



# The Power of Art

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“You can't measure the success of a [film] on how many tickets it sells. You can only measure it in how many hearts it changes.”

Hayao Miyazaki

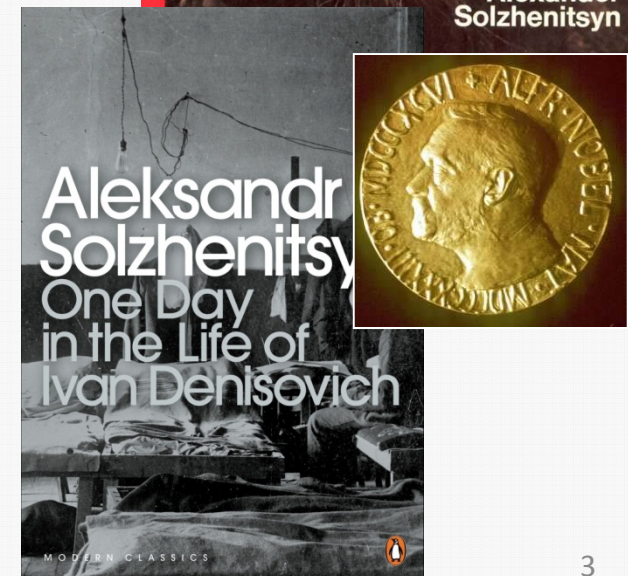
“The value of a work of art depends on the flight the observer takes from it.”

Robert Henri

# What art can do

- Not everything assumes a name. Some things lead beyond words. Art can **warm even a chilled and sunless soul** to an exalted spiritual experience. Through art we occasionally receive — indistinctly, briefly — **revelations the likes of which cannot be achieved by rational thought**. It is like the small mirror [in fairy tales]: you look into it but instead of yourself you glimpse for a moment the Inaccessible, a realm forever beyond reach. **And your soul begins to ache.**

— From Sozhenitsyn's Nobel lecture





# Why do we do what we do?



**Satan Exulting over Eve**

- William Blake
- English, London, 1795
- Graphite, pen and black ink, and watercolor over

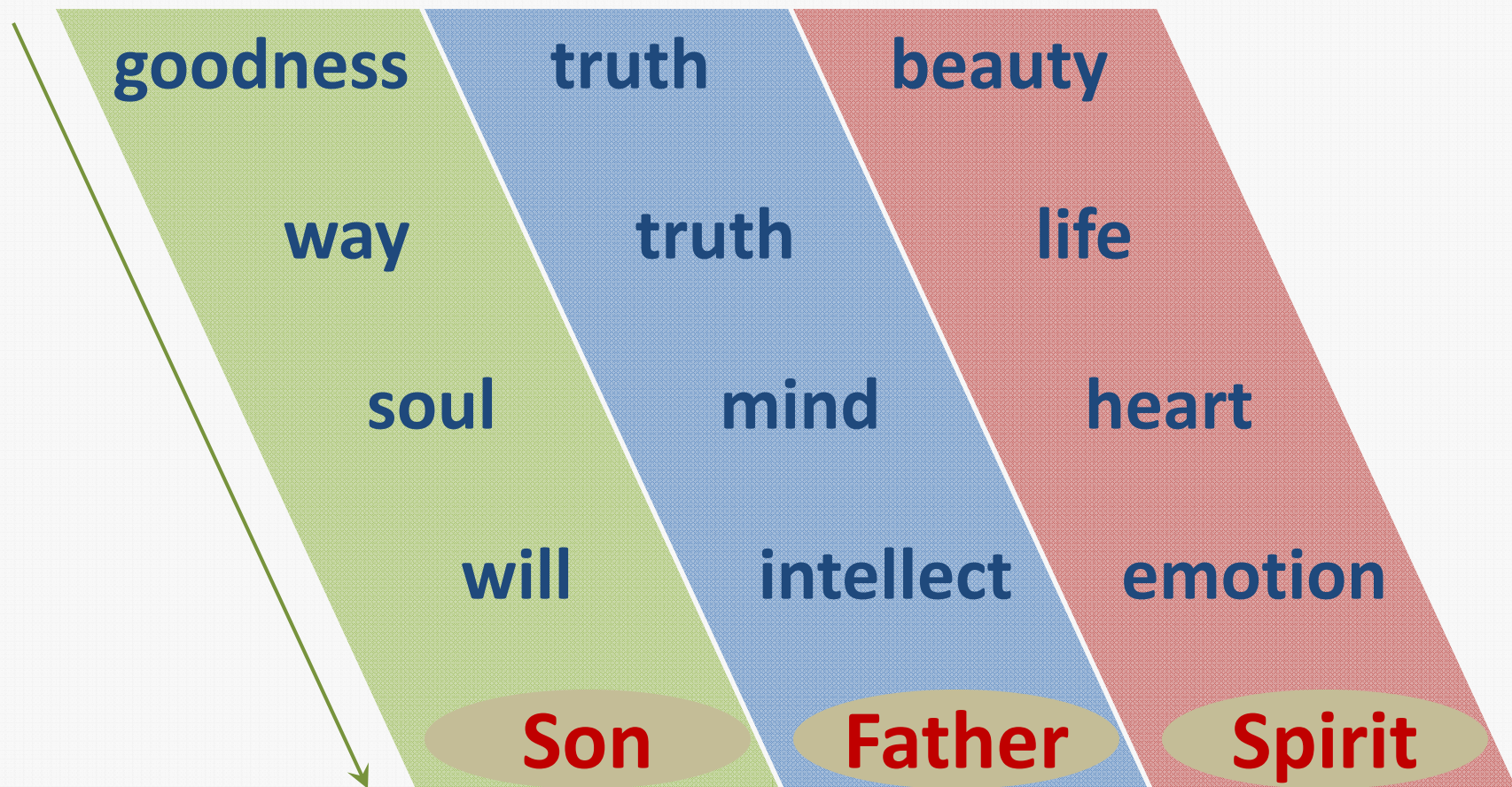
- The serpent
  - “You surely will not die! . . .when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:4-5)
- The result
  - “When the woman saw . . .
  - . . . that the tree was good for food, . . .
  - . . . and that it was a delight to the eyes, . . .
  - . . . and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, . . .
  - . . . she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” (Gen 3:6)

goodness

truth

beauty

# Art & the heart of God



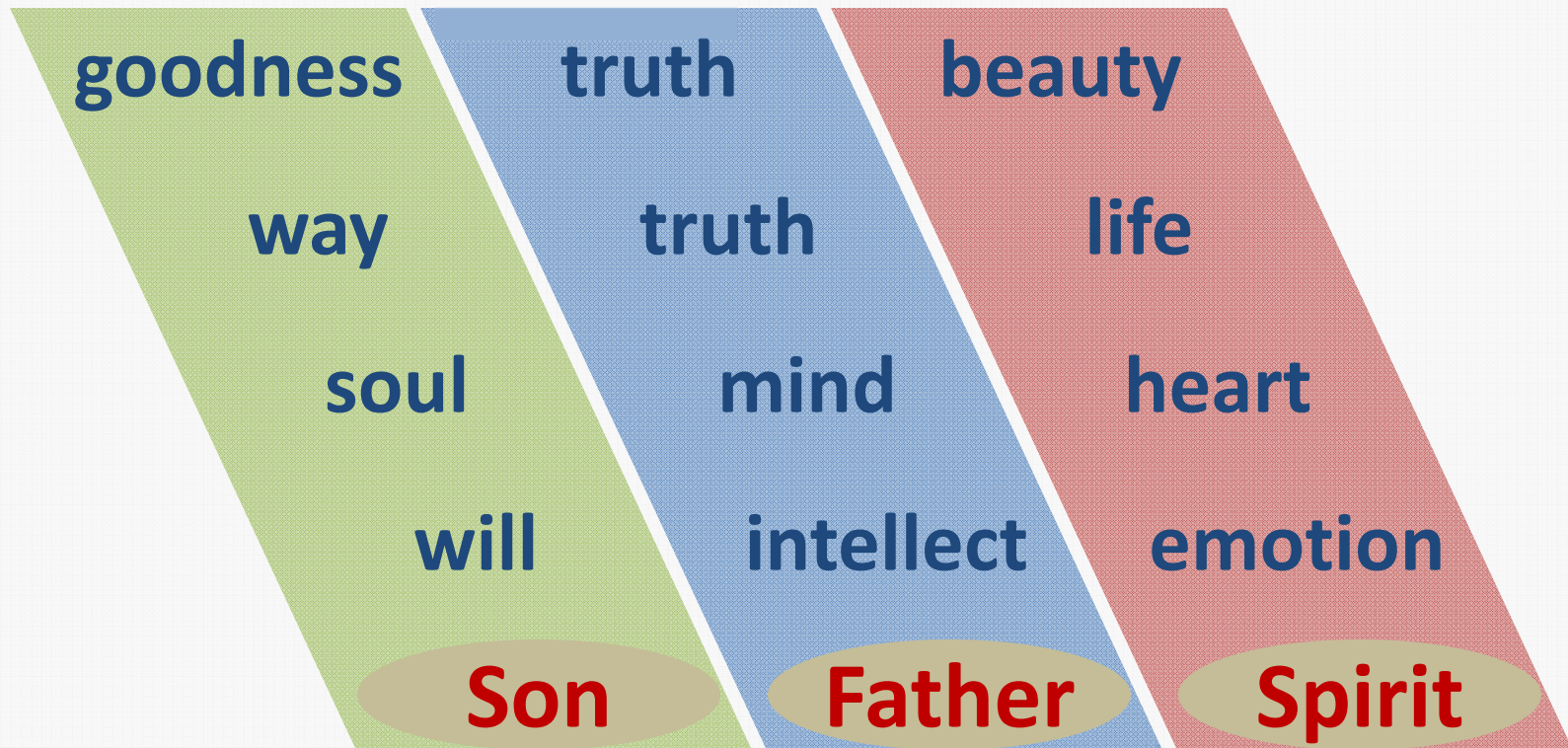
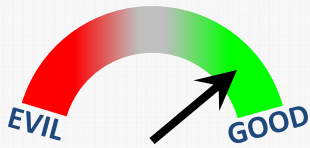


... and the greatest of these is love

morality

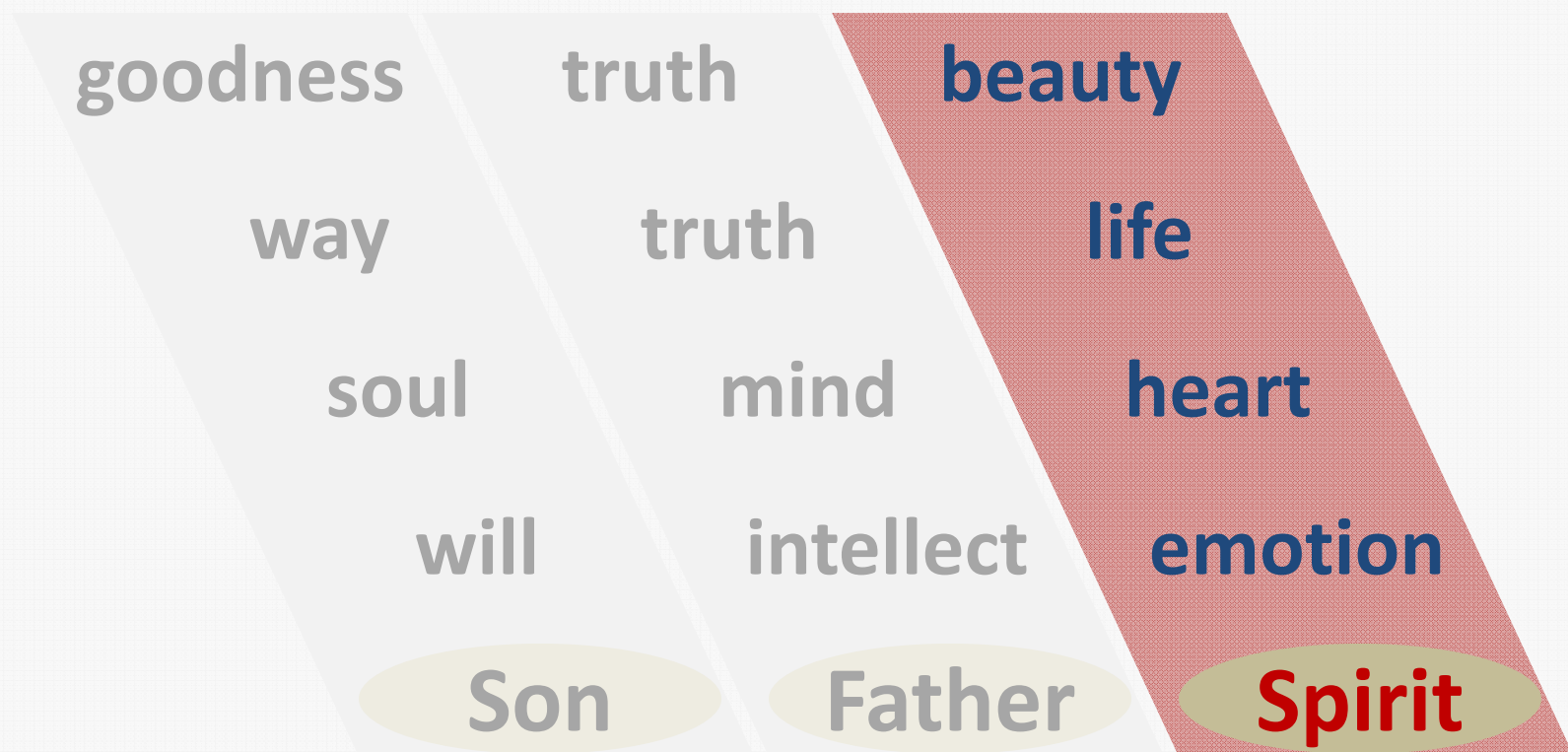
law

love



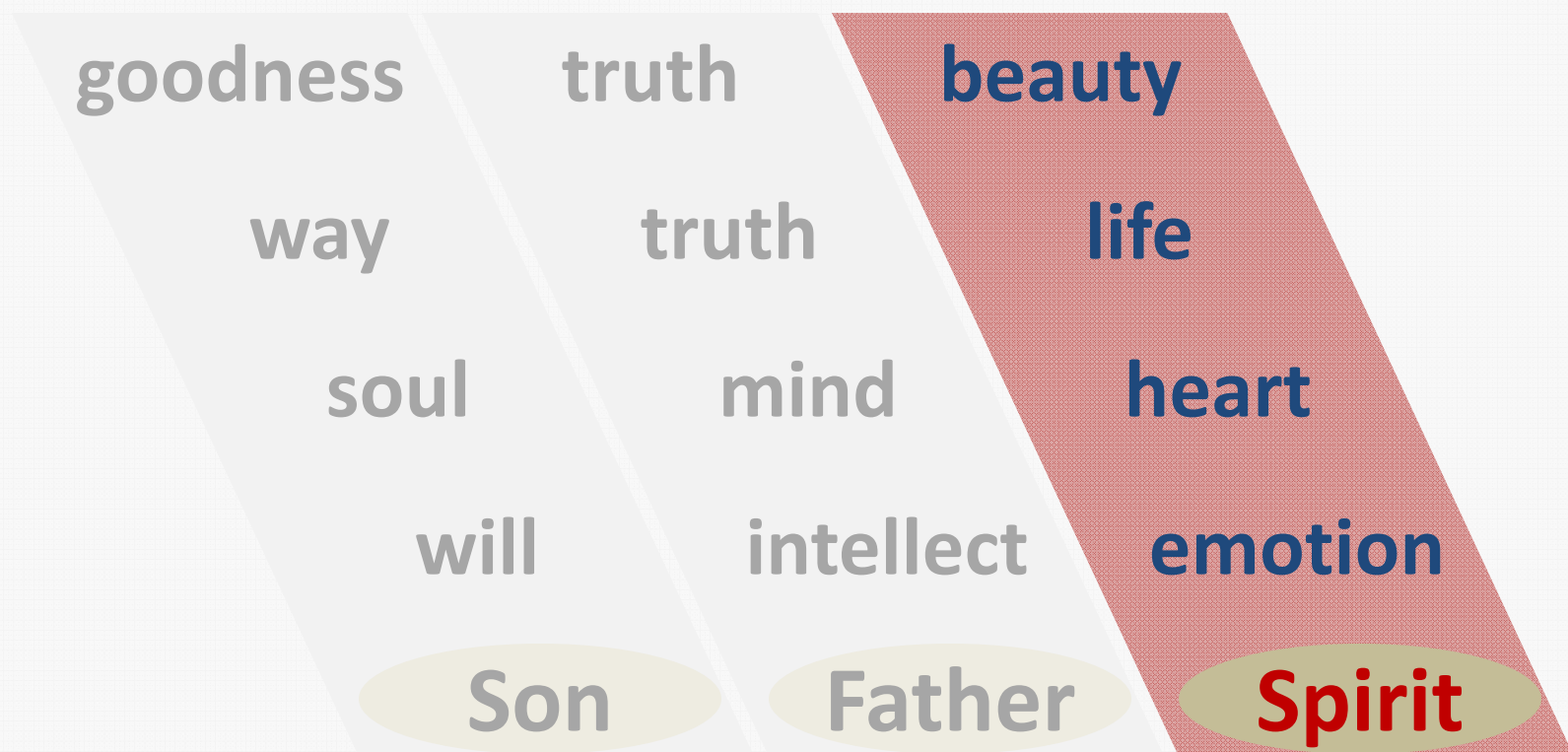
... and the greatest of these is love

- “I have come that they may **have life, and have it to the full.**” (John 10:10)



... and the greatest of these is love

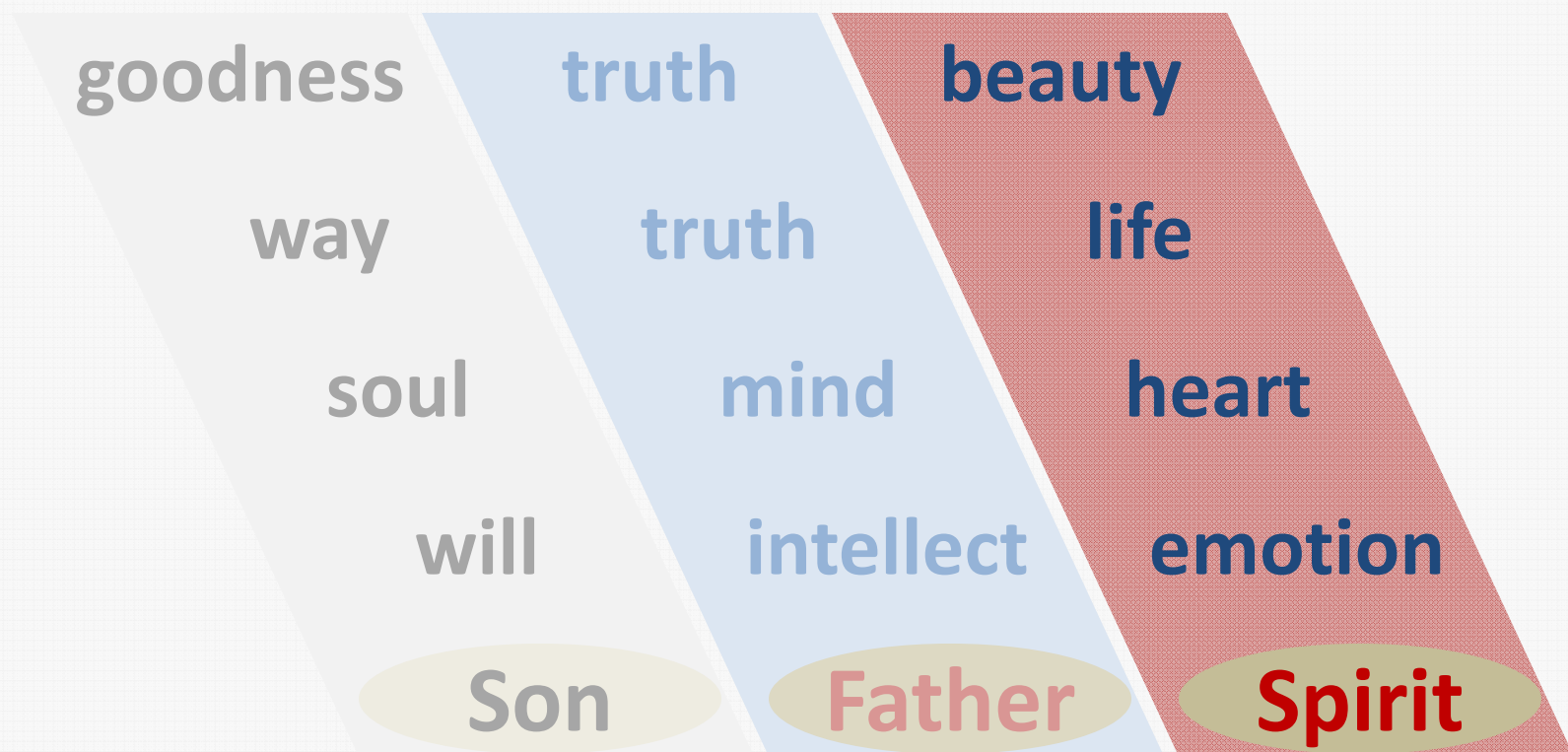
- “For the wages of **sin is death**, but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 6:23)





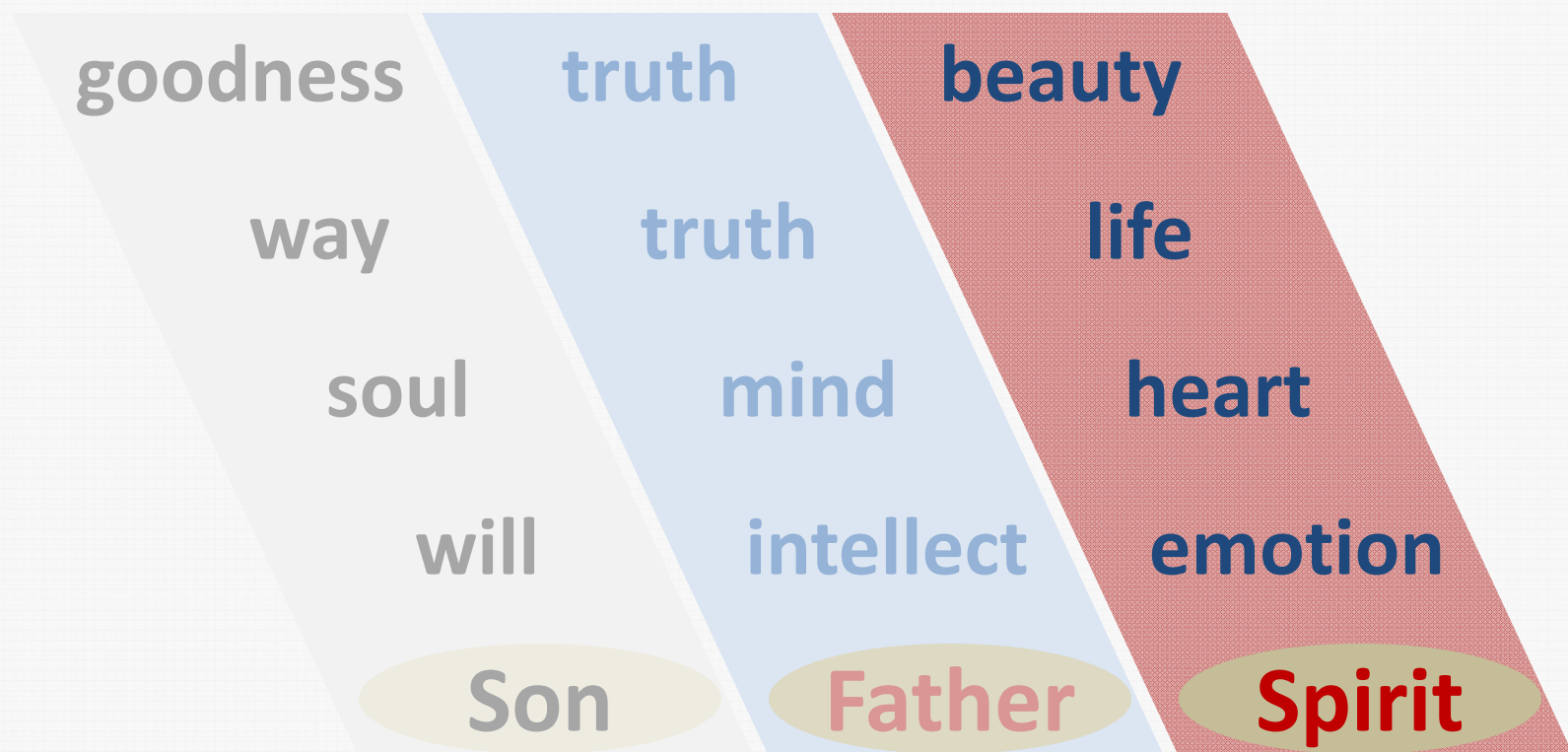
. . . and the greatest of these is love

- “**This is eternal life**, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)



. . . and the greatest of these is love

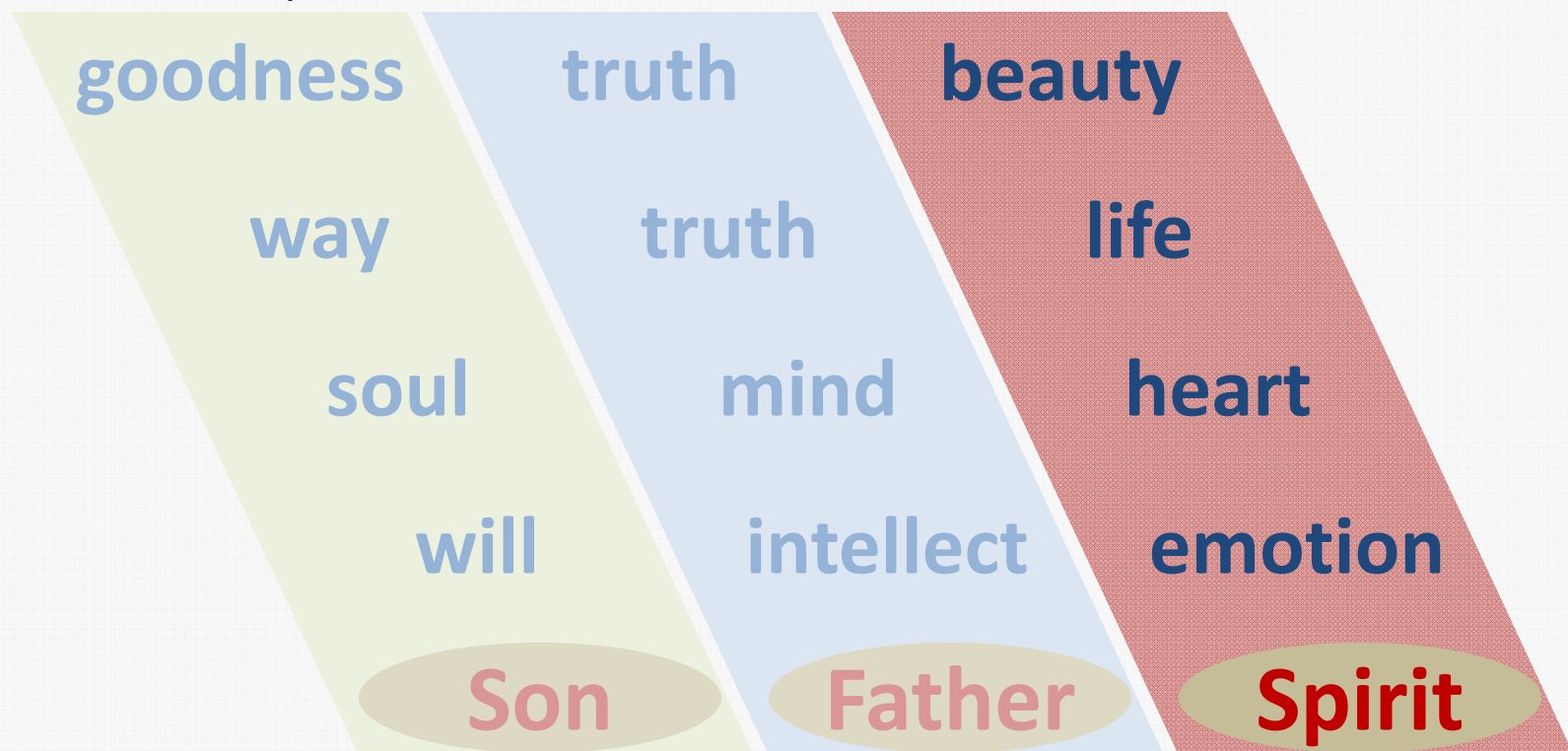
- “If you continue in My word, . . . you will know the truth, and **the truth will make you free.**” (John 8:31-32)
- “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**” (2 Cor 3:17)





... and the greatest of these is love

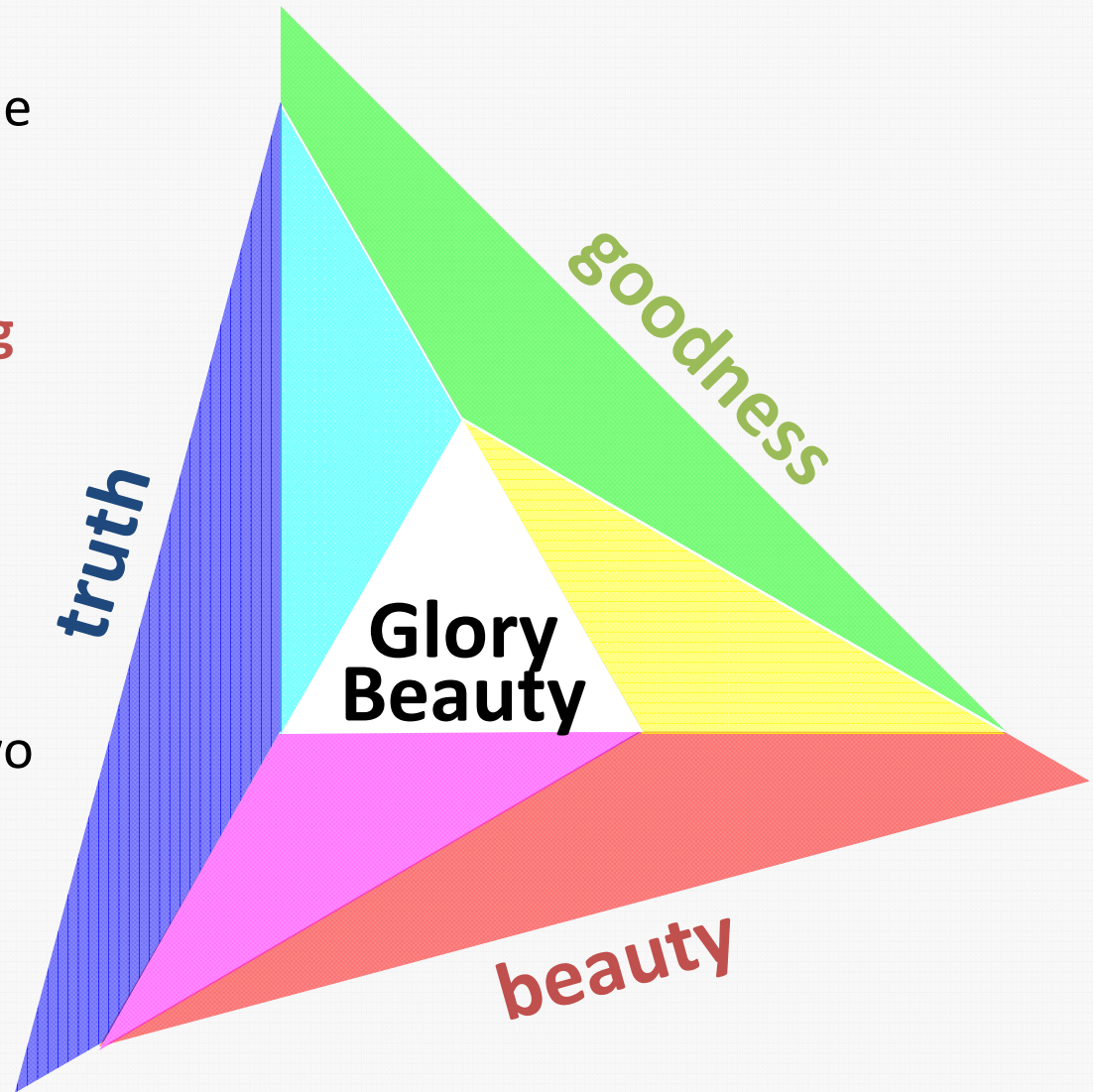
- “...be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may **prove what the will of God is, that which is good** and acceptable and perfect. . . Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**” (Rom 12:2, 13:10)



# Tri-unity of the transcendentals

## Hans Urs von Balthasar:

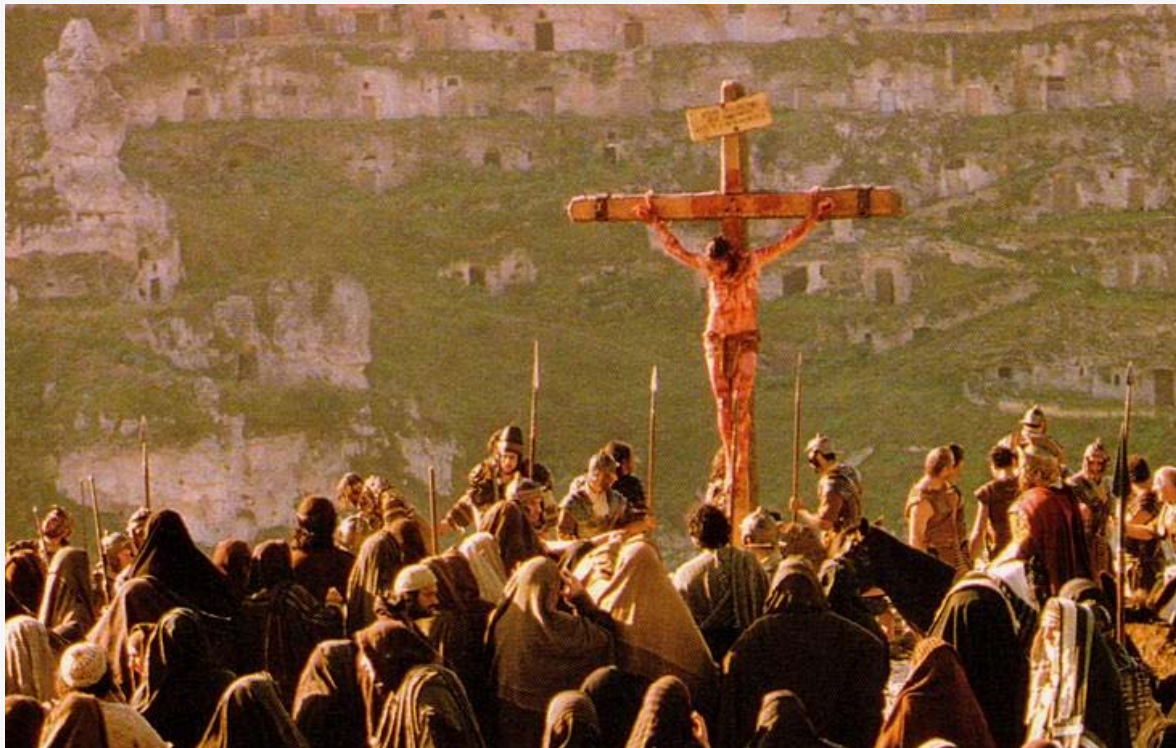
- “The beautiful guards the other transcendentals and sets the seal on them: **there is nothing true or good, in the long term, without the light of grace** of that which is freely bestowed.”
- “[**Beauty**] **will not allow herself to be separated** and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance.”





# God's ultimate Beauty and Glory

- “. . .I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom. . . I **determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** . . .so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” (1 Cor 2:1-2,5)



von Balthasar:

- “For the glory of the Lord the world was created; through it and for its sake the world is also redeemed.”
- “Glory is eternal love descending into uttermost darkness.”

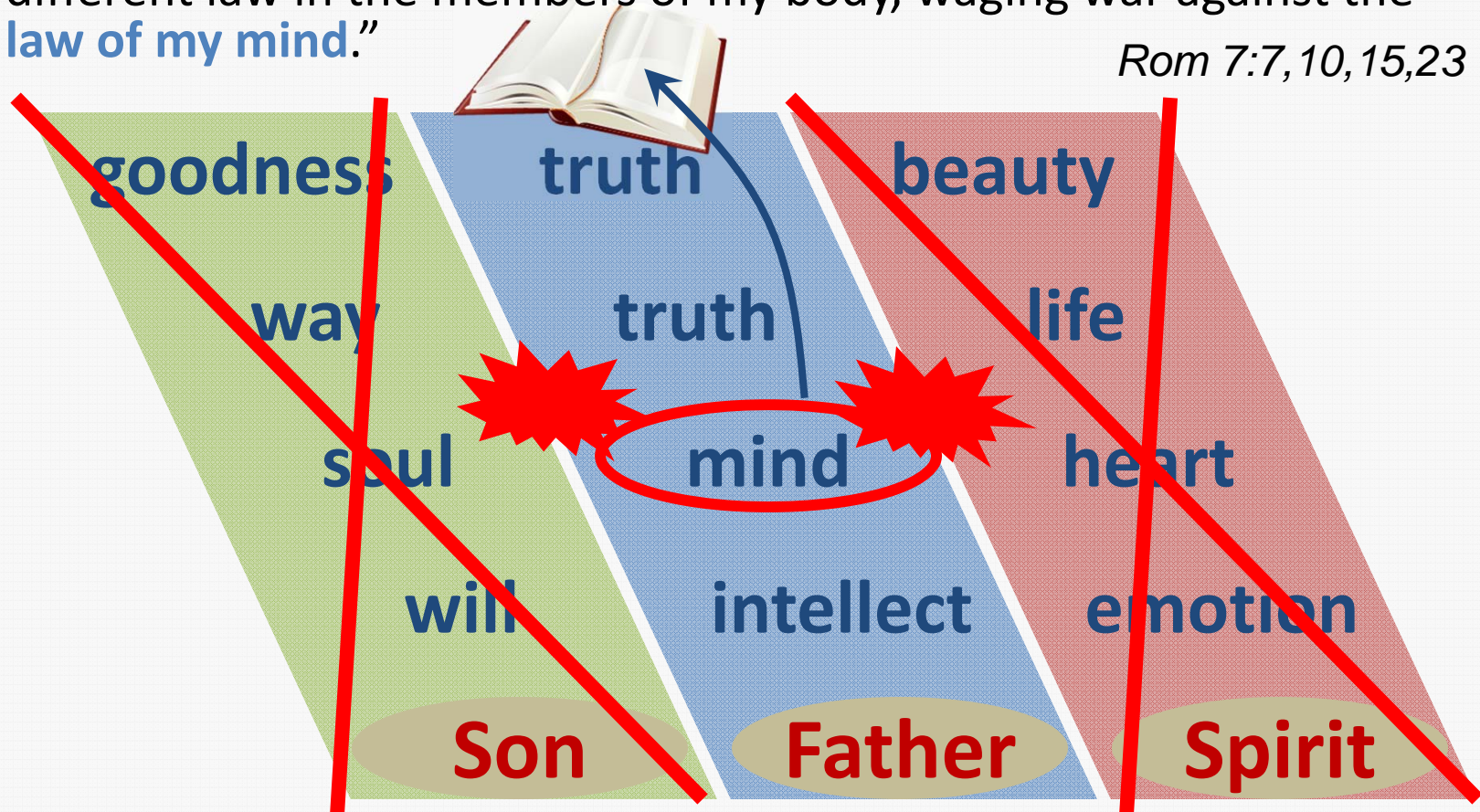
Still from *The Passion of the Christ*

- dir. Mel Gibson
- USA, 2004

# How we become who we need to be

- “I would not have come to **know sin** except **through the Law**. . . which was to result in life, [but] proved to **result in death** for me.”
- “I do not understand; for I am **doing the very thing I hate**. . . I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the **law of my mind**.”

*Rom 7:7,10,15,23*

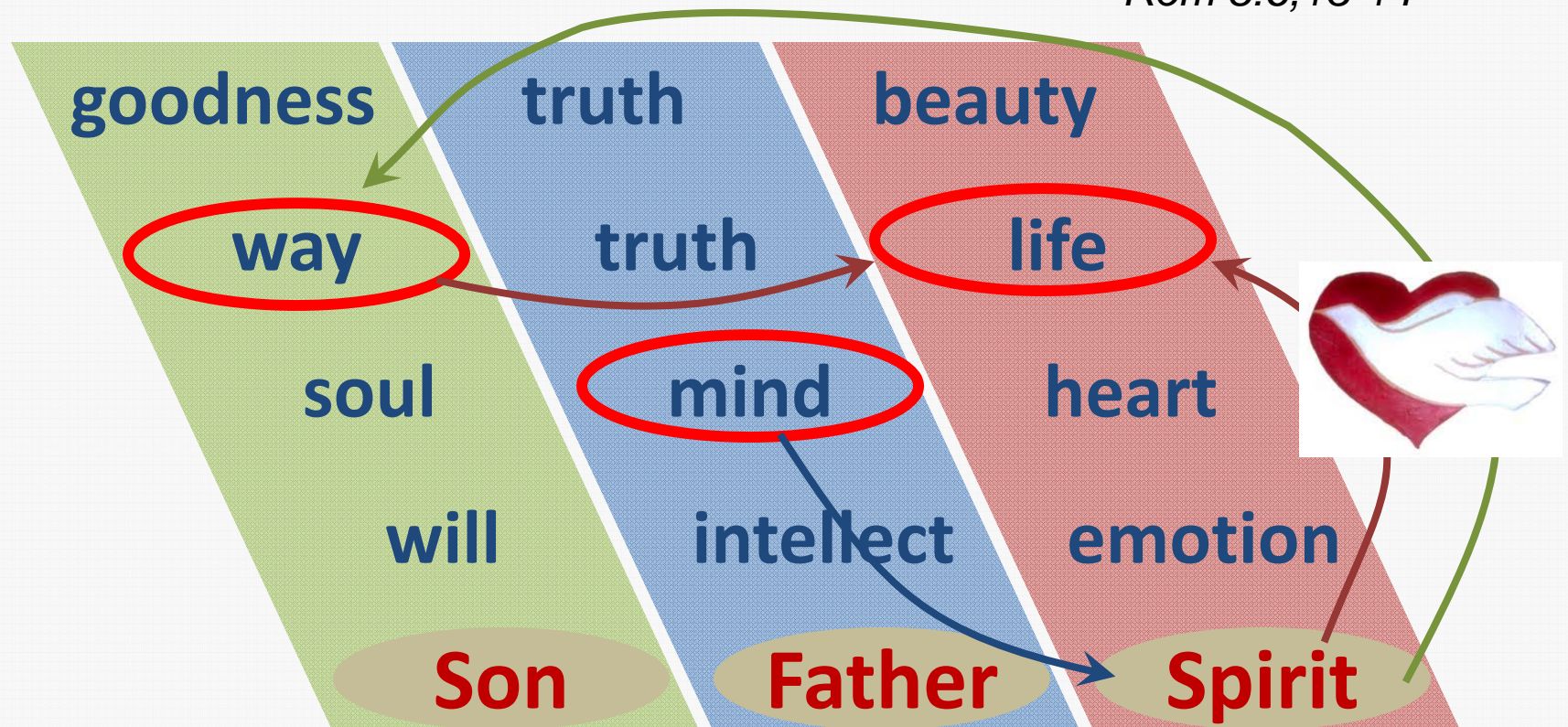




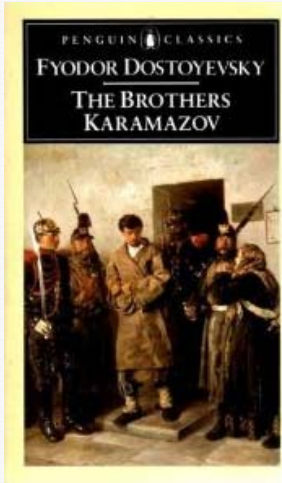
# How we become who we need to be

- “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the **mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.**”
- “. . .if **by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** For all who are being **led by the Spirit** of God, these are sons of God.”

*Rom 8:6,13-14*

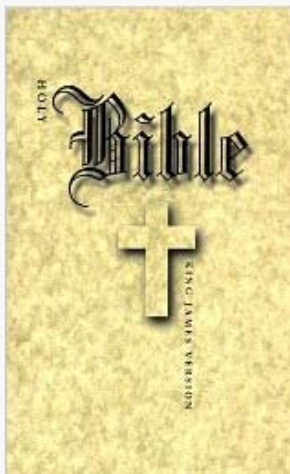


# People change by how they see Beauty



- “Is there beauty in Sodom? Believe me, that for the immense mass of mankind beauty is found in Sodom. Did you know that secret? The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and **the battlefield is the heart of man.**”

– Fyodor Dostoevsky



- “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and **on their heart I will write it**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

– Jeremiah 31:33



# Power for your art

- “It is the crux of your task as a communal body of fellow Christian artists to fire your art until it emits sparks that warm, or burn, those it reaches. . .in your artwork, **make the audience, believer or non-believer, jealous of the power and richness and wholeness of life** that is captured so convincingly and compellingly in the allusive forms you have fashioned.”

– Calvin Seerveld

- “[By a ‘learned life’] I mean the pursuit of knowledge and beauty, in a sense, for their own sake, but in a sense which does not exclude their being for God's sake. . .**We can. . .pursue knowledge as such, and beauty as such,** in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so.”

– C.S. Lewis

# Depth for your art

- “The world and life are common, every day, and almost empty to a great many people, but there are those who see that **the world and life are mysteriously wonderful.**”

– Robert Henri

- “The object is not to make art, but to be in the **wonderful state which makes art inevitable.**”

– Robert Henri

- “I am not interested in any one school or movement, nor do I care for art as art. **I am interested in life.**”

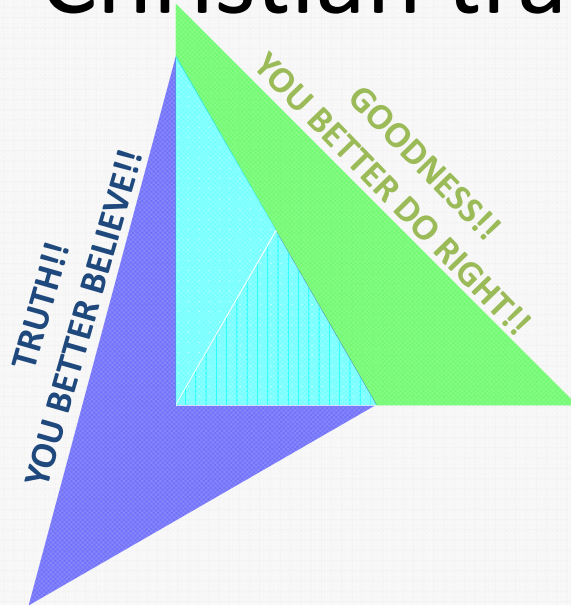
– Robert Henri

- “**I mortally and strongly defend the right of the artist to select a negative aspect of the world to portray** and as the world gets more materialistic there will be more to select from. Of course you are only enabled to see what is black by having light to see it by. . . Furthermore **the light you see by may be altogether outside of the work itself.**”

– Flannery O’Connor



# Christian trap #1: Preaching



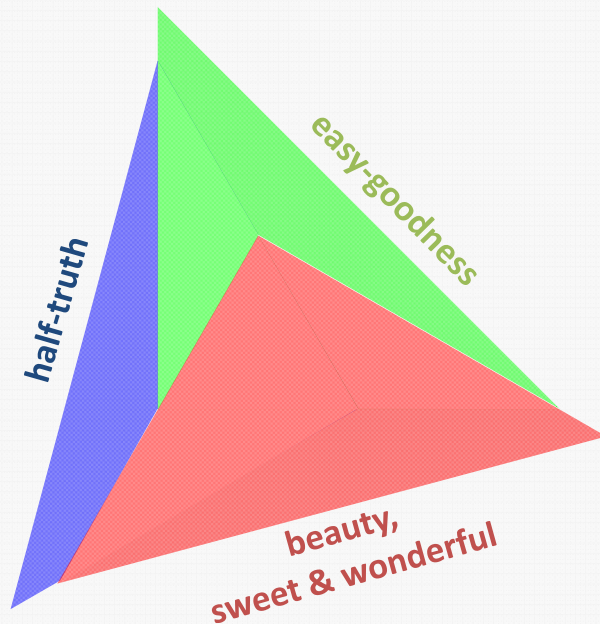
“. . .the Law. . . which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me.”

*Rom 7:7*

- “I thought I saw how [fairy stories] could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so **hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God** or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. **An obligation to feel can freeze feelings.** And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, **stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday School associations**, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons?”

— C.S. Lewis

# Christian trap #2: Sentimentality

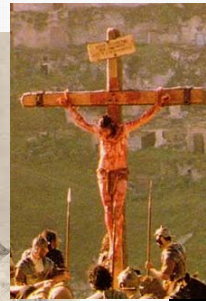
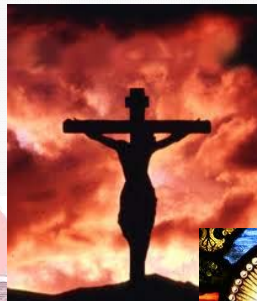
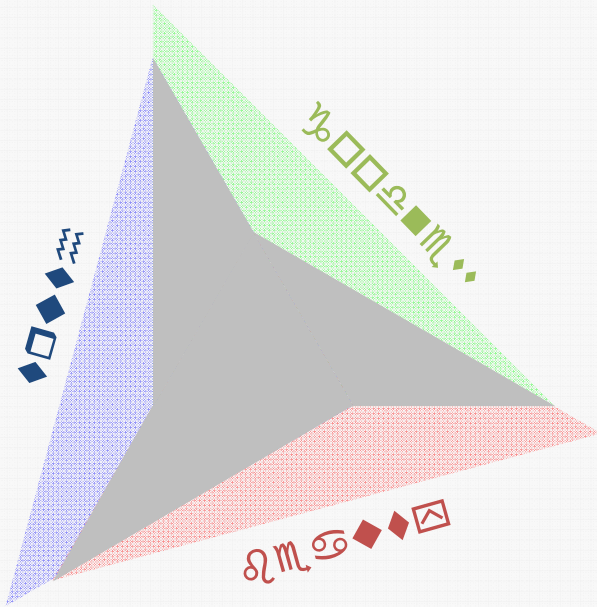


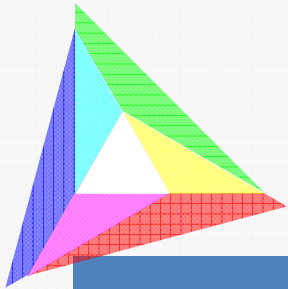
- “. . . whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if **anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.**” (Phil 4:8)
  - “dwell on” (*logizomai*) = “count up, focus on” not “restrict input to”
- “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even **expose them.**” (Ephesians 5:11)
- “**We speak God’s wisdom in a mystery,** the hidden wisdom . . . which none of the rulers of this age has understood.” (1 Corinthians 2:7)



# Christian trap #3: Christianese

- “Are you washed in the Blood?”
- “The world is in darkness without Jesus.”
- “You need a Savior.”
- “Jesus is our high priest.”
- “Mediator between God and man.”
- “Live life in a godly way.”
- “You can do it in the Lord’s strength.”
- “Let go and let God.”
- “To God be the glory.”
- “He is my hope.”





# What will our art do?

## Reach for the power

Enrich life with pleasing and profound artifacts to wear or display

Bring light to the hope that lives in the midst of darkness

Open the concrete depths of your journey to give others hope & wisdom

Co-explore life and expression via artistic dialog with other artists

Explore God's depth and mystery

## Fall in a Christian trap

Make Christian (or secular) kitsch

Tell half-truths to give empty hope

Pretend life is perfect with luscious feelings of godly praise

Have esoteric, elitist, exclusive dialogs only about art-at-the-cutting-edge

Preach simplistic doctrine

***Reach in and draw someone into God's mystery, draw them into humility before the glory of God, help them find real life in the heart of God, whether they know it or not.***





# The Power of Art

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