

emerge from non-existence into being. And we receive all of this as a gift for which we are thankful. For this reason we do not have to justify our moral, ethical and spiritual orientation as human beings. It is “natural” to be that way because this conforms to the creative will of God. The “business” of life may distract us—and at times even overwhelm us—but this “living life” (to again turn to a phrase from Dostoevsky) all adds up to something and not nothing. Even further, if God “is,” then our lives actually add up to something much greater than the sum total of all of our human experiences in this life. The Gospel would call this “abundant” or “eternal” life.

God or Nothing. All in all an intriguing title for a book! I’m not sure that I will ever read the book, but for one last time I will claim that this stark “either/or” approach is a real one, meaning that it reflects a deep look at reality. Could we even speak of a “middle” choice? The agnostic “maybe” or “perhaps” does not sound all that attractive or reassuring. If we have chosen God over nothing, then our vocation is to embody this choice in lives of meaningful pursuits, beginning with the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Fr. Steven Kostoff

LOOKING AHEAD

Thursday, February 11:	6:30pm Inquirer Class
Saturday, February 13:	6:00pm General Panikhida 6:30pm Vespers
Sunday, February 14:	9:30am Liturgy

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FEBRUARY 7, 2015

ST. SPIRIDON ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

400 Yale Ave., Seattle, WA 98109



WEEKLY PUBLICATION

36th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Tone 3. Afterfeast of the Meeting. St. Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus on the Hellespont (4th c.). Ven. Luke of Hellas (ca. 946). The 1,003 Martyrs of Nicomedia (303).

“GOD OF NOTHING”

Recently, I was browsing through some journals at a bookstore, and I picked up the current issue of one of my favorite religious journals, *First Things*. I came across a promotion of a new book by an African Roman Catholic bishop whose name escapes me. The title of the book was *God or Nothing*. I was immediately attracted by that title. Not much more was said about the book’s contents besides some strong endorsements by other well-known thinkers and authors, so my own short reflections are based upon that to which I may think that title is alluding—or as to what direction I would pursue based on such a title.

This is because I have come to the conclusion that if God exists, then we are “something;” but if God does not exist, then we are “nothing.” Hence, my attraction to the starkness of this book’s arresting title—*God or Nothing*. In no way, however, am I denigrating or devaluating our genuine human experiences by my own personal reaction to this stark contrast. On the contrary, as human beings we think, we feel, we create and we love, just to bring to mind some of our deepest experiences which are causes of both joys and sorrows. Such human

qualities endlessly enrich our lives. These are the basic human experiences that we all share, whether we are theists or atheists. Without such experiences, we would say that life is not worth living. But what is above, below or behind such meaningful experiences? If God does not exist, then the inescapable and—in my humble opinion—troubling answer is “nothing.” Literally nothing. There only exists the void from which we emerged and to which we will return. There is life and yet there is decay and death. And this process of descent back into that void can only be postponed, but not eluded. The “business” of living life only covers up this stark truth. And that is good; otherwise there would be too much despair in the world. It is this wider-ranging truth about our existence that I am trying to capture when I claim that if God does not exist, then we are “nothing.” And, of course, there is Dostoevsky’s famous aphorism that “if God does not exist, then everything is p e r m i s s i b l e . ”

Yet, if God does indeed exist, as we believe, proclaim and hopefully live by, then we are genuinely “something.” We do not hover over a void, but rather have our lives grounded in the ultimate Reality. There is permanence above, below and behind the world’s transience. Our lives count. And they endure beyond the ravages of time and its attendant decay and death. That is because our lives are all contained within the “memory” of God. (This is why we sing “Memory Eternal” for the departed). This “something” that we are if God exists is contained in that inexhaustible scriptural revelation that we are created “in the image and likeness of God.” Our human capacity to think, to feel, to create, and to love are the result of that wonderful truth—that our lives are God-sourced as we

Tone 3 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

Let the heavens rejoice!
 Let the earth be glad!
 For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.
 He has trampled down death by death.
 He has become the first born of the dead.
 He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
 and has granted to the world//
great mercy.

Tone 1 Troparion *(The Meeting of our Lord)*

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace!
 From thee shone the Sun of Righteousness, ^Christ our God,
 enlightening those who sat in darkness.
 Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder,
 thou didst accept in thine arms the ^Redeemer of our souls,
 Who grants us the Resurrection!

Tone 3 Kontakion *(Resurrection)*

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One,
 leading us from the gates of death.
 On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
 with the Prophets and Patriarchs//
 they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Tone 1 Kontakion *(The Meeting of our Lord)*

By Thy Nativity Thou didst sanctify the Virgin’s womb
 and didst bless Simeon’s hands, ^O Christ God.
 Now Thou hast come and saved us through love.
 Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians,
 O only Lover of Man!