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Renewing the *Nous*: Watchfulness and Praying**Hendi**

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This paper is a review of renewing and guarding the nous in the Philokalia teaching. The Philokalia is a collection of spiritual texts written between the fourth and fifteenth centuries by the monks of the Orthodox Christian tradition. Christian spirituality is very concrete and practical not mysterious or abstract. Its various aspects are described well in the Philokalia but the Philokalia remains relatively unknown while people seek to satisfy their thirst by consuming from the heresies teaching that ever existed from the beginning of time. One of the most important spiritual aspects that needs to be re-discovered today is renewing the intellect or nous. The fathers of Philokalia concern much on the renewing and guarding the nous. The way to renew the nous is only guarding the nous with all nepsis (prosoche) and praying (proseuche). They emphasized nepsis or watchfulness because the arch - enemy of the soul is a certain kind of thought which they described with the word logismoi. Nepsis and praying are the way to contend against the logismoi and the passions.

Keywords: *Philokalia, nepsis, nous, orthodox spirituality, the eye of the heart*

INTRODUCTION

To be authentically spiritual is not something abstract. It is something very concrete and practical. “Spiritual” means simply to be filled with the Spirit — the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. Even the body becomes spiritual when it is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. It becomes a temple, a church, as St. Paul states. We have our spirit, but it is empty of power, it only becomes stronger when the grace of Christ flows into it. Spiritual life comes entirely from His most Holy Spirit.

Spirituality has to be revealed today because there are plenty of unholy, evil spirits out there who try to come in and fill the vacuum if we are not overflowing with the Holy Spirit. The soul, and not only nature, hates a vacuum. Either you will be complete and free with the Holy Spirit, or you will be empty and slave to evil spirits.

Paulus Eko Kristianto summaries spirituality has influence to every aspect of life. Throughout history, Christian spirituality has tried to help those who tread the path of holiness to give up self-interest to be able to love others and God. The culmination of abandoning self-interest is attaining humility.¹ This is the practical

matters of spirituality that comes from purity of heart.

Today, people are looking for spirituality. A huge number of spirituality books have been published. The majority of these books comes from the New Age Movement, a collection of all the heresies of the early years. New Age spirituality book sales have increased from 5,6 million to more than 10 million. Angels and talk with God underlined in New Age books are more direct and must be believed than the word of God. People seek spirituality, but in the wrong place they search for it. It is demonology disguised as Christian spirituality which they receive. One of the greatest of all spiritual classics, the *Philokalia*, remains relatively unknown. It is a collection of texts written between the fourth and the fifteenth century by spiritual fathers of the Orthodox Christian tradition.

The *Philokalia* is a collection of texts written between the fourth and the fifteenth century by spiritual masters of the Orthodox Christian tradition. Two Greek monks, St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain of Athos (1749-1809) and St. Makarios of Corinth (1731-1805), collected it in the eighteenth century, and it was published in Venice in 1782. A second edition was

¹ Paulus Eko Kristianto, “Persinggungan Agama Dan Politik Dalam Teror: Menuju Terbentuknya Teologi Spiritualitas Politik Dalam Konteks

Maraknya Terorisme Di Indonesia,” *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 3, no. 1 (November 30, 2018): 1.

published in 1893 at Athens. The Astir Publishing Company also published a third edition in five volumes during the years 1957-1963 in Athens. All the texts in the original *Philokalia* are in Greek. In this paper, the writer uses the English translation edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware based on the third edition.²

Philokalia means the love of beauty, excellence, goodness and understanding of the beautiful and revealing Truth. Through such love “the mind is purified, enlightened, and made perfect,” as the subtitle of the original edition stipulates. To this cleaning, illumination and excellence, the texts were compiled. They show the way to awaken and cultivate consciousness and knowledge, to attain the condition of vigilance which is the hallmark of sanctity.

The *Philokalia* is an active force that reveals and induces people to follow a spiritual path. It is a call to him to conquer his confusion, to reveal the truth that resides inside, to liberate himself from delusion, and to be open to the mercy of the Holy Spirit, who teaches all things and brings all things to mind.³

The *Philokalia* texts are therefore a guide to contemplative practice. As St. Nicodimos puts it in his introduction, they constitute “the sacred school of inward worship” in which pupils may mature in faith and nurture the spiritual seed rooted in the core of the baptism (John 1:12), and in this deification “measure the status of the fulness of God” (Eph. 4:13). So, the focus is on inner working, on “cleansing the cup and the sheet inside so that the outside can also be washed” (Matt. 23:26).⁴

Spirituality is not abstract or mysterious. It is to be found in the living word of God as it is preserved in the Sacred and Apostolic Tradition of our Church. And it comes to its fullest expression and incarnation in the teaching, but above all, the life and being of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its various aspects are described in the *Philokalia*. Spirituality is encountered in the permanent and ever renewed experience of a praying life which is that of the whole church: the liturgy, sacraments, especially through the sacrament that enables us to dwell in Christ and He in us: The Holy Eucharist. Spirituality is taught and exemplified in and through the lives of Saints of

² St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 11.

³ Kallistos Ware, “St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*,” in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of*

Orthodox Spirituality, ed. Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

⁴ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, 13-14.

all ages. There we find living and concrete examples of what spirituality is.

One of the most important spiritual themes that needs to be re-discovered today is renewing and guarding our intellect or *nous*. The fathers of *Philokalia* concern on the renewing of *nous*.⁵ Anthony M. Coniaris states that, “The authors whose works are included in the *Philokalia* are often called the “Wakeful Fathers” because of the great emphasis they placed on wakefulness and alertness in the spiritual life. One of the major means of *theosis* according to the *Philokalia* is expressed by the Greek word *nepsis* which means vigilance, watchfulness, alertness, attentiveness.”⁶ And the most important way to renew the *nous* is *nepsis* or watchfulness.⁷ The most important inner work is *nepsis*; renewing and guarding the heart and mind. Renewing and guarding the intellect through *nepsis* is the centrality of spirituality in the *Philokalia*.

This article is going to review of *Philokalia*'s theme on renewing and guarding the *nous*. What is the actually renewing the *nous* and how to guard the *nous* in order

to renew our inner human nature? These questions are going to be answered in this article.

METHOD

The writer will review the renewing and guarding the *nous* according to the *Philokalia*. In the review process the writer will evaluate it with other New Testament writers and *Philokalia* fathers. The writer will elucidate the renewing and guarding the mind to give the brief view to the readers and could be applicable in daily life.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Renewing the New Human: Renewing the *Nous* in the Heart

After a person believes in Christ and is baptized in Christ, he has clothed himself with Christ (Gal. 3:27). Since putting on Christ's clothes, he has become a new human being (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24) and being renewed continuously to become the image of Christ or *the icon of Christ* (Col. 3:10) or to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29) or to be like Christ (1 John 3: 2) or *the morphe of Christ* becomes real

⁵ *Nous* is the highest faculty in man, through which - provided it is purified - he knows God or the inner essences or principles of created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception. The *nous* dwells in the “depths of the soul”; it constitutes the inner most aspect of the heart. The intellect is the organ of contemplation, the “eye of the heart”. See also Ware, “St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*.” 20.

⁶ Anthony M. Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1998), 32.

⁷ Literally, the opposite to a state of drunken stupor; hence spiritual sobriety, alertness, vigilance. It signifies an attitude of attentiveness (*prosoche*), whereby one keeps watch over one's inward thoughts and fantasies, maintaining guard over the heart and intellect or *nous*.

in him (Gal. 4:19). The clothe of Christ or the new man is undergoing renewal until they finally become *the icon* and *the morphe* of Christ both in soul and body. Man is positioned that the original character of the divine image can work as God intended, and the likeness to God is established gradually. The soul becomes once more a mirror of divine perfections. However, man is not immediately perfected or deified, but a new life after baptism is made possible in which man has the task of being conformed to the divine reality. It is important that man be open to divine power and influence.⁸

Our souls will be mature in Christ, no longer babies or young children, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Corinthians (1 Cor. 13:11, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I feel like a child, I think like a child. Now that I am an adult, I leave that childish things.”) and also to the Church in Ephesus, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13, full maturity, no longer, small child or baby). Our souls experience the growth toward Christ, “may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ”

(Eph. 4:15). And the body on the Day of Christ will be declared to be glorified and put on a body of glory like the body of Christ (Phil. 3:21). Therefore, this new man will be perfect when Christ's Day is revealed, the soul and body are Christ-like and this means that we participate in the divine nature or experience the divination (*theosis*) as written by the Apostle Peter, “... that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature ...” (2 Pet. 1:4). The central idea of participation could be defined thus: it is a movement of the divine towards the human, and of the human towards the divine.⁹

Furthermore, if *theosis* becomes the ultimate goal of this new human being, then the process of *theosis* is a renewed process (Col. 3:10). It is in a passive form and it means that God is working on the renewing (see Phil. 2:13; God is energizing both the will and the energy in you) but we are invited to work together with Him as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinthians, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave growth,” (1 Cor. 3: 6) and “Because we are the fellow workers of God; you are God's field, God's building” (1 Cor. 3:9). We are *Theou's sunergoi*, that is, working together or synergizing to become

⁸ Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian*

Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*

perfect synergy in order to grow like Christ (*theosis*).¹⁰

This renewing process basically starts from within or from a new human's heart (*kardia*). Why? For Jesus said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him, because from within, from the heart of a person, all evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder arise" (Mrk. 7: 20-21; see also Matt. 15:19) and, "A good man out of the good treasure brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matt. 12:35). Vladimir Lossky states that as far as the ascetic tradition of the Christian East is concerned, the heart is the center of the human being, the root of the "active" faculties, of the intellect and of the will, and the point from which the whole of spiritual life proceeds and converges. According to St. Macarius of Egypt, the heart is the source of all intellectual and spiritual activity and "a workshop of justice and injustice." It is a vessel that holds all the vices, but where at the same time there is to be found "Christ, angels, heaven and the Bible, light and disciples, and the riches of salvation. Where grace fills the pastures of the heart, it reigns over all the parts and the thoughts: for their inhabit the intelligence and all the thoughts of the soul."¹¹ So, the

renewing must be done starting from the inside of a person, that is from his heart.

What renewing should occur in the heart? The Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Rome, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be changed by renewing your mind (*nous*), so that you can discern what the will of God is: what is good, pleasing to God and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). The word "mind" in the original language is "*Nous*," and is more accurately translated as "the eye of the heart" or "the single eye" as taught by Jesus, "Eyes are the lamps of the body. If your eyes are good, light your whole body; if your eyes are evil, dark your whole body, so if the light that is in you is dark, how dark is darkness" (Matt. 6:22-23). The word "eye" is singular and this does not speak of the physical eyes but the spiritual eye or the only inner eye and which the Apostle Paul called "*Nous*." *Nous* can be said as our "third eye" which determines the lightness of our bodies. Lossky states that *nous* is the best part of the human race, the contemplative function by which man may pursue God, the most intimate element of man, the essence of his conscience and liberty.¹² *Nous* is the lamp of the body and this *nous* must be renewed continuously

¹⁰ Ibid, 167.

¹¹ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd, 2005), 383.

¹² Ibid.

(Rom. 12: 2) so that the *nous* will put on the *Nous* of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

He who has clothed Christ or a new man is one who continually renews his *nous* in his heart so that he also put on the *Nous* of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). And it means the way he uses his *nous* is to think or *froneo* like Christ thinking as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Philippians, “Let this mind be in you who is also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Therefore, renewing a new man means renewing his mind or heart that is renewing his *nous* in order to put on the *Nous* of Christ which is then manifested in a mindset or *froneo* like Christ (Phil. 2:5).¹³ This eye is directed towards Christ or as the Apostle Paul wrote, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

Our inner thoughts or *froneo* are directed to things of flesh or *froneo* on the things of the flesh then we will die and vice versa if we live according to the Spirit or *froneo* on the things of the Spirit we will live (Rom. 8:13; see also Phil. 3:19 where *froneo* those who perish are on worldly things). For *froneo* on the things of the flesh

brings the mindset of the flesh, *fronema sarkos*, which is death or *thanatos* (Rom. 8: 6) and *froneo* of the things of the Spirit brings forth a spiritual mindset, *fronema pneumatos* which is life and peace (Rom. 8: 6). *Fronema pneumatos* also means *froneo* on the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God not on things on earth or the world that bring destruction (Col. 3:1-2; Phil. 3:19).¹⁴

Fronema Pneumatos and Fronema Sarkos

The *fronema pneumatos*, which is in the mind or the working pattern of our *nous* who sees Christ, is thinking about things that come from the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to have the *Nous* of Christ. This *fronema pneumatos* and by the work of the Holy Spirit will ultimately put to death the works of our flesh as written by the Apostle Paul, “... by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13). And if our *nous* or inner eye is evil (see Matt. 6:22-23) then it will bring up *fronema sarkos* and bring about the works of the flesh and this means we live according to the flesh or *sarkos* and we will die (Rom. 8:13). The evil *nous* is the same

¹³ Nicholas Loudovikos, “Person Instead of Grace and Dictated Otherness: John Zizioulas’ Final Theological Position,” *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (July 1, 2011): 684–699, accessed April 9, 2020, <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2009.00547.x>.

¹⁴ Bogdan Lubardić, “Orthodox Theology of Personhood: A Critical Overview (Part 2),” *The Expository Times* 122, no. 12 (September 29, 2011): 573–581, accessed April 9, 2020, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0014524611415586>.

as living according to the flesh and bringing about the mindset of the flesh, *the fronema sarkos* and the deeds of the flesh.¹⁵ Whereas the good *nous* which is the same as the Christ's *nous* is the same as living according to the Holy Spirit and bringing forth the spiritual mindset of *the fronema pneumatos* and acts of the Spirit or what the Apostle Paul called "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22).

The Evil Logismoi and Epithumia Sarkos

According to Jesus, from the heart (*kardia*), evil thoughts arise, *dialogismoi kakoi* (Mrk. 7:21). Therefore, from *inside nous and fronema* it is able to deviate to produce an evil *logismos*. This *fronema sarkos* is manifested in the form of evil thoughts or *logismoi kakoi*. *Logismoi* frequently signifies not thought in the ordinary sense, but thought provoked by the demons, and therefore often qualified in translation by the adjective "evil" or "demonic"; it can also signify divinely inspired thought. *Logismos* is a "conceptual

image," intermediate between fantasy and an abstract concept.

These evil thoughts are the seeds of flesh lust or *epithumia sarkos*. The *fronema sarkos* produces *evil logismoi* and *evil logismoi* produce the lust of flesh as written by the Apostle Paul, "because the flesh is passionate" (Gal. 5:17). From *fronema* and *logismoi* now takes the form of *epithumia* or lust (desire; passion).¹⁶ And if these *fronema* and *logismoi* are controlled by flesh or *sarkos*, then they produce lust of flesh or *epithumia sarkos*. And if this *epithumia sarkos* is fertilized it will give birth to sin (Jam. 1:15) or the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). The Apostle James explains, "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jam. 1:15). Conception or *sullambano* is like a woman's fertilized seed or egg so that she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child. Thus, *the epithumia* is fertilized and gives birth to sin and if the sin is ripe, it brings death.¹⁷

¹⁵ L. Culliford and S. Eagger, "Assessing Spiritual Needs," in *Spirituality and Psychiatry*, ed. A. Powell Christopher Cook and A. Sims (London: Royal College of Psychiatrists Press, 2009), 16-17.

¹⁶ Another term is "pathos" in Greek, the word signifies literally that which happens to a person or thing, an experience undergone passively; hence an appetite or impulse such as anger, desire or jealousy, that violently dominates the soul. Many Greek Fathers regard the passions as something intrinsically evil, a "disease" of the soul: thus St. John Klimakos affirms that God is not the creator of

the passions and that they are "unnatural", alien to man's true self (John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, tran. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russel (London: SPCK, 1982), 211.). Other Greek Fathers, however, look on the passions as impulses originally placed in man by God, and so fundamentally good, although at present distorted by sin. On this second view, then, the passions are to be educated, not eradicated; to be transfigured, not suppressed; to be used positively, not negatively.

¹⁷ Alexis Torrance, "PERSONHOOD AND PATRISTICS IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY:

The Inner Battles

We can fail the fertilization process above before he gives birth to sin. How? Again, our *nous* and *froneo* play an important role. And this is an inner battle or battle of the soul to fight *logismoi* and the lust of the flesh or the passions. As Coniaris states that John Cassian uses a battle image to explain how the devils strike us in mind and heart. St. Gregory of Sinai speaks of battling for God in the domain of *nous*. In which the devil attempts to force us to give the idol of sensuality a sacrifice of *nous*. Origen said that the spring and source for all guilts are bad thoughts or *logismoi*. That's the unseen war. He had to cut off the brush of evil thoughts which beset him.¹⁸

This is an invisible battle because it takes place in our hearts or hearts, says the fathers of the *Philokalia* Church. As Matta El-Maskeen, a monk from the Egyptian Coptic Church, was quoted by Coniaris as saying that *nous* is a battlefield where humans first encounter sin. This is the border where humanity meets its mortal enemy, the Devil. It's not strange that the enemy must choose the human *nous* as a battlefield to wage his fierce struggle. Psychologists say that the *nous* is the crown

above the human body that directs our actions and behavior whether we wake up or sleep; it controls feelings, consciousness, emotions, will, and mind too. Thus, the central human *nous* which controls human behavior. Therefore, if humans are defeated on this battlefield, it is the Devil who then has all the talents and abilities of humans. with extraordinary and varied strengths, but despite all this, he still doesn't have any access to us except through our *nous*. This is an important fact that many of us need to be aware of - especially those who struggle in the realm of virtue, truth, and holiness. Because even though Satan is a great spiritual power, the scope of his activities against humans is very limited. He cannot approach anyone except through *nous*, the only part of our nature that is vulnerable to war with him - *nous* is the target of his attacks.¹⁹

George Timko also states that the church fathers emphasize that human beings' greatest misconception is that he feels his body makes him sin. He still excuses his body. If lust wakes up in him, he says, "That in my human nature is something given by God." He thinks that lust originates with his sexual hormones and not

REASSESSING THE DEBATE1," *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (July 1, 2011): 700–707, accessed April 9, 2020, <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2010.00669.x>.

¹⁸ Anthony M. Coniaris, *Confronting and Controlling Thoughts: According to the Fathers of the Philokalia* (Minneapolis: Light & Life Publishing Company, 2004), 52.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

with his mind. But, the fathers say, the body is a neutral instrument; don't blame it. You had better start looking into your conscience if you want to find the root of the guilt. According to Mark the Ascetic, "Blaming your mind and not your body for having sinned. For if the mind had not gone forth into sin, the body would not have gone after it."²⁰ This is why the mind or *nous* and *froneo* has been described as a battlefield. All battles are lost or won first in the internal dialogue of the mind.

The Good Logismoi and Epithumia Pneumatos

Therefore, *nous* and *fronema pneumatos* must also bring good *logismoi* as the Apostle Paul said to the Church in Philippi,

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good reports, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Phil. 4:8)

The word "meditates" used is *logizomai* which in the plural noun is *logismoi*. They are the *logismoi* that are compatible with the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:5). Such *logismoi* come from the *fronema pneu-*

matos because it has lived according to the Holy Spirit (see explanation above) as the Apostle Paul explained, "... live by the Spirit, and you will not obey the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). So, if it *froneo* on the things of the Holy Spirit it produces the *fronema pneumatos* and this *fronema pneumatos* brings *logismoi* as recorded in Philippians 4:8 above. And such *logismoi* brings the passion of the Spirit (the desire of the Spirit), *epithumia pneumatos*, as written by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:17. And what is very important is how the *epithumia pneumatos* is fertilized and produces the fruit of the Spirit, *karpos pneumatos* as written by the Apostle Paul, "But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, loyalty, gentleness, self-control. There is no the law against these things" (Gal. 5:22-23).²¹

The Crucifixion of the Flesh and Maturity

To produce the fruit of the Spirit is not an easy process because of the nature of the flesh in our hearts which we have to fight by killing or crucifying the flesh along with lust or *epithumia* or *pathema* as written by the Apostle Paul (Gal. 5:24). Crucify the flesh and its passions and possess the *Nous* of Christ that is the *froneo* of Christ. The

²⁰ George Timko, *Speaking of Silence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 179.

²¹ Douglas Christie, "Evagrius on Sadness," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (January 1,

2009): 395-409, accessed April 9, 2020, https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/theo_fac/102.

froneo of Christ will produce the *fronema pneumatos*. And the *fronema* will produce *logismoi pneumatos*. The *logismoi pneumatos* are the seeds of *epithumia pneumatos*. The *epithumia pneumatos* will produce *karpos pneumatos*. This is the process of renewing our new human beings towards the image and likeness of Christ. This is the growth of a baby or small child becoming an adult (1 Cor. 13:11). We throw away our childish nature as Coniaris said that in Christ mature means to put away childish things in its negative aspects: self-centeredness, insistence on one's own way, anger, blame on other people, envy and jealousy. To be a mature Christian means to be more and more like Christ in his positive aspects. It's not enough to simply grow up. We must become something fully mature like Christ. Jesus said, "Be perfect, for I am perfect" (see also Eph. 4:15). It is a life-long work done by the Holy Spirit by regular repentance and the baptismal faith.²²

The mature person in Christ is not the person who goes through life expecting love as a child, but the person who gives love. The mature person in Christ is the person to understand, to forgive, to take responsibility for his mistakes, to discipline himself, to be humble, to realize that he is nothing without God. When St. Paul writes

to the Colossians "First of all put love, which binds all together in perfect harmony" he selects love as its most important complement of maturity and of spirituality. When we allow the Trinity to come in and live in us, we can achieve that type of Godly maturity in our lives.²³

Guarding the *Nous* through *Nepsis*

The key to be mature in Christ or the process of renewing *nous* is now how to watch our *nous* with all vigilance (*nepsis*) and praying (*proseuche*) as Jesus said, "Keep watching always while praying, so that you have the strength to escape all that will happen, and so that you stand before the Son of Man" (Luk. 21:36; see also Matt. 26:41; 24:42-44). The *Philokalia* fathers emphasized the importance of *nepsis*, because the arch enemy of the soul was thought to be a sort of thought, as described by the word *logismos* (singular) or *logismoi* (plural).

Like the *nous* is the ruler or king of the kingdom of ourselves and this king is assisted by ministers and generals namely *nepsis* and prayer. *Nepsis* becomes a general who fights in the front to drive out all enemies and prayer becomes a minister who whispers all the words of Christ into our hearts and *nous*. Without these ministers

²² Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 32.

²³ *Ibid*, 34-35.

and generals, surely, the king will lose when enemies come to attack. As said by one of the *Philokalia* Fathers, St. Symeon the New Theologian,

Attention must be so united to prayer as the body is to the soul ... Attention must go forward and observe the enemies like a scout, and it must first engage in combat with sin, and resist the bad thoughts that come to the soul. Prayer must follow attention, banishing and destroying at once all the evil thoughts which attention previously fought, because by itself attention cannot destroy them.²⁴

Jesus' Teaching

Nepsis or inner attention is based on the words of Jesus. It is only through watchfulness and alertness that we can ever be ready for the hour the Lord addressed when His disciples asked, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). "Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour the Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42). Jesus often spoke to His disciples on the subject of vigilance (Matt. 24:4-5, 42-44; 26:41; Luk. 21:34-36). "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He comes, shall find watching," said Jesus (Luk. 12:37). The Lord's Day has come. He shall come unintendedly as "a thief in the night" to the ones who are not

watching (1 Thes. 5:2), but He shall come not to watch as a thief but as the Bridegroom of our souls.

At the conclusion of His imminent apocalyptic, Jesus told His disciples: "Watch! I'm telling everyone what I want to you: Watch!" (see Mark. 13:33, 37). This kind of vigilance prevents demonic thought from overcoming the heart, allowing the mind to focus on the "necessary thing" (Luk. 10:42). "The mind of an attentive man is the sentry, the sleepless guardian, placed over the inner Jerusalem," wrote St. Seraphim. Such a heightened state of vigilance causes a person to be awake even when he sleeps, "Though I sleep, my heart keeps awake" (Song. 5:2).²⁵

Watchfulness means that the entire person stands with full attention to God while he prays. When he prays to him, He is completely available to Him. The subconscious (*nous*) is not like a faulty Television that cannot be shut off or channels flipped or volume raising. It is possible to control the subconscious. The mind (*nous*) has a switch (*hegemonikon*) to check the thoughts (*logismoi*). The *hegemonikon* (intellect or *nous*) is the steward of the spirit. A ship would never enter the port without a helmsman. The "power of God" in holy baptism is particularly *hegemo-*

²⁴ Ibid, 95.

²⁵ Ibid, 92.

nikon. The mind is, as Jesus claimed, “the eye of the soul.” When, indeed, the eye is one, the entire body is full of light. Jesus said, “If therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil; thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Matt. 6:22-23).²⁶

Jesus links watchfulness with prayer, “Watch, therefore, at all times praying...” Attentiveness and prayer belong together. No one can be truly attentive without the power that comes from prayer. To be successful, a person’s efforts to be vigilant must be buttressed by God’s power. In fact, it has been said that *prosoche* (attention) is the mother of *proseuche* (prayer). “Watch and pray,” said Jesus, “that you enter not into temptation...” Jesus taught that watchfulness and prayer are inseparable in the unseen warfare with the unclean thoughts and demons. Prayer is not just a blessing but hard work. This requires constant watchfulness, *nepsis* and caution. This is why Proverbs 4:23 says, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the springs of life.”

Philokalia Fathers

Nepsis: guarding the heart. *Nepsis* is the way of guarding the heart and *nous* from *logismoi*. St. Isaiah The Solitary wrote

that as long as you are in your body, not to leave your heart unguarded. Just as a farmer can’t feel secure about the crop growing in his fields because he doesn’t know what’s going to happen to it before it’s deposited in his granary, so a man shouldn’t leave his heart unwatched as long as he’s still breathing through his nose. He cannot realize what emotion would strike him until his last breath; thus, as long as he breathes, he must not leave his heart unguarded, but should pray to God for His aid and grace at every moment.²⁷

Why heart? There are always temptations (*peirasmos*) from Satan and Satan’s temptations are conquering our heart (*kardia*) (Acts 5:3; 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11) so that from the heart possessed by Satan, it will arise evil thoughts (*logismoi*) (Mrk, 7:21; Matt. 15:19). St. Isaiah The Solitary told that,

Be attentive to your heart and watch your enemies, for they are cunning in their malice. In your heart be persuaded of this: it is impossible for a man to achieve good through evil means. That is why our Savior told us to be watchful, saying: “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it” (Matt 7:14).²⁸

Logismoi is part of the intellect (*nous*). This evil thought will bring up your desire or lust

²⁶ Ibid, 93.

²⁷ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, 25.

²⁸ Ibid, 26.

(passion; *epithumia*) and if the lust is fertilized, it will give birth to sin (Jam. 1:14-15) and it means that if the lust is done by our ego, it will give birth to sin. The watchfulness, prayer, especially Jesus Prayer, Psalms and reading the scriptures crowd the evil thoughts of our minds.

How do we guard our heart? By Guarding our heart means that guarding our intellect. St. Isaiah The Solitary writes,

When the intellect grows strong, it makes ready to pursue the love which quenches all bodily passions and which prevents anything contrary to nature from gaining control over the hear. Then the intellect, struggling against what is contrary to nature, separates this from what is in accordance with nature.²⁹

Guarding our intellect could be done only in prayer and *nepsis*.

There is a deep core in the mind where the whole person converges. That focus should be completely dedicated to Jesus. The essence of sincere prayer is to be fully present to Christ. This inner devotion to God when we speak to Him is the essential part of inner attention. St. Theophan said, “When praying to God, start as if you had never prayed before.” John Ciardi said once, “A man is what he does with his attention.”³⁰ The intellect is like a bride-

groom, St. Ilias the Presbyter said, “The intellect that encloses itself within the mind during prayer is like a bridegroom conversing with the bride inside the bridal chamber.”³¹

We look over our fragmented mind and bring it back and forth to the terms we say. This is shown beautifully in the liturgy where the words, “Let us pray to the Lord again and again,” welcome our attention and focus it on Christ. This attention is often drawn to us during the liturgy with the words “again and again.” It’s an appeal for *nepsis*, vigilance. St. Basil the Great emphasized the importance of *nepsis*. We must vigilantly guard our hearts not only in order to avoid sacrificing the mind of God or to sully the remembrance of His miracles by vain imagination, but also in order to carry out the sacred thoughts of God, imposed on our minds as an imminent indication by a constant and pure reminder. In so doing, he fulfills the statement, “I have always put the Lord before me: for he is on my right hand that I may not move” and he also observes the rule, “To the glory of God, if you feed, drink, or do anything else you do” We will behave as if in the presence of the Lord and live as if each thinking were held by him.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 34.

³¹ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, 26.

³² Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 97.

St. Isaac the Syrian urges us not even to hold converse with the distracting thoughts of the evil one. He warns of the danger involved in such conversation. It's a symbol of a spiritual, who finds knowledge and strength through grace, to not resist or disagree with the reasoning craftily sowed in us by the devil but to break off all ties with them through prayer. Her real understanding of the situation liberates her from a great deal of labor (vain and unnecessary). We are breaking off the complicated loops of a long roll by using this shortcut. Because all opposing thoughts can't always be silenced by argument and conquered by argument. Most of us are wounded, and it may take a long time to heal such accidents. You challenge adversaries with six thousand years of background! Your talk with them will provide the tools to bring your downfall, because in wisdom and knowledge they are far superior to you. Your mind is defiled by their vile thoughts, though, even if you win, and their foolish stench is in your memory. You become protected from all these consequences and anxiety by using the first approach (i.e. by avoiding discussion). There is no assistance except God.³³ Kallistos Ware wrote that,

Watchfulness means, among other things, to be present where we are—

³³ Ibid, 98-97.

³⁴ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1981), 153.

at this specific point in space, at this particular moment in time. All too often we are scattered and dispersed, we are living, not with alertness in the present, but with nostalgia in the past, or with misgiving and wishful thinking in the future... *The neptic man*, then, is gathered into the here and the now. He is the one who seizes the *kairos*, the decisive moment of opportunity.³⁴

St. John Climacus describes vigilance as “the quenching of lust, deliverance from dream phantoms, a tearful eye, a softened heart, the guarding of thoughts, the subduing of passions, the taming of spirits, the chastisement of the tongue, the banishment of fantasies” (The Ladder 20:5).³⁵ These words of John Climacus echo the words of Jesus, “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes back and knocks” (Luk. 12:35-36).

Throughout *Philokalia*, we read that *nepsis* is a strong discipline of our thinking. He holds it at the heart's entrance, so that he recognizes the wonderful ideas as they arrive, listens what they are doing and understands what these thieves do and which images are being projected.

³⁵ Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 196.

Nepsis and prayer. St. Symeon the New Theologian wrote of the importance of uniting vigilance with prayer:

Vigilance and prayer should be as closely linked together as the body to the soul, for the one cannot stand without the other. Vigilance first goes on ahead like a scout and engages sin in combat. Prayer then follows afterwards, and instantly destroys and exterminates all the evil thoughts with which vigilance has already been battling, for attentiveness alone cannot exterminate them.³⁶

St. Symeon's contribution to the later hesychast movement is often perceived retrospectively. John McGuckin describes him as a kind of fore-runner of the fourteenth century hesychast movement despite not having authored the texts on methods of prayer.³⁷

St. Evagrius the Solitary thought that if, as the apostle says, you are disheartened, pray (Jam. 5:13). Pray with fear, tremor, struggling, caution and alertness. It is especially necessary to pray in this way because the enemies are so evil. It is only when they see us weeping that they are ready to attack, to come and stand beside us, and say that our mind is not supposed to

think of prayer. In this sense, they seek to captivate our mind to make our meditation and supplication futile and needless. Because prayer, when it is not carried out with fear and trembling, with inward diligence and caution is completely futile and pointless.³⁸

St. Hesychios focused on Jesus prayer and *nepsis*, "Watchfulness and the Jesus Prayer, as I have said, mutually reinforce one another; for close attentiveness goes with constant prayer, while prayer goes with close watchfulness and attentiveness of intellect."³⁹ And "Forgetfulness can extinguish our guard over our intellect as water extinguishes fire; but the continuous repetition of the Jesus Prayer, combined with strict watchfulness, uproots it from our heart. The Jesus Prayer requires watchfulness as a lantern requires a candle."⁴⁰

Daniel Sutoyo states that pray is an activity most related to Christian's life; so, there is a saying that prayer is believers' breath of life. Substantially, praying is not mere routinized of service, but also life center. Pray becomes energy of every ministry even life.⁴¹

³⁶ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume IV*, 67.

³⁷ John Anthony McGuckin, "Symeon the New Theologian's Hymns of Divine Eros: A Neglected Masterpiece of the Christian Mystical Tradition," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 5, no. 2 (2005): 182-202.

³⁸ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, 37.

³⁹ Ibid, 178.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 179-180.

⁴¹ Daniel Sutoyo, "Allah Memanggil Umat-Nya Untuk Menjadi Gereja Yang Tekun Berdoa Menurut

Thus, vigilance, *nepsis*, is achieved by guarding closely the senses and especially by the Jesus Prayer. In fact, the Church Fathers often quoted one sentence of Evagrius because it contained a suggestive alliteration of two Greek words *proseuche* (prayer) and *prosoche* (attention). Attentiveness and prayer belong together. No one can be truly attentive without the power that comes from prayer. To be successful, a person's efforts to be vigilant must be buttressed by God's power. In fact, it has been said that *prosoche* (attention) is the mother of *proseuche* (prayer). "Watch and pray," said Jesus, "that you enter not into temptation..." Watchfulness and prayer are inseparable in the unseen warfare with the unclean thoughts and demons.

The Inner struggle. St. Symeon praised highly the struggle to contain our thoughts through *nepsis*. At any moment our whole soul ought to have a clear view, to be able to see and notice the thinking coming from the evil one into our hearts and to repel them. The heart should always be full of faith, humility and love. Don't fear and flee conflict; there's no virtue where no struggle exists.⁴² Coniaris writes that *nepsis*

is never easy. It requires constant struggle. The Fathers tell of a monk who prayed to God about the conflict brought about by the constant struggle to be vigilant. He wanted the struggle to come to an end. It did come to an end. He went to see his spiritual father and said to him, "I see myself in unbroken peace, without any conflict or struggle." The spiritual father said to him, "Go and pray to God that the warfare may return, because through conflict the soul comes to proficiency and victory. And when the struggle comes, do not pray for it to be taken away, but that the Lord may give patience in persecution."⁴³

St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain counsels that through mediation and service of senses, every thought of evil and every sort of passion reaches the heart. And if emotions are not protected, the bad impulses are not kept, either. How can these emotions be controlled and closed? Listen. Clear netting was put over the windows of the Temple of Salomon to avoid the invasion of impure insects (cf. Eze. 41:6). This may inform you that those who do not want the unclean impulses of the senses to reach their souls will place [spiritual] net on their senses. What are these nets? What are

Kisah Para Rasul 4: 23 – 31," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 2016): 52–73, accessed March 4, 2018, <http://sttintheos.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/dunamis/article/view/101/97>.

⁴² St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume IV*, 67.

⁴³ Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 107.

these nets? It's a remembrance of death, for one; our account of the judgment before Christ; the remembrance of eternal suffering. St. Neilos has confirmed that this is so:

Those who desire to keep their mind as a clean and pure temple, where the doors and windows are covered with fine nets to prevent the entry of any impure insects, must similarly cover their senses by meditating on the sobering realities of the future judgment which prevent the entry of any impure images to creep in.⁴⁴

St. Philotheos of Sinai wrote that,

When engaged in noetic warfare, we should therefore do all we can to choose some spiritual practice from divine Scripture and apply it to our intellect like a healing ointment. From dawn we should stand bravely and unflinchingly at the gate of the heart, with true remembrance of God and unceasing prayer of Jesus Christ in the soul; and keeping watch with the intellect, we should slaughter all the sinners in the land (Psalm 101:8).⁴⁵

Tito Colliander describes such attentiveness,

The spider may be another example for you. In the middle of his web he sits and feels the smallest fly and kills it. Likewise, prayer watches in the middle of your heart: as soon as a trembling makes it known that an enemy is there, prayer kills it. To leave off praying is the same thing

as deserting one's post. The gate stands open for the ravaging hordes, and the treasures one has gathered are plundered. The plunderer does not need long to accomplish his work: anger, for example, can destroy everything in a single second.⁴⁶

Paul Evdokimov wrote,

Vigilance allows us to recognize evil before being tempted . . . The spiritual masters make use of an image that was familiar in the desert: Strike the serpent on the head before he enters the cell. If the serpent enters, the struggle will be much more laborious.⁴⁷

St. Macarios tells of how Adam was tempted through the senses,

Adam was created pure by God to serve him... However, the devil approached him and spoke to him and it was from without through the hearing that he was first received. It was after this that the devil entered his heart and pervaded his entire being.⁴⁸

St. Evagrius the Solitary warns,

Be the door-keeper of your heart and do not let any thought come in without questioning it. Question each thought individually: "Are you on our side or the side of our foes?" And if it is one of ours, it will fill you with tranquility.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid, 98.

⁴⁵ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume III*, 16.

⁴⁶ Tito Colliander, *The Way of the Ascetics* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1985).

⁴⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *Agas of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 175.

⁴⁸ Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 104.

⁴⁹ St. Nikodemos of The Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: Volume I*, 33.

St. Hesychios gives the valuable insight that harmful foods make the body difficult, but the person who eats them can quickly take some bliss and therefore be unharmed as soon as he feels the pain. Often, once an intelligence that has imbued evil thoughts detects the anger, it is willing, through the deepest words of the spirit, to quickly remove them and fully get rid of them. This teaching and the accompanying knowledge were communicated through God's mercy comprehension to watchers.⁵⁰

And St. Maximos warns us of the enemy's stealing Christ from us through lack of vigilance. Let us not sleep, just watch our Lord and Savior so that nobody can take Him from the tomb of our hearts with eternal watching so that we can tell at some point that they came while we slept and stole Him away. We have rivals, because we would slip to sleep, that try to steal God from our souls. Let us hold Him in the tomb of our souls with constant watch; let him rest there; lay him sleep there; let him rise again there, if he will.⁵¹

One of the many benefits of growing in watchfulness is the gift of discernment. Ware explains how this happens. Through the diligence and self-knowledge, a journeyman starts to gain the

power of judgment or discernment (in Greek: *diakrasis*). As a person who is safe and who knows whether food is moldy or good is physical taste, the spiritual taste will differentiate him if it is produced with ascetic commitment and prayer. The difference between evil and good, between the unnecessary and the meaningful, between the imaginations inspired by the devil and images characterized by celestial archetypes in his creative imagination.⁵²

CONCLUSION

The *Philokalia* tradition has provide rich resources for the therapy of the heart by *nepsis* and praying. These two ways should be taken seriously in the discourse of finding true Christian spirituality. *Nepsis* and praying are the remedy of the *logismoi* and passions. The *Philokalia* challenges us to look afresh at the ways in which we interpret the spirituality. It presents a radical approach to psychotherapy or to renew our soul (heart) which provides at once an investigative tool, a therapeutic method, and a theoretical understanding of the human *nous* to inform these procedures.

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⁵⁰ Ibid, 196.

⁵¹ Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, 109.

⁵² Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 154.

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