

Here're pp.125f of Tom Oden's excellent TAG [TRANSACTIONAL AWARENESS GAME (Harper/76)]. This method of "doing theology" is ancient. It uses the a fortiori logic: if a saint is "holy," how much more is God! In the West, this is know as "via eminentiae," the way of upward projection from human spiritual eminence to divine pre-eminence.

There are two ways of approaching the attributes of God with frail human language, according to Scholastic speculations. The first is the negative way, the *via negativa*, by removing from our thoughts of God any imperfections that we observe in creatures. (Thus God is referred to as *not* mortal, *not* corporeal, *not* finite, *not* dependent, etc.) The second is the way of eminence, or *via eminentiae*, by which we compare God with the forces in human experience which we regard as nearest to perfection. The way of eminence is an act of comparison, by which we first look toward human experience and creaturely reality for that which appears to us to be the most perfect, and then ascribe to God in the most eminent manner those qualities. This is the tradition of language about God which celebrates God's radical justice, God's complete truthfulness (veracity), God's incomparable goodness, God's absolute holiness, God's steadfast faithfulness, God's absolute simplicity and unity, God's incomparable wisdom, etc.

As I was studying the intensifying descriptive adjectives of the Spectrum, the thought struck me with great force that each segment of the Spectrum has its own set of God terms, its own particular perfections. The adjectives which characterize the perfections of interpersonal behavior in every case uniquely combine the absolutely best aspects of each position with full intensity, yet without vice, addiction, excess, or avoidance. As an exercise in speculative reflection, I offer you my list of these God terms, or perfections of interpersonal behavior, wondering whether these might contain the seeds of a reappropriation of the ancient argument *via eminentiae*. If, as Anselm argued, God is "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," and if that same reality has met us in history and covenanted with us, and faithfully participated in a covenant history, as Jewish-Christian worship knows, then that presses us to look for better understandings of the perfections of interpersonal behavior as a means of shaping and sharpening our language about God. Does the Spectrum therefore point beyond itself to an implicit doxology of God's perfections?

## GOD IS...

### The Perfections of Interpersonal Behavior:

- 1 Righteously Rejecting, Wrathful toward sin, Spirited Negation of evil, Smiting injustice, Absolutely Opposing inauthenticity, Eternally Resistant to the diminution of good
- 2 Incorruptible, Upright, Absolutely Requiring, Rightly Judging, Pure, Spotless, Correcting, Exacting, Perfectly Firm in the will and capacity to do the good
- 2A Completely Veracious, Absolutely Straightforward, Constantly Improving, Prophetic, Visionary, Challenging, Truthful
- 3 Indomitable, Unconquerable, Invincible, Unconditionally Resourceful, Infinitely Determined to accomplish long-range purposes
- 3A Mysterious, Invisible, Impenetrable, Undefinable, Hidden, Veiled
- 4 Infinitely Creative, Entirely Congruent, Free, Radically Self-determined, Authentic, Eternally Self-affirming, Self-assured
- 4A Radically Self-sacrificial, Atoning, Expiatory, Long-suffering, Propitiating, Crucified
- 5 Omnipotent, All-sufficient, Unequaled, Supreme, Ultimately Powerful, Glorious, Majestic, Eternally Prevailing, Eminent without parallel, Unsurpassable
- 5A Infinitely Patient, Permitting, Allowing, Radically Letting-be, Serene, Incomparably Stable and Reliable
- 6 Omniscient, Faultless, Absolutely Trustworthy, All-wise, Foreknowing, Infinitely Comprehending
- 6A Eternally Faithful, Completely Loyal, Incomparably Attentive, Observant, All-hearing
- 7 Wholly Benevolent, Promise-keeping, Radically Saving, Rescuing, Aiding, Helping, Infinitely Generous, Totally Involved, Absolutely Responsible
- 7A Utterly Magnanimous, Totally Accountable, Infinitely Receptive
- 8 Infinitely Compassionate, Healing, Redemptive, Incomparably Merciful, Kind, Forgiving
- 8A Wholly Gracious, Eternally Reconciling, Peacemaking, Mediating, Incomparably Thoughtful
- 9 Loving, Unconditionally Positively Regarding, Prizing, Radically Self-disclosing, Infinitely Affirming