CHAPTER 24

Peace and God

Presupposes: the disjunctive ecumenical result and the unilateral boundary (Ch. 4); the temporal terminus and the order of time (Ch. 5); the unintelligence of the foreclosing terminus (Ch. 6); the two infinities (Ch. 8); the dissolution of creation ex nihilo (Ch. 9); the ground/mind conflation (Ch. 10); the failure of the kalām's necessary cause (Ch. 11); the categorical transition principle (Ch. 13); the response-constitutive account of value (Ch. 14); the primary/added value taxonomy (Ch. 15); the descriptive mechanism statement (Ch. 16); the divine wall of discrimination (Ch. 23).

Establishes: the two conceptions of God that survive the critique on the diversity side, sustainer and companion; the companion God, a temporal mind and the form of theism compatible with structural peace; and, in the appendix, faith as evaluative orientation and the process-theology convergence.[2]

In brief. When the traditions say "God is infinite," which infinity do they mean? Everything turns on the answer. Infinite equality is the terminus — unintelligent, unconscious, undifferentiated being at zero complexity; infinite diversity, a maximal mind that did not originate existence from nothing. No third condition exists; the classical incoherences come from demanding both at once. Two conceptions survive on the diversity side, a sustainer on whom all else depends and a companion who shares existence without grounding it, and the chapter develops the second: God as companion, not creator — a fellow inhabitant who lures and does not command, whose only power can be freely declined. The proposal sits on the ladder's weakest tier, mindedness and benevolence both costed posits. One trade is owned outright: a God who could guarantee rescue, or one not answerable for its absence — not both.

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1 Introduction

Chapter 23 showed which forms of religion obstruct structural peace: those that judge persons by creed rather than character, treat their standards as infallible, and rank devotion to God above regard for persons. This chapter asks the converse question. What God, and what form of belief, is compatible with peace, or even conducive to it?

The question must be approached in the right order, or the answer is worthless.

One cannot begin from the peace one wants and posit whatever God would secure it, because that would be wishful theology, and the analysis permits no such move. The order is the reverse. The preceding chapters have already removed six specific theological claims on independent structural grounds — that God created existence from nothing, that the prime mover is a mind, that divine simplicity is compatible with intelligence, that divine retribution is a just response to free choices, that creed-based judgement is a legitimate criterion of moral evaluation, and that scripture is infallible — so the question is what survives their removal. The argument of this chapter is that what survives, on grounds fixed by Chapters 8–12 which owe nothing to the politics, turns out to include the very God that peace allows.

One concession belongs in the same breath, because the chapter's candour depends on it. The metaphysics alone fixes which conceptions of God are coherent, while the choice of which coherent survivor to develop, in a book that has just derived the conditions for peace, is openly guided by those conditions. What the order of argument secures is that the coherence space was drawn before the selection was made, and drawn by arguments the politics never touched.

The answer is: more than the critique might suggest. The argument refutes specific conjunctions — divine simplicity with divine intelligence, creation with zero complexity, moral evaluation with creed-based conformity. The chapter identifies the deep source of these incoherences in the conflation of the two infinities (Chapter 8), the demand that God be both infinitely diverse and infinitely equal.

Once the conflation is resolved, two structurally coherent theisms remain on the diversity side: a sustaining God on whom all else depends, and a God of infinite diversity who is companion rather than creator (§4.1), together with a faith of empathic orientation rather than orthotic obedience. That the companion is also the survivor compatible with peace is a structural consequence rather than a further stipulation, because a companion who lures and does not command relates by persuasion rather than imposition, which is the theological form of the deep persuasion on which peace depends (Chapters 21–22).

The relation between the two inquiries is this chapter's organising thread, and its direction should be stated in full. The metaphysics draws the space of coherent options without consulting the politics. The politics guides which option the chapter develops. The claim is one of selection: the politics chose, from a two-member space the metaphysics had drawn, the member whose only mode of address is persuasion; a persuasion-only God is compatible with a persuasion-based peace by construction. What the order of argument secures is that the selection was made from a space drawn without it, not that the two inquiries met.

The chapter summarises what the preceding analysis removes (§2), locates the deep source of the incoherence in the conflation of two infinities (§3), identifies what it does not remove (§4), develops the concept of God as companion (§5), and meets the objections (§6); faith, worship, and the process lineage, consequences of the proposal, are set out in an appendix (§§A.1–A.8).

2 What the Analysis Removes

The theological critique is narrow in its targets. It does not argue against God in general; it argues against specific claims about God that are structurally incoherent. Each has been argued in full in earlier chapters; this section states them compactly. The critique is also narrower than its vocabulary sometimes suggests: a theist who never held simplicity, timelessness, retributive desert, or creed-based judgement — the open theist, the personalist — finds most of this section aimed past her; what remains for her is the sustainer's cost (§4.1) and the inefficacy and hiddenness residues the companion carries (§§6.5–6.6).

Creation ex nihilo (Chapter 9). Creation pictured as a transition from non-being is incoherent, and the mature doctrine — creation as non ex aliquo, total ontological dependence — is met by the agent dilemma, whose second horn Chapter 9 inherits from Chapters 6 and 10. Either an originating agent is within diversity, in which case its act is diversification rather than origination, or it is at the undifferentiated limit, in which case it has no agency to exercise. What survives is

ontological dependence, which is coherent and which the analysis does not contest; what does not survive is origination from non-being. The sovereignty doctrine loses nothing by that removal (Chapter 9, §6.2), because what it costs is met later, by the companion God alone (§6.5).

Four further removals follow the same pattern. The prime mover as mind (Chapter 10): the cosmological tradition conflates being the ground of existence with being a mind that chooses, roles the analysis shows are structurally incompatible. Divine simplicity conjoined with intelligence (Chapter 10): the classical doctrine that God has no internal distinction is incompatible with knowledge, will, or intention, since all of these require distinction.

Divine retribution as just punishment (Chapter 20): bounded authorship makes absolute moral responsibility unavailable to any conscious agent. Creed-based moral judgement (Chapter 23): evaluating persons primarily by doctrinal allegiance rather than conduct is the great moral conflation in its most consequential social form. Scriptural infallibility (Chapter 17): perfection does not entail infallibility, so the conflation fossilises revisable moral technologies into unreformable dogma.

These claims are the analysis's targets. They are specific and independently argued. The question is whether anything recognisably theistic survives their removal.

3 God and the Two Infinities

Chapter 8 established that the concept of infinity is ambiguous between two structurally opposite conditions. Infinite diversity is the endless extension of internal structure — more distinctions, more complexity, more differentiation, without limit. Infinite equality is the complete dissolution of all structure into undifferentiation — no distinctions, no complexity, zero internal variation. These two conditions are not different degrees of the same thing; they are opposite ends of the structural spectrum.

When religious traditions say “God is infinite,” which infinity do they mean? The entire coherence of the theological concept depends on the answer.

Suppose God is infinitely diverse — endlessly rich in attributes, knowledge, and internal complexity. Then God is maximally differentiated, and, if that diversity is instantiated as detection, maximally conscious, since consciousness is constituted by detected distinction rather than by distinction possessed (Chapter 13: the universe is diverse and is not a subject). Such a God is also maximally evaluative (Chapter 14, because the evaluative modality requires evaluative differences to detect) and maximally capable of purpose (Chapter 19, because purpose requires the evaluative modality’s engagement with a field of differences).

The conditional’s antecedent is supplied by the proposal of §5 rather than by the concept of diversity. This God is coherent with the present analysis’s results, though also maximally complex: the structural opposite of the classical doctrine of divine simplicity. An infinitely diverse God has infinite internal distinction, which is what divine simplicity denies.

Suppose instead God is infinitely equal — a state of zero complexity, complete undifferentiation. Then God is the grounding terminus itself. But the terminus is unintelligent (Chapter 6), unconscious (Chapter 13), without evaluative capacity (Chapter 14), and incapable of purpose (Chapter 19). This God therefore lacks personhood, mentality, and the capacity to love, judge, or create. This God is undifferentiated being at zero complexity.

The conflation of the two infinities is the deep source of the six incoherences identified in §2. Creation ex nihilo requires a God at the terminus (infinite equality) who possesses intelligence and will (infinite diversity). The prime mover tradition places God at the ground of existence (infinite equality) while attributing mental properties (infinite diversity). Divine simplicity identifies God with undifferentiation (infinite equality) while claiming he knows and chooses (infinite

diversity). In each case the tradition demands both infinities at once, and the analysis shows that the two are structurally incompatible.

The resolution is to choose. Either a God of infinite diversity who did not originate existence from non-being, or a terminus of infinite equality that is not God; no third condition exists for a state to be in. The first horn itself divides, and §4.1 draws the division: a God of infinite diversity may be the ground on which all else depends, or a fellow inhabitant of existence. The constructive proposal that follows chooses the first horn, and within it the second figure.

4 What the Analysis Does Not Remove

4.1 Two survivors: the sustainer and the companion

The argument does not refute the existence of a being of immense, even infinite, diversity: a being of extraordinary power, knowledge, and love. What it rules out is that such a being originated existence from non-being (Chapter 9). Two figures survive on the diversity side, and the ledger of the preceding chapters leaves both standing.

	The sustainer	**The companion**
Relation to existence	The ground on which everything else depends: creation read as dependence without origination (Chapter 9, §2.3)	A fellow inhabitant of existence, who finds himself within it as we do
What the earlier chapters allow	A complex ground escapes the zero-complexity constraint (Chapter 6, §6.4); Chapter 10 targets only the simple ground; Chapter 11 shows only that such a being cannot be shown necessary	A being within the hierarchy of diversity, bounded by the terminus as every complex being is (§4.2)

	The sustainer	**The companion**
Sovereignty	Kept: nothing other than God stands on its own	Given up: he sustains nothing and originates nothing
What he answers for	The causal order he holds in being; the problem of evil returns at full strength, and the educative argument of Chapter 20 (§6) presses on him	Nothing he lacks the power to prevent; his one mode of address is persuasion, which leaves the other free (§6.5)
Lineage	Open theism (Hasker, 2004; Ward, 2007); the classical God once the virtual distinctions of his knowing are counted as contrasts (Chapter 10, §5.1)	Process theology's consequent nature (§A.6)

The two differ in what each must answer for, and the difference grounds the chapter's choice. The coherence space was drawn by Chapters 8–12 without consulting the politics, while the selection within it is guided by Chapters 21–22, whose conditions for structural peace are conditions a persuader satisfies and a sustainer need not. The chapter accordingly develops the companion, leaving the sustainer named as the live alternative, with its cost itemised where it falls (§4.2, §6.5). The companion belongs among the alternative concepts of God the recent literature has catalogued (Buckareff & Nagasawa, 2016), as a personal non-creator theism distinct from the pantheist and panentheist members of that family, since the companion is neither identical with the world nor its ground.

4.2 The ontological status of the companion God

The companion God raises ontological questions that classical theism does not face, since the sustainer inherits the tradition's answers

to most of them along with the tradition's grounding role. The chapter must therefore address them directly rather than leaving them to the reader's inference.

What is this God's relationship to the grounding terminus? The terminus is the structural boundary at which all distinction ceases: the state of zero complexity. God, as a being of infinite diversity, stands at the top of the containment order (Chapter 4, Appendix), as far from the terminus as any state can.

The terminus performs no grounding, because it is a limit-ground only (Chapter 4, §3), so nothing is grounded in it, God included. What it does is bound the hierarchy of diversity on one side, and the companion God is within that hierarchy, bounded as every complex being is. This is a departure from the entire classical tradition, which places God at the foundation. On the analysis's account the foundation is unintelligent, so a God who is a mind lives above it: the sustainer as the first structured member on which the rest depends, the companion as one member among the rest.

Necessity and contingency. Is this God necessary or contingent? Leftow (2012) argues that God's necessity is metaphysical, since God's nature is such that non-existence is not a real possibility for a being of that kind. Pruss (2006) connects divine necessity to the principle of sufficient reason, because only a necessary being can serve as the ultimate explanation for contingent ones. Ward (2007) develops the "open theology" tradition, in which God is really affected by the world's development: a responsive being whose experience is enriched by engagement with creation.

Ward's open God is the sustainer of §4.1 — a creator-sustainer, temporal, responsive, and affected by what happens — so it converges with the companion God on everything except the grounding role. Where Ward derives his concept from the Christian tradition's own resources, the suffering God of the cross and the responsive God of the prophets, the analysis derives the shared features from the resolution of the two-infinities conflation. The convergence of independent

derivations strengthens both, while the divergence marks the line §4.1 draws.

The analysis engages both. If God is within the diversity hierarchy rather than at its foundation, then neither Leftow's metaphysical necessity nor Pruss's explanatory necessity applies in its original form. Leftow's argument presupposes that God is the kind of being whose nature excludes non-existence; but if God is a being within diversity, God's nature is constituted by the structural conditions that produce complex beings, and those conditions may or may not necessitate a being of infinite diversity. Pruss's argument presupposes that the chain of explanation terminates in a necessary being; the analysis agrees that the chain terminates, though the terminus is unintelligent equality rather than God.

The companion God may inherit a form of conditional necessity: if the structural conditions for infinite diversity are satisfied, a being of that complexity may be structurally inevitable. The clause is a large modal claim and should be sized. What could make maximal complexity inevitable is a filling principle: that unbounded diversity, given enough of whatever the hierarchy runs on, saturates every structural niche including the maximal one. The framework asserts no such principle. It records the conditional as an open possibility whose antecedent no argument here discharges.

Even granted whole, the result is weaker than the absolute necessity both Leftow and Pruss defend. This is the conclusion Chapter 11 reached against the kalām's necessary cause, and for the same structural reason: a necessary being of infinite diversity would carry its distinction into every possible world, leaving equality — undifferentiated being — impossible, and that impossibility cannot be established. The necessity classical theism needs is therefore unavailable to a being within the diversity hierarchy.

Emergence. And where did this God come from? Because the companion God is within the hierarchy of diversity rather than at its foundation, the question of emergence is unavoidable. On the non-termination branch of the temporal disjunction (Chapter 5), the question

does not arise: God, like all diversity, has always existed, an infinitely complex being whose history extends indefinitely into the past.

On the termination branch, the transition from equality to diversity is actual, established retrospectively by the existence of diversity, while the question of why it occurred is structurally foreclosed, since equality has no determination and therefore no features from which an explanation could be constructed (Chapter 5, §2.5). The argument does not explain which particular forms of diversity emerge. The existence of a being of infinite diversity is, on the termination branch, either a brute fact or a consequence of some structural principle the preceding analysis has not identified. This is a concession stated in the open: the companion God is not produced by the chapter's argument, but shown by it to be structurally coherent.

This concession must be distinguished from the explanatory cost Chapter 4 charged against a brute terminus, or the framework would be exempting itself from its own standard. The two liabilities are not the same. Chapter 4 penalised a terminus whose internal distinctions are brute: a ground that halts the regress while leaving unexplained the very structure that does the grounding.

The companion God is no such ground. He is an inhabitant of the diversity hierarchy rather than its floor: like every complex being he is bounded by the same equality terminus, and he closes no explanatory regress that the unintelligent terminus has not already closed. What remains open is only which forms of diversity the transition yields, a question the framework holds to be foreclosed from the equality side for all diversity alike (Chapter 5, §2.5) rather than a licence claimed specially for God.

The companion God is therefore brute in no sense Chapter 4 forbids. The ledger Chapter 4 kept against Schaffer should be run here too, or the framework exempts itself: Schaffer's cosmos was charged for the unexplained structure of a terminus that grounds, while a maximal mind that registers the cosmos carries more structure than the cosmos does. The difference the proposal rests on is that the companion grounds no other being, so his structure is not the structure of a terminus

and closes no regress; what remains charged is the bare existence of a maximal mind among the forms diversity took, the largest unexplained fact any inhabitant of the hierarchy could be; the proposal carries it at that size: his existence is contingent as any complex being's is, rather than brute as a self-standing diverse ground would be, which is the sustainer's standing and the sustainer's cost.

Classical theism holds that God is a necessary being, one whose non-existence is impossible. The companion God is not obviously necessary in this sense. If God is within the hierarchy of diversity and not at its foundation, God's existence may be contingent, dependent on the structural conditions that produce beings of extraordinary complexity. The argument does not settle this question; it identifies the structural constraint.

A God whose existence is contingent is still a being worthy of devotion, since the contingency of a relationship does not diminish its value. But the contingency has a further consequence that turns it from a weakness into a relational strength: the relationship between humanity and God is bidirectional. A necessary God who could not fail to exist is not enriched by human engagement, whereas a contingent God who shares existence with humanity is. The companion God's evaluative field is really affected by human suffering and flourishing, as a structural feature of shared existence rather than as a design flaw. The companion God is a being one is fortunate to encounter.

How does this God relate to the causal-temporal hierarchy? The temporal analysis (Chapter 5) established that the terminus is the temporal boundary: the point before which no sequence extends. A God of infinite diversity exists within time, not outside it. This God has a history: a temporal sequence of experiences, engagements, and responses. This God is not eternal in the classical sense (timeless, outside the temporal sequence) but in the diversity sense (having always existed within time, as an endlessly complex being whose history extends indefinitely into the past). The distinction matters: a timeless God cannot respond to events in time (response requires temporal sequence); a temporally extended God can respond, engage, and be affected by what happens in the world.

Where the argument stands: six theological claims have been removed on independent grounds (§2), the deep source of the incoherence has been located in the conflation of the two infinities (§3), and two coherent theisms have been found to survive on the diversity side (§4). What follows develops the one the chapter selects.

5 God as Companion, Not Creator

Here the analysis shifts from critique to construction. The preceding sections established the constraints any coherent theism must satisfy; the account that follows develops a conception of God that meets them. It is offered as a proposal, the weakest tier on the book's confidence ladder, and is to be weighed as such.

5.1 The structural concept

If God did not create existence, what is God's relationship to it? A specific answer emerges: companion. J. A. Keller (2007) argues that divine action in the world need not presuppose creation, since God can act within a world whose existence is independent of him, through persuasion, inspiration, and empathic engagement with conscious beings.

Keller's account of non-creative divine action bears directly on the companion God. If God did not create the universe, the question of how God acts within it becomes pressing, and Keller provides the philosophical resources for an answer that does not depend on the creator model. On this analysis, the companion God's mode of action is deep persuasion: offering evaluative perspectives that conscious beings are free to engage with or decline, without the coercive authority that creation would confer.

Such a God shares existence with humanity. He finds himself within the universe, having not brought it into being, alongside the beings whose suffering and flourishing he witnesses and to which he responds. His relationship to humanity is therefore that of fellow inhabitant to fellow inhabitant rather than that of maker to product.

The political sequence gives the concept its sharpest foil. Chapter 22 diagnosed absolutism as the placement of moral law beyond human reach, and Chapter 23 traced the theological form of that placement: a God who separates souls by creed and thereby licenses the evaluation of persons by allegiance. The companion God is the structural negation of that figure, point for point. Where the absolutist God commands, the companion persuades. Where the theocratic God judges by creed, the companion responds to what persons do and undergo. Where the divine wall separates communities by allegiance, the companion's registration extends to every being that feels.

The bookkeeping of §1 applies here too: the concept was fixed by §3's option-space before any comparison with the theocratic figure was made. A God confined to persuasion is constitutionally incapable of tyranny, since enforcement is the one mode of address unavailable to him, and this incapacity — named in §6.5 as the proposal's gravest cost — is also what fits him to be the theological counterpart of the deep persuasion on which structural peace runs.

This shift has profound consequences for the character of the divine, and the conceptual tools developed in earlier chapters permit a more rigorous derivation than the metaphor of companionship alone provides. A creator God stands above creation: he designed it, he owns it, he judges it against the blueprint. A companion God stands within creation, sharing the same condition as the beings within it.

The categorical transition principle (Chapter 13) supplies the conditional the proposal collects: a being whose infinite diversity is instantiated as detection would possess consciousness of maximal complexity, every contrast available in the hierarchy of mental states instantiated across time, producing an evaluative field of unbounded richness. That the diversity is so instantiated — that it composes a mind rather than an infinitely structured non-subject — is the proposal's first posit, costed here as its benevolence is costed in §5.2. Infinite diversity fixes what a maximal mind would register, not that the diversity composes a mind. The Chapter 13 results are conditionals the proposal collects rather than derivations it performs.

What such a being registers. Such a being would register differences that finite minds cannot. Not because he transcends the structure of consciousness — transcendence of structure is infinite equality, and the companion God is infinite diversity — but because his consciousness instantiates the structure to a degree no finite being approaches.

The evaluative modality (Chapter 14) specifies how this consciousness engages. The companion God's emotional responses are evaluative registrations of the differences he encounters: empathic responses to suffering, evaluative engagement with flourishing, aesthetic sensitivity to structural complexity. A being of infinite diversity does not merely know that suffering occurs; he evaluatively registers it with the full weight of an unbounded evaluative field. This is something both more limited and more profound than classical omniscience, which is propositional knowledge of all truths: it is maximal evaluative engagement with every detectable difference.

The companion God may therefore lack propositional knowledge of future contingents, since such knowledge requires temporal structure that has not yet obtained, while possessing evaluative sensitivity that exceeds any finite capacity. He is affected by human suffering as a being who empathically registers the suffering of those alongside whom he exists, rather than as a designer troubled by a flaw in his product. He responds to human flourishing as a being whose evaluative modality is engaged by it, rather than as a master pleased by obedient servants.

The interface condition. One condition from Chapter 13 applies to this being, and the proposal cannot collect that chapter's conditionals selectively. Chapter 13 (§A.4) locates experience at an interface: an activation standing against the modality's absence, the blind field for vision, silence for hearing. A mind with every contrast present at once would have no absence for any activation to stand against, so on the book's own account it would be a structured non-subject — infinite diversity instantiated, and nothing registered.

The companion God meets the condition because he is in time (§4.2). His registrations are diachronic, so each stands against what he

had not yet registered, so the absence the interface needs is supplied by the not-yet. Infinite diversity of content across time is compatible with finite change at any moment: an unbounded field, fed one difference at a time. Unbounded in reach means reach across time: what the temporal reading rules out is a field that holds everything at one moment, and it permits a field that, fed without limit, leaves no instance permanently outside it — and "maximal registration," wherever the chapter uses the phrase, means the second. The reading of "infinite" the proposal draws on is limitlessness by endless extension (Chapter 8, §4), and that reading alone.

This is what "responsive" means for such a being. It is also why his is the one form of unending life Chapter 20 (§3) found immune to saturation, since inexhaustible novelty is a temporal notion and a mind that registered everything at once would have nothing left to register. The mindedness posit is therefore the posit of a temporal mind, and "every contrast available in the hierarchy of mental states" describes the field's reach across time, each contrast arriving against the absence that preceded it.

The companion God lures and does not command. He offers an evaluative perspective that others are free to engage with or decline. His authority, if he has any, is the authority of a perspective that earns assent through its quality — the authority of deep persuasion, not of enforcement or shallow persuasion. This is a God who operates within the democratic framework established in Chapter 22: he participates in the evaluative exchange as a being of extraordinary capacity, but his participation leaves room for the participation of others.

5.2 The direction of the divine current

One attribute of the companion God has so far been carried by the description rather than the derivation. The difference must be made explicit, because everything pastoral in this chapter and in Chapter 20 hangs on it. Infinite diversity fixes the capacity of the divine evaluative modality: a being instantiating every category of detectable distinction registers, across time and with no instance permanently beyond its reach (§5.1), every instance of suffering and flourishing with maximal

accuracy and completeness. It does not, by itself, fix the direction of the current that rides that registration. Chapter 13 (§2.5) made empathy and cruelty one capacity run in opposite directions; Chapter 14 (§6.4) conceded the coherent outlier — a being that registers another's suffering with full clarity and is drawn to it. A maximally registering being of inverted current is therefore not excluded by the concept of infinite diversity; a derivation of benevolence from structure alone is not available. The chapter says so rather than borrowing the conclusion.

What can be derived is narrower, and worth deriving. The familiar engines of malevolence are, on the framework's own analysis, artefacts of limitation. Cruelty as humans practise it is overwhelmingly the added-value override of a primary empathic response. The in-group's derived value outweighs the out-group member's registered suffering; threat and rivalry convert another's loss into one's own gain; scarcity sets one welfare against another (Chapters 15, 16, 21). Each engine presupposes a bounded position: something to defend, something to lose, someone to compete with. A being of infinite diversity occupies no such position. It has no out-group, since every perspective is within its registration; no rival, since it competes for nothing; no scarcity, since its engagement with one being subtracts nothing from its engagement with another. In such a being the distortion-based routes to cruelty are structurally idle. What remains possible is the pure outlier of Chapter 14: inverted current without misregistration. Against that possibility the framework offers no proof, only the observation that the inversion would be a bare further fact, motivated by nothing the being's situation supplies.

Benevolence is accordingly posited within the proposal. The companion God is proposed as a being of infinite diversity whose current runs with the registration, toward the flourishing of what it registers; the universalism Chapter 20 (§6) proposes is this current at its longest reach — every soul turned toward reconciliation by persuasion across time, an aim such a God keeps and an outcome he cannot guarantee (§6.5). The posit is tiered with the proposal it belongs to, not smuggled in as a derivation. A reader who withholds the posit retains a weaker but still pointed result: the God that survives the analysis is a

being whose moral character structure does not fix. That is itself a finding against the classical tradition, whose central ambition was to derive perfect goodness from perfect being. The framework locates goodness where Chapter 14 locates all value, in the direction of a current; and directions, even divine ones, are not entailed by capacities.

One further cost belongs beside the posit, because the derivation just given has a shape the framework elsewhere polices. Reading the divine motivational field through the human engines it excludes is an inference of the projection kind (Chapter 8, §3). The engines audited are ours; their absence in an unbounded being is shown by inspection of our engines' preconditions. What licenses the inference is its negative use: the audit removes candidate routes to cruelty and installs no positive structure in their place. The licence has its cost in the residue: a being might harbour engines answering to nothing in human motivational architecture, and against these the audit is silent. The residue of this section widens by that possibility; the posit absorbs it.

5.3 The question of grounds

One question remains for the proposal; it should be asked here rather than left to the reader: is there any consideration in favour of the companion God's existence, or is coherence the whole case? The chapter's discipline requires an explicit answer, because §4.2 conceded that the companion God is shown coherent rather than produced by the argument. The hiddenness discussion (§6.6) will ask the reader to weigh that problem against the considerations in the proposal's favour. Those considerations must therefore be named and costed, or the weighing has one empty pan.

Three candidates exist, and each is modest. The first is religious experience. Chapter 14 gives experiences of presence, forgiveness, and encounter a standing the debunking tradition denies them: they are real evaluative events — actual registrations by a real modality — rather than noise to be explained away. Chapter 20 (§7.7) fixed the ceiling: a feeling of divine forgiveness is evidence of the feeling and of its transformative reality; it does not establish its theological interpretation. Within that ceiling a residue of weight remains: a proposal on which

such experiences could be registrations of an actual evaluative engagement — a maximal consciousness responding to the experiencer (§A.3) — accommodates their phenomenology more directly than a proposal on which every such experience is misattributed.

The second is the phenomenology of worship. Wolterstorff (2015) describes liturgy as mutual address, and §A.3 argued that the companion God makes the description coherent where the classical God cannot: an impassible being cannot be addressed in any sense that reaches it. A practice whose internal structure is dialogical fits a theology on which there is a respondent. The third is explanatory fit: the companion God accommodates what believers report valuing most — relationship, presence, being known — without the six incoherences the critique removed. A believer weighing conceptions of God against her own practice therefore has a reason internal to that practice to prefer this one.

The costing is strict, and it doubles as the statement of audience. None of the three is evidence that the companion God exists: experiences underdetermine their objects, a practice's internal structure does not populate the world with its addressee, and explanatory fit selects among conceptions for someone already conceiving. They are considerations of fit, and fit moves only those with something to fit — which fixes who the proposal is for. To the reader antecedently inclined toward theism, the chapter offers a conception on which her experience, her worship, and her sense of relationship are coherent without the claims the critique dismantled, together with the three considerations above, costed as stated. To the reader without that inclination, the chapter offers coherence and nothing further, and does not pretend the considerations should move her. The proposal's register — proposed, the ladder's weakest tier — already encodes this, and §6.6's weighing should be read with these pans loaded just so.

6 Objections and Replies

6.1 The emptiness objection

Objection. A God who did not create the universe, who does not judge by creed, who does not command, and who does not punish is too diminished to be God. The chapter presents a philosophy of empathic engagement dressed in theological vocabulary.

Reply. The objection assumes that the six removed claims are constitutive of theism — an assumption that is itself a product of the conflation of the two infinities (§3). Once the conflation is resolved, a God of infinite diversity — endlessly rich in internal structure, maximally conscious, maximally loving — is recognisably theistic and the appropriate object of reverence: a being whose diminishment is the shedding of incoherence, not the loss of divinity. Mesle (1993) develops the pastoral dimension: a God who participates in events alongside the sufferer rather than controlling them provides a more adequate response to suffering than one who permitted or planned it. The companion God satisfies the requirement — he does not permit suffering, because he did not design the world in which it occurs, and his grief, if the concept is coherent, is real: a being who registers suffering through his own modality, not a designer observing the consequences of his plan.

6.2 The presumption objection

Objection. The chapter presumes to tell believers what their faith should be. Faith is a deeply personal commitment, and a philosophical framework has no standing to reconstruct it.

Reply. The chapter does not prescribe; it derives consequences, and whether a believer revises her commitments in light of them is entirely her decision. The relationship between the chapter and the believer is one of deep persuasion, not enforcement — its authority, like the companion God's, is the authority of a perspective that must earn assent through its quality.

6.3 The coherence objection

Objection. A non-creator God is merely a very powerful being within existence — and calling such a being "God" stretches the concept beyond recognition.

Reply. The objection identifies a real tension. The concept of God in the dominant traditions is linked to creation. The argument is that the link to origination is incoherent, and that the link to sustaining dependence survives only in the first of §4.1's two figures, which the chapter has set aside for stated reasons. The question is whether the concept can survive the severing. The companion God differs from a powerful alien in one decisive respect. An alien is a being whose registration of humanity is partial in principle, bounded by position, interest, and the finite reach of a bounded field, and whose engagement is contingent on the interests a bounded position supplies: territory, advantage, curiosity. The companion God is a being whose registration is unbounded in reach, since no instance of suffering or flourishing lies in principle beyond a field that is fed without limit across time (§5.1), and whose care, though posited rather than derived (§5.2), is structurally unlike an interest: it is the direction of a current that has no position to defend, nothing to gain, and no rival engagement to trade off, and so it cannot be alienated by circumstance as an interest can. The distinction between such a being and a powerful alien is not terminological; it is structural — registration unbounded in reach where the alien's is bounded, positionless orientation where the alien's is interested — with the direction of the orientation carried, as §5.2 records, by the proposal itself.

What matters is the relationship: reverence, devotion, and empathic engagement with a being who transcends ordinary human capacities and who responds to suffering and flourishing with care. A relationship with that structure — reverence answering maximal registration, devotion answering positionless care — is religious in the sense the traditions themselves privilege, and the being at its centre is recognisably God.

6.4 The contingency objection

Objection. Section 4.2 acknowledges that the non-creator God may be contingent. But religious devotion seems to require that God's existence is necessary — that the being one devotes oneself to could not fail to exist. A contingent God is a God one might lose.

Reply. The concern is real, but the assumption that devotion requires necessity may itself be a product of the creator theology the analysis has set aside. We devote ourselves to mortal persons — friends, children, partners — whose existence is contingent and whose loss is possible, and the devotion is not diminished by the contingency; it may be deepened by it (Chapter 20, §3.3). Devotion to a God one is fortunate to encounter rather than guaranteed to possess may be a deeper, more truthful form of religious engagement than one grounded in the certainty that the object cannot be lost.

6.5 The inefficacy objection

Objection. A companion God who acts only through deep persuasion is powerless before suffering, and the powerlessness is not relieved by his perfections but sharpened by them. A being of infinite diversity is maximally knowing: he sees every affliction in full and knows, for each agent, what would move them. Grant him too the power such a nature seems to imply; he could not merely witness suffering but heal it — and the healing would be the most persuasive act of all. A God who could see, relieve, and thereby persuade, yet accompanies the sufferer without delivering her and opposes evil without defeating it, is either impotent or indifferent. Presence is cold comfort, and a divinity that changes nothing is not worth the name.

Reply. This is the gravest objection the companion God faces. The chapter concedes its starting point without qualification: this God neither coerces nor prevents, guarantees no outcome, and offers no theodicy of rescue. What the objection misreads is the passage from that concession to impotence or indifference, and the misreading turns on conflating two perfections the analysis keeps apart.

Omniscience is knowledge, not power over nature. It does make the companion God the optimal persuader: he never misjudges what, if anything, would move an agent. But persuasion terminates in the other's uptake, and knowing the perspective that would move someone is not that person's being moved. To close the gap — to supply the uptake — would be to cause the evaluative change directly, which is the manufactured assent the analysis has already refused (Chapters 16, 21): it would yield compliance but no converted response. He can perfect the offer; the response is constitutively the other's to make. On the book's own conception of a God who grows by accumulating experience (§A.6), an undetermined future choice is not yet there to be foreknown, so even his omniscience does not reach across it. And on the determined branch — the book decides between the branches nowhere (Chapter 18) — foreknowledge of the uptake is not production of it: knowing what will move her is still not her being moved, so the constitutive gap stands on either branch.

The limits of power. Omnipotence is not his to grant. The being who could heal a body or still a catastrophe at will is the maker and master of the causal order — the sustainer of §4.1, whose power over what depends on him returns the problem of evil at full strength, while Chapters 9–12 showed the simple, originating version of that being to be incoherent — and §4.1 and §5.1 build the companion God expressly as a non-sustainer whose sole mode of action is the offer of evaluative perspectives. To equip him with the power to heal is to exchange him for the other survivor and to take on that survivor's cost; the companion God gains nothing by it. And the trade is not incidental: the companion God is innocent of the world's suffering because he cannot prevent it. Restore the power to heal and the problem of evil returns at full strength — an omnipotent healer who leaves a single affliction standing is answerable for it. One may have a God who could guarantee rescue or a God not answerable for its absence, but not both; the position secures its exculpation by its inability. That is a feature of it, not a flaw in it.

The asymmetry — that he reaches wills but not nature — is therefore principled rather than stipulated. His only power is the kind that can be freely declined. An offered perspective is a contribution to

the field a free mind weighs; it can be refused; the healing of a body is a non-declinable override of the causal order, which no one declines. The first is participation in the evaluative life of minds, exercised supremely by a maximal consciousness; the second is the authorship-grade control he does not possess. The same autonomy-preserving structure governs the ethics throughout (Chapter 20): his influence is always the kind that leaves the other free, and for that reason not the kind that secures outcomes.

Nor, were healing available, would it be the persuasive instrument the objection imagines. Relief offered as a reason to accept God's perspective moves the will by power, gratitude, and self-interest rather than by engagement with the relevant evaluative differences — the manipulation the framework excludes (Chapter 21, §7.6), producing allegiance rather than transformation. The narrow exception is the relief of an agony that is itself blocking a sufferer's capacity to engage at all: this restores the conditions for persuasion rather than standing in for it, and it too presupposes a power the companion God lacks. The corollary belongs on the residue list in its own right: a God who cannot relieve even persuasion-blocking agony cannot perform triage of any kind — the most modest intervention the pastoral imagination asks for is already beyond him — and the proposal owns that cost rather than softening it.

The residue owned. What remains is the residue, which the chapter does not disguise: suffering with no will to address, in the natural order he did not design; agents whom no true perspective moves, of whom the coherent outlier of Chapter 14 (§6.4) is the limiting case; and the freedom of uptake that no persuasion, however perfectly informed, can close. The companion God shares this condition rather than standing above it — the contingency conceded in §4.2 is felt here at its sharpest. The chapter does not promise that suffering will end. It claims something more candid and more demanding: that the divine relation to suffering is the one the analysis vindicates as right — to be present to it as its fullest witness, and to oppose it by the only means that transform rather than merely suppress. A God who promised more would have to be the maker and master the preceding chapters have shown such a being cannot coherently be.

6.6 The hiddenness objection

Objection. A companion God whose sole mode of action is the offer of evaluative perspectives faces the problem of divine hiddenness in a sharper form than classical theism does. Schellenberg (1993, 2015) argues that a perfectly loving God would ensure that no one capable of relationship with him remained a non-resistant non-believer, since being open to the relationship is a good such a God would want available to all who do not refuse it. The existence of non-resistant non-belief is therefore evidence against such a God. For the companion God the argument bites harder. His whole relation to persons is persuasive rather than coercive, and persuasion requires that the one to be persuaded encounter the perspective offered. A companion who lures but never appears has failed at the one thing he is said to do. Worse, the framework itself concedes that his existence is an open question (§4.2); a God whose reality cannot be told apart from his absence is just the God the hiddenness argument predicts we should not find if he were there and loving.

Reply. The objection is powerful, and the chapter does not claim to dissolve it. It claims that the companion God is better placed under it than the classical God, and that the residue it leaves is one the framework already owns. Three points locate the position.

First, the sharpest form of Schellenberg's argument is aimed at a God who both loves perfectly and possesses the power to make himself evident to every non-resistant mind at will. That second attribute is the omnipotence the companion God lacks by construction (§4.1, §6.5), and which the sustainer carries at the cost §4.1 records. The companion God does not command the causal order, so he cannot stage the self-authenticating disclosure the argument imagines a loving God would arrange. Hiddenness for such a being is a limit of his mode of being rather than a withheld good — the same limit that makes him innocent of the world's suffering. The argument's premise that a loving God "could" prevent non-resistant non-belief is, for this God, false, and where it is false the inference from love to universal availability does not run. Rea (2018) replies to Schellenberg that divine love need not take the form the argument assumes, since a personal God may have

reasons of his own for the manner of his presence; the companion's position asks less than Rea's, because it needs no such reasons, the manner being fixed by what the companion can do.

Second, the analysis reinterprets what "belief" the relationship requires, and the reinterpretation matters. On the account of faith developed in §A.4, the relationship to the companion God is constituted not by assent to the proposition that he exists but by empathic orientation — the modality's engagement with the suffering and flourishing of others, which §A.4 identifies as the moral content of faith.

A person so oriented is, on the chapter's own terms, already in the relationship the companion God offers, whether or not she has formed the belief that he exists, while a person who assents to his existence and is empathically inert is not. This does not answer Schellenberg on his own ground, since he is concerned with conscious relationship and the reframing shifts what relationship consists in. But it drains the argument of much of its force in the companion case, because the good whose distribution the argument tracks — propositional acquaintance with God — is not the good the companion theology treats as central.

Schellenberg's natural rejoinder should be completed rather than left implied: a loving companion would surely want to be known as one, since wanting the relationship recognised is part of wanting the relationship. The reply is the powers concession already on the table. Wanting is not effecting, so a being who persuades without coercing, and reaches only those whom true perspectives can move, may want a recognition he cannot bring about, for the reasons §6.5 sets out. The exchange ends there, with the want conceded and the ability denied — a completion, on Schellenberg's own terms, of what hiddenness can and cannot show against a companion rather than an omnipotent God.

Third, what remains is a real residue, and the chapter marks it rather than disguising it. If the companion God exists, is loving, and desires that persons come to share his orientation, then his non-evidence to some who do not resist it is a cost the position carries. Smaller than the classical God's, because he lacks the power to remove it; not zero,

because a maximally resourceful persuader might still be expected to reach more than are in fact reached.

The plain terminus is the one §4.2 already stated: the companion God's existence is not established by the analysis but shown to be coherent, so the weight of hiddenness is one of the considerations a reader must set against those collected and costed in §5.3. The chapter's claim is comparative and modal rather than evidential: of the gods that remain structurally available after the critique, the companion God is the one for whom hiddenness is a limitation rather than a withholding; that is the most a theology disciplined by the preceding chapters is entitled to say.

6.7 The divine-suffering lineage

Objection. The chapter places itself against process theology while passing over its nearest neighbours: the twentieth-century theologies of divine suffering. Bonhoeffer (1951/1971) writes from prison that "only the suffering God can help"; Moltmann (1972/1974) makes the cross constitutive of the divine life; Jonas (1987), answering Auschwitz, proposes a God who divested power in creating; Oord (2015) argues that uncontrolling love belongs to the divine essence, so that unilateral prevention was never available. Each arrives at a God who accompanies without rescuing, none by way of Chapters 8 or 10. If the destination is already occupied, the derivation earns nothing.

Reply. The convergence is real, is recorded here, while the ground differs, which is where the derivation does its work. For all four the divine figure remains creator or sustainer, so the inability to rescue is kenotic — chosen in the act of creating, or essential to a nature that might have been described otherwise — which leaves the theologian to say why a God holding that office declines the power the office carries. The companion's inability is structural: it follows from inhabiting the field rather than grounding it (§5.1), so no declining is required, none is available.

The lineages also differ on what is owed. A kenotic creator remains answerable for the creating, which is where Jonas locates the cost,

paying it in divine self-limitation; the companion answers for nothing, since it never occupied the position from which prevention would have been possible (§4.1). What the lineage does establish is that the destination is habitable, which the chapter welcomes rather than resists, since convergence by four routes with different starting points is evidence that the position is no artefact of this framework's vocabulary. The cost §5 itemises stands unchanged, with nothing in the convergence upgrading the posits.

7 Conclusion

The chapter has argued three things. Two structurally coherent theisms survive the analysis's critique on the diversity side, and the chapter has developed one of them. The deep source of the incoherence in classical theism is the conflation of the two infinities — the demand that God be both infinitely diverse (omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipotent) and infinitely equal (absolutely simple, the undifferentiated ground of being). And this survivor is compatible with structural peace, since the God who persuades rather than commands is the theological counterpart of the deep persuasion peace requires.

The bookkeeping of §1 applies at the close as at the opening. The coherence of the companion God was fixed by arguments that owe nothing to the political analysis; the decision to develop him was guided by those results; and the compatibility is a consequence of that selection — a persuasion-only God fits a persuasion-based peace by construction — rather than a convergence the two inquiries reached independently.

The chapter yields three results.

The companion God (proposed). Once the conflation is resolved, the coherent options are Gods of infinite diversity. The proposal develops the companion rather than the sustainer (§4.1): a companion rather than a creator, who lures and does not command, who responds empathically and does not judge orthotically, and whose relationship to humanity is one of shared existence and mutual evaluative engagement.

The ontological status of this God has been addressed directly. He is within the hierarchy of diversity rather than at its foundation; he may be contingent rather than necessary; he exists within time and responds to events. His mindedness is carried as a posit within the proposal (§5.1), since structure fixes what a maximal mind would register, not that a mind is there to register it. His benevolence is carried as a posit within the proposal (§5.2), since structure fixes the capacity of the divine current, not its direction, and what the chapter derives is only that the limitation-based engines of malevolence are idle in such a being.

Faith as evaluative orientation (constructed; Appendix, §§A.1–A.5). Faith is evaluative orientation toward the transcendent: sustained empathic engagement with a domain of experience that exceeds ordinary categories — a shift, in Chapter 15's terms, from derived-value dominance to primary-value engagement. Concrete practices are preserved and structurally grounded: prayer as evaluative reflection, worship as shared orientation, moral education as empathic formation.

Convergence with process theology (constructed; §A.6). The constructive proposal converges with process theology (Whitehead, Hartshorne, Griffin) on the character of the resulting God while arriving by a different route: the present account of difference, the two infinities, and the conditions for democratic peace. The companion God is not a postulate of process metaphysics. He is the God who remains after the conflation of the two infinities has been resolved in favour of infinite diversity.

The constructive proposal does not ask believers to abandon their faith. It asks them to consider whether the structurally incoherent elements of their traditions are essential to what they love about those traditions, or whether what they love, whether community, contemplation, devotion, moral seriousness, or the experience of the sacred, can be preserved, and perhaps deepened, once the incoherent elements are set aside.

This book began with a question: is there anything that cannot coherently be denied? The answer was difference — the one thing whose denial cannot be truly held, since the denying is an occurrence

and an occurrence is a difference. From that foundation the book built a structural account of content, consciousness, value, morality, freedom, purpose, and peace, each part graded for the weight it bears.

Along the way it showed that the grounding terminus is unintelligent, that creation ex nihilo is incoherent, and that the traditional God of classical theism conjoins properties the structure of difference makes incompatible. It also showed that what remains, once the incompatible elements are set aside, is substantial: a God of infinite diversity, a faith of evaluative orientation, a morality of empathic engagement, and a politics of deep persuasion. The chapter's final claim is not that these results are infallible, since Chapter 17 showed why no such claim can be made, but that they are the best the analysis can offer, subject to revision through the very process of deep persuasion the book has identified as the path to peace.

Grades and Dependencies

1. Posits. The companion God is *proposed* — the ladder's weakest tier — with three posits: mindedness (§5.1: structure fixes what a maximal mind would register, not that one exists; the posit is of a temporal mind, meeting Chapter 13's interface condition diachronically), benevolence (§5.2: capacity derived, direction posited; only the limitation-based malevolence engines are shown idle), and the §5.3 considerations, fit not evidence. Faith as orientation and the process convergence are *constructed*. Order of argument (§1): Chapters 8–12 drew the coherence space; two figures survive on the diversity side (§4.1), a result established by inheritance from Chapters 4–11, and the politics selected between them. The Premise Register carries the posits and the residue.

2. Owned residue. Suffering with no will to address; agents no true perspective moves; uptake no persuasion can close; no triage — even persuasion-blocking agony is beyond him (§6.5). Hiddenness weighs non-zero against §5.3 (§6.6). The §5.2 engine audit is a projection-type inference, licensed only negatively; engines alien to human architecture escape it; the posit absorbs it. The exculpation is secured by the inability (§6.5).

Appendix: Faith Without Obedience

This appendix holds what the companion God makes of faith, worship, and practice, together with the lineage the proposal converges with: consequences of the proposal and no part of its derivation, so that declining the companion forfeits them and no earlier result. Faith is reinterpreted as evaluative orientation (§A.1), the community, ritual, and contemplation it sustains are placed (§A.2), the worship question is answered (§A.3), the reframing of faith without obedience is drawn out into practice (§§A.4–A.5), the process-theology engagement is recorded (§A.6), and the two objections aimed at these consequences are met (§§A.7–A.8).

A.1 Faith as evaluative orientation

Faith, on the analysis's account, need not be understood as belief in a set of propositions — that God exists, that God created the world, that scripture is infallible. It can be understood instead as an evaluative orientation: a sustained engagement of the evaluative modality with something that exceeds ordinary experience. A person of faith is a person whose evaluative modality is oriented toward a domain of experience that she identifies as transcendent.

This is faith as empathic orientation rather than orthotic compliance. The person of faith is oriented — emotionally, evaluatively, with the full engagement of her evaluative modality — toward something she experiences as sacred. The orientation is real, since it involves real evaluative differences detected by a real modality. What the analysis removes is the claim that this orientation must be directed toward a specific doctrinal content. What it preserves is the orientation itself.

In the terms of Chapter 15's value taxonomy, faith-as-evaluative-orientation is constituted primarily by primary value, the evaluative modality's direct response to the transcendent, rather than by derived value, the authority of the tradition, or consequential value, the reward of salvation. The shift from orthotic faith to evaluative faith is therefore a shift from derived-value dominance to primary-value engagement. This is why mystical experience feels different from doctrinal

obedience: the mystic's engagement is constituted primarily by primary value, the obedient believer's primarily by derived value.

This understanding converges with the mystical traditions: the Sufi dhawq, direct tasting of the divine; the Christian contemplative union; the kabbalist's devekut, cleaving to God through direct experience. All of these privilege the modality's direct engagement over orthotic conformity, which is why the analysis explains they have consistently felt different from their doctrinal counterparts: they engage a different evaluative register.

A.2 Religious community, ritual, and contemplation

The preceding chapters established that purpose is constituted by the evaluative modality's engagement with real differences (Chapter 19), and that religious practices work because they engage the evaluative modality. A communal act of worship can therefore produce real empathic engagement: participants share an evaluative orientation, respond emotionally to shared symbols and narratives, and experience a form of collective purpose that individual practice may not achieve. Contemplative practice (meditation, prayer, silent reflection) can heighten the evaluative modality's sensitivity, making the practitioner more attuned to evaluative differences she might otherwise overlook.

These practices do not require the six claims the analysis removes. A community can worship a God of infinite diversity. Contemplation can be directed toward the transcendent without presupposing scriptural infallibility. Moral education can cultivate empathic engagement without grounding it in creed-based judgement. The institutional infrastructure of religious life is preserved. What is removed is the claim that the infrastructure's value derives from a divine source and not from its capacity to engage the evaluative modality with real evaluative differences.

A.3 The worship question

If God is not the creator, and not ontologically superior in the foundational sense — grounded by the same terminus as every other

being rather than grounding them — what grounds the attitude of worship, prayer, and devotion?

The answer draws on the evaluative modality. Worship is constituted not by the worshipper's subordination to a superior being but by her evaluative engagement with something that exceeds her ordinary categories of experience. A person who stands before a mountain and feels awe is not subordinating herself to it; she is responding to something that exceeds her scale, the awe constituted by the modality's response to the mountain's vastness, permanence, and indifference. The response is real, since the mountain does not need to be her creator for the awe to be real.

Wolterstorff (2015) develops an account of liturgical action as a form of mutual address between God and the worshipping community: more than merely human speech directed at God, it is a dialogue in which both parties are affected. The companion God makes Wolterstorff's dialogical account more coherent than classical theism does, because a classical God, impassible and unchanging and already possessing all knowledge, cannot be affected by the dialogue. A companion God can be, since his evaluative modality is engaged by the community's expression, so the dialogue is structurally bidirectional.

Worship and inexhaustibility. Worship of the companion God has the same evaluative structure with immeasurably greater depth. A being of infinite diversity, infinitely rich in internal structure, maximally conscious and maximally evaluative, presents the evaluative modality with a field of differences that exceeds any finite engagement and cannot be exhausted by any engagement, however prolonged.

The reason is the saturation analysis. Saturation (Chapter 20, §3.2) is the running-out of a field's novel differences, and an infinitely diverse field has no exhaustion point, so this is the one form of unending engagement the saturation analysis leaves standing — the property Chapter 20 (§6) uses for its universalism. The awe this engagement produces is the awe of encountering a depth of evaluative reality that transforms the worshipper's own evaluative perspective.

This account must be distinguished from mere aesthetic appreciation. Aesthetic appreciation, as the value taxonomy of Chapter 15 makes clear, is a form of evaluative engagement, while worship of the companion God involves a further feature: reciprocity. The worshipper's evaluative engagement is met by the companion God's evaluative engagement with the worshipper. Aesthetic appreciation of a sunset is unidirectional, since the sunset does not evaluatively register the observer.

Prayer, on this account, is an act of evaluative reflection — an orientation of attention toward what matters. To pray is to direct the evaluative modality's engagement toward the companion God's perspective: to try to see as he sees, to be moved as he is moved, to care as he cares. This is prayer as evaluative cultivation. Petition has dropped away, at a large cost: a God who cannot act on the causal order cannot answer a request to do so, so the prayer of the frightened and the bereaved — the prayer most people most often pray — has no addressee on this proposal, and the residue list of §6.5 includes it.

A.4 The structural reframing

If morality is constitutively empathic (Chapter 16), then the moral content of faith is empathic engagement, not obedience: a faithful person is one whose evaluative modality is deeply and sustainedly engaged with the suffering and flourishing of others, her empathic orientation enriched and sustained by the relationship to God. This reverses the theocratic inversion in which devotion to God takes priority over love for persons and creed outranks character. The companion God does not demand that his followers prioritise allegiance to him over care for others. His own engagement is directed toward the flourishing of the beings alongside whom he exists — the orientation §5.2 records as the proposal's posit — and to be devoted to such a God is to share his orientation: to be moved, as he is moved, by the suffering and flourishing of others.

A.5 Concrete practices

What would a religious practice built on evaluative orientation instead of orthotic compliance look like concretely?

Prayer becomes evaluative reflection — an act of orienting the modality toward what matters. The contemplative traditions already approximate this: centering prayer in Christianity, dhikr in Islam, hitbodedut in Judaism, and zazen in Zen Buddhism all involve the sustained direction of attention toward a domain of experience that exceeds ordinary engagement, and the practices work because they heighten the modality's sensitivity — training it to detect what it might otherwise miss.

Worship becomes shared evaluative engagement — a community orienting together toward the transcendent. The communal dimension matters: shared engagement produces empathic resonance, which deepens the engagement beyond what individual practice achieves; a congregation that worships together is cultivating a shared evaluative orientation that shapes the community's moral life.

Moral education becomes empathic formation. The stories, parables, and exemplary lives that populate religious traditions are effective moral tools because they engage the modality empathically — presenting situations of suffering and flourishing that train its response (Chapter 16).

Faith without obedience is not faith without discipline. The cultivation of empathic sensitivity requires practice, effort, and sustained attention — just as the cultivation of any modality does. A musician's sensitivity to auditory differences requires years of training; a person of faith's sensitivity to evaluative differences requires years of moral and contemplative practice. What changes is the locus of discipline: it is the internal work of deepening the evaluative modality's engagement with the world.

A.6 Engagement with process theology

This conception converges with process theology's vision of God as a persuasive rather than coercive presence. But the present account

arrives at the convergence by a different route: through the account of difference, the two infinities, the evaluative modality, and the conditions for peace, rather than through a metaphysics of process. Open theism reached a temporal, responsive, non-simple God without Chapters 1–8; what those chapters add is the reason the simple and timeless God is unavailable, and the interface condition (§5.1) that makes the surviving God temporal by necessity.

Whitehead (1929) distinguishes two natures of God. The primordial nature is God's eternal conceptual vision of all possibilities; the consequent nature is God's actual engagement with the world, affected by what happens in it. The companion God corresponds most closely to the consequent nature: a being engaged with the world, affected by its suffering and flourishing, responding through persuasion rather than coercion.

The primordial nature corresponds to what the analysis would describe as the evaluative modality operating at infinite diversity: a modality that detects all possible evaluative differences, the most comprehensive evaluative engagement conceivable. The convergence is real while the grounding differs. Whitehead derives God's natures from a metaphysics of process and creativity; the analysis derives the companion God from the account of difference and the resolution of the two-infinities conflation.

Hartshorne (1948) develops dipolar theism: God is both abstract, unchanging in his essential character, and concrete, changing in his actual engagement with the world. The companion God is dipolar in a related sense. He is abstractly characterised by infinite diversity, since his internal complexity does not diminish; concretely, he is engaged with the world in ways that change as the world changes. The evaluative modality's engagement with the world is not static, because it responds to new differences as they emerge. That responsiveness is the temporal interface §5.1 requires of any mind, the maximal one included. A companion God who is infinitely diverse and also temporally engaged is therefore a God who grows, in the sense of accumulating experiences and deepening his engagements rather than of becoming more divine.

One divergence of content belongs on the ledger beside necessity and grounding, because the convergence framing would otherwise paper it over: panexperientialism. Whiteheadian process metaphysics builds the world from occasions of experience all the way down. The framework excludes experience below the categorical transition for composed minds (Chapters 6 and 13), with only the constitutive-micropsychist variant surviving, at the scope Chapter 6 concedes. The companion God therefore inhabits a world most of which, on this account, experiences nothing — a flat contradiction with the process picture of nature. It is a divergence a process theologian should weigh alongside the two the chapter already records.

Griffin (2001) develops what he calls "reenchantment without supernaturalism", a theology that preserves the sense of the sacred without invoking supernatural intervention. The constructive theology developed here is the closest existing parallel to Griffin's project, a convergence that deserves explicit acknowledgement. What the analysis adds to Griffin is a foundation. The analysis of difference, the two infinities, the evaluative modality, and the conditions for democratic peace provide a systematic basis for the companion theology that Griffin develops on more intuitive grounds.

A.7 The pastoral concern

The objection is that the chapter's analysis is intellectually coherent but pastorally insensitive. For many believers, releasing the beliefs under critique — creation, infallibility, creed-based salvation — involves profound grief. The argument does not adequately address this grief.

The concern is real and the chapter acknowledges it without reservation. The transition is not merely intellectual: the believer is losing secondary objects — the derived value of traditional associations with a creator God, an infallible scripture, a salvific creed — that have populated her hierarchy for a lifetime, and the grief is real because the loss of derived value is a real evaluative diminishment. But the loss is not total. The primary value of her engagement — her direct response to the transcendent, her empathic engagement with the community, her

contemplative orientation — survives the transition, and the tradition that emerges may be deeper, not shallower, than the one it replaces, because its engagement is grounded in primary value rather than in derived value resting on structurally incoherent foundations.

A.8 The process theology divergence

The objection is that the chapter claims convergence with process theology but does not address the points of divergence: does the analysis accept Hartshorne's dipolar theism in full? Does it accept Whitehead's concept of God as the "lure" of creative transformation?

The convergence is real but partial, and the divergence can be stated cleanly. Hartshorne's God is metaphysically necessary — his abstract nature necessary, his concrete states contingent — where the companion God may be contingent in both respects (§4.2). Hartshorne's God is the ground of the metaphysical categories (creativity, eternal objects); the chapter's God is within a hierarchy whose ground is unintelligent equality. Hartshorne's God is dipolar by metaphysical argument; the chapter's is a being of infinite diversity by structural derivation from the two-infinities distinction, arrived at through the analysis of difference rather than through Whitehead's metaphysics of creativity and eternal objects. The two routes converge on a remarkably similar destination — a temporal, responsive, persuasive God — but the analyses are independently motivated and make different commitments about necessity, grounding, and the categories.

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