

First Paper:
My Journal
on
**Quest for
The True Light**
Reflections and Prayer
by
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towards
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Introduction:

This is about the loss-of-Light experience. The end of the experience of seeing light with the eyes closed, in a vision, while being in a relaxed state, meditating or just asleep. The loss experience brings to focus what brought the Light in the first place and hopefully suggests a path for recovery.

Trying to cover 29 years of experience, while capturing the vivid feelings at turning points, all in a short paper is a challenge. So, I would revert to a variation of narrative, wide-angle detached account, with vivid description of live experience coupled with quotes of my prayers, and flashbacks adding details that were deliberately left out of the narrative. While I had to be selective in choosing the visions involved, for lack of space, I did not hold back on the intensity of feelings associated with the loss-of-Light experience and the attempts for its recovery.

Finally, I make comparisons between this experience and the Light experience in the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory Palamas.

Narrative account, the background:

My experience of the Light is a light that comes with a feeling that it is a special light, a sign of blessing, a light without shadows. To highlight its specialty, another vision of light comes along: showing a light bulb light with shadows, a frustrating light that feels useless; only one appearance of it was enough to show the specialty of the Light.

The first three experiences of Light were of a blinding light breaking through a window in the darkness, a different window every time, but always opening into an infinite space of blinding light everywhere. That is how I felt, somehow, even though I was blinded by it. It was the ultimate certainty and meaning. And a feeling of blissfully overwhelming love came from thin air in the quiet darkness. It was so intense and real that nothing else mattered.

Following that, the Light-without-shadows was not blinding any more. It was not a window on infinitely bright space, but more like glowing objects or a glowing patch that varied in shape, color and brightness, and

it lingered longer. I would call it the diffused Light-without-shadows. Even though the feeling was not as intense as that of the True Light, it was still a feeling of bliss and love that would come from thin air in the dark, before going to sleep. That was the highlight of my day for many years.

Twenty years later the blinding Light came for the fourth time. This time it came in conjunction with the diffused-Light to show me the difference. The blinding Light was the True Light, while the defused-Light was the True-Light passing through a barrier. A barrier of daily temptations and concerns. I was grateful to see True Light once more, but who I am to request a repeat? I already had more than my fair share. Perhaps it is natural that the True Light would never appear again as part of God's economy. I would settle for the defused-Light from now on. For the following seven years, I kept seeing the defused-Light almost every other night as I went to sleep reciting Jesus prayer and my added devotions. A feeling of bliss visited me from this air in the dark. However, with the passage of time the Light was getting dimmer, and dimmer and the feeling of blessing was getting weaker and weaker. Yet I would settle for any trace of it, until finally, it stopped completely.

I thought it was one of those periods when it would be interrupted for a few days following some misbehavior of mine, only to come back after I expressed my sincere repentance. But this time it didn't. Days, weeks and months passed by with no trace of Light or blessing, in spite of my heart-felt prayers and passionate devotions. On the first sad anniversary of losing the Light, I prayed as passionately as I could, and I begged to see the Light, any trace of the Light, no matter how dim. And, yes, I received a response; there was Light but not for me. In a vision, I saw a tree with three branches. It was a special tree with "Blessing" that resided where the three branches met. I stretched up trying to touch the Blessing point. But there was blinding Light just behind that point. I could not look at the Light for fear of having my eyes burned. So, I turned my face away, while still trying to touch the Blessing point. It was an acrobatic attempt that failed. With sadness I realized that I was simply unfit to see the True Light. .

With sadness I realized that not seeing the Light had nothing to do with "God's economy", but simply with my being unfit for the experience anymore. Now I understand why there was a twinge of regret in the Voice "Nabil, fear not" that came with the first True-Light appearance. With that Voice that was out of this world, there was a twinge of regret as if saying, "I wish you could have endured it longer, but I had to come now because you won't survive otherwise" (I was about to commit suicide, so that my ex would get the life insurance money). The True Light came to me prematurely.

Perhaps God's plan is to appear to people when they are ready for Him, near the end of their lives.

But for me, it is too late; I can't walk away from the Light, yet right now I'm not fit for it. I miss the Blessing.

This must be temporary, I thought. I'm sure that with intense prayers and sincere devotions I will recover. But, days, weeks and months passed by with no trace of Light or Blessing. Unlike the previous year, it wasn't just that "God's economy" required that, but that I continued to be unfit for the experience. My sadness was building up every day for the past year till it reached the crushing point.

The turning point:

I didn't understand why ... I waited and waited. As months passed by, with no Light in sight, and no Blessing that comes from thin air in the dark, my hope was fading and my worries were mounting... Until my despair overflowed in tears. My long suppressed grief flew uncontrollably for hours and hours. In my desperate hope to have a glimpse of the Light, I recited my prayers, and devotional love to God, as I am used to every day, but this time with passion and tears. As usual, I visualized Jesus carrying the cross for us, the sinless carrying the cross on behalf of the sinful, I felt overwhelming love and gratitude to Jesus; I reflected on the bursting life

everywhere, in its mysterious ways, and I felt that mystical love to the Holy Spirit; I reflected on our origin that is in the highest "Abyoun dabishmaya", said in Aramaic, brings refreshing love. That used to bring me the blissful feeling of love that comes from thin air in the dark. But now even though I put my heart in it with all the passionate love I have, the Light was no more.

"I beg you O Lord, make me worthy of seeing your Light again ...Hiding from your Light is hell on Earth I beg you with my overflowing tears, to give me an answer, a sign of any form!"

The response was swift: I saw gray light everywhere. Finally, there is light ... some kind of light without shadows, but there was something eerie about it

"It was a veil with Your infinite Light behind it ... a gray veil.

Gray as the color of corporate world ... the world of human knowledge, rat race, greed and false pride.

Oh God, it was my sins of being so submerged in this world that blocked your Light and Blessing from reaching me. Thank you, my Lord, for revealing it to me."

Then I saw pink light everywhere ... an eerie light, even though it, too, was without shadows! ...

"A pink veil reducing your infinite light to a trickle...

Pink like the color of "Sex at Eleven" on television ...

My vision of the color of lust ...

The sin of lust blocked your Light and Blessings.

Thank you, O' Lord, for revealing it to me.

One layer of sin after another take turns in distancing me from you."

I reflected on the circumstances surrounding the sighting of True Light.

It happened only when I was trapped in an oppressive situation that destroyed my earthly world. The Light came to rescue me. But, sadly the empowerment I received brought me temptations that I couldn't resist. First, with the curing of my stuttering, following "Nabil, fear not", my corporate career advanced, boosting my false-pride. That resulted in degrading the true Light to defused-Light. Nine years later, I gained more freedom in my life. More temptations followed, and more falling into temptations.

With tears I admitted:

"Oh Lord, you gave me enough warning all the way. You startled me with the vision of the huge man with grim face and "victor-posture" entering my life; and with a most seductive woman entering my life too. I couldn't stop neither one of them. Soon, I had corporate success to boast about and a trophy girl friend to show around ... how shallow that was!

You warned me with utmost clarity:

Following a surge in my image-building ways, I had a vision of a man who stood up and declared loud: "We can't afford all this earthly luxury, its cost is so huge". Stretching out his arms to express how huge it was, he took the form of the cross.

O Lord, You were that man telling me to cease and desist from my egotistic way. Sadly, I felt the guilt but ignored Your message. How sorry I am.

And while I was submerged in a lusty moment, I saw a vision of the face of a holy woman looking down at me, from above. She looked at me with empathy and pity, shook her head as if rebuking me, and closed her eyes in sadness ... she gave up on me. I felt the shame but ignored her message. It breaks my heart.

No wonder I was getting less and less of Your Light. Your messages kept coming in all the way and I kept ignoring them.

Suddenly I see a more horrific fact: Not only was I defying you messages constantly, but I was also using the benefit of Your Light to commit more sins! Seeing Your Light and hearing Your Voice, cured me from my stuttering and enabled me to see Your image in the physical world and in the world of dreams. While I tried to spread Your word in speech clubs, New-Age circles and to friends who shared their dreams with me, I was also grabbing earthly benefits to myself. Such circles became fertile grounds for growing false-pride and hunting fields for seducing women. Men who “admired” my “wits” boosted my pride, and women who shared their dreams with me ended up in my bed. I was like a kid in a candy store with unlimited credit card. And the credit card was the empowerment You gave me through Your Light.

How horrific it is to realize that not only I was defying Your messages, but also I was also using Your Love to defy them.

Oh Lord, how could I do that?!

My heart sinks into a bottomless abyss!

The laziest of the three slaves buried the talent and returned it back as it was ... (Mt. 25:14-29)

But I spent the ten talents and returned nothing.

If he was condemned, what do I expect for my fate?

Like a prisoner locked behind many doors, I don't know how to unlock the doors ... In my despair, I ask for Your help and, once again, I beg you with my broken heart to give me an answer, a sign of any form!”

Once again His response was swift: In a vision, I saw a white patch of defused light. It was more intense than the previous two, and it was pleasing, but it wasn't everywhere ... it was limited . By extrapolation, I remembered that The True Light was even more limited: A flash coming from a narrow point with a mysterious feeling of opening a window to infinite space of blinding Light. The narrower the Light, the closer it is to the True Light.

“It's the path of straight and narrow, as my freedom should be.

Thank you, O' Lord, for revealing it to me.

But how do I put limitations on my loose behavior?”

And for the third time His answer came in the blink of an eye: The patch of white light changed its boundaries into sharp edges... like swords bounding the light.

“Stab temptations with the sword”.

“Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the sword of God” (Eph. 6:17)

“... to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12)

“Thank you, O' Lord, for showing it to me so clearly. A picture says a million words.

But, given my record, I don't know how to do that on my own:

The first three sightings of True Light happened when I was trapped in a virtual prison.

The fourth sighting happened when I was restricted by physical heart pain when I fell to temptations.

Then I learned how to cure myself from that pain.

With the two external limitations removed, I'm on my own, and my record is disappointing.

The Samurai stabs his heart as an apology to his Emperor, his earthly god...

But I can't even stab temptations to please my Heavenly God, the King of Kings!

My sin is unforgivable

And my sliding away from You was unnoticeable, until it was too late:

Yet, you knocked on my door every night as I expressed my true love to you ..

But my door was locked by my sin ...

Like inviting a lover to visit me, then failing to open the door..
And I didn't know You were knocking on the door until it was too late ...
I'm horrified of the thought of it.
My regret is unstoppable.
Your Light pierced through the door leaving its signature: Light without shadows ...
But sadly it was dimmed by the barrier, and it carried its color too.
That should have been a sign and warning that I'm distancing myself from you ..
But in my foolishness, I thought the door was a blessed door, for it was glowing ...

I should have known that veils don't shine, and doors don't glow.
Only Your through-Light makes them look so.

So, here I am now: Can't glance at your Light.
Even the cat can stare at the king..
But I can't even glance at light of my God.
My shame is unbearable

Heaven and hell are here and now ...
Judgement Day is every day!
To gaze at your Light with awe and joy ... or to hide from your Light for fear of burning ... is the difference.
From basking in your light ... to hiding from your light...
My grief is inconsolable."

From now on, there will be no ambiguity about what to do: Fight temptations with utmost decisiveness. No more delusional belief that I can slide into indulgences, yet keep the True Light by just expressing my true love to God. No matter how true love to God is, and no matter how passionately I express it to Him every day, I will not see the Light unless I conquer temptations. Not that God is punishing me, but that His knocking on my door every day can't be heard as the door keeps growing thicker and thicker.

It is a quest for your Unobstructed Light...
The only True Light...
How I relate to Your Light determines whether I'm in Heaven or hell.
But whether I'm in Heaven or hell, I'll always love you with all my heart
But, where do I go for help?

Many chant "we have seen the True Light" ..but not "we have lost the True Light"
They can't help me.

"O God, I have no one but You. You are everything for me (1 Cor. 15:28), I'm too ashamed even to ask for your help again"

Restart "Reboot":

A whisper: "Look into your first three dreams". In a flash I could see my earliest three dreams, when I was three years old. (listed below at the foot note). They were strange dreams that surprisingly remained vivid all those years, yet they defied explanation by any psychology book or analyst. They had to wait until I joined the MTS program to have them deciphered ... as if they were in a time capsule waiting for the right moment to provide guidance Their message was:

- A touch of class in love gives a Christian vision of the world.

- Work like a mule, who brings nourishment but never eats, serving the Church in a down-to-earth manner
- Strive to make Christ happy; the Father will bless you and the Spirit will rest you in peace.

Following those dreams, 63 years ago, I asked my parents for a black balloon! My mother took it as a bad omen. But in reality it was just celebrating the sight of clergy in black visiting the bishop next door.

My only hope is in the guidance of a three-year old child, for to children the kingdom of heaven belongs (Lk. 18:16). I needed all this suffering to realize that, unless I receive the kingdom of God as a little child, I will never enter it (Mk. 10:15). Then, and only then, I will not be a slave to temptation but a child of God (Ga. 4:7).

It is time to “re-boot”, to start all over again. Work like a mule at the foot of the Church, and walk like a child carrying a black balloon, on the path to the True Light.

Conclusions on the nature of the True Light:.

From my journey, alone, even without reference to scripture, I concluded that:

- The True Light creates multitudes of circumstances, contrasts and forms that help define what it is and what it is not. The True Light:
 - Belongs to a living being (in my first encounter). A being with movement (flickering wings that were the window of Light); a voice (“Nabil, fear not”); and feelings of love, care and regret, as was implied in the tone of voice.
 - Comes accompanied with an invisible, but very real love, as if emanating from thin air in the dark. It feels like a field of love filling everything; just waiting for the right conditions to resonate with us.(all encounters)
 - Is the ultimate certainty, as it was felt; yet not to be confused with human knowledge (the first encounter was followed by a vision of Heisenberg Quantum Mechanics equations written in light too. But it was a faint neon light hanging from cheap plastic sheet. This peak of human knowledge was trying desperately to compete with the True Light but failed miserably). The True Light showed by example that no human knowledge is even close to it.
 - Belongs to a mysterious being: It came with a mysterious hissing sound as the beam of light swept its way across the darkness. (second encounter)
 - This being is of unstoppable power as the Light penetrated the most formidable “steel wall”, to enlighten the darkness. (second encounter)
 - Yet, this mighty power is expressed only softly, as the hard steel, at the above-mentioned point, was transformed into soft flesh, like lips, through which the Light emerged.(second encounter)
 - It is deeply seated in life: emanating from under the water. (third encounter)
 - It is a language of communication: It brings messages through voice and movement (first encounter); and symbols. (all encounters)
 - And it respond to requests, if presented from the heart (asking for a sign, August 2013).

- It is always the same: a blinding flash of white light, opening to an infinite space where every point in it glows with infinite light.(all four encounters)
- But it comes from a different window every time. The window represents the topic of the message it is bringing.(all four encounters)
- It changes life permanently. The change is related to the window it came from.(all four encounters)
- Is of a nature unlike ours. Unlike the light of our world, The Light is always without shadows. To make the point, the first sighting was followed by another showing, a light bulb with light and shadows. It created a distressing feeling to make the point. (next to the first encounter)
- Its first appearance is that of a trinity: flickering wings, light and voice. (first encounter)
- Not all Lights without shadow are the same. Only the True Light stays the same. The other forms of Light without shadows are of finite intensity, of variable sizes and colors. To make the point, both forms were compared together in one sighting (the fourth encounter). Two windows of defused Light turned out to be barriers against the True Light. Only when the barrier was punctured, the true Light emerged. So, the defused Light carries a component of our world.
- That component of our world, included in the defused Light, is an indication of sin (the latest gray and pink lights). While we don't live in a perfect world, even the defused Light is a welcome blessing, but we have to watch for the change of its intensity: A decreasing intensity is an indication of thickening sin and is to be considered a red flag.
- The color of diffused Light might be diagnostic as to what sin is standing in the way. In the above, I was lucky to identify two colors of sins, but there are many other colors that I still don't understand. Also, the color symbolism needs to be understood in relation to each specific person.

From the above, the True Light is how God appears to us.

I would be careful not to confuse the True Light with the defused Light, even though both are without shadows.

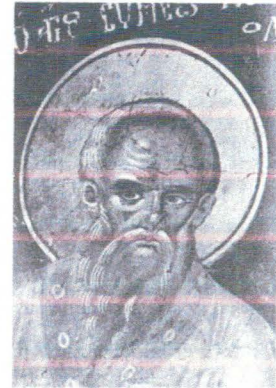
Certainly, both of the above are not to be confused with any other light of worldly origin.

Comparison with experiences of others:

St. Symeon the New Theologian (1, p.168)

In his delightful prayer to the Holy Spirit (1, pp. 173-176), St. Symeon the New Theologian wrote passionately about the True Light. He listed many good names and adjectives of the Holy Spirit and True Light, combining them together. It is not clear to me if he was referring to the True Light metaphorically as an adjective to the Holy Spirit, or if it was an actual True Light experience.

However, I can relate to several points of his descriptions of the True Light:



- “.. who alone come to the lonely” (1, p.174): reminds me of the blessing that comes from thin air when I’m alone.
- “.. who have separated me from everything” (1, p.174): My Light experience started when my world collapsed.
- “... these imperishable and holy tears” (1, p.174): Tears are in my experience too, but I’m not sure I would call my tears holy!
- “... you who fill the universe with your glory” (1, p.174) : In my vision, the blinding Light fills the universe literally, by some mysterious feeling.
- “... you who don’t turn away from a single creature” (1, p.174): In my vision, He kept knocking on my door even when it was closed.
- “I go from delight to delight in inexpressible blessings” (1, p.175): That describes my experience, while it lasted.
- “Oh Master, stay and don’t leave me alone” (1, p.175): In my case, He finally left me alone, at least for now. After all, I’m not the holy St. Symeon. I have a long struggle ahead of me with no guaranteed results.

St. Gregory Palamas (1296 - 1359 AD) (1, p183)

St. Gregory Palamas defended the Hesychasts reports of seeing the Divine and Un-created light: “In mystical contemplation a man sees neither with the intellect nor with the body, but with the Spirit; and with full certainty he knows that he beholds supernaturally a light which surpasses all other light. But he does not know through what organ he beholds this light, nor can he analyze ...” (2. p 45).

That applies to experience, in that I did not rationalize it, nor saw it by my eyes, but by a vision with my closed eyes.



He asserted that seeing the Divine and Un-created light of Thabor is not in conflict with the apophatic nature of God. He argued that on the grounds of distinction between God's essence and His energies. That was confirmed by the two councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351

My experience in relation to that is more humble and, I hope, less controversial, as my experience was of visions with my eyes closed. It is all in the spirit. Even with that, seeing the Light was actually seeing that it is un-seeable. It was a blinding Light, a blinding flash. The rest, of seeing an infinite space with infinite light, was recognized or “known” somehow-mystically, yet with utmost certainty, as if I actually saw it. The certainty was even more than the certainty of seeing things around me in the physical world.

If the experience defended by St. Gregory Palamas referred to actual seeing of the Light with open eyes, then I can't relate to it in full, but I take it at face value.

The dreams of a three-years old:



In the first dream: "My baby sister ... a bundle of love ... was petted on her face by our classy neighbors. She gained a third eye. I felt it was something out of this world"

At MTS I learned that a Christian should see the world by three eyes. So, the message is: A touch of class in love would give a Christian vision of the world.

The third dream: "As I went to bed to rest in peace, I saw four fishes dancing, on their tails in front of my bed. My father was standing near the headboard, smiling in approval. I felt huge joy."

The message: Strive to make Christ happy, the Father will bless you and you will rest in peace.

How? The second dream comes with a bizarre picture: "The mule that brings us produce, who feeds us but was never seen eating, pushed me against the wall of Church complex and down to the ground at the foot of the wall". In real life, I brought water in my mug to that mule, only to be rebuked. I sympathized with it as it was hard working, and never demanding.

The message: Get the persistence of the mule, in serving the Church, in a down-to-earth way.

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- 1- *"Voices in the Wilderness"*, Nikolaos S. Hatzinikolaou, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts 02146, 1988
 - 2- *"The Orthodox Way"*, Father Kallistos Ware, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 10707, 1980