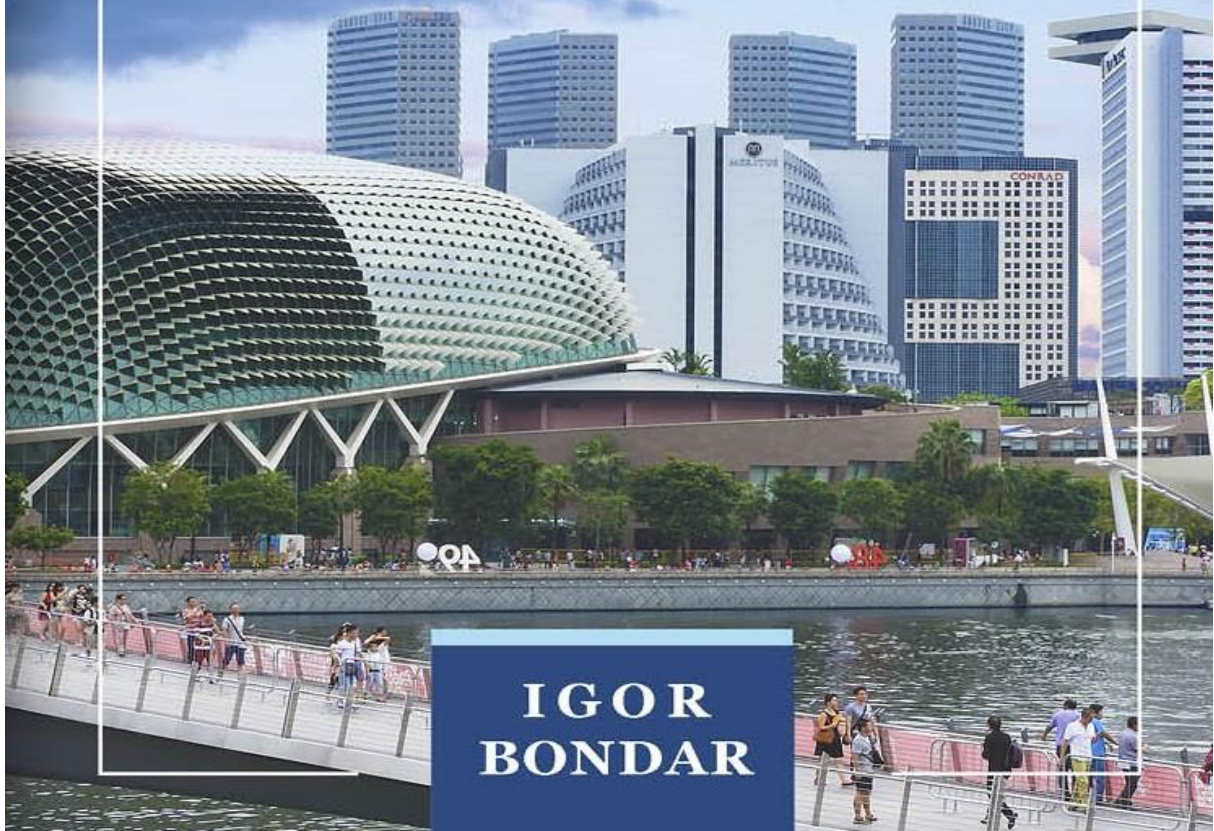


Face yourself

About
our times



IGOR
BONDAR

We live in extraordinary times. Externally human life is changing tens and even hundreds of times faster than it did before. Only the souls of men and the reasons for their happiness or unhappiness remain unchanged. It is sad that in the bustle of our modern lives we often forget this.

About God, faith and the soul.

How to find God? You simply need to look for the One who is closer to you than anyone else in the whole world.

We all love to have fun, to look for the beautiful and sublime in our lives. The problem is that we often manage to live out our lives without having seen that our Father stood behind our every kind joke and behind our every profound and beautiful thought.

If the soul is empty, no other person can ever fill it. They will be just a temporary distraction.

Only through miracles does the Lord let us know which spiritual teachers are correct. No man can create miracles without God's help. That's how it was from the beginning and that is how it is now.

If a person has not seen the never ending height, incredible light, inconceivable generosity and immeasurable love of the Lord towards him and all people, then he has not yet discovered that which is most important.

When a plane shakes violently passengers immediately become believers. How many of them later remember the Lord after their flight? The Saints have said: “A single thought about God in times of prosperity is worth thousands of thoughts about Him in times of misery”.

A person’s soul can only be healed by loving others. If the soul has no need of love, it means that it has withered and become completely empty.

Today God’s existence is undeniable. It is simply impossible as people possess too much evidence of His presence. However, these days He is well concealed by the hustle and bustle of our lives. If we choose to live without Him then the reasons become unimportant. There are no reasonable excuses for forgetting our Father and our Creator and replacing Him with something “more important”.

Today many people believe that God exists. However super-educated mankind is still unable to create a comprehensible list of the “exams and tests” which we have to pass on this Earth in order to enter into Eternal Life.

About the ‘modernity’ of our world.

The world today is blinded by its cleverness and advanced technology. However, all of its “modernity” is only a tiny drop from the world of the Father. We often blindly chase after some temporary and in reality not really necessary things and in doing so lose something really priceless and eternal. Unfortunately, we are sometimes not so smart and practical.

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What virtues does the modern world nurture and develop in people? The truth is that in the main, they are insignificant and quite often seriously distorted. Today a smile is an aid to earning money, democracy develops until it seriously infringes upon

somebody's interest, charity at times is no more than a desire to be trendy. Love? It is better not to talk about all the modern definitions of this word.

In this world the Light of the Father can always be found. But unfortunately, these days people don't often look for it and prefer to look at something completely different.

Constantly striving to improve our life every day we have reached the point where we have almost completely forgotten its only true meaning.

What other end of the world are we waiting for? To bring on a full-scale apocalypse we just need to turn off all the computers for a few days. Yet it was not that long ago that the world wouldn't have even "blinked" at such experiment...

The extraordinary high level of education today is more likely to confound people rather than help them. It is much more difficult to see the simple and joyful purpose of this life through the prism of endless human knowledge.

If we become too engrossed in the modern world, we have no more “freedom” than a moth caught in a cobweb. For us the cobweb is one we have spun ourselves.

Education can make us clever. Money can make us rich. But happiness comes from something very different. The paradox is that today most of us believe that to be happy we need to possess money and be well educated. Almost no one remembers that the sensation of real happiness only comes from a heart which is pure and free from passions.

About computers and media.

Nowadays mankind is facing a serious problem. There are hundreds of millions of people addicted to computers. While they have their computer and internet access they are invisible. They are just as invisible as a quiet alcoholic who has some booze, or a junkie who has his fix. The truth will be revealed if all this is taken away.

Today everyone has their eyes locked on to screens. Is that good or bad? It depends on what it is that we see on those screens – light or darkness, good or evil. All our modern information devices can be likened to pathways to our souls, which can be filled either with useful things or with garbage.

People today naively believe that they control computers. If they were a little bit more observant, they would notice that in reality it is computers that demand their constant attention. Everyone can easily count the amount of times they “need” to check their computer.

Who is it that creates the more and more credible computer generated virtual reality? The answer is not complicated. It is enough to look around and see what we sacrifice for it – nature, walks, beautiful real personal relationships, reflections on the meaning of life and acknowledgement of the Divine in this world. A long time ago God created the most incredible reality to which there is no possible comparison.

It is not “computerization” itself that scares us today but its pace. Now it is difficult to imagine where humanity will be in only ten or fifteen years time.

With the help of modern technology many people on Earth communicate with each other more frequently than they used to sometimes tenfold. Is that good or bad? Probably it is not bad until the communication turns into useless prattle or the process of communication itself becomes an addiction.

The ability of newspapers and television to influence the formation of desirable opinions, was turned into one of the most profitable businesses in the world a long time ago.

Social networks today are real nets that have already caught a significant part of mankind. Indeed, it is a convenient means of communication but these nets often take up a big proportion of our life and they replace the reality that God created for us.

The deception that comes from screens has become all-embracing. These days it seems that no one is interested in the truth but only in their own rightness.

About passions, illnesses, lessons.

Let's ask ourselves two simple questions and try to get some honest answers. Nowadays who wants to struggle with one's passions and sins? Apparently not many. But how can a man enter Heaven without doing that? He can not.

If we do not try to understand God's lessons and punishments, how can we understand when we are right and when we are wrong?

If we blindly judge other nations and beliefs then what kind of children are we to our Heavenly Father if we abuse His other children.

Illness is a part Divine Providence that we often misunderstand. They are as notifications, that we are somewhere is not good.

About politics.

Observing modern politics one can be surprised at how quickly mankind forgets the bitter lessons of the past and all its efforts making peaceful agreements afterwards. It keeps repeating the same mistakes being hostile, combatant and uncompromising.

It seems that the majority of today's politicians are not familiar with the following words of God: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”. Otherwise, they would pay much more attention to the question of peace.

We ourselves provoke all the conflicts on earth with our hostility and stubbornness. Afterwards we often blame God: “How did He allow that to happen?”. Yet for thousands of years God has essentially been busy extinguishing our fires of war and resolving the conflicts that we create.

In any politics it is always possible to apply our efforts in search of something that unites us and makes us closer and to be the first to extend the hand of friendship. This would lead to peace and good relations and such politicians would always have God by their side. Or we can search for and uncover the differences and contradictions between nations and countries – that is also a way. Mankind knows very well where that path will lead to. Although who likes to remember the past?

What is the purpose of all these wars? They are a violation of the Creator's laws and a pursuit of personal passions like anger, vindictiveness, pride, greed and others. Is it possible to live in peace on earth without any wars? Of course! Heaven has been living like that for a long time. It is just that in all of its history that mankind has never made any serious attempt to do so.

About kindness and love.

Judging how close a man has come to God is only possible by measuring the kindness and love that grows inside him. That was told by saints and God to us long time ago. Any other “measures” of our spiritual achievements are false.

Not loving the Lord with all our heart makes it impossible to love all the people around us. There is only one true motivation for such love – knowing that your beloved Father loves each of his children very much and that He is wants to help them.

The priority of money over kindness and love - is a path that leads nowhere. God has told us this many times. It is a pity that our intelligent and pragmatic world rarely remembers about that.

We often enjoy talking about morality. But the peak of any morality is always found in Heaven. Only there can one find life without a hint of deceit, love without a shadow of possession and friendship without any limits. If in his lifetime a man tries to reach the very summit of morality, he is involuntarily trying to reach God.

We believe that our world is becoming more and more modern and pragmatic. However, it is not so. What is so pragmatic about constantly veering off the main road of kindness and love which leads us to the only reality beyond this world? The world today may more likely be called blind and even absentminded.

Love is a flag that was given to us by God which in the past two thousand years mankind should have raised to great heights, rallied around it and happily marched behind throughout their lives. However, the world today is dazzled by flags the names of which I am not too eager to pronounce. Yet so many people chose to follow them...

About forgiveness.

At the center of the Lord's teachings, in His Sermon on the Mount He told us nine times that we should forgive everyone and not judge anyone. Other things get mentioned once or twice. A coincidence? Perhaps only for those who believe that God allows coincidences.

It is a lot more difficult to forgive an offender than to respond with force. However, behind forgiveness God stands with us but behind force stand our passions.

Sincere forgiveness is extremely powerful. A person who forgives others with all his heart is always light and joyful. It is strange that such an important law from the Lord, a law which can be easily checked by each of us, has not yet been given top priority by people.

About modernism.

The practice of “life on credit” interacts badly with the true desires of our soul. A man's conscience is such that he cannot be absolutely calm when he owes something to somebody.

Do various psycho analysts really help people? Only when they cause a person to recognize their own inadequacies or help them to sincerely forgive someone. In all other cases they provide only a temporary lull.

Often wishing to make it easier for ourselves, we sometimes give our children from a very early age various screen devices. There is a very real danger in this. Most programs and sites have either very little or a complete absence of spirituality. It becomes far more difficult to later correct the wrong opinions formed by our children.

It is impossible not to notice that in recent years there has been a rapid growth in the number of beauty salons, fitness centers and so on. Is it good or bad that we have started to pay more attention to our appearance? Probably there is nothing wrong about looking good – God loves beauty, but it is important that we do not forget to similarly take care of our internal beauty, the beauty of our soul.

Nowadays we are encouraged to seek fame and to be proud of our achievements. What isn't mentioned is that these "valuable"

assets will become a burden when we seek to enter the Kingdom of God.

Money in the modern world, unfortunately quite often takes priority over morality.

People more and more are becoming used to living without heart. So when someone falls in love, loses their head and is completely besotted many of us see it as a tragedy.

About faith.

What is the process of developing a belief in something? In the beginning we have a certain thought or hear some news, then we find something that supports or even verifies it and after that we start to believe. The “news” about God is thousands of years old. The amount of proof of His existence is documented in the thousands of miracles that happened on earth. This information is available to everyone. The paradox is that people are in no hurry to believe in the most proven and corroborated fact in the world.

It is strange that despite being extremely intelligent and logical mankind is often eager to believe in tens or even hundreds of different “spiritual” theories none of which are validated by a miracle from God. It is surprising how modern people who are usually so cautious and not very gullible show such astonishing carelessness when considering such an important question.

About different things.

What is spiritual blindness? It is the inability of people to actually see the facts and events on earth that God and His saints have shown us multiple times. Examination of these facts in contrast to scientific ones can lead a man to desire Eternal life and to aspire to become a better person. As a result, people often “look without seeing and listen without hearing” at that which is obvious and incidentally most important to them. That which does not require any particular knowledge. Spiritual blindness can be cured by asking God for help, by repentance and by living a kind and honest life.

How much time is left for this world? The exact answer is, of course, known only to God! However a lot depends on us also. Our Father gave us a free will and He acts according to the circumstances which are created by how we lead our life on earth. Nothing is fully predetermined – people play a big part in

determining their future depending on whether during their lifetime they live by God's rules or by those created by their passions. It is the amount of love and kindness in this world will determine its longevity.

No one likes to think about their death. All our life we deceive ourselves by trying to “stretch” the pitiful seventy or so years of earthly life out to eternity. To tell the truth, it is a silly idea! Eternity is reached by a different path. Thinking about death is useful as it helps us to touch reality and look for true Eternity. These thoughts gradually “turn” our achievements into temporarily amusing toys and help us find the right path.

Nature always helps us to purify ourselves and to start seeing the meaning of life clearer. However, even after a long vacation in the country if a man does not commence working on his soul, he will soon revert to his old ways.

Intuition helps us to make the right decisions while avoiding complex thinking processes. It is a pity that we often neglect it and rely only on our knowledge, because behind intuition stands the biggest source of Knowledge on earth – God.

What is a miracle? It is the Creator's supremacy over the laws of this world that people live by. God creates miracles to strengthen our faith in Him, our belief in Eternal life and to help us to choose the right path. Miracles have no other purpose.

How can a man get closer to God? First of all, he needs to pay close attention to himself and to those things that distance him from God. Namely his passions – lies, anger, judgment, dependence and many others. If a man is firmly on such path and truly tries to overcome his passions, then eventually he will begin to acquire kindness and love in his heart and become closer to God.

Nowadays, more and more often an opinion is stated that in order to come to goodness, people necessarily have to destroy some evil. What is rarely stated is that peace on earth can be instated by means of kindness, forgiveness, patience and explanation. However, only this is God's way. Otherwise, the Father would not have sent His Son to earth. It would be easier for Him to take out the “bad guys” – the pharisees.

If everyone around us suddenly becomes bad, it is time for us to look in the mirror. It is guaranteed that there we will see the cause of our misfortune.

What is closer to God – faith without kindness or kindness without faith? The latter of course. God spoke warmly of ordinary and kindhearted people many times. The faithful without kindness crucified Him. Although of course, it is better when kindness and faith come together in a person.

Perhaps, the least popular words of our time are honor, generosity and unselfishness. Our vocabulary along with our lifestyle is changing for the worse.

A man during his lifetime can look for God or look for love and kindness or look for the highest morality. All these searches will lead him in the same direction. If a man isn't looking for anything like that in his life, it means that Heaven with its high and wonderful life is simply not needed by him for the time being.

Only God joins the hearts of people. Simpler connections people find themselves.

It is not the seas, lakes and mountains that are the most beautiful to a man with a pure soul, although of course such beauty is delightful. What is the most beautiful to him are those people who are close to him in spirit. Moreover he acquires many yet invisible friends...

Those breaking earthly laws do not look very sensible in the eyes of honest people. In the same way in the eyes of the inhabitants of Heaven we don't look too clever when we break the kind and beautiful laws of the Creator.

The right path to the Lord is always joyful. What can possibly be more pleasant than the realization that you are going to be with your loving Father forever.

If we always choose good and do not pay attention to evil, then it gradually goes away. It becomes too uncomfortable for it to live in places where it is ignored.

Now is a good time for spiritual work. Even though the number of passions and temptations is so huge and diverse these days, a man having decided to resist them can with the help of God, achieve quite a lot.

Nowadays it is fashionable to seek stillness of the mind using a multitude of techniques. But this is not the way. A turtle on the sand can be absolutely peaceful and still. Only love sublimates a person.

Examination of peoples interests sadly shows that the Creator of this world and the people in it, is almost completely forgotten. Mankind seems to be achieving really strange “accomplishments”.

It is quite often that during arguments and disagreements we do not take the side of love, kindness and forgiveness. Yet it is exactly here where the problems in our life begin.

One saint of recent years has said that today we have lost our Home and also the way to It. Now we are even trying to convince ourselves and others that the world of lies, hostility and cold pragmatism that we are building today is the best home in the whole world.

The Lord once asked people, if would He would find faith on earth when He returned to earth a second time. Today it would be difficult to give Him an answer.

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A collection of the author's reflections

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