

Conf 2 - Apatheia, Hesychastic prayer

Rediscover what we were/are meant to be

If we do not know what we are like when God makes us, we shall not realize what sin has turned us into. (St Gregory of Sinai On Commandments #50, in Philokalia IV, 221).

Fragmentation of our memory - distractive thoughts (logismoi)

The source and ground of our distractive thoughts is the fragmented state of our memory. The memory was originally simple and one-pointed, but as a result of the fall its natural powers have been perverted: it has lost its recollectedness in God and has become compound instead of simple, diversified instead of one-pointed. (St Gregory of Sinai On Commandments #60, in Philokalia IV, 222)

Assault of the passions - a foretaste of hell

Lakes of fire (cf. Rev. 19:20) signify self-indulgent souls. In these lakes the stench of the passions, like fetid bogs, nourishes the sleepless worm of dissipation - the unbridled lusts of the flesh - as it also nourishes the snakes, frogs and leeches of evil desire, the loathsome and poisonous thoughts and demons. A soul in such a state already in this life receives a foretaste of the chastisement to come. (St Gregory of Sinai, On Commandments, #37, in Philokalia IV, 219)

Silence to be with God

We too are called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with God, together as a community as well as personally; to be alone with Him — not with our books, thoughts, and memories but completely stripped of everything — to dwell lovingly in His presence, silent, empty, expectant, and motionless. **We cannot find God in noise or agitation.** (Mother Teresa)

Full of Silence

“I think it is very important, that union with God. You must be **full of silence**, for in the silence of the heart God speaks. An empty heart God fills. Even Almighty God will not fill a heart that is full – full of pride, bitterness, jealousy – we must give these things up. As long as we are holding these things, God cannot fill it. Silence of the heart, not only of the mouth – that too is necessary – but more, that silence of the mind, silence of the eyes, silence of the touch. Then you can hear Him everywhere: in the closing of the door, in the person who needs you, in the birds that sing, in the flowers, the animals – that silence which is wonder and praise. Why? Because God is everywhere and you can see and hear Him; but we cannot see and hear Him if our heart is not clean.” (Mother Teresa, *Where there is love there is God*)

Key points

- importance of inward grief (experience of mercy)
- Importance of humility (going from theology to gnosis)

Hesychastic prayer - be filled with silence

Apatheia, Nous, pneuma, psyche, pathe

Nous - intellect (as opposed to “reason”) - the highest faculty in man, through which - provided it is purified - he knows God or the inner essences or principles (not deductive/discursive like the reason/dianoia) - understands divine truth by means of immediate experience, intuition or ‘simple cognition’ (Isaac the Syrian); it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart; the organ of contemplation (theoria)

Theoria - contemplation - perception or vision of the intellect through which one comes to spiritual knowledge (gnosis); contrast with the practice (praktike) of the virtues, which is a necessary preparation

Theologian - active and conscious participation in or perception of the realities of the divine world (one who practices **theoria** and **discretion** to receive divine truth)

gnosis - knowledge of the intellect (i.e., intuitive knowledge) as distinct from that of reason

Gnostic

PURIFICATION AND APATHEIA

- Apatheia is the promised land

The promised land is dispassion [apatheia], from which spiritual joy flows like milk and honey (cf. Exod. 13:5). (St Gregory of Sinai, On Commandments #48, in Philokalia IV, 221).

- **praktike purify intellect; inward grief is still necessary** -

Every bodily activity - by which I mean fasting, vigils, psalmody, spiritual reading, stillness and so on - is directed towards the purification of the intellect; but without inward grief the intellect cannot be purified, and so be united to God through the pure prayer that transports it beyond all conceptual thought, and sets it free from all form and figure. (St Peter of Damaskos; Philokalia III, 119)

purity of heart - much more than sexual purity - this is an interior free of control by the pathe and with a oneness of thought, desire, direction

interior freedom - apatheia, purity of heart - not a **vice grip** but a peaceful interior state

GOOD FRUITS OF PURITY OF HEART

- reading Scripture in a piercing way

The physical eye perceives the outward or literal sense of things and from it derives sensory images. The intellect, once purified and reestablished in its pristine state, perceives God and from Him derives divine images. Instead of a book the intellect has the Spirit; instead of a pen, mind and tongue - 'my tongue is a pen', says me Psalmist (cf. Ps. 45:1); and instead of ink, light. So plunging the mind into the light that it becomes light, the intellect, guided by the Spirit, inscribes the inner meaning of things in the pure hearts of those who listen. (St Gregory of Sinai On Commandments #23, IV, 216–217)

- a true sanctuary and temple of the Holy Spirit

A true sanctuary, even before the life to come, is a heart free from distractive thoughts and energized by the Spirit, for all is done and said there spiritually. If we do not attain such a state in this life, we may because of our other virtues be a stone fit for building into the temple of God; but we will not ourselves be a temple or a celebrant of the Spirit. (St Gregory of Sinai #7, IV, 213)

THEOLOGIAN AND GNOSTIC

The theologian whose soul is gladdened and kindled by the oracles of God comes, when the time is ripe, to the realm of dispassion [apatheia]; for it is written: 'The oracles of the Lord are pure, as silver when tried in fire, and purged of earth' (Ps. 12:6. LXX). The Gnostic, for his part, rooted in his direct experience of spiritual knowledge, is established above the passions [pathe]. The theologian, **if he humbles himself**, may also savor the experience of spiritual knowledge, while the Gnostic, if he acquires **faultless discrimination** [discernment of spirits/discretion], may by degrees attain the virtue of theological contemplation. These two gifts, theology and gnosis, never occur in all their fullness in the same person; but theologian and Gnostic each marvel at what the other enjoys to a greater degree, so that humility and desire for holiness increase in both of them. That is why the Apostle says: 'For to one is given by the Spirit the principle of wisdom; to another the principle of spiritual knowledge by the same Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:8). (St Didachos of Photiki, #72)

PRACTICING SILENCE (MOTHER TERESA)

In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.

To make possible true inner silence, practice:

Silence of the eyes, by seeking always the beauty and goodness of God everywhere, and closing them to the faults of others and to all that is sinful and disturbing to the soul.

Silence of the ears, by listening always to the voice of God and to the cry of the poor and the needy, and closing them to all other voices that come from fallen human nature, such as gossip, tale bearing, and uncharitable words.

Silence of the tongue, by praising God and speaking the life-giving Word of God that is the truth, that enlightens and inspires, brings peace, hope, and joy; and by refraining from self-defense and every word that causes darkness, turmoil, pain, and death.

Silence of the mind, by opening it to the truth and knowledge of God in prayer and contemplation, like Mary who pondered the marvels of the Lord in her heart, and by closing it to all untruths, distractions, destructive thoughts, rash judgments, false suspicions of others, vengeful thoughts, and desires.

Silence of the heart, by loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength; loving one another as God loves; and avoiding all selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and greed.

I shall keep the silence of my heart with greater care, so that in the silence of my heart I hear His words of comfort, and from the fullness of my heart I comfort Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor. For in the silence and purity of the heart God speaks.”
— Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers*