

Religious Philosophy of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, 1995. Kindle 1469 ff.)

There is an unchanging (stable) reality that abides throughout the whole of our existence. Often, I think it is possible for someone to feel as though this reality has been misplaced or buried. Childhood, when it is innocent and largely undamaged, gives easy access to this reality – it is the soul.

Among the more interesting experiences for a priest is the confession of children. The one thing I am certain to avoid is trying to teach children about sin when it is not part of their conscious existence. Convincing a child that there is an external parent (God) watching and judging their every thought and action is almost certain to create a certain distance from the soul itself. The question, “Am I ok?” is the language of shame, of broken communion, even communion with the soul. But, having done this now for 40 years, I can say that I see a gradual awakening in each child, an awareness of broken communion. The role of a confessor is not to widen that gap, but to help a child learn how it is bridged in Christ. I tell parents, “The only thing I want a child to know at first is the absolute certainty of God’s unchanging and unconditional love.” It is only in the context of such safety that, in time, an older adolescent can find the forgiveness and healing that they will inevitably need. If this is true of children, it is true for adults as well.

When Adam and Eve hide, it is the *exposure* of their nakedness that drives them away from God. This is shame. They are not hiding because they are afraid of God; they hide because they cannot bear their own nakedness. They have become alien to their own souls. And so, God, in His mercy, covers them. In confession we draw back the covering and dare to look towards our own soul. And (in Orthodox practice) we are then covered by the priest’s stole (epitrahelion) and drawn into communion with God as we hear the prayer of absolution.

What do we see when we look within? We usually see sin, embarrassment, failure, loneliness, the passions. These things are certainly there, but none of them constitute the soul. They obscure the soul. We come to know the soul (our own true self), and thus to see God, as we slowly clear away the detritus that covers the soul as mirror. This is asceticism in its many forms. Far more than simple fasting and prayer, it is primarily repentance, the *refusal* to call everything that encumbers the soul “my true self.”

There is a strange, inward paradox that accompanies this struggle. We naturally draw back from the things we see within ourselves that separate us from God. There can be an element of disgust (a form of shame). If we persist in identifying ourselves with that which disgusts us – then we discover that we stand in a position of alienation in which we have communion with nothing [non-being]. The struggle of a fastidious personality can be a path of abiding misery and loneliness. It is burdened by scrupulosity, driven to “clean things up.” It cannot bear the company of others (including God) unless the inner house is in order. The *logismoi* (thoughts and voices) that accompany this can be experienced as a terrible torment. Sometimes this is a pathology even requiring some form of medical intervention.

As a confessor, I listen carefully for this “voice” (the fastidiousness- one who is overly critical of one’s self). Tragically, the normal prayers that are read as part of our devotions can be taken up by this voice as a reinforced version of this torment.

The paradox lies in the fact that the things that disgust us, *that are truly made up of things we have thought, said, or done, are not actually the self* – the soul. However, we instinctively withdraw from an experience of disgust (and related experiences). The effort to “bear a little shame” is contrary to these instincts. As such, looking past them is a deep asceticism. We *instinctively* want to eat, but we fast. We *instinctively* want to sleep, but we keep watch. Ascetical

practices step over certain instincts for something greater. This is the virtue of *courage*.

It is with an element of courage that we sit with our shame in the presence of God and allow ourselves to move beyond it towards the true reality of the soul – that which is changeless and abiding. St. Gregory of Nyssa says, “To contemplate God is the life of the soul.” *De infantibus, III, 176 A*.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the young man falls into terrible sins and a wasteful life. However, we are told that “he came to himself” (Lk 15:17). This phrase makes it clear that he himself (his soul) is not to be identified with the terrible sins and a wasteful life. They are alien to him. In truth, he was fleeing from himself when he left the Father’s house. When he “comes to himself,” he returns to his true home.

In the Father’s embrace, there is only the true life (soul) of the younger son. There is no recalling of his failings in the words of the Father. “This my son was dead” (alienated from his soul), “but now he is alive.” And as he stands in the Father’s embrace, he perhaps sees the Father truly for the first time, now reflected in the mirror of his own soul.

This is salvation.

Holy Actions:

+**Missions Team** The Team will continue to collect food pantry items for Edinboro University Food pantry. See Anna R. or Debbie K. for more details.

---Also, There are OCMC summer mission trip scholarships available for anyone interested. See board in hall for more information on trips or see www.ocmc.org

+**Outreach Team** plans to have a booth at 2nd Saturday in Meadville in the next few months, volunteers are needed, see Isaac Bicko for more information.

Holy Services:

Today -- Panahidka/Luncheon for Vern Baldwin – Luncheon to follow

Wed. May 29th – Akathist – 6pm

**+Holy Ascension of the Lord –Thursday, June 6th Divine Liturgy
Great Vespers Wed. June 5th 6pm (Dinner Following)**

+Holy Pentecost – Sunday June 16th

+Patronal Fest Day and Parish Picnic Saturday June 29th 10:30am

UPCOMING

-Heirloom Garden Plants will be available God willing Next

week... (Please make a donation for the plants, donations will go to the Edinboro food bank.

-Andrew Angelini Grad Party Sun. June 2nd 3-5pm Parish Hall

-Chicken Barbeque – with Halupki July 14th 12-3pm

Saints Peter and Paul

Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641

Archpriest Fr. Daniel Mathewson – *Rector*

V. Rev. David Smoley – *Retired* **Lord’s Day – 5-26-2019**

Parish phone: 814-734-3801

Find us on the Web at: www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

**THE SAMARITAN WOMAN
CHRIST IS RISEN!**



5th SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone

4. Samaritan Woman. Apostles Carpus

and Alphæus of the Seventy (1st c.). Greatmartyr George the New at Sofia (Bulgaria—1515). Uncovering of the Relics of Ven. Makáry, Abbot of Kalyazin (1521). Martyrs Abercius and Helen, children of the Apostle Alphæus (1st c.). St. John Psichaita the Confessor, of Constantinople (9th c.). St. Augustine of Canterbury, Evangelizer of England (ca. 605).

**PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS
IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:** Newly Illumined Syra, Justin, Catherine ...

Those in need – Fr. Samuel, Fr. Andrew, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Eliza, Valerie, Paul, Pearl, William, Joseph, Terry, Rich, Karen, John, Stavros, Theona, Nickolas, Timothy, Judy, James, Amanda, Damian, Delani, Jeremiah, Megan, Mary, Christine, Rick, Timothy, The Homebound... Ann, Tanya, Richard, Ruth, William, Claudia Catechumens- Christian ... Travelers ... Military servers... Greg ... Newly Departed –Helen Miller, Anna Anderson, Rodney Senyo, Josephine Olvnik, Marilyn Filipos, Irene Hoover... Departed Orthodox Jeff, Catherine, John B., John S., Nickoli, Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... Special requests... Gilbert, Joanne, Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, James, Sean, Liam, Bill, Wesley, Zera, Kim, Jim, Margaret, Loren, Nick, Russell, Julia, Shelby, Janet, Mareen, Lynn, Jarrod, Zach.

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women Disciples of the Lord

learned from the Angel the joyous message of the Resurrection,

they cast away the ancestral curse

and elatedly told the Apostles:

“Death is overthrown!

Christ God is risen, //

granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 8 Troparion (Midfeast)

In the middle of the feast, O Savior,
fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety,
as Thou didst cry to all: “If anyone thirst, let him come to
Me and drink!”//
O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee!

Tone 8 **Kontakion** (*Pentecostarion*)

The Samaritan Woman came to the well in faith;
she saw Thee, the Water of wisdom and drank abundantly.//
She inherited the Kingdom on high, and is ever glorified!

Tone 4 **Kontakion** (*Midfeast*)

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all,
cried to all in the midst of the feast of the Law:
“Come and draw the water of immortality!”
We fall before Thee and faithfully cry://
Grant us Thy mercies, for Thou art the Fountain of our life!

Tone 3 **Prokeimenon**

Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing
praises! (*Ps 46/47:6*)

v: Clap thy hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
(*Ps 46/47:1*)

Holy Scripture:

Acts 11:19-26, 29-30 (*Epistle*)

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This

they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

John 4:5-42 (*Gospel*)

So He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.” And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?” The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

Holy Words:

The soul is a difficult thing to speak (or write) about. First, the word is used so commonly and widely that its true meaning becomes obscured. Second, the soul is largely unknown to each of us, despite its primary importance. So, I will begin by giving its simple meaning: the soul is our *life*. When we hear the story of Adam’s creation we learn that he is fashioned out of the earth. Then, God breathes into him, “and he became a living soul.” The soul is the life (there are no dead souls), and the life is a gift from God, the “Lord and Giver of Life.”

There is, of course, what we could call the “bios” of our existence – the mere fact of our biological life. But this alone does not constitute what is meant by “soul.” The soul is not only our life – it is our *true* life – our authentic existence. It is this authentic existence that is largely hidden from us. It is covered by so much that shapes our experience: pain, suffering, shame, dark intentions, fear, etc. In fact, much that we describe as our “existence” is little more than the effects of these experiences, particularly as they shape and energize the passions (our various desires). Here is a short description of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s thought on this point:

The journey towards salvation is marked by a successive elimination of all that we “have,” in order to reach what we “are.” The safest path and surest refuge is not to be deluded and fail to recognize ourselves – who we truly are. We should not believe that we are seeing our Selves when we are only seeing something that surrounds us – our body, our senses, the idea that others have of us.

For anything unstable [that which changes] is not us.

The soul is purified in this way, as she lays aside garment after garment. So, the ideal [salvation] will appear as that supreme instant wherein the soul, having laid aside all of her “corporeal” veils, presents herself naked and pure in spirit to the vision of God in a divine vigil. (from *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the*