CHAPTER THREE - THE DIVINE PARADOXES

Introduction to Chapter

Some of the ways we experience God may seem contradictory or inconsistent. In this chapter we will investigate these apparent paradoxes of God's reality in our lives. We will examine our perceptions of God as both Principle and Personal, Transcendent and Immanent, Father and Mother, and Law and Grace. These aspects of God's nature are, in Truth, not indicative of a duality in God, but are reflective of the perfection and wholeness of God. They are paradoxes only from limited human perception. The more clearly we are able to understand how each of these aspects works together, the more comfortable we will be with the multi-faceted nature of God.
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3A PRINCIPLE/PERSONAL:

"We shall realize that Being is not only principle so far as its inherent and undeviating laws are concerned, but also personal so far as its relation to each one of us is concerned; that we as individuals do actually become the focus of universal Spirit..." (TP/169).

"Though God is not a person, yet God is personal. There is nothing impersonal about God-Mind in me. It is my mind at the point of God-Mind, but it is my mind" (DP/34).

A paradox is an assertion that may appear contradictory or opposed to common sense but is nevertheless true. Understanding the concept of paradox helps us become more fully aware of the wholeness of God's creation. For example, where God may be realized as unfailing Principle, it is also true that God may be experienced as a warm and loving Presence. This is one example of a divine paradox.

3B IMMANENT/TRANSCENDENT:

"Transcendent God -- God above or beyond His universe, apart from it. God is more than His universe; He is prior to and is exalted above it, but at once He is in His universe as the very essence of it. God is both transcendent and immanent" (RW/196).

"God immanent -- This refers to the all-pervading and indwelling presence of God, the life and intelligence permeating the universe. Jesus lovingly revealed that the Father is within us, forever resident in the invisible side of man's nature" (RW/85).

We realize that God is the creator of the universe, but we also experience the presence of God within creation and within our very being. God is truly present within us and yet is greater than any definition or description. God is unlimited.
"In Scripture the primal ideas in the Mind of Being are called the 'sons of God.' That the masculine 'son' is intended to include both masculine and feminine is borne out by the context, and, in fact, the whole history of the race. Being itself must be masculine and feminine, in order to make man in its image and likeness, 'male and female'" (TM/52).

"Just as God has been from the beginning so Spirit substance has been from the beginning. This substance is in fact the Mother side of God, the feminine element in God's nature. It is the universal medium in which we plant all ideas of supply and support. Just as the earth is the universal matrix in which all vegetation develops so this invisible Spirit substance is the universal matrix in which ideas of prosperity germinate and grow and bring forth according to our faith and trust" (TP/39).

Though the terms "Father/Mother" carry the connotation of physical gender or personality traits, when we use them to describe the nature of God we are interpreting them metaphysically to represent ideas. We are speaking of God as being both the masculine and feminine principles of life. God is both wisdom and love, both power and substance. All elements are needed for the full expression of the creative and nurturing activity of God.

"Law, divine--Divine law is the orderly working out of the principles of Being, or the divine ideals, into expression and manifestation throughout creation. Man, by keeping the law of right thought, works in perfect harmony with divine law, and thus paves his way into spiritual consciousness. Divine law cannot be broken. It holds man responsible for the results of his labors" (RW/118).
"Grace explains the inadequacy of the idea of 'karma,' the endless cycle of cause and effect. It is true that 'as you sow so do you reap.' Yet, God's desire to express completely through you and as you is so great that you never completely reap the harvest of error, and you always reap more good than you sow. This is grace" (CY/127).

"Grace is simply an explanation of a wonderful facet of the activity of God in you. It is not something to work for, to develop. It simply is" (CY/128-129).

"You do not have to earn grace. It is not something that comes only to the good. It comes to all alike, simply because all alike are expressions of God" (CY/128).

There is but one law, the law of cause and effect. It is perpetually operating to establish divine order and divine justice. The grace of God is also perpetually operative. It is God's love in action. Grace does not operate contrary to law; it is a higher aspect of the law. Grace works to insure that the law benefits and blesses us. Grace is the unconditional love of God always available to us.

One of the meanings of "grace" is that it refers to that aspect of God's law which does not limit itself to "EVEN-EXCHANGE," but is the activity of "GREATER GIVING." It also includes the activity of "REWARD GIVEN IN ADVANCE."

Many metaphysicians also view it as the fourth-dimensional aspect of "cause and effect."
SUMMARY STATEMENTS

CHAPTER THREE

SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH WE EXPERIENCE GOD MAY SEEM CONTRADICTORY OR PARADOXICAL FROM OUR LIMITED HUMAN PERCEPTION.

THESE APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES ARE NOT CONTRADICTIONS AT ALL: RATHER, THEY ARE ASPECTS OF THE WHOLENESS OF GOD'S CREATION.

WE MAY EXPERIENCE GOD AS BOTH ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE PRINCIPLE, AND AS A WARM, LOVING PRESENCE.

WE MAY ACKNOWLEDGE BOTH THE EXALTED TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD, AND THE IMMANENCE OF GOD INDWELLING ALL CREATION.

WE MAY UNDERSTAND GOD AS BEING BOTH THE MASCULINE AND FEMININE PRINCIPLES OF LIFE.

WE MAY ALSO EXPERIENCE GOD AS BOTH UNBREAKABLE LAW AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE (GRACE).

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF PARADOX IS LEARNING TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPT THE APPARENT OPPOSITES AS BEING TWO ASPECTS OF ONE COMPLETE IDEA. THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH STUDY, PRAYER AND MEDITATION.
TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is your understanding of Divine Paradox?

2. Share a time in your life when you may have experienced the grace of God. Go into as much detail as you wish.
THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION AND MEDITATION

"God is a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere"

(IFL/1).

"For God may be thought of as law, but God is a law that acts like love"

(OTE/86).

Supplementary Reading

Butterworth, Eric, Discover the Power Within You, chapter 4, "Jesus' Unique Concept of God."

Fillmore, Charles, Talks on Truth, chapter 1, "Reform Your God Thought."