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TOPICS: Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, the sacred, the numinous, mysterium tremendum, total surrender, union with God, Energeia, Eros, das ganz Andere, the wholly other, Via Purgativa, twelve step program, illumination.

Common misspellings and variants of the name Glenn F. Chesnut: Glenn Chesnut / Glen F. Chesnut / Glenn F. Chestnut / Glenn Ch

The Seven Faces of the Experience of the Divine Reality

Rudolf Otto and the Idea of the Holy, Part 2

Glenn F. Chesnut

Rudolf Otto, the nature of our encounter with the Holy

In ancient Rome, the word *numen* referred to the power of the divine as such. All the gods and goddesses and nature spirits within the Roman pantheon — Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Silvanus, Vesta, the Lares and Penates, and so on — were simply different expressions of this single mysterious power. Rudolf Otto took the word *numen* and used it to coin a new term, "the numinous," which he used to refer to that mysterious power. This was what the sacred was, at its heart, the power of all the gods and goddesses and spiritual forces which human beings had worshiped throughout history. Or better put, when the power of the numinous came in from the outside and intruded into our everyday world, we human beings felt it and experienced it as the holy and the sacred.

In his book, *The Idea of the Holy*,¹ Otto made a long, detailed list of six different basic kinds of ways in which the various religions of the worlds had spoken about the numinous. I have added a seventh motif to the end of Otto's list, one which I believe is also important: the idea of the sacred as a force producing illumination and enlightenment. It should also be included in this list, not only because it appears in religions all around the world in a great variety of different forms, but also because it will

help us to understand the idea of God as the x-factor in conversion, where God appears as the divine power which enlightens us and produces authentic psychic change.

1. Tremendum: the feeling of awe and dread

The numinous is above all the *mysterium tremendum*. It is a mysterious presence which in its fullness can make us tremble (Latin *tremo*) with dread. In all our encounters with the sacred, we will at the very least feel a strong sense of *total awe*. As we enter more deeply into the sacred realm, we may *stand aghast* at the prospect of going into it any more deeply, and in fact we may turn and "run back out of the experience" in *panic fear* and *phobic terror*. Nevertheless, over the long-term process of spiritual growth, we become progressively able to actually take delight and find pleasure in experiences of the numinous.²

This is not the same thing at all as the artificial fears and anxieties which some religious systems attempt to indoctrinate into their members. In religions of this sort, the leaders, in order to maintain their power and authority, devise hundreds of complex mechanical rules which they insist that everyone must follow. Members become terrified in a manner which is very different from an authentic encounter with the sacred, because they are led to believe that if they violate even a single one of these arbitrary and absolutist rules, their souls will suffer in eternal hellfire, or they will be reincarnated as worms or frogs, or they will suffer some other painful divine punishment. This distortion of the authentic experience of the *mysterium tremendum* can work its way into any kind of spiritual system.

It requires a certain kind of neurotic authoritarian mentality to make and enforce these rules, or to passively accept them and attempt to obey them, but this is a perverted kind of pseudo-religiosity which has appeared over and over again in human history. The authoritarian mentality — both in the case of those who make the hundreds of rules and in the case of those who attempt to follow them — is in fact an attempt to avoid the authentic experience of the sacred and "domesticate it" in a way that gives us an illusion of control over God and the sacred. We come to believe (falsely) that if we can work out all the "correct rules" and follow them perfectly, God will be compelled to grant us whatever we want, and we will have gained control over him.

The real sacred power is so overwhelmingly powerful, however, that there is no way that a human being could ever gain control of it in this fashion, so people who become involved in legalistic religions of this sort invariably end up worshiping a fantasy God created in their own imaginations. This imaginary higher power can give us a comforting illusion of being in control over our own lives — we convince ourselves that all we have to do is follow a set of mechanical rules — and if we can rise to leadership positions, it can give us the egotistical thrill of control over the lives of others, who will be forced to obey us blindly. The problem is that, in the process of freeing ourselves from authentic awe at the overwhelming and uncontrollable power of the *mysterium tremendum*, we also find ourselves no longer able to share in its healing and power. The imaginary rules of an imaginary God cannot save anyone.

All spiritual systems can fall into this trap, if people are not perpetually vigilant. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the twelve step program — which had gained its enormous healing power during the mid-twentieth century from its rebellion against the authoritarians and the rule-makers, and by its demonstration of the true route to an authentic experience of the sacred — found increasing numbers of members who were trying to create just as many arbitrary and mechanical rules for the twelve step program as there were in the legalistic religious systems from which they had fled. Now the authoritarian mentality was expressed in the neurotic belief that saying the wrong words at the beginning of a twelve step meeting, or allowing the wrong person to speak to a conference, or reading something which was not "conference approved" (i.e., dictated by the authority figures who, in their blind egotism, claimed "to know better" than everyone else), would send people back to drinking or drugging or codependency or gambling sprees, or whatever the compulsion was which that twelve program was designed to deal with.

Why would people fall for that kind of obvious nonsense? Any sensible person can see that, in A.A. for example, parroting exactly the right phrases at the beginning of a meeting is not going to get an alcoholic sober. If only it were so simple and easy! Alcoholics do not get sober by magically repeating certain words or by blindly turning their lives over to the complete control of egotistical authority figures, whether these figures are called delegates or service representatives or members of the intergroup committee or whatever. A domineering authority figure is a domineering authority figure, whether you call the person a priest, a cardinal, a pastor, a rabbi, an imam, or an A.A. delegate to New York. But there are lazy people, searching for the easier and softer way, who will grasp at this kind of mechanical nonsense in order to avoid taking

authentic responsibility for their own lives, and in order to flee from an authentic encounter with the *mysterium tremendum*. And once these people start volunteering for a role of blind and servile obedience, there will also unfortunately be other men and women who will gladly and gleefully sit around pontificating and making up rules for them to follow, because being "the stage director" gives the prideful and arrogant an enormous ego thrill.

These kinds of imaginary fears and anxieties over breaking rules drawn up by pompous authority figures have nothing at all to do with the authentic experience of dread and awe in the face of the sacred, which is a force of nature itself. When the experience of the sacred bursts in upon us, it confronts us with something which we could never ever manipulate or control. Until we can learn how to live in the awareness of the *mysterium tremendum* without coming to pieces psychologically, we will never be able to truly live.

The real problem is that, even after we relieve newcomers from the fear that violating some mechanical rule will doom their souls for all eternity, the real power of the sacred will still loom before their eyes. Some of us are so scared of God and holy things when we first enter the twelve step program, that we will do anything to avoid praying to God or talking about God at all. A certain percentage of the newcomers who claim to be atheists are not atheists at all, at least down in lower levels of their minds. They spend large amounts of time trying to devise intellectual reasons for doubting God's existence, up at the top of their minds, in the attempt to quiet their overpowering fear of God down in the bottom of their hearts. To put it very crudely, an awful lot of people who claim to be atheists, are not atheists but wimps and cowards.

No newcomer is totally immune to this fear. At the beginning, whenever we start to have a powerful experience of the numinous, our natural tendency is to become frightened and pull back out. Proceeding more deeply into the spiritual life means confronting a series of additional things which will frighten us in a way which goes far deeper than any this-worldly fear. It takes a long time before we become able to tolerate long periods of immersion in the experience of the numinous presence.

Nevertheless, I know people in the twelve step program who are some of the most courageous people I have ever met in my life. They have managed to cope with and survive catastrophes in their personal lives, which would have crushed and destroyed most human beings. I suspect that the reason why they are able to manage this-worldly fears so successfully is because they have been schooled, in their spiritual lives, in

dealing with experiences of dread and awe and terror which surpass any kind of thisworldly fear.

Why would we want to experience the holy at all, if it is so frightening? It should not be forgotten that we human beings can learn to turn certain kinds of fear into pleasure. We can learn to love going on roller coasters, jumping with parachutes from airplanes, racing on horseback, and riding fast motorcycles. The hint of danger is a vital part of the thrill. Real spiritual people (as opposed to the phoneys) are not stuffy, and the real spiritual life is never boring.

2. *Majestas:* the call to total surrender

Even in the modern world, when we speak of the *majesty* of a great king, or a noble lord, or grand lady, some of the ancient numinous feeling still clings to this word. The sacred demands our *respect*. We can ridicule it or make fun of it only for so long as we can avoid having to actually experience it, and can keep well away from any authentic contact with it.

In its majesty, the sacred requires my *surrender* to it, and the *submission* of my own egotism. The Arabic word *islam* means surrender to the will of Allah in that fashion. The heart of Islam as a religion is this acknowledging of the overpowering majesty of God, who stands above all things and rules all things. Christianity and Judaism likewise proclaim a God before whom all creation will have to bow the knee at the end of time, when God will become all in all.

In the twelve step program, we are forced to learn that "either God is everything or else He is nothing." The psychiatrist Harry M. Tiebout, who was one of the first psychiatrists to take the twelve step program seriously, wrote a famous journal article with the title, "Surrender Versus Compliance in Therapy: With Special Reference to Alcoholism." Tiebout was struggling for words which would describe what he had noted in his work with alcoholics. Alcoholics who came for treatment could sometimes be totally "compliant." By that he meant that they were polite and listened and did what they were told, but they were still unable to stop drinking (and there was no real progress in the other parts of their psychotherapy either). No progress was made until something mysterious happened, which Tiebout called "surrendering." Alcoholics who *surrendered* turned themselves totally over — mind, heart, body, and soul — in a way that went far

beyond merely following rules and passively listening to authorities and experts lecturing at you and preaching to you. At the spiritual level, they finally became willing to acknowledge the *majestas* of the numinous power, the overpowering demand which the numinous power made on us, to become part of something much bigger than ourselves. This total surrender then liberated them to experience the sacred at all sorts of other levels, and that in turn allowed the divine healing power to actually enter into their hearts for the first time.

In some of the spiritual disciplines within what is called the mystical tradition (St. Denis the Areopagite, the Hindu philosopher Shankara, the Sufi mystics in Islam, and so on) this idea is taken much further: believers are asked to submerge their own self-identity so completely that they become a part of the numinous themselves. Mystical systems of this sort speak of attaining a "union with God" (or with the supreme divine reality) in which there is a total annihilation of the ego and the self, to such an extent that I lose all consciousness of being a separate self. I am God, in the same way that all is God.

It should also be noted, however, that there are many other spiritual traditions in which any talk of "becoming one with God" in this kind of fashion is regarded as not only silly but in fact blasphemous. They tell us that this kind of language lessens God and attempts to pull him down to our level. Rudolf Otto, however, points out that this language, used properly, does not at all imply a lessening of God's *majestas* but the reverse. Union with God in the mystical sense comes only when our awareness of the majesty of God finally grows so great that it totally overwhelms us with its numinous power.

Nevertheless, rather than become hopelessly entangled in this argument (which has been going on for thousands of years) over whether a human being can enter into this sort of union with God and the divine (where different religious traditions come to such completely different conclusions) Rudolf Otto says that it is sufficient to state that in all higher spiritual teachings, the follower must at the very least ultimately learn to say of the numinous reality, "thy will, not mine, be done."

This phrase was originally spoken by Jesus, when he was praying to God in the garden of Gethsemane immediately before his arrest. Luke 22:42 says that he prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Matthew 26:39 gives Jesus' prayer in closely similar words, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." This simple

prayer of surrender to the divine *majestas* then became one of the central themes in the A.A. Big Book, which said that this must be part of every prayer to God: "How can I best serve Thee — Thy will (not mine) be done."

3. Energeia: power, energy, love and Eros

It is strange, but a good many of the philosophers and theologians who have talked about God and the divine over the course of history, have portrayed the higher power as something static, as some sort of absolute which remains unchanging for all eternity. The higher power they describe may be grand and glorious, but it dwells in a realm where there is no emotion or feeling. We may admire this eternal and unchanging absolute from a distance, and look on it with awe, but there is in fact no logical and coherent way that we can combine that kind of idea of God with the idea of a God who reaches out to each of us with acts of grace, where each individual act of grace is different and tailored to exactly where I am or you are, at that particular moment in time.

Rudolf Otto was originally inspired to begin his phenomenological study of the idea of the holy by his research on the philosopher Jakob Friedrich Fries,⁷ who said that our awareness of God was an experience of the Infinite and the Absolute. That implied the traditional static concept of the supreme being, the one which had appeared in the writings of so many other philosophers down through history.

But when Otto looked at the actual experiences of religious people, all around the world and at all periods of history, he discovered that the sacred was not experienced in that fashion at all. The numinous reality was always in practice — at the actual phenomenological level — apprehended as something which was full of force, vital passion, and *energy*. To most of the peoples of the earth, at all periods of history, the sacred was seen as something that could *act* in this world, and act with overwhelming power.

When we look at their stories and rituals and instructions for actually living the spiritual life, we observe the numinous reality being portrayed as capable of passionate *love*. At the lowest, crudest level, the myths of the ancient Greeks spoke of the amorous affairs of the god Zeus; in India the Hindu religious tales of Krishna's exploits tell of his erotic exploits with the cow-maidens.

But the divine capacity for love can also be spoken of, in some spiritual traditions, at a higher level, such as when the New Testament speaks of a God "who so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten son" (John 3:16). The mystical spiritual writings of St. John of the Cross, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Teresa of Ávila, and Hannah Hurnard — spiritual authors writing at all periods of history — describe the spiritual life as a love affair between God and the human soul.⁸

I have chosen the word *energeia* to describe the idea of the sacred in this section of Otto's book, because it links into one of the most important themes of this book. Prior to the twentieth century, western theology and philosophy usually spoke of God as a static and unchanging Absolute, who was totally divorced from the world of time and change. God was the "Unmoved Mover," who served as a passive attractive force, putting the world into motion by pulling it towards himself as the ideal goal of all processes. But the revolutionary realignment of western thought produced by the discoveries of twentieth century science forces us to develop a different kind of concept of God, one which sees God as an active and dynamic force, exploding with energy, change, and continuous creativity, presiding over a universe which is likewise continually dynamic and changing and immersed in the flow of time and process — a universe peopled, at least on the planet we live on, by human beings who, by their free choices and driving passions, enliven the universe with the same perpetual creativity and blossoming of newness.

There are different kinds of energy, which is very important to note. All of the physical energy in our universe is derived from the explosion of energy which we call the Big Bang, which took place around 13.7 billion years ago. The natural sciences study that kind of physical energy, including all the natural forces of attraction and repulsion.

But there is another kind of energy, which also involves both attraction and repulsion, which operates as a kind of "higher harmonic" of the kind of energy which the scientists study. This different kind of energy, which operates at the level of higher meaning, is love. Even though speaking of love gives us no help at all when we are talking about rocks and electrons and galaxies and the other sorts of things which natural scientists study, human beings understand (and are motivated at all times by) this kind of love, so we have to talk about this other kind of attractive energy field in order to make any real sense of human behavior at all. "Love" as a kind of energy is only relevant to beings which have a higher consciousness, but it is an essential part of their makeup, and hence is a real part of the universe.

The ancient Greeks spoke about three different kinds of love, a distinction which is extremely useful to make. God can act towards human beings with all three of these different kinds of love: The Bible tells us that God wants to be our friend (*philia*), and that he will treat us with $agap\hat{e}$, a kind of dependable and compassionate loving kindness, a "welcome home love" which will express itself in concrete help. But Christian mysticism goes beyond that, and says that God also desires us with a divine $er\hat{o}s$, where he wants us for his own.

As the contemporary Irish-American writer Father Andrew Greeley puts it in a whole series of interesting novels (over fifty of them at last count), ¹⁰ the divine Eros continually showers us with countless gifts in truly exuberant fashion. One galaxy would be an incredible thing to create, but the divine Eros creates millions. A single flower would be an extraordinary thing to create, but the divine Eros scatters them everywhere, dandelions and wild roses and honeysuckle and all the marvelous tiny little blossoms we see scattered through the grass in Spring. And the divine Eros uses every wile in its power to gently and subtly seduce us into believing that we are the ones who are trying to find God, when in fact it is the other way around.

What makes Father Greeley's novels especially interesting is his portrayal of the feminine aspects of God. The preceding Christian mystical tradition liked to quote from the Song of Songs in the Old Testament and portray the human soul as feminine, while portraying the divine Eros as a masculine love. Greeley however reverses this, and says that the divine Eros is not masculine at all, but the kind of feminine love which young women know so well — the art of acting in ways which make the young man of her choice believe that he is the one who chose to pursue her, where the young man is often filled with great fear and trembling at the thought that she might reject him, little realizing that it was her (the young woman) who actually chose him and not vice versa.

This is one aspect of the ancient figure of God as "Sancta Sophia," Lady Wisdom, whom we meet in the Bible at various points, as in Proverbs 8:1, 23-25; 9:1-6.

Does not Wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?

At the first, before the beginning of the earth, when there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth.

Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
from the highest places in town,
"You that are ignorant, turn in here
Lay aside ignorance and live,
and walk in the way of insight."

In the vernacular, Sophia (Lady Wisdom) is sometimes referred to as Mother Nature or the creative and healing power of nature, but she is also identified in the Christian tradition with the Holy Spirit, and sometimes even with the indwelling power of Christ. She is also essentially the same power as is represented in the figure of Our Mother Mary as the Gate of Heaven. The huge domed church of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople (modern Istanbul) was for almost a thousand years the largest Christian church building in the entire world.

The numinous reality can display other emotions as well, such as joy, anger and grief. ¹³ In Alcoholics Anonymous, people regularly report that the higher power they have discovered also has a well-developed sense of *humor*. Sometimes for example he plays little tricks on us, they say, to get us laughing at ourselves until we are laughing so hard that we truly come to realize how foolish one of our old destructive behaviors actually was — and in that very moment, we become freed from its deadly power.

This is a place where we need to ignore all the philosophers who have attempted to turn God into a static, unchanging Absolute, devoid of all emotion and feeling, and pay attention to what ordinary men and women have discovered — people from all parts of the globe and all periods of history — as they went about the day-to-day business of actually leading the spiritual life. A careful phenomenological study of the idea of the holy, like the one Rudolf Otto made, makes this clear. Learning to feel the power of the energy flowing forth, in God's continually outpouring love for us, is one of the most important parts of the experience of the holy at its higher level.

4. Alienum: the divine abyss lying behind the surface illusion of understandability

The sacred is a *mysterium*, Rudolf Otto said, a mysterious reality which cannot be talked about in the same kind of language that we use in speaking of houses and chairs and cabbages and nuclear reactors and space missiles and choosing the best laundry detergent and what the new duties are that my boss gave me at work.

But that negative description does not go nearly far enough. *The numinous confronts my soul as the completely Alien*. We are struck with blank wonder, numb amazement, or total astonishment. A chill runs down our spines.

In Rudolf Otto's German phrase the numinous reality is *das ganz Andere*, the "Wholly Other." Karl Barth borrowed that phrase from Otto, and pointed out its consequence: "you cannot speak of God by speaking of man in a loud voice." God (or Allah or Brahman) is not like a human being, except that he is just more intelligent and more powerful and in more places. Instead, the numinous reality is *totally different* from anything in this world.

When I move to the very edge of the structures of my own mental world, and look "over the edge," I may attempt to describe what is there as *das Nichts*, the infinite Nothingness which is the existential abyss. In one sense it is correct to say that this is a No-thing-ness, because the numinous reality is not a thing in the way that the things of this world are things. But it is not truly an empty void, because it is the surrounding presence of something totally alien but nevertheless there, which stretches out forever.¹⁴

All of the plethora of different atheistic systems which began to be developed in the western world in the 1840's were attempts to domesticate the universe, and turn all of our human experiences into things which we could explain and control. Human beings wanted to be their own gods, and turn everything into this-worldly experiences, which thereby became "comfortable" and manageable.

One of the major points which this present book was making in its first three chapters was that, paradoxically, we cannot turn even this-worldly experiences into "safe" and totally explainable this-worldly experiences. Everywhere we turn, gaps appear in our explanatory schemes, fissures open up in the seamless façade of logical interconnections, and through the gaps and rents we see the completely Alien lying below the fragile surface of our definitions and scientific laws.

When I look around my study, I can focus on the comforting illusion of normality: my desk, the bookcases filled with books, the walls and ceiling of the room, grass and trees which I can see through my windows. And when I do so, I can comfort myself with the illusion of things which are solid and stable and unchanging. But all of this is no more than a tissue laid over an alien abyss stretching forever, and my life (with all its schemes and plans) is no more than a tiny chip laid on top of this insubstantial fabric.

And yet herein lies salvation and healing. Once I truly see how frail and fragile the surface of "normality" actually is, I can also see that it is plastic and malleable. I can learn to use the power of the underlying Alien reality to take apart the distorted and destructive ideas which dominate my life, and remake the surface layer of my world so that I can live triumphantly and successfully. Instead of frantically trying to patch and cover over every rift and tear in this surface layer, I can learn to relax and float upon the surface of the infinite ocean of the eternal Mystery which lies below me.

This was the secret of the New Thought movement — Emmet Fox, James Allen, and so on — which had such a powerful effect upon the thinkers who put together the twelve step program. I can change my world in dramatic and sweeping fashion by changing the way I think about my world.

The alien quality of the numinous may send a shiver down my spine and raise up the hairs on the back of my neck, but it is the power of New Meaning which can rescue my soul when all the meaning which used to structure my life seems to have fallen into the fires of destruction. It is what Paul Tillich, in *The Courage to Be*, called the power of the New Being, and what Viktor Frankl (a survivor of the Nazi death camps) called the power of meaning (*Logos*) to rescue our spirits and keep the flame of our humanity alive in even the most desperate of circumstances. Das ganz Andere, the "Wholly Other," tears apart the fabric of our old lives, but contains a power which will give birth to a new and better life, as long as we give it its power by not attempting to domesticate it.

5. Fascinans: salvation itself as living in the continual presence of the sacred

In spite of the fear and awe which one feels before its sheer otherness and its overwhelming majesty and power, the experience of the numinous nevertheless fascinates us so deeply that it draws us in. People pursue the spiritual life because they want to drink more and more at the spring of this experience.

In the higher religions, it is found that living in the presence of the numinous in the right way conveys a sense of peace and overwhelming joy and gratitude. It gives power to us far beyond the normal human limitations. It gives a sense of being loved — in spite of anything that we have done, or have not done, or may not ever do — with a total trustworthiness and dependability and an infinite well of compassion and mercy.

In the highest and truest form of the spiritual life, as this is described in all of the higher religions of the world, living in the continual presence of the numinous *is salvation itself*. Experiencing the numinous (here and now in this life) is in fact the blessedness or beatitude that is the real spiritual goal. This is "being saved" or "experiencing Nirvana" or "achieving satori."

This is also what is meant by the Christian teaching of salvation by grace alone and faith alone, rather than by works of the law. There is no way I can feel the experience of the sacred and the holy simply by following a set of mechanical and arbitrary regulations. I cannot achieve this goal by doing things like not going to movies on Sunday, not eating meat on Fridays, not harming the sacred cows wandering through the streets, not eating pork, wearing my hair or my clothes in a certain way, following all the rules devised by overenthusiastic and authoritarian A.A. delegates, or anything like that. I also cannot automatically feel the experience of the sacred by donating food and clothes to the poor, showing sympathy towards someone who is grieving, or taking faithful and responsible care of my family. The experience of the sacred is simply something "wholly other" from these concerns. ¹⁶

On the other hand, it has been found repeatedly that people cannot be in close contact with the realm of the numinous when their minds are totally taken over by resentments that will not go away, by unrelenting self-pity, by worldly fears that gnaw and nag at them continuously, and by anxieties that keep them perpetually on edge. Once people are far enough along in the spiritual life, they take great pains to act as morally as they can, not because they are afraid that God will not love them if they do not do so, and not because they believe that God will reward them for acting morally, but because they have found that only by acting morally can they keep resentment, self-pity, fear, and anxiety from blocking them from the full experience of the sacred. There is a kind of paradoxical quasi-selfishness to this, because it is only by acting in a totally *unselfish* manner that I can gain real peace and joy and the experience of the numinous *for myself*.

6. Augustus: the power which condemns us but then washes us clean

The sacred represents the power of what Rudolf Otto called the *augustus*, which he understood as a kind of numinous value which makes itself regarded as the supreme center of all worth. It is that which commands our ultimate reverence. He said that in the higher religions which have well-developed moral systems, this is what is being schematized in their ethical precepts. The numinous in this aspect is what the ancient Greek philosopher Plato called the *bonum ipsum*, the Good Itself.¹⁷ It is our awareness of that ultimate transcendent goodness which creates the criterion for the basic distinction between good and evil.

In this section of *The Idea of the Holy* however, where Otto is talking about the *augustus*, he only talks in detail about one aspect of this way of apprehending the holy, that is, the holy as the vision of the *bonum ipsum* which condemns the evil in our hearts and deeds, but also paradoxically washes us clean and heals us. So I am going to add a seventh section (under the heading *illuminatio*) where we will look at the important part he left out, which is the way this vision of the *bonum ipsum* also shines its light on goodness and beauty, in a way which makes them so attractive and desirable that we become willing to turn our lives over to the pursuit of the new goodness and beauty which has been revealed to us.

For now, however, let us confine ourselves to what Otto said about the sacred as that feeling of the *augustus* which at first seems only to condemn us. In the presence of the sacred — because it contains within itself an all-surpassing goodness and beauty — all the things inside our souls which are evil will appear to us as things of horror and total revulsion.

Our ability to sense the sacred in this aspect is what creates the *scintilla conscientiae*, the little spark of what we might call deep conscience, which is buried down in the bottom of our souls. We are not talking here about the Freudian superego, which is made up of introjected parental and societal admonitions, and is essentially no more than a set of arbitrary guilt-laden rules. We are looking here at something far more primordial, which has nothing to do with the hundreds of rules and arbitrary should's and ought's which various authority figures tried to impress upon us when we were children. The *scintilla conscientiae* (the divine "spark of conscience" within our souls) is based on

something much deeper, that is, the ability (which all human beings share) of being able to understand the infinite qualitative difference between true evil and true good.

Since we cannot avoid being aware of the presence of the sacred all around us, at the subconscious level at least, after we have done something that we know is enormously evil, we feel dirty and unclean. Pontius Pilate and Lady Macbeth both tried compulsive hand washing, but this never really works. People who have done something which they know was dirty and perverted, and a betrayal of all decency and all their self-respect, will sometimes go home afterwards and try to spend an hour in the shower, scrubbing themselves with soap over and over and trying to wash off the sense of being stained and fouled which continues to cling to them.

Sometimes, Otto said in this section of *The Idea of the Holy*, we may feel almost sick at our stomachs, in a kind of inner spiritual nausea at the memory of the ugly deeds which we did. We feel somehow that if we could "throw it all up," we could somehow get the poisonous and damning awareness out of our systems.

We remember Jean-Paul Sartre's novel, *La Nausée*, which came out in 1938, and quickly became one of the defining works of the early twentieth-century atheistic existentialist movement. Even though we try to deny the existence of the sacred, we will still feel its presence at some level, although usually it will be an extremely negative feeling. The atheistic existentialists saw the sacred ground of being, but denied its sacredness and claimed that it was only an abyss of nothingness. Trying to deal with it that way, what they could not truly explain was why, if it was only nothingness, their immediate reaction was to draw back in nausea and a sense of pervasive guilt. Nearly all of the atheistic existentialists spoke of the feelings of continual floating guilt which still plagued their lives. They tried to explain the guilt away by claiming that it was only an "existential anxiety," a natural part of human existence itself, which had to be resolutely ignored and rejected. But they never could get rid of the feelings of guilt that way.

We can run from the feeling of the sacred, but we cannot hide. This is why any good spiritual system requires some means of *atonement*, some way of "washing ourselves clean" spiritually, some method of admitting or confessing our wrongs, some way to make amends when possible, or some other kind of way to take away the sense of dirtiness, pollution, shame, and humiliation.¹⁸ The English word atonement means quite literally at-one-ment, healing and cleansing our relationship with the sacred, so that we can be "at one with it" again, able to immerse ourselves fully into the feeling of the sacred again without continually wanting to throw up or flee in horror.

There is a great paradox here. When people first begin the spiritual life, they fear the experience of the sacred because they feel so morally unclean, yet the only thing which can truly wash us clean is the numinous power itself. Only the force of the Good Itself can overpower that which is truly evil. But that means we first have to appear before this sacred power while we are still in our dirtiness before the process of washing us clean can even begin. And we have to be willing to remain in the presence of the holy while it cleanses us, in spite of our feelings of guilt and nausea and dirtiness.

This is why a good deal of time needs to be spent on reassuring newcomers to the spiritual life that the force of the numinous will not destroy them, no matter how it makes them feel at first. Instead, it is going to wash them clean and heal them. They need to be told over and over, that God accepts us just as we are, and that God loves us long before we learn to love back. The self-hatred and self-loathing which is created by my sense of guilt over the truly evil things I have done, is part of the evil which needs to be washed away. But I have to confront it courageously, and allow myself to feel it, before it can be washed away.

What people do not seem to realize is, that God's response to finding a human soul that can be cleaned is like that of an antique dealer who discovers an old table at a garage sale, covered with peeling paint, and filthy and dirty, and realizes that it is in fact a fine Louis-the-whatever piece of antique furniture that can be restored perfectly. But every human soul at bottom is the little child of God, made in his image, ¹⁹ so none of us are truly irredeemable, and all of us can be turned into something of infinite worth and value by God's restorative techniques, even if it takes months to begin seeing the fine lines of God's original handiwork beneath all the accumulated grime and cheap, garish paint. So God does not mind me appearing before him, still dirtied with shameful deeds, but on the contrary is delighted to see me, as long as I allow him to start healing and restoring me, one little step at a time, and at a pace that I can tolerate.

Nevertheless, if I wish to continue standing in the presence of the holy, I must begin doing some work myself right away, in order to cleanse my life. There is a synergism at work: only the power of grace can save me, but even the power of grace cannot save me unless I am willing to do my own small part to help it. And if I wish to continue in the spiritual life, I must continue this cleansing process at deeper and deeper levels. In the twelve step program, this is what is being done in the fourth through tenth steps, where I begin in the fourth step by identifying my character defects, then confess them to God and another human being in the fifth step, and next ask God to start freeing me from their

power. When I finally get to the tenth step, I learn that I must continue this process for all the rest of my life on earth, because as I "peel the onion" and get down to deeper and deeper parts of my being, I will continually find new levels where I need cleansing and healing. Once I am past the stage, however, of being a raw newcomer, I will learn that the process of continuing to work on my soul and my character is in fact a joy and a triumph. No matter how good my life becomes, I can always make it even better, going on (as the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18) "from glory to glory," *apo doxês eis doxan*, from one eye-opening revelation of new life and light to the next. Walking this journey into greater and greater insight and wisdom, with new depths of happiness opening before me without end, produces an extraordinary feeling of joy.

In traditional Christian mysticism, this journey was called the Purgative Way (*via purgativa*), the cleansing of the ingrained evil in the soul. The great mystics like St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross made clear that we had to work at that part of our spiritual lives in order to obtain the higher spiritual gifts, as we progressed to walking the Illuminative Way (*via illuminativa*) and ultimately the Unitive Way (*via unitiva*), where God's spirit and the power of the divine love came to totally fill our hearts.

As St. Teresa said, in the *Interior Castle*, when talking about the first of the seven sets of mansions (the seven stages of the spiritual life), which is the entryway into the spiritual life:²⁰

You must note that the light which comes from the palace occupied by the King hardly reaches these first mansions at all ... because there are so many bad things — snakes and vipers and poisonous creatures — which have come in with the soul, that they prevent it from seeing the light. It is as if one were to enter a place flooded by sunlight with his eyes so full of dust that he could hardly open them. The room itself is light enough, but he cannot enjoy the light because he is prevented from doing so by these wild beasts and animals, which force him to close his eyes to everything but themselves.

But we must pass through St. Teresa's seven sets of mansions in order, and this is where we must begin, at the first one, where we are still horrified at our own evil and wickedness, but must begin to use the power of prayer and divine grace in order to cleanse ourselves of the character defects which have made us think and act in that kind of destructive, dirty, resentful, and fear-centered way. This is the beginning of the *via purgativa* (the cleansing way) in St. Teresa's teaching about the spiritual life.

In the section of *The Idea of the Holy* where Rudolf Otto discussed the holy as the *augustus*, he began by talking about this, the first of the traditional Three Ways: the *via purgativa*, where the encounter with the sacred fills us with horror at our own evil. But he also explained why we had to walk this way before we could begin walking the *via unitiva*, the Unitive Way, where our souls could be united with the God and the holy, and we could obtain *atonement* for our guilt by washing ourselves in the light of the holy, and once again become "one with God."

7. *Illuminatio:* inspiring us to pursue the true goal of the spiritual life

Once we recognize that what Rudolf Otto called the feeling of the *augustus* was what the Platonic tradition called the vision of the *bonum ipsum* — the sunlight of the spirit, which shows us all the goodness and beauty of the world, and the path to true serenity and "feeling good about ourselves" again — we realize that we must add a seventh section to his discussion of the human awareness of the holy and the numinous. Because in Plato, as we see in his parable of the cave, the Good Itself is the power of divine light.²¹

Or as St. Teresa and the mystical tradition put it, there are three ways which we must follow in order to obtain true serenity and peace. In between the *via purgativa* (where we see the evil lurking within our souls and begin to cleanse it) and the *via unitiva* (where we atone for the evil deeds in our past and are allowed to become one with God again), there lies the *via illuminativa*, the Illuminative Way.

The vision of the sunlight of the spirit in Plato is an awareness of that ultimate transcendent goodness which creates the criterion for the basic distinction between good and evil. At first we feel a sense of guilt and condemnation, because our deeds have been such that we cannot bear to see them in the full light of day. That is the feeling of the sacred as the *augustus*, to use Rudolf Otto's terminology.

But it is not enough simply to see the wickedness of my old way of life. That is the problem with a good deal of religious preaching. People are harangued and condemned and told over and over that they are evil wrongdoers, but they are given no power to change. The human soul cannot be changed at its deepest level by preaching a negative. A true psychic change can only be produced when human beings are given positive motivation for thinking about the world in a different way. We must be inspired and

given a vision of something so wonderful and marvelous that we would be willing to do anything at all in order to obtain that kind of beauty and goodness of life.

We must see the sunlight of the spirit shining, not only on the dark side of the street, where we have been living, but also on the sunny side of the street, so that we can be motivated from within ourselves to walk over to that side of the street.

A.A. spirituality begins with the recognition that a practicing alcoholic will do anything at all to obtain alcohol. Alcohol is dearer to them than job, family, social approval, freedom, health, and even life itself. If you tell practicing alcoholics that you will lock them up if they continue drinking, they will continue to drink. If you tell practicing alcoholics that they will die if they continue to drink, they will continue to drink. To non-alcoholics, this is impossible to comprehend or imagine. How could human beings conceivably continue to drink when competent physicians (and elementary common sense) are telling them that they will be dead within a few weeks or months, from a heart attack or a stroke or liver failure, or something else of that sort? And yet that is exactly what real alcoholics do. Alcohol is their Higher Power, and they will sacrifice even life itself in order to persist in their drinking.

The only way to stop alcoholics from drinking permanently is to give them something so much better that they will voluntarily stop drinking. They will no longer want to drink. But nothing earthly will be big enough to do this. Only the vision of the sacred and the infinite itself will be great enough to overcome their desire for alcohol. And the same thing applies in all the other twelve step programs. We find people literally destroying themselves with narcotics, gambling, dangerous sexual addictions, food (because we can literally eat ourselves to death, and many food addicts actually do that), caretaking (because people in Al-Anon will tell you how they were driven to the point of suicide by their obsessive need to "save" other people), and inability to control their anger. They *know* that they are destroying themselves, yet in their despair, even then they cannot quit.

So we need to add a seventh section to our discussion of the sacred, where we talk about the way the sacred gives us saving insight, enlightenment, illumination, and a quality of luminosity that shines out in all the universe. We see this kind of light metaphor being used in religions all over the earth. The Buddha, we are told, grants us true enlightenment. The Dead Sea Scrolls tell us how to stop being Children of Darkness, and how to start becoming Children of Light. In a little Bible church in Marion, Indiana, I love to listen to Steve C. and Sister Neese strumming their guitars and

leading the congregation in a rousing rendition of "I saw the light, I saw the light, no more darkness, no more night" You can just feel the love in that little church, and Steve C. in particular will gladly tell you how the combination of A.A. and that church led him out of all the raging anger that had filled his soul after the horrors he had experienced as a foot soldier in the jungles of Vietnam — a rage that had led him down the path into alcohol and drugs, and had been destroying him.

The Navajos in Arizona and New Mexico arise at dawn, and chant sacred hymns while they scatter corn pollen as an offering to the rising sun, which is the symbol of the light which illumines all that is good and beautiful and harmonious. The Navajos do not talk about God in the Judeo-Christian sense, but instead use the word yo'zho' to refer to the saving power which they find in the experience of the sacred. Yo'zho' is a Navajo concept which takes several different English words to translate fully: it means beauty, harmony, the smooth natural flow of things, peace, and serenity, all viewed as a sacred and holy quality which we can sense and feel in the natural world around us — the mountains, the valleys, the deer, the sky, the clouds — and which we can also sense within ourselves, when we have attuned our emotions and attitudes to it. Their traditional prayers ask us to visualize this sacred beauty and harmony all around us: "Beauty in front of us, beauty behind us, beauty beside us." "Peace in front of us, peace behind us, peace beside us." What is important to note here however, is that in the offering to the rising sun, and in the campfires which they light to perform some of their most important rituals, they are using the light metaphor to symbolize the way that the experience of the sacred illumines their spirits and shows them the healing path.

In traditional western spirituality, when we enter the Cloud of Unknowing, the power of the sacred topples and dissolves all our old preconceptions and dismantles the framework of our old cognitive structure. New insights however begin to show us new ways of framing our basic thought structure. Sometimes this can take a long time. I may hear something at a twelve step meeting 453 times without understanding what people are telling me, and then suddenly, the 454th time, I suddenly understand what the words mean, and how they impinge on my life.

But receiving an insight into a new and different way in which I could live my life will not, in and of itself, motivate me to change the way I have been living my life. We often find ourselves knowing what we ought to do in order to live a good life, but being totally incapable of making ourselves actually do it. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 7:15-24:

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law [of God] is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me I can will what is right, but I cannot do it For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my arms and legs another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my arms and legs. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Jonathan Edwards, in his essay on "A Divine and Supernatural Light," explained that real soul change will only occur when the divine light shows me "the excellency of the things of God," as he put it in eighteenth century language. I have to see the new way of life as a shining goal which pulls me towards it by its own intrinsic beauty and goodness. Its appealing quality has to become so great that I will, by my own deepest internal wishes and wants, leave my old way of life behind and turn to it instead. It will then become, not some rule or requirement imposed on me from outside myself, but something which I authentically desire inside myself.

Alcoholics in A.A. who have become genuinely sober do not stop drinking because they hate alcohol and its effects, but because they have found something which their hearts desire even more. Newcomers to A.A. are sometimes disturbed when one of the old timers tells them, "Why don't you go back out and drink some more? I don't think you're ready for this program yet." These newcomers expect the A.A. old timers to scold them and preach to them about the evils of drinking. Instead they tell the newcomers that they have no objection at all to other people drinking, and that they are not anti-alcohol in any way whatsoever. That is because they know that these newcomers will never become able to stop drinking (and stay stopped) until they see something in the eyes and faces of these good old timers that they want even more than they want alcohol, and until they find a higher power whose holiness and goodness and beauty will turn them into willing sober people, getting sober because they themselves want to dwell in the presence of this sacred reality, instead of doing as they used to do when they were continually attempting to befuddle and confuse and darken their minds into an alcoholic stupor.

Spirit creative, give us light,
Lifting the raveled mists of night;
Touch thou our dust with spirit hand
And make us souls that understand.²³

The experience of the sacred: the source of true serenity and the healing of the spirit

In conclusion, what will save the lost soul is learning to experience the sense of the sacred once again. It can be perceived in a church or a religious ritual, or even in a graveyard for that matter, but it can also be encountered in many other contexts. Many people can feel it the same way that many of the Native American people used to encounter it. So for example, I know people in the twelve step program who experience it by going out for walks in the woods, and soaking in the beauty and peace which surrounds them. I know a woman who begins every day by quietly drinking her morning coffee and silently meditating while looking out over a peacefully flowing river. There is an A.A. old timer in my part of Indiana, a retired nuclear submarine commander, who was in the Navy alcoholism treatment center at Great Lakes, and made his first entry back into the awareness of the sacred when he looked up into the sky after he had been there a number of days: he saw wild geese flying overhead and marveled at the sight of these birds flying hundreds of miles and somehow knowing where to go in their annual migration, and suddenly realized that there was something far bigger than himself, and that it was grand and awe inspiring.

Some Christians experience the sacred while going through elaborate communion rituals, with long liturgical prayers and chants and incense, in churches with organs and stained glass windows and robed priests. Quakers and A.A. people experience it when a small group of people sit together quietly in a room, and simply talk honestly about their spiritual lives — whether we call it the Holy Spirit or the Inner Light or the spirit of the tables, it is the numinous power which is quietly but unmistakably present when people gather together to surrender themselves to the power of the sacred.

Someone beginning the spiritual life merely needs to experiment. Where can I, at this point, experience some sense of the sacred in a way that seems healing and restoring? This is not an exercise in working myself up into a frenzy or some other highly abnormal emotional state, nor is it an exercise in seeing how much I can beat myself up with guilt and shame and blame, with endless penitential prayers, or by listening to condemnatory sermons or lectures. No, what I should be looking for is a context in which I can find awe and wonderment and the sense of the infinite and all-powerful, but also healing, peace, a calm mind, and a sense of quiet empowerment for whatever has to be coped

with. What works for me will not necessarily work for you, and vice versa, which is why you will just have to experiment with different things until you find what works for you.

But if you wish to walk the spiritual path, it is important to find something, and preferably something that you can do regularly and consistently as part of your normal life schedule. Remember, living in the continual presence of the sacred *is salvation itself*. In the highest versions of the spiritual life, this brings along with it true self-esteem and inner confidence, the end of self-sabotage and self-betrayal, serenity, inner quiet, peace, joy, and a comforting sense (at the end of every day) that "the day has been satisfied." But more than that, it brings the blessed presence of the sacred itself into the heart of our lives. This is where all the rewards are, and they are amply worth it.

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NOTES

- 1. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950). Quotes from the German original are from *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 11th ed. (Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923).
 - 2. Otto, The Holy, pp. 13-18 (Ger. 13-18).
- ³ Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001; orig. pub. 1939), p. 53 "When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing."
- 4. Harry M. Tiebout, M.D. "Surrender Versus Compliance in Therapy: With Special Reference to Alcoholism," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* (Yale University) 14 (1953): 58-68. Available as reprint from National Council on Alcoholism, 733 Third Avenue, New York NY 10017.
 - 5. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 19-21 (Ger. 20-21).
- 6. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001; orig. pub. 1939), p. 85. Compare pp. 67 and 88, where this prayer is shortened to simply "Thy will be done."
- 7. Rudolf Otto, *The Philosophy of Religion Based on Kant and Fries*, trans. E. B. Dicker (London: Williams & Norgate, 1931).
- 8. St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, trans. E. Allison Peers (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1983), and *The Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. and abridged by Kurt F. Reinhardt (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1957). St. Gregory of Nyssa, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, introd. Jean Daniélou, trans. Herbert Musurillo (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1961). St. Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (Garden City NY: Image Books/Doubleday & Company, 1961), the Spiritual Marriage as described in the concluding section of the book, "Seventh Mansions." Hannah Hurnard, *Hind's Feet in High Places* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1975; orig. pub. 1955).
- ⁹ The Greek word *agapê* was originally simply a translation, devised by Hellenistic era Jewish rabbis, of the old Hebrew word *hesed*.
- 10. Beginning with Cardinal Sins (1981), Thy Brother's Wife (1982), Ascent into Hell (1983), and Lord of the Dance (1984), some of Andrew Greeley's more recent novels are Irish

- Gold, A Midwinter's Tale, Irish Stew, Irish Mist, The Bishop in the Old Neighborhood, Irish Lace, Younger than Springtime, The Bishop Goes to the University, Star Bright: A Christmas Story, and so on. His ideas of about the divine Eros as a feminine, seductive love are better developed in the later novels, but in all his novels he recognizes that erotic love between man and woman are reflections down here on earth of one part of the divine love.
- 11. In the New Testament, see for example Luke 11:49 (it was Holy Wisdom who sent the prophets and apostles), 1Corinthians 1:24 ("Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"), 1 Corinthians 1:30 ("Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"), 1 Corinthians 2:7 ("But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory"), and James 3:17 (the reference to "the wisdom that is from above").
- 12. Whom we see in western Catholic Christianity in the figure of Mary as the Mystical Rose at the end of Dante's *Paradiso*, and in eastern Orthodox Christianity in many of the powerful verses of the Acathist Hymn (the office of praise of the Mother of God), where she is hailed as the one who has opened the gates of Eden, the fountainhead, the bridge to heaven, the key to the doors of Paradise, the radiance of the mystical day, the sea which drowned Pharaoh, the pillar of fire which guided those in darkness, the one who flows with milk and honey, the tree from whom believers feed, the shady glen in which we shelter, space of the spaceless God, gate of the sublime mystery, the sacred chariot which bears the Godhead, lamp of knowledge, beam of the mystical sun, opener of the stream of the waters of life, flowing water which cleanses the conscience, holy vessel overflowing with joy, wall of the kingdom of heaven, and healer of our bodies and savior of our souls.
- 13. Anger: the Thugee cult in India was commanded by the murderous goddess Kali to waylay travellers on the highway and strangle them to death, the Greek gods and goddesses would become angered at a human being (e.g. Odysseus, Arachne, Psyche) and do that unfortunate person great harm (cf. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 23-24 [Ger. 24-25]). Grief: the goddess Demeter grieved for her daughter Persephone every winter, and the women of Syria and Lebanon ritually mourned with Aphrodite for the death of Adonis once a year.
- 14. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 26-30 (Ger. 28-32) and 16 (Ger. 16). On existential anxiety in the face of nonbeing, see also the classic work by Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), e.g. ch. 2 (pp. 32–63).
- 15. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, rev. ed. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963; original title *From Death Camp to Existentialism*). Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).
 - 16. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 31-36 (Ger. 38-45) and 38-39 (Ger. 47-48).

- 17. Contrary to what Otto said at one point in his book. He must have been interpreting Plato in a different way than I do, but I feel fairly confident that I am reading Plato correctly concerning the nature of the Good.
 - 18. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 50-57 (Ger. 61-69).
- 19. Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, trans. A. Moorhouse (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963), pp. 56–7 and 86, see also pp. 115 and 117. Jean Daniélou's introd. to Gregory of Nyssa, *From Glory to Glory*, sect. 2, "Gregory's Doctrine on the Image of God in Man" (pp. 10–23). For the Lutheran and Reformed understanding, see Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1985), s.v. *imago Dei* (pp. 143–6). For the idea of the image of God in the christological context, see also Glenn F. Chesnut, *Images of Christ: An Introduction to Christology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row/Seabury, 1984).
- 20. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers. (Garden City NY: Image Books/Doubleday & Company, 1961), First Mansions, chapter 2, pp. 40-41.
- ²¹ Plato, *Republic*, 2 vols., trans. Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1935–7), 7.1.514A-3.518B. In 7.3.517B–C he said that the sun stood metaphorically for "the idea of the Good" (hê tou agathou idea), which was that which enabled us to see what is right (*orthos*) and beautiful (*kalos*), to recognize truth (*alêtheia*) and intelligible meaning (*nous*), and to act in a manner which was sane and sensible (*emphrôn*). This central concept therefore linked together the Good (and truth and beauty), and the establishment of the noetic realm (the realm in which the cognitive structures of our minds enable us to think intelligibly).
- 22. Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light," pp. 123-134 in Jonathan Edwards, *Basic Writings*, ed. Ola Elizabeth Winslow (New York: New American Library, 1966).
- 23. Earl Marlatt, "Spirit of Life, in This New Dawn." It is Hymn No. 462 in *The Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, Tennessee: Methodist Publishing House, 1966), but can be found in numerous American Protestant hymnals. Earl Marlatt taught at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, where I did my seminary degree, although he was born in 1892 and was no longer on their faculty when I became a student there in 1961. When I quote from his hymns, I do so with a certain twinge of what I suppose is guilt, because I got myself through one summer there by repainting faculty offices. Marlatt had been in charge of choosing the paint scheme when the structure was newly built, and he had chosen a deep purplish maroon color for some of the offices, which the other faculty deeply detested, and referred to as "Marlatt mauve." Having undone that part of the man's work, I am not totally sure that I have the right to quote from his work, but he did produce some very good hymns, and I sometimes find that his way of putting things is very useful for explaining my own thoughts!