

Chapter 14 – The Spiritual Victory

The economics of enlightenment has its foundation in spirituality – the belief in a need to live in harmony with a higher order of things. Many seem to equate spirituality with religion; however, religion is but one means by which people may practice their spirituality. Anyone who believes that a fundamental set of unchanging laws or principles underlies all truly moral and ethical values may be said to be spiritual. In this respect, it makes no difference whether one’s belief in God arises from their belief in fundamental laws of nature, including human nature, or one’s respect for nature and other people arises from one’s belief in God. Both reflect a belief in some higher order that defines the larger whole of which humans are but a part.

Enlightened self-interests are realized by living in harmony with this higher order. Enlightened self-interests recognizes that shared interests and altruistic interests are but different layers of one’s self – that our individual self is inseparable from our social and moral selves. We are enlightened in the sense that we recognize explicitly that our life is better when we not only care for ourselves, but also care for the well-being of others -- with no regard for what we may get in return. When enlightened, we recognize explicitly that our life is better when we conserve and protect the earth’s resources for future generations -- with no regard for an earthly reward. Enlightened self-interest recognizes explicitly that we have three different layers of self – the independent self, the interdependent self, and the ethical or moral self – and that quality of life arises from harmony and balance among those three dimensions.

While no one of the three layers of self is any more or less important than are the others, the spiritual dimension is different in that it is inviolate and unchanging. We can, and often must, change the personal and interpersonal aspects of our lives to accommodate the higher order of things, if we are to find peace and harmony in our lives. Specific actions, as individuals and as members of society, have inevitable consequences that we cannot change. Instead, we must change. We cannot be our own Gods. The quality of our life will be a reflection of our willingness and ability to find harmony and peace within the higher order of things – to reconcile our individual and social values and actions with universal moral and ethical principles. Spirituality is the foundation upon which we must build lives of quality – as individuals and as a society.

The Dalai Lama of Tibet puts it in slightly different terms, “If you think in a deeper way that you are going to be selfish, then be wisely selfish, not narrow-mindedly selfish. From that viewpoint, the key thing is

the sense of universal responsibility; that is, the real source of strength, the real source of happiness. From that perspective, if in our generation we exploit every available thing, trees, water, mineral resources, or anything, without bothering about the next generation, about the future, that’s our guilt, isn’t it? So if we have a genuine sense of universal responsibility as the central motivation and principle, then from that direction our relations with the environment will be well balanced. Similarly with every aspect of relationships: our relations with our neighbors, our family neighbors and country neighbors will be balanced from that direction.”¹

We are “wisely selfish” when we pursue our “enlightened self-interests” – when we respect the higher order of things, the spiritual, in our relationships with others and with the earth.

By John Ikerd, from “The New American Farm,” a paper presented at the 1999 Resilience Annual Fall Conference, Creola, OH. Oct. 9, 1999.

This chapter reflects my sense of the truth regarding the nature of human spirituality and its importance in living. Your sense of truth may be different from mine. If so, that’s okay with me. But, it’s not okay with me to deny anyone’s right to speak or write *their truth*, simply because we may not all believe the same things to be true. We will never know for sure whose truth is best, because the truth exists at a level beyond our tangible reality. We must decide for ourselves what we sense to be true.

As I have indicated previously, the issue of sustainability is intrinsically rooted in spirituality. Thus, we cannot truly address the issue of sustainability without addressing the issue of spirituality. Those who attempt to do so may provide useful information concerning ecology, economics, and sociology, but provide little of use in understanding the true nature of sustainability. We cannot win the new revolution without achieving spiritual victory.

Perhaps the greatest human tragedy of the modern era, I believe, has been the apparent triumph of the mental over the spiritual. In the age of reason, people, systematically and purposefully, have been persuaded to doubt, if not outright deny, that they even have a soul. Those who have resisted have been coerced into keeping the spiritual aspect of their lives to themselves. Spirituality has been systematically excluded from our schools and public affairs under the guise of separation of church and state. Spirituality has been discouraged in the workplace under the guise of avoiding unnecessary distraction from the business at hand. Spirituality has been excluded from science, because it isn’t logical and

rational. If you can't see it, feel it, touch it, smell it, or hear it, then you can't prove that it exists. If you can't prove that it exists, but still insist that it exists, then you should just keep it to yourself.

All human beings have souls – regardless of their doubts or denials. Perhaps in some sense, we share a common soul, but we each, nonetheless, have a soul. We can never expect to understand fully the concept of soul, at least not in a rational and logical sense, because the soul is spiritual in nature while the processes of logic and reasoning are mental. Our mind is reluctant to acknowledge the existence of anything that it can't understand. So our mind, being logical and rational, encourages us to deny, or at least to doubt, the very existence of our soul.

Even in organized religion, the concept of sin has been reduced to the struggle between mind and body. We are considered to be righteous people if we are able to resist the temptations of the flesh – if we don't kill anyone, don't steal anything, don't lie to gain advantage, don't commit adultery, and don't lust for things that belong to others. If our minds are able to control our bodies, we are considered not only to be logical and rational but also to be *righteous*. The Old Testament *commandments* not to worship false gods and not to deny the existence of the true God have become optional *suggestions* in many religious circles. After all, is it reasonable to expect even religious people to believe in things that their minds can't comprehend? Barbarians allow the animalistic urges of their bodies to control their actions, but civilized people put their minds in control of their bodies. Why should we expect civilized people in the age of reason to allow their minds to be influenced by some intangible, mystical, spiritual idea called the soul?

But, intelligent, civilized human beings do allow their minds to be influenced by their soul. They *know* they have souls and they *know* that only the soul is capable of controlling many aspects of their lives. To deny what they know to be true would be truly unreasonable. The human mind quite simply is not capable of discovering its own purpose, or discovering the meaning of human life on earth, through reliance on the scientific method or any other logical method of reasoning.

The mind can't possibly discern why we humans benefit from the simple act of treating other people as we would have them treat us. The mind reasons that we must expect something in return. The mind can admit that acts of true selflessness result in personal benefits, but it can't rationalize why such benefits occur. The mind can't possibly determine why we feel a sense of well-being when we have set aside something that we could have used for ourselves, to be used instead by some unknown

being of some future generation. The mind can admit that acts of true stewardship results in personal satisfaction, but it can't understand why.

We practice true friendship and stewardship because we *feel* in our soul that these are the right things for us to do. And, we are rewarded through these simple acts because they *are* the right things to do. We share the knowledge of these truths with all beings who are willing to listen to their souls. This common sense of right and wrong arises from our common connection to the higher order of things – a connection through our soul. Common sense is a unique form of logic and rationality that arises not from the mind, but from the soul.

Humanity has gone as far as the human mind and body can take it without greater reliance on the human soul. In fact, our abilities to think and to do things already exceed our abilities to know what to think about and what to do. Certainly, thinking and doing will continue to be an important aspect of human evolution, but today, human values are seriously out of balance with the fundamental principles of right living. We are trying to control everything with our minds.

The human mind obviously is failing in its struggle to control the lusts of the body, and it is utterly incapable of answering the questions of greatest importance to human civilization today. How can we resolve the conflicts within us, so we can find peace within? How can we resolve the conflicts among us, so we can live in harmony with each other? How can we share the bounty of the earth with others and still have enough for ourselves? How can we meet the needs of all today and still leave equal or better opportunities for those of the future?

These are questions of sustainability concerning not just the future, but also the quality of our lives today. How can we add quality to our lives, rather than just quantity? And, how can we sustain a desirable quality of life for all people for all time? These questions cannot be answered by the mind alone. The answers are at least as much spiritual as mental. We can never control our bodies using our mind alone. Self-control is a *fruit of the spirit* – of the soul. When there is harmony and balance among the physical, mental, and spiritual, our lives still will be dynamic and challenging, but they won't be in constant turmoil. We won't lead lives of quiet desperation, but instead will lead lives of purpose and meaning. The next step forward for humanity demands that we draw upon the spiritual as well as the physical and mental dimensions of our lives. The new revolution must be a spiritual revolution and the victory will be a spiritual victory.

The spiritual victory is within our grasp, but we should not expect it to come easy. The struggle between the body, mind, and soul is as old as

human life on earth – in fact, quite likely defines the beginning of *truly human* life on earth. Every culture has its own version of the creation story, but virtually all such stories have some important commonalities. The Judeo-Christian story begins, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” and later, all of the living things upon earth. Then by one means or another, depending on the story, God set humans apart from the other living things on earth – God made humans special.

Science doesn’t deny that humans somehow were created, along with the other things of the earth. After all, we know we exist. But, there is no logical reason to think that humans are different, at least not in any fundamental way, from other living creatures. So at this point in our creation stories, our mind and soul tends to lead us in two different directions. Science cannot explain the existence of the soul, so the mind is inclined to deny that it exists. However, the soul does not go away simply because the mind denies it. I think it’s quite possible that we humans were made special by the very fact that God gave us a soul and caused us to *know* that we have it. Without a soul, we are not so very different from other animals.

The Bible’s creation story speaks of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In Judeo-Christian theology, they were living there in perfect harmony and peace with all of the rest of God’s creation – quite possible because at that time they were not so very different from the rest of creation. But then, they were tempted into eating from the forbidden tree of “knowledge of good and evil.” It seems possible that up to that time, humans, like all other creatures of the earth, could *do no evil* because they *knew no evil*. God knew the difference between good and evil because God had created the tree of *knowledge of good and evil*. But, Adam and Eve were not satisfied being like all other creatures on earth, they wanted to be like God – they wanted to be special.

After being warned against it, humans were allowed to choose to have a soul, so they would know the difference between good and evil, like God. As far as we know, we were the only species allowed such a choice. Our soul gives us a spiritual dimension that is God-like. Perhaps, this is the sense in which we were “created in the image of God.” But, our soul has become both our blessing and our curse. Our soul gives us a God-like responsibility of choosing between good and evil, between right and wrong, and between selfishness and wholeness. We are the only species capable of making conscious, purposeful choices about how we should treat other people and how we should treat the other things of God’s creation. Other species can do no evil because they know no evil. But,

we have the knowledge of good and evil, and with that knowledge, the responsibility for choosing good over evil.

Some scholars label stories such as those of the creation, great floods, and second comings as *cultural myths*. Such stories have been passed down from generation to generation with no known source or time of beginning. Similar stories may differ somewhat between cultures, quite possibly because they have been passed down by different people within different cultures. But, it is completely conceivable that similar stories within different cultures might all have a single common origin. These stories are called myths only because there is no proof that the events they describe actually happened and often no logical or rational way the events could have happened, as least as told in their current versions.

However, if we suspend the simple tests of logic and reason, it would seem far more believable that people chose stories of things that actually happened, rather than myths, to pass down from one generation to the next. Logic and reason are not the only possible means for validation of truth. Why would people choose to pass down a myth as truth? Perhaps, the events didn’t happen exactly as described, as the details of any story tend to change with each retelling. But, our common sense tells us that the essence of similar cultural stories, particularly the parts that they share in common, might actually be true. At some time in the past, something of the nature of the events described in these stories quite likely actually did happen.

The desire of humans to be God-like is a common theme of many such *cultural myths*, as well as nearly every widely recognized, enduring religion in the world. By nature, we humans don’t want to submit to some higher order, instead, we want to define our own order of things. We want to be our own God. However, our knowledge of the higher order of things, including good and evil, does not empower us to change the order of things. We can’t make evil things good or good things evil. Our knowledge instead obligates us to make the appropriate choices.

The age of reason, in many respects, was an attempt to absolve humans of the responsibility of choosing between right and wrong by denying the existence of anything beyond the grasp of the human mind – beyond our ability to reason. If something couldn’t be proven, it didn’t exist, and thus, we didn’t need to be constrained by the myth of its existence. Logic and reason would be our new God. We would define our own order of things. We would recreate the earth to fit our own image of how it should be.

We can deny the existence of our soul, but we cannot avoid the consequences of our choices. We continue to live lives of internal

conflict because we make rational and logical choices about how best to serve our self-interests. The world is continually confronted with conflicts and wars because we continue to make rational and logical choices about how best to defend ourselves against others. Starvation, disease, and disaster are everyday occurrences in many parts of the world, because people continue to make logical and rational choices concerning how best to survive the next day. Even the most affluent countries are riddled with crime and drug abuse because people continue to make logical and rational choices concerning how to get as much as they can for themselves, right now. We spend billions of dollars on courts and lawyers because we make logical and rational choices about how best to resolve our disputes with others. We continue to degrade the natural environment and rip apart the social fabric of our societies because we insist on making logical and rational choices concerning how to keep our economy growing. The age of reason may have brought us many good things in the past, but it holds little promise of a better life in the future, unless we temper our logic and reason with common sense. It's time for a spiritual revolution.

Thankfully, people still have souls, even in this age of reason. We don't have to create it, buy it, or even ask for it – it's already there. All we have to do is accept it. I don't know when I received my soul. As I said, the soul is not something that we will ever fully understand. Regardless of when I received it, I suspect that my soul became functional when I reached the age of accountability. The age of accountability is the point in time when a person becomes aware of the difference between right and wrong, based not on what they have been taught by someone else but on what they *know* from within themselves. I believe that every human being reaches an age of accountability, although some may refuse to listen to this voice within, or even to admit its existence. It is easier to recognize and to accept your new soul if you have been prepared for its appearance and have been taught to listen to it. But, everyone gets one, regardless of whether they have been prepared for it or not, or whether they are inclined to heed its directions.

My sister Helen is an elementary school teacher. I have heard her say that she thinks children are born into this world without flaws, like little angels, and invariably become something less because grownups attempt to shape their lives. In other words, she believes that children are inherently good and that they have to be taught to be bad. I agree that children learn a lot of bad things from their parents, teachers, and other grown ups, but I don't believe adult influence is the thing that turns little angels into normal human beings.

I think that children are born like other living creatures, without knowledge of good or evil. Little children can do no evil because they have no knowledge of evil. They are not little angels; they are simply little people who know no evil. But at the age of accountability, they become uniquely human. They become aware of their soul, and thus, become able to share a common sense of right and wrong with other spiritual beings. They come to know the difference between good and evil, and they gain the ability to choose either. Their previous contact with adults may affect their choices, but the choices are their responsibility. Children grow up to be imperfect adults because they grow up to be humans.

I don't believe humans have a choice as to whether they want to become accountable. I believe the few truly evil people in the world are those who, for whatever reason, persist in denying the existence of their soul. When you look in the eyes of some serial killers, for example, you see a dark emptiness – the look of evil. There is no sense of connectedness, of concern, of caring, of compassion. The eyes look dark and empty because you see no evidence of a soul. On the other hand, when you look into the eyes of people who are compassionate, caring, and gentle, their eyes are bright and full of life – you are looking into their soul. Of course identifying good and evil people is not as simple as looking into their eyes. Some people who do evil things have very disarming looks while some people who do very good things may have a look of evil. Only God knows what is in a person's heart. But for some reason, eyes that appear empty appear to be evil. I believe the absence of soul is the essence of evil.

I believe all people are different and we each have a different role or purpose to fulfill here on earth. But, we all have the potential to be far more than our physical and mental abilities would allow us to be, because we all have a soul that connects us with a higher power and a source of greater ability.

What happens to our soul when our bodies die and our mind ceases thinking? This question has been the source of speculation throughout human history. Is there a heaven, or is heaven just something we humans have dreamed up to lessen our fear of death? None of us will know for sure, until death happens to us. Obviously, I don't know either, but I believe that my soul existed before I was born and I believe it will exist after I die. I believe the words of the old gospel song, that there exists a realm in which “the soul of man never dies.”

When we were born, our body and our mind began to develop almost immediately and continued to grow to maturity – our mind typically

maturing well after our body. Eventually, both our physical and mental abilities begin to diminish as we approach the end of life. The soul, on the other hand, knows no age. It was never young, and it never gets old. It is today as it was in the beginning, and as it always shall be. Perhaps that is why, as people get older, they tend to become more spiritual. They realize that the body and the mind are dying, but that their soul will live on. However, spirituality is not necessarily a function of age. Young people who know they are dying, perhaps from terminal cancer or AIDS, sometimes show the maturity of soul of an older adult. When we realize that our bodies and minds are incapable of sustaining us, we realize that we must rely on our soul, regardless of age. We don't have to wait until we are old to gain this wisdom. It's available to anyone at any time. The soul is our connection to our common sense – our true wisdom.

It took me a long time to learn to rely on my common sense. I had begun my journey to spirituality in earnest the fall before my near-death adventure. In mid-1997, within a matter of weeks, I got two requests for keynote presentations, both wanting me to address the spiritual dimension of farming. I knew that spirituality had been a theme within the sustainable agriculture movement. In fact, a national conference on “The Soul of Agriculture” had been held the past spring. But, most of what I had read or heard about spirituality and agriculture thus far had been pretty academic in nature – applying the discipline of ethics to issues of agricultural sustainability. I don't know where the people who invited me got the idea of asking me to speak on spirituality. Perhaps I had made some comments on the Internet during exchanges related to moral and ethical issues that had caught their attention. I honestly don't recall. But, I accepted the challenge of preparing a presentation on the subject. The title I liked best was, “Reclaiming the Sacred in Food and Farming.”

These two presentations, one in Wisconsin and the other in North Carolina, changed my professional career – and changed my life. Never before had my speeches sparked such enthusiastic responses. I received standing ovations from both groups. I was almost moved to tears by the positive energy coming back from those audiences. Members of the audience in both places came up afterwards and told me, it was as if my words had been coming *through* me but *from* somewhere beyond. I shared the feeling. The words truly had come *from* my heart, but they also had come *to* my heart from somewhere beyond. Before each presentation I had prayed, “God, please let me speak not my words, but Your words – the words You want these people to hear.” This certainly was not the first time I had prayed such a prayer, but it probably was the

first time I had found the courage to do my part – actually to say what I felt God wanted me to say.

Now, whenever I am asked to make a new presentation, I generally prepare a paper on the topic of my talk. If I have a very short presentation, I will sometimes write a speech, but I will never simply read a paper to the audience. When I speak, I rely on small note cards on which I have a brief outline of the points I want to make. I review my paper and my cards before every presentation, but I then depend on God to give me the actual words I speak.

I know of no way to better express in writing the absolute necessity of integrating the spiritual dimensions of our lives with the economic and social than the way I expressed it in the paper, “Reclaiming the Sacred in Food and Farming.” Some of the paper repeats ideas expressed earlier in this book, because those same truths are a necessary part of this integration. However, the arrangements are new, and thus, the whole is new – the only concept of new that we know.

Reclaiming the Sacred in Food and Farming²

Farming is fundamentally biological. The essence of agriculture begins with conversion of solar energy through the living process of photosynthesis. The food that sustains our lives comes from other living things. If life is sacred, then food and farming must be sacred as well. Throughout nearly all of human history, both food and farming were considered sacred. Farmers prayed for rain, for protection from pestilence, and for bountiful harvests. People gave thanks to God for their daily bread – as well as for harvests at annual times of thanksgiving. For many, farming and food are still sacred. But, for many more, farming has become just another business and food just something else to buy. Those who still treat food and farming as something sacred may be labeled as old-fashion, strange, radical, or naïve.

But, the time to reclaim the sacred in food and farming may well be at hand. The trends that have desacralized farming may have run, even overrun, their course. There is a growing skepticism concerning the claim that more “stuff” – be it larger houses, fancier cars, more clothes, or more food – will make us more happy or satisfied with life. There is growing evidence that when we took out the sacred, we took out the substance, and have left our lives shallow and empty. Humanity is beginning to

ask new questions. The old questions of how can I get more is being replaced with questions of how can I be more?

The answer to this question, at least in part, is that we must reclaim the spiritual dimension of our lives. But, how can we reclaim the spiritual or sacred? And how will doing so change the way we farm and live? These questions will be addressed, but first we need to understand why we took spirituality out of food and farming in the first place and why we now need to put it back in.

Until some four hundred years ago, nearly everything in life was considered spiritual or sacred. The religious scholars were the primary source of knowledge in the intellectual world. Kings, chiefs, clan leaders, the people who other people looked to for wisdom, were assumed to have special divine or spiritual powers. It was only during the seventeenth century that the spiritual nature of the world became seriously challenged. Among the most notable challengers was Descartes who proposed the spirit/matter dualism. “The Cartesian division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine.”³ Sir Isaac Newton also held this mechanistic view of the universe and shaped it into the foundation for classical physics.

Over time, the mechanical model was expanded to include the living as well as the dead. Plants, animals, even people, are now treated as complex mechanisms with many interrelated, yet separable parts – in spite of the emergence of quantum physics, which now challenges the old mechanistic worldview. Reductionism, which attempts to explain all biological processes as purely chemical and mechanical processes, has come to dominate the applied biological sciences from agriculture to medicine.

The spiritual realm, to the extent it was considered at all, was assumed to be in the fundamental nature of things – the unchanging relationships which scientists sought to discover. There was no active spiritual aspect of life, only the passive possibility that spirituality was somehow involved in the initial creation of the universe that we are now exploring. The more we understood about the working of the universe, the less we needed to understand about the nature of God. The more we “knew” the less we needed to “believe.” As we expanded the realm of

the “factual” we reduced the realm of the spiritual until it became trivial, at least in matters of science.

Farming was one of the last strongholds for the sacred in the world of science. The shift in scientific thinking had been from a “science of understanding” to a “science of manipulation.”⁴ Over time, the goal of science shifted from increasing wisdom to the goal of increasing power. We didn’t want just to understand the universe; we wanted to dominate it. The purpose of science had become to enhance our ability to influence, direct, and control. Mechanical processes – using machines to manufacture things from dead matter – were relatively easy to understand and manipulate. Biological processes – involving living organisms, including humans – proved much more difficult to both understand and to manage. Farming and food are fundamentally biological. So it took far longer to learn to manipulate and control agriculture. Farmers continued to pray for rain, and people continued to give thanks for food – although scientists would have advised us that both were either unnecessary or futile.

But, science eventually succeeded in taking the sacred out of farming – at least out of modern, scientific farming. People tend to be difficult to understand and manipulate. But, machines eventually took laborers out of the fields, so farming became more manageable. Selective breeding brought genetic vagaries more or less under control. Commercial fertilizers gave farmers the power to cope with the uncertainties of organic-based nutrient cycling. Commercial pesticides provided simple scientific means of managing predators, parasites, and pests. Deep-well irrigation reduced the grower’s dependence on rainfall. Processing, storage, and transportation – all mechanical processes – removed many of the previous biological constraints associated with form, time, and place of production. Farms have become factories without roofs. Supermarkets and restaurants are but the final stages in a long and complex food assembly line. Why pray for rain when we can drill a deep well and irrigate? Why thank God for food created by ConAgra? Who needs God when we have modern science and technology?

But today, as in the seventeenth century, we are in a time of great transition. “We are at that very point in time when a 400-year-old age is dying and another is struggling to be born – a shifting of culture, science, society, and institutions enormously

greater than the world has ever experienced. Ahead, the possibility of the regeneration of individuality, liberty, community, and ethics such as the world has never known, and a harmony with nature, with one another, and with the divine intelligence such as the world has never dreamed.”⁵ These are the words of Dee Hock, founder of the Visa Corporation and creator of the Chaordic model of business organization.

Hock is certainly not alone in this thinking. A whole host of futurists, including Alvin Toffler, Vaclav Havel⁶, Tom Peters,⁷ Peter Drucker,⁸ John Naisbitt,⁹ Robert Reich¹⁰, and others agree that we are in a time of fundamental change. They talk and write of a shift in worldview from the mechanistic, industrial era where power is derived from control of capital and the technical means of production, to a post-industrial era where human progress is derived from knowledge – the new source of wealth and human satisfaction. They agree that knowledge is fundamentally biological rather than mechanical in nature and will require a new science of understanding to replace the old science of manipulation.

The transition to a more sustainable agriculture is but one small part of the “great transition” that is taking place all across society. The questioning that is driving the sustainable agriculture issue, however, exemplifies the broader questioning of society that is fueling the great transition. We are questioning the sustainability of agriculture because we have come to believe that our natural resource base is finite, that we and the other elements of our environment are all interconnected, that there is a higher and unseen order of things to which we must conform. Sustainability concerns seem foolish to those who believe that human ingenuity is infinitely substitutable for natural resources, that our environment and we are separable, and that the laws of nature are but temporary obstacles to be overcome through science. Conflicts regarding the legitimacy of the sustainability issue are conflicts of beliefs, not of facts. But, there is a growing body of evidence to support the questioning of whether agriculture, or any other aspect of our current society, is sustainable.

In agriculture, the litany of sustainability concerns has become a familiar theme. Agriculture – with its fundamental purpose of transforming solar energy into human-useful form – now uses far more energy from fossil sources than it captures

from the sun. Water and air pollution, associated with commercial fertilizers and pesticides and large-scale confinement animal feeding operations, have become major public concerns. Declining numbers of family farms, a consequence of agricultural industrialization, has left many rural communities in decline and decay – as places without a purpose.

The ethical and moral commitment to stewardship and community among farmers seems to have given way to concern for the economic bottom line. Increases in agricultural productivity have become more illusionary than real as the farmer’s role in food production declines and the role of input and marketing firms rises. Small farms are considered largely irrelevant to agriculture, even though most U.S. farm families still live on small farms. There is a growing disillusionment and a sense of hopelessness, even among larger farmers, as multinational corporations take over a larger and larger share of agricultural production.

Similar concerns are apparent in the larger society. As population and per capita consumption increase, the ultimate scarcity of natural resources – such as land and fossil fuels – seem obvious to many, if not most, of us. The environmental movement, born only in the early sixties with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, has grown to permeate the global society as evidence of environmental pollution abounds.¹¹ The disintegration of families and communities is beginning to have major negative impacts on our societal quality of life. Increasing drug use, violence, and crime are attributed to the decline in ethical and moral values of a disconnected society. Declining productivity of labor, a symptom of treating people as if they were machines, has led to growing underemployment and economic and social inequities. These and other factors contribute to a growing disillusionment and sense of hopelessness that permeates much of society. A world conference of intellectuals reported in the book, *Reinventing the Future*¹², listed degradation of the environment, breakdown of public and private morality, and growing social inequities between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres as three of the four items on their global agenda.

But what do these concerns for sustainability have to do with spirituality? The answer: these concerns share a common

source: the removal of spirituality from science and society. The science of manipulation, the quest for power and control, provided the conceptual foundation for the industrial revolution. The fundamental concepts of industrialization – specialization, standardization, and centralization of control – are based on a mechanistic worldview. The science of Descartes and Newton became a science that sought to separate, sequence, compartmentalize, and control. Growing concerns for ecological, social, and economic sustainability all are consequences of growing industrialization. And, in the mechanistic worldview supporting industrialization, there is no active role for the sacred.

The science of manipulation is a science that separates – mind from matter, people from nature, people from each other, the body from the mind, and the mind from the soul. It's the science of modern economics, which assumes that the greatest good arises spontaneously from the greatest greed, that the interest of society is a consequence of the vigorous pursuit of self-interest. The same science that made the industrial era possible is the science that removed the sacred from matters of economics and politics and removed spirituality from the day-to-day matters of both individuals and their communities. We were lead to believe that good science would bring about success and happiness without any help from on high.

But, biological and social phenomena never really fit the mechanistic, manipulative view of the world. Living things of nature had to be bent, twisted, bribed, and coerced to bring them under control. But, nature inevitably fights back. Questions of sustainability invariably can be traced to the unintended consequences of treating living things as if they were inanimate, programmable, controllable machines. A science of understanding – of wisdom rather than power and control – must provide the foundation for a sustainable society.

Using almost anyone's definition, concerns for sustainability imply concerns for intergenerational equity – a need to meet the needs of our current generation while leaving equal or better opportunities for those of generations to follow. Thus, sustainability is about "equity, forever." The three cornerstones of sustainable agriculture – ecological soundness, economic viability, and social equity – rest upon a foundation of intergenerational equity. Intergenerational equity, in turn, has

its foundation in human spirituality. Concern for sustainability reflects a felt need to treat fairly those in whom we have neither self-interests nor shared-interests, in any sense other than spiritual.

Conventional economic theory deals with short-run self-interest. Economic efficiency defines the optimum means of using things up. There is nothing in economics to ensure long run sustainability. Economics is about "me, now." Conventional public choice theory deals with collective decisions concerning matters of current shared-interest. There is nothing in this theory concerning allocating societal goods and services to ensure a sustainable society. Public choice is about "us, now." Likewise, many of the current environmental concerns are related to a desire to protect "us, now" rather than our concern for future generations. But, sustainability includes concern "for us and for them, forever." Only the spiritual is capable of transcending the present to address the fundamental issues of long run sustainability. Only the spirituality transcends "me, us, and them, both for now and forever. "

What is this thing called spirituality? First, spirituality is not religion, at least not as it is used in this paper. Religion is simply one of many possible means of expressing one's spirituality. William James, a religious philosopher, defined religion as "an attempt to be in harmony with an unseen order of things." Paraphrasing James, one might define spirituality as "a 'need' to be in harmony with an unseen order." This definition embraces a wide range of cultural beliefs, philosophies, and religions.

A Native American, Chief Sealth, or Seattle, is alleged to have said, "Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."¹³

From another culture, "the most important characteristic of the Eastern worldview – one could almost say the essence of it – is the awareness of unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events, the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness."¹⁴

From a Polynesian worldview, "The Kahuna told me, if you are looking for God, look out at the sea. Look to the horizon.

Get in your canoe and go to the horizon. When you get there, you will meet God. God is nature. God is everything.”¹⁵

And, from a Jewish Prayer, “And God saw everything he had made and found it very good. And he said: This is a beautiful world I have given you. Take good care of it; do not ruin it...I place it in your hands: hold it in trust.”¹⁶

Finally, from the Bible: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the sun; A time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, a time to heal; a time to weep, a time to laugh;... a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.”¹⁷

A common thread of all these expressions of spirituality is the existence of a higher, unseen order, or interconnected web that defines the oneness of all things within a unified whole. We humans are a part of the whole. We may attempt to understand it and even influence it, but we did not create nor can we control it. Thus, we must seek peace through harmony within the order of things beyond our control. This harmony may be defined as “doing the right things.” And, by “doing the right things,” for ourselves, for others around us, and for those of future generations, we create harmony and find inner peace.

The sustainable agriculture issue ultimately is rooted in a perceived need to be in harmony with the order of things – in spirituality. Finding harmony with a higher order requires an understanding of that order – wisdom, not power and control. Sustainable farming means farming in harmony with nature – nurturing nature rather than dominating or manipulating it. Sustainable agriculture means fitting farming to the farmer and the farm – not forcing either to fit some predefined prescription for progress. Sustainable farming means farming in harmony among people – within families, communities, and societies. Sustainable farming means farming in harmony with future generations – being good stewards of finite resources. A life of quality is a shared life. A life of quality is a spiritual life.

The goal of sustainability is to sustain a desirable quality of life. Quality of life is not something we can buy at Wal Mart or Disney World with the money we earn from farming for the bottom line. Quality of life is determined by our ability to “do the right things,” for me, for us, and for them. Quality of life,

inherently and inseparably, is personal, interpersonal, and spiritual in nature.

A sustainable agriculture, likewise, has personal, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions. A sustainable agriculture must be ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just. Protecting our own environment is not enough. We must conserve and protect resources for those of the future. Profits are necessary – farmers must be able to sustain themselves economically. However, the economics of self-interests alone will not ensure adequate resources for future generations. Neither will economics ensure that needs of all are met equitably – even today. A society without justice is not sustainable – no matter how profitable and environmentally sound it may seem. The economic, ecological, and social dimensions are all essential and inseparable. Sustainability requires harmony among things personal, interpersonal, and spiritual. We can begin reclaiming the sacred in food and farming by reclaiming, up front and without compromise, the spiritual nature of sustainability.

As we reclaim the sacred in food and farming, it changes the way we farm and live. We learn to pursue peace and happiness rather than success. We seek harmony among things economic, social, and spiritual – not maximums or minimums. If we focus on any one, we tend to deplete the others, and lose, rather than gain, what we seek to achieve. Farming solely for the bottom line, for example, invariably takes time and resources away from family and community, degrades the natural resource base, degrades the human spirit, and eventually destroys the ability of the farm to even generate a profit. However, ignoring farm economics for family or religious reasons can be just as devastating in the end – for both family and spirituality.

Our common sense tells us that we must have balance in our lives among the personal, interpersonal, and spiritual. Yet we are bombarded from every corner with the message that having more stuff will make us happy, that success means having more money. Or we may be told that happiness is found only in love of family and friends, and that money doesn't matter. On Sunday, the message is likely to be that happiness comes only from the love of Jesus, that we should deny ourselves and follow Him. The thesis of sustainability is that all these things matter, that no one alone is sufficient. To sustain the sacred in farming,

we must find harmony among things economic, social, and ecological – among the personal, interpersonal, and spiritual.

Spirituality does not mean that our rewards must be delayed until the after-life, any more than sustainability means we must sacrifice quality of life today for some future reward. We live only in the present, not the past, or the future. If we are unhappy today, reaching some future tangible goal is likely to leave us just as unhappy. If we are happy today, we are quite likely to be happy in the future, regardless of whether we reach some goal we now have in mind. The focus of faith and hope may be on things expected or hoped for in the future, but the true benefits of both are in the here and now. Living in faith and hope defines a life worth living far more than does a life of achievement. Faith and hope are about now, not when. Faith and hope are fruits of the spirit.

Likewise, the spirituality of sustainable farming is about here and now, not there and when. The rewards come from having adequate, not maximum, income; from having positive relationships with family, friends, and others; and from being a responsible steward of resources for the future. All of those things have rewards here and now, as well as somewhere else at some time in the future. The key-point is that the reward comes from knowing that we are living in harmony with some higher, unseen order. An adequate income, friends and family, and a clean environment are all products, not sources, of our overall sense of peace and happiness.

Returning to the spiritual does not guarantee peace and happiness. Returning to the sacred simply recreates a possibility or hope for a desirable quality of life. We still must seek to understand, so we may learn to accommodate rather than dominate and nurture rather than conquer. We need to be wise, not smart. And wisdom may be more difficult to achieve than is cunning. We need to learn to be humble, not powerful. Humility may be more difficult to master than is control. We need to seek and accept the spiritual in everything we see and do. The physical may be far easier to see and to manipulate. We need to learn to dance with life rather than try to push life around.

To farm and live sustainably is to farm and live spiritually. Sustainable agriculture certainly is not a religion, but it is fundamentally spiritual. Sustainable farming and sustainable living are attempts to work and live in harmony with an unseen

order of things – to work and live spiritually. To farm and live sustainably, we must be willing to proclaim openly the spirituality of sustainability. We must reclaim the sacred in food and farming.

I have included this paper in this chapter because it does not pertain only to farmers and farming, it applies to all of us and to all aspects of our lives. To live a life of true quality, we must be willing to proclaim openly the spirituality of our being. We must reclaim the sacred in all aspects of our day-to-day life. Initially, I was concerned about how people might receive this message of spirituality; that they might think I was preaching rather than teaching. But, I have been pleased at the response everywhere I have been given an opportunity to present it.

I used to worry a lot about my presentations – about how many people would show up, who would be there, how the messages would be received, whether the people would be impressed, or whether someone would be offended and get up and leave. I don't worry about any of these things any more. I prepare for each presentation, I write my papers, prepare my note cards, and rely on God to do the rest. I ask God to give me the words that these particular people need to hear today. Sometimes the crowds are large and sometimes they are small. Sometimes I get a standing ovation and sometimes I don't. Occasionally someone will be offended and will get up and walk out. But I never doubt that the people who need to hear what God wants me to say will be there. And, they will hear what they needed to hear – regardless of whether I intended to say it or not. I am not sure that I always succeed in my efforts, but I have no doubt that I am trying to do what God wants me to do with my life. My life was fundamentally changed when I reclaimed the sacred in my being.

I'm sure many of my former colleagues believe I have gone off the deep end, so to speak, that I have abandoned my scientific discipline for some sort of spiritual mysticism. However, science in the purest sense of the word refers to systematized knowledge of general truths or operational laws. The scientific method is but one way of knowing such truths and laws. The scientific method is a valuable tool for some purposes, but it can neither prove nor disprove moral truths or spiritual laws and thus provides no knowledge of good and evil. Our knowledge of such truths and laws come not from our mind but instead from our soul. We have systematic knowledge of many spiritual truths and laws, and thus, they are as valid as any other laws or truths of which we have systematic knowledge. It's not the source of knowledge but instead the existence of knowledge that gives something true scientific validity.

Scientists quite simply are not credible when they go about their work as if the spiritual dimension of our being did not exist. Scientists are not credible when they suggest that spirituality has no place in research, particularly in research that directly involves, relates to, or affects humans. Scientists are not credible when they ignore moral truth and spiritual laws, which so affect the quality of human life. Scientists are not credible when they deny the existence of their own soul. I may have lost my credibility among much the scientific community, but I have gained credibility among lots of real people. I am among a small minority of scientists who have gained credibility by openly proclaiming the necessity of dealing with spiritual truths when dealing with issues that affect people, other living beings, and the earth.

We don't have to convince people that they have a soul to win the spiritual victory. We only have to give them the courage to admit what they already know. A spiritual awakening is already underway in American society. There is a growing awareness that the ills of our society today are a symptom of spiritual atrophy. We know that most of today's problems are the consequences of yesterday's solutions. We know that the mind alone is incapable of solving problems that are fundamentally spiritual in nature. We know that it will take something other than money to alleviate poverty, that it will take something other than more courts and prisons to resolve disputes among people and to prevent crime, and that it will take something other than better weapons to prevent war. We know that we must reawaken the spirit within us if we are to gain the insights and knowledge we need to achieve more quality in our lives. We know what we need to do. We know that the answers to the most important questions of our times are to be found not in our minds, but in our souls. All we need to do to win the spiritual victory is to find the courage to admit what we know to be true – to use our common sense.

In closing this chapter, I want to make it clear that I am not holding myself as some shining example of a spirit-filled life. I am no better than any other fallible human being. I still have all of the day-to-day struggles that are an inherent part of any normal human life. I still have problems with self-perceptions and with relationships – rooted in fifty-some years of living in disharmony and denial. I didn't expect all of the old wounds to heal overnight and they didn't. I still struggle to maintain balance and harmony among the body, the mind, and the soul – among the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. I'm still very much a work in progress and shall remain such for the rest of my days. But, I can say with certainty, with scientific knowledge, if you will, my life is now better than it was

before. I know my life is now far better than it would have been had I continued to rely solely on my mind to understand and control everything else. This I know to be true.

I really don't expect a great spiritual victory to be won in a decade – perhaps not even in fifty years. Maybe we will never achieve a true spiritual victory, in that humans probably have wanted to be their own God since the beginning of time. But, I do expect a spiritual revolution, or maybe a spiritual renaissance would be a better term. I sense that a spiritual awakening has already begun. I fully expect this new spirituality movement to spread across American society. I expect to see a general acknowledgment that our society has suffered because we have denied, or at least ignored, the spiritual dimensions of our lives. I also expect the general quality of human life on earth to be enhanced as we reclaim the sacred in our day-to-day lives. I expect people to take better care of each other and better care of our natural environment as we accept our God-given responsibility to do so. And, I expect the quality of American life, in the here and now, to improve as we become more accepting of our human responsibilities toward each other and toward nature. I truly expect humanity to take another step forward in the decades ahead. Perhaps another step forward is enough to expect from any spiritual victory. I certainly see no reason to expect or accept anything less.

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