

The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai

11 мая 2012 г.

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Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia examines the teachings of St Gregory of Sinai (1255-1346) on the Jesus Prayer. Describing both the form of the Prayer and the inward and outward techniques of prayer of the heart, Metropolitan Kallistos also touches upon the question of possible parallels or influences from other religions on the Jesus Prayer in Eastern Christianity. We are left with a clear impression of the extraordinary saint who, with St Gregory Palamas, initiated the renaissance of hesychasm.

The Two Gregories

The mystical theology of 14th-century Byzantium is dominated by two Gregories: St Gregory of Sinai (1255-1346) and St Gregory Palamas (1296-1359).^[1] It is a curious fact that, although their periods of residence on Mount Athos overlap, the sources nowhere mention any direct contact between them.^[2] On Athos the two shared in one and the same spiritual and monastic tradition, but thereafter their paths diverged. Palamas was drawn into public controversy with Barlaam the Calabrian and, doubt-less against his own will, was forced to defend the Hesychast way of prayer against hostile and uncomprehending critics. Gregory of Sinai, on the other hand, preferred to play no part in the disputes about the divine light which raged during the last eight years of his life. His concern was not to justify Hesychasm before outsiders, but to explain its deeper significance to those who were within. Whereas Palamas spent the concluding decade of his career as Archbishop of Thessalonika, the second city of the Empire, Gregory of Sinai chose to end his days at Paroria, among the remote mountains of Thrace, in what his disciple and biographer Patriarch Kallistos terms 'the utmost depths of the uninhabited wilderness'.^[3]

This difference in outward situation is reflected in the writings of the two men. St Gregory Palamas is the apologist and the theologian of Hesychasm, integrating the ascetic and mystical tradition of the Hesychasts into the system of Christian doctrine as a whole, and so providing a firm dogmatic basis for the monastic methods of prayer. Intricate in style and lengthy, often highly abstract in their argumentation, his writings cannot have been easily comprehensible to the average monk. St Gregory of Sinai, on the other hand, is par excellence the teacher and practical guide. A master of the spiritual life rather than a systematic theologian, he does not attempt any theoretical justification of Hesychasm; his concern is to tell his disciples what to do, to indicate in detailed and specific terms the way of prayer which they must follow. His works are far shorter than those of Palamas, far simpler and more direct in style; and in consequence they have always enjoyed a wider diffusion.

Life and Travels

Throughout his long life, St Gregory of Sinai was a great wanderer. Born around the year 1255 at Koukoulos, near Clazomenae on the western shores of Asia Minor, he was taken prisoner in a Turkish raid during the reign of Andronicus II (i.e. after 1282), and carried off to Laodicea on the Syrian coast. Ransomed by the local Christians, he made his way to Cyprus, where he was admitted to the first grade of the monastic life, becoming a 'rasophore'.^[4] He travelled next to the Monastery of St Katherine, Mount Sinai, and here he received the tonsure. From Sinai he journeyed to Jerusalem and

then to Crete. While on this island, he met an aged monk called Arsenios who instructed him concerning 'the guarding of the mind, true vigilance and pure prayer' (περί τε φυλακῆς νοός, περι νήψεως ειλικρινούς καὶ καθαρῶς προσευχῆς) [5] This was a de-cisive turning-point in Gregory's spiritual development. Hitherto his prayer and asceticism had been on the level of the 'active life' (πρ ᾧξις πρακτικῆ): now he began to advance to the level of 'contemplation' (θεωρία). [6] Since Gregory has sometimes been taken as representing a specifically 'Sinaite' spirituality, it should be noted that he learnt about inner prayer not at Sinai but in Crete. [7]

From Crete Gregory sailed to Athos, and without delay he traversed the entire Mountain in an endeavour to discover others familiar with the spiritual teaching imparted to him by Arsenios. Initially he was disappointed. 'I saw not a few men', his biographer Kallistos represents him as saying, 'endowed to the utmost with grey hairs, with under-standing and with every dignity of character; but they devoted all their zeal to the active life. If asked about quiet (hesychia) or the guarding of the mind and contemplation, they said that they did not know of this even by name.' [8] After long searching, Gregory eventually discovered three monks at the skete of Magoula, not far from the monastery of Philotheou, who possessed some knowledge of contemplation and inner prayer; all others whom he encountered were absorbed exclusively with the active life. [9] Here, at Magoula, he himself settled.

If accurate, this testimony provides a revealing picture of the spiritual condition of Athos around the start of the 14th century. It may be that Kallistos, in the common fashion of biographers, has somewhat exag-gerated the preceding neglect of inner prayer on the Mountain, in order to underline the personal influence of his hero; yet surely his evidence cannot be wholly discounted. When Gregory arrived, so it would seem, the emphasis at Athos was placed almost exclusively on the external: on manual labour and exact obedience, on fasting and similar ascetic exercises, on the ordered sequence of liturgical prayer. The inner life was overlooked. This prevailing ignorance concerning contemplation and 'guarding of the mind' is especially remarkable, in view of the fact that Nicephorus the Hesychast may still have been alive when Gregory first arrived; in any case, his death cannot have occurred long previously. [10] The disciples of Nicephorus must have been so effectively concealed in the remoter regions of the Mountain that Gregory failed to make contact with them.

While on Athos, St Gregory of Sinai lived from preference, not in one of the large coenobia, but in the 'semi-eremitic' milieu of a secluded skete, in the company of a restricted circle of chosen disciples. This was also the form of monastic life adopted by St Gregory Palamas during most of his time on the Holy Mountain. Alike in the 14th and the 18th centuries, and also in our own day, the Hesychast tradition on Athos has flourished in the sketes rather than the 'ruling monasteries'. 'A lover of quiet, if ever there was one', [11] Gregory of Sinai sought ever to lead a life of silence and withdrawal, hidden from the world. Forced to dwell for a time within the walls of the Great Lavra, he found that 'constant contact with the monks deprived him of the hesychia for which he longed'. [12] In this regard he belongs to the lineage of Evagrius Ponticus and St Isaac the Syrian, rather than to the cenobitic way of St Basil the Great, St Theodore the Studite and St Symeon the New Theologian.

But at the same time Gregory of Sinai believed that the path of hesychia was in no sense the monopoly of the hermits, but could be pursued equally by monks in coenobia.

[13] In the case of one of his disciples, Isidore (later Patriarch), instead of conferring the monastic tonsure upon him, he instructed him to return to Thessalonika and there to follow the vocation of an 'urban Hesychast', acting as exemplar and guide to a circle of lay people: 'I do not wish you to live here in the wilderness or the mountains – why do that? – but rather in the world, among the monks and the lay people dwelling there, that you may serve as a model to them all . . . alike by your silence and your speech.' [14] Such words imply that inner prayer is possible in the city as well as the desert; mysticism and society are not necessarily incompatible or mutually exclusive. Such also was the firm conviction of Gregory Palamas. While near Berea, he encountered an ascetic named Job who maintained that continual prayer is possible only for monks. Palamas vigorously upheld the contrary view, arguing that the command of St Paul, 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Th 5:17), applies to all Christians without exception. [15] Troubled by the Turkish incursions - to which the monks in the scattered sketes on Athos, lacking the protecting ramparts of the large coenobia, were especially vulnerable - around 1325-8 St Gregory of Sinai and his disciples left the Holy Mountain. He went to Thessalonika and then to Chios, with the idea of returning to Sinai. But at Chios he changed his plans, making his way to Mytilene and so to Constantinople. After six months in the capital, he journeyed to Paroria, in the Strandzha mountains on the borders between the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria. His first stay here was relatively brief. He returned for a time to Constantinople and then to Athos, but eventually settled once more at Mount Katakryomenos in Paroria, perhaps during 1335 or slightly later. Here, on 27 November 1346, he died.

In this wild and unfrequented region, St Gregory of Sinai established a veritable 'spiritual workshop', in the words of his biographer. [16] During his last years he gathered under his care a substantial body of monks, not only Greeks but Bulgars and Serbs. He enjoyed the support and protection of Tsar John Alexander of Bulgaria. [17] His community at Paroria served as a link between the Greek and the Slav worlds, thus occupying a key position in what has been aptly styled 'the Hesychast International'. It was monks from Paroria or their immediate disciples - men such as St Feodosii of Trnovo, St Romil (Roman) of Vidin, Patriarch Evtimii of Bulgaria, and Metropolitan Kiprian of Kiev - who were responsible for the great revival of contemplative monasticism which swept across the whole of Slav Christendom in the later Middle Ages. [18] St Gregory of Sinai's wide-ranging journeys may come as a surprise to those nurtured according to the Benedictine principles of stability. Many parallels can, however, be quoted from the Eastern monastic tradition. If Gregory moved from place to place, this was due, not to any inherent restlessness of character or spiritual instability, but rather to three other factors. First, there was the grave insecurity of the Byzantine Empire at this period, exposed as it was to constant attacks from the outside. Secondly, lover of quiet though he was, Gregory seems also to have felt the call to act as a 'missionary' of Hesychasm, and he desired to spread a knowledge of inner prayer as widely as possible. Thirdly and most important, he longed for detachment and feared that, if he stayed too much in any single spot, he would become a celebrity – well-known, honoured and securely 'established'. [19]

In his biography, Patriarch Kallistos emphasizes the warmth of St Gregory's personality, his gentleness and sense of peaceful joy: 'I saw him coming out of his cell with his face radiant and as if smiling, and he looked at me with gladness. ... He answered me with

great mildness and gentleness, as was his custom. . . . There was joy in his countenance and meekness in his soul within. . . .'[20] This same sense of joy, as we shall discover shortly, is vividly reflected in Gregory's teaching upon prayer.

The Context of the Jesus Prayer: the Discovery of Baptismal Grace[21]

The first thing which strikes a reader of St Gregory of Sinai is the central place which he assigns to the Jesus Prayer. But to appreciate what the invocation of the Name meant to him, it is necessary to establish the theological context in which the Jesus Prayer is set.

What is prayer? After offering a long series of definitions, Gregory concludes with the simple yet memorable words: 'And why speak at length? Prayer is God, who works all things in all men.'[22] Prayer is God: in the deepest and fullest sense prayer is not our own action but the action of Another in us. It is not we who by our own unaided efforts gather our mind within our heart in prayer, but the indwelling Paraclete; and without him we can achieve nothing. 'No one of himself can control his mind, unless he is controlled by the Spirit.'[23]

True prayer, then, is the prayer offered in us by the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Gregory develops this point in a specifically sacramental way, observing: 'Prayer is the manifestation of Baptism' (βαπτίσματος φανέρωσις).[24] Since prayer is the action of God within us, and since it is through the sacrament of Baptism that God comes to dwell in our hearts, it follows that prayer is essentially the discovery and disclosure of baptismal grace. Our aim in the life of prayer is to bring to light this divine presence within us, to remove the obstacles of sin so that the grace of Baptism may become fully 'active' in our heart.[25] Prayer, then, is to become what we already are, to gain what we already possess, to come face to face with the One who dwells even now within our innermost self. The whole range of the ascetic and mystical life is contained, by anticipation, within the sacrament of Baptism.

Such is Gregory's basic orientation. Prayer is God within us - God who dwells in our hearts through Baptism; to pray is to pass from the stage of baptismal grace present in our hearts secretly and unconsciously, to the point of full perception and conscious awareness when we feel the activity of grace directly and immediately.[26] This transition from secret to conscious grace can be expressed in terms of the familiar distinction between 'water Baptism' and 'Spirit Baptism':

We are little children at the time of our second creation, and so we are unaware of the grace given to us, unconscious of our renewal, ignorant of the surpassing greatness of the honour and glory in which we have come to share. We do not realize how we ought, through fulfilment of the commandments, to grow in soul and spirit and to see with our mind that which we have received. . . . And even if we are baptized as adults, yet it is a Baptism in water alone, and we do not perceive with the Spirit. . . . How shall a man discover, or rather him-self be discovered by, the One whom he possesses and has received through Baptism in the Spirit, even Christ? As the Apostle says, 'Do you not know that Christ Jesus dwells in your hearts?' (cf. 2 Co 13: 5; Ep 3:17).[27]

Gregory goes on to specify two ways in which the grace of Baptism and the presence of the indwelling Godhead are rediscovered – through ascetic effort and through the Jesus Prayer:

The activity of the Spirit which we have already received secretly [or 'mystically', 'sacramentally': μυστικῶς] in Baptism, is discovered in two ways. In the first place, the

gift is revealed in a general fashion through the fulfilment of the commandments, with much toil and time; as St Mark puts it, 'The more we fulfil the commandments, the more clearly the gift of the Spirit shines upon us with its own radiance'. Secondly, it is manifested to us in obedience through the methodical and unceasing invocation of the Lord Jesus, that is, through the memory of God. The first way is slower and the second shorter.^[28]

The first way is that of the 'active life', the way which Gregory himself was following until he met the monk Arsenios in Crete. The second way is that of inner prayer, and it is characterized above all by the 'memory of God', that is, by the continual invocation of the Name of Jesus. So far from rejecting the first way, Gregory treats it as a genuine spiritual path which can indeed bring a man to the full discovery of baptismal grace. But he sees the second way, the way of the Jesus Prayer, as quicker and shorter. Strictly speaking, the two are not alternatives. Those who use the Jesus Prayer are not thereby dispensed from following the first way as well, the way of the commandments. The 'active life' is not a stage through which the man of prayer passes, in such a manner as to leave it completely behind; for there is an important sense in which the 'contemplative' mystic must still continue to struggle on the 'active' level until the end of life. Gregory's point is that we should not struggle only on the active level, for there is a further dimension of the spiritual life into which we can also enter. In connection with the second way, Gregory states that the gift of baptismal grace is manifested to us 'in obedience': by this he means obedience to a spiritual father.

If the way of inner prayer is termed 'shorter', it is such only in a relative sense. Gregory most emphatically did not envisage it as a 'soft option'. This is rendered abundantly clear in the daily timetable that he proposes for the Hesychast, which runs as follows:

1) By day:

1st hour: the 'memory of God', prayer (i.e. the Jesus Prayer), 'quiet of the heart'.

2nd hour: reading.

3rd hour: psalmodia (recitation of the Psalter).^[29]

The same three activities are prescribed in the same sequence for the 4th, 5th and 6th hours; and for the 7th, 8th and 9th hours. As an alternative to this threefold sequence Gregory suggests that the Jesus Prayer may be used without interruption.

10th hour: meal.

11th hour: sleep (if desired).

12th hour: Vespers.

2) By night. Here three possibilities are specified:

(i) Beginners: one half of the night is to be spent in vigil and the other half in sleep.

Midnight forms the point of division, but it does not matter whether the sleep or the vigil comes first.

(ii) Intermediaries (mesoi, 'those in the middle'): 4 hours of sleep and 8 of vigil, arranged thus:

1-2 hours awake (? spent in recitation of the Jesus Prayer).^[30]

4 hours asleep.

6 hours awake, spent in prayer: Matins (Orthros)^[31] with the reading of the Psalter and prayer (presumably the Jesus Prayer); then Prime.

(iii) The Perfect: these, says Gregory, keep vigil standing without interruption throughout the whole night!^[32]

This is a formidable programme to follow day after day, year after year. True, the beginner is allowed a reasonable amount of sleep – if he wishes, about 7 hours out of the 24.^[33] But only one meal is permitted each day, at 3-4 p.m. The basic diet prescribed by Gregory is bread and water: about a pound of bread daily (a fairly generous allowance) and three cups or *baukalia* of water, mixed with two of wine. This may be supplemented by such other foods as come readily to hand, in the main presumably vegetables; meat certainly would have been excluded, but perhaps Gregory would occasionally have permitted fish outside periods of fasting.^[34] But more serious than any bodily privation is the sheer monotony of this daily programme. Nothing is said about meetings with other Hesychasts for spiritual conversation and mutual comfort, nothing about exercise outside the cell: how far did Gregory take this for granted? More surprisingly, there is no clear indication about manual labour or handiwork. This Gregory seems to discount as appropriate mainly for the ‘weak’:^[35] these, if they wish, may work with their hands or make prostrations as they recite the Jesus Prayer.^[36] Equally, there is no clear indication about the Liturgy: how often should the Hesychast receive communion? In general, Gregory scarcely ever mentions the Eucharist in his writings. Doubtless he assumed that the Hesychast, if living not far from a monastery, would attend the Liturgy there on Sundays and feasts; if living in a more remote spot, he might have to depend on the occasional ministrations of a visiting priest. Many Hesychasts used to spend five days of each week in strict seclusion, and then Saturday and Sunday in community, attending the Liturgy on both days: Gregory may envisage some such arrangement, but he does not say so explicitly. With this five-day pattern, the monotony would of course be greatly diminished.

The Verbal Form of the Jesus Prayer

Such, then, is the context in which St Gregory of Sinai sets the Jesus Prayer, as a means whereby we reactivate the grace of Baptism and become consciously aware of the indwelling Spirit in our hearts; and such is the daily programme which he proposes for one practising the invocation of the Name.

In Gregory’s writings, the standard form for the Jesus Prayer is ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’ (Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐλέησόν με).^[37] In the *Life* by Patriarch Kallistos, this standard form is given with the addition at the end of the two words ‘a [lit. ‘the’] sinner (τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν)’;^[38] this expanded version, adding ‘a sinner’, does not occur in Gregory’s own works.

On occasion, so Gregory suggests, the Hesychast may wish to employ abbreviated forms of the Prayer:

‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’

‘Son of God, have mercy on me’

‘Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me’.^[39]

These shorter formulae he considers to be easier than the full form.^[40] It is noteworthy that the second of the three shorter forms does not include the Name of Jesus. While permitting this diversity of verbal formulae, Gregory issues a warning against changing too often from one to another.^[41]

The previous history of these different formulae may be briefly noted. What we have termed Gregory’s ‘standard form’ – ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’ (without ‘a sinner’)-is first found, to my knowledge, in the *Life* of Abba Philemon, a work of the 6th–7th century, emanating from Egypt.^[42] It recurs in the treatise of

Nicephorus the Hesychast, *On Vigilance and the Guarding of the Heart* (late 13th–early 14th century).^[43] During the intervening period of 700 years between these two texts, I cannot recall any other source in which it appears.^[44] The *Life of St Gregory of Sinai* is, so far as I am aware, the earliest occasion on which the Prayer is given with the words ‘a sinner’ at the end.

Of Gregory’s three shorter formulae, by far the most frequent in earlier sources is the first, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’ (without ‘Son of God’): indeed, it is considerably more frequent than the so-called ‘standard form’. It occurs in the *Life of Abba Philemon*, alongside the standard form,^[45] and also in the *Book of Varsanuphius and John*^[46] and in the *Life of Dositheus* (both Palestinian and dating from the early 6th century).^[47] In the *Life of Dositheus* this prayer is used in conjunction with the words ‘Son of God, help me’, which recall the second of Gregory’s shorter formulae, ‘Son of God, have mercy on me’.^[48] Varsanuphius also offers a number of other forms, not mentioned by Gregory:

‘Lord Jesus Christ, save me’^[49]

‘Master Jesus, protect me’^[50]

‘Jesus, help me’.^[51]

The last of these is also found in the alphabetical collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.^[52] The form ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’ occurs in a text of the late 12th century, the *Meterikon* of Abba Isaias, addressed to the nun Theodora, daughter of the Emperor Isaac II Angelus.^[53] The same form, but beginning with the word ‘Our’, is found in the Coptic Macarian cycle, in a text of uncertain date, but possibly from the 8th-10th century: ‘Is it not easy to say with every breath, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me; I bless thee, my Lord Jesus, help me”’.^[54]

The Outward Technique: Control of the Breathing

Turning now from the verbal form of the Jesus Prayer to the external technique by which it is accompanied, we find that Gregory is familiar with the ‘physical method’ expounded in the treatises *On Vigilance and the Guarding of the Heart* by Nicephorus the Hesychast, and *On Holy Prayer and Attention* (also entitled *On the three Methods of Prayer*) attributed to St Symeon the New Theologian.^[55] Although, like them, Gregory recommends control of the breathing, his directions are far less detailed. Thus he merely says:

From early morning sit down on a low stool, about eight inches high; compress your mind, forcing it down from your brain into your heart, and keep it there. Laboriously bow yourself down, feeling sharp pain in your chest, shoulders and neck, and cry persistently in mind and soul, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’. Then, because of the constraint and labour, and also perhaps because of the feeling of distaste that results from this continual effort - but not, certainly, because of feeding continually on the one food of the threefold Name, for he says, ‘they who feed on me shall still be hungry’ (Ecclus 24:21) – transfer your mind to the second half and say, ‘Son of God, have mercy on me’. Repeat this many times, and do not from laziness change frequently from one half to the other: for trees which are continually transplanted do not grow roots. Control the drawing in of your breath, so that you do not breathe at your ease. For the current of air which rises from the heart darkens the mind and agitates the intelligence, keeping it far from the heart. . . . Hold back the expulsion of your breath, so

far as possible, and enclose your mind in your heart, continually and persistently practising the invocation of the Lord Jesus.[\[56\]](#)

Elsewhere, Gregory's instructions are even less specific:

Sometimes sit on a stool, and this for most of the time, because of the discomfort; sometimes lie down on your couch, but only occasionally and for a moment, by way of relaxation. You should remain patiently seated, remembering the words 'Persevere in prayer' (Col 4:2); and do not quickly stand up out of faint-heartedness, because of the insistent pain that comes from the inward invocation of the mind and continued immobility. 'For behold,' says the Prophet, 'pangs have laid hold on me, as the pangs of a woman in travail' (Is 21:3). But bow yourself down and collect your mind within your heart, if it is open, and call the Lord Jesus to your aid. Your shoulders will ache and you will often feel pain in your head, but persevere persistently and with ardent longing, seeking the Lord in your heart.[\[57\]](#)

Control of the breathing, he continues, helps us to control the mind:

The retention of the breath, with the mouth kept tightly closed, controls the mind, but only partially, for it becomes dispersed once more.[\[58\]](#)

Too much emphasis on the purely physical aspect is to be deplored; the aim is always the concentration of the mind:

Closing your mouth a little, control the respiration of the mind, and not that of the nostrils, as the uninstructed do. . . .[\[59\]](#)

That is as far as Gregory goes in his directions about bodily posture and control of the breath. It can scarcely be termed a 'psycho-somatic technique', far less an instance of 'Christian Yoga'. All that he tells us is that the Hesychast is to sit on a low stool, with his head bowed; his normal position, when reciting the Jesus Prayer, is to be seated, rather than to stand, kneel or lie down. Gregory emphasizes the physical discomfort that he will experience from continuing in this position for a prolonged period. The Hesychast is told to restrain the drawing in and out of his breath; to avoid, so far as possible, breathing deeply or quickly. And that is all. Reading these passages in context, it is absolutely clear that for Gregory the primary factor is always the actual invocation of the Name of Jesus and not the accompanying technique. His approach agrees here with that of Gregory Palamas, who defends the legitimacy of the physical method, but treats it as no more than an optional accessory suitable mainly for beginners.[\[60\]](#) Neither of the two Gregories saw the physical method as a uniquely privileged or infallible device, leading automatically to the vision of God.

In his references to the control of the breathing, was St Gregory of Sinai influenced by the physical techniques practised among the Sufis in connection with dhikr (the invocation of the Name of God)? During his earlier years Gregory travelled widely in the Islamic world, and so it is not impossible that he knew something of Sufism through direct personal contact. On the whole, however, it is far more probable that he learnt about the control of breathing either from the monk Arsenios in Crete or from the writings of Nicephorus and ps.-Symeon.[\[61\]](#) The directions about bodily posture and breathing given by Gregory of Sinai, as also by Nicephorus, ps.-Symeon and Palamas, are far less elaborate than those given in Muslim mysticism. Yet the parallels are still sufficiently striking, and it is difficult altogether to exclude the possibility that the Hesychast tradition at some point underwent influences from Islam.[\[62\]](#) The whole question calls for further study.

The Inward Technique: Uninterrupted and Imageless Prayer

So far as the inward (rather than the physical) technique of the Jesus Prayer is concerned, St Gregory of Sinai insists on two things: first, that the invocation shall be so far as possible continuous; secondly, that it shall be free from images. The first point is so much taken for granted by Gregory that it is nowhere discussed at length. When referring to the invocation of the Lord Jesus, as a matter of course he adds the adjective 'continual'.^[63] This ceaseless invocation, so he teaches, some-times takes the form of an oral prayer, framed outwardly by the lips; at other times it is recited by the mind alone.^[64]

Great emphasis is placed upon the second point. 'Always keep your mind free from colours, images and forms', he urges.^[65] Our aim in prayer should be simply and solely to obtain 'activity of the heart . . . altogether free from images and forms'; we must not imagine any 'shape or impres-sion, even of supposedly holy things'.^[66] He issues a severe warning against the human imagination or phantasia: he who prays must beware lest he become a phantastes instead of a hesychastes!^[67] Taking up a phrase of St John Climacus,^[68] Gregory observes, 'Hesychia is the laying aside of thoughts'.^[69] All this was standard teaching in the Christian East long before St Gregory of Sinai. According to St Diadochus of Photice (5th century), the invocation of the Name of Jesus or 'memory of God' – for Diadochus as for Gregory of Sinai, the two phrases mean the same thing – has as its object to close the 'outlets' of the mind and to cut off the phantasiai, thus recalling the mind to the true vision of itself.^[70] Hesychius of Vatos (? 9th-10th century) is particularly emphatic about the need for the Jesus Prayer to be free from thoughts and imaginations: above all else, it is a way of keeping guard over the mind.^[71]

The Jesus Prayer, in other words, is not a form of meditation on specific incidents in the life of our Lord. Rather, it is a method for con-trolling thoughts, for concentrating the attention and guarding the mind; more precisely, it is a way of containing the mind within the heart. Under normal conditions, a man's attention is scattered and dispersed over a multiplicity of external objects. In order that he may acquire true prayer of the heart, his mind must be unified. It must be brought from frag-mentation to singleness, from plurality to simplicity and nakedness; and so it will be enabled to enter and dwell within the heart. Such is the aim of the Jesus Prayer: 'By the memory of Jesus Christ', as Philotheus of Sinai (?9th-10th century) puts it, 'gather together your mind that is scattered abroad.'^[72] That is why the Jesus Prayer must be at once uninterrupted and imageless; only so can it fulfil effectively this task of unification.

Gregory of Sinai develops this line of thought with particular reference to the Fall. The memory of man was originally single and unitary, but as a result of Adam's sin it has suffered division and disintegration. Through the 'memory of God' and the invocation of the Name, our memory is enabled to return once more to its primal wholeness.^[73]

Gregory's understanding of the Jesus Prayer as an invocation free from images is well expressed by a Russian spiritual writer of the 19th century, Bishop Theophan the Recluse:

Standing with consciousness and attention in the heart, cry out unceasingly, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me', without having in your mind any visual concept or image, believing that the Lord sees you and listens to you. . . . The essential part is to dwell in God, and this walking before God means that you live with the

conviction ever before your consciousness that God is in you, as he is in everything: you live in the firm assurance that he sees all that is within you, knowing you better than you know yourself. This aware-ness of the eye of God looking at your inner being must not be accompanied by any visual concept, but must be confined to a simple conviction or feeling.[74]

The Effects of the Jesus Prayer: Joyful Sorrow, Warmth and Light

While excluding thoughts and images from the practice of the Jesus Prayer, St Gregory of Sinai has much to say about the feelings which should accompany the invocation of the Name. There is a strongly 'affective' tone about all that he writes. In his eyes, the Jesus Prayer is not a magical incantation, a verbal equivalent of the Tibetan prayer wheel, but a supplication to be offered with full intensity of feeling, with vivid love and personal affection for the Saviour. The feelings of which Gregory speaks are at once joyful and penitential, confident yet hesitant: a con-junction that he sums up in the composite term χαρμολύπη, 'joyful grief',[75] borrowed from Climacus.[76] The saying of the Jesus Prayer leads, he writes, to 'an exultation filled with trembling', to 'mingled joy and fear': 'the soul rejoices because of the visitation and the mercy of God, but it fears and trembles at his coming, for it is guilty of many sins.'[77] Such is the double effect of the invocation.

As this last quotation from Gregory makes plain, from one point of view the Jesus Prayer is a cry for forgiveness, an expression of mourning (penthos) and compunction (katanyxis): 'Lord Jesus Christ . . . have mercy on me'.[78] This penitential aspect of the invocation of the Name is heavily underlined in the Life of Gregory by Patriarch Kallistos:

Gathering all his perceptions inwardly within himself, exerting to the utmost his mind together with his spirit, fixing and binding it fast and in a word nailing it to the Cross of Christ, with frequent repetition he said in prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner', with his soul full of anguish, with groanings and a broken heart; and he made the ground wet with the warm tears that flowed in abundance from his eyes.[79]

The particular form in which the Prayer is here given, ' . . . a sinner', naturally gives special emphasis to this penitential aspect. The Prayer is linked directly with Christ crucified - ' . . . nailing his mind to the Cross of Christ . . .'— and it is closely associated with the gift of tears.

But Kallistos immediately goes on to describe how the Prayer set Gregory's heart on fire, filling him with light and joy. And so it is also in Gregory's own writings. While he does not underestimate the need for contrition and tears,[80] unquestionably the note of rejoicing prevails over that of sorrow. When he describes the action or effect of the Jesus Prayer, its energeia (a favourite word in Gregory), the terms that he employs are 'gladness' (efphrosyni), transport or 'leaping up' of the spirit (skirtima, agalliamia), and 'assurance' (plirophoria).[81] These are all expres-sions of an 'affective' character, involving the strong suggestion of feeling, of spiritual sentiment and sensation consciously experienced.[82] And they are obviously words which imply, not despondency and mourning, but a loving and exultant confidence in God's compassion. The timetable which Gregory of Sinai prescribes for the Hesychast may seem, to an outsider, intolerably austere and exacting; and Gregory himself speaks of the concentrated effort required of those who recite the Prayer, of the 'sharp pain' felt by

them in 'chest, shoulders and neck'. But at the same time he did not expect his Hesychast to be a dejected and melancholy figure, but the exact opposite.

There is one kind of feeling in particular to which Gregory makes constant reference: the sensation of warmth (θέρμη). 'The true beginning of prayer', he writes, 'is a feeling of warmth in the heart.'^[83] His words should not be understood merely in a symbolical or metaphorical sense. True, he meant a spiritual rather than a purely physical sensation; but this spiritual experience seems, in his view, to have had definite concomitants on the physical level. He is careful, however, to distinguish three different kinds of warmth: a natural warmth, bodily in origin, due to a 'surfeit of blood'; an unnatural and sinful warmth, inflaming the imagination to thoughts of lust, and inspired by the devil; and true spiritual warmth, the fruit of grace.^[84] How is a man to discriminate? The basic criterion, says Gregory, is the sense of wholeness: if the warmth is from God, it is marked by an entire absence of doubt, by complete inward confidence and calm assurance: 'If anything comes into the soul, say the Fathers, whether sensible or intelligible, and the heart hesitates about it, not accepting it, then it is not from God but sent by the adversary.' And Gregory adds characteristically: 'Time and experience and perception reveal this to us. . . . The palate distinguishes foods, says Scripture (cf. Eccles 36:18-19); so spiritual taste infallibly makes plain what each thing is.'^[85] Note the appeal to experience, so frequent in the Hesychast tradition.

This feeling of warmth played a decisive role in the spiritual life of Gregory's contemporary on Mount Athos, St Maximus of Kapsokalyvia. In a conversation between him and St Gregory of Sinai, recorded by Maximus' disciple Theophanes of Vatopedi, Gregory asks Maximus whether he possesses 'prayer of the mind', true inward prayer. In answer Maximus describes how in his youth he prayed fervently to the Mother of God for the grace of prayer:

And one day . . . as with longing I kissed her immaculate icon, suddenly there came a warmth in my chest and my heart, yet not burning me up, but filling me with refreshment and sweetness and great compunction. From that moment, father, my heart began to say the prayer within me; and at the same time my brain with my mind holds fast the memory of Jesus and of my Theotokos: and this memory has never departed from me.^[86]

The manner in which the Jesus Prayer is here linked with devotion to the Blessed Virgin is altogether unusual in 14th-century Hesychasm, and there is no parallel to this in the writings of St Gregory of Sinai.^[87] Gregory and Maximus are, however, fully agreed in the significance which they attach to the feeling of warmth, and both alike treat this as the visible sign and sure indication of the beginning of inner prayer. In this emphasis upon feeling, upon the conscious sensation of grace, both alike stand in the 'affective' tradition extending back, through St Symeon the New Theologian, to St Diadochus of Photice and the Macarian Homilies.

The notion of warmth inevitably suggests the idea of fire, and fire in turn is associated with light. It is only to be expected, then, that Gregory of Sinai should link the Jesus Prayer with the vision of divine light. On this point, however, he is noticeably more reserved than Symeon the New Theologian or Gregory Palamas. He makes virtually no references to the Transfiguration.^[88] When he does speak in terms of light, it is usually to warn the reader against the dangers of illusion (πλάνη: in Russian, prelest), against the false visions of light which result from self-deception or the trickery of the devil. 'Do

not seek to behold lights',^[89] he insists; and echoing words of caution issued long before by Diadochus,^[90] he writes:

Give heed, lover of God, with care and knowledge. If it should happen that, when occupied with the work of prayer, you see light or fire outside or within, or what purports to be the form of Christ or an angel or one of the saints, do not accept it, lest you suffer harm.^[91]

The one sure criterion of the presence of grace is the feeling of warmth; and this feeling, like the invocation of the Name, should be entirely free from visual images and forms. But if Gregory of Sinai offers no fully explicit description of the vision of the light of Tabor, it does not therefore follow that he believed such a vision to be impossible or unimportant. The true reason for his reticence surely lies elsewhere. To those who need to learn about prayer from books, and who have not yet been vouchsafed the vision of divine light in their personal experience, all verbal descriptions will be not only inadequate but potentially dangerous, for they may encourage the acceptance of a false vision of light. As for the few, the very few, who have been granted the true vision of Tabor, they have little need to read about it in books. The light of God, when it is revealed, is self-authenticating.

Yet, despite this reserve, the discerning reader will find in St Gregory of Sinai's writings, and also in the Life by Patriarch Kallistos, sufficient indications to justify numbering Gregory among the 'mystics of light'. He speaks of a 'spiritual contemplation of light', terming this contemplation 'hypostatic',^[92] that is, objective and not merely symbolical and imaginary.^[93] In pure prayer, so he teaches, 'the senses are clothed by the light of the mind, for the mind at that moment becomes non-material and full of light'.^[94] 'When the mind is purified and returns to its ancient dignity', he writes elsewhere, 'it looks upon God and from him receives divine knowledge. . . . It immerses its thoughts in light and itself becomes light.'^[95] Most significantly of all, when discussing the false visions of light that come from the devil, he goes on to mention a true vision of light that comes from God: 'From its activity (energeia) you can know whether the light that shines in your soul is from God or from satan.'^[96] These are no more than hints, but they are enough to show that Gregory of Sinai belongs to the same mystical tradition as Symeon the New Theologian and Palamas.

St Gregory of Sinai has been termed 'a missionary of mental prayer, fully conscious of initiating something new in the monastic world of his time';^[97] a missionary who 'inaugurated the most celebrated mystical renaissance in the whole of Byzantine history'.^[98] The second statement comes closer to the truth than the first. Gregory did not 'initiate something new', in the sense of propounding a doctrine of prayer that was wholly novel and freshly invented. He drew, on the contrary, upon a spiritual and mystical tradition extending far back into the past, to Evagrius, Mark the Monk and Diadochus, to John Cliniacus and Hesychius. What he initiated, then, was not a revolution but a renaissance – a rebirth and revival of what had long been taught but was in his own day widely forgotten. His biographer records, as we have seen, that on his arrival at Athos around 1300 Gregory found but three ascetics on the entire peninsula who knew a little about inner prayer. A generation later, when Gregory Palamas appealed for support in his struggle against Barlaam the Calabrian, the leading monks throughout the Holy Mountain endorsed the Tome which he had prepared.^[99] What in 1300 was a hidden teaching, known to exceedingly few, had by 1340 become

the shared possession and the glory of the monastic community as a whole. Such was the measure of Gregory of Sinai's success as a missionary of Hesychasm.

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A paper read at the Sixth International Conference of Patristic Studies, Oxford, 10 September 1971.

[1] Gregory of Sinai's works were first published in the *Philokalia* of St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (Venice 1782); in the recent five-volume reprint, they appear in vol. iv (Athens 1961), pp. 31-88. The *Philokalia* text is reproduced, with a Latin translation, in MPG cl, cols 1240-1345: in references throughout the present article, the MPG column is cited in brackets. There exists unfortunately no critical text; a systematic examination of the manuscripts may well reveal other works by Gregory of Sinai. For hymnographical material attributed to him in the manuscripts, see C. Emereau, 'Hymnographi graeci', *Echos d'Orient*, xxii (1923), p. 432.

The greater part of Gregory's writings is available in English translation in E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* (London 1951), pp. 37-94; this version has been made, not directly from the Greek, but from the Russian translation (sometimes very free) by Bishop Theophan the Recluse. For selections in French, translated directly from the Greek, see J. Gouillard, *Petite Philocalie de la prière du cœur* (2nd edition, Paris 1968), pp. 177-97.

The life of St Gregory, composed by his disciple Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople during 1350-3 and 1355-63, has been edited by N. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie izhe vo sviatykh otsa nashego Grigoriia Sinaita (Zapiski Istoriko-Filologicheskago Fakul'teta Imperatorskago S.-Peterburgskago Universiteta*, xxxv: St Petersburg 1894-6). Kallistos knew Gregory personally, living with him for some years, and also gathered material from other disciples: *Life*, 3 (ed. Pomialovskii, 2,27-3,5). His testimony is thus of primary importance.

Relatively little has been written about Gregory of Sinai in modern times. There is an article, old but still valuable, by J. Bois, 'Grégoire le Sinaïte et l'hésychasme à l'Athos au XIVe siècle', *Echos d'Orient*, v (1901-2), pp. 65-73; compare also the brief but perceptive sketch in J. Meyendorff, *St Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe* (Paris 1959), pp. 67-71. For further bibliography, see H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich 1959), p. 695; S. G. Papadopoulos, in *Thriskevtiki kai Ithiki Enkyklopaideia*, vol. iv (Athens 1964), col. 707; J. Darrouzès, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. vi (Paris 1967), cols 1013-14. I have not seen the unpublished dissertation of W. Pandursky (Marburg 1945).

[2] When Palamas arrived on Athos c. 1317, Gregory of Sinai was also on the Mountain; both Gregories left around the same time, c. 1325-8, because of the Turkish incursions, and both then went to Thessalonika. When Gregory of Sinai returned briefly to Athos during the 1330s, Palamas was once more there. Gregory of Sinai and Palamas were both associated with the same area of Athos: the north-eastern side, between Iviron and Lavra. The followers of Gregory of Sinai were among the firmest supporters of Palamas during the Hesychast controversy; Gregory of Sinai's disciples at Magoula signed the *Tomos Hagioreitikos* in defence of the Palamite view-point, while it was Palamas who gave the monastic tonsure to Gregory of Sinai's spiritual son Isidore. In view of all this,

direct personal contact between the Gregories would seem intrinsically probable, but it cannot actually be proved. On Athos Palamas had as his spiritual master a certain 'Gregory the Great', but this does not seem to be Gregory of Sinai. (On all this, see J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* [Paris 1959], pp. 52-53, 63-64, 75.)

[3] *Life*, 19 (43,24).

[4] This seems to be the meaning of Kallistos, *Life*, 4 (5,5), 'he was clothed with the monastic garments', with no reference at this point to the tonsure. When Kallistos describes Gregory's arrival at Sinai, he says specifically that 'the hair of his head was tonsured' (5,8).

[5] Kallistos, *Life*, 5 (9,3-4).

[6] The terms 'active life' and 'contemplative life' are, of course, used here in their original Patristic sense, and not with their modern Western connotation. The 'active life' signifies, not the life of direct service to the world - preaching, teaching, social work and the like - but the struggle to uproot the passions and to acquire the virtues.

Understanding the term in this way, it can be said that many hermits, and many monks and nuns living in strict enclosure, are still largely absorbed in the 'active life'. By the same token, there are men and women committed to a life of service in the world, who possess true prayer of the heart; and of these it may justly be said that they are following the 'contemplative life'. What matters is not the external situation, but the inward reality.

[7] On the concept of 'Sinaite' spirituality, see I. Hausherr, SJ, *La Méthode d'Oraison Hésychaste* (*Orientalia Christiana*, ix, 2 [36]: Rome 1927), pp. 118-29, 134-42, especially p. 125. Heavy use of this concept is made by 'Un Moine de l'Église d'Orient', *La Prière de Jésus* (3rd ed.: Chevetogne 1959), pp. 24-57. The anonymous monk here treats Gregory of Sinai as representing 'the end of the Sinaite phase and the beginning of the Athonite phase' (p. 44); he is wrong, however, in saying that Gregory met Arsenios at Sinai (*ibid.*). Fr Hausherr later withdrew or qualified much of what he wrote in 1927 about Sinaite spirituality: see 'Le Traité d'Oraison d'Évagre le Pontique', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, xv (1934), pp. 169-70; *Noms du Christ et voies d'oraison* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 157: Rome 1960), pp. 247-8.

[8] Kallistos, *Life*, 6 (10,12-16).

[9] *Life*, 7 (10,17-23).

[10] On Nicephorus the Athonite or Hesychast, see Gregory Palamas, *Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, I, 2, 12 (ed. J. Meyendorff [Louvain 1959], 99,5-11) and II, 2, 2-3 (321,10-323, 22). The testimony of Palamas implies that Nicephorus was well known as a spiritual guide on Mount Athos, leaving behind him an influential following - not the kind of conclusion that we would draw from the *Life of Gregory of Sinai* by Kallistos.

[11] Kallistos, *Life*, 15 (33,7-8).

[12] *Life*, 16 (38,28-29).

[13] *Life*, 14 (31,20-23).

[14] Patriarch Philotheos, *Life of Isidore*, 22 (ed. A. Papadopoulos-Keramevs, *Zapiski Istoriko-Filologicheskago Fakul'teta Imperatorskago S.-Peterburgskago Universiteta*, lxxvi [St Petersburg 1905], 77,21-26). Compare Meyendorff, *Introduction & l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, p. 54: 'Once again, we see here a characteristic distinctive of the

Hesychasm of the 13th and 14th centuries, which a man such as Theoleptos of Philadelphia sought to promote: monasticism is conceived as a prophetic mission in and for the world and not simply as a means of individual salvation.'

[15] Patriarch Philotheos, *Encomium S. Gregorii Thessalonicensis* (MPG cli, cols 573B-574B). Compare the text in the *Philokalia*, vol. v (Athens 1963), pp. 107-12; also Igmene Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer*, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer (London 1966), pp. 87-88.

[16] *Life*, 19 (43,24-25).

[17] *Life*, 17 (40,12-41,30).

[18] On the influence of St Gregory of Sinai in Slav lands, see A.-A. N. Tachiaos, *Epidraseis tou Hesychasmou eis tin Ekklesiastikin Politikin en Rosia 1328-1406* (Thessalonika 1962), especially pp. 65-68; D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London 1971), pp. 301-5 and p. 404 (bibliography).

[19] In his longing for detachment Gregory was, however, less uncompromising than his friend Maximus of Kapsokalyvia, who – to avoid all sense of personal ownership – regularly burnt down his cell and moved elsewhere.

[20] *Life*, 8 (12,9-10 and 29-30); 10 (18,29-30).

[21] Note on the sources of St Gregory of Sinai. The author quoted or mentioned by name in Gregory's works by far the most frequently is John Climacus (13 references). After Climacus comes Isaac the Syrian (4 references); Mark the Monk (or Hermit) and Maximus the Confessor (3 references each); Ephraim the Syrian, Diadochus of Photice, Varsanuphius of Gaza (2 references each); Symeon the New Theologian (two references, one definitely and the other probably to ps.-Symeon, *On Holy Prayer and Attention*); Basil the Great, Abba Isaias, Hesychius, Thalassius, Philotheus of Sinai and Nicetas Stethatos (one reference each). It is interesting that there are no explicit references to the Macarian Homilies or to ps.-Dionysius.

[22] *Capita*, 113 (1280a).

[23] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 3 (1332A).

[24] *Capita*, 113 (1277D).

[25] *Capita*, 129 (1294B-C).

[26] On this distinction between grace present secretly and unconsciously and grace perceived with full awareness, see Kallistos Ware, 'The Sacrament of Baptism and the Ascetic Life in the Teaching of Mark the Monk', in F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, vol. x (*Texte und Untersuchungen 107*: Berlin 1970), especially pp. 445-7.

[27] *De quiete et oratione*, 1-2 (1305A-D).

[28] *Ibid.*, 3 (1308A-B). Gregory is here referring to Mark the Monk or Hermit (early 5th century). The quotation is not exact, but the general idea recurs frequently in Mark: see *De his qui putant*, 56 (MPG lxx, col. 937D), 85 (944A); *De bapt.* (1001B), etc.; and compare Ware, art. cit., pp. 441-52. The same teaching on Baptism and the spiritual life is found in the *Century of Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos*, 4 and 6 (MPG cxlvii, cols 637D and 641C).

[29] *Psalmodia*, prescribed by Gregory for the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the day, probably includes the recitation of the Lesser Hours of Terce, Sext and None.

[30] Perhaps *Compline* (*Apodeipnon*), with the appointed Canon, is said at this point.

[31] There is no mention of the Midnight Office (Mesonyktikon): possibly this is regarded as part of Orthros.

[32] Capita, 99 and 101 (1272C-1273A). Note the standard division of the Christian life into three stages. Clearly Gregory did not intend many of his disciples to call themselves 'perfect'!

[33] Following the normal monastic practice in the Christian East, Gregory allows twelve hours by day and twelve by night, with sunset and sunrise as the points of division. The actual length of an 'hour' by night or by day depends, of course, on the time of year: more sleep will be possible in winter, less in summer. In general, Gregory looks with little favour on sleep: our nightly sleep, he says, is 'the image of death' (Capita, 39 [1252A]).

[34] Capita, 102 (1273A). Elsewhere Gregory deplores the giving of exact rulings about food: legalism is to be avoided, for each must retain his proper liberty in Christ; the physical constitution varies from person to person – what satisfies one man is for another a major privation. The basic principle is never to eat to satiety (Quomodo oporteat sedere, 6 [1337A-C]).

[35] Capita, 99 (1272C).

[36] De quietudine et duobus orationis modis, 5 (1317C).

[37] Quomodo oporteat sedere, 2 (1329B). It must be remembered, when discussing the verbal formulae of the Jesus Prayer, that in many instances there is no critical edition of the text cited; any conclusions, therefore, about the exact wording can only be provisional.

[38] Life, 8 (11,8-9).

[39] The first two of these forms are found in De quietudine et duobus orationis modis, 2 (1316A); the third, in Quomodo oporteat sedere, 2 (1329B).

[40] Quomodo oporteat sedere, 2 (1329B).

[41] De quietudine et duobus orationis modis, 2 (1316B); Quomodo oporteat sedere, 2 (1329B).

[42] See the Philokalia, vol. ii (Athens 1958), p. 244. The importance of this text is rightly under-lined by B. Krivochéine, 'Date du texte traditionnel de la "Prière de Jésus"', *Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarche russe en Europe occidentale*, vii-viii (1951), pp. 55-59. Cf. I. Hausherr, *Noms du Christ*, pp. 239-46.

[43] MPG cxlvii, col. 964B.

[44] Early writers who refer to the invocation of the Lord Jesus often fail to provide an exact form of words. This is the case with Nilus of Ancyra and Diadochus of Photice (5th century), and also with John Climacus, Hesychius of Vatos, Philotheus of Sinai and John of Carpathos (7th-10th centuries). All speak of the invocation of Jesus, yet without providing a specific formula, although Diadochus may perhaps have in view the simple invocation 'Lord Jesus': see *Century*, 61 (ed. E. des Places, *Sources Chrétiennes* 5bis [Paris 1955], 121,5). Compare Hesychius, *Century*, 106 (Philokalia, vol. i [Athens 1957], p. 157), where the form 'Lord Jesus Christ' is used; but in the edition of MPG xciii, col. 1513A, the word 'Lord' is omitted. Possibly the words 'Lord Jesus' represent the most ancient form of the Jesus Prayer: cf. 1 Co 12:3. See also note 54 *infra*.

There is no mention of the Jesus Prayer in the authentic works of Symeon the New Theologian (see B. Krivochéine, introduction to the *Catecheses of Symeon: Sources Chrétiennes* 96 [Paris 1963], p. 54, n. 1). Symeon's disciple, Nicetas Stethatos, has only

a passing reference to the 'invocation of Jesus God' (Cent., I, 97: MPG cxx, col. 897B; cf. Hausherr, *Noms du Christ*, p. 259). The Jesus Prayer is nowhere mentioned in another text of the 11th century, the vast and systematic Synagoge of Paul Evergetinos (Hausherr, *op. cit.*, p. 247). All this shows how careful we must be not to assume a universal employment of the Jesus Prayer in Byzantine spirituality; there were many authors who did not assign to it the centrality which it possesses with Gregory of Sinai.

[45] *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 244.

[46] *Vivlos Varsanouphiou kai Ioannou* (ed. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain: 2nd ed., Volos 1960), Answers 126 (p. 90: here the formula occurs in the question) and 446 (p. 222).

[47] *Life of Dositheus*, 10 (ed. L. Regnault and J. de Préville, *Sources Chrétiennes* 92 [Paris 1963], 138,2).

[48] The formula 'Son of God, help me' is found also in Nilus of Ancyra (?Evagrius), *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus* (MPG lxxix, col. 1448D).

[49] Answer 255 (p. 156): these are in fact the opening words of a longer prayer.

[50] Answer 659 (p. 309). The form 'Lord Jesus, protect me . . .' (but followed by other words) occurs in *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Sisoës 5 (MPG lxxv, col. 393A).

[51] Answers 39 (p. 50) and 268 (p. 164).

[52] *Elias* 7 (MPG lxxv, col. 185A).

[53] See Hausherr, *Noms du Christ*, pp. 260-1.

[54] 'The Virtues of St Macarius', ed. E. Amélineau, *Histoire des monastères de la Basse-Egypte* (*Annales du Musée Guimet*, xxv [Paris 1894]), p. 161; cited in J.

Gouillard, *Petite Philocalie de la prière du cœur* (2nd ed.), p. 55. This text may possibly indicate some control of the breathing, similar to the 'physical method' of Byzantine Hesychasm. The same formula, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me', also occurs shortly before: Amélineau, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Gouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 54. For the formula 'My Lord Jesus, help me', see the *Life of Macarius*, in Amélineau, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

Further evidence of the use of the Jesus Prayer in Coptic Christianity is provided by an important inscription recently discovered at Cellia: see A. Guillaumont, 'Une inscription copte sur la "Prière de Jésus"', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, xxxiv (1968), pp. 310-25, especially pp. 316-17. This dates from the 7th-8th centuries and contains the simple formula 'Lord Jesus'.

[55] Text of Nicephorus, *On Vigilance and the Guarding of the Heart*, in MPG cxlvii, cols 945-66: English translation (from the Russian version of Theophan) in Kadloubovsky and Palmer, *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, pp. 22—34; French translation (from the original Greek) in Gouillard, *Petite Philocalie*, pp. 138-53. Text of ps.-Symeon, *On Holy Prayer and Attention*, in Hausherr, *La Méthode d'Oraison Hésychaste*, pp. 150-72; English translation (from Theophan) in Kadloubovsky and Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-61; French translation (from the Greek) in Gouillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-64.

In both works Theophan has deliberately omitted much of the description of the 'physical method', which he considers dangerous and liable to misuse. Thus, with reference to ps.-Symeon, he observes; 'Here St Symeon describes certain external methods by which some fall into temptation and relinquish their work, and others distort the work itself. Since, owing to scarcity of instructors, these methods may lead to evil effects, while in themselves they are nothing more than external adaptations for inner

doing and have no essential value, we omit them. The essential thing is to acquire the habit of making the mind stand on guard in the heart—in this physical heart, but not physically’ (Kadloubovsky and Palmer, op. cit., p. 158, n. 33: compare p. 32, n. 12). Hausherr considers that the two treatises are both by Nicephorus and form, indeed, two halves of a single work (*La Méthode d’Oraison Hésychaste*, pp. 111-34). His arguments have been called in question by M. Jugie, ‘Les origines de la méthode d’oraison des hésychastes’, *Echos d’Orient*, xxx (1931), pp. 179-85. Jugie considers that the two pieces are separate, and that ps.-Symeon is the earlier; he even holds that *On Holy Prayer and Attention* may be a genuine work of Symeon the New Theologian. Today, however, there is general agreement that it is spurious. According to Krivochéine, the author of ps.-Symeon may be Philotheus of Sinai (introduction to the *Catecheses of Symeon*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 96, p. 41, n. 2).

Gregory Palamas regards both Symeon the New Theologian and Nicephorus as teachers of the ‘physical method’ (*Triads*, I, 2, 12: ed. Meyendorff, 99,1-11); it is clear that Palamas knew the two treatises as separate works and attributed *On Holy Prayer and Attention* to Symeon. Gregory of Sinai does not allude to Nicephorus by name, but in *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 3 (1316D) he cites *On Holy Prayer and Attention* (ed. Hausherr, 164,15-17), attributing the quotation to the New Theologian. There is a further mention of the New Theologian in *De quietudine . . .*, 11 (1324D): the context suggests that Gregory of Sinai once more has the text of ps.-Symeon in view. Thus, as the double testimony of the two Gregories indicates, by the 14th century this text was generally regarded as an authentic writing of Symeon.

[56] *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 2 (1316A-B). Compare the greatly abbreviated version in Kadloubovsky and Palmer, pp. 84-85.

[57] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 1 (1329A).

[58] *Ibid.*, 3 (1332B).

[59] *Ibid.*, 7 (1344B).

[60] *Triads*, I, 2, 7 (87,17-18).

[61] *The Life* by Kallistos is of small assistance here, for it makes no clear reference to the breathing technique. In 8 (11,6) *pneuma* probably means ‘spirit’ in general, and not ‘breath’ in particular.

[62] On the parallels between Sūfism and Hesychasm, see L. Gardet, ‘Un problème de mystique comparée: la mention du nom divin (dhikr) dans la mystique musulmane’, *Revue Thomiste*, lii (1952), pp. 642-79; liii (1953), pp. 197-216. But many of Gardet’s conclusions, especially in the second half of his article, are open to question.

[63] See, for example, *De quiete et oratione*, 3 (1308B); *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 1 (1313A). Compare *Capita*, 17 (1244D), 118 (1281D); *De quietudine . . .*, 2 (1316A-B) and 8 (1320D).

[64] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 2 (1329B-1332B).

[65] *Ibid.*, 7 (1340D).

[66] *De quiete et oratione*, 3 (1308B-C).

[67] *Capita*, 118 (1284A); *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 7 (1340D).

[68] *Scala* 27 (MPG lxxxviii, col. 1112A). Climacus in his turn is adapting Evagrius, *De oratione*, 70 (MPG lxxix, col. 1181C): ‘Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts’.

[69] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 5 (1333B); cf. *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 9 (1324A).

- [70] Century, 59 (119,2-11).
- [71] Century, I, 5 (MPG xciii, col. 1481C-D), 7 (1484B), 10 (1484C), 32 (1492B), et passim.
- [72] Capita, 27 (Philokalia, vol. ii [Athens 1958], p. 283).
- [73] Capita, 60-61 (1256B-C). Here Gregory is probably drawing on Diadochus, Century, 25 (96,19-97,15).
- [74] Igumen Chariton, *The Art of Prayer*, pp. 96, 100.
- [75] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 7 (1341D).
- [76] Scala 7 (MPG lxxxviii, col. 804B).
- [77] *De quiete et oratione*, 4 (1308D).
- [78] Compare Hausherr, *Noms du Christ*, p. 118: 'La Prière à Jesus . . . a commencé par le penthos, le luctus, la douleur sur le péché . . . Elle condense en une formule courte, adaptée aux besoins de la "meditation", la spiritualité monacale du penthos.'
- [79] *Life*, 8 (11,5-12).
- [80] For references to tears in Gregory, see for example *De quiete et oratione*, 4 (1308D), 7 (1309D); 9 (1312B); *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 7 (1341C).
- [81] See *De quiete et oratione*, 3 (1308C), 5 (1309B); *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 10 (1324b); *Capita*, 113 (1277D).
- [82] For the emphasis on conscious experience, see *Capita*, 127 sub fine (1292D): an immediate and conscious union with God.
- [83] *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 10 (1324A-B).
- [84] *De quiete et oratione*, 7-8, 10 (1312A-C).
- [85] *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 10 (1324B-C).
- [86] Theophanes, *Vita*, 15 (ed. E. Kourilas and F. Halkin, *Analecta Bollandiana*, liv [1936], 85,9-17).
- [87] Compare, however, the important place assigned to the Mother of God in St Symeon the New Theologian's vision of the divine light: *Catechesis xxii* (ed. Krivochéine, *Sources Chrétiennes* 104 [Paris 1964], p. 370, line 78 and p. 376, line 152). See also his *Thanksgiving ii* (ed. Krivochéine, *Sources Chrétiennes* 113 [Paris 1965], p. 350, lines 265-8).
- [88] *Capita alia* 1 (1300C) is an exception.
- [89] *De quiete et oratione*, 3 (1308C).
- [90] Century, 36 (105,13-16).
- [91] *De quietudine et duobus orationis modis*, 10 (1324A).
- [92] *Capita*, 118 (1281d). Compare *Capita alia*, 1 (1300C), where the 'contemplation of divine light' is linked with Christ's Transfiguration.
- [93] Gregory Palamas speaks in the same way, terming the divine light hypostatikon: *Triads*, I, 3, 7 (123,28).
- [94] *Capita*, 116 (1281A).
- [95] *Capita*, 23 (1245D). Compare Kallistos, *Life*, 5 (9,4-7), 8 (11,28-29; 12,2-7; and especially 14,14-15,7).
- [96] *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 8 (1345A). For other passages where Gregory of Sinai speaks in terms of light, see *Capita*, 5 (1240D), 45 (1253A), 85 (1265B), 113 (1277D); *De quiete et oratione*, 3 (1308C), 4 (1308D); *Quomodo oporteat sedere*, 7 (1344D). In some of these instances, the reference to light may be no more than symbolical.

Capita, 43 (1252d) mentions the 'darkness of theology' – perhaps a reminiscence of ps.-Dionysius, of whom on the whole Gregory makes little use.

[97] I. Hausherr, in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, vol. i (Paris 1937), col. 1643.

[98] J. Lemaître (?I. Hausherr), in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, vol. ii (Paris 1953), col. 1797.

[99] See the list of signatures in MPG cl, col. 1236A-D.