

GRACE
IN A
WINTRY SEASON

Revised Edition
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First Holy Communion, May 1950.

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But Now My Eye Sees You

October 1984

It was a beautiful fall evening in southwest Missouri. Elyse and I were on an unhurried vacation, driving through the rolling Ozark hills, visiting places we had not seen before even though we were lifelong residents of the state. That night we were staying in the rustic lodge at Roaring River State Park.

Sometime during the evening, a book I had read a few weeks earlier, John Sanford's *Healing and Wholeness*, came to mind. I had been introduced to it at a dinner party. It had been given to the hostess by a nun-friend of hers who loved it. Sanford, an Episcopal priest and Jungian psychoanalyst, maintained in effect that there is within us a Center that knows us better than we know ourselves, loves us more than we love ourselves, and is always trying to heal our woundedness through the dreams and visions it creates in us, and otherwise.

That was news to me. If it were true, if this Godlike Center really existed and was communicating itself to us lovingly in dreams and otherwise, what would that mean? That the Universe was friendly? That it wasn't the indifferent machine it seemed to me to be? I remembered Einstein reportedly having said that there was really only one important question in life: Is the Universe friendly? Was it possible that "yes" was the correct answer? I didn't think so.

I had a very low opinion of God at the time. That opinion had begun in high school but had taken root in my twenties when working as a juvenile officer for the Circuit Court of the City of Saint Louis. There I saw for the first time the heartbreaking effects of poverty—the violence, the broken, not-to-be-healed lives, the despair. I was in the investigation unit; we prepared certain cases for hearing—the homicides, felonious assaults, rapes, and armed robberies.

Some of the cases still haunted me: the girl whose eyes were gouged out by her rapist so she

couldn't identify him;¹ another girl shot dead in an alley, the word "pussy" scrawled in her blood on a garage door; the neighborhood wino doused in gasoline and set on fire, just for the fun of watching him scream and die; the frightened little boy sitting in darkness not far from me—I was working the booking desk that night—dumped at the detention center by his aunt who didn't want him, his mother having recently died, his father long gone.

Where was God?

Recalling Sanford's book that evening—I had been impressed by how well it had been written—it occurred to me that I ought to pay attention to any dream I might have that night and find out for myself whether he knew what he was talking about. I had never paid attention to a dream before. I knew I had them, but I didn't remember them. I was forty-two and a lawyer, Elyse thirty-two and a nurse. She didn't remember her dreams either.

I wanted to be scientific—science is the only way to really know anything, right?—and so formed a null hypothesis before going to bed: If I have a dream tonight and remember it and write it down and analyze it, I will have wasted my time because, as everyone knows, dreams are nothing but garbage heaps of repressed desires, having no spiritual meaning whatsoever.

It seemed to me that if Sanford were correct about there being within us a loving, dream-creating Center, my education had been hugely deficient, had missed the mark widely. I considered that unlikely.

I was also thinking that I knew what evidence looked like, having litigated many cases, so that if there were any evidence of something spiritual in any dream I might have, I would recognize it.

Early the next morning, I lay in bed and realized I was dreaming. The dream seemed absurd and not worth bothering with, but having resolved the night before to pay attention to any dream I might have, I forced myself to do so. When the dream ended, I tiptoed through the dark room so as not to awaken Elyse, entered the bathroom, shut the door, flipped the light switch, sat on the floor, and recorded the dream on the pad of paper I had laid beside the bed the night before. Sitting there in the bathroom in my pajamas, I berated myself for being such a fool, for wasting time with this nonsense when I could be in bed sleeping. I jotted down what I remembered of the dream.

The dream:

But Now My Eye Sees You

Everyone in the huge, old courtroom is looking at me, the prosecutor, waiting for me to proceed. But I don't know what I am doing! How did I get into this?

I don't know what the case is about. I don't know who the witnesses are or what the other evidence is. I don't know anything! I feel like running out of the courtroom, but I'm not going to. I am going to see this through to the end no matter what.

I am standing at one of the two counsel tables. To my right, at the other counsel table, are the defendant and his lawyer. I address the judge. The defendant's lawyer is also standing. He is

1. Karl Evanzz, *The Wilma Chestnut Story* (Baltimore: New Wave Books, 2011).

objecting to whatever I am saying.

Seated to his right is the defendant. I look at him briefly and turn away in disgust. He is a denizen of the gutter—an old, irresponsible skid-row bum. His crumpled, threadbare suit looks as if it has been worn continuously for months. He needs a bath, a shave, a haircut, and new clothes.

Every time I say something, the bum's lawyer objects, and the judge sustains the objection. His lawyer is not letting me get away with anything. The judge, a kindly, gray-haired old man, is becoming impatient with me.

There are only three jurors: three elderly men.

Because I am confused and anxious, everyone else is also. Except the defendant. He is calm. He seems oblivious to the proceedings.

The judge says something to me, and I respond. The bum's lawyer objects, and the judge sustains the objection. I realize that I have nothing else to say; I have run out of BS. Something horrible is about to happen; I can feel it. Maybe I'm going to have a heart attack or lose my mind!

Just then, the bum, still seated, addresses the judge: "All I ever wanted was twenty-five hundred dollars and a little Schlitz."

Immediately the mood in the courtroom changes. Everyone is now laughing and smiling, except me. I just stand there, wondering what in the world is going on. I feel better, though; the trial is over.

The bum's lawyer removes a checkbook from his briefcase, writes a check for twenty-five hundred dollars, and hands it to the defendant. The defendant then hands him a rubber stamp and an inkpad. This is odd, I think. What is this? Then I realize that the rubber stamp and ink pad have something to do with the defendant's business, and that is what the trial has been about, the defendant's rubber stamp business.

I don't get it. What does this mean? I just stand there.

While I'm looking at the bum, he turns and looks at me. His eyes are filled with love and joy, and I feel both. He is pleased with me, pleased that I didn't run out of the courtroom, even though I felt like it. I realize that he is not a bum at all and that he is extremely intelligent.

Gazing into his eyes, I realize that it is he who is creating this trial and putting me in it and that he is doing so for my benefit. I don't understand; nevertheless, I feel myself loving him in return.

I am fascinated. What is happening?

I am now walking north along Vandeventer Avenue near Saint Louis University, approaching a bar, the grand opening of which is being celebrated. The owners are my girlfriends, three beautiful women in their early twenties. They are standing in the doorway. When they see me, they wave and call to me to join them. I have to be elsewhere soon but say I will join them for a little while. They are pleased and say they won't keep me. I love them and am happy to be with them.

I step inside. There are a few tables, a bar, and bar stools. We sit at a round table in the center of the rectangular room. Several graduate and undergraduate students are laughing and having a good time. We are served a pitcher of beer. We talk awhile, laugh, and enjoy one another's company. I share their excitement and joy. When I finish a glass of beer, it is time for me to leave. I

stand up and excuse myself.

I am now standing on the sidewalk in front of a one-story, rectangular building housing three different businesses. I am in front of the business in the center. It is the rubber stamp company that the defendant sold to his lawyer.

I look to my left and observe the business there: a fruit and vegetable shop. Long tables are filled with fresh fruit and vegetables. I look to my right and see that the business there is an art and antique shop. Paintings are on the walls, and the shop is full of antique furniture and sculptures.

Inside the rubber stamp company is an old man who has worked there many years. He knows the business thoroughly. Next to him is the defendant's lawyer, the new owner of the business. Standing in the doorway in front of me is the lawyer's wife. She is feminine, intelligent, artistic, beautiful. She is examining the doorjamb, peeling away some cracked paint. She is pleased that her husband has acquired this business and the old building.

"I am going to strip away this old cracked paint and expose the natural wood underneath and turn this old building into a work of art," she says.

The old man asks the defendant's lawyer, "Can I stay on?" The lawyer responds, "You certainly can. I can't run this business without you."

I feel very good observing the old man, the lawyer, and his wife. I am filled with confidence and am ready to return to the courtroom, ready for the next trial, whatever it might concern.

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Sitting on the bathroom floor, I looked over what I had written. I ought to analyze it, I thought; I've wasted so much time on this nonsense already, I might as well waste some more. And so I looked over my notes. Almost immediately, I saw, in part, what the "Dreammaker" was doing! I felt a tear roll down my face. I realized that my life had just changed in an immense way. I said to myself, "So this is what religion is *really* all about!"

What I understood was that religion, or spirituality, was really about the relationship I had just experienced—the relationship between my conscious mind, the one I more or less identified with, and the one that/who had just created the dream. It wasn't about assenting to dubious doctrines or participating in rituals I found meaningless.

What I saw was that the trial in which I didn't know what I was doing was a metaphor for my life. My life was a trial, an ordeal, in which I didn't know what I was doing or why I was in it, why I existed, but which nevertheless needed to be proceeded through; bills had to be paid, and so on.

I saw that, because the defendant was the creator of the trial and the trial a metaphor for my life, that meant he was an image of *my* Creator! He was a God-image, an image of the God I had been putting on trial in my mind for years. That God was either incompetent or indifferent or both. That God was a bum.

The Dreammaker, who had imaged himself (himself, herself, itself) as the defendant, as the creator of the trial, as *my* Creator, wasn't like that, however. S/he (he, she, it), the Dreammaker, imaged as the defendant, was loving and joyful and wise—and I found myself loving in return!

As the dream's meaning was sinking in, the last stanza of my favorite poem at the time crossed my mind:

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold had been wrong about life. All the things he said were lacking in the world, weren't; I was experiencing them.

With the passing of time, other things in the dream began making sense—the rubber stamp company, for instance.

A few years before the dream, when I was an assistant prosecuting attorney in Cole County, Missouri, the local circuit clerk used a rubber stamp—the “authentication stamp”—to authenticate copies of original documents: orders for child support, for example. I would mail a stamped, authenticated copy of such an order to the prosecutor in the jurisdiction in which a defaulting parent resided—Los Angeles, for instance. The authenticated copy, stamped with the clerk's official seal, was as valid, as “real,” as the original order in the clerk's office in Cole County. It wasn't necessary for the clerk to travel to Los Angeles and testify that the copy was authentic; the stamped copy was “self-authenticating.”

In the dream, I was the copy that/who was being authenticated. The Dreammaker's love, wisdom, and joy were being stamped into my soul, into me; I was being made in the Dreammaker's, the loving defendant's, image. The dream was self-authenticating.

The grand opening of my girlfriends' business was another metaphor, one expressing the grand, or first, opening of my mind to the Dreammaker. It was grand too in the sense of being huge, being life-changing.

The three girlfriends, were they a feminine trinity? Another loving, joyful, wise God-image?

The beer being served in my girlfriends' bar: Schlitz perhaps? And the twenty-five hundred dollars the defendant said he wanted: the small amount of money it took to open the very simple bar, that is, the small effort it took to open myself up to the Dreammaker, to pay attention to the dream?

The last scene, with the three businesses under one roof, suggested to me a movement from left to right, from the fruit and vegetables on the left through the rubber stamp company in the middle to the works of art on the right—a movement from untransformed Nature through the authentication

process to transformed Nature, to the works of art. If so, what did that mean?

The defense attorney's wife said she intended to strip away the building's old cracked paint, expose the natural wood underneath, and turn the old building into a work of art. Was she talking about me? Did she intend to strip away my old cracked paint, the old worn-out persona I had been showing the world and myself for years? To strip "me" away in other words, and then uncover my natural, authentic self? Did she intend to transform me into a work of art? If so, what sort of work of art?

Who was she anyway, and her husband? What were they images of?

Eventually, the Book of Job came to mind—and Job's saying:

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:5, 6)

Job had asked for a response from God concerning his unmerited suffering and eventually received it in the form of a whirlwind that made clear to him God's incomprehensible and overwhelming power and intelligence.

Job then saw, then understood, that God's ways were beyond his ability to comprehend, and he gave up his complaining, his putting God on trial.

The dream was for me something like the whirlwind was for Job. I saw a God-image that moved me deeply and made clear to me how little I understood.

My eyes saw and ears heard, so to speak, for the first time, and I stopped putting God on trial.

Face to Face

December 17, 1984

The day begins with my driving about sixty miles from our home in Jefferson City to the Pettis County Courthouse in Sedalia, the site of the Missouri State Fair.

On the court's docket is a case I am handling as the assistant attorney general representing the Missouri Department of Agriculture. The case is on the docket because the judge, not the parties, placed it there.

Years earlier the plaintiff, a cattleman, had loaned a hundred head of cattle to the department for use in a roping exhibition at the fair. His petition alleges that ten head were not returned to him, and he wants to be compensated. The department maintains that all of the cattle were turned over to the truckers the cattleman had hired for transport back to his ranch, and if ten head were missing, the truckers had taken them, not the department's employees.

The suit has not been pursued since it was filed. The judge wants it disposed of one way or another—by trial, settlement, or dismissal.

Several lawyers are present, handling various matters. My missing cattle case is near the bottom of the docket. I sit and wait and wait and wait. I am not happy. I need to be working on other matters, some grain elevator insolvencies in particular.

As I wait, I think about time itself, about how limited and precious it is. I begin reviewing my life, thinking about how much time I have thrown away on things that didn't matter.

Eventually, the case is called up and a trial date set. Driving home, I continue assessing my life, regretting the time I have frittered away, wondering what I ought to be doing with whatever time remains for me.

Back home, I am alone. Elyse is working, Nathan, our eight-year-old son, is in school, and Dorothy, Elyse's mother who lives with us, is out with friends. I am thoroughly confused and miserable. I grill two cheese sandwiches and eat them at the kitchen table while watching several goldfinches at the feeder in the backyard. I envy the little birds. They aren't concerned about what they should be doing with their lives; they are doing it. They are fully in sync with Nature.

What would it take for me, a human being not a bird, to be fully in sync with Nature? Surely I would need to know who and what I am and why I exist, wouldn't I? But I don't know!

The thought occurs to me that maybe the Dreammaker might be able to communicate with me when I am awake as well as asleep. If s/he could, would s/he? What would happen, if anything, were I to put myself into a deep state of relaxation and ask hir for help? Probably nothing, I think. I decide to give it a try anyway.

In a bedroom upstairs I disconnect the phone, not wanting to be disturbed. I lie in bed on my back, eyes closed, and clear my mind as best I can; I want to be as receptive as possible to whatever

imagery the Dreammaker might send. I put myself into a relaxed state using an exercise I learned in an adult ed stress management class: I imagine a warm, heavy substance slowly moving from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. I imagine this happening several times.

I ask the Dreammaker to send me any images that would help me understand who and what I am and why I am here, then pause and look into the blackness behind my closed eyelids for any images that might appear. There are none.

“I knew this wouldn’t work, it was a dumb idea,” I say to myself. But I don’t feel like giving up, and I repeat the exercise a few more times, continuing to look into the blackness. Then I stop the exercise, and an image appears.

Face to Face

A small white circle is in the center of the blackness! I realize that the Dreammaker is responding to my plea for help. S/he is “talking” to me!

For half a minute or so, there is only the one tiny white circle. It seems far away. Then, innumerable little white circles stream forth from the original circle, spinning, spiraling, and swirling symmetrically in all directions. I am astonished by the beauty of their movement. I am aware that I am not dreaming but am fully awake and aware also that what I am observing is an elaborate, intricate, joyful dance. The Dreammaker, now “Visionmaker” (this is not a dream; I am fully awake), is ecstatic. I feel hir joy!

The image of a child in front of our house in Jefferson City playing with Roman candles, celebrating the Fourth of July, crosses my mind. Is that child an image of me?

Eventually several circles coalesce and form a white oval with a white circle in its center. It is an image of an eye.

I look at the eye for a long time expecting something to happen, but nothing does. Eventually I grow a bit impatient and say (internally, not out loud) to the Visionmaker, “Why are you sending me a picture of an eyeball?”

Immediately the eye disappears, and a capital letter “I” takes its place. I understand the “I” to mean that the Visionmaker is announcing hir presence and explicitly identifying hirself for me; s/he is addressing me directly! I feel myself trembling slightly and realize I am in a state of mind I know nothing about. I am fascinated.

I watch the “I” for some time, until it disappears. It is replaced by an image of a brown wooden crucifix on top of a dirt hill. I think of Calvary, the hill on which Jesus was crucified. Why this image?

Another image follows: the same cross, but now a dying man hangs on it, his head slumped to his right. I cannot see his face distinctly, but I can feel his anguish. He feels abandoned, and so do I. What am I looking at? A visualization of the actual crucifixion of Jesus? How could that be? It can’t.

I feel as if I am in both the past and present, as if there is only this very strange now.

Four white lines forming a horizontal rectangle, in the upper-right portion of the blackness, replace the image of the man dying on the cross. At first, I think it is just a rectangle and wonder what if anything it has to do with the images preceding it. Then I realize it is an image of a coffin, the crucified man's coffin.

The coffin is now in the center of the blackness, and the crucified man is rising up from it, his hands on the sides of the coffin pushing himself up. He is alive again! I see, but not distinctly, his smiling face. I feel his joy.

I now see this same man walking along a dirt road toward me—the me observing the imagery (I am not in the image). The road runs diagonally from the left background to the right foreground. To the man's left are several green trees and bushes. The area to his right is clear. He is wearing a tweed suit that resembles my best suit. His shoes look like my best wingtips. There is dust on them; I stay focused on the dust for a long time.

Midway along the dusty road, he stops and looks directly at me, the observing me. We are face to face. The thought occurs to me that the man I am looking at is an extraordinary image of myself, but I immediately dismiss the idea. This man is perfect in every way—far beyond perfect, actually. He is superhuman; he is divine. Obviously, this could not be a picture of me.

I stare at his powerful shoulders and wonder what I am looking at. It has to be an image of immense strength and perfect health, I think.

*I then focus on the man's chest. I can see through his suit and shirt. In the center of his chest is a ball of white light. I am amazed and stay focused on the light, wondering what in the world I am looking at. Eventually the word *vita* (veeta) pops into my mind, and I know at once that it is the Latin word for "life." I correct myself; I am not looking at a picture of immense strength and perfect health, I say to myself, but rather a picture of Life itself!*

*I look at the man's face. I have never seen anyone so happy. Just looking at him floods me with joy. Whatever joy is, I am looking at a picture of it. I stay focused on his face for a long time and realize I have seen his eyes before. They are the same loving, joyful, wise eyes of the defendant in *But Now My Eye Sees You!* Are the defendant and this risen man the same person? How could that be? I don't understand.*

The risen man then disappears. He is followed by an image of a white oval against a black background. It is, I understand, an image of a vulva. Why this image?

It is then replaced by an identical image with a white cylindrical shaft, a phallus, penetrating it. I am surprised and wonder whether this experience is going to turn into something pornographic. Why an image of sexual intercourse?

That image is replaced with another image, a phallus. At the top left of the shaft are a few small white dots arranged vertically. I understand them to be images of spermatozoa.

The image of the white shaft gives way to that of a large white circle containing a small white circle in its upper-right area. I take the image to be that of a womb containing an embryo—a pregnancy resulting from the intercourse previously imaged.

The large circle reappears, now containing several smaller circles instead of one. The womb is fully pregnant.

A different circular image appears, that of a planet. Earth? A patch of land resembling a continent occupies the top part of the planet. It is split in half, left and right. Water separates the two halves. An immense ocean covers the bottom of the planet.

On the land are seven babies, four on one half and three on the other. They have just been born, although they appear to be several months old. They are sitting up and looking all around. They are seeing the world for the first time and are amazed. I realize they were imaged previously as the small circles inside the large circle.

This imagery gives way to blackness with a tiny red ball in the center. The red ball seems very far away, and it doesn't mean anything to me at first. It's just a little red ball, but then I realize that it is alive in some way I don't understand, and that it is full of power. I feel it is going to do something, but I don't know what. I wait, continuing to watch it.

Eventually, there is an extremely brief, barely discernible white flash. The red ball is gone. There is nothing but blackness. The tiny red ball must have silently exploded, I think. I wait for something to appear in the blackness. Nothing does. But I feel enveloped in a huge Presence, as if I am somehow inside the Visionmaker's immense mind and feel also that my little observing mind is actually hers.

Although I see only blackness, I know that this experience is not yet over, that the Visionmaker is still present; I feel hir.

A small white speck appears in the blackness. Then, slowly, another. Then another, and another, and so on. I don't understand what I am looking at but keep looking. Finally, I get it. "My God, I'm watching the universe coming into being!" I say to myself.

I am keenly aware of the extraordinary state of mind I am in. It seems that the Visionmaker is Reality himself, God, and is using my little mind, which is actually hers, to observe herself, to observe hir transformation from a tiny red ball billions of years ago into the universe as s/he now exists—that s/he is both creating the imagery and observing it.

I feel that s/he has answered my plea for help, and it is time for hir to leave. But I don't want hir to leave, not yet. Not until I understand this experience.

Frantically, in an effort to comprehend, I run the various images through my mind, starting with the small white circle and ending with the little white specks. It doesn't help. I don't understand. I then run the images through my mind in reverse order, thinking I might get a better perspective. It doesn't help.

Finally, I cry out (in my mind, not out loud), "What are you trying to tell me?" and wait for a response. There is none. There is only blackness and silence.

Then, slowly and almost inaudibly, a voice whispers, "I — am — you."

Still trembling inside, the vision fades, and I return to normal consciousness.

I remain in bed a few minutes trying to comprehend what I have just experienced. I want to stay in bed but can't. It's time to go to the office.

At the office so much energy is running through me that it is difficult to concentrate, to sit still even. I get up from my desk several times and walk around the eighth floor of the Broadway State Office Building.

For a week or so, I try without success to categorize the vision, to understand what sort of experience it was. Then one day the term "mystical experience" crosses my mind, and I know at once that is what the vision was, even though I didn't believe in such, in what the nuns and priests had termed "a direct contact with God."

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If at this point I were to discuss my present understanding of the various images, you might think that I quickly grasped their meaning; I didn't. So I will just mention a few thoughts now and move on.

First, who or what is the Visionmaker?

I understand him to be Nature, that is, the Universe, functioning through our three-pound human brains. But what is the Universe? One of the ways in which Divinity itself (or himself), that is, Being itself (or himself), exists?

The term I will often use for the Visionmaker-Dreammaker is *Vita* since it is the term s/he used to identify himself—as I understand it. I am capitalizing the term because I experience *Vita* as divine.

Second, why the presence of love in the eyes of the risen Christ-figure and earlier in the eyes of the defendant in the first dream—love that I actually felt? Why not indifference or something else?

Third, two things Saint Paul said:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.
(Galatians 2:19–20)

if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

(2 Corinthians 5:16–18)

Imagine that we are living in the year 40 CE and that we are friends of Paul, and one day he says something to us like this: "You know, about ten years ago I was crucified with Jesus of Nazareth and died as he did. It's not really me anymore living in this body that you see in front of you, it's really Jesus, our Messiah, living in me."

What would we say to Paul? That he had lost his mind?

But do you see how, if he had a vision similar to the one I have just related, one in which there was a divine, heavenly, glorious risen Christ-figure that resembled him in some way, how Paul could make such apparently crazy statements and not have been crazy but had instead misunderstood what

he had experienced?

What might he have been referring to as “a new creation in Christ”?

Fourth, why did *Vita* employ a divine, heavenly risen Christ-figure in the vision?

I did not at the time, and do not now, believe that Jesus’ corpse was resuscitated. What did the risen Christ-figure symbolize? My state of consciousness, or mode of self, during the vision?

Fifth, what type of experience could have led the first Jesus-followers, all monotheistic Jews, to compose the astonishing “Christ hymn” (in Philippians 2:5–11):

Let the same mind be in you that was in
Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point
of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly
exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under
the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.²

Lastly, regarding the “I — am — you” statement, one of Meister Eckhart’s gems:

God is closer to me than I am to myself . . . So He is also in a stone or a log of wood, only they

2. For a brief discussion of the Christ hymn, see *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 357. See also Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977).

do not know it. . . .³

3. Meister Eckhart, "Sermon Sixty-Nine," in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and trans. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, foreword by Bernard McGinn (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2009), 352.

The Call

December 20, 1984 – January 28, 1985

Shortly after the vision, I begin feeling that *Vita* wants to be known and related to consciously by everyone and is requiring me to do something about it, requiring me to share the vision.

I can't shake the feeling, even though my sharing the vision strikes me as ridiculous, as impossible. How can I share it when I don't even understand it? Over the next month or so, I repeatedly object to the obligation I am feeling. I don't have the requisite knowledge; I am not a theologian or depth psychologist or neuroscientist. I'm a lawyer, what do I know about mystical experiences? Nothing.

Nevertheless, one afternoon at the office, feeling that I am never going to be let off the hook, I take a short break and think about the possibility of someday writing a book about the vision. A title immediately suggests itself: *The Nature of Reality*. That is what I feel I encountered in the vision: Reality, Being himself, God. I jot down some subjects I think necessary to cover in the book: psychology, theology, Eastern and Western religion, philosophy, neurology, biochemistry, and so on.

I soon put the pen down, realizing I will never have the requisite knowledge.

That night I go to bed feeling that I am a failure, too weak to carry the load that has been placed on my shoulders. The next morning, a dream:

The Call

January 29, 1985

Long ago, San Francisco Bay must have looked like this, I say to myself, standing on top of a hill overlooking a bay. There are no people, no buildings, no bridge. The sea is calm, the sky blue, the hills far across the bay, green. I feel the enormous power of the sea coursing through my body and am in awe of that power and of the beauty spread out before me. I am filled with a sense of adventure.

I walk down the hill toward the sea and see two wooden piers I had not noticed before. They are about a hundred yards apart, and each extends into the bay about a hundred yards. At the end of each pier, out over the water, is a wooden building. The buildings intrigue me, and I decide to investigate.

I walk along the shore to the first pier. The building at its end is small and square. I glance at the building at the end of the second pier and see that it is large and rectangular. It looks like a huge warehouse. I am curious about that building and walk along the shore over to the second pier and down that pier to the warehouse over the water. I stand next to it; it is to my left, the pier being L-shaped. As I stand there, again appreciating the beauty before me and feeling the strength of the sea, I hear the drone of a distant motorboat.

Looking across the bay, I don't see the boat anywhere and realize it must be to my left and obscured by the warehouse. The noise grows louder and louder, and I soon realize that the boat is speeding toward me. The boat is going to smash into the pier!

I start running across the pier toward the shore. When I'm close to the shore, the boat collides with the pier, and there is a terrific explosion. I turn around. The warehouse is gone! Tiny bits of debris are raining down from the sky into the bay.

I am afraid. Had I not moved, I may have been killed.

Looking at the end of the pier, now minus the warehouse, I catch a glimpse of a black speedboat, the boat that rammed the pilings under the pier and demolished the warehouse. It moves slowly toward the small square building at the end of the first pier. It strikes a piling beneath that pier and stops.

"Help me! Help me!" screams the man who was operating the boat. I can't see him; he is under the pier. He must be injured or drowning, I think. I want to help him but am afraid. He nearly killed me.

Looking in his direction, I remain on the second pier, wanting to help the screaming man but I am unable to move; my arms and legs are paralyzed with fear. I feel horrible.

I wake up.

I am too upset to fall asleep again. I go downstairs to the kitchen table and reluctantly record the dream in my journal and then put it aside and get ready for work. I don't want to think about the dream. That day and the next, the paralyzed-with-fear dream ego (me in the dream) pops up in my mind several times. Each time I feel ashamed for not helping the screaming man, for being such a coward, yet I don't want to deal with the dream. I want it to go away.

The third morning, I lie in bed, again remembering the dream. I feel that it is going to hound me forever unless I do something. The thought occurs to me that maybe it is possible to reenter a dream, and if so, perhaps I can reenter this one and force the dream ego to swim over to the screaming man and help him—then maybe I won't be bothered by this dream anymore. I decide to give it a try, even though I don't think it will work. I have never heard of reentering a dream, but what do I have to lose by trying?

I put myself into a relaxed state using the same relaxation exercise I used before *Face to Face* and ask *Vita* to send the dream back to me. S/he does, immediately!

The Call

January 31, 1985

Everything is as before except now there are two of me: fully awake me observing the dream ("I"), and me in the dream, the dream ego ("Ed"). It is as if I am in an audience observing a play and at the same time an actor on stage performing.

Ed is still standing on the second pier near the shore, paralyzed with fear, looking toward the first pier. The man underneath the small building at the end of that pier is still crying out, "Help

me!”

I want Ed to jump into the bay, swim over to the screaming man, and help him, but he doesn't. He doesn't move; he can't.

I realize that I have to do something to force Ed to move.

I imagine hitting him in his upper back as hard as I can with both fists. As I imagine it, I see Ed lurch forward, as if struck from behind (I do not see the fists, however). He teeters on the edge of the pier, nearly falling into the bay. I want him to fall in! But he doesn't. He straightens up and begins walking along the second pier toward shore and then along the shore toward the first pier.

Seeing this, I realize Vita has taken over. That Ed should just walk over to the screaming man instead of swimming over to him had never occurred to either Ed or me. I am grateful and relieved that Vita has taken over. I have done, it seems to me, what s/he wanted me to do in reentering the dream and forcing Ed to move, and now s/he is going to resolve this drama. I feel that s/he is rewarding me and that I can now lie back and watch the dream unfold.

Walking along the first pier toward the small square building at its end, Ed stops for a moment and looks it over, then opens a door and walks in. There is only one room. It is dark. He has difficulty seeing but notices a trapdoor in the far left corner of the room. It has a heavy metal handle. He walks over to the trapdoor, pulls the handle, lifts off the door, and sets it aside.

Looking through the hole in the floor, he sees the black boat and catches a glimpse of the once-screaming man diving off the bow into the bay. The man's black trousers, black socks, and black shoes are all that Ed sees as the man enters the water. Immediately, Ed jumps through the hole in the floor of the building and onto the bow of the boat, then dives into the bay in pursuit.

In the water, Ed sees before him the man's trousers and shoes moving up and down as he descends at about a forty-five-degree angle. After a while, the man's clothes fall off. Continuing their long descent, the man eventually turns into a fish. Ed and I think this is extremely bizarre: a man turning into a fish!

Ed continues following the fish still deeper into the sea, and then Ed also turns into a fish!

Near the bottom of the sea, there is only blackness; light can't penetrate this deeply. Ed can no longer see the fish in front of him. Then the fish begins glowing, and Ed can see it again. He continues following the fish. Eventually, to the left of the glowing fish, Ed sees a white, glowing ball of light on the bottom of the sea. It is small like a pearl.

Having seen the ball of light, Ed is no longer interested in the fish in front of him, and when it veers off to the right, he doesn't follow it but heads straight for the light on the bottom of the bay. When he reaches it, he opens his fish mouth and swallows it. He then turns upward and begins the long ascent to the surface, his fish body glowing in the darkness. Halfway up, he becomes a man again. His human body glows.

Reaching the surface, he is beside the black boat under the small square building at the end of the first pier. Pulling himself up onto the boat, he sees above him the square hole in the floor of the building and jumps up, grabs the edge of the floor, and pulls himself up and into the building. He

walks through the dark room and out the front door, down the first pier toward shore, and then along the shore to the second pier where the big warehouse had been.

Standing on shore next to that pier and the debris-filled water, he is amazed at the devastation. There is nothing left of the warehouse except tiny particles. His body still glowing, he reaches over and touches the pier with his right hand. Immediately, the warehouse is perfectly reconstructed! There is no debris. Both Ed and I are astonished.

He walks over to the first pier and touches it. Whatever damage had been done to that pier when the boat struck one of its pilings is now repaired. Both Ed and I feel the repair.

Ed then begins walking up the hill on the top of which he was originally standing. Close to the top, he pauses, turns around, and looks at the bay, again in awe of its beauty and power. He feels close to the sea, close to home. So do I. He turns and continues climbing the hill.

The dream fades, and I feel wonderful, as if I have been and continue to be in the presence of the divine.

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I lie in bed, amazed at what *Vita* has produced.

I realize that the man screaming for help didn't need any help; there was nothing wrong with him. His job was to get my attention, hold it, and deliver a message.

"Help me!" was the message, delivered on behalf of the Light at the bottom of the sea. It was s/he, the Light, who wanted help, not him. S/he wanted me to bring hir up to the surface.

Later it seems to me that the large warehouse corresponded to the large book I had thought necessary to do justice to the vision. Both were big containers, the warehouse a container of items of one sort or another and the book a container of information of some sort. In demolishing the warehouse via hir messenger, the Light was telling me to demolish the magnum opus, that is, to forget about writing the huge book.

What the Light wanted, as I understand the dream, was for me to write the book s/he wanted written, a book that could only be written by bringing hir up from the bottom of the sea. I would have to become fishlike and descend deep into the dark sea, into the so-called "unconscious," the unknown part of one's soul, or psyche.⁴

For a long time people have considered some dreams and some visions to be of divine origin:

It seems strange how much there is in the Bible about dreams. There are, I think, some sixteen chapters in the Old Testament and four or five in the New in which dreams are mentioned. . . . If we believe the Bible, we must accept the fact that, in the old days, God and his angels came to men in their sleep and made themselves known in dreams. Nowadays dreams are regarded as very foolish, and are seldom told, except by old women and by young men and maidens in love. .

4. For levels of the unconscious and more, see C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 160; and, Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul: An Introduction* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 2001).

. . . After [a particular dream] occurred, the first time I opened the Bible, strange as it may appear, it was at the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, which related the wonderful dream Jacob had. I turned to other passages, and seemed to encounter a dream or a vision wherever I looked. I kept on turning the leaves of the old book, and everywhere my eye fell upon passages recording matters strangely in keeping with my own thoughts,—supernatural visitations, dreams, visions, etc.⁵

Two examples of such biblical passages:

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” And Solomon said, “. . . Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?”

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, “Because you have asked for this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word.

Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind. . .

(1 Kings 3:5–15)

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.

(Matthew 2: 13–15)

It isn't just young men and maidens in love nowadays who are taking dreams seriously; scientists and theologians are also:

If you want to understand human nature, the human mind, what makes us tick, you need to look at dreams.⁶

Carl Jung and other psychologists would encourage us to assign more importance to our dream life; it need not be a mere concession to some “primitive” instinct of human beings if God were also to use dreams as means for communicating revelation.⁷

5. Ward Hill Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (1895, 1911; Project Gutenberg, 2012), Kindle edition (with images), chap. 7, loc. 1707.

6. Patrick McNamara, PhD (neuroscience), interview excerpt, “What Are Dreams?” aired June 29, 2011, on NOVA, PBS, www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/what-are-dreams.html.

7. Gerald O'Collins, SJ, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77.

Was I visited by “God” and one of hir “angels” in *The Call*?
