

THE WORKS OF GREGORY THE SINAÏTE*

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ii) *Practical doctrine.*

As already noted, St Gregory's directives to contemplatives on how to practise hesychia are mainly contained in the last two series Δ' and Ε' of his *kephalaia*, the remainder, with the exception of Α', 99-102, amounting principally to theoretical background.

The Sinaïte's practical prescriptions have been very adequately dealt with in an excellent study by Kallistos Ware, entitled «The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai»²¹⁰. But an account of the Saint cannot possibly omit consideration of his teaching on the Hesychast way of life and method of prayer; so the essential features of his practical doctrine must be summarised here too, while acknowledging considerable indebtedness to this scholar, who on 6 June 1982 was consecrated Bishop of the Orthodox Church, the first Englishman to be raised to that dignity in modern times. The more these things are repeated for the information of various sectors of the reading public, the greater the expectation that an objective grasp of what the Hesychasts really stood for will spread. There is a need to dispel the distorted and calumnious version of it which has been put in circulation by critics of the Orthodox Church.

Gregory is not claiming to be an innovator. Ware enumerates 36 or 37 references of his to forerunners in the ascetic tradition of the Byzantine world²¹¹. To these we can now add four more to John Kli-

* Continued from *Θεολογία* 52 (1982), 2, 3 and 4.

210. *Eastern Churches Review*, Vol. IV, 1 (1972) 1-22. Unfortunately this quarterly journal never enjoyed the broad circulation which it deserved, especially outside England. All the more justification for returning in an Athens journal to the subject of the article in question. Since 1979 the *Eastern Churches Review* has merged with *Sobornost*, quarterly organ of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. A further study by the same scholar has recently appeared in *Sobornost* / *ECR* 4:2 (1982) 163-184: Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, «The Holy Name of Jesus in East and West: the Hesychasts and Richard Rolle», which, though not dealing specifically with St Gregory of Sinai, provides (p. 164-171) a useful historical summary of the whole Hesychast tradition on the Prayer of Jesus.

211. «The author quoted or mentioned in Gregory's works by far the most frequently is John Klimacus (13 references). After Klimacus comes Isaac the Syrian (4 references); Mark the Monk (or Hermit) and Maximus the Confessor (3 references each); Ephrem the Syrian, Diodochus of Photice, Varsanuphius of

makos and one explicit quotation from the Makarian Homilies in the newly edited final *kephalaia* of Γ'; but there is still no reference to Pseudo-Dionysios.

The manifestation of Baptism

As we have seen, according to St Gregory true prayer is a heavenly influence poured into the soul. «Prayer is God, who worketh all in all» (A', 113). Only the Spirit of God, acting within a man, can enable him to gather his mind within his heart in prayer: «Understand, that no one of himself can control his mind unless he is controlled by the Spirit» (E', 3). But man can prepare himself for this gift; for if he has been baptised, he already has the germ of it within him. Prayer is, in fact, «the manifestation of Baptism» (A', 113), and by removing the obstacles set up by sin it can and must become «active» in our heart; otherwise, though every believer is a member of Christ possessing the spirit of Christ, he is «unactivated, unmoved, and unreceptive of transformation by grace»²¹². The aim of the ascetico-mystical life is to bring the grace of Baptism to life, to allow God to activate it. Grace is present secretly and unconsciously, but by prayer we aim to perceive it fully, consciously, perceptibly. We are mostly baptised only as unconscious infants, but «even if we are baptised as adults, yet it is in water alone, and we do not perceive it in the spirit» (Γ', 1-2). Here we come up against the distinction between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit, which is based on Scripture²¹³ and plays a prominent part in the present «Charismatic Movement»^{213α}. Whereas we should be living under the direct guidance of God (θεοδιδάκτοι), without Baptism in the Spirit we are unaware of «the exceeding greatness of the honour and glory in which we have been made participants»; «we know neither whether there is a God, nor what we are and what we have become, sons of God and sons of Light, and children and members of Christ» (Γ', 2).

Gaza (2 references each); Symeon the New Theologian (two references, one definitely and the other probably by ps.- Symeon *On Holy Prayer and Attention*); Basil the Great, Abba Isaías, Hesychius, Thalassius, Philotheus of Sinai and Nicetas Stethatos (one reference each).

212. ἀνεέργητος, ἀκίνητος καὶ πρὸς μετουσίαν τῆς χάριτος ἀνεπίδεκτος (A', 129).

213. Matth. 3,11; Mk. 1,8; Luke 3,16; John 1,33, 3,58; Acts 1,15, 11,16; 1 Cor. 11,13.

213a. Ware (*op. cit.*, nn. 26,28) points out its presence throughout the Byzantine monastic tradition, beginning with Mark the Hermit (early 5th century) and ending with Kallistos and Ignatios (end of the 14th). An outstanding exponent of the theme was St Symeon the New Theologian (10th/11th century).

But how then does one find that Christ, whom one has received at Baptism, «and how, after that, does one progress so as to *keep Him*»? One may well ask, for «many have waged the struggle to the point of finding Him whom they sought, but have stopped short there in their aspiration, nor do they proceed any further, nor care, satisfied merely with the beginning they have found» (*ibid.*). They run into obstacles, lose their way, yet think they are still on the right path. But even some who have «reached the half-way stage of enlightenment» (τὴν μεσότητα φθάσαντες τοῦ φωτισμοῦ) have sunk back through negligence or indifference; why, even the perfect can inadvertently fall into self-esteem and become no better than novices (*ibid.*).

There are two ways by which the activity (ἐνέργεια) of the Spirit, which is mystically present in us since Baptism, can be discovered. Firstly, it is revealed gratuitously by our carrying out the commandments and engaging in much labour for a long time: and the more we apply them, the more «He shines on us his resplendencies». But besides this ascetic effort of the «active life» or *πρᾶξις*, which Gregory learnt on Mt Sinai and found almost exclusively practised on Mt Athos, there is another way, which is that of contemplative prayer «through the continual psycho-technical invocation (διὰ τῆς ἐπιστημονικῆς ἐπικλήσεως συνεχοῦς) of the Lord Jesus; that is, through the memory of God» (Γ', 3). The first manner of life is an authentic way to grace but it produces its results more slowly, while the second does so more quickly (*συντομώτερον*), provided one «learns to dig the ground laboriously and perseveringly so as to seek out the gold». But St Gregory notes that in it the Spirit is revealed «in subjection» (ἐν ὑποταγῇ), i.e. one must practise it under the direction of a spiritual father. Nor is it an easy short cut which will dispense a monk from asceticism. On the contrary, the Saint prescribes a formidable programme of physical and spiritual self-discipline to accompany it. For he does not intend to eliminate *πρᾶξις*, only to insist that the contemplative can cap it with a technical method of prayer which will quicken the pace by urgently inviting the Lord to reveal himself. His mind will be taking its stand both on *πρᾶξις* and on *θεωρία* (= ὁ πρακτικὸς καὶ θεωρητικὸς νοῦς). With the first he will, under God, be conquering the passions, while with the second he will be contemplating Him, in so far as man is capable of it (Δ', 1).

The hesychast method of prayer

This method of prayer has two components: an external psycho-physical technique, and an internal formula of prayer. Let us first consider what Gregory writes about certain aspects of the technique.

1. Bodily posture

«Sitting from morning onwards on a low seat²¹⁴, compress your mind out of your brain²¹⁵ in(to) your heart, and keep it there. Bend over laboriously and, suffering severe pain in the chest, shoulders and neck, cry out persistently in mind and soul: «Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me». Then, because of the constraint and the labour and also perhaps because repetitiveness is repellent... switch your mind over to the other half (of the formula) and say: 'Son of God, have mercy on me'. Keep saying the half many times over, and do not continually transfer from one to the other out of supineness...» (Δ', 2).

And elsewhere he writes:

«On a bench sometimes — indeed most of the time, because of the discomfort — and sometimes on your bed — but only occasionally and for a time, for sake of relaxation, — you must practise patience in your sitting, because of him who said: 'persevering in prayer'²¹⁶. And you must not hasten to rise again out of negligence because of the persistent pain and the spiritual invocation and ceaseless fixedness of the mind, ... but bend yourself over and gather your mind within your heart, if it be open,

214. Literally, «a span seat», «a seat one span high». A span (*σπιθαμή*) is the distance between the tips of the thumb and little finger, officially calculated in Byzantine times to be 23.4 centimetres. See E. Schilbach *Byzantinische Metrologie* (= *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* XII, 4), Munich 1970, 19-20. Most people will find this quite uncomfortably low. It is certainly not a matter of «sitting up» to pray. Though the normal prayer position for the Hesychast is thus a crouching one, and this distinguishes it from most other Christian traditions, St Gregory allows him to rise occasionally and raise his hands and eyes to heaven, imploring help, if he is pestered by obsessive thoughts and temptations (Ε', 5).

215. Ἐκ τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ means literally «out of the leading faculty of the soul, the reason». The expression, in Latin «principatus», stems from the Stoics. Gregory considers this to be located in the brain (*ἐγκέφαλον*), for in this Δ', 11 he speaks of τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν ἐν τῷ ἐγκεφάλῳ.

216. St Paul, in Col. 4,2.

and invoke the Lord Jesus to come to your help. You will have pains in your shoulders and your head will often ache, but persevere laboriously in them out of love, seeking the Lord in your heart...» (E', 1).

What are we to think of this unusual posture? Some have thought it exaggerated and in any case non-essential. Thus Theophan the Recluse (see n. 140, above) omitted much of this description from his Russian translation, and commented as follows on Pseudo-Symeon, from whom Gregory derived it:

«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»²¹⁷.

We can accept the reservations of the celebrated Russian spiritual director, but they should not blind us to the following factors:

(i) The practice of this strange bodily posture was inherited by St Gregory from others²¹⁸; it was taught by him to many in his day, when it seems to have produced the result which he intended; and thereafter, though its use became rarer, it never quite died out. But we may note that Gregory, though obviously following Pseudo-Symeon, does not

217. See E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer's English adaptations of Theophan, *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* (London 1951) 158, n. 33.

218. See above, nn. 82-83. His principal source was a treatise «On the three ways of attention and prayer», wrongly believed in the 14th century to be by St Symeon the New Theologian. But the background of the tradition, that crouching and stooping with his head between his legs may be an appropriate stance for one engaged in earnest prayer, goes right back to the Old Testament. It is reported in 3 (1) Kings 18, 42 of the Prophet Elijah, when he prayed for rain on Mt Carmel, that (to follow the Septuagint version) «he bent forward down to the earth and put his face between his knees (ἐκωψεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἔθηκε τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀνά μέσον τῶν γονάτων αὐτοῦ)». The posture was perhaps traditional among the «Sons of the Prophets» and other bands of prophets, who may be regarded as the O.T. equivalent of monks. Among Jews it survived at least down to the 1st century A.D., when Hanina ben Dosa, a Galilean charismatic Hasid, also «put his head between his knees and prayed» for a miracle (Talmudic source quoted by Gesa Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, London 1973, p. 74).

copy his more controversial prescription about «gazing at one's navel²¹⁹», which led to Varlaam's contemptuous description of the Hesychasts as men «whose soul is in their navel» (ὀμφαλόψυχοι). Nor does Gregory's other predecessor, Nikephoros the Hesychast, use such an expression²²⁰. Not that there is really anything in it that could rightly shock Varlaam in the 14th century or Hausherr in the 20th. For gazing at one's navel is obviously not intended as a practice valuable in itself, but simply as a way of fixing one's attention on the centre of one's body. In an age when men had no knowledge of the circulation of the blood and the working of the nervous and respiratory systems, ascetic authors did what they could to explain their meaning in terms of their erroneous conception of human physiology. The essential thing is the psychological attitude and spiritual discipline which they aimed to inculcate partly through rudimentary physical descriptions. Though Pseudo-Symeon talks, for example, about «seeing the air in the midst of the heart» (βλέπει τὸν μεταξὺ τῆς καρδίας ἀέρα) and Gregory about «the breeze of gasps issuing from the heart» (ἡ αὐρα τῶν πνευμάτων ἀπὸ καρδίας ἀναδουμένη) and «the respiration of the mind» (Δ', 2. Ε', 7), what they are both aiming at is to train the mind (νοῦς) to fix its awareness and find its right orientation in this crudely described interior psycho-somatic environment, so as to achieve a contemplation of its own self and of the activity of divine grace which is pure and quite formless (ἀνείδεος, cf. n. 206).

ii) Though regarding the bent-over posture, with Theophan, as non-essential and certainly not an infallible material instrument automatically producing a spiritual effect, one should probably recognise in it a means of inculcating in *very simple persons*²²¹ the difficult lesson of how to remove their consciousness from the head, where it is liable to visual projections, and concentrate it in the breast. Felt by man to be the

219. Text edited by I. Hausherr, *La méthode d'oraison hésychaste*, 164-5.

220. Νικηφόρου Μονάζοντος, *Περὶ νήψεως καὶ φυλακῆς καρδίας*, *Philokalia Δ'*, 26-28 and *PG* 147, 963-966. See also Hausherr, *op. cit.*, 130.

221. St Gregory Palamas, *Ἐπιστολὴ Β' πρὸς Βασιλάμ*, 49-50 and *Ἐπέρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων* I, 2, 6-8 (ed. Chrestou I, 287-288 and 512-514), while referring to Elijah's prayer-posture and to a text of John Klimakos as proof that monks must «confine their mind within their body», makes the further point that it is above all new initiates (εἰσαγόμενοι, ἀγύμναστοι, ἀρχόμενοι) whose minds need to be trained to recollection by certain devices (μηχαναῖς τισι) such as breath retention and the fixing of the eye («on the breast or the navel» (τῷ οικείῳ στήθει ἢ τῷ ὀμφαλῷ). To the advanced (προκόψαντες), hesychia of body and thought becomes second nature.

seat of his deepest emotions, his life-centre, this upper part of the trunk — the *leb* of the Hebrew scriptures, which houses not only his heart, but his solar plexus, his respiratory system and other vital organs — is regarded by the hesychast tradition as the right base from which the *nous* should operate when laying aside all discursive thought and imaginative shape and stretching out to God in simple and purely spiritual acts of inner devotion. For «prayer of the heart» has a corporeal side to it: note the hesychast emphasis on *θέρμη* (warmth), *σκιρτημα* (leaping), *τρόμος* (quaking) and such-like semi-physical movements enumerated at great length in E', 3-10 — some of them signs of grace, others of delusion. Seen in this light, the bent position is simply a means to an end, which the more sophisticated may be able to do without. Far from needing to lean over in order to «find the place of the heart», some people may find it comes to them easier if they throw their head up and back and close their eyes instead of gazing at their navel. The main thing, as Theophan says (*ibid.*), is making the mind «stand on guard in the heart — in this physical heart, but not physically».

iii) There remains, however, the physical labour, constraint and pain, on which the Sinaïte seems to set much store in the passages quoted above. On the one hand it seems natural that a formula of prayer expressing *πένθος* (grief, penitence) and man's dolorous yearning for salvation should be accompanied by such unpleasant bodily feelings rather than by those of ease, relaxation and comfort. On the other, is not an extreme of discomfort and pain liable to distract the mind from its less tangible, spiritual object? What one can say for certain is that the promoters of the hesychast posture intended the constraint and aching to be so closely married to the anguish of soul, that they mutually express each other²²². Should this attempt to marry body and soul result mainly in distraction and divided attention, the painful constriction of the neck and thorax would have to be slackened or abandoned as defeating its own purpose. There are circumstances when the very existence of the body is best forgotten altogether; indeed, Gregory himself leads the Hesychast to expect that perhaps to happen sometimes under the

222. In Kallistos' *Life of the Saint* (see above, Vol. 53, p. 37) we have his description of Gregory's ardent prayer which ushered in his «strange transformation». Anything detracting from its degree of spiritual concentration would only have been an obstacle. There is no suggestion that Gregory had purposely adopted a painful bodily posture. The very brief account of Arsenios' teaching, which put Gregory on the right track (*Ibid.*, 35), likewise conveys no hint of such things.

influence of divine grace²²³. However, in a general way, Gregory is very insistent that Hesychasm necessarily involves a man in a great deal of suffering. His long chapter Δ', 14 is entirely devoted to this uncompromising doctrine. The Hesychast, he says, requires κόπος (toil) and πόνος (pain). The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and violence (βία) here means «the feeling of bodily distress in everything». It must be present in «every work, both physical and spiritual». A Hesychast cannot be ἀνάλγητος (without pain); his heart must suffer the throes of labour (καρδία ἐνώδυνος).

2. Breathing

As Ware remarks, Gregory's recommendations on control of the breathing are far less detailed than those of Pseudo-Symeon and Nikephoros, the two predecessors on whom he is drawing. This is what he writes:

«Control the drawing in of your breath, so as not to breathe freely; for the air-breeze issuing from the heart darkens the mind and fans its thinking, separating it from the heart, and either delivers it as captive to forgetfulness or contrives that it should be involved in confusing one thing with another... Hold back the expulsion of breath as much as you can and confine your mind within your heart...» (Δ', 2).

«Respiratory inhalation, accompanied by tight closing of the mouth, puts a brake on the mind: though only partially, for it again becomes distracted...» (E', 2).

«Closing your mouth in prayer rather tightly, control the respiration of the mind, but not that of the nose, as the ignorant do, lest you suffer harm from congestion...» (E', 7).

The above passages amount to saying that the Hesychast should limit his inhalation and exhalation, and not breathe unrestrainedly. Such breath-control has no virtue of its own; its purpose is purely psychological and spiritual. It should help the Hesychast to «confine the mind within his heart» and «control the respiration of his mind»²²⁴, i.e. to

223. In A', 118 he speaks of «total ecstasy» (ἐκστασις διανοίας ἐν πνεύματι ὀλικῆ τῶν αἰσθήσεων); and in his *Life*, of a «marvellous and strange alteration», in which the soul «no longer feels this humble, earthly and material body» (*loc. cit.* 39). See also § 13 of his *Discourse on the Transfiguration*, edited at the beginning of the present study.

224. This kind of cross-attribution is typical of Gregory's style; it need not be

concentrate his awareness, steady his mind and drive away distractions.

In the West, where every effort has been made to throw discredit on Hesychasm, it has been suggested that these directions about breath-control derive from the Muslim mysticism of the Sufis. But let it be noted that the use of breathing as a regulatory discipline for fixing of the mind during prayer is not unknown in the West, notably among the Spanish mystics of the 16th century²²⁵, and that Spanish mysticism too has been accused of drawing on Sufi inspiration²²⁶. The fact is that reg-

taken as involving literal implications. It finds its parallel in expressions where he mixes the sense-data, such as «fragrant light» (φῶς εὐωδιάζον, — Γ', 3), «sound of glory» (ἡχώ τῆς δόξης, — *Discourse* 220) and «breeze of light» (αὔρα φωτός, — *ibid.* 74).

225. Lev Gillet («Un moine de l' Eglise d' Orient») pointed in his book *La Prière de Jésus* (Chevetogne 1951) to its use by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Hausherr dealt with this by emphasising in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 20 (1954) 7-26 («Les Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignace et la méthode d' oraison hésychaste») that the use of breathing recommended by the founder of the Jesuits was somewhat different and that he had claimed no infallible efficacy for it. This is true, but really beside the point.

226. See Jean Baruzi, *Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de l' expérience mystique* (Paris 1931) and Miguel Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado* (Madrid 1931). Here again, it has been easy, in reply, to point out that there is a difference of approach. For the Sufis' highly complicated practices, see L. Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris 1954) 53-73.

On the question of their possible influence on Hesychasm, Ware mentions Louis Gardet, 'Un problème de mystique comparée: La mention du nom divin (dhikr) dans la mystique musulmane' in *Revue Thomiste* 52 (1952) 642-679 and 53 (1953) 197-216. He might equally have referred to G.-C. Anawati and Louis Gardet's joint book *Mystique musulmane; aspects et tendances; expérience et techniques* (= *Études musulmanes* VIII, Paris 1961), where the above serialized article is reproduced *in toto* on pp. 187-259. This is a very interesting investigation, largely based on comparison of Sufism, Yoga and Hesychasm, into the extent to which mystical techniques, if practised with total dedication, can produce results which, though quite extraordinary, are none the less natural psychological effects, not gratuitous gifts of divine grace. Of course, as Ware (n. 62) remarks, «many of its conclusions are open to question». But one must have the courage to face this problem, in which, be it noted, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck and the Rhenish mystics are also involved, — as M.-M. Labourdette, reviewing other works of Gardet, points out in *Revue Thomiste* 62 (1962) 253-266. In these days indeed, when «transcendental meditation» and various other mystical techniques of the non-Christian Orient are in vogue, it is a problem which vitally concerns many of our contemporaries.

Students of Hesychasm should rely on the original sources, i. e. the «neptic» Fathers, and not pay exaggerated attention to such books as *The way of a pilgrim* (tr. from Russian by R. M. French, London 1954), which though they have served to popularise the subject, are not fully authoritative. Nor does one really feel, de-

ular and controlled breathing is a device which occurs almost automatically to any determined person embarking on an attempt to achieve the maximum of interior concentration and attention. It is far more natural to man than the assumption of a crouching posture.

3. The Jesus Prayer

a) *Its formula*

Lev Gillet (*La Prière de Jésus*, Chevetogne 1951) and above all Kallistos Ware in his works quoted above, have studied in detail the various forms of words used in this celebrated prayer and have traced an outline of their historical development. Earlier writers, and in particular Archbishop Basil Krivoshein²²⁷ and Irénée Hausherr²²⁸, have contributed to our knowledge of this subject. It will not be necessary to repeat here any but the most essential data.

The essence of the Jesus Prayer is a brief invocation including, firstly, the name of Jesus²²⁹ — to which may be attached other words,

spite the respect now shown to Hesychasm by many non-Orthodox specialists, that studies by outsiders such as G. Wunderle, 'La technique psychologique et l' hésychasme byzantin' in *Études Carmélitaines* (Oct. 1938), penetrate to the living essence of the matter. Anyone who prefers to read recently published literature should at least seek out those writers who have had full actual experience both of practising the Jesus Prayer themselves and of guiding others in its use. In this respect one cannot perhaps do better than read the works of Archimandrite Sophrony, and particularly *His life is mine* (Mowbrays, London/Oxford 1977); see especially his pp. 115-116, where he shows profound awareness of the difference between «natural mysticism», produced by technical methods, and infused supernatural prayer, and sounds a solemn warning against the former, as leading finally to a kind of self-contemplation and self-worship. Of course, where psycho-technical practices are persistently applied, there are liable to be border-line cases when both natural and supernatural effects may be present; and then, as Gardet says, «on voit l' extrême complexité des cas existentiels qui se peuvent présenter».

227. «Date du texte traditionnel de la 'Prière de Jésus'», in *Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarcat russe en Europe occidentale VII-VIII* (1951) 55-59.

228. *Noms du Christ et voies d' oraison* (= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 157, Rome 1960).

229. Hausherr's work just referred to sets out to prove that this last is more essential than the effect of the name Jesus. He may well be right. But for the paramount importance of the Holy Name in the East, see Kallistos Ware, *The Power of the Name: the Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality* (= Fairacres Publications, no. 43), Oxford 1974. This is one of the many studies by Orthodox writers which have appeared in the West in recent years, addressed not to the learned public in search of byzantinological lore, but to contemporary Christians seeking practical guidance

declaring His entitlement to be approached as Saviour (Lord, Christ, Son of God)—and secondly calling on Him for mercy and reconciliation. The «standard» formula is «Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me», and it can be traced right back to the 6th/7th century. Nowadays, the words «a sinner» are generally added; but according to Ware, the *Life* of St Gregory the Sinaïte (Ch. 8) is the earliest instance of their addition; and they are absent from Gregory's own works. Briefer ejaculatory prayers, approximately on this model, are traceable to the early 6th century. The whole tradition emanates from Egyptian and Palestinian monastic circles.

In his more recent study mentioned above in n. 210 Ware writes: «There is little or no evidence in the Greek East for the use of the name 'Jesus' on its own». I take the liberty of qualifying this statement by pointing to a rather striking text which constitutes an exception. Kallistos and Ignatios, «the Xanthopouloi», who closed the cycle of Byzantine hesychast authors with their admirable «Century» of *Kephalaia* dating from the end of the 14th century, are generally regarded as reliable but not very original compilers of the sayings of all their predecessors in the «neptic» tradition²³⁰. But besides the Century there are two fragments in a manuscript at Oxford (Bodleian Holkham gr. 74 of the 15th century, ff. 131r-133r), one of which attributes to them the following original description of what happens when the soul is powerfully visited by grace:

«The divine influence (ἐνέργεια) wells up from the heart, snatching up, as it were, the affection of the heart and stirring the mind from the very depths. It becomes so attached to the divine influence itself, that it cries out repeatedly (πικνά): «My Jesus, my Jesus!

in the use of this form of prayer. A voluminous bibliography could be compiled, witnessing to the popularity of this theme. See, e.g., Elisabeth Behr-Sigel: 'La Prière à Jésus ou le mystère de la spiritualité orthodoxe' in *Dieu Vivant* 8 (1947), Nadezhda Gorodetsky: 'The Prayer of Jesus' in *Blackfriars* 23 (1942). and Lev Gillet ('A Monk of the Eastern Church'): *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus* (London 1950, reprinted by SLG Press, Fairacres, Oxford 1970).

230. The text, in 100 chapters, of their «Method and rule... for those choosing the contemplative and monastic life (Μέθοδος καὶ κανὼν... περὶ τῶν αἰρομένων ἡσυχως βιῶναι καὶ μοναστικῶς)» was published in the *Philokalia* (Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν, Athens 1976, Δ', 197-295), whence Migne reproduced it in *PG* 147, 636-812. Unfortunately, Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, in his brief biographical introduction, mistakenly identified this Kallistos with Patriarch Kallistos I (1350-1353 and 1355-1363), whereas he is Kallistos II (1397). See also n. 28, above.

(Ἰησοῦ μου)». For as soon as the heart is opened up, this is all that the mind cries out: «My Jesus!», and the mind is incapable of saying the whole formula: «Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me» because of the frequent openings of the heart (ἀπὸ τῶν πυκνῶν ἀνοιγμάτων τῆς καρδίας), but only «My Jesus!». And any who say that they pronounce the whole prayer when in this state are deceiving themselves; for when, as we have said, the mind becomes attached to the divine influence and penetrates into the utmost depths (τὸ ἐνδότερον) of the heart, it is no longer able to cry out anything but «My Jesus!»²³¹.

The authors follow this declaration with a striking description of the vision of the Uncreated Light²³². Such reduction of a fairly extensive prayer-formula to an almost inarticulate cry when in a state of fervour finds its parallel in Syrian spirituality of the 6th/7th century. In a recent study²³³ Dr Sebastian Brock, Lecturer in Syriac at the University of Oxford, quotes the recently published works of John the Elder as recommending, for periods of aridity, the repetition of the words: «My God, grant me wisdom and strengthen me», but at moments of spiritual euphoria, simply: «Abba, Abba!» («Father, Father!» — Cf. Rom. 8,15 and Gal. 4.6).

The Hesychast is advised to say the words of the Jesus Prayer sometimes by mouth, sometimes to formulate them only with his mind; but if the former, to pronounce them «quietly and without disturbance», not allowing his voice to hinder the inner application of his mind to them. With time and practice, the mind will have learnt from the Holy

231. Hausherr, *Noms du Christ...* 266-267, reports that he has found the text of which this is an extract in a rare book, *Κῆπος χαρίτων*, printed in Venice in 1819 (p. 221 ff.), where it is apparently attributed to Patriarch Kallistos alone. He gives not the Greek, but only a French translation of it. This coincides in the main with my English, as above, but reveals a mistake in the Greek original used by him, which seems to have ἀρουσα ὡσπερὶ τὸ φύλλον τῆς καρδίας (whence his translation: «soulevant pour ainsi dire *la feuille* du cœur»), whereas the Bodleian ms. has τὸ φῶλον, which I take to mean «the loving disposition, the affection».

232. Without access to *Κῆπος χαρίτων*, it is impossible to discern whether Hausherr has seen the whole of this description, since his French text breaks off before it has got properly under way. I hope soon to republish the whole Greek text, together with the other *opusculum* mentioned above, which is a letter from the Xanthopoulos brothers to a certain «recluse and hesychast» in the monastery of St Savas in Palestine.

233. «The Prayer of the Heart in Syriac Tradition», in *Sobornost' / ECR* 4:2 (1982) 131-142.

Spirit how to pray «entirely and strongly» by itself; indeed, it will no longer be *able* to pray through the mouth (E', 2).

b) *Its quality*

Ware rightly underlines as Gregory's principal requirements in this respect, that the Jesus Prayer should be 1) continuous and 2) imageless.

He expresses the first requirement through a whole vocabulary of words implying continuity and persistence. The prayer must be uninterrupted (συνεχῆς Γ', 3· ἀδιάστατος Α', 101· ἔμμονος Δ', 15): the Hesycahst must pray continuously (διηνεκῶς Δ', 2) constantly (συνεχῶς Δ', 2· Ε', 3,4), persistently (ἐπιμόνως Δ', 2· Ε', 3,4), lengthily (συχνῶς Ε', 4) and, at the beginning, laboriously (ἐπιπόνως Ε', 4). The Jesus Prayer is not something practised occasionally: it is a constant occupation, aiming at the achievement of a permanent state of soul. Progress in it implies that under the influence of grace, infused prayer should flow from the heart like a perpetual stream (ἀείρρυτος Α', 118· ἀεικίνητος Γ', 3). The Jesus Prayer must become second nature, and that is why the formula used should not vary too much. «For plants which are constantly transplanted do not take root» (Δ', 2, — cf. Ε', 2).

As for formlessness and absence of all imagination, we have already seen that St Gregory says this is the characteristic of pure «angelic» prayer, which sees nothing ἐν παχύτητι²³⁴, and that the remedy for the perils of delusion lies in «keeping the mind devoid of colour, of form, of shape» (Ε', 7)²³⁵. He who «always keeps his mind free from fancies (ἀφάνταστος) and stripped of notions and of thoughts», has nothing to fear²³⁶. Some indeed have gone astray and suffered mental damage, but this was because they indulged in singularity and vain-glory; he who seeks for God in a spirit of submission to a spiritual father, whose advice he will humbly ask for, will, by the grace of Christ, never come to any harm²³⁷.

If the «work of the heart» is to be kept «inviolable» (ἄσυλος — Δ', 4) and the prayer «pure» (Α', 116· Γ', 1· Ε', 7), the mind must be kept free from elation (ἀμετεώριστος — Α', 118); it must not be allowed to create

234. Literally, «in solidity» (Α', 116). See *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) σ. 1113.

235. See *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) σ. 1117.

236. Ε', 7. *Φιλοκαλία*, Δ', 87, 2-3.

237. 'Ο καθ' ὑποταγὴν μετὰ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνης ζητῶν τὸν Θεὸν οὐδέποτε βλαβήσεται, χάριτι Χριστοῦ (ibid., 7-9).

phantoms (φαντασιοποιεῖν) nor see things as in a mirror (ἐνοτροίζεσθαι), otherwise the contemplative risks becoming a *phantast* instead of a *hesychast*²³⁸. We have already seen what principal forms delusion can take²³⁹. In order not to fall into it, this is what the Saint advises²⁴⁰:

«If you want to live the life of hesychia properly, with the expectation of being with God, never accept anything you may see, whether perceptible to the senses or to the mind, or from outside or from inside you, even if it is a form of Christ or apparently the shape of some Angel or Saint; never imagine or form an appearance of light with your mind. For the mind itself is naturally endowed with its own imaginative power, and in persons who have not yet learnt to take precise notice it can easily put forth phantasms of the things for which it longs; thus it does harm to its very self. Even the recollection of things good and evil is wont to imprint a crowd of sensations on the mind and induce it to form images, so that he who indulges in this sort of thing becomes of his own accord a phantast instead of a hesychast. Therefore take care not to believe in anything through hastily agreeing to it, even if it is something good, before asking experienced persons and having it thoroughly examined, lest you suffer damage. No, you must behave negatively towards it²⁴¹, always keeping your mind colourless, imageless, shapeless. For many have suffered damage in a trial which was really sent them so that they might be crowned by God [for rejecting delusion], since the Lord wishes to try out our self-determination, to see which way it inclines»²⁴².

a) *Its effects*

As we have seen above, according to St Gregory's teaching, man by his fall from paradise has lost his single-mindedness (ἐνοειδής

238. φανταστής καὶ οὐχ ἡσυχαστής — A', 118. The same expressions reoccur below, in the immediately following quotation.

239. See *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) σ. 1116-1117.

240. E', 7. (*Φιλοκαλία Δ'*, 85, 37).

241. μένε βαρούμενος πρὸς αὐτό. Cf. E', 8: μένε βαρὺς καὶ μετὰ δοκιμασίας πολλῆς κάτεχε τὸ καλὸν τὸ δὲ πονηρὸν ἀπόρριπτε. The use of βαρὺς here can be taken as meaning that the contemplative must stand his ground, being «heavy» or severe in the sense that he does not lightly allow himself to be carried away.

242. Cf. the text of Γ', 11 newly edited in *Θεολογία* 53 (1982), lines 25-30.

ἀπλή μνήμη — A', 60) and fallen a victim to unsound and unwanted thoughts (λογισμοί), which beset him and incline him to distraction and to sin. His mind has become uncontrolled (ἀκράτητος), being in perpetual movement (ἀεικίνητος) and habituated to turning hither and thither (περιφορὰν οἰκειωσάμενος — E', 3). Prayer of the mind in the heart not only importunes the Lord to come and remedy this disastrous situation by His grace and restore man's integrity (νοερά αἴσθησις τε καὶ ἔνωσις — E', 3), his primal simplicity (τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀπλοῦν — A', 60); it also prepares for that supernatural intervention by doing what is humanly possible to simplify and master the activity of the mind.

Not that the human mind can free itself completely or for long from its fallen state of distraction (E', 3) and from those obsessive thoughts which the secret demonic powers of evil incessantly work to excite (A', 68, 70). But it can get into the habit of driving them away by using the Jesus Prayer against them. This is how our author describes this work of «vigilant sobriety» (νήψις) and «guarding of the mind» (φυλακὴ καρδίας) against undesirable thoughts (λογισμοί):

«When these thoughts come, call upon the Lord Jesus at length and persistently, and they will depart; for they flee because they cannot stand the warmth of heart which issues from the prayer, being burnt up by it as by fire. 'With the name of Jesus', says St John Klimakos, 'scourge your enemies'» (E', 4)²⁴³.

«If you perceive the impurities of the evil spirits, that is, these thoughts (λογισμοί), rising or changing shape in your mind, do not take fright. Even if they present you with an appearance of good ideas about things, pay no attention to them; but as far as possible, retain your breathing-out and keep your mind close shut within your heart and carry on uninterruptedly and perseveringly with the invocation of the Lord Jesus, and you will soon burn them up and repress them, scourging them invisibly with the divine Name. For St John of the Ladder says 'with the name of Jesus scourge your enemies; for there is no more powerful weapon in heaven and on earth' (Δ', 2)²⁴⁴.

It is noteworthy that the Hesychast is expected to drive away even good thoughts. This injunction is repeated in the following passage:

243, 244. Κλίμαξ 20,6.

«Watching secretly in your heart and praying, guard yourself; and disregard, with the help of the (Jesus) Prayer, all notions, either sensible or mental (αἰσθητά, νοητά), which come up, issuing from the heart. For hesychia consists in setting aside, for the time being, such thoughts about divine things as are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, lest by paying attention to them because they are good, you lose what is greater than they» (Δ', 9).

Experience shows in fact that it is quite possible by using the Jesus Prayer or some other ejaculatory invocation to train oneself to drive away instinctively most thoughts recognised as evil, uncharitable or in any other way detrimental. But to void the mind of *all* thoughts and distractions is a superhuman endeavour. And although the Saint invites those to whom he addresses his writings to embark upon it — even excluding apparently good thoughts, since they may be the beginning of delusion, or at least deflect the soul from attaining to higher mystical states, — and he seems to promise an almost magic effect when he says that the Name will consume evil thoughts like fire, he has to warn his readers against imagining that the use of the Name will be a safe arm in the hands of those who approach this practice with the wrong disposition. The Jesus Prayer, the «memory of God», he says, must not be taught to just anyone, to chance persons (τοῖς τυχοῦσι). Pupils may be ignorant, yet if they are submissive that is enough. But if insubmissive and inclined to go their own way (αὐτόστοιχοι, ἰδιόρρυθμοι), whether they are simple-minded or intelligent, their mind will be found to lack the purification which comes from tears, and owing to their lightheartedness and pride they will fall into delusion instead of true prayer. For the impure spirits in their heart, disturbed by the terrible Name of Jesus, will violently resist the wielder of the whip and «will grind their teeth to destroy him» (Δ', 8).

Despite these dangers, St Gregory is confident that the practice of the Jesus Prayer, if engaged in with the right disposition, will not only concentrate the mind and free it to some extent from distraction; it should lead the beginner into a whole interior world of formless religious experience and feeling which is obviously a gift of divine grace. The essential thing is «to aim at having only the activity of the prayer going on in the heart²⁴⁵, where it will warm the mind and gladden it

245. μόνον τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς προσευχῆς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐνεργοῦσαν ἔχειν. As explained in n. 114 (cf. 135, 151), the activity of *grace* is meant. The Hesychast's rôle in this is purely passive; he is receiving infused prayer.

and inflame the soul with ineffable love of God and of men» (Γ', 3). He regards this as «exempt from error» (ἀπλανής — E', 7) and safe even for novices, because it is inspired by God, though he admits that «sometimes when the mind is praying and standing in the heart, thought (ἡ διάνοια) wanders away, engaged in other things» (E', 3). And he proceeds to describe that strange mixture of deep humiliation, contrition and anguish with exultation, joy and peace which is, he repeatedly declares, the specific mark of the initial phase of the Hesychast's spiritual path (Γ', 3-4). The whole of his third set of *kephalaia*, full of lyrically expressed enthusiasm, yet qualified with subtle distinctions (5-6) and warnings against the counterfeits of delusion (7-10²⁴⁶), deserves to be closely studied, though it cannot all be translated in this résumé. Perhaps the most pertinent phrase in it, which sums everything up, is his quotation from Hebrews 4,12: «The living and powerful word of God, which is Jesus,... is 'piercing even to the division of soul and body, joints and marrow', so as forcibly to melt away what is passionate from every part of the soul and of the body» (Γ', 4).

Though such feelings as gladness (εὐφροσύνη — Γ', 9), cheerfulness (ἰλαρότης — A', 10), exultation (ἀγαλλίαμα — Γ', 4,5) and assurance (πληροφορία — A', 113, Δ', 10) seem to predominate in the Sinaïte's description of the Hesychast's disposition²⁴⁷, he never ceases to warn him not to be carried away too much, for

«He who is keen to achieve pure prayer should progress quietly, with much trepidation and sorrow (πένθος) and guided by consultation of experienced men; and he must be always weeping for his own sins, grieving and fearing lest he go to hell or fall away from God now and in the future life... His greatest arm which he must brandish (against the Devil) when praying is sorrow, lest he fall into self-esteem owing to the joy he derives from prayer, whereas if he chooses joyous grief²⁴⁸, he may keep it harmless. For prayer exempt from error is that warmth which comes with the

246. Not forgetting the extension of 10-13 edited by me above.

247. According to Kallistos' *Life* (Cf. 3), the Saint himself, when his great illumination came to him at Magoulá, was in a paroxysm of repentance and anguish, in which his mind was «nailed to the Cross of Christ ... with groanings and a broken heart»; but after it, his characteristic disposition for the rest of his life was mainly one of serenity, radiant joy and loving-kindness.

248. χαρμολύπη (E', 7): a portmanteau expression inherited by Gregory from St John of the Ladder (*Κλίμαξ* 7, 11).

Jesus Prayer... and burns up the passions like thorns, infusing joy and gladness into the soul»²⁴⁹.

Warmth is indeed a characteristic feeling often mentioned confidently by our author; yet even here, there is a counterfeit warmth, an «irregular burning» (ἀνώμαλος καῦσις — Δ', 10; cf. ἀνώμαλος θέρμη — Γ', 11) of diabolical origin, against which he utters a warning.

But the chief stumbling-block is presumption and self-conceit²⁵⁰. It can prove fatal, even when the Hesychast is well advanced along his path (καὶ μετὰ τὴν προκοπήν — *ibid.*). If, in the absence of a repentant stance, a soul falls into presumptuous thoughts, Jesus «hides himself», turned away by the crowd of notions and λογισμοί with which the mind is darkened (A', 108). The contemplative must therefore take very great care «neither to seek prematurely what is appropriate to some stage, nor to abandon what he has in hand and imagine other things; for by nature the mind... has... a capacity to fabricate things which it has not yet really reached» (A', 118). One of the principal criteria of genuineness is the wholeness of a spiritual experience, the fact that its impact brings complete absence of doubt, «unhesitating assurance» (ἀνεκδοίαστος πληροφορία — Δ', 10). But «if anything enters the soul... and the heart hesitates to accept it, then it is not from God» (*ibid.*).

In his last three sets of chapters, which we are considering now, St Gregory of Sinai seems to concentrate his attention almost exclusively on beginners: their needs, their experiences and the dangers they face. This is natural because, as we have seen, they are letters addressed to individual recipients (Longinos, Niphon, and Luke or some other disciple) who are probably not yet very advanced in the mystical life; and also because he considers that «about the middle phase of (divine) action and about its perfection, there is no need to say much, for 'this by itself has God as teacher' according to the author of the Ladder» (Γ', 12)²⁵¹. But elsewhere he has characterised that intermediary phase as one of «enlightenment» (φωτισμὸς — Γ', 2).

As for the perfect (τέλειοι), we have seen that their prayer is «like fragrant light in action» (ὡς φῶς εὐωδιάζον ἐνεργούμενον — A', 113), that their mind has become «immaterial and light-like» (A', 116) and that they enjoy «hypostatic spiritual contemplation of the Light»

249. E', 7 — Φιλοκαλία Δ', 86, 26-39.

250. οἰησις: a word very frequently used by the Sinaite, who regards it as «the queen of the passions» (A', 104).

251. Text newly published. See *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) σ. 704, lines 49-50.

(A', 118) — which means that they perceive it objectively, existentially and not merely as a subjective concept or metaphor. In his Discourse on the Transfiguration we have seen how the Saint envisages the world of the Spirit, where there is an «everlasting outpouring of Light» (φωτοχυσία ἀένναος — 385-6). The perfect Hesychast is already living in that world. For «especially in those who are advanced in prayer», God acts as «a slight breeze of peaceful light» (E', 7 — *Φιλοκαλία Δ'*, 87, 33-4), in which He «becomes superessentially intelligible to us in states of participation» (Discourse 74-5). Let us recall what the Sinaïte told his disciple and biographer about his own state of divine contemplation²⁵²: his soul «having reached formless and ineffable beauty, converses alone with God alone, brightly illuminated by the effulgence and grace of the most Holy Spirit»; it «has resplendantly risen above all creation, is living above things visible» and «sees the entire creation luminous as in a kind of mirror». St Gregory «has seen the resurrection of his soul before the general resurrection».

The Hesychast who has reached this stage of perfection is of course eminently qualified to teach others:

«He looks on God and receives from Him divine ideas. Instead of a book he has the Spirit;... instead of ink, the Light. So dipping his mind in the Light, and himself becoming light (φῶς ἀποτελῶν), he inscribes words in the Spirit on the pure hearts of his listeners. And then he understands the Scripture: how the faithful will be taught by God, and how God, as the Prophet says²⁵³, teaches man wisdom»²⁵⁴.

Gregory of Sinai, great teacher in the Spirit, initiator of a great mystical renaissance and inspirer of many generations of contemplative monks, seems not to have taught any theological explanation of the metaphysics of the Divine Light and of its relationship to the Essence of God. But he was undoubtedly one of the leading «mystics of light». As such, he was revitalising a tradition which can be traced almost uninteruptedly back to the beginnings of monasticism in the East. And as

252. *Life*, Ch. 8; extracts translated above, in *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) 37-39.

253. Psalm 93 (94), 10. The Authorised Version has: «teacheth men knowledge».

254. A', 23. Cf. the passage from A', 114 already referred to above in the section on Theoretical Doctrine: Τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐλλαμπόμενος τῇ δυνάμει τῆς μεταποιητικῆς συνέσεως μελετωμένης τῷ πνεύματι, ποιεῖν καὶ φωτίζειν δύναται διὰ τῆς συνέσεως τοὺς πιστῶς ἀκούοντας.

his Discourse on the Transfiguration now shows, he identified the light which shone on Mt Thabor with the eternal Divine Light.

d) *Its critics*

As we saw when dealing with Gregory's life story and his theoretical teaching, he was well aware that many rejected his call to contemplative prayer and his method of practising it²⁵⁵. He attributes this to carnality, self-love and lack of faith (A', 126), supineness and ignorance (A', 135). He also enumerates six «comprehensive vices», any one of which, if a man finally (and even after having made progress in prayer) succumbs to it, will turn him into a passionate enemy and critic (κατήγορος) of the Hesychasts; they are over-boldness, gluttony, talkativeness, distraction, self-importance and conceit (A', 104). He must be speaking from experience.

However, he admits that some opponents of Hesychasm were motivated by less disreputable incentives. They are suspicious of those who claim to have arrived rapidly (έν συντόμῳ), by the mercy of God, through the use of technical methods (έπιστημονικῶς) and the warmth of their faith, at a result — the «finding of grace» — which they themselves have only managed to reach by much labour after many years spent in ascetic activity (πρακτική). The Hesychasts have been led astray, they think, by ignorance and conceit; and such results as they may achieve are attributable, they assert, to delusion, not to grace (Δ', 5). Though the Sinaite regards the attitude of this class of critic as indicating lack of faith and highmindedness (ύψηλοφροσύνη — cf. Rom. 11, 20), he does take the trouble to reply to them in his chapters Δ', 5-9 and E', 2. These two large sections of his work are presented in the manuscript tradition under headings connecting them with «psalms», which is an overall expression covering oral recitation or chanting not only of the Psalms and Canticles, but of all other liturgical texts. It

255. Some authors, such as Syrkú (*op. cit.* in n. 175 above, p. 120), wrongly attribute Gregory's first departure from Mt Athos in 1325 mainly to this monastic opposition rather than to the Turkish raids. But a) he was by then gaining influence under the powerful protection of the *Prótos* and b) he was accompanied by a whole group of twelve other hermits, including Gregory Palamas, against whom no such opposition is recorded, except that Nikephoros Gregoras, a prejudiced and unreliable witness, maintains that Palamas fled to Thessalonica to escape condemnation for Bogomolism (see his *Antirrhētika* I (ed. H.-V. Beyer. Vienna 1976) 1, 2, 4, p. 134-135).

is well known that the monastic liturgical tradition had by Gregory's day accumulated a vast hymnographical corpus which, alternating with scriptural material, made up the very lengthy offices chanted daily throughout the year and especially during the early morning hours. Gregory distinguished the eremitical life from the cenobitic and regarded both as legitimate paths to salvation: the first through hesychia, the second through *praxis* (or τὸ πρακτικόν), of which «psalmody» was a part²⁵⁶. The latter might in the very long run lead to contemplation (θεωρία), because infused spiritual prayer would be found to have been granted to some who laboriously practised psalmody²⁵⁷. The question was, to what extent, if at all, those engaged in hesychia in *Sketes* and hermitages should also become involved in psalmody. Gregory rebuts the objections of his critics and gives well balanced advice in answer to that question.

His first retort is that his opponents have no experience of what they are talking about and are therefore incompetent; their incredulity involves them in envious slander which is sinful (A', 126). Furthermore, those who, without having received the Spirit, write and speak and want to edify the Church are ψυχικοί, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες (Jude 19) and will be judged accursed for uttering their own thoughts before undergoing purification, whereas even St Paul relied only on divine prompting (A', 128)²⁵⁸. And he quotes Scripture as condemning those who are sceptical about the exceptional manifestations of grace (Δ', 5)²⁵⁹. Besides, why speak of psalmody as though it were the only component of the active ascetic life (πραξις)? Are not fasting, continence, vigil, standing and self-prostration, sorrow for sin and voluntary poverty all parts

256. For the other constituents of *praxis*, see above, *Θεολογία*, 53 (1982) 50.

257. Τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι προσευχῆν... πρέπει τὰ πολλὰ ψάλλειν καὶ ἀμέσως καὶ αἰεὶ ἐν ποιικιλίᾳ πολλῶν εἶναι καὶ μηδέποτε παύεσθαι, ἕως ἂν ἀπὸ πολλῆς ἐπιπόνου πράξεως εἰς θεωρίαν προκόψωσι, προσευχῆν νοερὰν εὐρηκότες ἐνεργούσαν ἐντὸς αὐτῶν. "Ἄλλη γὰρ ἐστὶ τῆς ἡσυχίας ἢ πράξις καὶ ἑτέρα τοῦ κοινοβίου· ἕκαστος δὲ ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη προσμείνων σωθήσεται (E', 5).

258. The Saint is unbridled in his condemnation of such people. He seems to be following St Symeon the New Theologian in this: Τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων οἱ λόγοι ἀηδεῖς καὶ ἀφώτιστοι· οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ζώσης γὰρ πηγῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος μεταλαμβάνοντες λέγουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐκ λίμνης οἰά τινος βορβορώδους καρδίας, βδέλλας καὶ θφεις καὶ βατράχους ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τύφου καὶ ἀκρασίας ἐχούσης τρέφονται, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς γνώσεως αὐτῶν ὕζον, θολερόν τε καὶ χλιαρόν· οὗ οἱ πίνοντες εἰς καθεξίαν καὶ ἀηδίαν καὶ ἐμετὸν ἀλλοιούμενοι, μετατρέπονται.

259. τὰ ἐξαισία ἐν τισὶ τῆς προσευχῆς ἰδιώματα ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐνεργούμενα ἰδιοτρόπως.

of that *praxis* which, they aver, must necessarily accompany the life of prayer? And anyway, the important thing is not the physical act of uttering words, but the spiritual one of meaning what they say. And he quotes St John of the Ladder and St Maximos as declaring that inner prayer is the highest of all works (Δ' , 6).

For the solitary, St Gregory recommends that he should practise psalmody, but only in moderation, putting his best and most prolonged effort into contemplative prayer, with psalmody held in reserve as a relaxation from the strain of concentration ($\pi\tilde{\eta}\xi\iota\varsigma$) in prayer. Those who have advanced and reached enlightenment ($\phi\omega\tau\iota\sigma\mu\delta\varsigma$) need no psalmody at all; it would detach their mind from God and throw it into confusion (Δ' , 8). But if their concentration slackens off, they should rise then and sing or meditate, work or read (standing, so as to tire the body); or it is enough to read the psalms etc. without chanting them (Δ' , 9). Returning to this theme in his last set of *kephalaia* (E' , 5), the Sinaïte again states that the best thing is moderation: a little psalmody, but not so much as to cause confusion ($\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\gamma\chi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$). To sing a great deal belongs to the $\pi\rho\alpha\kappa\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$, who know no better and require labour, but Hesychasts should confine themselves to prayer of the heart with abstinence from all thought. A mind which has expended its full power in much psalmody becomes too exhausted to pray strongly and persistently. Whoever has the Prayer active in his heart and leaves it for psalmody is falling from the heights down onto the ground ($\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \tau\tilde{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\psi\eta\lambda\tilde{\omega}\nu\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\tilde{\alpha}\ \chi\alpha\mu\alpha\iota\pi\epsilon\tau\tilde{\eta}$) and disrupting his own tranquillity ($\gamma\alpha\lambda\acute{\eta}\nu\eta$), which is the essence of hesychia. Praying out loud is only given to us owing to our negligence and rusticity, in order to lead us on to true prayer, which is the spiritual cry from within. Whoever has tasted of the Spirit should do a proportionate amount of psalmody, but busy himself principally with inner prayer. However, not all walk the same path, and the Sinaïte terminates the chapter (E' , 5) with the following passage, which shows that, though he was zealous for hesychia and strenuously defended it, he was not narrow-minded about it:

«Many have reached contemplation ($\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$) through asceticism ($\pi\rho\alpha\kappa\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$) and have then abstained from all work, observing a Sabbath according to the spiritual law, and have rejoiced solely in God, satiated with the divine delight, not being allowed by grace to chant psalms or engage in anything else; for the time being they are struck with amazement, having attained the object of their desires almost to the utmost, by way of a

pledge. Others again have lived to the end in practical asceticism, and dying, have been saved, having waited for their reward in the future life. Some have received full assurance at their death, for after it their bodies became fragrant in proof of their salvation; they had the grace of baptism, as all have, but owing to their captivity and the ignorance of their mind they had not participated in it mystically during their life-time. And others there are besides, who prove their worth in both psalmody and prayer and so go through life endowed with grace as something perpetually welling up in them and never impeded by anything at all. Others indeed, being illiterate (*ἰδιῶται*), have stuck to hesychia right from beginning to end, and have confined themselves to the Prayer; and they fared very well, being alone united to God alone²⁶⁰. For the perfect, as we have said, 'can do all things in Christ which strengtheneth them' (Phil. 4,13)...».

The ascetic régime

The Jesus Prayer alone is not enough. It must be capped by the observance of a strict system of concomitant austerity, regulating the Hesychast's occupation and his nourishment.

1. Time-table

St Gregory distinguishes «day» and «night» and divides each into 12 «hours». According to the conception prevalent in the Roman and Byzantine Empires and perpetuated long after the fall of both in Eastern monastic discipline, day begins at dawn and night at sunset, so that the hour, which is one twelfth of each, is a variable time by our modern standards²⁶¹. This must be taken into account when interpreting the following daily time-table laid down for the Hesychast in his chapters A', 99 and 101:

260. This is a noteworthy statement, implying as it does that an untutored person is perfectly capable of receiving the highest mystical gifts, whereas his lack of education makes it difficult for him to benefit much from the complicated language of liturgical texts.

261. Thus, very roughly speaking, in the Aegean and S. Balkan area the day hours will gradually diminish from about 90 minutes each at the summer solstice to about 45 each at the winter solstice. Only at the equinoxes will the Byzantine hours be what we now call «an hour»; and the numbers by which hours were named

Régime by day

During the 1st, 4th and 7th hours: The Jesus Prayer²⁶².

During the 2nd, 5th and 8th hours: Reading²⁶³.

During the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours: Psalmody²⁶⁴.

During the 10th hour: The one and only meal.

During the 11th hour: Sleep (if needed).

During the 12th hour: Psalmody²⁶⁵.

Régime by night

Here, when St Gregory mentions «vigil» (ἀγρυπνία), he presumably means the Jesus Prayer. He distinguishes three classes of practitioners:

i) **B e g i n n e r s**: They sleep half the night (either the first half or the second, as convenient) and spend the rest in vigil.

are universally different from ours. The «first hour» of the day was not our «one o'clock»; its beginning varied from about 3 to 8 a.m. according to the season. «Two hours» during the night would mean only one of ours at the height of the summer.

262. For the 1st hour, Gregory writes: «From dawn onwards, he should busy himself with the memory of God through prayer and hesychia of the heart, praying persistently.» For the 4th and 7th, he simply says «Prayer».

263. Gregory, of course, means the reading of Holy Scripture and the Orthodox Fathers. In his *kephalaion* Δ', 11 «On Reading», he recommends that while engaged in hesychia (ἐργάτης ὧν), a monk should set aside the other patristic material which he might normally be studying and concentrate exclusively for the time being on ascetical literature, as «this makes the reading of the rest superfluous». He names, as examples, the *Ladder* of St John, and the works of St Isaac, St Maximos, St Symeon the New Theologian «and his disciple (Niketas) Stethatos», Hesychios, Philotheos the Sinaïte and «as many other such works (as have been written) by such authors». The mention of Philotheos (perhaps 10th century) is interesting, because he may be the author of the Pseudo-Symeonian work «On prayer and attention», which laid the basis of the hesychast method. Gregory also recommends that the reader (presumed to be reading aloud to himself) should not indulge in oratorical showing off, as though to others, ἀπὸν ὡς παρῶν. And in his next *kephalaion* he subtly enlarges on the very real danger that anyone engaged alone in prayer, reading etc. may nevertheless be sub-consciously play-acting as though he had a human audience which he is anxious to please. He would then be only σχήματι ἐργάτης...

264. Presumably beginning with the recitation of Terce, Sext and None, which are named after these three Byzantine hours. But they will not take more than 10-15 minutes each. The 6th hour always begins about midday.

265. Τὰ ἑσπερινά. This may include, besides Vespers, some other liturgical matter, such as perhaps Compline (ἀπόδειπνον).

ii) Those «half-way»²⁶⁶: Their régime is: 1 to 2 hours of vigil, followed by 4 hours of sleep; then, for the last 6 hours of the night, till dawn, psalmody (beginning with Matins²⁶⁷) and the Jesus Prayer; at the end, Prime is recited and the day régime, as above, begins.

iii) The Perfect: All-night vigil, standing up.

The above seems to be only rather a rough sketch. For one thing, both in these two *kephalaia*²⁶⁸ and, as we have just seen when dealing with the controversy over «psalmody», in various chapters of his series Γ', Δ', and Ε', Gregory implies that as the Jesus Prayer has priority over all else, those who are so disposed and have reached the right stage of spiritual maturity should sacrifice almost everything to it, the ideal being perpetual contemplative prayer. And with regard to the night régime, it is not clear to what the Hesychast devotes the extra hour in hand, if he chooses to begin with only one hour of vigil, not two.

2. The single meal

Those who intend leading a strict life, St Gregory writes (Α', 102), must practise three basic things: fasting, vigil and prayer. It remains to deal with the first of these.

Gregory, as we have just seen, allows for only one meal a day, taken three «hours» before sunset. A pound (λίτρα) of bread²⁶⁹, he en-

266. Οἱ μέσοι, those who have reached an intermediate stage.

267. Ὀρθρος can mean either the time just before day-break or Matins. Thus ἐγείρεσθαι πρὸς τὸν ὄρθρον could mean «to rise towards dawn»; but as it is explicitly stated that «six hours» will go by «till morning» (ἕως πρωῆ), Matins must be meant.

268. «Then chant Prime and sit down to practise hesychia, as said above; and either stick to the working time-table from hour to hour, or keep on with the Prayer right through, uninterruptedly». So much for the ὅροι τῶν ἐργασιῶν.

269. E. Schilbach (*op. cit.* in n. 214 above) must be our authority in assessing the amount of bread meant. The λίτρα λογαρική or «measuring pound» varied somewhat in the course of the centuries, but its steady tendency was towards diminution. From 324 grammes in the 6th/7th centuries and 320 in the 7th to 9th, it reached 319 by the beginning of the 13th century and thereafter was «wohl nicht über 319 gr» in the declining Byzantine Empire (Schilbach, p. 166). Translated into avoidupois, this means that in Gregory's day one *litra* was «certainly not more» than 0.7034 pounds, and probably a little less. Thus Ware is overestimating it when he says «about a pound», and even Syrkt̄ («three quarters of a pound») is putting it a little too high. If one must speak in familiar round fractions, «two thirds» is nearer the mark. Let us say «a little over two thirds of a pound». This is not a very generous allowance, but it must be remembered a) that it was real bread, whole meal,

joins, is sufficient each day for anyone engaged in the struggle to attain *hesychia*. To it he may add any food (σιτία)²⁷⁰ that is available; not as much, however, as natural appetite yearns for, but only as much as forethought indicates is appropriate for consumption by a self-controlled person. As for drink, the Hesychast is allowed by him two *vafkalia* of undiluted wine and three of water²⁷¹.

But in his chapter E', 6, which, as already noted, is headed by a separate sub-title in some manuscripts and should therefore be separately numbered²⁷², Saint Gregory shows that, despite his warnings against the belly as cause of man's fall in the past and his falling again in the present, he is reluctant to lay down one strict rule for all. Some need very little food, some need «much» (πολύ) to sustain their natural strength. Still, the Hesychast must always feel unsatisfied (ἐνδεής), never fed to repletion; otherwise he cannot pray «strongly or purely», but will be half asleep and obsessed with «phantasies». So he repeats his prescription: one *litra* of bread and three or four drinking-cups (ποτήρια) per day of «water and wine», and of such foodstuffs (βρώματα) as come to hand, a little of each, from time to time, but always avoiding

stone ground, and not the white pulpy stuff most of us eat to-day, and b) it was to be supplemented (see on) by whatever else came to hand.

270. Τὸ σιτία basically means grain, but as bread has already been dealt with, here it must have its equally common extended meaning of «food, provisions» — whatever man eats, as distinct from χόρτος, the food of animals. By writing ἀπὸ τῶν εὐρισκομένων σιτίων τρέφεσθαι (cf. τῶν παρατυχόντων in E', 6), Gregory implies that the Hesychast feeds himself with «any such provisions as happen to be available», and makes no special effort to seek out and procure the foodstuffs of his preference. Presumably he will be supplementing his bread ration with vegetables, fruit, nuts and, in the Aegean area, olives. By long tradition, meat was totally excluded; but outside the days and periods when fasting was obligatory, which added up to over a third of the whole year, oil, cheese and other fats, fish and eggs might be allowed, if available.

271. Α βανκάλιον, according to Ch. D. DuCange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Lyon 1688; reprint, Graz 1958) s.v., was a thin-necked bottle or carafe. But as our author in his later ch. E', 6 (see on) expresses the ration as «three or four drinking-cups of water and wine», he cannot have been thinking of anything but a *small* carafe. If 5 βανκάλια = 3-4 ποτήρια, perhaps the total of liquid allowed may be very roughly estimated at a little over a litre. Wine was not regarded by the Mediterranean peoples as a luxury, but as nourishment; bread and wine, the basis of the Hesychast's diet, were also that of the peasant and the workman. Though Gregory in his time-table does not mention anything but eating (ἐσθιειν), it may be presumed that drinking too was probably confined to the same single occasion.

272. See above, Θεολογία 53 (1982) 426-427, and n. 139.

satiety. He will be wise to partake of them all, so as to avoid conceitedness and show gratitude to God for all His creatures, unless, of course, he is weak in faith and soul, in which case he should confine himself to herbs²⁷³. But he confidently states that «the other forms of food do not strengthen the body as much as bread and water do»²⁷⁴.

3. Other factors

This is a severe régime. If it is strictly followed, the most sleep that even a beginner will ever get is, in the aggregate, about 7 of our hours in 24; but that is only in the depths of winter, and it gradually dwindles to 4-5 by the summer. The one-meal diet too is rigorous. However, though no provision seems to have been made in this programme for ever varying its monotonous austerity, it should probably be taken as no more than an indicative sketch of a Hesychast's ideal average day. Also it must be borne in mind that Gregory is perhaps thinking above all in terms of special periods or retreats of intense hesychia, such as he provided for himself in various hermitages to which he used to withdraw from the *skete* of Magoulâ²⁷⁵. And anyway, there are obviously other factors which must be considered if one is to have a balanced picture of the Hesychast's life.

The hermit has to earn his keep and presumably cannot always rely on charitable gifts of food, clothing, fuel etc. (though his receipt of some is expected — see B', 7); he has to keep in reasonably good health, for which a little bodily movement would seem advisable. There is bound therefore to be some element of work in his life. But one must beware of identifying this with what Gregory calls *ἐργασία*; that word does usually mean «work», but for him it is nearly always «spiritual activity» and, more often than not, the labour of the Jesus Prayer²⁷⁶.

273. Gregory here is quoting St Paul's words, recommending condescension to those with dietary prejudices, in *Rom.* 14; that chapter includes the phrase *ὅς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχνα ἐσθίει*. There must have been criticism of Gregory's broad-mindedness over this.

274. In the latter part of *κεφ. E'*, 6 St Gregory advises his correspondent, who is an elderly man (*γέρον ὄν*), not to overdo fasting. He must feel himself free to do what he can (*κατὰ τὴν σὴν δύναμιν*), but in any case he should not take in less bread and water than is laid down above.

275. See details from his *Life*, summarised in *Θεολογία* 53 (1982) 43-44.

276. For *ἐργασία* in this sense, see for instance A', 101, 102, and cf. 60; Δ', 4, 5, 6, 11, 14; E', 2, 7. "Ἔργον has the same sense (v.g. E', 2, 7). Even *ἐργάτης* — normally «a workman» — has become «one engaged in the Jesus Prayer» (Δ', 11, 12). Coming out to meet men's *ἐργασία* in the prayer, there is the *ἐνέργεια τῆς χάριτος* or

In monastic parlance ordinary work is ἐργόχειρον («manual labour»); but Gregory does not deal with it directly. He only mentions it cursorily three times: as an activity «pleasing to God... if he (the Hesychast) is weak» (A' 99)²⁷⁷, as prescribed by some as a form of «tiring» activity (Δ', 5) and in a quotation from Varsanouphios the Great about life in the *sketes* (Δ', 4). Ἐνέργεια χειρῶν (activity of the hands) is likewise mentioned by him as something the contemplative may engage in when prayer becomes too difficult (Δ', 9). Clearly, work as such is of very secondary importance to him, and no doubt he would prefer to envisage the Hesychast as «praying on his own and feeding off charity» ὁ κατὰ μόνας καθήμενος καὶ ἐσθίων ἀγάπην (B', 7). But the exigencies of practical life inevitably impose a certain amount of manual activity, and also of contact with other persons.

As a matter of fact the recipient of the E' series of *kephalaia* is presumed to have (or to intend having) a «faithful disciple» who is living with him (συνών). This was a very common state of affairs, and advanced Hesychasts absorbed in constant νοερὰ προσευχῇ relied on younger men, who came to them to learn the contemplative life through obedience, to relieve them from most of the mundane chores which even hermits cannot neglect. Kallistos' *Life* shows that Gregory of Sinai was no exception: he liked to have a disciple with him, and he even took one with him when he went out to a hermitage in the Paroria to prepare for death.

And there is another aspect — a spiritual aspect of the eremitical life, to which Ware very rightly draws attention (p. 11): «nothing is said about meetings with other Hesychasts for spiritual conversation and mutual comfort». Gregory himself began on Mt Athos by going round visiting many people, seeking precisely that; and we see the same purpose in his famous visit to St Maximos ὁ Κασσοκαλυβίτης²⁷⁸. It is highly probable that he encouraged his disciples to seek edification and exercise brotherly love in this way too.

Finally, Bishop Kallistos Ware raises the following very pertinent question: «There is no clear indication about the Liturgy: how often

τῆς προσευχῆς, ἡ καρδιακὴ ἐνέργεια, ἡ ἐνεργοῦσα ἐντὸς αὐτῶν. None of these words are used for handwork.

277. Ἄσθενής could mean «sick, ill», but probably refers here to spiritual debility.

278. See n. 76, above. A critical edition of Maximos' *Life* by his disciple Theophanes of Vatopedi has more recently been brought out by Eulogios Kourilas, monk of the Grand Lavra of Mt Athos, and F. Halkin, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 54 (1936). The conversation in question is described in its 15th chapter.

should the Hesychast receive communion? In general, Gregory scarcely ever mentions the Eucharist in his writings». One must hope that the suggestion which he makes is right, i.e. that Saint Gregory would expect the Hesychast, if possible, to attend the Liturgy in a neighbouring monastery on Saturday and Sunday and thus spend most of those two days every week in community, relieved of the monotony of his strict seclusion and the rigid austerities observed by him during the other five days. This was certainly a common and ancient practice²⁷⁹ and is recounted of St Gregory Palamas, during his periods of residence at Verroia and at St Savas on Mt Athos, by Philotheos, Patriarch of Constantinople²⁸⁰. Let it also be remembered that some hermits were priests, and some churches where the Liturgy could be celebrated were the domestic chapels of hermitages, while some hermitages were grouped as a veritable village, which might end by being organised as a *skete* with its own common church (καθολικόν). Still, the Sinaïte's silence about the Eucharist is indeed strange. However, as already pointed out right at the start of this study on his doctrine, he has left us not a systematic treatise but a series of jottings or aphorisms and three personal letters to disciples containing practical advice on hesychia only. The very nature of *kephalaia* as a literary *genre* precludes the drawing of any inferences based on their mere silence about a subject.

279. That is clear from the compilation of data regarding early monasticism made by John Moschos (6th/7th century) and known as the *Λειμών* or *Νέον Λειμώναριον*, *PG* 87, 2856. Also, the earliest monks of the Egyptian desert seem to have sometimes kept the Reserved Eucharist, called «the food of grace», in their cells. See the *Lausiac History* of Palladius, items 139, 158, 196 (Syriac Version, *The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge, London 1907, Vol. II, pp. 32, 35, 44).

280. See his *Enkomion* of Palamas, *PG* 151, 572 and 574.

EPILOGUE

Saint Gregory of Sinai was a heroic Christian, whose gift, zeal and diligence as a teacher of the mystic way made him the Spiritual Father of innumerable disciples, many of them canonised Saints, stretching from St Gregory Palamas in the 14th century to St Seraphim of Sarov in the 19th. He was the universal Starets of the whole Orthodox monastic world. He was not the author of the Jesus Prayer or of the Hesychast method of praying, but he did more than anyone to propagate them, especially the Prayer, and was the prime inaugurator of a great mystical renaissance.

Though not a good systematic theologian or an accurate exegete, St Gregory left spiritual writings which have influenced many hungry souls. They epitomise the whole «neptic» tradition which he inherited²⁸¹, and into them he also injected something of his own spirit: his ardour and ascetic thoroughness, his acute psychological insight, his discretion, humility and compassion for his fellow-men. It is a privilege to have unearthed and published a Discourse on the Transfiguration, which by its outlook, method and vocabulary is so obviously a genuine work of his. Even approached with the critical spirit which has prevailed in this study, he stands out as a spiritual giant and a genius. He deserves to be better known.

But above all he deserves to be respected and fairly treated. It is an astonishing thing, and a sad reflection on the lengths to which confessional prejudices will drive earnest Christians, that Gregory of Sinai has been treated as a dangerous *illuminé* who offered monks a soft option, an easy short cut to an illusory vision of Light²⁸². To refute that superficial judgment, let us terminate this study with a translation of his *kephalaion* Δ', 11:

281. St Nil of the Sora wrote of him in his Spiritual Testament: «This blessed one summed up all the writings of the God-bearing Fathers» (quoted by Syrkù, *op. cit.*, 234).

282. About 250 years after Gregory, the great Spanish mystic of the 16th century, St John of the Cross, was teaching his followers how to prepare to ascend by a *short cut* (se disponer a llegar in breve) along a narrow path to the summit of Mt Carmel, i.e. Divine Union (see his *Subida*, in *Obras...* ed. Gerardo (Burgos 1915-1924) Vol. I, 132), using a form of imageless prayer which was very similar, since it drew its inspiration from the same source, viz. the Areopagite — though Gregory never actually quotes the latter. But like Gregory, Juan de la Cruz also was a formidable ascetic who demanded total renunciation as the necessary background to such prayer, such a rapid ascent. He too seemed to some to be an undesirable inno-

«It is impossible for anyone to learn by himself the science of the virtues, though some indeed have had experience as their teacher. For to act on one's own and without the advice of advanced persons implies conceit, or rather is apt to give birth to it. For if the Son 'does nothing of himself, but as the Father hath taught Him', and likewise the Spirit, for 'He shall not speak of himself' (John 8,28 and 16,13), who then is this, who has reached such a great height of virtue that he needs no one else to initiate him into the mysteries? Is he not deceived, having madness rather than the virtue which he seems to have? Therefore it behoves us to obey those who know the labours of practical virtue and go through them accordingly: that is, through famishing hunger, pleasureless continence, laborious kneeling, toilsome motionless standing, persistent prayer, genuine humility, ceaseless affliction and groaning, reasonable silence as though seasoned with salt, and in all things patience. For one should not spend one's whole time taking one's ease, nor always persevere in sitting²⁸³ before the due time comes or before old age or sickness. For Scripture says: 'Thou shalt eat the labours of thy virtues²⁸⁴' and 'the violent take the kingdom of heaven by force' (Matth. 11, 12). Therefore he who painfully strives each day to accomplish the aforesaid labours will, with God's help, cull the fruit thereof in due course».

vator. John was cruelly persecuted by the unreformed branch of his Order; he died, aged 50, so gravely out of favour even with its reformed branch, that on his death-bed he burned all letters he had received, to protect the writers from persecution, since «solo ser su amigo era un delicto». It took the Carmelites 83 years even to get him «beatified» and another 51 for his canonisation. Yet 200 years later, he was proclaimed «Doctor», the leading authority on contemplative prayer in the Roman Church. «The mills of God grind slowly»... They are grinding for Gregory of Sinai too.

283. Τῷ καθίσματι ἐγκατερεῖν. Gregory presumably means «in adopting the sitting position while at prayer». For this sense of τὸ κάθισμα, compare E', 5 (Φιλοκαλία Δ', 82, line 18). But of course he may also mean just sitting (for lack of energy to stand) and there is also the Byzantine sense of «chair, seat», as in modern Greek. There is no need to have recourse to the liturgical sense of κάθισμα — a part of Matins when sitting is permitted while psalms are read, — as I. Hausherr injudiciously does in his translation of Stethatos' *Life of St Symeon the New Theologian* (*Orientalia Christiana*. Vol. 12, no 45 (1928) 37, n. 4).

284. Psalm 127 (128), 2. Actually, the Septuagint has «the labours of thy fruits», while the Authorised Version has «the labour of thy hands»,