

Hesychia and Theology

“We live in a society where man’s personality is fragmented. What a person thinks is different from what he desires, and what he does is different again. This is a society in the grip of pollution by noise and images, which enslaves man’s whole existence to reason, the senses and external allurements, and robs him of his freedom. So we are well aware of the value of the Orthodox Church’s therapeutic method known as noetic hesychia.”

“As we know from analyses elsewhere, this neptic tradition of the Church was lost in Western Christianity and other kinds of Christian life evolved...Western man, finding himself in the narrow and inhuman confines of scholasticism and puritanism, came to the point of inventing another way of solving all his various problems through psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. This invention is actually Western man’s attempt to find the neptic theology possessed by the Church. Our Church contributes to the Westerners’ search by offering the treasure in its possession: the neptic and hesychastic tradition.”

The Neptic Theology of the Orthodox Church as a Therapeutic Method

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“The spiritual father plays a significant role in our journey towards regeneration...The spiritual father’s behaviour towards his spiritual children should have elements of both fatherhood and motherhood, and express both...”

Discernment is essential for the spiritual father in the exercise of his spiritual ministry...The spiritual father must have the gift of diagnosing the spiritual state of the person for whom he has taken responsibility...The spiritual father has to discriminate between spiritual, psychological-neurological and other physical illnesses. I say this, because some illnesses are spiritual and due to the loss of God’s grace and the activity of the passions, others are due to

psychological and neurological problems, others result from physical anomalies and others again are the work of demons. The spiritual father must have the gift of discernment so as not to ascribe a psychological or neurological illness to demonic possession, or identify demonic possession with psychological illness, and so on.”

The Person of the Spiritual Father and the Gift of Discernment

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“The life of St Mary of Egypt shows how an immoral woman can become a god by grace, how a human being can become an angel incarnate, and how Christian hope can replace the despair that comes from the devil. In the person of St Mary of Egypt we see someone who sought sensual pleasure and chased after men for her own satisfaction. By the grace of God, however, she was able to be sanctified to the point that saints chased after her to receive her blessing and to venerate her revered body. Even wild animals honoured her...

The Church has chosen St Mary of Egypt as a model of a life of inspired repentance, spiritual struggle and progress towards deification. In her we see how someone can change from a sinner into a saint through participation in the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God.”

The Path to Deification

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“Moses withdrew from the multitude, ascended the mountain and entered the darkness in which he saw God. St Gregory [of Nyssa], comparing the theophany that Moses saw earlier in the mystery of the burning bush that was not consumed with the darkness on Mount Sinai, says that there is no contradiction between the two. In the first case Moses saw light, whereas in the second he went into the darkness. As man’s nous is purified and draws nearer to theoria, ‘it sees more clearly what of the divine nature cannot be seen’, which

is called darkness on account of its all-surpassing brightness. When someone sees the sun rising he rejoices, but when he attempts to see the sun at midday his sight is darkened and he sees it as darkness.”

Orthodox and Secularised Theology

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Wherever Christ is, the angels who hymn His glory are also present. All who conduct themselves like angels, who have inner noetic prayer, a pure mind and spiritual senses, are able to see the noetic spirits, the angels, during the Divine Eucharist, as happened with St Spyridon, who was accounted worthy to concelebrate with angels. This is a sign of the inner aspect of the Divine Eucharist, which is invisible to those who do not live the hesychastic way of life.

Singing with the angels is conditional on serving God in holiness and the transformation of soul and body, of the whole man. These are further indications of the Church’s hesychastic and neptic tradition.”

Hesychastic Elements in the Divine Eucharist