

Neville Goddard Lecture



Self Abandonment

Neville Goddard Lecture - Self Abandonment 06-1-1970

Week after week, as I take this platform, I know what I want to say. It is merely finding out how to say it so that it is intelligible, for we are dealing with a mystery. It's not something you can spell out and say, "Now this is it."

It's peculiar, the most fantastic mystery in the world. To me, to experience Scripture, to experience God's plan of salvation, is my interpretation of the whole purpose of life. That is what I firmly believe. I firmly believe that the roots of our 'being' are rooted in God, and God unfolds Himself creatively in us.

When I make that statement, I put myself on the side of that which is being transformed, say, a man. For metamorphosis is the theme of the Bible. That is the complete transformation of man into God. When I make a statement as I have just made it, it seems that this is man, you and I are the man, being transformed by a means other than ourselves, and I don't mean that at all. But man is so conditioned to believe he is a little worm that you approach it from that angle. You and I are the God transforming man into our image, into our likeness.

But then, if I said that to a large crowd, the curtain would come down and they wouldn't hear one word I had to say beyond that. But you and I took the plunge. We were the "sons of God," together making God, for the word God is a plural word. The word is Elohim.

“In the beginning God.” That word is Elohim; it is plural. And “God said, Let us make man in our image.” The same word is Elohim. It’s a compound unity, one made up of others.

We are told in Deuteronomy that “He has set bonds to the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.” No child can be born unless God occupies that little temple. These are the gods that came down. You and I are the gods that came down. We are transforming these identities, these men and women with which we are identified, into our likeness rather than being transformed by something other than ourselves. We are the gods that came down; and when we awake we are the gods spoken of in the very beginning.

“In the beginning God” ‘Elohim’, plural, the gods . . . “created the heavens and the earth,” like creating a theater for the display of its might and its creative powers. And then the God said, “Let us make man in our image”; so we came down and clothed ourselves in these garments.

We aren’t pretending. We completely abandon ourselves to these garments. The secret is self-abandonment. Never would you have made anything had you not loved it, . . . never! We so loved it; and so, having loved it, we commit ourselves to the object of our love and actually become it. Self-commission is the secret.

Now we are told, “Be imitators of God as beloved children”; in this world we have forgotten who we are. Now comes the revelation: “Be imitators of God as beloved children.” Just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, now imitate that. But on this level, I feel myself Neville. But I know from experience, I AM The One that became Neville, to transform this identity into my own Being, the Being that was, that has no beginning; and there was a plan that I set forth within myself when I buried myself in this being called “Neville.” This is true of everyone in the world.

Now listen to this carefully. It is the first chapter of Ephesians. I am just quoting four verses; you’ll find them within the first ten verses; so I have omitted just a few because they are not necessary for what I want to get over. “God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will,” “He destined us in love . . . through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, . . . which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time.” (Ephesians 1: 4, 5, 9, 10)

You listen to it carefully. Go home and you read it, in the first chapter within the first, I think it is the 4th, 5th, 9th and 10th verses of Ephesians. "God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." So, we see that the salvation of man is not an afterthought of the Creator. It is prior to this historical process. Long before this was animated and became history . . . human history, this decision was made. So, our fitness is the consequence, not the condition, of His choice.

So here, as Neville, I, the true Being, chose "Neville." I am going to "play" Neville. You chose the being that you've chosen and we came down into this and animated it, this historical process. We are the gods who made the decision. We are identifying ourselves with these garments; we are transforming these into ourselves.

Now that is something that the world shuns against. They abhor it; because they do not realize that man, the man, can do nothing to save himself. There is not a thing that man as a man can do. It is the God who is buried within man who does it. As we are told in the letter to the Philippians: "He", meaning God, "who started the good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." The "day of Jesus Christ" is the unveiling of this plan in you, for Jesus Christ is in you.

"Christ in you is the hope of glory." Were he not in you, then you would be a dead, dead body forever and forever; but the gods came down, and it takes all the gods, called "the sons of God," to form God. The One became fragmented into the many. One fell containing all. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Do you get it? Before there was a world, we were. We are the gods. We are in the One Being that is known in Scripture as God; and we came down for one purpose: to expand our own creativity, and we do it by actually burying ourselves in humanity.

Now, Crucifixion is either a demonstration of the most horrible failure in the world or the greatest success in the world. It has been proven that the seed that fell, which is called the Word of God and the Word of God is God, and that is God Himself.

"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The Word was the seed that fell into humanity. That is called the Crucifixion. Well, it rose, and it continues to rise, because all the sons will rise. None will fail. If one failed, you would have to leave everyone behind and go in search of the one, because the one that is missing completes the One, the "one body, the one spirit, the one Lord, the one God and Father of all."

So night after night as I take the platform, I know exactly what I want to say, and my problem is how to say it so as to be intelligible, to be understood by those who hear me. For man has been conditioned to believe that he is a silly little thing in the world who has sinned; and having sinned, now he must make all kinds of penance to redeem himself. Man cannot redeem himself. It is God who comes down; and by His crucifixion, which is the burial in man, God now demonstrates His creative power, that He can “die” and rise again. So, He “dies” in man.

“I AM crucified with Christ,” said Paul. “Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ who lives in me; And the life I now live in the flesh I live by reason of the faith that I have in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

So that Son of God is in you. You say, “I AM,” that’s He. That is the Son of God. But you so loved the object to whom you gave yourself that you abandon yourself completely and empty yourself of your Divinity, and just buried yourself in the object of your love; and you are going to transform it into your Self, who is God.

Then when you transform it, you are the same God, only you have expanded beyond that moment in Eternity when you ventured into this experiment, becoming your own creation.

So in the world of Caesar, “be imitators of God as beloved children.” Just as Christ loved us, and gave himself to us, now imitate that So, are you in love with money? There’s nothing wrong with it. Are you in love with fame? There’s nothing wrong with it. Are you in love with physical health? Nothing wrong with that! But, be in love with it. If you are in love with it, you must do the same thing that God did in the beginning, and you are that God of whom I speak who so loved the object that is you when you see it reflected that He abandoned Himself. No restraint. A complete abandonment of Self to the object of its love! For if there is no object of the love, no beloved, what is love?

There must be a beloved to demonstrate love, and so you have an object . . . your emanation, which is nothing more than your “wife,” . . . not your physical wife, . . . the body is your emanation. That’s your wife “till the sleep of death is over.”

And you so loved it; you are going to transform it into the most beautiful, perfect thing in the world, which is just like you, who is perfect. So, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.” That’s what we are told. So, He chose me.

Well, who is “He”? I AM He; but to become me, He has to forget that I AM He, and He thinks He is Neville. He has to. He chose me “in Him before the foundation of the world”; but now, I AM The One who forgot and became Neville.

When I awake, I know I was “before the foundation of the world.” But now I bring Neville with me, and now I have one more aspect of my protean being. I have another being I’ll redeem. I fell in love with it and brought it back; and now I am the protean being, that I can see others, and let the others see me as Neville. So, they see me as Neville. But do they really see me? They see me as Neville when they see me clothed in Power, clothed in Wisdom, or maybe clothed in Love: and they will see me because I so loved that that I gave my Self to it, and raised it to the level of my own Being prior to coming down into it and burying my Self within it.

So, when I try night after night to tell it, I hesitate because I wonder if this is as clear as I can make it. I know what I want to say, but how to say it so that it is understood, that it is intelligible? Because you have got to go through all the preconceived misconceptions that man has concerning Scripture. And so I say, to experience Scripture, to experience God’s plan of salvation, is really the whole purpose of life.

But while we are here, we can be anything we want to be; and the Being within us, who is our true Being, allows it and will go [through] the part with us and play everything. But I am speaking to the God in you, the God in Scripture, whose name is Elohim, or Jehovah, or the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s the same Being who is buried in you. He is actually buried in you.

And that Being will rise.

“Teach me, O Lord. Teach me, O Holy Spirit, the testimony of Jesus that I may actually comprehend wondrous things out of the Divine Law. Teach me, O Holy Spirit.”

Well, tell the story of the God who became man that man may become God. And then we are told the story in a very simple way, for:

“Truth embodied in a tale Will enter in at lowly doors.” [Tennyson]

So you tell it as the simplest tale imaginable. Right from the beginning you tell the story.

“Truth embodied in a tale Shall enter in at lowly doors.”

So, Mother would take me on her knee and tell me the story of Jesus. He had no father; but he did one day claim he was the Father. Well, she didn't understand that, and neither did I. He had no father, but he claimed he was the Father! "I and my Father are one."

Then she told me that he had a miraculous birth. It was not like any birth in the world, something different; and then she told me that he said that unless we are born in a similar manner, for he said, "I AM from above," that he was "born from above"; and "unless you are born from above, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Then he also said that the most perfect man born of woman was John the Baptist, and yet the least in the Kingdom is greater than John the Baptist; therefore John the Baptist cannot be in the Kingdom of Heaven if the least is greater than he!

No matter how little it becomes, the least is greater and he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Mother did not understand that, any more than I did when she told me. Then she told me that David "in the spirit" called him "my Lord." She didn't understand that, and neither did I. And then she told me that he identified himself as the Son of Man and then likened the Son of Man to a fiery serpent; and that unless the Son of Man is lifted up in the same manner in which the fiery serpent was lifted up, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then she told me that when he was baptized, a dove descended upon him and remained upon him, and the outer man knew. That outer man was called John, and he knew because it was revealed to him the one on whom the dove descended and remained was the Son of God . . . the one that came down from Heaven, for "No man can ascend into heaven except the one who came down from Heaven, the Son of Man."

All this was a mystery, but a lovely story that excited the child mind; and so you carried it with you. This is something that is all within you. And then comes this shocking suddenness. When you least expected it, it all happened in you.

We go back to Ephesians. "He set it forth as a plan in Christ for the fullness of time." He set it forth in Christ. In Christ? Yes, and Christ is in you! God Himself descended into man, and He set forth His plan of redemption in Christ. So, in Christ it is in man. It has, now, to unfold in man. So, it unfolded in me, and I realized that "I AM He" who came down, for no one can go up unless he first came down. Well, having gone up in the fiery serpent manner, then I must have been the one who descended. But when I went up, I

went up without the loss of the identity of Neville; so I came down and redeemed a being called Neville.

You come down and so identify yourself with the being that you believe yourself to be that when you go up you take that which you have redeemed with you. You present it to your brothers, for they are all waiting for the presentation of your act of faith. For faith is complete self-commission. I cannot commit myself to that which I do not love. So God is Love. So, I loved it, and then agreed with all of us to commit myself to that; and then I committed myself to it, and lost all consciousness of the Being that I really am in my self-commission to the object of my love.

And then I went through “hell,” as we all do. But as Paul said, “I consider the sufferings of this present time not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.” What glory? The only glory is the glory of God; so the cry of one who has accomplished the job is this, in the 17th [chapter] of John: “I have accomplished the work Thou gavest me to do. Now glorify Thou myself. Glorify Thou me with Thine own Self.” Glorify me with your own Self. “Return unto me the glory that was mine, the glory that I had with Thee before that the world was.”

So, bring it in now, the glory that I gave up in my self-commission to the object of my love. Now let it return. So, I brought back, individualized, a garment I can wear in Eternity. It was “dead,” and I, like the seed that fell into the ground and died, revealing the great secret, the mystery of life through death, so, I “died.” I died when I became this [indicating the physical body], and then suffered all the hell of the world.

And then the pattern, which I contained, unfolded within me. So, He has made manifest unto me the mystery of His will according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time. So, He set it forth in Christ as the plan. Well, that plan is Jesus Christ buried in man. It’s a pattern, so, the pattern Man.

How to tell the world that Jesus Christ is the pattern of salvation buried in man, when man has been taught to believe that Jesus Christ is a little man who walked two thousand years ago? And then disappeared, having told the story, to return again into this world physically that physical eyes would see him as coming from without; that’s what the world has been told. But that is the

“Truth . . . embodied in a tale, That it may enter in at lowly doors,”

For if you were told it as I've told it tonight, the world couldn't take it. They would be shocked beyond measure to hear what you have heard tonight. They would not accept it. They believe in some little external savior that came two thousand years ago, and who promised to return; and the great teachers of today, "great" in the sense of numbers but not in understanding . . . are looking for him to come from without.

He can't come from without, because He is buried within us. He can only come when He awakens within us. That pattern is the pattern in a seed. But this is God's Seed, the Word of God, buried in man. It unfolds within man; and when it unfolds within man, everything said of Jesus Christ, the individual in whom it unfolds experiences it in the first-person, singular, present-tense experience. Then he knows who God is.

He always was God, who emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of man; "and being found in the form of man, he became obedient unto death, even death upon the Cross" of man, and was made in that state a slave. But in the end, he fulfills his purpose, and then he is given a name that is above all names; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of all.

Well, who is that Jesus? He is in you. So, when you actually fulfill and accomplish the job that you took upon yourself, you bear the name of Jesus. There is only one Lord. We all return, scattered as we are we return as the one Lord, the one God, the one Father of all: "one body, one spirit," . . . not many; and yet without loss of identity.

If I could take you with me into the actual experience, coming through two mornings ago . . . Here I AM. On the surface of my being I know exactly what I am doing, and I am Spirit! And here is this whole vast world, and the world is "dead," just dead. But I cannot move it unless I come down into it. I come down into it. But now with the memory of having been "born from above," having come down into it, I can change it. Prior to being "born from above," you lose all consciousness of the Being that you are that came from above, and you come back night after night in the "garment," and you are simply one more of the crowd, lost. But now, after the "birth from above," after you begin to grow in stature in the favor of the gods who preceded you in the same, similar "birth," memory now remains, for you come back in the morning from your union with the brothers. And you come back and you see it for what it is. It's all "dead."

But now you do not lose the consciousness, as you did prior to the "birth from above." So you come down. You can change it if you so desire. But why change it?

Listen to these words that came from Blake when Blake departed this world. But Blake was “born from above” long before he departed this world. So, in a book called “Looking at Modern Paintings,” there is a chapter on Max Beckman, considered a great modern artist of modern paintings. He said he met Blake in this super-terrestrial world, and there was this giant of a man, like a supernatural being, and he waved greetings to him, and he said to me: “Fall back. Have confidence in objects. Do not let yourself be intimidated by the horror of the world. Everything is ordered and correct, and must fulfill its destiny in order to attain perfection. Follow this path, and you will attain from your own ego an ever-deeper perception of the eternal beauties of creation. You will also attain an ever-increasing release from all that which now seems to you so sad and terrible.” The whole thing is ordered. The whole thing leads towards the perfection that you determined to bring about when you emptied yourself of God and actually became the being that you are today. And you will awake from it all, and you will return to the glory that was yours “before that the world was,” only magnified beyond what it was by reason of your venture into this world of “death.”

This was the limit of contraction. The limit of opacity and you took it upon yourself. Now there is no limit to the expansion, to the translucence that you bring back. So, we all are returning to the Being that we were “before that the world was.” So when we read: “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,” we were the ‘gods.’ We were the “sons of God” that collectively make God.

So, that wonderful confession of the Hebrew faith is the greatest confession in the world:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”

Jehovah, which is simply “I AM”. Translated the Lord “Adonai” the Lord; and here our God, that’s plural, “Elohim.’ We are the “gods”; but together we are “Adonai” . . . One. So, it takes the One made up of many to fall –the One God that is the confession, the Shema of Israel:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Never forget it. No little man, little picture, do you stand before and worship. All this is “dead”; and men make idols of men. So he has money, or he is a tyrant, like a Lenin; so they make a little icon of Lenin, and thousands every day walk past this stupid little thing that is kept on display. And I read Buckley’s statement today that was datelined “Leningrad.” It used to be St. Petersburg. It was Peter’s Square, the same square. Now

it is Leningrad, and here is this little mummified thing; and a friend of his walking by the little mummified thing had his hand in his pocket, and the guard in the most impressive manner said, "Take your hand out of your pocket. You are passing through holy ground. Here is the word made flesh, and he dwelt among us."

And the way he treated it was perfectly marvelous, the way he treated this most stupid concept of worshipping this little thing that they had to pick up a few years ago and rebuild, because time takes its toll and it was disintegrating. And this is their little icon that they worship. *

* See L.A. Times article I tell you, the only God in the world is you. There is no other god. One day you will know it. One day He will unfold within you. Read the story carefully, for when He unfolds within you, everything said of Him in Scripture you are going to experience in the first-person, singular, present. . tense experience. And His only Son, which is only the personification of all the experiences that you have ever had as man, so take all the experiences of man and all that man could ever experience, and fuse it into a single whole and personify that whole, and it comes out as David, the David of Scripture, the great Psalmist. That's David. He stands before you, and he calls you, "my Lord." He calls you, "my Father."

That is the only Son of God, which is a personification of the sum total of all the experiences of humanity. So when you, playing the part that you are playing, have gone through all the gamut that man is capable of experiencing, in the end, you awake, and then the sum total of the experiences is fused and personified and stands before you; and he is that glorious, beautiful lad David, and he calls you, "my Father," "my Lord." And the drama is over as far as you are concerned.

Then you join the brothers that you knew before the world was, and you contemplate the world of death. You become one of those who, in great Eternity contemplate death; and you too will say, "What seems to be is to those to whom it seems to be, and is productive of the most dreadful consequences to those to whom it seems to be, even of torments, despair and eternal death. But Divine Mercy steps beyond and redeems you in the one body, the Lord Jesus," [from Jerusalem] . . who is Jehovah.

"There is only one body, one spirit, one lord, one God and Father of all."

So all are redeemed eventually, but the man, as a man can't redeem himself. It's God in man that is doing the work. "He, who began the good work in you, will bring it to completion at the unveiling in you of God" as you. So my problem, night after night, is to

find words to tell it. I know what I want to say, but the problem is how to say it, how to say it that it is understood, that it is intelligible, because you must always bear in mind that you are facing an audience that may not be prepared for the shock, for it is a shock to the human mind to tell them who they are. They would rather depend on something external to themselves and pray to it; so they go to church and light a candle, and they bow before some little man-made cross or a man-made star and they do all these things on the outside; and no one has confidence in himself, and the Self of man is God. That wonderful human imagination of yours . . . that is the Eternal God.

So, tonight I say, our roots are in God; and God Himself unfolds Himself within us. I could have said, "Our roots are in divine imagining, and Divine Imagining unfolds Itself within us." But it doesn't matter. I personally like the word "God," but I do not put Him on the outside as something to worship. The world will accept that better if I said "God" than if I said "Divine Imagining." So, I did not say it in the beginning of the lecture, I now present it to you. But when you imagine, that's God creating. And "all things are possible to God." So begin to imagine. That's God, God-in-action. But believe in the reality of the imaginal act.

So, you imagine yourself to be what reason denies and your senses deny; but imagine it. God had to completely abandon Himself to the form of man to believe Himself man. Do you know what that is? The Being that you really are? For I tell you, when you come back after the "birth from above," and find yourself Spirit, I mean Spirit, but more real than anything in the whole vast world all put together, but you are Spirit, and you are more real than any object in space or all the objects in space.

But to come down prior to the birth is to forget yourself as Spirit. God is Spirit, and you do it after this birth without loss of identity. That's the lovely part about it: when you come back into the world and pick up the garment that is asleep on the bed, and quite normally bathe it and shave it and feed it and do all the normal things with it, but you know it to be a garment. And you know you've extracted from it a certain identity, which identity you take back as Spirit, for the body is going to be put into the furnace and be discarded. That will be simply reduced to the ash that it is, but you have extracted from it a certain identity; and you take back into the Brotherhood your accomplishment. You came down and died as a man, and now you go back, bringing back the identity of the man that you wore through the ages. You take it back! And you are all greeted in joy because you accomplished that which you intended.

So, the Will of God will not turn back until He has executed and accomplished the intents of His mind. In the latter days you understand it perfectly, only in the latter days.

So, “the sufferings of the present age cannot be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us, for those whom He foreknew,” . . . and He foreknew all of the sons . . . we are the sons. Regardless of your sex, we are the sons, for in the Resurrection we are above the organization of sex. We are neither male nor female. We are God. “And those whom He foreknew, He also predestined; and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified. He also glorified.” So, no matter what you have done as man, you will receive justification . . . in other word divine acquittal . . . complete acquittal, no matter what you have done. If you have played the part of a Hitler or a Stalin, or any other monster, you will be acquitted.

On this level you want them all to suffer; but your brothers, knowing the part you played, they don’t want you to suffer. They want you to awaken from the dream of being a Hitler, the dream of being a Stalin, or any other horrible character in the world. And so, when you come before Him, having been called, that is justification.

“Justification” in Scripture is nothing more than divine acquittal, and after justification comes glorification, which is God’s gift of Himself to you. You are then God the Father! And all the sons together form God the Father!

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Two Tombs in Russia: A Saddening Contrast

By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

LENINGRAD . . . Everybody knows that Russia is a land of paradoxes, but few have imagined how little pains the Communists take to conceal them.

On the road to Zagorsk, the spiritual home of old Russia, you pass a splendid monument, a graceful, gently-arched titanium bow tapering, 75 feet high, into a missile, the first to orbit the earth: a fine commemoration of an extraordinary scientific achievement that required extraordinary resources.

A few miles further down the same road you note that a central hydrant delivers the water to the neighboring villagers. There is no running water 15 miles from the capital of the country that orbited the first satellite.

At Zagorsk you visit the monastery of St. Sergius, the patron saint of Russia. Here is one of the three surviving seminaries in the Soviet Union. For a while they were all shut down and then after the war, eight were permitted to reopen. Khrushchev, in pursuit of moderation, cut them down to three. But the abbot does not talk about such matters. They recently buried the Patriarch Aleksiy, at age 92. Many thought him a fellow traveler for consenting to the long list of humiliations imposed on his church by the Soviet government. But he presumably knew that protests would not avail him, and reflected that martyrdom is inefficient in Russia. He lies in a little catacomb underneath one of the old sacred buildings, with a few wilted flowers on his grave.

The grave I saw the day before was something else. So heavy is the continuing demand to see the tomb of Lenin that the crowd stretches for two to three hours on a typical day. Honor guards keep the line moving at a rate that permits over 2,000 people to slip by every hour.

In front of us were schoolgirls, tip-toeing down the stairway, their right hands frozen in salute. You could almost hear their excited heartbeat. The guards hushed those who had not already been arrested by the mystery and the silence.

My companion had his right hand in his pocket, and the guard brusquely told him to take it out . . . one does not slouch toward Bethlehem.

All over Russia, the banners proclaiming Lenin's 100th birthday have gone apocalyptic in some, "Lenin lived. Lenin lived. Lenin will live." (In the beginning was the Word...) Or "The Holy Lenin" appeared on this earth in 1870. (The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us ...)

We were now just a few steps away from the turn to the right which brings you in view of Lenin, who died 46 years ago, but is preserved for the pilgrims who file so reverently by his remains, exposed in a glass coffin. Up you climb, a half dozen steps, and then over past Lenin's feet, so that you stare directly down at his face. How chancy it all is. When the Tsar was overthrown, Lenin was in Zurich, rubbing oil on his balding pate, wondering whether modern, non-ideological science would bring back his hair. Lenin was out of luck. None of the sciences he invoked ever did anything for him.

In Leningrad, beautiful Leningrad, the Soviet government has transformed a cathedral into a permanent museum of “religion and atheism.” It is a child’s garden of anti-religious graphic art, done under Lenin’s rubric, “We seek the emancipation of the working people from the superstitions of religion.”

Pity the poor Russians. Imagine, St. Lenin as a substitute for St. Paul.

We went by an exhibit of torture instruments . . . “These,” our guide told us matter-of-factly, “were used by the religious people during the Inquisition.”

“Are they,” I asked, “a part of the Lubyanka collection?”

At first she smiled. But quickly she thought better of it. “That is not a funny joke,” she said. She is a very sweet and scholarly lady, and I did not wish her to be hostage in surrogate ideological warfare, so I said that I agreed with her, that no jokes about torture are funny. She said, spotting a copout,

“No, I don’t mean that jokes about torture aren’t funny, I mean jokes about what you said aren’t funny.”

I retreated, as travelers to the Soviet Union should. Sadly, believing as I do that all, all is lost to any society that dishonors the King of Kings. But that is a personal prejudice, which in Russia only St. Sergius and a few other subversives cherish; hoping as they do for a turn of events, in which connection God would prove most useful.

Let us go into the Silence.