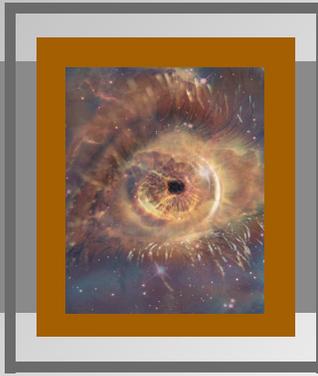


VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision

PSALM 27

PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

The experience of Axial Age Enlightenment turned religious tradition toward the vertical axis and stood the dominating features of conventional religion on their heads. It revealed God was not a super-human or a universal King, but a Transcendent Presence full of light and love. It said that Presence, though beyond imagining, could be experienced in a whole new way, as something deeply personal.

In the midst of life as we know it on the earth (often full of turmoil and chaos), God could be known and experienced as both transcendent and immanent. That awareness changed religious understanding forever. This Psalm poetically expresses significant features of this fundamental change.

What might a personal encounter with God do to us? Each human may encounter God in a unique way, just as no two persons have the same relationship with a third. I have a unique relationship with my children different from that of my wife. They are the same children, but the relationships are different. So if my encounter with God as a personal Presence is unique to me alone and if it develops into a friendship, it is likely that my life will change—perhaps forever. Both the psalm text and its illuminations suggest something unique.

In this hymn there is something universal, something found almost everywhere in the world: to truly encounter God sets the human heart singing! The world's great mystical literature agree that the experience of God fills the heart with songs of praise. An individual cannot truly know the divine Presence

without experiencing praise filling the “cup of the heart.” And when the heart is full of praise, it affects everything else—it seems to touch everyone and everything around it in a new way. It is similar to when an individual has the experience of falling in love. It changes almost everything about the way one experiences the world—even its negative aspects: falling in love fills the world with greater light and joy.

This is indicative of a change in consciousness. The truth is, God changes human consciousness. Encountering God has multiple affects on human beings. If those changes are permanent (and not just a temporary state, but a true change at the level of being and consciousness), then praise and light become a permanent feature of life no matter what the current circumstances may be.

This is, of course, one of the many meanings of enlightenment—a change of consciousness that sets an individual moving in the direction of permanent light. Light fills the world in a new way, but it especially affects conscious awareness.

In the beginning, it is experienced as transcendent Light which comes from outside us. Experiencing this light is not just a fantasy (the result of an overactive imagination) that are met by Light and consciously enter its Presence. The Light we experience transcends us, of course, but it also touches us intimately and deeply and begins to radiate from within. The sense of such intimacy is another powerful feature coming to us from the revolution of the Axial Age. God is present in both a transcendent and in an intimate way. The Light-source draws near to us.

Reflections on Image and Text:

A Place for Notes and Journaling

1. *How might your relationship with God be unique to you and you alone? How is it different from what the psalmist describes? How is it the same?*
2. *Read the text carefully. In addition to the experience of praise what else is the psalmist experiencing? Can these be experienced together? Does not the experience of one cancel out the other?*
3. *Have you ever had this kind of experience? How would you describe it?*
4. *Is this your experience at this moment?*
5. *When you look at the illuminations for this psalm can you feel what the psalmist is feeling?*
6. *The illuminations attempt to describe our experience of nearness to the Transcendent. How is nearness imaged? How is transcendent being imaged?*
7. *If you were illuminating this section of Psalm 27 would there be something else that you would want to add to illumine it from your perspective or experience?*

*This reflection, text and its
illumination
have been provided
by Alison Hine
and Lynn Bauman
as a means of
contemplative
prayer
2018*

LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

PSALM 27:6-8

Personal Encounter

*For in these troubled times I come to you,
to find a place to hide away,
your light a tent that covers all.
Your presence is the highest pinnacle of rock on which to stand,
beyond this storm.*

*For there you raise my head and lift my eyes to you
above my enemies round about and unafraid.*

*And in this sacred place I give my being back to you,
and everything as sacrifice;
And there I offer you in song,
a grateful heart and a voice filled up with praise and prayer.*

*—translated by
Lynn C. Bauman
Ancient Songs Sung Anew*

Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATIONS

