, he shapes his terminology and his viewpoint. However, it does not mean that his students and readers have come to terms with his thoughts as he understands them. In the lower-left corner he shares his thoughts in order to achieve mutual understanding and reflection. He is explaining the interior concepts of a personal God, as well

as the power that everyone possesses, because the I AM of a person is divine. The knowledge that I AM divine (the interior), according to Fox, leads to the manifestation (the exterior).

When the interiors (upper-left and lower-left) of the four-quadrant model co-exist, then the demonstration takes place within the exteriors (upper-right and lower-right). In other words, when a thought (upper-left) is explained in order to gain mutual understanding (lower-left), then the answering of prayer becomes significantly noticeable as the actual healing within the exterior quadrants. This is how a thought becomes a thing. This is probably the reason that Fox (1944:28–29) is not so concerned about the immediate understanding of all the facts, or with philosophical speculation,¹⁴ as he maintains. He is aware that once the thought of God is manifested as a unique experience about God, the individual parts will interconnect into the greater whole and, as Wilber proclaims, one then moves up the holonic ladder of consciousness.

In my opinion Fox shuttles, knowingly or unknowingly, between the concepts of pantheism and panentheism. His writings are predominantly of a ‘God is all’ nature, although there is adequate substantiation of the thinking ‘God is all and all is God’. The latter is represented most closely in his declaration of I AM THAT I AM. Here, the divine and the human are integrated in an interesting and dynamic web of co-creation. This line of thought is typical of the early New Thinkers. They seem very pantheistic in their descriptions of God, but they regularly cross over into panentheism. Whether they were aware of the precise and philosophic division and discussion between these two concepts is debateable. Then again, this idea of God in all and all in God appears to have been the thought of the day in any case. Although the term ‘panentheism’ did not appear in the writings of these early New Thought leaders, they agree that ‘God is in us as we are in God’ (Holmes 1938:87) and according to Divine Science ‘I in God and God in me’, as well as ‘God-Mind includes you and me’ (James and Cramer 1957:51, 63). Fox mostly uses a more traditional and very personal terminology to discuss the concept of ‘God’. Then again, he skilfully introduces his readers to an ‘other’ perspective. He constantly plants the seeds for thinking in a new way about existing views. His

ability to be instrumental in the transformation of one level of consciousness into the next designates him a bridge-builder.

6.4 JESUS CHRIST: A METAPHYSICAL REVOLUTION

Emmet Fox declares that Jesus was the most misunderstood man of his time. Actually, the very existence of Jesus seems debateable. Because the discourse over the Jesus Christ story continues, and consensus over this issue is still a point in the future, this discussion will focus briefly on the differences between the titles and teachings of Jesus and Christ and Fox's interpretations and beliefs. (His beliefs will become clearer in the chapter on biblical exegesis.) Ken Wilber's evolutionary model, as well as the thoughts of some prominent New Thought scholars, will provide the framework for Fox's religious thinking.

Lloyd M Graham, the author of the controversial book *Deceptions and myths of the Bible* (subtitled *Is the Holy Bible holy? Is it the Word of God?*), pleads for a metaphysical revolution that will change humanity inwardly and, according to him, it will not be a religious revolution, but 'the return of the wisdom-knowledge of the cosmos', which will bring that 'new dimension of consciousness and right orientation with Reality' so long denied by religion. 'The latter [religion] we know, is sacred to millions, but it's the sacred that's blinding us. Criticism, we know, is shocking to millions, but "a shock upon our minds is long overdue"', according to Max Frankel (in Graham 1979:436). Matthew Fox too calls for a much-needed paradigm shift within religion and theology – a movement away from anthropocentrism back to the Cosmic Christ. 'The quest for the historical Jesus has dominated christological studies for two centuries', but this happened at the expense of the Cosmic Christ (Fox 1988:78).

Ken Wilber (1995:179) noticed a general progress on all levels of his great chain of being model. Particularly with humanity's consciousness having reached level 4, egoic-rational (he places it from the middle of the first millennium BCE to about the sixteenth century), there was a new type of 'looking within'. The emphasis shifted from 'What is there to know?' to 'How can I know it?' The common theme was 'look within'. This was the fundamental message of Jesus of Nazareth: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within.'¹⁵ Emmet Fox agrees that human destiny has

turned a corner. The vast political upheavals of his time are indications of ‘the change in the race mentality’ and the readiness for the second coming of the Christ, which is the day that one obtains one’s ‘own personal, living, divine contact with God’ (Fox 1993:186–187).

To return to the great chain of being (chapter 4), Ken Wilber reminds us of the evolutionary advance of Christ’s revelation that ‘I and the Father are One’. This was the shift from level 6, the subtle Sambhogakaya level, to level 7, the causal Dharmakaya level. He also refers to the sameness within the Upanishads of ‘Thou art That’, which indicates that ‘you and God are ultimately one’ (Wilber 1996:255–256). Christ, who faced the old Mosaic law of the external One God of the Sambhogakaya level, challenged it, and therefore was crucified, because ‘you, being a man, make yourself out God’. Wilber 1996:256) explains:

That is, he was crucified because he dared to evolve from the Sambhogakaya – where the subject-object dualism remains in a subtle form, and where therefore the dualism between Creator and creature remains in a subtle form – to the Dharmakaya – where subject and object reduce to prior oneness, and where therefore God and soul reduce to prior Godhead, or the Void of the Supreme Identity.

Wilber (1995:172–173) contends that

in each epoch, the most advanced mode of the time – in a very small number of individuals existing in relational exchange in microcommunities (lodges, academies, sanghas) of the similarly deepened – began to penetrate not only into higher modes of ordinary cognition (the Aristotles of the time) but also into genuinely transcendental, transpersonal, mystical stages of awareness (the Buddhas of the time).

Thus, in level 2, the magical, the most advanced mode seems to have been in the psychic, level 5, resulting in a couple of shamans or pioneers of yogic awareness; when the consciousness advanced to level 3, the mythological, the higher perception came from level 6, the subtle, with some saints; and when it reached level 4, the mental-egoic, the highest awareness came from level 7, the causal, represented by some sages. However, the average mode of the mythological epoch did not reach these more advanced levels. For this level of consciousness myths were still interpreted as concrete-literal. For example, Moses actually did part the Red Sea, a historical fact. Culturally (lower-left), one’s belief systems were determined by the norm of the day.

With the expansion of consciousness, when humanity moved into Wilber's level 4, rationality meant that one could now reflect on one's own thoughts and patterns of behaviour. For the first time in this evolutionary process one could seek viable reasons for one's beliefs. For example, did Moses part the Red Sea? Why should I believe this? Or what does 'parted the Red Sea' mean? Questioning the validity and historicity of myths led to a clash between myth and newly emerging reason. This resulted in the rationalisation of myths, and this is why Wilber called this level mythic-rational. Historically, at the same time, the social level (lower-right) developed from tribal villages into empires and finally emerged into nations and states. It was this progress that altered the consciousness into one of 'looking within'.

Wilber (1995:253) regards Christ and other spiritual figures not as 'figures of the past', but 'figures of the future'. He maintains that

they cannot be explained as an inheritance from the past; they are strange Attractors lying in our future, omega points that have not been collectively manifested anywhere in the past, but are nonetheless available to each and every individual as structural potentials, as future structures attempting to come down, not past structures struggling to come up.

Few individuals managed to go beyond the magic, mythic and rational eras into the transrational and transpersonal domains. Those such as Christ (Buddha and Patanjali for example), whose transrational teachings were about 'the release from individuality', were sadly snapped up by the masses and interpreted within the magic, mythic and egoic terms as 'the salvation of the individual soul', a 'grotesque notion' (Wilber 1995:265).

One must bear in mind a very important and significant statement that Wilber (1995:329) made earlier: 'This world is not a sin; forgetting that "this world" is the radiance and Goodness of Spirit – there is the sin.' It is thus the recollection, the remembrance of source and that one's true nature is divine that brings about enlightenment. Wilber (1995:329) insists that 'enlightenment or awakening (bodhi, moksha) is not a bringing into being of that which was not, but a realizing of that which always already is'. This, to him, is what Christ meant when he said 'Do this in remembrance of me.'

6.4.1 Jesus and Christ: the human and the divine

Wilber's last statement that one's true nature is divine has provided ongoing debate among many academics. It is also an avowal with which most New Thought and mystical scholars agree. Another major point of discussion, especially as expressed in esoteric writings, is the belief that 'in the life and person of Jesus Christ two distinct and different individuals are involved'. One is the historical Jesus, 'an initiate of high spiritual development who was born in Bethlehem and grew to manhood', whereas the other entered the story with Jesus' baptism by John, when evidently 'Jesus allowed his body to be used by the Christ, the Teacher of Angels and Men' to carry out his mission on earth (Peterson 1986:153). Emmet Fox states that the Christ is not Jesus, but Jesus expressed the Christ more fully than anyone else. The Christ is the active presence of God, the incarnation of God in living men and women. 'In the history of all races', Fox (1993:188) says, 'The Cosmic Christ has incarnated in man – Buddha, Moses, Elijah, and in many other leaders and teachers, but never to the degree the Christ manifested in Jesus.' The reason he gives is that Jesus, more than any other, had made himself aware of the Christ power.

Phineas Parkhurst Quimby makes the distinction that 'Jesus was a carpenter', whereas 'Christ is God'. He also comments that: 'The inner man is Christ' (or the spiritual man). Thus he says: 'Jesus was the name of a man and Christ was the Truth', and it indicates 'All One' (Hawkins 1984:33, 42). Emmet Fox believes that Jesus' life is a dramatisation of the Christed soul, the soul that has chosen the spiritual path, just as everything in the Bible and within one's own life is a dramatisation of one's soul. For this reason, he argues, Jesus' life has many diagrams for living within it.

Fox (1993:143) maintains that Jesus was God, but he always adds that 'so are we'. 'The totality of God could not be limited in a human form. Jesus was the expression of God, the individualization of God, just like each one of us is.' He then remarks that although Jesus was God, he was not infinite spirit. This statement leads one to enquire whether Fox makes a distinction between God and infinite spirit. Is infinite spirit superior to the concept of God? Throughout Fox's writings he is of the firm belief that God is infinite spirit, the One that cannot

be destroyed, that God is principle, the unchangeable. It seems that Fox reserves the concept of 'infinite spirit' for the highest possible thought about God, and uses the concept of God whenever a person is involved – God individualising himself as man. He demonstrates the difference between Jesus, who 'knew he was God' and us, who 'only hope and vaguely believe we are, but we do not know'. For when we know, 'then we shall be able to do the works that Jesus did, as he promised we should' (Fox 1993:143–144).

Yogi Ramachakara also believes that Jesus' consciousness prior to his birth was of a more profound and divine nature. This yogi and mystic highlights the mystery of the life of Jesus, which 'forms the subject of some important inner Teachings of the Mystic Fraternities and Occult Brotherhoods'. These mysteries include his virgin birth, a soul 'fresh from the hand of the Creator', 'free from taint', and 'not bound by the Karma of previous incarnations' (Ramachakara 1935:183). To fulfil his role and purpose on earth, a world-saviour, Jesus had to enter the karmic circle of humanity. Jesus was indeed different from other souls for, 'being a free soul animated by Pure Spirit, Jesus was A GOD – not a man, although inhabiting the fleshly garments of humanity'. Ramachakara (1935:186) then points out Jesus' superior power and that he was 'Pure Spirit incarnate in human form, with all the powers of a God. Although of course subordinate in expression to the Absolute – the Great Spirit of Spirit – he was in his essential nature the same in substance. Truly, as he himself said, 'I and the Father are One'. Such a God could not raise the consciousness of the world from the outside. To perform his work, he had to place himself within the 'Circle of Influence' – he entered into the earth's karma. His knowledge of his real self, the God Within, which was within him and all men, gave him the strength and the courage to overcome the temptations of the earth-things.

Fox (1979b:6) insists that the more we focus and dwell on this perfection – 'each one of us has a Divine Self which is spiritual and perfect', the 'true man', the 'Christ within' – the more outer appearances improve. Elsewhere he refers to the mystics, who testify 'that when any man or woman gets a larger concept of God, then his or her personal affairs will change for the better, far better than it was possible to imagine' (Fox 1993:187). The expression 'saluting the Christ in him' is precisely the same as 'judge not according to appearances but judge righteous judgment', says Fox, and therefore he advises one always to look for the divine in

other people, especially if there is an inharmonious condition. Quimby (in Hawkins 1984:22) also believes that one's divine nature gives one dominion and 'if this law could be understood, it would rid us of all evil beliefs that are bound in the natural or carnal man'.

New Thought teaching in general supports these ideas. Divine Science teaches that Jesus was completely aware of the truth, for the knowledge of his divine origin made him declare that 'I and my Father are one', and 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life'. If all is indeed spirit, then man and God cannot be separated. 'Our divine nature – our real Self – is the Christ our hope of glory', maintains Divine Science. 'Just as Jesus became the Christ, so this is the latent possibility and destiny for the individual – each one will become Christed' (James and Cramer 1957:73, 116). Emerson (1926:207) reminds us: 'Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God.' Quimby (in Seale 1986:83) regards Christ as 'the God in man'. Emma Curtis Hopkins, former student of Mary Baker Eddy and hailed as the 'Mother of New Thought', states that one arrives at the Good/God by the Jesus Christ method only. 'The Jesus Christ method is the Truth method. Jesus Christ means Truth. It is God. It is all the God there is. It is Principle – high Principle.' And when one unites with this power, with God, it is like being married to it. She states: 'Jesus Christ was married to God in that He was united to His understanding' (Hopkins [sa]:25, 70–71). Ernest Holmes (1938:485) comments: 'The inner Spirit, which is God, bears witness to the divine fact that we are the sons of God, the children of the Most High. As sons of God, we are heirs to the heaven of reality; joint heirs with Christ.'

Jesus has been acknowledged as Saviour (Fox). Wilber (1996:256) describes him as 'a true Spiritual Guide helping all to become sons and daughters of God'. The Gnostics believed that Jesus came as a guide to open access to spiritual understanding rather than to save one from sin. His role was that of teacher, revealer and spiritual master. Troward (1915:136) recognises Christ as 'the Mediator between God and Man, not by the arbitrary fiat of a capricious Deity, but by a logical law of sequence which solves the problem of making extremes meet, so that the Son of Man is also the Son of God' and this allows everyone to receive the power 'to become ourselves sons of God'. This, to Troward, is 'the dénouement of the Creative Process in the Individual'. 'Jesus Christ is called the Mediator of the New Covenant', comments

Hopkins ([sa]:92–93), ‘because He teaches that by His principle we have an easy yoke and a light burden.’ ‘New Thought’, say Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:45), ‘sees Jesus as a role model, the wayshower, our elder brother.’

Most scholars confirm repeatedly that we humans, like Jesus, are made in the image and likeness of our creator. ‘This is our great hope’, maintain New Thinkers Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:45), ‘that we can emulate him because we are like him in kind, if not in degree.’ He himself told us: ‘Greater works than these shall (ye) do’ (John 14:12)’. In the Gnostic gospels, this thought is reaffirmed, that whoever ‘have drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measure out’, says Jesus, ‘He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am; I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him’ (Pagels 1981:xx). Jesus, having obtained this power, accepted his Christhood and lived as the Christ, but nevertheless stated, according to Divine Science, that he fully understood that ‘he had no special power; that all are Sons of God and that the same power which he used is available to all’ (James and Cramer 1957:140).

6.4.2 The Jesus Christ teaching

Fox (1979c:73), and many like-minded thinkers, sums up the whole of Jesus Christ’s teaching in these words: ‘For behold the Kingdom of God is within you.’ This is the concurrent theme of the Gnostic gospels. As cited above (5.4.1), *The Gospel according to Thomas* (1959:3) declares that ‘the Kingdom is within you and it is without you.’ Thus, the kingdom of God is not a specific place and must not be interpreted in literal terms. With this statement Jesus taught humanity the nature of God and thereby one’s own nature. Consequently Fox regards Jesus Christ as the most important figure to have ever appeared in the history of mankind and through his life and death, as well as his teachings, to have influenced the course of human history more than any other.

‘It is of no use to preach to me from without’, says Emerson (1926:203–204). ‘I can do that too easily myself. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle. That includes the miracle.’ Jesus made it quite clear that many still did not

understand the inner teachings that he brought and taught.

And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parables. And He said unto them, 'Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand' (Ramacharaka 1935:212).

It was a great calamity, says Yogi Ramacharaka, when the church departed from these inner teachings, an error from which the church is still suffering. Well-known occultist Eliphas Levi (in Ramacharaka 1935:222) said:

A great misfortune befell Christianity. The betrayal of the Mysteries by the false Gnostics – for the Gnostics, that is, those who know, were the Initiates of primitive Christianity – caused the Gnosis to be rejected, and alienated the Church from the supreme truths of the Kabbala, which contains all the secrets of transcendental theology.

Fox (1942:5) too reminds New Thought teachers not to come 'between the individual soul and God'. In other words, they should not commit the age-old mistake of organised religion, in which the material channel (the teacher, the dogma or the church) gradually takes the place of the 'individual divine contact'. Fox (1993:183, 185) emphasises that Jesus never wanted his followers to worship his personality, for 'as long as people looked to a person or an institution, a man or a church, they were missing the divine thing within themselves'. He repeatedly stressed that 'each one must get his own contact with God'. All the great teachers in all branches of knowledge, including Jesus, have said 'Don't rely on me, rely on the teaching' (Fox 1993:184). Anderson and Whitehouse (1995:45) also remind their readers not merely to believe in Jesus, as the traditional churches taught, but to believe Jesus. In other words, 'believe what the man said and to try it out for yourself'.

Quimby (in Seale 1986:132) states that 'Jesus tried to establish the kingdom of truth in man so that men could teach it, but man was not developed enough to receive it'. This seems to be the reason that Jesus never answered the disciples directly. He always pointed them in the direction of self-discovery by asking questions or making a so-called contradictory statement. For example, when Jesus was asked, 'Who are you?' he answered, 'You do not realize who I am from what I say to you.' When they asked him to show them the place of life, he responded

with: 'Every one (of you) who has known himself has seen it.' The disciple of the Gnostics 'learns what he needs to know by himself in meditative silence' (Pagels 1981:158). To the Gnostics, Jesus' role, although one of teacher and spiritual master, is only a provisional measure, for once the disciple comes into his awakening, he and his teacher become one. This is what Emerson (1926:109) understood when he informed his readers:

He teaches who gives, and he learns who receives. There is no teaching until the pupil is brought into the same state or principle in which you are; a transfusion takes place; he is you and you are he; then is a teaching, and by no unfriendly chance or bad company can he ever quite lose the benefit.

Emerson (1926:105) expresses this same idea in a different way: 'Our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened – then we behold them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream.'

According to Fox, the message of the whole Bible is summed up in the single phrase, 'As you believe, so shall it be done unto you.' He refers to Jesus' belief in eternal life and his resurrecting demonstration. He also reminds his readers that Jesus said 'and greater works than these shall ye do'. We have not yet performed these miracles, says Fox (1939:18), because we do not believe. These 'greater works' will be done when we believe, 'not as a limited personality, but we believe we can do it in virtue of our oneness with God'. And this to Fox is the New Thought message.

6.5 SOCIALISING CONCEPTS

In bringing this chapter on the social-cultural quadrants to a close, two concepts should be mentioned, namely Emmet Fox's thoughts on church and structure; and the spiritual practice of tithing. Although these perceptions will not be dealt with extensively, they complete the picture of Fox's religious thoughts.

6.5.1 Church and structure

Fox (1979a:129) is clear that organised religion breeds grave dangers and that the

accumulation of property, which is 'an evil which overtakes almost every well organized church sooner or later', is so powerful and subtle that it excludes anyone from participation who does not agree with its ways. In an interpretation of the Book of Isaiah, Fox reminds his readers that when they are successful in prayer, in other words, when they are conscious of the presence of God, the 'way' becomes a 'highway'. This implies that every person can use a highway – it is for all – and not the exclusive right of any group or organisation. Most religious movements, especially the older and greater ones, taught about the path and how to enter onto it. 'But', says Fox (1979a:129), it is 'treated, not as a highway, but as a private road fenced in by themselves, to the gates of which they alone held the keys'. If one focuses on this exclusiveness and forgets that the path is a highway, then we are in danger of repeating the old mistakes.

The only right way or religion to follow is to consciously know your own indwelling Lord. Fox is aware of the numerous church leaders who, exploiting their own personalities, discourage their students from going elsewhere for enlightenment or help. 'What is this but the jealousy of the petty tradesman who warns a doubtful customer of the danger he runs in going to the shop next door' (Fox 1979a:143). He believes that this loyalty to something other than God is blocking the avenue of truth. He also regards the building up of vested interests in wealthy organisations, or the exploitation by individuals of their own personalities as grave dangers to true religion. The danger that an organised church is facing is development into an industry that concentrates more on the ranking, filing and providing a living for a number of officials, creating a tradition of loyalty to an organisation, rather than loyalty to the truth or to one's own soul. Fox (1979a:143) therefore reminds his readers that 'you absolutely owe no loyalty whatever to anything or anyone but your own soul and to the furtherance of its spiritual development'. He was not a man to build structures around his teachings or himself and he often encouraged his congregations to seek truth wherever they could get it. He believed that: 'The history of orthodox Christianity is largely made up on attempts to enforce all sorts of external observances upon the people', whereas Jesus made a special point of discouraging emphasis on outer observances (Fox 1979c:75). Could this way of thinking reflect on Wilber's four quadrant model? In this model he often referred to one being part of a social system and at the same time excluded from the cultural arena. It thus appears that the actual physical and

theological structure of the church, which teaches concepts, dogmas and philosophies, is part of the social system (lower-right), while the inner meanings, which are totally ignored, misinterpreted or even rejected because of a lack of true understanding, result in not being part of the culture (lower-left).

6.5.2 Tithing

Fox decided to address the issue of tithing because of the number of inquiries about it, not to mention the apparent confusion in people's minds. The practice of tithing has been a life-long habit with many truth students and is prescribed in numerous places in the Bible: 'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it' (Malachi 3:10). 'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord' (Leviticus 27:30). 'Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine' (Proverbs 3:9–10). 'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you' (Luke 6:38).

Dorothy Elder (1992:21), student of metaphysical and mystical philosophies, as well as a New Thought adherent, defines tithing as 'giving one tenth of one's income to the source of one's spiritual good'. This definition is confirmed by New Thought minister Margaret Stevens¹⁶ (1982:68): 'Giving ten percent to God's work is called tithing.' Elder and Stevens are in agreement that the tithe should go to a person or organisation through which one's good comes. Robert Schuller, well-known Reformed Church minister and one of the strongest sources of New Thought principles outside the movement itself, admits that tithing ten per cent off the top of his salary cheque to give to God was the third most important decision in his life. He challenges everyone to try it, for he believes that it transformed his life and his destiny. 'A tithe is not a debt we owe [he argues] it is a fertile seed we sow' (Schuller 1983:317). Fox maintains that the truth about tithing is that those who set aside ten per cent of their net

incomes to the service of God – not with the primary motive of getting, but simply because they feel that it is right to do it – find that their prosperity increases by leaps and bounds, until all fear of poverty disappears.

There is consensus among New Thought believers over the principle behind prosperity: ‘There is just one basic substance, which is God, who is both the substance itself and the Source of that substance’ (Stevens 1982:67). This realisation that God is the source of all one’s good, maintains Fox, is the spiritual way to understand tithing. William Warch, another New Thinker, remarks that acknowledgement of God as the only source ‘must be accompanied by an outer action, that of tithing’ (Warch 1990:96), for it involves one in commitment to God.

Og Mandino (1981:67), known by millions of readers for his best-selling book *The greatest salesman in the world*, stresses some New Thought principles in becoming successful. These include the concept that ‘what you plant now, you will harvest later’. This sentiment is shared by Fox (1994:159): ‘whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; and that no man escapes the Law’, and by Ernest Holmes (1983a:89), who insists: ‘We cannot avoid the Law so we may as well learn how to use It in the right way. The Law so works that as we believe so we shall experience.’

Fox reminds his readers that there is not the least obligation upon anyone to tithe at all until he or she reaches the state of consciousness when he or she prefers to do so. He actually feels that it is better not to give until one is ready. ‘To give grudgingly or with misgivings from a supposed sense of duty is really to give from a sense of fear, and no prosperity ever came out of fear’ (Fox 1994:157). On the other hand, the payment of a tithe is an extremely efficient act of faith. He highlights a common trend among students, who in pressing times feel that it is impossible for them to tithe, but they propose to do so as soon as circumstances improve. This is to miss the point, argues Fox (1994:157–158), for ‘the greater the present necessity, the greater the need for tithing, for we know that the present difficulties can only be due to one’s mental attitude and that circumstances cannot improve until there is a change in the mental attitude’. Appreciating New Thought’s emphasis on the dominant characteristic of God as mind, thinking or thought is the key to attaining success in life. Mandino (1981:78)

maintains: 'The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, or a hell of heaven', and this is 'the greatest success in the world'.

Consciousness of prosperity in New Thought 'has to do with believing in an abundant universe with plenty for all', whereas 'lack and limitation are simply indications of our limited perspective' (Anderson and Whitehouse 1995:129–130). Emmet Fox (1979c:325) explains that there is no limit to divine abundance, for 'the only limit is the limit of our capacity to receive'. For example, he continues, there are billions upon billions of gallons of water in the ocean. However, the amount that one can carry away will depend upon the size of the container.

In closing, tithing, according to Fox, does not include general charity or material giving. Tithing, and prosperity, is indeed a natural outflow of the cosmic law that what we give out, we shall receive back. Again the concept of 'tithing' can be divided into the left and right sectors of Wilber's model. The question is whether the affirmation of God as the source of everything is the inner (left) spiritual way of understanding a concept such as tithing, and whether the actual giving or paying of the tithe represents the outer demonstration of this inner belief? New Thinkers agree on the inner knowing (God is source) and the actual outer action, they call tithing. If this argument is acceptable, it is in accordance with the previous example that one can be part of a social system (lower-right) and perform the outer action of tithing. On the other hand, this does not indicate the true and spiritual (lower-left), as well as inner understanding of the process itself. To give because it is expected because of a dogma or social system's belief is to mock the inner meaning. As New Thinkers, and Fox in particular have stated repeatedly, tithing becomes the outer and measurable act of an inner and spiritual understanding.

NOTES

- 1 Valentinus (c140) was a Gnostic teacher and poet who travelled from Egypt to teach in Rome. He claimed to have learned Paul's secret teaching from one of his own disciples (Pagels 1981:16, 18).

- 2 'Demiurgos' is the Greek term for 'creator'. It suggests a lesser divine being who serves as the instrument of the higher powers. 'It is not God', he explains, 'but the demiurge who reigns as king and lord, who acts as a military commander, who gives the law and judges those who violate it – in short, he is the "God of Israel"' (Pagels 1981:44).

- 3 Wilber (1995:506) recognises the idealist movement as 'the last great attempt to introduce true Ascent and, most important, to integrate it believably with true Descent – the Ego and the Eco both taken up, preserved and negated, honored and released, in all-encompassing Spirit'. The thrust of the Idealist movement can be summarised as
 - a. an intuition of the transpersonal domain expressed in vision-logic. As vision-logic, it was a developmental evolution beyond simple formal operational rationality, a move beyond instrumental and ego-centered rationality (Verstand) into dialogical, dialectical, intersubjective reason (Vernunft), carrying with it a unifying of opposites and a reconciliation of fragments. As holoarchic vision-logic, it saw neither isolated wholes nor abandoned parts: each stage of development was a whole/part that preserved and negated its predecessors.

 - b. It points out 'since every holon is simultaneously both a subholon and a superholon, then all agency is always agency-in-communion'. Thus, 'nothing is lost, all is preserved' (Wilber 1995:507). The first collapse of this movement was the 'failure to develop any truly injunctive practices'. In other words, there were 'no yoga, no contemplative practices, no meditative paradigms, no experimental methodology to reproduce in consciousness the transpersonal insights of its founders. The great Idealist systems were mistaken for metaphysics.'

 - c. The second failure was that the intuitions and insights (its major driving force) 'burdened Reason with a task it could never carry'. As with Hegel, 'the transpersonal and transrational Spirit becomes wholly identified with vision-logic or mature Reason, which condemns Reason to collapsing under a weight it could never carry' (Wilber 1995:509).

- 4 I – Inside, immanent; O – Outside, transcendent; U – Upstairs, inactive, changeless, eternal; D – Downstairs, active, growing, temporal.
- 5 The wisdom of Swami Shankarananda was revealed when one of the Ashramites dropped a cup, which shattered. To this, Swamiji responded with a glint in his eye, saying, 'The One has become the many' (A tribute to Swami Shankarananda 2001:2).
- 6 Teachers of Gnosticism disagreed on the meaning of words. Some insisted that 'divine is to be considered masculofeminine – the 'great male-female power'". Others claimed that the terms were meant 'only as metaphors, since, in reality, the divine is neither male nor female'. Then a third group suggests that one can describe 'the primal Source in either masculine or feminine terms, depending on which aspect one intends to stress' (Pagels 1981:61).
- 7 The Gnostics are in accord with this belief when they state that 'self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical' and 'to know oneself, at the deepest level, is simultaneously to know God' (Pagels 1981:xix). This thought is confirmed by Emerson and the teachings of the Vedas, which state that 'Man is the reflection of God; but the reflection cannot exist without the object reflected; so man must know what God is, if he would know himself' (Paramananda 1985:49–50).
- 8 Judge Thomas Troward, one of the most outstanding British New Thought leaders, spent most of his active career in India and the latter part of it as a judge in what is now Pakistan. He valued the teachings of Emerson highly and he was influential in shaping the thinking of Ernest Holmes.
- 9 Fox (1994:71) uses the text of Exodus 10:1, where the Lord has hardened Pharaoh's heart, as an example. He suggests it was 'Pharaoh's own (mistaken) idea of God' that 'hardened his heart, not that the true God did this'.
- 10 Brinsley Le Poer Trench, former editor of the popular aviation magazine *Flying Saucer Review* and author of *The sky people*, believes that the visitors to this planet in Atlantean and biblical times are with us today. The distinctive approach of someone such as Le Poer Trench challenges established traditions. Besides providing the reader with a wider perspective, he introduces another dimension that is still unheard of and unspoken.
- 11 Blavatsky (1952b:215–216) continues this line of reasoning: 'Of tribal Gods there were many; the One Universal Deity is a principle, an abstract Root-Idea, which has nought to do with the unclean work of finite form. We do not worship the Gods, we only honour Them, as beings superior to ourselves. In this we obey

the Mosaic injunction, while Christians disobey their Bible – missionaries foremost of all. ‘Thou shalt not revile the Gods’, says one of them – Jehovah – in Exodus xxii,28; but at the same time in verse 20 it is commanded: ‘He that sacrificeth to any God, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed’. Now in the original texts it is not ‘God’ but Elohim – and we challenge contradiction – and Jehovah is one of the Elohim, as proved by his own words in Genesis iii,22, when “the Lord God said: Behold the Man is become as one of us”.’

- 12 Brinsley Le Poer Trench (1960:27, 31) points out that references to the ‘gods’ can still be found in the King James version of the Bible. In Genesis 1:26: ‘Let *us* make man in our image’; Genesis 3:22: ‘Behold, the man is become as one of *us*’; Genesis 11:7: ‘Let *us* go down, and there confound their language’; 1 Samuel 4:8: ‘Woe unto *us*! Who shall deliver *us* out of the hand of these mighty *Gods*? These are the *Gods* ...’.
- 13 The Supreme Master Ching Hai said in her address to the 1999 Parliament of the World’s Religions that we are from God and therefore we must have the same surname. We have just forgotten our family name and heritage. We should introduce ourselves as ‘Hi, I am Mary *GOD*’ and not Mary Jones (to use Fox’s example).
- 14 ‘Theoretical knowledge’, says Emerson (in Paramananda 1985:56), ‘is not dependable knowledge’, and ‘intellectual knowledge leads us into an ever-increasing tangle of diversity; while direct vision always simplifies and leads to fundamental unity’. Evelyn Underhill (1937:51–52) sums it up by stating: ‘So, while we must avoid too much indefiniteness and abstraction on one hand, we must also avoid hard and fast definitions on the other hand. For no words in our human language are adequate or accurate when applied to spiritual realities; and it is the saints and not the sceptics who have most insisted on this. “No knowledge of God which we get in this life is true knowledge,” says St John of the Cross. It is always confused, imperfect, oblique. Were it otherwise, it would not be knowledge of God.’
- 15 Wilber (1995:179) summarises the essential message of Gautama the Buddha: ‘Don’t worry about gods, goddesses, spirits, the afterlife, any of that – rather, look very carefully at the nature of your own subject, your own self, and try to penetrate to the bottom of that, for if enlightenment exists, it lies through an understanding of (and going beyond) the subject itself.’ Wilber states that this is indeed ‘radically, radically new’.
- 16 Dr Margaret Stevens, previously from the Santa Anita Church in Arcadia, Los Angeles, in association with Dr June Jones, the leader of the Association of Creative Thought in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, formulated a course for young New Thought students from South Africa to attend. It was through this agreement that many South Africans, including myself, received ordination into the New Thought movement.

