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THE MONASTIC LIFE ACCORDING TO SAINT NILUS

By

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A B S T R A C T

THE MONASTIC LIFE ACCORDING TO SAINT NILUS

By C. J. Kornarakis

The present dissertation comprises an introductory section and four main chapters. The introductory section deals with the life of St Nilus, focusing especially on the problem of his historical identity which has been debated since the closing years of the last century, i.e. whether he is Nilus *Ancyranus* or Nilus *Sinaita*, and with St Nilus' theological method in his indisputable identity as master of monks. This leads on to the main topic of the dissertation which is examined in the following four chapters: monastic life.

Chapter I examines the essence of the monastic life as it can be detected in the extant writings of St Nilus. The main themes here are those of: self-renunciation, as the principle which leads to the differentiation between true and false personality, and, the science or art of being a leader or a follower of the spiritual path which specifies the true person.

Chapter II examines the basic theme of passions, providing first a sort of spiritual anatomy of the human psyche, looking in some detail into the meaning and use of such terms as soul, heart, mind, perception, and also into the interrelationships of the soul's powers and functions. This becomes the basis for analysing Nilus' theory of passions, including the role of the devil and the function of demonic deceit.

Chapter III examines the positive method of the masters of the desert in fighting passion and demonic deceit. This includes such themes as the scriptures, the saints, the icons, the desert and dispossession. Particular attention is given to the theme of silence which is closely related to that of the desert and to self-understanding.

Chapter IV concentrates on what might be called the most essential function of the life of the ascetic when he arrives at the more mature level of progress. This is the function of *nepsis*, vigilance and prayer, which is crowned by union with God. Several sub-themes are treated here, such as the study of God by means of participation in the sacramental life of confession and communion and of adoption of the spiritual exercises of prayer, manual labour vigil and psalmody. The last sub-theme of this chapter is that of the martyrdom of *nepsis* which is connected with the memory of the last judgement and with the gift of tears and *penthos*. The theses concludes with a brief epilogue and bibliography.





ΝΕΛΟΣ Ο ΑΓΚΥΡΑΝΟΣ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION: ST NILUS' LIFE AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD

- A. St Nilus' life.
- B. St Nilus' theological method.
- 1. The agony of spiritual care.
- 2. The true philosophy of existence.

CHAPTER I: THE ESSENCE OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

- I.1. The ontological principles of the monastic life.
 - I.1.1 Self-renunciation.
 - I.1.2 Person, true and false.
- I.2. The science of "leading and being led".
 - I.2.1 The work of the spiritual pastor.
 - a) The untrained pastor.
 - b) God as prototype-pastor.
 - c) The pastor's spiritual life as the presupposition of his spiritual work.
 - I.2.2 Submission.
 - a) The necessity of submission.
 - b) The process of submission.
 - c) The most authentic submission.

CHAPTER II: THE ASCETIC THEORY OF PASSIONS

- II.1 The structure of the human psyche.
 - II.1.1 The soul (ψυχή).
 - II.1.2 The heart (καρδία).
 - II.1.3 The mind (νοῦς).
 - II.1.4 The perception (διάνοια).
 - II.1.5 The interrelation of the soul's powers and functions.
- II.2 The "ontology" of passions.
 - II.2.1 The devil.
 - a) The devil's power "by permission".
 - b) The demonic deceptions.
 - II.2.2 The birth of passions.

CHAPTER III: THE METHOD OF THE MASTERS OF THE DESERT

- III.1 The road sign-posts of the ascetical life.
 - III.1.1 The Scriptures.
 - III.1.2 The Saints.
 - III.1.3 The holy Icons.
 - III.1.4 The Lives of the Saints.
- III.2 The desert.
 - III.2.1 The life of dispossession.

- a) The fleshly monk.
- b) Perfect dispossession.
- III.2.2 The silence of the desert.
 - a) Severing ties with relatives.
 - b) Silence.
 - c) The desert.
 - d) Self-understanding and social conduct

CHAPTER IV: THE *NEPTIC* WAY OF LIFE

- IV.1 The notion of *nepsis*.
- IV.2 The study of God.
 - a) The sacramental life:
 - i) Repentance - Confession
 - ii) Eucharist.
 - b) Spiritual exercises:
 - i) Prayer
 - ii) Manual labour
 - iii) Vigil and Psalmody.
- IV.3 The martyrdom of *Nepsis*.
 - a) Contrition for death and the dreaded apology.
 - b) The boldness of grief and tears.
 - c) The meaning of martyrdom.

BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

FOOTNOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- a) Texts
- b) Studies

PROLOGUE

The present study is a sort of general introduction to the problems of the monastic life, as they are understood by St Nilus the Ascetic. As a general introduction it does not provide an in depth analysis of the various aspects of monastic life, but represents an attempt at examining as thoroughly as possible the greater spectrum of aspects which characterizes the monastic manner of life in the coenobitic and eremetical context of the 4th and 5th centuries AD. The general contents and the systematic way in which this study is structured allow it to carry the title: The Monastic Life according to St Nilus. It was first written in Greek, which is my mother tongue, and then translated into English. This may account for some peculiarities in the syntax and the style.

Having concluded this study I wish to thank several people who helped me to achieve it. First of all I owe my deep gratitude to my supervisor, the Very Rev. Dr George D Dragas, not only for suggesting this topic to me, guiding me through the intricacies of modern research on St Nilus and assisting me with the presentation of it in English, but also for inspiring me through his general lectures on the theology of the Fathers and through his invaluable post-graduate patristic seminar which will be warmly cherished in my memories. The personnel in the Department of Theology, in the College of St Hild and St Bede, in the Library and in the other facilities of the University, as well as various members of the University community, most notably Dr Dragas' family, provided me with an excellent context to work with, for all of which I am greatly and gratefully in their debt.

Special thanks are due to those who helped me financially, including Fr Emmanuel Karyophyllakis and Mrs Kyriaki Tryphona and, especially, my parents John and Helen Kornarakis to whom I wish to dedicate this research in acknowledgement, above all, of their moral support. Last but not least I wish to mention with gratitude my spiritual father, Fr. George Kretikos, and Professors Markos Orphanos and Constantine Skouteris of the University of Athens for their encouragement and interest.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AnB *Analecta Bollandiana*.
- AdA Ad Agathium.
- Can Commentarium in Canticum Canticorum.
- D&K H DIELS & W KRANZ, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1951/2.
- D&M De discipulis et magistris.
- Ep1 Epistolae, liber primus.
- Ep2 Epistolae, liber secundus.
- Ep3 Epistolae, liber tertius.
- Ep4 Epistolae, liber quartus.
- LUC S. LUCA, "La fine inedita..", *Augustinianum* 22(1982) 365-402.
- LME Liber de monastica exercitatione.
- MoP De Monachorum praestantia.
- OAI Oratio in Albanum.
- OPP Oratio prima in Pascha.
- OSM De octo spiritibus malitiae.
- MPG J.-P. MIGNE, *Patrologiae cursus completus series Graeca*.
- SC *Sources Chretiennes*, Paris.
- TPV Tractatus de paupertate voluntaria.
- ΦΙΛ Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν, τομ. 1-5, Ἀθήναι.

INTRODUCTION: ST. NILUS' LIFE AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD

A. The Life of St Nilus

St Nilus (+430) was an ascetic in the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Information on him is found in texts of ecclesiastical authors and church Fathers,⁽¹⁾ as well as in texts deriving from Nilus himself.⁽²⁾ In spite, however, of the richness of witnesses concerning the person of St Nilus - a fact which in other cases would be sufficient for regarding the person under investigation as being biographically and historically in a favoured position - the historical data concerning his identity are exceptionally confused and, from a certain point of view, deficient. In any case St Nilus belongs to the group of historical persons whose biographies are problematic. Contemporary research, in particular, which has been dealing with the clarification of the authentic data of his identity, rejects a whole multitude of witnesses which have been handed down to posterity.

The indisputable data concerning St Nilus' person, which the critics unanimously accept, are: that he had lived during the closing decades of the fourth century and the opening decades of the fifth century A.D.,⁽³⁾ and that he had been a pupil of St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople.⁽⁴⁾

The work entitled "*Nili Monachi Narrationes quibus caedes monachorum montis Sinae et captivitas Theoduli ejus filii describuntur*", which was discovered in the tenth century A.D., has been ever since regarded as the most important source of information concerning the life of St Nilus.⁽⁵⁾

According to this work St Nilus, being married at first but burning afterwards with divine eros and unquenchable thirst for the ascetical life,

separates ^{from} his wife by common consent with her and, taking one of his children with him, comes to Mount Sinai to fulfil his ascetical desires and dispositions. Being once with his son on the way to visiting certain fellow ascetics in the Sinai peninsula, he fell victim to a barbarian invasion. Though he himself was let free on that occasion, his son Theodoulos was led away to captivity in the hands of those barbarians. Thus, days of distress, tears and prayer follow for both, St Nilus and his son, but God does not delay in responding to their request. He ~~heeds~~ to their prayers and through a miraculous intervention saves Theodoulos from death. Subsequently, Theodoulos is bought free by the Bishop of Elousa, who ordains both father and son to the priesthood in spite of their hesitations and representations.⁽⁶⁾ This is in brief the biographical content of the "Narrationes".

As regards the problem of St Nilus' origin, Nicephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos places it in Constantinople and he also supplies the information that St Nilus was of a noble family and held the office of Prefect before his withdrawal to Sinai.⁽⁷⁾ These details, however, are not included in the "Narrationes".⁽⁸⁾

In any case the authenticity and trustworthiness of the "Narrationes" as a significant source for St Nilus' biography were seriously questioned from 1917 onwards, the year, that is, of the publication of the decisive study of Heussi.⁽⁹⁾ According to Heussi the "Narrationes" is a mythological construction which belongs to the category of "romance", i.e. of the popular philological genre of that time. For Heussi St Nilus did not become an ascetic in Sinai but in a monastery located in the region of Ancyra (Galatia). In support of his view he refers to the witness of codices of St Nilus' opera which refer to him as an "Ancyran" (Ἀγκυρανός),⁽¹⁰⁾ and also to the existence of "Epistola LXII" of the "Fourth Book of Epistles", which reveals

according to Heussi the existence of two Niluses.⁽¹¹⁾

Heussi's views were opposed by Degenhart and as a result of this several views were exchanged through critical researches. ⁽¹²⁾ Finally, however, it was Heussi who seemed to have won the debate, since his views came to be accepted by the universal scholarly consensus. Since then scholarly opinion on the subject has wavered between moderate and extremist positions concerning the historical identity of St Nilus.

If the view that the "Narrationes" do not represent a genuine work of St Nilus were to be accepted, then all the texts, subsequent to and based on them, such as synaxaria and patristic references, must be rejected. At the same time one should speak of two Niluses who divide among themselves the witnesses of the sources. The one became an ascetic at Ancyra ("St Nilus the Ancyran"), who became abbot of his monastery and composed certain orations, while the other became an ascetic at Sinai ("St Nilus Sinaita") who is known only from his life.

There are, however, some extreme positions. According to one of these St Nilus lived in a subsequent century,⁽¹³⁾ or according to another he is an anonymous and schismatic Christian philosopher who borrowed a well known name in order to express his own theories,⁽¹⁴⁾ or according to a third position the narrative concerning his life is purely mythological and perhaps the only truth in it is connected with the names.⁽¹⁵⁾

This is a general account of the problems and opinions surrounding the historical identity of St Nilus as they emerge from the contemporary scholarly research. In this light St Nilus is a "well-known unknown" saint of the Church. But there are two objections to this scholarly agnosticism which in our opinion carry some considerable weight.

The first one was born in 1967, when Ringshausen argued in his dis-

sertation that the author of the "Narrationes", the "Peristeria" and the "Sermo in Lucam 22:36" is one and the same person with the author of the "Oratio in Canticum Canticorum" which is regarded by the critics as a genuine work of St Nilus.⁽¹⁶⁾

The second objection was formulated in 1983 by F. Conca in his invaluable critical edition of the "Narrationes", where the study and comparison of all the extant codices, led, 66 years after Heussi's thesis, to the reattribution of the paternity of these writings to St Nilus. This view is indeed founded on firm and secure scholarly criteria. Conca gives an analogous weight to "Epistola LXIIa" of the "Fourth Book of St Nilus' Epistles", regarding it as a "compendium" of the "Narrationes" and arguing that it is derived from the same pen.⁽¹⁷⁾

These two objections to the older critical research on the life of St Nilus constitute a considerable progress in the understanding of this life and proleptically point to an imminent crystalization of the saint's historical identity, including his distinction as an author and ascetic of the Church who honours him as a saint and exalts his memory on the twelfth of November.

B. St Nilus' theological method

The basic method in the theology of St Nilus is that of "anagogy" (ἀναγωγή) or "elevation" from the practical experience of the observance of the commandments of Christ, through the biblical and patristic spirituality, to the sphere of the theory of Christian philosophy.

The process of this "elevation" is achieved with the refined ability of penetration into the life-based procedures of practical experience. This means

that St Nilus emerges as an able anatomist of the subjective life-experiences of the soldier of the desert and of coenobitism. The products of his thought establish him as an able psychologist who searches the depths of human personality. On the other hand this "elevation" from the practical perspective to the theory of the battle for watchfulness ($\nu\eta\psi\iota\varsigma$), transmutes in a physiological, as it were, way the psychological observation into a theological recording, since the work of this elevation is always achieved within the sphere of the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is perhaps for this reason that St Nilus is proved able to discern with success the sphere of the "mystic" actions and to penetrate with expressive clarity into the regions of the fighting and praying personality which can be "viewed" only with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Besides, the last point clarifies why St Nilus is interested in his observations and in his particular perspectives far more for the content of thought than for the ideological construction or form of its expression. What dominates his spirit is primarily the question of salvation and more particularly the agony for the uninterrupted relation with God.

St Nilus combines the practical with the theological perspective so successfully that his texts are really blameless tokens of authentic Christian philosophy, i.e. of a holy and spiritual combination of life and spirit in Christ Jesus.

B.1. The agony of spiritual care

The main characteristic feature of the practical and theoretical (theological) perspective of the entire work of St Nilus establishes in an authentic way his general character as father and teacher of the Church. St

Nilus is a spiritual "shepherd" who teaches, or he teaches because he is a spiritual "shepherd". The combination of his spiritual paternity with his didactic (literary) and charismatic ease underlines a deeper element of his personality: namely, his anxious care for the progress of the spiritual battle within the sphere of the Church and particularly within the region of the monastic community and the life of the desert.(18)

The element of anxiety in his general care as a "shepherd" expresses St Nilus' basically existentialist attitude to the life of the Church. As it has been already noted, his principal interest is the salvation of the souls, the redemptive activity of the life of the Church. This basic perspective naturally turns St Nilus into a "fighter" shepherd and teacher and in this way his anxiety for the pastoral care is transmuted into a lively expression of holiness, which is the final aim of this care.

Thus St Nilus is not a "distant" theoretician of the pastoral work of the Church who speaks "ex cathedra", nor is his care for this work of a "scholastic" sort, i.e. relating only to the problem of practical methodology. It is the anxiety of the direct threat to existence. For this reason this anxiety is a sort of "pastoral agony", or, even, a "vigilant agony". The last observation explains why St Nilus, in exercising his pastoral charisma or his didactic virtue, becomes a dynamic fighter, a stigmatizer of self-deception and of the falsification of the spiritual life, a warrior for the truth and an unshakable follower of consistency in the battle of the spiritual life.(19)

In this way St Nilus leads the flock with his own life, becoming an example to be imitated by those who lead and those who are led, a prototype of an "expert shepherd" (ἐπιστήμων ἡγούμενος, lit. a scientific abbot) for the shepherds of the Church. In both instances his anxious care and providence for the pastoral work of the Church, governed by the action

of the Spirit, constitutes the entelechy of all his activity.

B.2. The true philosophy of existence

The term "philosophy" in St Nilus' vocabulary denotes the monastic manner of life. This "philosophy" involves living "in a Godly manner" (κατὰ Θεόν)(20) or "in a Christ-befitting manner" (κατὰ Χριστόν)(21) and for this reason it is regarded as a "high",(22) "true",(23) "greater",(24) "philosophy of what lies above", (25) or even "spiritual philosophy".(26) We may briefly say that St Nilus contrasts and compares the "true philosophy" to any other type of philosophy.

Many of the ancients produced philosophy, but they had had groundless presuppositions. This is especially revealed in their ascetical way of life, which was the fruit of their philosophy and which was a mixture of presuppositions characterized by the common feature of autonomous selection. They defined in a completely arbitrary way, which was the natural product of their unbridled subjectivism, the parameters of their asceticism, simply obeying their own dispositions and attempting to theologize with exclusively rational arguments and criteria. Their in-built inability to theologize authentically was the natural consequence of this manner of life and thought.(27) Besides, their manner of life, not being "authentic", i.e in accordance with its philosophy, led to the creation of a "false face" (προσωπεῖον), as a possibility of defence for the individual choices and justification of their philosophical positions. According to St Nilus, the philosophers were great pretenders, since they did not apply to practice what they taught in theory.(28)

On the other hand the Jewish ascetics who produced philosophy, did

reach the highest levels of ascetical life, because they founded their "philosophy" on a moral basis, with consistency and faithfulness, which was due to their steady and tested prototypes. All their effort, however, turns out to be in vain, because "what benefit can they gain from the struggles and the laborious training, if they deny Christ who set the rules of training?" "Denying the distributor of the trophies", they also denied the authenticity of the manner of life which they followed, since this manner of life was far removed from the true knowledge of God.⁽²⁹⁾

The possibility of embodying in life "the Christian philosophy" is rooted in Christ himself, its propounder. Christ was "the only one who exhibited in word and deed the true philosophy".⁽³⁰⁾ Through his "pure life style" (καθαρὴ πολιτεία) he preserved his soul above the passions of the body, to the point that he discarded his very (human) life, being willingly led to death and thereby teaching "that the philosopher should be determined from above". By denying as a true philosopher the luxuries of life and struggling to master the corrupting passions, Christ arrived as a true example (ὑπογραμμός) to the point of not counting even his life whenever virtue called him to deliver it.⁽³¹⁾

"True philosophers", besides Christ, were also Christ's disciples, who adopted their Teacher's teaching in their life with absolute consistency⁽³²⁾ and also the imitators of Christ and his disciples, the saints,⁽³³⁾ who, discarding everything earthly, turned to the "philosophy which is above" (ἄνω φιλοσοφία), so that caring only for the absolute needs of the body they paid all their attention to the purification of their soul and to its presentation in boldness before God.⁽³⁴⁾

Keeping the example of the life of Christ before his eyes as it was concretely applied in the lives of the Apostles and the Saints, St Nilus

specifies more accurately his definition of "true philosophy". "philosophy is the accomplishment of good life-manners accompanied by the conviction of the true knowledge of existence" (φιλοσοφία γάρ ἐστὶν ἡθῶν κατόρθωσις μετὰ δόξης τῆς περὶ τοῦ ὄντος γνώσεως ἀληθοῦς).(35)

The diagrammatic process of this definition of true philosophy could be expounded into the following stages:

St Nilus clarifies that the problem of the philosophy based on Christ arises from the will of the pupil who tries to adopt it. Thus he observes, that if the pupil of this philosophy honestly wishes to adopt it in his life, then there is nothing which could inhibit his progress in doing so, because even satan himself is unable to interfere in its course when he encounters the strong will of the spiritual pupil.(36)

The pupil of the philosophy which is according to Christ is a sort of initiate who is being initiated into the "dogmas" of the "lofty philosophy", as it was expounded in the "Sermon of the Mount"(37) by its great initiator, the Mystagogue Jesus Christ, and as it was applied by him in his own earthly conduct.(38) In this way it becomes clear that the necessary presupposition of the philosophy which is according to Christ is the application of this philosophy in life. As such this presupposition constitutes a "demonstration" (ἐπίδειξις) of the "trustworthiness of the precepts which have been handed down" (τῆς τῶν παραδεδομένων ἀξιολοπιστίας).(39)

The problem of applied philosophy is essential. "Life without reason is by nature more beneficial than reason without life. For the former is of benefit even when it remains silent, whereas the latter is annoying even when it shouts. If, however, reason and life run together, they constitute a statue (an ideal) of complete philosophy."(40) Applied philosophy, combining reason and practice, is the formula of perfection.

The lover of philosophy, who seeks the "accomplishment of the right manners of life" (τὴν κατόρθωσιν τῶν ἠθῶν), the mastery of the greater knowledge and philosophy and the exploration of the knowledge of true existence, i.e. the perfect Christian, spends all his time in a state of spiritual alertness (νῆψις), i.e. treating it as liturgical time (καιρός), because he is not satisfied only by the spiritual opportunities granted to him by the Church but uses every moment and every detail of his life to a spiritual end. His state of spiritual alertness (νῆψις) turns his life into "a brilliant feast" (ἐορτὴν λαμπράν) which enriches him in piety (τῇ σεμνῇ πλουτοῦντα πολιτείᾳ). This is a spiritual feast and gathering of saints, a daily celebration of passing from death to resurrection, which makes the celebrant "more royal than the royals" (βασιλικώτερον τῶν βασιλέων),(41) a person who is materially poor but spiritually rich as true lover of God. In the centre of it all there is a renunciation of materialism and a mortification of sensuality which go side by side with an elevation of the mind above the creaturely domain which is followed by its capture (προσκαρπαγή)(42) and entry into a conversation with and contemplation of intelligible realities, i.e. the vision of God.

The philosopher according to Christ is an imitator of Christ and of the saints, who has freely chosen to adopt in his life the exact pattern of Christian conduct, because he is moved by an "eros for philosophy", i.e. a desire for sanctification. Thus, for St Nilus, the philosopher according to Christ is the saint and, also, the one who is called to be a saint, the monk; similarly the philosophy according to Christ is the life of sanctity and, consequently, the monastic life. The monk, then, is the authentic pupil of sanctity, the self-dedicated servant of the tradition. With this service the monk will be sanctified and become a model of sanctification, i.e. a model

of the philosophy which is according to Christ.

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

I.1. The ontological principles of the monastic life

St Nilus examines^e in his writings and especially in the context of his admonitions and advises the problems of the ascetic manner of life. In doing this he also examines the logical parameters of the human being. It is a characteristic of the ascetical literature, that preceding and that following the time of St Nilus, to question the intellectual manner of life which is currently in force. This scheme of expression is not derived from argumentative roots. Had this been so it would have been uprooted from its origin. It is rather, a natural outcome of a manner of life which, being authentic, specifies the boundaries between what is rational and what is irrational. The confusion between what is and what is not rational or irrational is owed to the ignorance of the biblical material where one clearly finds the expression of the clash between the rational and the irrational and is given the Christian manner of life as a safety valve.

The expression of the ontological principles of the monastic life is a dialogical process from the broken rationality to its identity, from what is secularly rational to what is secularly irrational, i.e. from what is irrational to what is rational.(1)

St Nilus examines^e the essence and the hypostasis of the fighter of the

desert, but not always on an intellectual basis, but on an existential one, where the essence specifies the hypostasis and the hypostasis interprets the essence. The combination and distinction of these fundamental existential terms expresses the harmony and identity of the "inner man".(2)

I.1.1. Self-renunciation

St Nilus professes allegiance to "the philosophy which is according to Christ". This philosophy is completely different from ordinary philosophy which is understood to be an intellectual investigation, solution, analysis, or disputation of problems. But it is primarily different because it is based on its self-denial!

The problematic condition of the human being was created from the moment when he deified his intellectual achievements. Here St Nilus has in mind, although he does not mention it explicitly, St Paul's position concerning the wisdom of the world.(3) God turned against the sophists, the makers of vain and false reasonings which are full of deceit,(4) because they did not manage to render their wisdom useful for the knowledge of God.(5) God's turning away from them signaled the foolishness of the wise(6) and the transference of the authority of reason to ordinary unskillful people (ἰδιώτες).(7)

It is in this sense that the notion of irrational rationality is introduced. It consists of the clash between the "foolishness" of the wise and the authority of the "rationality of the unskillful people". This form of logic is called by St Nilus "philosophy according to Christ". The servants of this logic are the ordinary people who dedicated their life to the observation of its precepts, namely, the monks.(8) The term unskillful-manner of behaviour

(ιδιωτεία) specifies at the same time the monk's ontological identity. St Paul has spoken about "the foolishness of man for the sake of Christ"⁽⁹⁾ as a manner of life which indicates the right manner of approach to God.

St Nilus delinates the monk's "holy foolishness" (σολότης) by speaking about his self-denial.⁽¹⁰⁾ The monk has rejected his own existence, "by rejecting his being human", as a final condition of need and unskillful behaviour and as a unique possibility of authority of reason which is expressed as transposition to the nature of the incorporeal powers.⁽¹¹⁾

Self-denial is not an act which is completed with its verbal expression. Because denial of self means denial of nature and hypostasis. Consequently this is the case of ontological or ontic denial in these two fundamental dimensions of it. This is precisely what the psalmist means in saying that "he is a worm and not a man, a shame of a man and a refuse of the people".⁽¹²⁾ This realization is at the same time a realization of an annihilation of existential possibility, since it is only through a sort of annihilation of being, i.e. through the denial of the old man of mere conventions, that the monk escapes the attacks of the passions,⁽¹³⁾ like someone who is dead and insensitive.⁽¹⁴⁾ Thus the monk acquires the possibility of been transposed to God.⁽¹⁵⁾

Then, conscience becomes a merciless judge,⁽¹⁶⁾ a criterion of self-consciousness which protects the fighter from the attacks of the unconscious⁽¹⁷⁾ and the vainglory of an artificial image.⁽¹⁸⁾ At the same time consciousness denies to itself the possibility to exist independently in itself, so that at the same moment it may be allowed to function as a judge.⁽¹⁹⁾

The obstacle in the journey of the fighter is his own achievement. By questioning what is an excess in himself and by accepting that he acts as an

unprofitable debtor,⁽²⁰⁾ he cannot boast as a saint,⁽²¹⁾ because he knows that what he did was his duty and that the grace of God is connected with humility and is differentiated from any claim of repayment.⁽²²⁾

As long as man is not prepared to deny himself, perfection remains far removed from him.⁽²³⁾ This is reversed when he empties himself and "rejoices with those rejoicing, weeps with those weeping, sympathises with whatever each one is in need of, thus being tested by happy and unhappy circumstances".⁽²⁴⁾ St Nilus is not ignorant of the positive results of self-emptying in inter-personal relations. "... who would not love the person who dwells in the desert" and who "does not express any opinion, even though he could do so";⁽²⁵⁾ just as he is not ignorant of the world's disapproval of the monk who empties himself in the context of his discipline. When they deceive him he prays.⁽²⁶⁾ When they do injustice to him, he 'puts on' the hybris and the damage without raising any opposition.⁽²⁷⁾ In this he imitates Christ who is the type of one who suffers injustice and reviling⁽²⁸⁾ and who empties himself teaching others "the ineffable philosophy" of self-emptying and self-denial.⁽²⁹⁾ St Nilus advises the monk not to lose his courage when he is exposed to the temptations of reviling and disapproval,⁽³⁰⁾ but admonishes him to put on the perfect form of self-denial which falls in line with the perfect severing of the will. The monk should "bend his soul like a convict, so that he may gain crowns".⁽³¹⁾

This condition of humiliation of the monk produces different results from those produced by the conventional morality of human beings. Since the existence of a personal will is a "dizziness of heart" (ζάλη καρδίας),⁽³²⁾ the removal of it from the monk's life is identical with his healing and the prevailing new condition of "sober intoxication" (νηφάλιος

μέθην),(33) which specifies his relation to God. "Dizziness" is replaced by "intoxication" and thus the monk resembles the "wild ass" (ἄγριος ὄνος) who runs in the desert.(34) Though he is righteous, he became an object of ridicule.(35) But he laughs at the public commotion, "not having to suffer the rebuke of the tax-collector, and grieving for the world,(36) though the world makes a ridicule of him".(37)

Thus the monk goes beyond the limits of himself, becomes non-being, returning to the level of non-beings, so that he may be easily remodelled by Christ(38) and become friend of Christ.(39) When this happens the natural environment is subjected to the "intoxicated unskilled-person"(40) who was rejected by the world but was blessed by God. In this way he becomes the sign-post of the two types of rationality, that of the city and that of the desert.(41)

I.1.2. Person, true and false.

The monk's self-denial and self-emptying is not a static act, which reaches its perfection at some point. It is rather the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new one who is dead to sin.

St Nilus admonishes the monk to become imitator "of the divine nature"(42), in order to replace his mortal ontological perspective with the possibility of taking part in the life of the Trinity.(43) And this possibility is connected with the fact that he has been made "according to God's image", since "we have been created according to this image in order to preserve the characteristics of His in us".(44)

In this way the monk preserves in his life the divine acts, in which he participates and thereby imitates Christ's nature. The space in him which

was emptied is occupied by Christ himself, he acquires "the mind of Christ"⁽⁴⁵⁾ and, furthermore, he "puts on Christ",⁽⁴⁶⁾ becoming himself a Christ, as he lives in the theology of his death and transformation as a taste of "clear joy"⁽⁴⁷⁾ which is the outcome of the vision of God.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The pleasure of this relation with the Holy Trinity belongs to the monk who put off the fleshly weight of himself⁽⁴⁹⁾ and returned to the agapetic communion with Christ as it was established at his baptism.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Communion with the holy Trinity is secured only with the mortification and the crucifixion for the things of this world,⁽⁵¹⁾ i.e. the mortification of the senses for the vanity which the scheme of this world produces.⁽⁵²⁾ Thus man lives the martyrdom of crucifixion as a stimulus of bad habits inviting him to return to them.⁽⁵³⁾ Essentially there is a clash here between *habit* (ἔθος) and *manner* (ἥθος), which is specified as a self-willed captivity to Christ,⁽⁵⁴⁾ i.e. the unconscious attraction to "what the monk previously denied"⁽⁵⁵⁾ and his self-willed submission to Christ. This is what, according to St Nilus, constitutes the meaning of ascetical theology. Asceticism becomes meaningful only in the context of the imitation of Christ, i.e. in the struggle of self-willed captivity. Philosophical exercise does not achieve the elevation of the nature of the human being. It leads perhaps to the condition of "a forgiven honour" (συγκεχωρημένη τιμή),⁽⁵⁶⁾ i.e. a condition of admiration, but it fails to lead man beyond the limits of the human nature. This is where the utopianism of humanism and of philosophical exercise lie as they were appropriated and are still being appropriated in the history of mankind. Their utopianism lies in the fact that they are unrelated to the "imitation of Christ",⁽⁵⁷⁾ which is the necessary presupposition for keeping man free from from the danger of self-justification and narcissism.

The theology of the "imitation of the divine nature" in St Nilus' thought is connected internally with the theology of the person. In point of fact the person is an ontological declaration; it specifies the ethos and the fundamental dimensions of being: essence and hypostasis. In its extension the person denotes essence, hypostasis, ethos in indissoluble unity, where essence is characterized by ethos and ethos is essence and hypostasis specifies and is specified by the two preceding notions.

"This is what the Lord blamed the pharisees for, that they did not understand the notion of the person, nor did they bear the intelligent fruit which is derived from it, when they convicted the disciples for having eaten with unwashed hands, saying: Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, because you wash the outside of the plate and the cup whereas the inner side of it is full of plunder and evil. O blind pharisee, cleanse the inner part and the outer shall also be clean ... what is from the purity of the outer man, and be diligent to gather the fruit of inner purity".(58)

Referring to Lev. 26:10, St Nilus makes a distinction between the old and the new persons, meaning the completion of the Old by the New Testament.(59) The way, however, of specifying this change is important: "for there is a course of a new manner of life by imitation of the old",⁽⁶⁰⁾ where the meaning of the term person is specified by the term "course of ^{ἡνέω} manner of life" (νέας πολιτείας φορά).

The inability of the pharisees to understand the meaning of the person, denotes their inability to produce the "intelligent fruit" of the "course of the new manner of life" and, consequently, of their ignorance of an authentic manner of life. This ignorance of "the inner purity" is the cause of the artificiality of the "outer purity" of the pharisees.

St Nilus observes that the antithesis between the inner and the outer

man is not unknown in the monastic life. It has to do with those monks who, being unable to cope with the criterion of the desert, "escape" to the cities, where they carry about "an expertise of piety" as a bait and creating "an antithesis between an honoured scene and the truth".⁽⁶¹⁾ St Nilus characterizes the "honoured scene" as a "false person" or "mask" (προσωπεῖον).⁽⁶²⁾

In this way, the false person is set up against the person, i.e. against the authentic manner of spiritual life. The false person symbolizes the lack of inner spiritual life, the ignorance of the fruit⁽⁶³⁾ of the new manner of life which is according to Christ⁽⁶⁴⁾ and, therefore, the pretence or hypocrisy whereby an artificial external balance seems to exist between being and acting.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Such a false person is only interested in what the others can see in him; in other words in the assessment of his spirituality by the on-lookers. And it happens that when they disapprove of him he loses courage, and when they approve, his false person is filled with boasting.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Quite the opposite is the case of the "unskilled" person of the desert, who is restricted to the inner spirituality, i.e. relation with God. "He is alone with God alone who crowns his toil; who knows his particular work and who strives to teach him to learn himself and many other things, because he also runs the risk of becoming at some point an appraiser of himself, or being overtaken by a childish mind and doing harm to himself in the same way as he might suffer harm by others who praise him."⁽⁶⁷⁾

I.2. The science of leading and being led

St Nilus speaks about pastoral work having fully perceived its dimen-

sions and its soteriological content. He studies the field of pastoral work with a profound and neptic wisdom, precisely because his approach is not based on abstract theory but constitutes a presentation of personal existential experience. St Nilus' theory of pastoral work is marked by authenticity, because the presenter of it has acquired personal experience of the contest and has been strengthened by his struggle to meet in a godly manner the difficulties entailed in this work. He has at his disposal a rich pastoral wisdom "by the grace of God".⁽⁶⁸⁾

I.2.1 The work of the spiritual pastor

According to St Nilus the good pastor is a "scientist" (ἐπιστήμων)⁽⁶⁹⁾ and a "person of discipline" (ἐπιστάτης)⁽⁷⁰⁾. The science of pastoral art is the result of spiritual toil and virtue.⁽⁷¹⁾ It is not simply an art but the art of arts.⁽⁷²⁾ This is why St Nilus reprimands those who come forth as teachers of virtue without serious consideration of the discipline involved.⁽⁷³⁾ Every art can be taught, but only the art of arts, the virtue of piety, is regarded as "easiest of all (εὐκολωτέρα πάντων)⁽⁷⁴⁾ and no one can learn it who regards it as "an easy-going matter" (εὐχερές πρᾶγμα).⁽⁷⁵⁾ Thus the "untrained" (ἀπαιδοτρίβητοι)⁽⁷⁶⁾ who attempt to emulate the life of the master, do nothing else than present the latter as a type of teacher who is "easily scorned at" (εὐκαταφρόνητος)⁽⁷⁷⁾ and "laughed at" (καταγέλαστος). "For who would not laugh at one who yesterday was carrying water in the local tavern, but today is seeing as a teacher of virtue escorted by disciples, or at one who, having recently withdrawn himself from political crimes, was yesterday seen with a multitude of disciples creating a stir as he went through the market".⁽⁷⁸⁾

Bringing the pastoral art to disrepute is a natural consequence of not taking it seriously, since in this case "knowledge does not progress into habit by the particular training exercises",⁽⁷⁹⁾ or the pastoral art is taken up by people who have no experience of going to battle with demons: "they have not experienced any skirmishing of a spiritual army; nor have the invisible boxers come to them yet; nor have they been reached by the bitter and gloomy lines of battle of the enemy; nor has the Assyrian fallen on them; nor have they been tested; nor have they been shaken or scattered to pieces ... nor, probably, have they even heard of the perilous and toilsome name of virtue, and they already assume that they are accomplished fighters, victors of all opposing powers, reapers of every evangelical edict, persons equipped with every exceptional practice, experts [lit. scientists] of every spiritual wisdom, so that they are no longer in need of their teachers".⁽⁸⁰⁾

These are persons who only learned the "manners of asceticism" (τὰ ἤθη τῆς ἀσκήσεως), i.e. what prayer is, how one should pray and how one should live according to the monastic prototypes.⁽⁸¹⁾ Learning, however, what relates to asceticism merely theoretically, they are still ignorant of the essence of ascesis, i.e. of the purification of "the old pollutions" through bodily exercise.⁽⁸²⁾ Possessing the false sensation of spiritual maturity, which is often a feature of the person who "has just entered the monastic life",⁽⁸³⁾ they become self-designated teachers, "pulling along a row of disciples",⁽⁸⁴⁾ without realizing that "to look after souls is the most difficult task of all".⁽⁸⁵⁾ Hence the questions which St Nilus raises at this point: "How can one who has never advanced beyond bodily ascesis correct the manners of those subjected to him? How can he transform those who are accustomed to an evil habit? How can he help those who are in battle with passions, if he has no knowledge of the battle in the mind, or how can he

heal the wounds incurred by fighting in the war, when he is still laid off by wounds and needs to be cared for?"(86)

The untrained pastor, who lacks experience, lacks the source from which he could draw with streams of divine wisdom his pastoral teaching. As long as he is deprived of the source, whatever he teaches is derived from "disobedience" (ἐκ παρακοῆς).(87) A teacher of "disobedience" is especially one who lacks a habit of his own, i.e. an authentic spiritual life.(88) Being ignorant of the source of the inner relation with God, he attempts to lead others on the basis of his intellectual shrewdness, which he formed out of what he collected from his brief discipleship under the fathers of the desert. This is a dangerous act, inasmuch as "if he has not secured reason from every side, he runs the risk of becoming a cause of scandal to those who come under his discipline"(89) since he will be forced by a more profound discussant "to confess his ignorance".(90)

This lack of spiritual life in a pastor, i.e. lack of reference to a neptic experience, has serious damaging consequences in the contests of the brethren who are under his rule.(91) It could end with, either the reaction of the brethren, who instigate an "economic" [in the theological sense] revolt which is tolerated by God(92) and could produce the desirable effect on the pastor, or, worse, with the imitation of the "pastor's own vices" by the brethren(93) to the detriment of their own souls.(94) It is also possible, of course, that some of the brethren, "thinking prudently", may desert the "unscientific" (inexperienced) pastor in good time "considering his lessons to be shameful".(95) Clearly, however, the person who bears the brunt of responsibility for whatever happens is the "teacher of vices" who fails "to reprimand those who become zealots of his own vices".(96) There is no doubt that the loss of a soul becomes a cause of "additional punishment"

for the pastor concerned.⁽⁹⁷⁾

Thus St Nilus forewarns one of the "teachers of vices" about the pastors and fathers of the desert in this manner: "Becoming zealous of the Apostles, they were some sort of lamps shining in darkness, stationary stars, brightening up the moonless night of the human life, docks of safe havens unaffected by wintry storms, indicating to all that it is easy to escape without being damaged the attacks of the passions. You, however, who has under your custody so many souls, have cast out virtue, and driven it far away, and have happily covered up your face with the darkness of evil thought and manner and have led the brethren into evil-doing and wintry storm and ceaseless turbulence, striving to lead to destruction those who ought to be saved."⁽⁹⁸⁾ Recalling St Paul, St Nilus warns this pastor: "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God".⁽⁹⁹⁾

On the above basis the pastor who finds himself in an unhealthy spiritual state, should retreat from shepherding souls and give himself first to the healing of "the bad smell of his mouth"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ through silence and hesychasm, undergoing "most enduring pain, and hardest discipline, and floods of tears, by persisting hardship and unceasing humility",⁽¹⁰¹⁾ so that the grace and fragrance of Christ may be granted to him "to his own benefit and to the benefit of those who are to be catechized by him afterwards".⁽¹⁰²⁾

St Nilus raises in this connection a devastating and pointed question which stresses in a particular way the utopian conduct of the unworthy pastor: "If you are unable to give an account of yourself before God, why do you strive, o man, to take into your hands the protection and training of others?"⁽¹⁰³⁾

b) God as prototype-pastor

The right assessment of pastoral science starts with the acceptance of its absolute character. The genuine pastor is exclusively dedicated to his work. This is what St Nilus means when he says: "Let us throw away everything" (πάντα ρίψωμεν),⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ which specifies the limits of pastoral activity within its natural framework.

The absolute and total dedication of a pastor to his work is dictated by the primary prototype of God as pastor.

Following the creation of man, God undertook man's pastoral care, by training Adam's soul (ψυχ-αγωγία). "He engaged daily in conversation with him because he needed to be led in his soul, God himself becoming a volunteer in the absence of those who might sooth his listlessness".⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ The prohibited fruit was not introduced on account of "envy of knowledge" (φθόνω γνώσεως), but as a device of pastoral training; so that man might come to know that he too is subject to law and command, even though he rules over all the animals. Envy, as a state of relation is unthinkable for God, who, as St Nilus says, is "clean of envy" (καθαρὸς φθόνου).⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Besides, as a perfect pastor who "has his own glory self-poss^{ess}" (τὴν οἰκείαν δόξαν ἔχων αὐτόκτητον), God rejoices when others also wish to acquire it.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

God's pastoral love is also discerned in its postlapsarian expression. God does not abandon the disobedient Adam to be "without a guardianship" (ἀπειθῆ κηδεμονίας), "destitute" (ἔρημον), as it were, nor does he deprive him of his assistance. He creates for him new conditions of life, so that what he failed to achieve in a state of comfort, he might succeed to acquire through a new form of life in toil and pain. Since he failed to

learn God's therapy and to be entertained in his soul by his conversation with him, he had to undergo a new form of discipleship provided by divine love.(108)

The pastoral expression of the love of God the pastor is clearly described by St Nilus, both when he refers to the "birth-pains of the Holy Spirit" in reforming the inner man,(109) and when he explains "Christ's tutelage", whereby paedagogical constrain is "economically" (οἰκονομικῶς, by dispensation) prescribed for his "most favoured servants".(110)

The pastor, then, is the continuator of the work of God and, naturally, of his Son. He is "the deposit of blood and pain",⁽¹¹¹⁾ inasmuch as he is a type of "the just Jesus, the Lord of all, who suffered such and so many pains for his servants, his beneficiaries, and was never vexed against them, but made propitiation for them before the Father".⁽¹¹²⁾

c) The pastor's spiritual life as the presupposition of his pastoral work

It is in the perspective of this succession in the work of the arch-pastor Christ that we see the self-denial of the pastor as a basic and indispensable presupposition of the pastoral ministry. This is a fundamental virtue in the monastic life, since this life also presupposes the self-denial and self-emptying of the pastor, which has been achieved during the period of his personal ascesis. This is the reason which makes the preceding personal training of the pastor to be regarded as a sort of safety valve of the pastoral work which follows afterwards.

The authenticity of the pastoral work demands the perfection of its agent. "You should not desire on account of love of honour to catechize and initiate others before you have achieved the acquisition of virtues; but

you should first accomplish every good task and, having become perfect, after you have carried them out successfully ... then you may train and teach the others with boldness".⁽¹¹³⁾ It is because the pastoral work is not cut off from the entire personal ascetical experience, but is naturally integrated with it, that the pastor should follow the "bloody path" and acquire the "experience of war" in order to become a living instrument of the dynamics embedded in this work.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The journey towards the conquest of pastoral virtue is, above all, a war journey.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ This war is, in its first phase, a battle against the passions, so that the cultivation of the soul might follow⁽¹¹⁶⁾ and the virtues which are necessary for the exercising of the pastoral work might be acquired. It is after this kind of personal cultivation that the pastor will have the possibility to cultivate others.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Having thus cultivated himself, by going to battle with the demons, he is now in a position to turn the weapons of war into weapons of peace,⁽¹¹⁸⁾ so that he may work for the benefit of many,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ which is an impossible task for those "who are still running to wood with the works of vice".⁽¹²⁰⁾ Besides, what sort of benefit is it to anyone, if the fertile earth is occupied by war "so that the enjoyment of the cultivated fruit is inhibited and the plenitude rendered by it is given to the opponents rather than to those who laboured for it".⁽¹²¹⁾

This manner of life is typologically expressed with the life of the Israelites in the desert. During the entire period of their journey to the land of the promise, they were not allowed by God to engage in any agricultural activity, because this would have been to the detriment of their training for war. "It is after the respite of the enemies that he advises them to do it [i.e. agriculture], saying: When you enter the land of the promise, you should plant in it every tree that bears fruit."⁽¹²²⁾ You shall

not plant anything before you enter there; for the one presupposes the other, as it is obvious".(123)

In accordance, then, with this typological image, the work of pastoral care for others is preceded by personal "cultivation" (γεωργία). This means that the person who is to become a pastor of others should first struggle against the personal passions. This struggle, of course, is not mono-semantic. It has a manifold signification, but its most important feature is connected with spiritual wisdom and knowledge which is obtained when the fighter fights the passions. The battle with the passions has the advantage that it helps the future pastor "to deliver to his memory"(124) (i.e. to preserve in his consciousness) the manner of combatting the passions and its technique, so that he can store up the various forms of advice which is to be given to the brethren under him. The combination of this storing up of memory of the war technique with the study for soberness and watchfulness constitutes the condition of nepsis. Nepsis, as a personal acquisition, is the basic presupposition for authentic spiritual teaching and redemptive pastoral work. This is why the authentic spiritual fighter should discern with the power of nepsis the "intercourse" (κοίτη) of the psychical world and bring to the surface of consciousness the impassionate ideas which specify his behaviour and contact.(125) Thus the spiritual fighter has the opportunity "to advise others concerning the matters of the battle", (126) as experience is transformed into teaching,(127) and has the possibility "to crown their effort with victory without pain by foretelling the intentions of the adversary and to produce crowns at the outcome of the battle".(128)

The example of Joshua son of Nun, in particular, is one that expresses typologically the procedure of this form of nepsis. As it is known, as soon as Joshua crossed the Jordan with the Israelites, he took care to place

pointer-stones, as indicators for safe crossing of the river for those who were to attempt this in the future.(129)

St Nilus also uses the image of the washing basin to present the pastor in the same framework of nepsis. The pastor is a type of a washing basin. As such "he does not reject anyone of those who come to him".(130) He bears up not only the burden but also the stain of the weaker brethren. And, as the washing basin accepts the dirt of those who are being cleansed in it, so the "supervisor" (ἐπιστάτης) bears up the pollution of the thoughts and actions of his subordinates. This special form of sacrifice on the part of the pastor acquires an even greater significance, if one takes into account, that as he himself cleanses the stains of others, he does not remain uncon-^otaminated, since "it is natural that the memory pollutes the mind of the speaker".(131)

The possibility of indicating the manners of victory to the subordinates and the meeting of the pastor with their pollution, indicate ^ehights of spiritual situation and at the same time a profound knowledge of the neptic science. For this reason St Nilus states that "such a pastor is rare and not easy to find".(132) Because there are pastors who conquered their passions, without, however, being able to say how and, consequently, without being able to teach their subordinates the authentic manner of the acquisition of virtue. These pastors became victors over the passions, but in the manner "as it were of a night-battle" (ὡς ἐν νυχτομαχίᾳ),(133) within the darkness of the possibilities of their consciousness, and hence, they were ignorant of the "how" of the victory. They won thanks to the great hardship to which they subjected themselves. Their victory, however was not "in full understanding" (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει). For St Nilus such a victory can not help the pastor in his work, since he lacks the deep knowledge of the manner by

which it was achieved. According to St Nilus the basic principle is that "the full awareness of the manner of carrying out the spiritual battle and the direct understanding, as far as possible, of the secret schemes entailed therein constitute the most essential condition and presupposition of the successful ascesis of the pastoral art".⁽¹³⁴⁾

Consequently, self-knowledge (αὐτογνωσία) is one of the essential conditions pertaining to the success of the pastoral activity of a pastor. The pastor must operate on himself consciously, so as to assure himself whether he teaches "in deed" (ἔργῳ), or only "in word" (λόγῳ).⁽¹³⁵⁾ St Nilus does not have an absolute preference for any one of the two methods of teaching. He is confident, however, that "it is not word, but deed that induces those who are led to adopt imitation".⁽¹³⁶⁾ Indeed Holy Scripture underlines the work in the case of Abimelech and Gedeon. "You should also do, as you saw me doing".⁽¹³⁷⁾ And also in the address of St Paul to the elders of the Church of Ephesus; "That these hands served to my needs and to those who were with me".⁽¹³⁸⁾

On the other hand, by projecting the balance of the ascetical logic St Nilus puts the word in its place in comparison with the act, stressing that "the acts which are deprived of theory (vision) wither"⁽¹³⁹⁾ and thereby indicating that the ideal of the ascetical pastoral life, and of all pastoral activity in general, is the harmony of deeds and words. The unity of words and deeds strengthens the authority of the pastor and it is a criterion of authenticity of spiritual life. In this case the pastor is freely accepted by his subordinates, since "he himself is put forth to the learners" as an icon of virtue and a type for imitation.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Thus the imitation of the pastor by his followers becomes a constructive relation for the pastor.

The pastor is always keeping watch and remains in a state of nepsis

because he understands that "the teacher's inexperience leads to the loss of the disciples" and that "the disciples' lack of diligence endangers the status of the teacher".⁽¹⁴¹⁾ He keeps watch about, and even agonizes over, his behaviour so that his example may build up the disciples.⁽¹⁴²⁾ His agony for himself is derived from his effort to present himself to his disciples as a type of virtue so that they may make progress in the spiritual life and at the same time help their teacher in his own struggle.

On the other hand the pastor's agony for the salvation of his disciples is derived from the fact that "he will have to give an account for them".⁽¹⁴³⁾ St Paul "made Onesimus a martyr from being a fugitive". Elijah "made" Elishah a prophet from being a farmer. Moses, above all others, "enhanced the adornment of Joshua above all others". Eli made Samuel rise above him.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ All these teachers helped their disciples to become better than them and "this is why they became God's mouthpieces, administering God's decisions to human beings; for they heard him saying, If you bring something honourable out of something dishonourable, you will be like my mouth".⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ This is exactly the work of the teacher: to turn the disciple from a piece of clay into a holy temple.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ The quest for the ontological rejuvenation of the disciple becomes "at the same time" (ἐν ταυτῷ) a quest for the preceding ontological renewal of the teacher. This means, indeed, that the spiritual life of the teacher is a norm of salvation or destruction of the disciple. The realization of this fact is the mightiest challenge of self-awareness for the pastor.

I.2.2. Submission

Submission is put forth in the ascetical literature as a necessary

condition of the authentic spiritual life. If this submission is rightly appropriated, as a perfect denial of self and humility of mind, it is capable for leading the monk to progress in monastic life and remains as a guarantee of sanctity, as long as the subordinated person is a diligent student of the "science of virtue".(147)

a) The necessity of submission

St Nilus relies on his pastoral experience in underlining the need of assuming perfect submission, not as an alternative option, but as a quest for life, inasmuch as ignorance of it is a cause of death. Here he mentions the example of Abel(148) and Dinah,(149) the daughter of the patriarch Jacob. Abel was assassinated and Dina was corrupted. Both of them suffered damage, because they did not choose the hesychastic manner of life which is appropriate for those who lack perfection, so that they may make progress in ascesis,(150) but tried "to go beyond their own way of life".(151) Other examples relevant in this connection are those of Giezi and Judas. Both of them ignored their teachers and misunderstood the meaning of submission. As a result Giezi fell into the crime of theft,(152) and Judas into the ultimate dishonour of betrayal.(153) "Had they remained attached to the teachers of prudence, none of them would have committed any transgressions".(154)

Furthermore, the denial of submission is for St Nilus an ontological downfall. The monk who refuses to submit, loses his ontological complement. "Who^osoever says, that I become an anchorite on this account, so that I may have no one irritating my anger, does not differ from any irrational beast.

For we do indeed see the beasts at rest, and in no way showing any wildness, if no one arouses them to anger".(155) This ontological downfall either leads to death, according to the above example, or to some other manner of bringing one to his senses on the part of God. "Those who do not wish to be saved through the word of obedience and faith, they are brought back to their senses according to some ineffable goodness of God by means of painful and fallen additions".(156)

The meaning which St Nilus attributes to this submission has to do on the one hand with the possibility of salvation, which is thereby secured for the monk, and on the other hand, to the fact that this is not simply an ascetic obligation but a composite relation which exerts a powerful influence both on the subordinate and on the spiritual master. St Nilus regards ^{it as} "grave and dangerous to overlook even slightly any of the teacher's demands,(157) not only because this incurs personal damage to the subordinate, but also because "the lack of diligence of the disciples, incurs much danger to the teacher and especially "when they are indolent on account of his inexperience".(158) For this reason the teacher should be always on his guard, not only concerning himself but also concerning the attitude and behaviour of his disciples, so that if a need arises he may exclude the person responsible for it from the coenobitic life.(159) St Nilus establishes his thesis on the prophetic authority of Ezekiel. "And you shall place an iron pan between yourself and the city and there shall be a wall between yourself and between ^{it} it".(160) At the same time the teacher shall save in this way the rest of the subordinates from the threat "of communion of punishment with the indolent one".(161)

c) The most authentic submission.

Submission is not an act which is easily accomplished. This is because man's self-denial is not a self-evident act. St Nilus directs the monk with high pastoral sensitivity to achieve his initial purpose, which is to accept submission not as a typical (external), but as a cataphatic (essential) act.

The structure of his thought starts with a commonly accepted truth: "For the judgement of the artful is one and of the artless another".(162) It is also commonly accepted that it is the sailor and not the passenger who trusts the captain of a ship, believing in him rather than in himself, and considering him to be the only suitable judge to determine his salvation, even if his perspective is different from what his would have been in a similar situation.(163)

St Nilus deals with submission-obedience in the monastic life in the same way. "It is not, then, those who allowed others to deal with their salvation, that having abandoned what is obvious, conceded to the art of the person who knows their own thoughts thinking that their own is a more trustworthy science".(164)

St Nilus emphasizes the scientific aspect of the method of learning consisting of the monk's submission to the spiritual master. Initially the new monk will learn from the guides of the desert (ὁρηγητάς), who are also responsible for the younger and more inexperienced monks. When, however, the new monk progresses in obedience, then, he comes to the professors of the desert (καθηγητάς) who are responsible for the advanced disciples. It is not impossible, if the need arises, for the professor of the desert to exercise at the same time the ministry of the guide of the desert. In this connection St Nilus uses the term "science" (ἐπιστήμη) of the desert in

order to underline the methodical and systematic process of learning virtue and perfect submission.(165)

Only the perfect subjection is perfect. The monk, should deliver himself to his teacher, imitating the saints, and this includes not only himself but also whatever belongs to him, material or spiritual, so that his teacher may work out his salvation without any obstacles.(166) In this unit St Nilus mentions the example of Elishah, who "denied the world as he coordinated himself to his teacher". "He ploughed, he says, with oxen, and there were twelve oxen in front of him, and he slaughtered the oxen and grilled them in the vessels of the oxen".(167) Just as Elishah did not argue with himself, but denied himself and strove to wipe out the causes, which would possibly obstruct him in his spiritual progress, so the monk is called to be emancipated from the deception of "his own mind".(168) Perhaps because the monk of this kind, keeps some sort of relic of his old self which prevents him from succeeding in denying his existence. Besides, this is the tragedy of the fall. The first subordinate of humanity was Adam, who denied the absolute paedagogical authority of God his teacher, not being able to deny himself. The inescapable consequence of his weakness was precisely the fall.

In reality, as St Nilus points out, the subordinate can be compared with the oxen which carried the ark. In spite of the sorrow and the toil, which was caused to them by its weight, they did not turn to any other direction not did they decline from their course. Walking steadily "as if following a definite rule" (ὡσπερ ἐπὶ κανόνι) they run the course "being conquered by the awesomeness of the preceding ark". The question, then, naturally arises, "why should those who are going to carry the intelligent ark not do the same?"(169).

Essentially the monk, following the example of the oxen of the ark, should walk, without apprehension or opposition, i.e. without a personal will, on the traces of Joseph in order to arrive at Dothaim,⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ which is interpreted "a great eclipse", and is a term of perfection, since it is ontologically interpreted as perfect poverty.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ The condition of perfect poverty is the beginning of spiritual creation and civilization. The subordinate arrives at the stage "of denying himself and his own will as if he is no different from a soulless body,⁽¹⁷²⁾ and much more as matter in the hands of the artist who does not prevent him from working on it as he sees fit. "Thus the teacher is working out the science of virtue on his disciples who are entrusted to him and raise no objections to him [like soulless matter].⁽¹⁷³⁾

St Nilus extends the meaning of subjection and discipleship *ad infinitum*. In this perspective, discipleship, as perfect submission, is seen as an eternal act, which is not interrupted nor ceases to move at some particular point, but accompanies the entire existence of the fighter of the desert to the very end. "The disciple makes speedy progress, if he looks to the teacher for ever".⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Besides, discipleship, as expression of humility, is an essential and inalienable element of the spiritual battle of the monk and in the last analysis this means that it falls in line with the end of the monk's life.

CHAPTER II: THE ASCETIC THEORY OF PASSIONS

II.1. The structure of the human psyche

St Nilus appears to have a profound knowledge of the depths of the human psyche. His penetrating statements about this constitute very apt renderings of the psychological observations of the patristic wisdom of his time which took shape under the experience of "nepsis" and prayer. The reader of St Nilus' works observes a certain restriction in the descriptions of human psychic motions which, however, are reversely analogous to the richness of his thought. Avoiding the construction of a scholastic system of psychological exposition, St Nilus offers his invaluable experience throughout all of his work, in an incidental fashion, always using the challenge of particular cases in order to expound his themes.

The purpose in St Nilus' psychological references is to lead, as it were, his monks by the hand in the battle against the passions. In doing this he exposes them to the difficulties of the battle and also presents them with the possibilities available to them for coping successfully with these difficulties.

The material of St Nilus' psychological references is presented below in such a way as to render as far as possible the fuller picture of his psychological experience under the perspective, of course, of his theological and neptic thought.

II.1.1. The Soul (ψυχή)

St Nilus specifies the soul as a "mindful reality" (νοητὸν χρῆμα)⁽¹⁾. As mindful, i.e. immaterial, "she is capable of reaching things pertaining to the mind" (ἐφίεται τῶν νοητῶν). She is a divine and wonderful creature⁽²⁾. The nature of the soul is invaluable (χρυσή = golden, as Nilus puts it),⁽³⁾ but the man who commits sin, turns her into the condition of stone and copper. Thus she runs the risk of "being drowned" (καταποντισμοῦ) "by reason of her own choice" (προαιρέσει οικείᾳ)⁽⁴⁾. Under such circumstances the soul is unable to rise to God, because she is, on account of sin, irresistibly drawn downwards to earthly things. For the neptic fighter, however, the fall of the soul towards earthiness, under the weight of sin and the flesh, is a challenge arousing the desire of departing to Christ the Master.⁽⁵⁾

The highest expectation of the soul is the resurrection which will follow death. Through this resurrection the soul will receive her body "enlivened through the Holy Spirit and continue to be united with it for ever in an indissoluble gladness, blessedness and sinlessness."⁽⁶⁾ For this reason St Nilus calls the event of the resurrection a "second soul" (δευτέρα ψυχή),⁽⁷⁾ thus underlining, that if the earthly life is cut off from the expectation of the resurrection, then, man becomes dead to acts of virtue.⁽⁸⁾

The possibility of the resurrection is hidden in Baptism. Through Baptism the soul enters into a relation of love with God (ἀγαπητική σχέσηις) and, from that moment onwards, she tries to live in accordance with the will of the jealous God (ζηλωτῆς θεός), who does not allow the

soul to depart from him.⁽⁹⁾ God is the only one who knows the essence of the soul. Her powers, however, are known to the man of virtue, according to the schema: "from the superabundance of the heart".⁽¹⁰⁾

The relation of "love with God" is seen in the special blessings which God provides.⁽¹¹⁾ All these blessings raise the soul to a distinguished position amongst the immaterial and spiritual beings. St Nilus stresses that the soul is higher than the angels and even "above every principality and authority" (ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας).⁽¹²⁾

In St Nilus' teaching the relation of the soul to the body is also of special importance. The soul is regarded as "mistress" (κυρία) and the body, as "servant" (παιδίσκη).⁽¹³⁾ The body is understood as a "living thing which cooperates with piety" (συνπράττοντι πρὸς τὴν θεοσέβειαν ζῶν).⁽¹⁴⁾ Its role should be viewed from the vantage point of the present (τὸ ἐνεστὼς ἰωμένης καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐξῆς ἔνδειαν ἀχρηστος).⁽¹⁵⁾

St Nilus' admonitions have a clearly ascetical perspective. The prototypes for imitation in this are those Fathers who taught, through the subjection of their flesh to their soul, which was being perfected, the measure and the degree of the participation of the flesh in the sanctification of the soul. They remained firmly fixed upon the vision of God until the bodily needs (nature) brought them back to the body which required their care.⁽¹⁶⁾

On the contrary the "double-souled man" (ὁ δίψυχος ἀνὴρ),⁽¹⁷⁾ i.e. the monk who "is distinguished for his prayers but also hesitates" (ὁ διακρινόμενος ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς καὶ διστάζων)⁽¹⁸⁾, since he measures his circumstances and behaviour from the perspective of the present life, remains attached to the fulfilment of the needs of his body, as it seems right to him, and not as it is prescribed by the neptic conscious-

ness. The "double-souled man" makes no serious progress in spiritual life, because only the emancipation from the things of this life can lead to the formation of a perfect soul.⁽¹⁹⁾ The cares of the present life, whatever their nature, push the monk downwards and do not allow him to rise upwards to God.⁽²⁰⁾ This monk has an "impious soul" (ἀσεβῆ ψυχῆ).⁽²¹⁾

The crucial dangers of the spiritual condition of the soul are on the one hand "acidy" (weariness of soul - ἀκηδία), and on the other hand, "pride" (ὕπερηφάνεια). St Nilus speaks of "acidy" as the unnatural condition of a soul which is "out of tune" (ἀτονία ψυχῆς). By contrast the brave soul is that which comes through and overcomes temptations.⁽²²⁾

Furthermore "pride" is a "wound of the soul" (οἶδημα ψυχῆς). The greater the height of a monk's pride, the greater the depth of his fall. As a matter of fact the monk who is proud in his soul "is abandoned by God and becomes the object of the demons' rejoicing" (ἐγκαταλιμπάνεται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ γίνεται δαιμόνων ἐπίχαρμα).⁽²³⁾

St Nilus' sensitivity concerning the dangers to which the soul is exposed forces him to admonish the monk to seek her salvation⁽²⁴⁾ by sanctifying her through the sacraments.⁽²⁵⁾ As he points out, the soul which "was previously turned through laxity into a desert and uncultivated land", is *able* through the sacraments "to be changed to the better and to be turned into a land which is tamed and capable of being cultivated and shaped in accordance with what is greater".⁽²⁶⁾ Since the "non-fabricated beauty" (ἀμήχανον κάλλος)⁽²⁷⁾ of the soul can shine forth through God's grace, it is sufficient for her to depart from indolence, to enter into humility and to meet with God,⁽²⁸⁾ because the reward of "the perfect soul" is the "grasp of the truth"⁽²⁴⁾ and the highest truth is God.

II.1.2. The Heart

The term "heart" (καρδία), as it appears in the writings of St Nilus, denotes the inner spiritual reality of man. Its meaning is focused either on the inner man or on man's inner mind.⁽³⁰⁾

The commencement of the spiritual struggle demands bravery of heart. This is necessary both for the fighter of the desert and for the brethren in the monastery. This is what makes St Nilus to borrow a relevant text from Deuteronomy ("A man who is coward in his heart, should return to his house and decline from going to war, in case he turns his brother's heart to cowardice")⁽³¹⁾ in order to warn the fighter of the spiritual battle about the consequences of cowardice. "It is possible," as he explains, "for a person who is coward before temptations and the battle against demons to paralyze the eagerness of the person who is ready to do the best".⁽³²⁾ Cowardice of heart is cowardice of mind, due to the lack of spiritual training. "Staying in the house" indicates security, since lack of daring in the spiritual life is a cause of death.

The clash with the demons demands the "brokenness of heart",⁽³³⁾ as an act of self-rejection of the achievements of a monk, i.e. of self-denial. The brokennessⁿ of the inner man is not an act of cowardice, but an act of inner power on the part of the spiritual man who adopts with consistency the teachings of the Scriptures and the "tokens" of God's chastisement.⁽³⁴⁾ This is why the replacement of a "stony heart" (λιθίνη καρδία) by a "heart of flesh" (σαρκίνη καρδία) is a necessary presupposition of spiritual progress.⁽³⁵⁾

When Ezekiel formulated this prophecy of his, he had before him the

Israelites who suffered from hardness of heart⁽³⁶⁾ and who, waiting the Day of the Lord with the assurance of the exclusive and unique inheritor, regarded it to be their natural right to institute their own laws of spiritual life and abolish the laws of God.

Ezekiel is added to the chorus of the prophets who stress the incomprehensible and unexpected character of the coming of the Day of the Lord. To the verse from the Prophet Isaiah, "wash yourselves and be cleansed"⁽³⁷⁾ Ezekiel adds as a presupposition of purity the "removal of the stony heart"⁽³⁸⁾ as the only way of healing the "hardness of heart" (σκληροκαρδία), as a humility of mind and possibility of communion with God.⁽³⁹⁾

Applying this prophesy to the struggle of a monk St Nilus also stresses the baseless assumption of the principle of predictability in the spiritual life. Thus by admonishing the monks "to avoid communion with those who, having followed the monastic life, chose to serve pride, grinding their teeth with confidence and enlarging their chests",⁽⁴⁰⁾ he calls for a "heart of flesh" (σαρκίνη καρδίαν), i.e. the adoption of a humble mind. According to him the new Israelites carry within them the law of God much more than the ancient Israelites did in OT times, because they carry it not in "hearts of stone" but in "hearts of flesh" ⁽⁴¹⁾, thus demonstrating God's grace⁽⁴²⁾. These hearts are not inscribed with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.⁽⁴³⁾ On the other hand failure in the spiritual life leads to a heart of sorrows and tribulation.⁽⁴⁴⁾ This heart is deceived by the things around her to which she is attached but which do not allow her to find rest.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In another unit of thought and syllogisms, St Nilus stresses the

significance of the heart as denoting the inner man. Every "evil thought" (πονηρὸς λογισμὸς), which enters into the heart, constitutes a "foreign dress" (ἀλλότριον ἔνδυμα) and not the wedding garment of the union with God.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Essentially the affirmation of sin is an ignorance of the heart. In turn ignorance of the heart is ignorance of God.⁽⁴⁷⁾ It is within such a perspective that St Nilus recommends the purification of the hearts, so that the "divine trophies" (τὰ θεῖα κειμήλια) may be placed in the purified house of the heart.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The purity of the heart is not, of course, connected only with the inner man as depositor of the divine trophies. It is at the same time a presupposition of external behaviour which reflects the inner purity. The purity of the heart penetrates both the inner and the outer man and secures man's authentic progress in these two dimensions, the psychological and the bodily. Indeed the purity of heart is a presupposition for the purity of the body⁽⁴⁹⁾. The body which is led by a "pure heart" also works out its own purity.

II.1.3. The Mind (Νοῦς)

According to St Nilus the mind occupies a leading place within the sphere of the inner man. In point of fact the mind is the "charioteer" (ἡνίοχος)⁽⁵⁰⁾ who governs the inner world of man. Its leadership consists in the discrimination which determines the "psychic movements", "to the point of achieving a sort of common harmony".⁽⁵¹⁾ Furthermore the mind is "the king (ὁ βασιλεύς),"⁽⁵²⁾ "the general of the powers that are inside" (ὁ στρατηγὸς τῶν ἔνδον).⁽⁵³⁾

The distinguished position of the mind is explained by recourse to its

nature. The mind has the possibility to "talk to God" (προσομιλίας μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ).⁽⁵⁴⁾ This is a dialogical relation which comes to exist in the context of the "vision of God" (θεωρία Θεοῦ).⁽⁵⁵⁾ The ascent of the mind to God and the preservation of its relation with him demand a process of nepsis and struggle. The struggle begins from the regulation of the relation of the mind to the flesh. This relation functions in accordance with the position which is given to these two fundamental agents in the whole man. The mind is the Master of the flesh. Therefore the flesh has the position of a servant.⁽⁵⁶⁾ As long as the mind issues commands in accordance with what its relation with God teaches it, it remains the indisputable master. However, in whatever instance the mind issues "abominable commands" (βδελυρά), showing that it is deprived of a relation with God, then, it is possible for the servant to rise against its master. The flesh "abhors the mind which issues abominations"⁽⁵⁷⁾ and thus it is possible for the servant "to forget its proper limits, to arrive at a tyranny and to dare raise arms against its owner".⁽⁵⁸⁾ Then the mind becomes "submerged" (ὑποβρύχιος).⁽⁵⁹⁾ It loses the capacity to rise to God,⁽⁶⁰⁾ and to enter into the vision of God.⁽⁶¹⁾ In this case the mind becomes dull,⁽⁶¹⁾ uncontrollable,⁽⁶³⁾ darkened,⁽⁶⁴⁾ and, inevitably, subservient to many masters.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The therapeutic training of the mind by the fighter of the desert begins from the moment when he makes the decision about and achieves the transposition of his mind from the life of the flesh to the spiritual life.⁽⁶⁶⁾ The difficulties of the "healing of the mind" are connected with the "condition of anxiety" which is created in the anchorite when his mind is "gripped by anxiety" (ἐναγχος)⁽⁶⁷⁾ immediately after his ascetical flight. The condition of anxiety is a consequence of the influence of passions.

The passions put pressure on the mind to return to its previous condition. Under this pressure the mind resembles "the body which has just begun to recover from a long term illness, in which even the slightest excuse becomes a cause of its return to the illness in case it regains greater strength."⁽⁶⁸⁾

The inner clash which the pressure of the passions stirs up inside the anchorite is the cause of his return to the memory of these passions. This is further enhanced by the "ceaseless movement of the mind". This means that the ascetic who undertakes the struggle has to master and control the ceaseless motion of the mind in a way that it does not run away to the cares of life which capture it and, on many occasions, feed the passions.⁽⁶⁹⁾ In the life of the desert the mind has to be delivered from cares. When it reaches the state of being care-less, "it becomes untouchable to the devil".⁽⁷⁰⁾ This allows the monk to be delivered from the anxiety of the temptations⁽⁷¹⁾ and to be able to lead his mind to the vision of God. This ascent is achieved by means of spiritual exercises (contests); "for it is with the study and exercise of spiritual sayings, as well as with intensive prayer that the mind becomes detached from the things which are not pleasing to God and is transported to Godly lessons, spending profitably its time by engaging in these latter, while throwing to oblivion the former."⁽⁷²⁾

The transposition of the mind to God leads to the vision of God and to the dialogical relation of the monk with God. Nevertheless, this achievement does not mean that the monk may now rest assured of having secured his position in the spiritual contest. Even when he has managed to enter the stage of his direct relation with God, the monk still needs to continue exercising his mind, so that he may not deviate from communion

with God and return to a communion with the passions, i.e. to the condition of anxiety caused by the temptations.

Having achieved its ascent to God, the mind draws to itself the gift and grace of God.⁽⁷³⁾ At the same time, however, being free from fleshly attachments and from the anxiety of sin, it trains itself "either by praying to God or by considering what is useful".⁽⁷⁴⁾ The constant training leads the mind to the possibility of self-examination and self-understanding, so that by observing itself it may ensure that nothing good is missing from it."⁽⁷⁵⁾

The training of the mind in the conversation with God leads it to put on Christ⁽⁷⁶⁾ and consequently to be assimilated with "the mind of Christ." In the monastic idiom "the mind of Christ" is defined as a "purified hegemonic principle" (κεκαθαρμένον ἡγεμονικόν).⁽⁷⁷⁾ In this condition the monk acts as Christ, "leading a bright life" (πολιτευόμενος λαμπρῶς)⁽⁷⁸⁾ and becoming perfect, "as our Father in heaven is perfect".⁽⁷⁹⁾

II.1.4. The power of perception (Διάνοια)

According to St Nilus the work of perception is of no lesser importance than that of the mind. This is because perception has the capability of reflecting the Divine.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In essence it is perception which facilitates the work of the mind. This facilitating function becomes apparent from the fact that the lack of diligence on the part of perception in supporting the work of the mind incurs inability in reaching vision.⁽⁸¹⁾ Without the unique service of perception the mind is incapable of functioning properly so as to rise to God.

The procedure leading to the grace of God begins from the relation of

perception with fleshly things. St Nilus stresses the fact of the "sluggishness" (ἀποχαλύνωσις)⁽⁸²⁾ of man on account of sin. This is a condition prevailing upon the ascetic fighter of the desert owing to excessive attachment to earthly things. By doing this the monk loses sight of the damage incurred upon him, especially because he finds himself far removed from nepsis and alertness. St Nilus describes with clarity the tragedy of sluggishness as seen in the case of the fighter of the desert who lets himself be led astray by earthly things related to the present life. "For how can perception find time to know what is sorrowful, when the sight of visible things completely ^{is} distracts it, and does not give it much chance to consider this? At this moment it accepts these forms, and after a while it accepts others, and a little later others again... Thus it cannot understand its pollution".⁽⁸³⁾

The distraction of perception by the visible things leads to "the collection of construction materials of sin" (σλλογή ποιητικῶν ὑλῶν τῆς ἁμαρτίας).⁽⁸⁴⁾ This means, in turn, that "memory" (μνήμη) is fed with these materials⁽⁸⁵⁾ and as a result perception is burning with a desire to commit sin.⁽⁸⁶⁾

St Nilus never fails to remind his monks of the evangelical teaching concerning the commitment of sin. Following the relevant verse from St Matthew's Gospel, where it is stressed that "everyone who sees a woman and desires her has already committed adultery in his heart,"⁽⁸⁷⁾ he draws his conclusions: "whoever desires a certain thing, either good or evil, has already committed it in his mind".⁽⁸⁸⁾ Consequently the acceptance of sin is connected with its very roots. This is the reason that prompts St Nilus to reprimand the "monks who indulge in dreaming" (τοὺς ῥεμβάζοντας μοναχοῦς) for throwing fuel in the fire instead of keeping in a state of

quietness (ἡσυχία).(89)

The distraction of the mind and its re-orientation towards earthly things constitutes a spiritual deficiency. Perception becomes fleshly and, consequently, unable to "reflect" God as a mirror.(90) The inability to reflect God is inability to communicate with him. In this condition "the monk is completely unable to think of anything above and beyond the body" (οὐδὲν παντελῶς δύναται ὑπὲρ τὸ σῶμα διανοεῖσθαι).(91) This is what constitutes death.

The neptic person is bound "not to allow entry into his perception of the imaginations of thoughts which are by nature damaging" (οὐ πάροδον διδόναι ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ταῖς τῶν βλάπτειν πεφυκότων λογισμῶν φαντασίαις), "so that the passions which are mortified through diligence might not be revived".(92) If there is something that distinguishes the perception in its relation to fleshly things, this is the "ease" (εὐχέρεια) it has in its "inclination towards the passions which had been previously ousted from it for some time".(93) The fighting monk should always keep in mind this "ease", as well as the fact that "the inclination of the habit of virtue is very easy to change, indeed too easy, if one is careless, and turns to its opposites,"(94) so that he may always choose to follow the way of nepsis and prayer.

Following this way the monk arrives at "the condition of an undistracted perception" (ἀπαρενόκλητον τῆς διανοίας κατάστασιν).(95) This is the "time of fulfilment" (ὁ καιρός) into which "perception" enters "after the corruption of the adversaries", in order to be able "to change to the better and to cultivate its own powers".(96) Entering into this "time of fulfilment", involving an active relation between God and man, the monk arrives at a "condition of quietness" (ἡσυχία) which is a necessary

presupposition of his welcoming Christ into his life. When he is in the "condition of an undistracted perception", then Christ comes to dwell in him⁽⁹⁷⁾ and the ensuing spiritual circumincession, or rather mutual interpenetration, is sealed with the condescension of the Holy Trinity to reveal itself, as "the pacified perception comes to belong to the Holy Trinity alone".⁽⁹⁸⁾

Given that elsewhere St Nilus describes the "hegemonic principle" as house of Christ,⁽⁹⁹⁾ we could assume that he identifies "perception" (διάνοια) with the "hegemonic principle" (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν). If this identification is correct, then, the participation of perception in the monk's struggle becomes obvious. This perception has the ability, if the monk does not pay the necessary attention to it, either "to drown the soul in a manner worse than a wave,"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ or to lead it to higher levels of spiritual life. In this latter case perception becomes brilliant (λαμπρή διάνοια)⁽¹⁰¹⁾ as it is fully and constantly enlightened by the mystical illumination of its union with the Triune God.

II.1.5. The interrelation of the soul's powers and functions

In his teaching St Nilus does not separately examine every section or area of the psychical world of the monk, because he does not attempt to write a manual of neptic psychology, but to present the life experiences of the monk in his attempt to reach perfection in the science of the desert. Since, however, we have so far, for methodological reasons, presented separately the psychological world of man in the context of the monastic way of life, we shall attempt, in what follows to provide a general account of the totality of the human psychology of a monk in order to clarify the

interrelation of the psychic powers and functions.

As a reality, the soul is certainly wider than the functions and powers of its parts. Viewed as a totality it is characterized as a "dwelling place" (δόμος),(102) or as a "house" (οἶκος).(103) Whenever St Nilus analyses or describes life experiences, he distinguishes the particular functions from the totality of the soul.(104)

First of all he presents as intimate the relation between the "soul" and the "heart". The heart is regarded as the hidden treasury of the soul, "in which many iniquities take place, which are seen only by the sleepless eye".(105) The soul, then, enjoys benefit or damage in accordance with the degree of the purity of the heart.

The functions of the soul are revealed by the heart, since this latter is expressed by virtue of its overflow.(106) Our saint is in this case based on the biblical verse which stresses the revelation of the inner world of man by means of his acts.(107)

Besides, the strengthening and assistance of the Holy Spirit is expressed "in the gladness of the heart" (ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ καρδίας).(108) When a man becomes dispirited, then the Holy Spirit reappears "in the poverty of the heart" (ἐν ἀπορίᾳ καρδίας) to strengthen the soul from which he had departed for paedagogical reasons.(109)

Perception (διάνοια) too belongs to the soul and occupies an important position in it. St Nilus asks himself how the teaching of the sacred precepts can enter into one's perception if the soul is impure on account of evil thoughts which contaminate every place within it?(110) He hastens to add that the task of the soul's purification depends on the purity of the heart.(111)

Equally important with the perception is the mind (νοῦς) which occup-

ies a central place in the soul. This becomes particularly obvious from the phrase "person of the soul" (πρόσωπον ψυχῆς) which St Nilus attributes to it. In fact it is "the purity of the mind" which is for St Nilus the person of the soul, while "the evil which is derived from indolence" constitutes "the back" (τὸν νῶτον), as it were, of the soul.⁽¹¹²⁾ However indirectly, it is the mind that leads to "the facility of the psychic movements". The virtues are obtained when the mind is the first actor and discovers the appropriate ways; e.g. the achievement of the purpose of continence and the progress in it is the result of the functions of the mind.⁽¹¹³⁾

The relation of the mind to perception is as fine as it is interesting. They do not differ ontologically; but there is a fine distinction between them, which becomes clearer when the (Greek) term "perception" (διάνοια) is more closely considered. The second component of this term in its original Greek rendering denotes the "mind" (τὸν νοῦν). In combination with the preposition διὰ this points to the fact that "perception" is a function of the "mind". Yet St Nilus often speaks of "perception" as "the inner head" (ἔνδοον κεφαλήν) which is capable of "pulling the soul to unseemly remembrances".⁽¹¹⁴⁾ In other words he attributes to it a leading function. This, however, does not apply to every case. There are many other cases where the functional superiority of the mind in contrast to perception is clearly stressed. Our saintly author does not omit to characterize the mind as "a general inside the perception" (στρατηγὸν ἔνδοον τῆς διανοίας),⁽¹¹⁵⁾ or as "a king" (βασιλέα) whose perception is the doorkeeper of the senses.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ This interchange of the primary role in the sphere of cognition between perception and mind shows that there is certainly a fine - however invisible this may be - difference between mind and perception in the specific cases of the cognitive functions of the

soul, which is simply located in the possibility of this interchange.

Another distinction between mind and perception is specified by their relations with the "hegemonic principle of the soul". Here too we observe interchanges as above. Perception is often identified with man's hegemonic principle and as the place where God condescends to dwell.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Yet the mind too - especially the mind which puts on Christ and becomes Christ's mind - is identified with "the purified hegemonic principle" (τὸ κεκαθαρμένον ἡγεμονικόν); but in any case the mind seems to be the hegemonic instrument of the soul *par excellence*. This is why whoever has put on Christ as a mind "is capable of a brilliant cognition and of an elevated and brilliant manner of life" (διανοεῖται λαμπρῶς καὶ ὑψηλῶς καὶ λαμπρῶς πολιτεύεται).⁽¹¹⁸⁾

The modest schematic presentation of the relation of the various psychic functions which we have described above could be perhaps better presented by means of three concentric circles, the widest of which is the soul and which is followed inside it by the mind and last by the perception. This is a *grosso modo* coordination of these psychic realities, since the material provided by St Nilus does not allow for any greater elaboration.

Finally as regards the heart one could place it in the space of the circle allotted to the soul, but it should also have some relation to the perception. The texts show that the perception has the capacity to change the quality of the thoughts which enter into the heart. The perception can also cleanse the heart from the impure thoughts and to secure for it the bridal garment of innocence.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Thus perception and heart, as it was previously stressed, have a special relation. The study of this relation is precisely a study of the neptic experience, since the basic problem of the

fighter of the desert is his psychic purification from evil thoughts and generally the damaging conceptions and images.

The examination of the neptic psychology of St Nilus seems to lead to the conclusion that he gives greater initiative to the "mind" and the "perception" in the struggle for spiritual progress, while he attributes to the "soul" and the "heart" a character which is more or less passive. However this is no firm conclusion, since the comprehensive character of the soul and the undivided unity and "cooperation" of all the powers of the psychic functions and operations are indisputable presuppositions.

II.2. The "ontology" of passions

II.2.1. The Devil

St Nilus, being an authentic fighter of the desert, knows perfectly well the role of the devil in the whole procedure of the spiritual training of the desert.⁽¹²⁰⁾ According to him the authentic men of the desert are those who have, on account of their experience of the demons,⁽¹²¹⁾ come to know fairly well both the devil "and his wise devices;"⁽¹²²⁾ Thus they have the capacity not only to confront him successfully, but also to lead others "to win over him without much pain."⁽¹²³⁾

St Nilus, using as his guide his experience of his struggles against the devil, provides through his works an analysis of the devil's manner of existence, as well as of the method of his activity and of how he can be successfully countered. Through his clear presentation of the devil and his explicit and wise directions, he leads to the assumption that the experience of "the most pious men "⁽¹²⁴⁾ became his experience as well, and as such

was proved to be as a criterion of neptic life, i.e. certainty of sanctity.

St Nilus's significant theses concerning the devil are: a) that not only he exists but that he possesses a great power, and b) that this power of his is not an ontological necessity, but a condescension on the part of God. In this way on the one hand he clarifies the danger to which the young monk is exposed in his spiritual life, and on the other hand he excludes the projection of censures concerning dualism, or two kingdoms of good and evil, which were nothing but constructions and tales of the Gnostic epoch.

(a) The Devil's power "by permission"

The devil is a "most cruel master" (ὀμώτατος δεσπότης), who subdues man to his tyranny with a special hatred.⁽¹²⁵⁾ He is "wicked" (ἀλιτήριος) and "man-hating enemy" (μισάνθρωπος ἐχθρός),⁽¹²⁶⁾ who is envious of the monk's struggle for virtue,⁽¹²⁷⁾ and is, therefore, waging full war against him.⁽¹²⁸⁾ Indeed St Nilus points out, in his comments on the devil's preference for monks, that the devil "is not as much interested in the affairs of the world as he is in those who have chosen the lonely and quiet life, always preparing and sharpening the double edged knife, as it were, of the thousands of temptations which occur every hour."⁽¹²⁹⁾

Besides being a man-hating enemy, the devil is also a "thief", who attacks the monk in order to steal "from his greatest possessions" (ἐκ τῶν κρειττόνων) and to spoil him.⁽¹³⁰⁾ The devil is the thief of the monk's communion with God.

From the point of view of fighting competence the devil has enrolled

the demons to his service.⁽¹³¹⁾ The demons are the "generals of the pleasures" (στρατηγοὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν),⁽¹³²⁾ ordered by Satan to fight by means of a thousand methods the fighter of the desert.

The demons are "soul-corrupting" (ψυχοφθόροι)⁽¹³³⁾ fighters of the monk's spiritual battle. Their power is seen in the qualifications which are attributed to them by St Nilus. They are "of many blemishes" (πολύσπιλοι) and "cunning" (δόλιοι),⁽¹³⁴⁾ and, indeed, "many-faced" (πολύμορφοι).⁽¹³⁵⁾ Every demon is "a creator and painter of evil" (δημιουργὸς καὶ ζωγράφος τῆς κακίας),⁽¹³⁶⁾ with the exclusive task of crushing the monk's resistance. He has the capacity "to construct many falsehoods" (τεκταίνει πολλὰς ψευδέτητας),⁽¹³⁷⁾ i.e. to fight the monk from many sides simultaneously. His dangerous presence is specified as being like that of a "lion" (λέων) or a "poisonous snake" (ἀσπίς).⁽¹³⁸⁾

The demon is the "fierce and shameless enemy" (δεινὸς καὶ ἀναίσχυντος ἐχθρὸς),⁽¹³⁹⁾ who trembles "before the divine words and prayer".⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ He is the "impure" (ἀκάθαρτος)⁽¹⁴¹⁾ opponent of the monk, who has the capacity to be present only where the good is absent, since he is the faithful servant of evil.

The refutation of the idolatrous dualism which identifies the powers of good and evil is advanced by St Nilus in his account of the conditions under which the devil and his generals, the demons, put to effect their hateful plans against mankind.

Essentially, however, the existence of demons in the life of a monk as opposing powers is regarded by St Nilus as greatest beneficence due to God's paedagogy.

According to St Nilus the "sharpness" of the horse "falters", where there is no competition and similar is the case of an athlete whose

strength remains hidden as long as there is no competitor. Even gold has to be tested in order to be established to be such. Something similar applies to all the saints, as, for instance, the cases of Job, or Joseph, demonstrate.(142)

The monk too is tested as a sort of spiritual athlete by means of his "martyrdom" of asceticism. This asceticism is a sort of mental martyrdom, the experiencing of which helps the monk to advance in the spiritual life of the desert. In fact this martyrdom of temptations which finds its cause in the devil's activity, is the criterion of the monk's spiritual progress. "If Satan had not been around tempting and distressing us, it would not be obvious who among us is incompetent and indolent."(143)

On the other hand the devil's machinations are proved to be "in vain" (φορούδη),(144) since the Grace of God does not abandon the fighter monk even when it permits the devil's interference in his life.(145) In this case God's paedagogy is such that it does not let the monk become overconfident about his achievements. Thus as soon as the grace of the Holy Spirit ^econsols his heart it departs from the monk in order to let him fight with his own powers against the devil. The "joy" of the visitation of the Spirit is turned into "bitterness" and "anguish" on account of the temptations.(146) God sends his Spirit to strengthen the monk's heart, quenching, as it were, his thirst by partaking of Him, so that he may return to the furnace of temptations and fight the battle which is assigned to him.(147)

It is clear, then, that the devil's operation is not wholly autonomous, because it also depends on God's purposeful tolerance. This is indeed the case of a "special training" (διαγυμνασία)(146), set out by "God acting as a trainer" (τοῦ ἀγωνοθέτου Θεοῦ) for the neptic athlete. It is a supreme act of divine paedagogy which accompanies the spiritual contestant

till "his last breath"⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ and which constantly demonstrates the richness of the divine grace.

The devil's ultimate subjection to God is first revealed in the temptation of the protoplasts. Subsequent biblical accounts of spiritual contests and martyrdom help one to clarify the devil's machinations and God's toleration of them for the spiritual benefit of the devil's contestant. The most characteristic, perhaps, dialogue between God and the devil concerning this matter is found in the opening verses of the book of Job. Here the devil appears to be outraged as he suggests through his question that Job "does not fear God for nothing",⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ and thus makes God concede to Job's subjection to the devil's temptation. "Behold, all that he (Job) has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand".⁽¹⁵¹⁾ This concession of the Lord to the devil is a matter of constant experience in the life of a monk. The devil has the concession to sit "impertinently" (ἀναιδῶς) on the human perception, "to drag the soul to the arena of sin" and thus to set the scene for the monk's spiritual contests. It is necessary for the spiritual contestants, says St Nilus, "to engage in spiritual boxing and wrestling, without succumbing to or compromising with the enemy" (ἀναγκαῖον πυκτεύειν καὶ μάχεσθαι, μὴ συγκατατιθεμένους, μηδὲ συνδιάζοντας).⁽¹⁵²⁾ Otherwise the contestant falls into sin and thereby willfully yields to the devil's temptation. Without such a willful yielding to temptation on the part of the monk, the devil is unable to "touch him" because he is explicitly ordered by God not to do so (μὴ ἄψη).

(b) The demonic deceits

The devil's temptation provokes man to react. This reaction can be positive, i.e. a yielding to sin, or it can be negative, i.e. a rejection of the demonic suggestions.

When a monk responds affirmatively to the devil, then his subjection to him is the product "of his own decision" (ιδίου θελήματος).(153) Ultimately it is "by his own will" that man is either subjected to or emancipated from the devil.(154)

The initial concession to Satan's suggestion incurs the laying on of the foundation, as it were, of the subjection or enslavement to him. This subjection, however, takes place "in due course" (έν καιρῷ προσήκοντι).(155) In this case the monk who willfully subjects himself to the devil resembles the traveller who abandons "Jerusalem", i.e. the blessed life, and walks towards Jericho. On his way to Jericho he falls victim to the "soulcorrupting demons" (ψυχοφθόροι δαίμονες) who are the most senseless and unhesitating "robbers".(156) This monk is the "indolent" one, who neglects prayer and the praises of God.(157)

The powerlessness, indolence and indifference of this monk become the ammunition of the robber-devil, since "his food and protection are our sins, by means of which he slaughters us and causes our perdition.(158) In the last analysis it is the monk himself who offers the weapons of his defeat to his enemy the devil. The demon, or demons, ordained for the particular monk, "have the habit of causing greater trouble for and prolonging their presence in" (πλέον ὀχλεῖν καὶ παραμένειν εἰώθασι) him who "was paralysed" in the battle.(159)

On the other hand, it is true that the devil is attracted by the

contestants of the desert. As St Nilus says, the demons "are very envious of prudence" (ἄγαν φθονοῦσιν.. σωφροσύνην),(160) of "fasting" (νηστείαν)(161) and are hateful of virginity.(162) They study how to catch the virtuous and Godloving soul.(163) The greater the advance of the contestant, the fiercest the attacks of the demons,(164) who, seeing the prize which the Lord is preparing for his faithful, become enraged with envy and invent "evil passions" (φασὶν ἄλλα πάθη).(165)

The artistry of the demons consists in their ability to invent a multitude of passions in order to exhaust the fighting monk by throwing him into despair. The testing of spiritual character and strength of a monk passes through the furnace of sorrows, since "the fighter must suffer many sorrows by the activity of the demons and be tested" (χρὴ τὸν ἀγωνιζόμενον πολλὰ θλιβῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ δοκιμασθῆναι).(166)

The demon's attempt is often accompanied by supernatural results. Quite notable is the case in which the demons can enter into the human body and cause organic exhaustion or even collapse, with symptoms of paralysis, in spite of the absence of an organic cause.(167) These symptoms aim at the emergence of indolence or carelessness in the soul of the contestant.

More particularly, however, the devil's technique is aimed at the discouragement of the contestant by means of arousing the demands of the senses. His "sword", as it were, is the "evil remembrance, or the secular affairs or the practical sin, or the members of the body", which "he uses as weapons in order to slaughter the soul, by alluring it by means of foul thinking (τῷ λογισμῷ). (168)

It is possible, however, for the demon to direct his attacks on the virtuous and neptic monks(169), exploiting the challenge of despair which

is based on the unexplainable cause of specific temptations. Though not subjectively responsible, the monk often experiences temptations which disturb his peace and cause trouble on all kinds of fronts. Thus it often happens that the demon of fornication⁽¹⁷⁰⁾, or "spirit of fornication" (πνεῦμα πορνείας)⁽¹⁷¹⁾ or "the demon who promotes fornication" (ὁ μαστρωπὸς δαίμων)⁽¹⁷²⁾, attempts to introduce dirty thoughts into the mind of the contestant who lies either in a state of sleeplessness or sleep in order to procure the burning of sin through nocturnal polluting images.⁽¹⁷³⁾ "He introduces into the soul" the image of a beautiful woman or of "well-looking youth" prompting the mind to commit a sin⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ by accepting these thoughts and moving on to the commitment of the particular sin.

Then he irritates the "genital parts", not only during sleeping but also in the condition of alertness, even inside the church, "wounding the heart" through unacceptable thoughts⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ and causing a secretion even inside the house of God,⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ especially on "the occasion of holy feasts".⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ The aim of this methodical action of the demon is to cause anxiety and desperation in the monk's soul. He often achieves this by driving monks either to castration or to "the devil's captivity" through commitment of sin.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

Within this particular context of the tactics of satan to arouse desperation in the neptic contestant particular attention is paid by St Nilus on the sin of hopelessness,⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ which is derived from the demonic attacks and which takes the form of a contest with, or of questioning of, God. This is the condition into which a neglectful monk falls. Yet it is possible for the neptic contestant of the desert to overcome the demons by the grace of God and to meet the challenge of despair with the "trampling over demons". Having such a case in mind St Nilus writes to the fighter

monk the following: "when you have trampled over the demons they are afraid of you, who previously drove you to be afraid, because of the decision which the Lord has announced".⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Thus St Nilus encourages the neptic soldier of the desert by showing him that no demonic attack is invincible and unconquerable.

St Nilus' encouragement to the monks in the spiritual struggle against the devil has certain eschatological dimensions. Seeing in the perspective of the salvation which is achieved by the believers in Christ the demons both appear to be powerless and to be inescapably heading towards "an arduous loss" (ἀπώλεια χαλεπή).⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Their wages will be analogous to their works and they will receive the due punishment for their wickedness "by virtue of the just recompense of Christ." "That I will do to you according to your hatred and according to your zeal, because you have acted hatedly against the monks, and have pursued poor men whose heart had been opened in order to procure their death".⁽¹⁸²⁾

Such encouraging thoughts are employed by St Nilus as he advises his monks to be steadfast in their struggle. What he achieves is a sort of strengthening or "consolation of the heart" (παράκλησις καρδίας)⁽¹⁸³⁾ which is going through a wintry trial of demonic attacks.

II.2.2. The birth of passions

It is a basic principle of neptic thought, that the birth of passions is due to the existence of "materials which create the passions" (ποιητικῶν τῶν παθῶν ὑλῶν).⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ These materials are derived from "the monk's mingling (σύμφορσιν) with the outside world".⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ It is the monk's touch of, or relation, to the outer world which produces the raw material for

the creation of the passions.

The demon watches carefully to discover any tendency of the monk to be "mingled with the world". He often projects in the monk's mind "his daughters", i.e. the monk's "foul remembrances", which arouse him and "strongly beg him to yield to the ignominious, enraged and hideous work" (λίαν παρακαλοῦν καμφοῦναι πρὸς τὸ ἄτιμον καὶ λυττώδες καὶ ἐπάρατον ἔργον) (186) of the commitment of sin. How crucial this demonic attack is is shown by the multitude of the malevolent conceptions which the demon introduces into the monk's mind and which "resemble the fecundity of rabbits".(187) The "evil reminiscence" (τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνθύμημα), which is introduced into the soul, "gives birth to many other thoughts (λογισμοῦς), each one of them being changed and transformed into another".(188)

If the monk succumbs to the demon's thoughts, then, he is subdued to the demonic technique or procedure for the acquisition of passions and subjection to sin. "The demonic thoughts are sometimes hiding inside us and sometimes come out on to the things outside us, prompting us to commit sin through deeds".(189) St Nilus never fails to underline the ironic disposition of the demon. He speaks of him in terms of "a poisonous snake which intrudes with the pretext of great quietness, and which applies its bites as soon as it gains control of the situation. Thus he derides us inside our hearts by congratulating himself for his successes".(190)

Analysing further the process of the birth and growth of passions, as described in the works of St Nilus, we observe the following:

As St Nilus assures us the basic presupposition for *yielding* to sin is the absence of God from a human being, owed to the latter's attitude. The person who "becomes forgetful of God" (ἐπιλανθάνεται τοῦ Θεοῦ)

inevitably decides for sin.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ The absence of God from the thought of a neptic is due to his being negligent of the words of Christ and of the pursuit of virtue.⁽¹⁹²⁾

Departing from God, the monk is alienated in his soul in a way that "he becomes nervous with undertaking the good, while he desires what is fatal".⁽¹⁹³⁾ St Nilus is uncompromising at this point. The monk should be constantly vigilant, so that a "foul thought" (φασύλη ἔννοια) may not enter into his mind. This could only mean the victory of the enemy.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Rather he should be vigilant in order to destroy the head of the intelligent beast, i.e. "the first attack of evil" (τὴν πρώτην τοῦ κακοῦ προσβολήν),⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ with lofty fighting disposition, so that his mind may be preserved pure from foul conceptions.

If a monk is unable to respond to demonic attacks with vigilant promptness, he follows a procedure which is well known to the neptic fathers. Initially he concedes to "harmless satisfaction" (ἡδoς),⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ gained through contact with things which are neutral in themselves. This is what St Nilus calls carelessness or indifference (ὀλιγωρίαν) which leads to habitude.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ As an example of this he mentions the habit of poisonous drugs.⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ The daily reception of a small dose makes the body to acquire the habit of the drug as something indispensable. In the same way the subjection to various and simingly harmless things leads to the creation of passions.⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ This is why St Nilus, like all the neptic fathers, never makes a distinction between "smaller" and "greater" sins, because the commitment of the former necessarily incurs the commitment of the latter and vice versa.⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Guile begets lawlessness⁽²⁰¹⁾ and it is well known that guile often appears as innocent (ἀθῶον) and harmless satisfaction (ἡδoς) which becomes pure "hedonism" (ἡδονή).⁽²⁰²⁾ On the other hand the taste

of hedonism is the taste of sin, the appropriation of passion. Thus the chain of procedure towards the passions begins with the unsuspected pretext⁽²⁰³⁾ of a passion, the chaff.⁽²⁰⁴⁾ The monk who lies in a state of slothfulness⁽²⁰⁵⁾ and ostentation⁽²⁰⁶⁾ is naturally in a state of mind characterized by negligence,⁽²⁰⁷⁾ i.e. by forgetfulness of God.⁽²⁰⁸⁾ This negligence easily permits the initial acceptance of a harmless thought, which, however, becomes "in due course"⁽²⁰⁹⁾ an impassioned thought.⁽²¹⁰⁾ In this case it is memory that takes the lead,⁽²¹¹⁾ introducing images and imaginations of the past into the mind, i.e. related conditions of sin, like those which a monk experiences in any given moment through imagination and desire.⁽²¹²⁾ On the other hand the coordination of impassioned thought and old images, consistently leads to the acceptance of evil desire,⁽²¹³⁾ which begets pleasure and, consequently, the actual consent,⁽²¹⁴⁾ since the person who is in this condition has passed the limit of the "harmless satisfaction" and fallen into the dizziness of hedonism. The final outcome of this impassioned process is the commitment of sin.⁽²¹⁵⁾

Now the commitment of sin is not simply a temporally isolated act, which has taken place on a certain occasion because of the monk's negligence and which can be easily rectified. Unless the monk returns to the neglected or forgotten God, he is running the risk of turning the commitment of sin into a mere habit (συνήθεια) and, subsequently, into an indispensable or unavoidable one (ἔξις), which takes the concrete form of "nature" (φύσις). In this case it is easy for sin to become "natural" to the life of a monk (φύσιν μεταβαλεῖν χαλεπόν).⁽²¹⁶⁾

St Nilus speaks of this "natural condition of sin" in terms of "languidness" (χαλύνωσις).⁽²¹⁷⁾ It is a condition which makes the mind

dark, fleshly and incapable of seeing God⁽²¹⁸⁾ and the soul, unable to "taste",⁽²¹⁹⁾ i.e. to distinguish between virtue and sin. This last fact causes the special problem of man's relation to the world. Thus, while the pious finds in every event and detail of his life the occasion to praise God, the sinner, "who lives in languidness" (ὁ χούνωσ πορευόμενος),⁽²²⁰⁾ subdues everything to the mastery of sin.⁽²²¹⁾

The monk who has fallen into such a condition is spiritually illiterate, since he lives his style of life jauntily, being totally unaware of the damage which is done to him.⁽²²²⁾ The truth is, however, that "the greater the taxes are, which he has to pay to the sensible things on account of his defeated senses",⁽²²³⁾ the greater also will be the damage which is done to him through his subjection to the tyranny of the devil,⁽²²⁴⁾ including the ultimate consequence of death.

CHAPTER III: THE METHOD OF THE MASTERS OF THE DESERT

III.1. The sign-posts of the road of the ascetical life

According to St Nilus's teaching on this particular subject the masters of the desert are those neptic fathers, who, following the manner of life which strives to achieve union with God, have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to reach the higher levels of virtue and, as a result, to come to care not only about the salvation of their souls and the fulfilment of their desire for union with God, but also about other monks, leading them in the fulfilment of their aspirations.⁽¹⁾

The method followed by these masters⁽²⁾ is described as "scientific" (ἐπιστημονική), because it is the fruit of rules of life which have come to acquire an unalterable status throughout the ages. This method, which constitutes the quintessence, as it were, of monasticism, was tried and vindicated for many centuries, before it was handed on to the students of the desert as a living and unadulterated legacy of those masters who had applied it authentically. The neptic fathers, as the professors of the desert, functioned in the name of this tradition, indeed becoming themselves identified with it, since their life exhibited all the characteristics of the neptic tradition.

The possibility of a safe passage into the ascetical paths of the desert is rooted in the foundation of the Scriptures, of both the Old and the New Testaments, as well as in the lives of the Saints who became prototypes for imitation by monks and in whose lives the teaching of the Scriptures is eloquently put forth as the source of the secrets of eternal life.

III.1.1. The Scriptures

For St Nilus the Scriptures are "sacred" (σεπταί)⁽³⁾ and "God-inspired" (θεόπνευσται).⁽⁴⁾ Indeed they are considered to have been taught by the Holy Spirit.⁽⁵⁾ St Nilus does not discriminate among the Scriptures, nor does he have any special preferences for any of them. This is obvious from the plethora of his Scriptural references which come from all the books of the Old and the New Testaments. When he refers to the Scriptures, he uses the terms "Scripture" (Γραφή)⁽⁶⁾, "God-inspired Scripture" (θεόπνευστος Γραφή)⁽⁷⁾, "Divine Word" (θεῖος λόγος)⁽⁸⁾, "Divine perceptions" (θεῖα νοήματα)⁽⁹⁾, "Teaching of the Holy Spirit" (διδασκαλία ἁγίου Πνεύματος)⁽¹⁰⁾, "Words of the Holy Spirit" (λόγια ἁγίου Πνεύματος)⁽¹¹⁾, or "Holy Scripture" (ἁγία Γραφή).⁽¹²⁾

It is only at two places in the writings of St Nilus that a distinction is made between the Old and the New Testaments, which, however, is not axiological, but theological.⁽¹³⁾ In another place he speaks of Deuteronomy as the type of the Second Law which is fulfilled in the Gospel of Christ. Thus he regards the Gospel as the Second Law⁽¹⁴⁾ which is not written on tablets of stone but on the human heart.⁽¹⁵⁾

The basic contribution of the Scriptures to the spiritual life of the "violator of the Kingdom of heaven" is that in them "there lies hidden the kingdom of heaven, which is revealed to those who are waiting for it.." (ἐγκέκρυπται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀποκαλύπτεται δὲ τοῖς προσκαρτεροῦσι..).⁽¹⁶⁾ Besides, the mystery and the uniqueness of the Scriptures consist in their capability, founded upon the fact that they are God-inspired, to be offered to the fighter of the desert to a measure

corresponding to his quality and condition at the time of his reading them. "For in the Divine Word there is a quality for every intel gible eating; to those regenerated from water and Spirit it becomes pure milk and to those who are sick it is like vegetable, whereas to those who have their senses trained in discrimination the word offers a different food; indeed it becomes all things to all, so that human beings may be saved and become worthy to receive eternal life".⁽¹⁷⁾ This proximity of the Scriptures to the quality of the spiritual life is expressed by means of the following two iconic divices.

Initially it is expressed as "sweet challenge" (γλυκεῖα πρόκλησις). Here St Nilus has in mind the verse from the Proverbs, which stresses this sweetness: "Eat honey, my Son, for honey is good, so that your pharynx might be sweetened".⁽¹⁸⁾ Analysing this verse, our Saint points out that the sacred author has in mind the reading of the Scriptures.⁽¹⁹⁾ At the same time he notes that the honey is to be found in the mind of the letter, i.e. in the deeper sense of the verse, while its literary expression constitutes the wax, as it were, which contains the honey.⁽²⁰⁾

On the other hand the reading and understanding of the Scriptures by those progressed in the spiritual life is likened to the "eating of meat" (κρεοφαγία), what St Nilus calls "another kind of food" (ἑτέρα τροφή).⁽²¹⁾ The text which contains this image also contains St Nilus's explanation that "a sort of meat eating are truly the divine conceptions" (κρεοφαγία ὄντως ἐστὶ τὰ θεῖα νοήματα).⁽²²⁾ The partaking of solid food, which is a prerogative of those who embody the Scriptures in their lives, is understood by the neptics metaphorically as "meat eating".

However, the significance of the Scriptures for the spiritual life is also apparent from the reaction and hostility of the devil against the Bible reader. It is part of the strategy of this enemy to try patiently and steadily

"by the intrusion of desires" (ὑποτίθεται διὰ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν) to persuade the spiritual athlete that he has nothing to gain from the reading of the Scriptures. His objective is to weaken the disposition of study and "to uproot and destroy every right conception through excessive negligence and forgetfulness of the divine commandments" (ὅπως τῇ πολλῇ ἀμελείᾳ καὶ τῇ λήθῃ τῶν θείων προσταγμάτων ἐξορύξῃ σου καὶ ἀμαλδύνη πᾶν δεξιὸν νόημα).(23) The reaction of the neptic fighter to these tactics of the devil is the ceaseless reading and the study of the Scriptures so that "he might be led to what is best".(24)

If the spiritual athlete gives in to the machinations of the devil, then he loses the ability of objective discrimination between a good act and the choice of evil. In this case he obtains a stony heart,(25) and becomes an eternal slave of satan, acquiring a distorted view of the age to come.(26)

Other dangers mentioned by St Nilus as threatening the spiritual fighter, include the influence exerted on his mind by attractive teachings, which are dressed up in sophistic elements and are invented by the dark perplexities of the human intellect; these damage the vision of the soul(27) and lead it astray from the conceptions of the Scriptures. The same is the case with the athlete of the desert whose sympathy for the Scriptures never reaches the level of act but always remains on the level of mere theoretical admiration.(28) As previously, so in these cases St Nilus speaks of the athlete who fails to follow the Scriptures as an "irrational beast" (κτῆνος ἄλόγιστον).(29)

St Nilus' advice to the athletes of the desert is "that they should attach their will to the study of the divine words with an unquechable will" (τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ λογίων προσανέχειν ἀκορέστως τῇ γνώμῃ)(30) as if they are their food and drink which are necessary for

their life. Indeed for St Nilus no one "should ever rest from the study of the Scriptures";⁽³¹⁾ rather, the sacred labour of the constant study of the Scriptures is to everyone's interest, because one will, in this way, be able to uphold the criterion of the authentic and saving knowledge,⁽³²⁾ which does not permit evil thoughts (φάλλους λογισμούς) to enter one's mind⁽³³⁾ but enables one to progress from spiritual weakness (καχεξία) to well-doing (ἀγαθοεργία).⁽³⁴⁾ At the same time one is enabled to carry out successfully and wisely every pastoral responsibility with which one may have been entrusted.⁽³⁵⁾

In St Nilus's thought, as this is expressed in his own writings, the importance of the Scriptures goes beyond the boundaries of a spiritual necessity for the achievement of a certain desirable purpose and is linked with the question concerning life and death. Without the application in life of the precepts of the Scriptures, whatever labour this might incur, the neptic athlete of the desert cannot fulfil his spiritual perfection which constitutes his salvation.

III.1.2. The Saints

St Nilus's attitude toward the saints is one of reverence and admiration. He sees them as those spiritual athletes who arrived at the greatest degrees of perfection through their personal labour and the rich gift and support of the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting that St Nilus concentrates on the "voice" (φωνή) of the saints in describing their spiritual power. "The voice of the saints has put an end to wars, has cast out demons, has made the elements stand still; as in the case of Joshua son of Nun who cried: Stand still, oh sun and moon,

and so they did straight away; or as in the case of Moses who made the sea go away and return; or as in the case of the three youth who turned the flame into dew through hymns and praises".⁽³⁶⁾

This power of the saints does not only demonstrate their acceptance and approval by the Divine Grace. This is not merely the case of an external charismatic benefit. The saints possess something more; a "sonship in Christ"! They are Christ's sons. As St Nilus puts it in his exegesis of Isaiah's statement "Behold I and my children":⁽³⁷⁾ "the Saviour is related to the saints as to children".⁽³⁸⁾ This is because the saints were able to become types of Christ by what they achieved through their spiritual struggles and what they offered to others through their ministry. They became, as it were, Christ's relatives with respect to his perfection.⁽³⁹⁾ This is the meaning of the "sonship in Christ".

It is precisely this adoption of the saints by grace that necessitates the respect of the pleroma of the Church towards them. St Nilus defends this point on the basis of two biblical verses. Initially he examines the particular verse from the Book of Genesis, where God holding a dialogue with Abraham and recognizing the latter's righteousness, gives him the promise that he will bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This verse is combined with the Thirtieth Psalm where the Psalmist asks for "lips of guile, speaking of lawlessness in pride and contempt against the righteous, to become dumb".⁽⁴¹⁾ The conclusion which St Nilus draws from this combination is, "that those who praise the righteous man are blessed by God and enjoy, on this account, a thousand goods, whereas those who dare to speak insolently will fall into irreversible evils".⁽⁴²⁾ Behind the respect for sanctity there lies the respect for the source and power of it, the Holy Spirit and the opposite is also the case; the rejection of sanctity is ultimately the

rejection of the Holy Spirit, i.e. that blasphemy which, according to Christ's warning, has no forgiveness but leads to death. Thus to insult a saint is to insult God, for, as St Nilus puts it, the former is transferred to the latter (ἐπὶ τὸν Θεὸν ἀνάγεται).⁽⁴³⁾ The tragedy of the person who insults the saints is his/her ignorance of the fact "that it is utterly horrible to dare to raise a hand against God".⁽⁴⁴⁾

III.1.3. The holy Icons

St Nilus extends his discourse concerning the honour due to the saints by underlining the honorary character of the iconographic representation of the saints. He does this in texts of his which are directly related to this topic; as in his Epistle LXI to the Prefect Olympiodorus⁽⁴⁵⁾ and in his Epistle LXII to the Silentarius Heliodorus,⁽⁴⁶⁾ both of which belong to Book IV of the Epistles. It is a fact that these Epistles were used by both iconophiles and iconoclasts in the eighth century iconoclastic dispute.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Yet their incorporation into the Minutes of the Seventh Ecumenical Council confirmed their correct meaning.⁽⁴⁸⁾

In his discussion on the veneration of honour of the icons of the saints St Nilus points out their importance for pastoral work on the grounds that they obviously strengthen the spiritual consciousness of the faithful. He also points out the miraculous power of the icons which springs not out of themselves but out of the saints whom they depict and who are spiritual guides to the faithful. As an example of this miraculous power of icons we may mention St Nilus's story of St Plato's miraculous intervention on a certain dramatic occasion.⁽⁴⁹⁾ A certain old man, who was living as an ascetic with his son, is attacked by a barbarian tribe who take them captives. The old

man manages to escape on which occasion he prays to the holy martyr St Plato kissing his icon. As a result of this the Saint intervenes riding on a horse and liberates the old man's son.(50)

The paedagogical character of the holy icons is particularly revealed in the wisdom which they reflect. The holy icons function like the holy Scriptures; "so that those who are ignorant of letters and unable to read the Scriptures they might, through the vision of the painting, acquire a memory of the good deeds of those who rendered genuine service to the true God".(51) The holy icons, then, are hints for the need of imitating the prototypes of the spiritual fighters, since the faithful have the obligation to become imitators of the holy life of these prototypes. The icons arouse in them the appetite for the glorious and ever memorable achievements through which those depicted in them exchanged the earthly for the heavenly, preferring what is not visible to what is visible.(52)

III.1.4. The Lives of the Saints

The holy icons, as spiritual means facilitating the imitation of the saints by the faithful, become important factors of the ontological renewal of the human person. The holy icons transmit to the faithful, according to the latter's measure of faith and fighting mentality the grace of the saints and are strengthened in their spiritual struggle. This is because "they are strengthened by becoming imitators of the saints in their lives; they put out the fire of sin by their words; they render dry the sources of pleasures; they tame the anger and expel the desire; they unnerve vain glory; they make the burning love for money to wither; they redeem from depression and sorrow and put deep calmness into the troubled souls".(53)

The challenge of the holy icons consisting in the presentation of the saints who are depicted in them as models of imitation, leads the faithful to the study of the lives of the Saints. These lives are not only human constructions but also the construction of the Holy Spirit; "so that each one of those who are involved with pursuing good conduct might be brought to the truth from similar models".⁽⁵⁴⁾

On the other hand *the* "divinely inspired" character of the Lives of the Saints constitutes a guarantee of spiritual integrity. The monk who strives to become "a friend of Christ, has the friends of Christ as his authentic prototype", i.e. the saints.⁽⁵⁵⁾ By studying their Lives, the monk approaches Christ himself. This is why St Nilus' advice to the monks, and to the faithful in general, has often a practical character. "Those who love God" "let them follow the traces of the Lives of the Saints".⁽⁵⁶⁾ But the monk should read especially the Lives of the Saints and the "Accounts of Martyrdoms".⁽⁵⁷⁾ The Lives of the Saints and especially the Accounts of their Martyrdoms function like "candles" (λύχνοι), destined to point the way back to the right direction to "those who have gone astray" (τοὺς λανθάνοντας)⁽⁵⁸⁾ within the darkness of sin. Those who actually become "consumed by zeal and wonder for them",⁽⁵⁹⁾ acquire the possibility to be taught the angelic manner of life and to live on earth as if they were in heaven.⁽⁶⁰⁾

St Nilus never fails to stress, that the recognition and study of the Lives of the Saints is not simply theoretical and unconditional. In his relevant admonitions this study is always combined with the "liturgical" life and especially with the spiritual duties of the monk. Because the monk who does not live according to the prototypes of the angelic life is not affected by what he studies. Typical here are the examples of the indolent monk,

who is unable to concentrate on his study, but keeps turning the pages when he is reading⁽⁶¹⁾, and of the gluttonous monk who simply mentions the martyrs in contrast to the encrute monk who imitates them.⁽⁶²⁾ This fact demonstrates the meaning of putting ⁱⁿ to practice the study of the Lives of the Saints. The Lives of the Saints are not formal and stereotyped writings. They are a code of life which the monk has a duty to appropriate in his own life and to turn it into a means of holiness.

Since this is the case, it is the pastor first who has a duty "to put forth his own life as an image of virtue to the learners, so that those who are transferred there might not distort the beauty of virtue by the uncomeliness of his mistake".⁽⁶³⁾ This is the difficulty of his office: that he leads not only monks but also lay people and that he acts as a monk and especially as head of monks.

On the other hand the monk also should likewise put forth his own life in the world as an image of virtue, as an inspired imitator of the Lives of the Saints. Because according to the principles of the monastic life the monk bears always and everywhere the mortification of Christ in his body. Thus St Nilus reminds his monks: "you have died with Christ ... you have been mortified for the world", and therefore "you have been raised up so that you may think the things which are above",⁽⁶⁴⁾ so that you, the monks, may be for the world "light and salt".⁽⁶⁵⁾ Besides, this struggle is not without a prize. The monk struggling to make his life a glorification for God, according to the prototypes of the Saints, exhibits precision of perfection and for this reason he is recompensed with triple payment: payment for his personal training, payment for the benefit he brought to his brothers "who are upheld by the same zeal" and payment for becoming a cause of benefit to those "who are estranged from godliness".⁽⁶⁶⁾

Finally, because generally "the divine laws want us to be types for other men, and to provide for all the unobstructed way to the irreproachable life",⁽⁶⁷⁾ the monks are obliged to be an image of sanctity and perfection of spiritual life.

According to the above, the rationality of sanctity is imbued by a fighting and aggressive spirit. It is constantly in motion and never *in statu*. The monk is taught by the Saints how to become a saint. He is constantly fighting to embody sanctity as a manner of life, which will bring him closer to God and will make him a new sign-post of the spiritual life. The burden of this heritage of the Saints strengthens the neptic character of the monastic self-consciousness.

III.2. The Desert

III.2.1. The life of dispossession

The basic meaning of the desert is certainly specified, in the first instance, by its external image, which consists of two elements: the loneliness and the destitution of the material mind. The monk appropriates externally in his life the loneliness of the desert in order to achieve with greater ease communion with God. He appropriates, however, within the framework of loneliness, the rejection of matter as well. Thus the monastic life is truly apostolic. And the monk, like every apostle of Christ, moves towards God "possessing nothing", from the things which belong to the material realm, and yet "possessing everything",⁽⁶⁸⁾ since he communicates with God.

a) The fleshly monk

The problematic understanding of creation begins with the monastic certainty, that "everything which does not contribute towards virtue is an unbecoming burden to the one who does it".⁽⁶⁹⁾ This axiomatic ascetical principle means, in other words, that the man, who chose as manner of his life his mortification and crucifixion with Christ, is not possible to pretend that the nails are painful, when he does not even feel the weight of the cross. In its essence creation is an obstacle in the monk's journey towards Christ and specifies the fleshly monk. A fleshly monk is one who ignores^e prayer,^Λ⁽⁷⁰⁾ who communicates with God not in the perspective of exclusivity, but with a feeling of doing something incidentally.⁽⁷¹⁾ Although he is basically orientated towards the acquisition of material things, he pretends that he is godly. In other words a fleshly monk is one who has chosen the death of the soul (by his attachment to material things), instead of the death of the sinful mind, which is strengthened and fed by the acquisition of material things.

The fleshly monk is a lover of money, because money is the most essential expression of matter. A lover of money is one who loves matter and love of money is the root of all evils.⁽⁷²⁾

The fleshly attitude of the monk specifies the antithetical stance towards the authentic ascetical manner of life. His basic need has been converted into an uncoⁿtrived luxury, and whereas his life ought to have been a refutation of vanity, it is instead developping into a guilty apology concerning duties.⁽⁷³⁾

The result is that self-consciousness is turned into confusion. Its screen is filled with idols made of matter and the soul is captivated by them, losing

its contact with the one and only truth, namely, God. In this case the fleshly monk falls into complete ignorance of God. However, ignorance of God means ignorance of resurrection. Departure from God has the inevitable consequence of delivering the fleshly monk into a condition of habitude, which is understood as a sort of "monthly uncleanness". Matter contaminates his habitude and the habitude is what forms his ethos.⁽⁷⁴⁾

The traumatic effect of all this on one's ethos is not an act which is completed in time. Ethos is traumatised and changed constantly, as the same psychological procedure is repeated, which is described by St Nilus on the basis of his ascetical experience: The habitude of the acquisition of money shapes the "money-loving" ethos, which creates the impulse for acquiring more and more money, i.e. matter. The possibility of possessions, however, is not a self-explained event. The monk may desire and seek after matter, but this does not mean that he can succeed in his endeavour. It happens many times that he simply remains only with the desire and the longing. In this case his fruitless endeavour causes wrath, anger and guilty reactions, because, what he considered to be worthy of acquisition (in spite of knowing in the depths of his innermost self that it is not necessarily in agreement with his manner of life) did not come to his possession and thus his existential clumsiness was not replenished by a material volume.

At the same time anger is a false and clumsy reaction to a failure of acquiring material things. And this happens because anger quickly surrenders its place to sadness, which, in turn, will be converted into sorrow for a failure of an existential kind, i.e. total or partial.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Essentially the whole problem of creation is connected with the schizophrenic condition of human rationality, which first appeared at the fall and continues to exist to an ever increasing degree in the passage of the

centuries.

St Nilus underlines both aspects. The irrationality of the fall is seen in Adam's choice. He does not choose the "friendly words of God and the enjoyment of his sayings", but the "roarings and beatings and brayings of vexing sounds by which the ears are bitten up".⁽⁷⁶⁾ Thus he loses the possibility of perfect dispossession and makes a start in seeking his food through labour and work.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Consequently, the human race acquired the habitude of creation as a manner of life and slipped away into the insecurity of the vanity of matter, i.e. into a relationship with misfortune.⁽⁷⁸⁾ St Nilus examines^ε_λ the weakness of consumerism, both as a symptom of monastic irregularity and also as a sickness of the lay people: If there is a certain category of people who ought to be described as "needy", these are certainly the very rich, exactly because they are subjected to the unquenchable passion of constant acquisition, i.e. they are captives to the need which they themselves create. They act because they have the need of matter, because they feel poor.⁽⁷⁹⁾ They are "enslaved" to the vanity of creation,⁽⁸⁰⁾ which is unseless,⁽⁸¹⁾ because it leads to the nihil.

Human life seems to last as much as one night. Whatever operates and exists within it is a dream. Every concrete reality, every material element is essentially un-hypostatic. It is a lie, because the truth is located in the fact that the world is passing away; matter is being lost; the dream is fading away. What, then, is the benefit which human beings gain by their struggle to acquire matter? The time will come when the condition of the enjoyment of matter will pass away, when the "night-mares" will be turned off, ceasing to produce sorrow and to create vanity. Then, what they considered to be important will appear to have been illusory.⁽⁸²⁾ On the day when the

dreams are turned off, they will realize that they did not eat, did not drink, did not become rich, did not gain any glory.

On that day those who were vigilant will rise up rejoicing, because they invested in their salvation by remaining alert. On the contrary the "possessors" will be filled with sorrow, as they will realize that nothing was preserved from what they laboured to gather. For St Nilus this is the same, as the case of a man who is dreaming, but realizes in the morning, that nothing remains to him from what he was dreaming about throughout the evening. The only thing that remains is non-sense or joy, according to one's past. Thus when the stage of this theatre of life is dismantled, on which man played his own role, as St Nilus hints, satisfaction and need cease to exist, and so do wealth and poverty, glory and humility. What remains is either rejoicing, or horror and fear.⁽⁸³⁾

On the opposite side of the needy rich we now find the rich needy. St Nilus calls rich those, who, not only do possess certain goods, but those who throw away even things of which are in needed,⁽⁸⁴⁾ since whatever is even slightly in excess of what constitutes sufficiency is regarded as avarice.⁽⁸⁵⁾ They are rich because they they are not subjected to any need; because they overcame the vanity of material secularism. In this way the seemingly poor are rich and the seemingly rich experience utter destitute, because they desire and cultivate a passion for the acquisition of things which they do not possess.

This distinction of St Nilus between true richness and true poverty does not make sense from the point of view of the logic of the secular person. It presupposes the logic of asceticism, which cannot be coordinated with the secular logic. This is due to the fact that whereas the ascetic has a taste of God and speaks out of this experience, the secular sage derives his spiritual

dynamism from creation alone independently of God! Essentially this is not the case of two straight lines which cut across each other, but, the case of two reversed parallel lines, which have no point of contact, since ignorance of God on the part of the world is a given premise.⁽⁸⁶⁾

b) Perfect dispossession

The type of the rich monk is drawn with great perceptiveness in the writings of St Nilus and it is quite clear that this drawing is the result of a rich and profound ascetic experience.

To begin with St Nilus makes a distinction between three kinds of dispossession, since he clarifies that "there has been one type of dispossession instituted from the beginning by the Creator and equally applicable to all, which is devoid of care and totally immaterial, and which was afterwards divided into several such by the opinions of men which were variously split according to the inclinations which they adopted towards certain things".⁽⁸⁷⁾ Initially the protoplasts experienced in Paradise a total form of dispossession, which is accorded senior status (πρεσβεΐα).⁽⁸⁸⁾ Examining God's command to Adam to eat only from the plants of the field, he points out that "the worthiness of the one who gave the command inhibits the curiosity of the investigation",⁽⁸⁹⁾ and at the same time he offers sparsity of ascetical thought and sacred logic. The command of God specified the quality and the dimensions of the dispossession in Paradise which was endowed with an ascetical depth. The diet, in other words, which God commanded, was far better, because it prohibited affability and pleasure of gluttony from exerting a bad influence on the intellect, or darkening rationality, discernment and sobriety.⁽⁹⁰⁾

After the fall of the protoplasts and their expulsion from Paradise, man passes to the condition of "middle dispossession" (μέση ἀκτημοσύνη). It is the condition in which man possesses what is necessary and nothing more. Everything moves on the level of necessity and of satisfying it, in accordance with "the second form of life" which God specifies for Adam.(91)

The gradual distortion of consciousness, due to its meeting with the postlapsarian material reality, led Adam to forget his postlapsarian lamentation. Thus the human race passed into the condition of the "material" (ἔνυλος) and "much-possessing" (πολυκτήμων) dispossession. The examination of the texts of St Nilus reveals, at first glance, the contradiction between the terms "much-possessing" (πολυκτήμων) "dispossession" (ἀκτημοσύνη), which, however, are combined by the author.(92) This contradiction is rather ironical in character. Or, perhaps, the dialectic of contradiction and the coordination of these terms is designed to emphasize the irrational dimension of "possession". Every "much-possessing" person is essentially "dispossessed", since according to St Nilus, "much-possessed" implies "a vain dream which is exposed as the day dawns".(93)

The process towards the "healing of the mind",⁽⁹⁴⁾ i.e. towards the formation and instruction of the perfect soul,⁽⁹⁵⁾ is directed from the life according to the flesh to the spiritual life.⁽⁹⁶⁾ St Nilus confesses that the struggle towards the perfect dispossession, which is a prerequisite of the perfect soul, requires brave souls and this is why those who seek to recover perfect dispossession are blessed.⁽⁹⁷⁾

In this case, what is basically required, is a change of mind in relation to material things. Every need of the body should be dealt with not in a materialistic perspective but for the present (ἐνεστωτικῶς).⁽⁹⁸⁾ The monk

is training to meet the needs of the moment, without any further perspective. He turns to earthly things to the extent that this is required by the need of the body at a specific moment. Yet, he immediately returns to his relation with God.⁽⁹⁹⁾ He appropriates, then, dispossession in humility and through virtue.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ He knows that attachment to material things gives birth to vain glory, which leads to the false thoughts of conceit, which, in their turn, intrude, like worms, into the treasury of the soul in order to eat away the gathered labours.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Thus the neptic fighter of the desert, going through the tempest of his struggle, throws away into the sea of dispossession all his material provisions⁽¹⁰²⁾ and strips himself of all cares of life, so that he may enter into the ring of the spiritual contests free from material necessities, like the ancient athletes, entertaining strong hopes for reaching the desired end.⁽¹⁰³⁾

On the other hand the necessity of stripping from material things is derived from the image of the opposing demon: he is naked from every care. How then can the monk confront him successfully?⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Principally the monk mortifies himself with respect to all that the shape of this world produces,⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ and, denying his own personal will and renouncing the world, he puts on the dispossessed Christ.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ At the same time he takes care in order to supply his garment to those who are in need, preferring to put on the reviling of the world, instead of his garment, and to consider every injustice done to him as his real property.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

This manner of life incurs the stripping of the mind from every care, since for him the provider and dispenser of material goods is Christ.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Stripped of cares the mind enters into the ring of the contests against the demon. As the ancient athletes were anointed with oil, so he anoints himself with the oil of "carelessness" (τὸ ἀμέριμνον), not giving any chances to

the demon to take possession of him. In accordance with the spirit of asceticism, alertness and nepsis consist in the monk's ability not to allow his adversary demon to throw any dust of sin on him, which would make the monk lose the smoothness of his soul, i.e. his "carelessness". This is really achieved by avoiding the cares of life, which function like dust, hardening the smoothness of the mind, which, being in this condition, becomes easy prey to the machinations of the devil.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

By carelessness, then, the monk is freed from the material domination of life and imitates Joseph, who, being free, was able to avoid the demonic challenge.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Certainly Moses' attitude, with its neptic dynamism, appears to be an act of holy madness. For the secular logician this is an incomprehensible madness, because Joseph despised nature and acted in a way which was both peculiar and against nature (παρὰ φύσιν). For the logician of the desert, however, Joseph's act is a witness to "God's knowledge" and to the wonder-working Grace of God. In this perspective, Joseph's attitude is not against nature but above nature. Joseph is the type of man who is truly free, who, through his act of sacred foolishness, inspires the monk in experiencing the true meaning of freedom.

Joseph's example shows that choosing^o between virtue and vice, good and evil, which is projected in a moralistic spirit, is a conventional act of freedom. True freedom begins, as a possibility, with the "taste of God", the "putting on of Christ", and proceeds to the God-loving "knowledge", which inspires confessions and appreciations which are also God-loving. Since the monk is in possession of this knowledge and appropriates it in his life consistently, he is freed from the relative powers of himself and imitates Joseph. In this spiritual condition he is a mature inhabitant of the desert. "A wild mule",⁽¹¹¹⁾ without limits and bounds, which laughs at the noisy

and activist life of the city; he does not have to face the revilings of the tax-collector and moves with free spirit to every direction. Thus he lives his freedom as a perfect (in every sense) dispossession and as a sojourning in a strange and temporary land.⁽¹¹²⁾

With this manner of life, the monk follows the life which befits his first dispossession, which was pursued by the saints.⁽¹¹³⁾ He approaches and appropriates the ultimate virtue, i.e. the perfect dispossession.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

These saints were those who, communicating with God ceaselessly, out of utterly godly desire, were raised to a point of transcendence which allowed them to be attached to things divine. In their ascent they had no material or spiritual obstacle, since everything was handed over to Christ the dispenser. Whenever the moment of bodily need arrived, they took care of it to an extent that the need itself specified and with every frugality, so that they could return to the taste of God; and all this they did because they considered "alienation from the experience of God" to be damaging and deprived of any sense of "profit or duty". They followed the sacred logic which commanded; "having comforted the necessity of need at the right time and having rid of the need of [labour for the body], which was useful yesterday but is not present today,⁽¹¹⁵⁾ they were able to concentrate on the care is spiritual things alone.

This stance of the monk concerning the needs of the body, allows him to reach the stage of perfect prayer,⁽¹¹⁶⁾ with uninhibited ascents, which is identified with the taste of the Triune God. In this condition the neptic athlete is able to observe ecstatically the overturning of the rules of nature, since they no longer function with dire necessity in his particular case, but on the basis of a plan of divine providence, which ceaselessly accompanies his spiritual endeavour.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

Affirming that "the predicament of the hope which rests on God is a secure outcome" (ἡ τῆς ἐπὶ Θεὸν ἐλπίδος [ἀνάθεσις] ἀσφαλῆς ἐστὶν ἐκβασίς), and that every human agony is vain, St Nilus places a great emphasis on the idea, according to which nature "operates outside the purpose of what is regarded as obvious" (ἐκτὸς τοῦ σκοποῦ τοῖς δοκοῦσι εὐλόγοις), outside every conventional pursuit and irrespectively of repetitions occurring elsewhere and with the known, constant phenomena. The logical necessity in the operation of natural phenomena is not always constant for the logician who is prudently persuaded that phenomena "have an ambivalent and contingent presence" (ἀμφίβολον ἔχει καὶ ἐνδεχομένην τὴν παρουσίαν).⁽¹¹⁸⁾ The *ταπεινὴ* of the Prophet Elijah⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and the miracles of the Prophet Elisha⁽¹²⁰⁾ are some of the examples which the holy man mentions in order to establish these ideas.

Thus the holy man of God, persuaded by God's words, lives under God's absolute tutelage and, holding firmly fleshly poverty and sojourning in a "local colony", he studies how to serve God.⁽¹²¹⁾ In this way the holy monk obtains boldness before God and arrives at a position of overruling nature. He becomes accustomed to the miracle of nature's subjection to him, while nature itself becomes his synergist in his life.⁽¹²²⁾ Although the holy monk is not a possessor of all that belongs to nature, he is always rich as far care of his needs goes. The apostolic spirit rests on him too, so that he too feels "as having nothing, but possessing all".⁽¹²³⁾

III.2.2. The silence of the desert

Studying the ascetical writings, the researcher of the monastic life has the possibility to find out, that, within the heat of the desert, the ascetic is

working out the perfection of ethos, living daily in relation with God, man and the world, without the deceiving reflections of the desert, but with purity and existential transparency.

Within this atmosphere, he attempts to get rid of the pretence of wearing a mask and to live out the genuineness of the authentic person. The theology of the quietness of the desert is free from the anxiety of pretence which bedevils the heavily inhabited city. The ascetic, being a student of *hesychia* and prayer, trains himself daily and at every moment and thus gets rid of the fear of his unknowable inner self. Besides he has the ability to walk unobstructedly to the inner paths of his soul and to find God there, within the space of a multi-sided existential silence.

a) Severing ties with relatives

The authenticity of the ascetical ethos is appropriated in life by the lover of the desert in a gradual manner. This appropriation runs parallel to his *kenosis*, so that he may put on Christ.

The citizen of the desert is dispossessed not only ontologically but also matter-wise and flesh-wise. The appropriation of dispossession is of inestimable value in the spiritual life and is indeed magnified in every direction of existence, so that its dimensions become truly catholic. In this perspective one can understand the cutting off of ties with relatives and friends of the athlete of the desert. In a sense the tie with relations and friends is a sort of possession. When one is bound to a sense of belonging, one is possessed, as it were, by that to which he belongs, and this is certainly a bonding which does not facilitate the spiritual life. This is why the neptic fighter should be free from every relation which is appropriated as a "possession".

St Nilus is persuaded that the "left-overs" in the life of the ascetic are the cause of every deviation.⁽¹²⁴⁾ In this case relatives and friends are also included.⁽¹²⁵⁾ Relations and friendships of the flesh are not, as such, causes of sin. St Nilus often advises in his admonitions on how important honour to parents is⁽¹²⁶⁾ and on the value of friendship.⁽¹²⁷⁾ In the case of the monk, however, the relations and friendships of the flesh become a "snare" (θήρατρον) in Satan's authority. Through them Satan has the power to destroy the fighter of the desert, nudging the unthoughtful mind with memories of relations and friends and in this way leading it astray from the austere attachment to what is "truly desirable" (ὄντως ἐφετόν).

This seeming austerity and even insensibility, of St Nilus is a neptic warning, or, as he himself describes it, a question concerning life and death: "If, then, you died for the world, if you denounced the corruptible life, if you conjoined yourself with the heavenly army and order and manner of conduct, you should not draw anything to yourself which belongs to earthly things and to the generation which is according to the flesh".⁽¹²⁸⁾

The reason for this is obvious. He who loves his relatives, introduces the relation of the flesh into his relation with Christ. In this way he excludes from his relation with God that total love to him, thus indicating that he is ignorant of the ascetical dispossession, i.e. the poverty for Christ's sake, i.e. the exclusive subjection to him. This manner of life leads to the slavery of Satan and to the rejection of the truth. Because whoever is attached to his relatives, "being pierced [through this attachment] in his ear by an awl, so that he might not hear the sound of hearing through the physical hole", can never receive the "word of freedom", i.e. of the truth.⁽¹²⁹⁾

The characteristic example which St Nilus provides in this case is the

manner of Lot's flight and of his family from their sinful region. Lot's wife is a type of the monk who turns back, to the earthly relations, turning his back to his relation with God. This turning back is a repatriation to the ancient evil.⁽¹³⁰⁾ Besides, the firm attachment to the ancient evil is imaged as a "pillar of salt". Attachment to the previous stages of secular life exposes the monk's immaturity. And while Freud's psychology gives its own meaning to the term "attachment", in order to specify simply psychological delay of a crashing character,⁽¹³¹⁾ the neptic psychology specifies such an attachment to previous stages of secular life as disobedience to God, i.e. as in-experience of God.⁽¹³²⁾

The monk who decided to acquire the experience of God, has before his eyes the tragic example of Lot's wife, who "has stood up till now as example to those who disobey, having being turned into a pillar of salt".⁽¹³³⁾ This neptic allusion is put forth, "so that one might not, on examination, be found to be wholly fleshly and earthly and unlearned".⁽¹³⁴⁾

On the contrary the ascetical endurance of a monk is determined by the interest which he shows for his relatives and especially by the manner in which he reveals this interest in his life. In the best case this interest for the relatives is transported through prayer and consumed by the grace and love of God, so that it is finally expressed as an attitude towards "some sort of poor strangers". ⁽¹³⁵⁾

It is a fact that the pilgrim of the desert always seeks to embrace perfection.⁽¹³⁶⁾ This search, does not differ, in typological analysis, from the wanderings of Joseph in the desert. The monk too is wandering in the desert having as his guide a sacred agony for achieving perfection. In this case two possibilities emerge: the right way forward or the deceit. The way forward is right when it is understood to be a search for a specific pur-

pose; or, a fruitless wandering, when it has the character of deceit.

Joseph was seeking his brothers in the desert.⁽¹³⁷⁾ This search ended up in deceit. His deceit was "the search for his own relations".⁽¹³⁸⁾ Joseph was wandering in the desert of Sechem, until he was found "wandering in the plain by a man; and the man asked him, what are you searching for? and he said, I am searching for my brothers; tell me where they led their cattle; and the man said to him, they departed from here; and I heard them saying, Let us go to Dothaim; and Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothaim".⁽¹³⁹⁾

Dothaim is a neutral place. In the context of the ascetical life Dothaim means "a sufficient eclipse".⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ The pilgrim monk has to discover Dothaim in order to become fully conscious of the deceit of his tie with his relations. Discovering Dothaim, he will understand that: "there is no other way for achieving perfection, unless the endeavour relating to the relations of the flesh is sufficiently eclipsed".⁽¹⁴¹⁾ The search for relations is an attachment to the things of the flesh.

Consequently Dothaim is a necessary stop in the pilgrimage of the neptic fighter of the desert. Because, "even if one abandons Haran, which signifies the senses, for they are interpreted to be holes in the ground, and comes out of the valley of Hebron, i.e. of lowly works, and from the desert, in which the deceit occurs of the one who is searching for perfection, he gains nothing from his lengthy ordeal, if he does not emigrate to a sufficient eclipse, because the love for the relations constitutes an insecurity for perfection".⁽¹⁴²⁾

This is also the meaning of the rebuke which the child Christ addressed to Mary the Theotokos in the Temple.⁽¹⁴³⁾ It signaled the eclipse of the ties with relatives from the relation of man with God.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

This "eclipse" (ἔκλειψις) should be also adopted by the monk, according to the typological, for our case, command of Moses: "And the person who has been cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off every hair and be bathed in water and thus he shall be clean; and after all these he shall enter into the enclosure ..".(145)

Consequently, as St Nilus points out, material dispossession is not enough. The perfection of the monastic life demands an ontological, i.e. a perfect dispossession, a perfect mortification, as a deprivation of everything and of all, so that one might approach God, "who is all".

St Nilus' admonitions to the hesychastic candidate, given in the specific verse which follows herein, summarize the above theses: "For if they are to wash completely their soul and to be healed from all the things which contaminate them, they are obliged to depart from all the things, by which the stain increases, and to supply much calm to the reasoning faculty, and to be far away from things which excite, and to avoid being in touch with what is more familiar, by embracing loneliness which is the mother of philosophy".(146)

A "monk" is one who is "alone"; one who appropriates in life his loneliness, not so much as a perfect absence of relations as, mainly, an internal loneliness, which is a necessary presupposition for the vision of God.(147) Hesychasm is achieved when the inner man is mortified, when the personal will is renounced, so that the communicability of the human nature might be turned into a function of communion with God. This communicability should not be hindered by the ties of the monks with his relatives. The monk strives to become a genuine relative of God. It is in this unique relation that the entire magnificence of his deified communicability is expressed.

b) Silence

The way forward to the ascetic *hesychia* begins with the monk's denial not only of evil inter-human relations, but also of relations with relatives, or neutral relations. This denial is legalized, once he understands the basic threat, implied by the preservation of human relations. It is the wrong use of the main instrument of communication among human beings, the tongue. The logic of asceticism knows that the function of the tongue is that which regulates the degree and the authenticity of the ascetical self-consciousness of the monk.

St Nilus specifies with clarity the ascetical position on this matter: "This is why we were given two ears, but one tongue, so that we might hear more of what pertains to our salvation, which we declare through our good works and divine achievements, rather than through our speech".⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ The neptic fighter tries to keep himself in silence, because it is in silence that he meets God. The more he speaks, the more he loses God. The more he keeps unguarded the door of the mouth, the easier he stains himself, until he is subjected to the devil, because "death and life are in the hands of the tongue"⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ and "an abusive tongue is intercourse with the devil".⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

According to St Nilus "those who speak ... without being asked", do it out of disposition of vain glory and a tendency to gain the attention of other human beings. These are vain and idiots⁽¹⁵¹⁾ and the only thing they gain is harm, springing out of the loss of God: "They suffer great harm and undergo much damage" those who rest in controversy and boasting; as they scatter the brightest mind, and harden the smoothness of prudence, and cast out the indescribable operations of grace, and instead of giving first place to the contemplation of existing beings, they are engaged in all

sorts of life affairs and temptations".(152)

Following the therapeutic manner of the neptic conduct St Nilus, advises the monks, who used their mouth foolishly, ^{and} exhibit "an untrained insolence and an unbridled tongue", (153) to heal their sickness "by enduring pain and most hard manner of conduct, streams of tears, lengthy hardship and ceaseless humiliation, until Christ, the Master of all, has pity on them and tells them: Open your mouth and I shall fill it, (154) no longer with dishonour and much abhorrence, but with fragrance and every goodness".(155)

c) The desert

The necessary presupposition for appropriating *hesychia* as a condition of the monastic life, which leads the monk to make progress in his spiritual combat, is achieved in its natural environment: the desert.

St Nilus examines in an entire treatise, which is called: "That those who live as hesychasts in the deserts differ very much from those who are housed in cities, even though the opposite seems to be the case for many ^{who} have no experience", (156) the self-deception of the monks who choose the city as the place of their habitation. The problems associated with living in the city are also described in a symbolic way as an antithetical wrangle between two notions, those of "commotion" (κίνησις) and "quietness" (ἡσυχία). The monk of the city is he who appropriates the inner obstruction as loss of self-understanding and ignorance of his inner world. (157) The monk of the city is he who fights with shadows, (158) exactly because, in the gloom of the inner obstruction, he has a confused image of the lurking dangers. He fights against what he sees, but is ignorant of what is stored inside him. According to St Nilus the basic cause of this is the im-possi-

bility of *nepsis* which is caused by commotion.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

The "commotion", as an anti-hesychastic term, can be traced, to some extent and with certain semantic adjustments, to the earlier times of the Stoics and the Cynics. The aim of those philosophers was immobility (*ἀκίνησις*), exactly because they understood motion (or commotion) as a dimension of the world of their psyche. At the same time they observed that pleasure (*ἡδονή*) lies in ambush in the delicate movement.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ The typical narratives from the Lives of the Cynics or of the philosophers of the Stoa, as that of Diogenes, signal the agony of the archaic philosophy relating to the return to the lost internal cohesion of man.⁽¹⁶¹⁾

In Christian philosophy, as St Nilus presents it, the monk strives to reach *hesychia*, because motion breaks up the ascent to the ladder of virtues which leads to God. In *hesychia* the monk of the desert has the possibility of touching his inner self, something which the secular monk is deprived of.⁽¹⁶²⁾ Essentially the secular monk lives the tragedy, the vanity of the world. His entire life is the performance of a theatrical role. If he had to be described in icon form, then he could be depicted as a "dove". He plays in the eyes of the viewers the role of virtue, which means, that he contaminates it willingly or unwillingly, since he falls under the subjection of vain glory and ostentatious asceticism, believing that he assists his fellow-human beings, while in point of fact "he empties the gain of pain" and, like the dove which hands over to man her young ones which she carried in her, he loses the fruit of his work.⁽¹⁶³⁾

The secular monk believes that he acts well, whereas in reality he reacts like a maniac.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ He believes that he is stronger than the monks of the desert, because they do not have well shaped temptations, whereas he has to fight constantly against real temptations.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ He does not know, however,

that the monks of the desert by mortifying their flesh,⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ purify the mind from the contamination of the temptations and, through neptic life, transcend the stage of the cultivation of their souls,⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ passing to the condition of peace and ascent to God.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ At the same time the monk of the city lulls himself with the praise of men for his spiritual virtues, while it escapes him that he spends his time only for war, ignoring the peace of neptic hesychasm and spiritual ascents. Indeed, against what he believes about his being in the world, the fruit of his war is reduced to nothing in the furnace of the inter-human relations. The coincidences of the day are turned into wounds of the night.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Thus the problem of the secular monk is not a problem of possibility of bravery, but a problem of psychological break up which is caused by the coincidences of the day, as they store in the unconscious space of their soul damaging images, which in due course will come out.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ This monk who did not come to know the science of the desert and the "eloquence" of silence, is certainly ignorant of himself and is being led to "languidness" (χαλύωσις) and discouragement (ἀθυμία),⁽¹⁷¹⁾ out of the misunderstood communicability and the deceitful sense of self-righteousness for the services which he offers to the people of the city. This monk is the inexperienced one, who is basically ignorant, and who, beyond the purely theoretical perception of monasticism, never learned what the world of his psyche is and how it functions in his practical life.

The choice, then, of the monastic life entails the teaching concerning *hesychasm* for its authentic achievement. The appropriation of *hesychia* is an entire science and its ignorance ^{of it} _Λ does not allow the candidate of hesychasm to attain to his aim. St Nilus emphasizes the fact that hesychia is a difficult task which can lead to disappointment from the very first steps of him who attempts to achieve it. This is due to the fact that the mind of the "newly

initiated hesychasts" (τῶν νεωστὶ ἡσυχάζόντων) is "a new fulness of evils" (ἔναγχος κακῶν).(172) This fact makes as a consequence the appropriation of the ascetical isolation an unbearable struggle. "Hesychia is laborious to those who have newly professed renunciation; for it is on such an occasion that memory takes the opportunity and stirs up every dirty segment that lies there, not taking any consideration of it because of the multitude of the excessive things".(173)

In his inner isolation the monk will meet himself in the dialectic of death, experiencing as death the "disturbance" of the "contaminating thoughts" (μικροὶ λογισμοί) and the nepsis of the soul, so that he might come to supply much calm to the reasoning faculty, and to be far away from things which excite, and to avoid being in touch with what is more familiar, but embracing loneliness which is the mother of philosophy".(174)

It is utterly irrational, according to St Nilus, for the monk "to make his soul ready to fight" at the moment when he has the possibility to preserve "the acquisition (of spiritual goods and achievements) unspoiled", (175) from the robbers of the road of the secular context, as he spends his life in the context of the desert and of the ascetical *hesychia*.

Being in the desert, away from "makeable materials" of sin, the monk can transcend the danger of disturbance from passion, since the absence of temptation preserves the mind in peace, because memory becomes inactive and consequently no passion is provoked. In this case "deep peace and inner calmness" comes to dominate the psychological world of the monk.(176) Putting it differently, one could observe that, the person who lives in hesychia, appropriates unobstructedly his calm relation with God,(177) because, appropriating perfect isolation,(178) he remains invulnerable to the arrows of temptations.(179) Perfect hesychia is the fulness of the neptic

appropriation and that spiritual condition which allows the godly ascents. For this reason the quality of the hesychasm which is being acquired is the criterion of the authenticity of the neptic experience. Certainly, however, whoever acquired perfect hesychia, never abandoned it.(180)

In this perspective, St Nilus opposes in a very severe manner the abandonment of isolation by the monk, because his experience of asceticism knows that something like this happens "on account of one's faint-heartedness and certain human, weak thoughts",⁽¹⁸¹⁾ or "because one cannot bear the exactness of life".⁽¹⁸²⁾ These words of abandonment of hesychia clarify the cause of the monk's inability to progress towards virtue and sanctity. This cause is the constant transposition of the monk from place to place. Just as a plant cannot flourish if "it is constantly transplanted, even if it is richly watered",⁽¹⁸³⁾ likewise the constantly moving monk cannot enjoy the fruit of spiritual progress. As an experienced master of the psychology of spiritual life, St Nilus lets it be understood that constant movement reveals a pretext of avoidance of hesychasm.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾

Hesychasm "requires firmness, patience, consistency, and unshakeable conduct",⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ and this is why the holy man begs: "we should not allow ourselves to be moved from place to place, but rather stand patient in prayer".⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Of course the holy man does not exclude the case of possible transposition on account of a great need,⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ but he stresses at the same time that "satan always manages to catch with a hook by and large with what is seemingly obvious those who have not acquired the experience of his evil machinations".⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

d) Self-understanding and communicability

The authentic hesychast of the desert strives to achieve hesychia, avoiding human conduct, because he knows, that communication with "corrupt men" is equivalent to "pestilential sickness".⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ He is isolated from the world, because the latter is unable to understand the mystery of the internal life of man, and because he realizes that justly "the saints abandoned the inhabited world", since the world "is not worthy of them". It was with good reason that they turned to the mountains, the caves, the holes of the earth "and put on garments made of sheep skin, deprived of material goods, undergoing sufferings, escaping from the worst behaviour of the evil of men, and of the grotesque affairs which flood the cities, so that they may not be brought, as if by a torrent of violence, to the indifferent wantomness of the many by the force of corruption".⁽¹⁹⁰⁾

The lover of hesychasm, i.e. the saint, is different from the world, not in his ontological dimension, since he is truly man, but in the manner of his life and therefore in his conduct, because he has the "mind of Christ".⁽¹⁹¹⁾ The holy hesychast is the "anti-social" person, who preferred to live "in the manner of the beasts", avoiding "human beings as insidious", putting his trust on beasts as friends, since "these do ^{not} teach evil and wonder _λ at and honour virtue. Thus Daniel was considered by other men to have been lost, but he was saved from death by the lions ... and the virtue of the man, which to human beings was a matter of envy and dispute, became to wild beasts the cause of respect and honour, to those indeed in whom love has been implanted".⁽¹⁹²⁾ In many cases, in the ascetical writings, communication with wild beasts is used as a paradeigm of prudent communication and relation, in contrast to communication with human beings and it



is not rare to come across the incredible phenomenon: the sullen⁽¹⁹³⁾ and austere ascetic⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ conversing with the wild beasts of the desert, and thus proclaiming the poverty of the world in emotions and reason and reminding of man's longing for his return to the paradisaal reconciliation of nature and man.

This anti-social stance of the ascetic is not interpreted in any case as antipathy for the world, since he has already rejected it.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ This is rather the case of the ascetic who simply endeavours to live out his relation with God as a rejection of the self, which can be studied and understood only in his authentic isolation with God. It is in the hesychia of this isolation that the ascetic can actually understand himself, as it is emphatically pointed out by St Nilus to the new candidate of asceticism.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Being fleshly he cannot know himself⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ but fortifies himself behind his form,⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ so that he may function as a theatrical actor.⁽¹⁹⁹⁾

On the contrary the hesychastic and anti-social monk appropriates the martyrdom of self-knowledge,⁽²⁰⁰⁾ since, as St Nilus says, "nothing is more difficult and more toilsome than knowledge of self".⁽²⁰¹⁾ Confronting with bravery and courage the stirrings of the passions, the monk is tested in the furnace of unceasing self-examination, always striving for perfection. He is like the holy father, mentioned by St Nilus, who, having achieved hesychia in the desert, had the ability to take a heap of sand and, placing one by one every pebble now on the right side, i.e. on the right thoughts, and now on the left side, i.e. on the bad thoughts, to be constantly on the alert, so as to know what progress he has actually made.⁽²⁰²⁾

Ascending on the ladder of virtues, the hesychast is constantly in a state of nepsis, so that he may not lose on account of his vainglory,⁽²⁰³⁾ what he achieved in his struggle, but, rather, maintain the right progress, not

considering what he did (what he achieved) but feeling sorry for what he does not yet possess.⁽²⁰⁴⁾ Thus he does not rely on the contemplation of his abilities, but runs unwaveringly after his deficiencies.⁽²⁰⁵⁾

The martyrdom of unceasing self-knowledge leads the hesychast to the vision of God. As St Nilus says, when the ascetic comes to be "in his own sense ... the grace of the Lord is not delayed in being sent to him, and when it comes, it gives food as to some yawning young one, and transmits, as it has been said, divine consolation, divine perceptions, divine honeyed-speech, divine compunction, divine fear and wisdom, and longing, divine joy and manifestation of great mysteries".⁽²⁰⁶⁾

Within this blessing and wealth of the grace of God the ascetic transcends the limits of his isolation. He transforms his communion with God into a communion with the whole of nature and the whole of humanity. He is alone, but he communicates with the whole race of human beings and his seemingly anti-social attitude becomes an eschatological appropriation of the community of men, based on endless love and prayer. Then the monk "can see what the superiors unlawfully do to their inferiors, those who do injustice and those who are treated unjustly, those who are tyrants and those who suffer under tyrants, those who deprive and those who are deprived by others, and he suffers with the sufferers by his disposition towards them, and sharing in their lot, is indignant with those who vex others with toil and having compassion for those who are vexed by others with toil, being filled with anger and bending for mercy, incited and pierced in his bowels, and despising sometimes the God of long-suffering for acquiescing in them. For this is what the prophet Habakkuk suffered on a certain occasion and showed to the sufferers what he suffered, saying, 'why did you show me labours and pains; the impious oppresses the righteous,

and you made human beings like fish which is swallowed up by the sea`,(207) treating this forbearance and indulgence as anarchy, and reproaching God with a fiery passion but with audacity".(208)

CHAPTER IV: THE NEPTIC WAY OF LIFE

IV.1. The notion of *Nepsis*

In the context of the ascetical life, *nepsis* is understood to be a condition of unceasing and laborious watchfulness, on the part of the ascetic, for the "study of God"⁽¹⁾ and, therefore, for the continuous relation with God.⁽²⁾

The ascetic turns his thought to God in an exclusive way, pursuing the virtue which always tends to conquer and always remains distant.⁽³⁾ It keeps watch so as to obtain the appropriate possibilities of approaching perfection, which, in its absolute dimension, can never be conquered. "For who has ever thus conquered it [the virtue] so that nothing is lacking to him in perfection?"⁽⁴⁾

Nepsis is the necessary feature of the monk for the conquest of the spiritual life. It is essentially connected with his salvation. Spending his entire life in *nepsis* is only slightly sufficient for a monk in his endeavour to reach virtue.⁽⁵⁾ Thus *nepsis* is the condition of salvation.

Therefore the monk "raises his spirit to God who enlightens him concerning the divine precepts in the night"⁽⁶⁾, because his journey to God, the appropriation of the ceaseless doxology, is a warding off, a mortification, of satan, "and satan will not be able to inflict on him any passion, or disaster, or any sin".⁽⁷⁾ As St Nilus knows from his rich ascetical experience, the observance of the law keeps the monks protected from

demonic attacks and supports those who seek to keep the law in their watchfulness.⁽⁸⁾ For this reason the monk humbly accepts God's protection, not only as a joy of being related to him, but also (when the will of God deems it necessary for him to be tested) as a "scourge" (μάστιξ) or as a "test" (ἐλεγχος), being anxious to live neptically and eager to suffer the martyrdom, which God may impose on him, "so that he might not fall off from that eternal and irremovable heritage, which has been prepared for him in heaven and the ceaseless joy".⁽⁹⁾

Nepsis is appropriated in two ways: as a living relation with God, arising from the vivifying effect of the sacraments and the liturgical life in general, and also as a living relation with God, arising out of the mortification of the senses and of the entire self, which is constant and ceaseless. But nepsis is also appropriated, always to the extent that the monk's spiritual capabilities allow, as a joy of affirming God, a martyrdom of denial of self which is full of grace; and finally, as a study of God, arising out of the joy and pain of the neptic struggle.

IV.2. The study of God

When St Nilus refers to "the study of God" he always has before his eyes the sacramental life, the order of the monastic duties, as well as the combination of prayer and manual labour.

a) The sacramental life

The spiritual life of a monk revolves around two sacraments: sacred

Confession and divine Eucharist. The beginning and the end, however, of the spiritual life of the monk is Confession.

i) Confession

The monastic life is from its nature a special manner of life. The human being who chooses the monastic life, as manner of life and expression, with all the peculiarities which this entails, is dangerously moving on a rope. He risks at every moment his deification and the heritage of eternal life, by undertaking a toilsome struggle against the death of his soul. This is because in the isolation of the desert, the monk has to fulfil a very difficult task: to hold a dialogue with himself. In the desert, where one is alone with himself, it is impossible to avoid the inner dialogue. On the other hand this dialogue cannot possibly be hypocritically appropriated, because it progresses in the context of isolation and ceaseless self-consciousness. Such a spiritual venture is indeed the most difficult task for the human being. The monk will either withstand the challenge of the authenticity of the desert or will be degraded to a struggle of "body against body" with his unsubmitive "old self".

St Nilus has in mind this journey of ascetical life and traces it with therapeutic perspective and care. Because the central problem of this journey is despair, which may arise from the difficulty and severity of the venture to put on the hardship of the neptic struggle. According to St Nilus, the master of despair is the devil, who "dictates" to the fighter who has believed. "For he is the one who urges the commitment of sin, and also the one who, after sin is committed pushes the sinner to despair. Now to sin, of course, is human; but to despair, satanic and utterly destructive".⁽¹⁰⁾

The fighter of the desert, "though he did not expect to be persuaded about this", he should never despair.⁽¹¹⁾ St Nilus recalls here the assurance of God, through the prophet Ezekiel, according to which the death of the sinner is undesirable to him ("I do not desire the death of the sinner but his return")⁽¹²⁾ and the question of Jeremiah, "Does not the one who falls rise up again?"⁽¹³⁾, and so encourages the fighting monk by observing: "To be saved is not hopeless because of the compassion of Christ".⁽¹⁴⁾

St Nilus anxiously admonishes the neptic not to yield to the "evil spirits", which "lead the person falling to desperation", so as to exclude the case of "repentance"⁽¹⁵⁾ and thus to let himself sink into utter despair,⁽¹⁶⁾ "giving up his own salvation".⁽¹⁷⁾ Despairing about salvation means denying the grace of the Spirit, i.e. blaspheming against the Holy Spirit⁽¹⁸⁾ and therefore, death, since "those who give themselves up are numbered with the impious".⁽¹⁹⁾ The monk who throws himself into despair does nothing else than to follow the path, which was first traced by the devil. "Hence the devil himself out of despair was hurled off to such a loss, because he did not want to repent".⁽²⁰⁾ The monk, then, who gives up his fight is an imitator of the devil.

In contrast to this kind of reaction against the deep realization of sin, St Nilus proposes "the return to goodness through repentance",⁽²¹⁾ which is characterized by escaping the ultimate consequence and gaining profit. Repentance is assiduous and profitable.⁽²²⁾

The appropriation of repentance is an affirmation of God, since it is understood as, and indeed is, a gift of God to the fallen man.⁽²³⁾ Thus repentance becomes the characteristic of regeneration and the hope of resurrection, ⁽²⁴⁾ a necessary condition of salvation. For this reason, whoever rejects the value of repentance, is "deranged, like Novatian, who

being a leader of the heresy of the puritans,⁽²⁵⁾ taught "what is alien to the apostolic canons", "throwing away the saving repentance" and regarding his community to be "pure", "and those who committed sin to be impure and to be moving towards destruction through despair".⁽²⁶⁾

To accept repentance as a ceaseless task and constant manner of life, which expresses humility and self-denial, i.e. the unconditional subjection to God, is in essence "a violation of the kingdom of heaven".⁽²⁷⁾ As Christ affirmed, the knock at the door entails the opening of it,⁽²⁸⁾ while St Nilus does not hesitate to emphasize insistence and patience in the knocking of the door to the point of impertinent behaviour. In the rules of secular life politeness is often equated with hypocrisy and is useless even in the case of some good pursuit. In the rules, however, of spiritual life impertinence has a place. "For impertinence is preferable to modesty in the case of need. Because it is on account of his impertinence that it will be given to him as much as he wants,⁽²⁹⁾ as the Lord said".⁽³⁰⁾ Impertinence, as transcendence of the rules of behaviour is the agony of salvation and the pursuit of it.

Essentially, according to the patristic teaching, the person who is saved is only he who has the ability to turn, with respect to his salvation, his sin to his benefit.⁽³¹⁾ This means that, in spite of the fact that every man is under the yoke of sin, every man also has the possibility to decide for himself,⁽³²⁾ turning sin into a factor of salvation. In this perspective the neptic fighter of the desert also has the possibility to break up his stony heart ⁽³³⁾ with the sacrament of confession, which alone can be used as a laboratory of transformation, through repentance, of sin into a redemptive experience of salvation. In the sphere of the sacrament of confession the neptic person will grieve for his fall⁽³⁴⁾ and will sanctify his agony for his salvation.

Resorting to confession means acknowledging human weakness and the deep desire of the power of grace. The monk subjects himself to God, leaving himself entirely in the hands of the "spiritual master" (the γέρον) and thus confessing existentially his inability and in a way, his impertinent cry for help and salvation.

Consequently confession is the perfect form of self-denial and this dimension of it is manifested in the "absolute" authority of the spiritual father and in the corresponding subjection to him of the "spiritual child". This special character of confession, as a paedagogic spiritual authority, is clarified by St Nilus in his admonition: "When the spiritual father tells you something which is regrettable or harsh, accept it philosophically and magnanimously; for it is not out of passion; it is without passion that he sees this".⁽³⁵⁾ Furthermore, subjection to a spiritual father, appears to have an unconditional character. According to the holy man, even if there is a possibility for the spiritual father to act with empathy, the spiritual child should not give it the dimensions which seem to be attached to this empathy, at first sight, because it does not proceed out of the depth of the soul of the spiritual man. It is rather an unwilling faint-heartedness. "It is the same as the case of a mother who falls upon her child out of melancholy; it becomes obvious that she does not fall on her offspring willingly, when shortly afterwards the mother changes her mind and grieves at the harm which her child suffered".⁽³⁶⁾

In this way the monk succeeds ⁱⁿ to transcend ^{ing} in his life his psychical weaknesses, and ⁱⁿ to be ^{ing} sanctified, since from another point of view, it is his "impertinence" for salvation that is being tested through the pressure exerted on himself to be willingly subjected to the hard paedagogy of the spiritual master. Finally, it is a fact that this pressure is possible and is crowned

with grace only within the sacrament of confession and repentance.

ii) Eucharist

Confession gives the possibility of participation in the divine Eucharist. The divine Eucharist is the mystery (sacrament) of Life. Without participation in this mystery, there is no spiritual life which leads to salvation. Only the communicant of the immaculate mysteries lives "in Christ Jesus",⁽³⁷⁾ because it is through these immaculate mysteries that he partakes of God.

Through the divine Eucharist the faithful "consume" Christ, while the latter becomes to them "garment" and "food". The faithful "are fed" by and "given to drink" through him.⁽³⁸⁾ Those who deny this "food" and this "drink", "die" out of spiritual starvation. St Nilus is plain: "It is impossible for the faithful to be saved otherwise, or to receive forgiveness of transgressions and to gain the heavenly kingdom, unless he partakes of the mystical and immaculate body and blood of Christ the God".⁽³⁹⁾

The divine Communion is offered "by dispensation" as a "pasture".⁽⁴⁰⁾ Given the grace of the Holy Spirit, the faithful approaches the mystery "with fear and longing"⁽⁴¹⁾ and with divine expectation and hope.⁽⁴²⁾ St Nilus puts forth with great clarity the two basic aspects of the mystery of the divine Eucharist. One of them is the dimension of him who is present: the grape of Cyprus of the Song of Songs,⁽⁴³⁾ which denotes the enjoyment of the fragrance.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Enjoyment is the joy of God's participation, which is expressed as love on the part of the faithful, who thus responds to the love of God,⁽⁴⁵⁾ through the divine Communion. He accepts the offer of the mystery and this acceptance is the expression of his love towards God. As David cries at

a certain moment of ecstasy: "I shall take the cup of salvation",⁽⁴⁶⁾so the faithful takes the cup of salvation as response of love to the dimensions of the possibilities of the human nature. The love of the faithful cannot respond in an totally adequate way to the infinite love of God. The love of the faithful is real, but, in relation to the infinite love of God, it is "symbolic".⁽⁴⁷⁾ "This is why the great David perceiving that what is due to the Master for his beneficence is very hard to return, promises to return it partially by the martyrdom of death",⁽⁴⁸⁾ signifying the martyrdom of death of the believer, which is "proclaimed" in and through the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ,⁽⁴⁹⁾ in the partaking of the mystery of the divine Eucharist which, in turn, proclaims Christ's death. Besides, this martyrdom, as St Nilus understands it existentially and in terms of the spiritual life, is not a martyrdom of persecutions, but what is called "martyrdom of consciousness".⁽⁵⁰⁾ This martyrdom is experienced mainly as a mortification of the mind of the world and as a burial with Christ, which is guaranteed by the hope of resurrection. This is exactly the other side of the mystery: the dimension of the future. The mystery of the divine Eucharist is the "pledge" (ἄρραβών) and promise of eternal life. It is a foretaste of the resurrection and an assurance of eternal life with Christ, with God, with the Holy Spirit. By his participation in this mystery the neptic fighter offers his martyrdom to God and God, accepting it, pours out on him the blessing of the resurrection and of eternal life.⁽⁵¹⁾

b) Spiritual exercises

Apart from the sacramental life, there are in the context of the monastic life other challenges and spiritual means for a constant nepsis and

progress in holiness. These spiritual means belong to the study of God, because, in combination with the grace of the sacraments, they have the ability to lead the monk to the vision of God.

St Nilus mentions of form of monastic rule, which has direct reference to the expression of the spiritual life. He does this as he addresses certain brethren, who "find difficulty with the toilsome, repetitive and coordinated prayer and psalmody on account of their laziness, and tie themselves to a book alone and more often stand gaping and stretching themselves on the seat, abolishing the commandment⁽⁵²⁾ which says, that first of all they should pursue supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, and then teach themselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs". In this way, however, a difficient inner life is built up, since, how could he who chooses the one over the other "bring to completion and construct a spiritual house through the one commandment, i.e. through one stone, as it were, which he has chosen?"⁽⁵³⁾ The mere study of the book, without psalmody and hymns, makes the spiritual feeding and ascesis difficient. It looks as if the entire spiritual life rests on one and only stone!

It appears that St Nilus found the structure of this monastic rule in St Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, where the Apostle stresses the primacy of prayer, as an important element of internal growth and of unity with other human beings.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Equally important, however, is for St Nilus the rest of the liturgical life (keeping vigil and reciting the psalter) in the monastic rule.

i) Prayer

When St Nilus refers to prayer, he normally uses two terms: *proseuche*

(προσευχή) and *euche* (εὐχή). It is a fact, however, that in the ascetical life these two terms are distinguished only linguistically and not semantically.

The term *proseuche* denotes, in the above mentioned "monastic rule", "supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings" (δεήσεις, ἐντεύξεις, εὐχαριστίας), while the term *euche* is principally connected with the brief and unceasing repetition of the name of Christ. The first type of prayer is usually the form of dialogue between the monk and God, containing the problems and the events which take place in the ascetical life.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The second type of prayer is an interior dialogue, the typical form of which is hidden by its unceasing which keeps the memory of God.⁽⁵⁶⁾

This distinction, however, is not in a tightly controlled one, as we have already noted. The fathers are not interested in the systematic articulation or analysis of religious perceptions, but in the experience of God. This is why many of their works present a lack of "scientific" precision and strict methodology. It is this spirit that St Nilus also exhibits when he treats the subject of prayer. In many cases, when he speaks about prayer, he actually has in mind the *euche*, especially when he talks about the ascent of the mind to God.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The aim of the practice of prayer is the constant memory of God. Essentially by the term *euche* it is the inner relation of the monk with God that is covered, from its imperfect beginning to its desirable end. Because *euche* has the sense of introduction into the spiritual growth, and also of the continuation and perfection of this growth within the limits of the possible. Through *euche* one achieves the circumcision of evil,⁽⁵⁸⁾ which is necessary if God's blessing is to be appropriated by the neptic contestant. Besides, through *euche* one achieves to rise to God. Consequently, the beginning of the spiritual labour, such as the *euche* is, is prolonged in its

ceaseless continuation.

St Nilus teaches the appropriation of the unceasing *euche*, which is identified, as to its frequency, with physical breathing.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Every breathing in and breathing out is fulfilled, through *euche*, with the name of Christ.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In this way the monk gets used to *euche* and *euche* becomes his constant life experience. From that point on the monk experiences *euche* not simply as a duty, but as an existential impulse, i.e. possibility of life, and thus remains in a condition of *nepsis* of *euche*, whether he is awake or asleep.⁽⁶¹⁾ He sleeps and prays, holding an unceasing dialogue with God.

The learning of *euche* passes through an initial stage, which is specified by St Nilus as a stage of two months.⁽⁶²⁾ It is only after this stage that one realizes what a great help this *euche* is,⁽⁶³⁾ and also what a supreme good.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Through patience and *euche*, the grace of God is richly bestowed on the fighter of the desert.⁽⁶⁵⁾ In this condition the neptic fighter, using *euche* sleeplessly, unwaveringly⁽⁶⁶⁾ and unceasingly,⁽⁶⁷⁾ loses all despair arising from the demonic attacks⁽⁶⁸⁾ and, generally, the harshness of the spiritual battle. *Euche* is a visit of God, which sweetens the struggle of the lover of the desert and leads him unswervingly to the desired spiritual progress. Thus the mind becomes "God-loving"⁽⁶⁹⁾ and as such remains invulnerable to the demons.⁽⁷⁰⁾ This is why the demons, interfering between God and the monk, attempt to remove the latter's mind from the memory of God.⁽⁷¹⁾ They know that the memory of God makes sin ineffective,⁽⁷²⁾ since the monk has the possibility, raising his hands in *euche*,⁽⁷³⁾ or practicing "unhesitating prayer" (ἀδίστακτον εὐχήν),⁽⁷⁴⁾ to make the opposing powers "easy to overcome" (εὐχείρωτες). It is the "sleepless *euche*" which "pierces" the demon⁽⁷⁵⁾ and, generally, drives out the "fear and shame" which are caused by him.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Also very important is the combination of *euche* and the cross, whenever the neptic is disturbed by demonic attacks. As St Nilus points out, "For whenever the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ is named, and the seal of the dominical cross is laid on his heart, his forehead and his members, the power of the enemy is undoubtedly dissolved, while the evil demons who scare us run away from us".⁽⁷⁷⁾

At another advanced stage of the spiritual life, when the demons remain completely abashed, *euche* taken on another character which denotes the spiritual height on which the neptic has arrived. By using the term ἐνεόν (= "deaf and dumb", or speechless) St Nilus indicates the spiritual function of the mind which ends with the vision of God.⁽⁷⁸⁾ At this point of ascent to God we also have the case of prayer, and this is why the distinction between *proseuche* and *euche* is here too a formal or external one and does not refer to content or substance.

Yet St Nilus often distinguishes between two kinds of prayer: the "perfect prayer" (τελεία προσευχή)⁽⁷⁹⁾ and the "secondary prayer" (δευτέρα προσευχή).⁽⁸⁰⁾ Each one of these corresponds to the degree of the spiritual progress of the monk.

The principle governing the commencement of the spiritual battle for perfection is found in the very disposition (the resolve) of the fighter himself to turn to the work of prayer. Given that "indolence" or "laziness" (ῥαστώνη) drives away the mind from the dialogue with God and turns it to alienation from God through earthly desires⁽⁸¹⁾ and consideration,⁽⁸²⁾ the monk who fails to pray as he ought, becomes "indolent" (ὀκνηρός) and, as a result, his work of prayer is slackened.⁽⁸³⁾ The slackening, however, of prayer, makes the monk fleshly, so that he may no longer pray,⁽⁸⁴⁾ since his relation to God becomes a secondary concern in his life. The fleshly

monk makes "questionable" the possibility of his prayer being answered⁽⁸⁵⁾ and minimizes his interest in it according to the degree of his fall.

It is a fact that the monk's character, which specifies his spiritual quality, exerts its influence on the quality and effectiveness of the prayer. The mind of the gluttonous person does not rise to God⁽⁸⁶⁾ and the prayer of the person who is given to anger is turned into an abominable incense.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The prayer of the monk of sorrow is not pure and that of the monk who is careless (ἀκηδυστήρ)⁽⁸⁸⁾ cannot function correctly.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The prayer of the vain-glorious does not rise to God⁽⁹⁰⁾ and God is angered with the prayer of the proud.⁽⁹¹⁾ Besides, the fleshly monk lives in the isolation of a fruitless monologue.

All these types of monks who pray wrongly are certainly transgressors of the commandments of God. St Nilus considers it an impossibility to pray unceasingly for the monk who transgresses the commandments of Christ.⁽⁹²⁾

On the contrary, a monk has the duty to resist the indolence which inhibits the task of prayer.⁽⁹³⁾ He should lament from the depths of his heart to the Lord,⁽⁹⁴⁾ because, "through self-control and prayer", he has the possibility "to deliver to destruction the crowds of passions and unlawful pleasures".⁽⁹⁵⁾ Redemption from passions is a grace of God; "for the Master, listening to prayer, delivers one from the midst of destruction to eternal life and brings to him joy"⁽⁹⁶⁾ demonstrating the power of prayer.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Thus it was through prayer that Daniel shut the mouths of lions,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and it is again through prayer that the monk of the desert performs miracles.⁽⁹⁹⁾

It is prayer that brings out the grace of God, so that the monk can be strengthened, cleansed, fed, enlightened⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ and brought into the memory of God and thus be saved, because "God saves those whom he brings into

his memory".(101)

As long as the monk asks of and talks with God, he is in the stage of "secondary prayer". It is the situation in which the mind observes with eagerness the words of prayer,(102) where "the mind prepares prayer to become a warming fire and makes its requests to God with prudence".(103)

The demon's reaction to the work of prayer aims at contaminating prayer and inhibiting it in every way. He tries to scare the neptics, transforming, with his interferences, the good petitions into a call to self-destruction and the doxology into blasphemy. "For when a person cries at prayer, 'Have mercy on me, O God and save me', the enemy speaks gently saying, 'Be angry with me, O God and destroy me'. And again when on many occasions a man confesses with all his heart and praises what is greater, the enemy immediately takes hold of the praise and the doxology and turns it into blasphemy".(104)

St Nilus is for sober prayer, which is "drastic" (δραστική) against the demons.(105) It consists in complete attachment of the mind to the object of desire(106), insistence on more prayer, as the attacks of the demons increase more,(107) enrichment through *euche* and hymnody,(108) and above all, absolute *nepsis* : We pray with *nepsis* (watchfulness), when "we allow no imaginary (abstract) consideration (λογισμὸν) to enter into our heart, neither white, nor black, not right, nor left, nor written, nor unwritten, except that which is [connected] with the supplication to God, the vision of God and the illumination and sunshining which occurs to the hegemonic principle (the power of volition) from heaven".(109)

Appropriating the "warm school" (θερμὴ σχολή) of the "great work of prayer",(110) the monk arrives at the condition of the "dense and laborious prayer", which makes the mind of the monk "full of fire and vigour", (111)

practicing *nepsis*, i.e. enjoying a foretaste of immortality,⁽¹¹²⁾ since the prayer which is "unwavering" (ἀρεμβος) and "watchful" (νήφουσα), combined with inner purity, leads to impassibility,⁽¹¹³⁾ i.e. a condition which denotes immortality.

In its authentic form, prayer is "a pure mind" (νοῦς καθαρὸς), free from any care (even a modest one), an exclusive relation with God. This purity of the mind certainly depends on the relation of the monk with the secular things, but also on the unceasing exercise of the mind in spiritual things.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Keeping watch and confronting the demons, the monk trains himself so that he moves easily into the condition of perfect prayer.

Perfect prayer is the prayer of the authentic people of God. It is a condition of "rapture of the mind" (ἄρπαγή τοῦ νοός), which entails ecstasis of the senses, while the spirit inheres in God, "with unspeakable sighs", in agapetic coinherence, which is based on the condescension of God to the heart's longing for him, since he has the ability to read it like a book, printed with "unspoken types". Besides, during the "rapture of the mind", every verbal expression falls aside, so that the mind may not be able to think, but, rising above itself, to find rest in God, who speaks to the heart which longed for his presence.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

This is the condition of the holy men, such as of St Paul and St Peter. St Paul supplies a typical account of this when he describes his perplexity about the participation or not of his body in his "rapture" to heaven, thus showing the inability of the function of the intellectual faculties in the condition of rapture, which do not simply remain silent, but are, rather, brought to nought.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

"Ecstasis", which is a term mentioned in the text of the Bible,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ is not an emotional incitement, but a real transposition to the world of God

and can be met only in the perfect monks. As for the symbolism of the act of prayer, the furnishing of the mind with wings, it is found in the "falcon" of Job, which, "spreading out the wings and watching motionless what lies in the south",⁽¹¹⁸⁾ symbolizes with its shape the composition of the person who is at prayer. In other words, it supplies the icon of the "science" of God⁽¹¹⁹⁾ as ecstasis and agepetic circumincession. Besides, by its very name it symbolizes the sacredness of the mind, on account of its ability to approach God (ιέρ-αξ).⁽¹²⁰⁾

Perfect prayer, according to St Nilus, is a characteristic feature of the monks who have thrown away the cares of earthly life, so that they can only care for the ceaseless communication with God.⁽¹²¹⁾ The second prayer, i.e. the attentive consideration of the words of prayer, is a characteristic feature of the monks who turn to earthly cares, and is useful only "to special times and to the need of the body".⁽¹²²⁾ They have, however, the ability, changing their "conduct", to arrive at perfect prayer, the exclusive relation of God and monk.⁽¹²³⁾

ii) Manual labour

The fathers of the desert stress the special importance and contribution of manual labour (ἐργόχειρον)⁽¹²⁴⁾ in the monk's spiritual life.

It is of fundamental importance that the monk earns his food alone, i.e. with his own labour.⁽¹²⁵⁾ St Nilus mentions the example of St Paul, and puts the stress on the spiritual meaning of the monk's work. The monk is obliged to care "for his needs" but also "his hands" should also serve "those who are with him".⁽¹²⁶⁾ The meaning of earning one's food is fully understood in the context of the spirit of "holy poverty" (ἀκτημοσύνη). The

monk obtains food and the necessary material goods, but not in the sense of storing them up or gathering them up in view of a long maintenance. What he needs he takes care to be the most necessary for his daily maintenance. Prototypes on this are the Apostles and the Honourable Forerunner, who, without possessing any material goods, obtained food "which could be found on the hour".(127)

The basic contribution of manual labour in a monk's spiritual life is understood as a challenge of *nepsis*. It is a dictum of experience that "indolence" is the food of the passions.(128) Because abstention from labour is the cause "of many evils to many, little by little, increases common bad habits and teaches what was previously unwonted".(129) Indeed, abstention from labour, as cause of many evils ends up with being "the beginning of every evil enterprise".(130)

Abstention from labour is what gives food to passions, allowing the desires to move towards the end for which they were created, i.e. to occupy and absorb the mind in the invention and discovery of ways of satisfying the excited desires. As a result of this the monk interrupts his conversation with God and holds conversation with the "sojourning passion" (ἐνδιδιαιτώμενον πάθος), becoming deprived of God. The loss of God, on the other hand, unavoidably leads to the pollution of the mind, which feeds the heart with evil considerations and makes it fall off from the condition of prayer. This procedure, from abstention of labour to passion, shows that the indolent monk who engages in no manual labour or any other manual work, is not just lazy or deprived of *nepsis*, but alienated from God; he is deprived of God. This is why St Nilus rigorously reprimands the indolent monk by means of citing biblical verses.(131) According to the spirit of these texts, indolent is he, who "placed a bulb flower within cow-

dung";⁽¹³²⁾ one who prefers as little as possible a movement. "Like a door turning round a hinge, so is the indolent on his bed".⁽¹³³⁾

In discussing the above matters St Nilus finds the occasion to turn against the heresy of the Messalians,⁽¹³⁴⁾ that group of Christians, who rejected labour, in their eager pursuit of unceasing prayer, on account of which they were also called Euchites (εὐχίται). Rejecting the redeeming power of baptism which is destructive of sin, they laid an overstress on the exclusive contribution of prayer as redemptive power, thinking that in this way they could overcome the passions.⁽¹³⁵⁾ The tragic result of their ineffective struggle is noted by St Nilus through the following axiomatic statements: Abstention from labour is a cover up of indolence. Indeed, abstention from work excites the passions through the ease which is thereby secured, so that thought feeds on passions, "until the so-called prayer, not being what is said to be, is totally abandoned".⁽¹³⁶⁾ Those who abstain from work cannot possibly pray, because they are distracted in the inner conflict of their thoughts which serve the passions.

What St Nilus means in this context is essentially the projection of subjective experiences to the ground of prayer. Without the sacramental support of Baptism and without the exercising of the spiritual powers also by means of labour or manual labour, the monk attempts to meet God relying exclusively on prayer which is based only on his own abilities. Even in the case when such a choice of manner of spiritual life finds its starting-point in a good disposition, the end result is not less than demonism.

At this point St Nilus follows faithfully the theology of St Paul. Referring to the well known verse from the Epistle to the Thessalonians, where St Paul corrects the Thessalonians about the "maran-atha" and abstention from work, which led to a deadly inactivity,⁽¹³⁷⁾ the saint

explains that St Paul's manner of speaking suggests that work is the security of the mind; "seeing work as the anchor of the mind, he rushes to make it secure".(138) As long as the monk prays while he works and works while he prays, his mind is firmly attached to dialogue with God and consequently he finds himself in constant nepsis, which is maintained by the combination of prayer and manual labour. In this condition he can transcend the attacks of the "spirits", diverting his mind from being allied to or holding conversation with any passion. The exact opposite occurs whenever the power of perception "is put in a whirl" (δεμβάζει), (139) or whenever the mind is mortified by passion by the neglectfulness of the perception, which functions like a "door-keeper" (θυρωρός). (140)

The ascetical life is a manner of life with a manifold structure and operation, in which several basic factors and contributors to spirituality are coordinated and combined. Yet none of these factors or contributors is absolutised at the expense of the others. Each of them has a unique value and is necessary, always in combination with the others, for progress in asceticism and nepsis. The example of labour is sufficient to show that it is possible for prayer to end up in a useless and fruitless monologue and eventually in a non-existing act, if it is not supported by labour, besides other factors. For this reason only the monks of prayer, hymnody, manual labour and work "flourish and overflow with manifold virtues", (141) as they journey through the narrow path of perfection to the condition of perfect prayer, when the monk converses with God with utter joy. God, on the other hand, sends in this case to the one who is perfected by virtue, what is necessary for life and it is exactly at that point that the need of work for the perfect monk ceases to exist, (142) because, at the heights of the divine ascents, the laws of nature cease to work, inasmuch as they are now

under the authority of the monk himself by the grace of God. Thus the neptic struggle of the lover of the desert becomes the occasion for the revelation of the glory of the perfect ones by God.

iii) Vigil and Psalmody

As it was noted in a previous reference, St Nilus advises the monks to keep the ascetical rule, which also includes vigil and psalmody.⁽¹⁴³⁾

Vigil is a condition and term of life. Already ancient Greek philosophy regarded sleep as the "brother" of death.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ The ancient philosophers saw sleep as a typological symbolism of death, and this is why sleep has the meaning of a brief death.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾

In his neptic perspective St Nilus stresses the relation between sleep and death in the context of monastic life. This is a vicinity⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ which denotes an eschatological existential notion. Sleep is a corruptive condition,⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ inasmuch as it leads to slackening of alertness.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ The lover of sleep is himself "a mortuary, a dead soul in a living body".⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ The monk who turns his back to alertness and to nepsis, delivering himself to sleep, is dead. He, of course, is "resting"; but the time of his life is running away. Nepsis is deflected and his heart attracts vain things. Essentially his life is diminished, but he is not aware of this; he has no sense of it.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Thus he becomes indolent and coward. The coward monk "does not understand, he is compared to the senseless cattle and is like to them".⁽¹⁵¹⁾

The neptic monk who converses with God, should not be asleep.⁽¹⁵²⁾ On the contrary he should imitate the example of Christ,⁽¹⁵³⁾ "being gladdened with vigils".⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ The teaching of Christ was a neptic challenge, so that the spiritual man might not fall in the temptation of the devil.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾

This is why the Apostles Paul and Silas "not being ignorant of the profit of keeping vigil, were glorifying God in the middle of the night" while in prison.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Besides, David has hinted at the relation between vigil and virtue, as well as spiritual progress, by saying: "I kept vigil and became like a bird dwelling on the top of a house".⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ The sense of height, connected in this instance with the word house, denotes here, as St Nilus points out, the monk "who dwells on the height of virtue".⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

The monk who keeps the vigil is truly blessed,⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ because by his vigil he "makes his enemy [the devil] sorrowful",⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ who feels discontent at not finding the fighter of the desert in a state of slackness so that he can easily capture him.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Vigil, then, is the weapon of the monk against the demons.⁽¹⁶²⁾

At the same time, however, the blessedness of the monk is denoted by the fact that his apology to God becomes all the more acceptable through the vigil.⁽¹⁶³⁾ In the sleepless doxology of God in the vigil, the sinner raises "his supplicatory voice", instead of his hands, to God and, thus, kisses "the invisible feet of God the lover of mankind", weeping and preparing his heart as an altar, where the grace of God rekindles the coal of the knowledge of God, i.e. the neptic knowledge of God. Working out in this manner the perfection of the humble man, God accepts favourably the offering of his heart as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

The Vigil is a "loving-kind mother", who reveals to the neptic person, in the midst of nepsis, calm and peace, "its own treasures of wisdom, of sacred admonitions and of divine illuminations". As for the neptic person, he lives in the bliss of the presence of God, is sanctified by his participation in the vigil, as she "fills the bosoms of him who has come to it".⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ He lives in the grace of the Lord and travels in his journey

rejoicing in his assimilation with him.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ The vigil, as a characteristic feature of the monastic life, is, according to the saint, of condition for the vision of God.

Equally important, however, is the position of hymnology in the neptic life of the monk. In the works of St Nilus it is usually mentioned along with vigil,⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ but also along with *euche*⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ and the rest of the duties of a monk.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

The doxology of God is not unconditional. The monk is obliged to offer it with prayer and neptic struggle, so that it may be acceptable to God ... The possible weaknesses or defects of a monk inhibit the acceptance of doxology by God. St Nilus characterizes the hymnody of the argumentative monk as detestable to God,⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ because the person who is deceived by the devil, cannot offer a hymn which is acceptable to God.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ In this case St Nilus has in mind the specific saying of the Wisdom of Sirach, "The praise is not good in the mouth of the sinner", since (as the text adds) "it was not sent by the Lord". The genuine and acceptable praise "will be said in wisdom and the Lord shall bless it".⁽¹⁷²⁾ The wisdom of a praise is an offspring of divine eros of the soul with God.⁽¹⁷³⁾ When this disposition is absent, praise is not an authentic call of God.

The contribution of praise to the spiritual life of the monk is also evaluated by the relevant admonitions of St Nilus. Psalmody should be as ceaseless as the breathing;⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ daily⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ and sleepless.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ The monk is likened to a nightingale which sings throughout the night,⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ praising God "in strings and instruments", i.e. with all the powers of his "Christ-loving soul".⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ He sings "continuously and intelligently, in accordance with the attention of the memory of the greater", ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ "walking in ether by his will and sacred thoughts,⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ so as to forget everything sensual and at the same

time to crush the enemy,⁽¹⁸¹⁾ inasmuch as psalmody is against the demons.⁽¹⁸²⁾ Through psalmody the monk "forgets the defiling and destructive passions, is filled with ineffable joy and, consequently gazes at God with eagerness striving and struggling towards this end alone and considering nothing amongst the visible things as more preferable in beauty to that invisible one".⁽¹⁸³⁾ Thus psalmody too is a term of the possibility of the vision of God.

IV.3. The martyrdom of *Nepsis*

The Fathers of the desert, led by their infallible neptic sense, fortified the spiritual training of the monk with certain powerful experiences, which are derived from the love for God⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ and can preserve and increase the spiritual conquests of the fighter of the desert. Subjected to the exercises of these powerful experiences this fighter is trained to withstand the corruptive sluggishness and the seductive relaxation of spiritual conquests, which can, however, be lost and to render vain the ascetical labour by which they were gained.

a) Contrition for death and the dreaded apology

The uncertainty of the future is connected with the fear of God. The fear of God is not understood as an agonizing condition of despair. Fear of God is the veneration of God,⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ which, in contrast to other fears, such as the human and the demonic, does not cause any trembling or agonizing, but exceeding joy and gladness and, hence, "is called of the day and of the light".⁽¹⁸⁶⁾

This fear is fruit of the maturity of the love of the neptic person for God, who has made progress in the spiritual life, mortifying his mortal flesh to sin.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ The neptic fighter is raised above the fleshly things⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ and becomes acceptable to God with great pleasure.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ On the contrary, the despiser of God is led to the cul-de-sac of fire and death.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾

The ability of watchfulness, which is caused by the fear of God, leads the neptic to the agony of death as a boundary point of transposition to the joy of God or to the curse of punishment.

In this perspective the monk lives the fact of the impending death as a neptic agony. Death is regarded as a transposition to real life; for this reason, when his life on earth comes to an end, he will realize that all things were "dreams", shadows weaker than dream, that the real act and the indisputable fact of the daily routine was a phantasy and that all the human needs never existed and never were they healed.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ It is the same experience which is derived from the painful realization of the sacred author, that the days of a human being are spent in vanity,⁽¹⁹²⁾ and the deplorable realization of the psalmist for the relativity of human affairs, according to which, "let the morning pass away as grass; in the morning let it flower and pass away; in the evening let it drop, let it be withered and dried up ... our years I studied as a spider, the days of our years, in them there are seventy years, and if men should be in strength eighty years and the greater part of them would be labour and trouble".⁽¹⁹³⁾

The monk living and progressing spiritually in his relation with God, gains a sense of the vanity of the reality of the present world and easily understands the irrationality of the fleshly life, compared to which "there is nothing that is as perishable".⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Consequently it is perfectly useless to make his flesh more luxurious, so that the worms of the earth might enjoy

it.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ The monk of the flesh is without excuse, because every moment of time is priceless and should be spent for the salvation of the soul. The labour which the secular monk wastes on the body, is exhausted by the neptic monk on the care of the spirit; "sowing the fields of the spirit, from which he will reap eternal life".⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

On the other hand the monk of neptis, having lived with the benefit and gain of having always before his eyes the exit from this life",⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ does not live according to the flesh, but according to God, considering every moment of his life as a possibility for death. The following question of St Nilus is essentially a question about death and at the same times expresses the basic idea of the neptics, according to which the spiritual condition of the moment of death is the criterion of God for the earthly life of man. In the spirit, then, of this idea, St Nilus asks: "Where are the labours of the great Moses? where is the wisdom of Solomon? where is the conversation of Giezi with Elisha; and what did Judas benefit from conversing with Christ?" The answer is given by himself in his conclusion: "Therefore the labour of the righteous is vain", if he fails to reach perfection. "Hence, it is not the one who begins well and subsequently goes well, that is perfect; but rather he who rules well is righteous before God".⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ In this way St Nilus sees death as a possibility of a double reality (bodily and spiritual death) or as a persuasive means of perfection (the road to justification).

The compunction of the monk, which is caused by the expected termination of his life, reflects equally the possibility of his apology before Christ the Judge, as the "judgment Seat is already prepared".⁽¹⁹⁹⁾

The monk lives constantly in his heart the terror of the punishments,⁽²⁰⁰⁾ which is begotten by the agony of the "threatened punishments",⁽²⁰¹⁾ which will be imposed by the dreadful judgment seat.⁽²⁰²⁾ The

comparison of the temporary span of life with the eternity of punishment cause terror,⁽²⁰³⁾ which sensitizes the neptic self-consciousness. The monk, who is in a state of nepsis, can feel the horror of the punishments, be humbled and lament for his salvation,⁽²⁰⁴⁾ not because he is pressurised by God's threats, but because he runs the risk of losing God's love. In the first instance he undergoes devastating experiences which are understood as a curse;⁽²⁰⁵⁾ in the second instance he tastes the blessing of redemption.

The termination of the life of the monk and his impending apology, assist him in his spiritual growth, if they are neptically appropriated during this earthly life.⁽²⁰⁶⁾ Otherwise, they proclaim his death, because they are appropriated without nepsis.⁽²⁰⁷⁾

b) The boldness of grief and tears

Grief (πένθος) for personal sinfulness and wretchedness is regarded in the monastic tradition as a condition of blessedness. Because grief, in this sense, is an assurance of repentance, i.e. a seal of neptic self-understanding. The descent into the innermost depths of the soul reveals to the monk his imperfection, which, combined with the fear of the loss of God and the separation from him at his last judgment before the heavenly tribunal, delivers him to grief for his sinful condition. This grief, of course, is not paralysing or loosening but neptic, since it mortifies the movement of the mind towards sin and at the same time sets in motion the impulse for union with God.

Leader and prototype of those in grief, according to St Nilus, is David.⁽²⁰⁸⁾ It is in the psalms of his repentance and grief "that those who happen to be in need" find shelter.⁽²⁰⁹⁾ Transferring the image and the

idea of the davidic grief to the ascetical experience, St Nilus draws certain analogies. The commitment of sin is an impious attack against God.⁽²¹⁰⁾ Consequently, it is a pain of soul in sin,⁽²¹¹⁾ which calls for the "woe" of sorrow,⁽²¹²⁾ "the epiphthegm of lamentation, which bears witness to a million of sorrowful and impious things".⁽²¹³⁾

The tragedy of sin is quite intense in the context of monastic life, because the monk is exceptionally sensitized to communion with God, which is characterized by an agapetic double-sided dialogue. Thus the monk experiences sin as a condition of separation from this relation and, consequently, as a condition of great pain and convulsion.⁽²¹⁴⁾ At this point St Nilus warns the monk who is in such condition about the danger of losing hope. Grief can be saving or demonic. This depends on the optical angle from which it is viewed. The monk should not yield to the loss of hope.⁽²¹⁵⁾ On the contrary, finding himself in a state of grief on account of his sin, he should come to Christ as "one who is in need" delivering the burden of his agony to the "intelligent David".⁽²¹⁶⁾

The experience of the agony of loss and of the reestablishing of the bond of Christ is expressed as creative grief which calls out the divine grace. Having delivered the anxiety of the pain of sin to Christ, the monk appropriates the grief and the tears as an occasion for calling out the compassion and love of Christ. For this reason the fathers of the desert recommend the appropriation of grief⁽²¹⁷⁾ throughout one's life as an expression of unceasing regret, tears, weeping and lament which lead to an unfailling reestablishment of one's bond with Christ.⁽²¹⁸⁾

Besides, grief is not an act which is cut off from the worship of God. Grief, in the above terms, is a sacramental prayer; a praise of God "in choir and drum".⁽²¹⁹⁾ It is the mystical psalter; a neptic appropriation of

shame on account of sin,⁽²²⁰⁾ a deep sorrow for demonic acts, a contest of supplication for their abolition.⁽²²¹⁾ It is a mystical presentation of lamentable considerations, "collected night-coloured tears of sorrow",⁽²²²⁾ which offer the heart to Christ, humbled but not set at nought. It is the daily bread of the spirit.⁽²²³⁾ A ceaseless act, so that the monk may be composed and lament, go to sleep and weep, "shedding tears as he remembers God and turning to the spiritual stone with lakes of tears".⁽²²⁴⁾

Tears save, because they are the gift of God, a benevolent act of divine grace. Yet it is clear that not all the fighters of the desert are recipients of this purifying flow of tears. He, however, who desires, but does not experience, the neptic theology of tears, is not necessarily deprived of God. If he does indeed desire to praise God through the flows of his tears and if he fails to do so, he is considered by the ascetical consciousness as one who has already wept, because "he who desires something, whether good or evil, has already committed it in his mind".⁽²²⁵⁾ It is possible for such a man to be granted tears by God; but it is also possible that he be put to the test of absence of them. If he is deprived of this grace, he still has the possibility to transcend this weakness of his and to attract the favour of Christ, praying to him and thanking him, because he was deprived of the "gift of tears which dissolves evil and purifies" and granted it to his brother, and begging him to enrich his brother with this grace for ever.⁽²²⁶⁾ In this way the monk raises himself to the heights above. He becomes a sacrifice of pain and love, because he experiences pain and joy simultaneously as two emotions which are derived from two different causes and yet are both appropriated by the neptic soul. Thus the monk becomes "by free choice" a monk of tears and love and receives the crown of Christ.

The possibility of grief, as lament, wailing, tears and sorrow, is a substitute for many weaknesses of the monk in the field of his friendship for God,⁽²²⁷⁾ incurs the presence of God⁽²²⁸⁾ and is experienced as boldness of life⁽²²⁹⁾. The boldness of the grief and tears leads the monk to the kingdom of God,⁽²³⁰⁾ exactly because it secures boldness before the throne of his kingdom.

c) The meaning of martyrdom

The life of the monk is interwoven with martyrdom, because neipsis for the "unceasing and unyielding salvation"⁽²³¹⁾ is a martyrdom. Experiencing this martyrdom in his life, the monk is mortified and crucified to whatever pertains to this world.⁽²³²⁾ He experiences the martyrdom as a life-giving mortification.

The mortification and crucifixion of the monk, with regard to whatever belongs to the form of this world, starts with his initiation in the life of martyrdom through the study of the lives of the saints and above all of the Scriptures. In the field of the desert he appropriates all that reality of the life-giving mortification, in his meeting with himself, which is projected in the teaching of the Scriptures and is existentially depicted in the life of the saints of the Church.⁽²³³⁾

In the quiet of the desert the neptic fighter experiences the martyrdom of the mortification of thoughts, but also the burial of himself.⁽²³⁴⁾ He mortifies his members⁽²³⁵⁾ so that he may die with Christ.⁽²³⁶⁾ The mortification of the monk is a necessary condition of salvation, because the re-creation of a new self presupposes the mortification of the old one. "As if by a sort of conceiving corruption it carries the embryos of the seeds

which have been mortified by decay; and becomes mother of life to the evil ones, while mortification and death emerge as father of the birth".(237) Experiencing in his life the death of himself, the monk is betrothed with the joy of the resurrection and the carefree life of the angels.(238)

The appropriation of martyrdom should not be regarded as a human return for the benefits bestowed by God. Man is not worthy to return anything for the benefits of God.(239) He can only make a humble effort to confirm himself in the good,(240) patiently accepting God's paedagogy without any grumble.(241)

The supreme experience of martyrdom has a sacramental character. Martyrdom is a mystery of the love of God. In this sense martyrdom finds its justification in the sacrament of the divine Eucharist. The divine Eucharist, as a martyrdom by crucifixion, becomes the death of the monk, after the flesh, so that the life of the spirit might emerge. By his participation in the divine Eucharist the servant dies for the sake of the Master. But, of course, the one sacrifice [of the Master] is not equated with the other [that of the servant]. "For it is not identical nor similar that the servant should die for the master and the master for the servant".(242) The servant dies as a debtor. And the monk becomes a martyr with the burden and the constant sense of the debtor.

In the race-course of the monastic life the monk fights a hard fight on many fronts. He assumes purity, righteousness, ascetic martyrdom, "a perfect manner of ascetical conduct; but also a downcasting which occurs to those who are blameworthy, a smiting of the forehead, a beating of the breast and a bowing of the knee, a raising of hands with pain of heart, kisses of a harlot which wipe the feet of the Master, a cry of deep sorrow on account of sins, a sigh from the depths, a fruit of lips confessing the name

of Jesus Christ, an anointing of lament and a shedding of tears".⁽²⁴³⁾ In other words, he experiences the death of himself.

As St Nilus stresses, in agreement with the fathers of the desert, the road which leads to God is a road of sorrows.⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Walking along the road of sorrows the monk is trained in the law of God.

The life of the monk is a constant movement forward, through which he excludes any other road,⁽²⁴⁵⁾ and dedicates himself to God,⁽²⁴⁶⁾ walking along the narrow and sorrowful path of this age, which leads to the favour of God.⁽²⁴⁷⁾ On the other hand the avoidance and rejection of the narrow path is a loss due to neglect.⁽²⁴⁸⁾ The monk's affirmative response to the paedagogical work of God is his acceptance of the invitation of God to a spiritual exercising. The monk, who, in spite of the sorrows which are entailed in this acceptance, is prepared to undergo this exercise, is considered to be blessed, because he is a disciple under God.⁽²⁴⁹⁾

The more the monk is trained by God the clearer he perceives his mercy towards him, while his friendship towards his creation is confirmed.⁽²⁵⁰⁾ Whoever God wants to save, him he subjects to the test.⁽²⁵¹⁾ God tests but does not put to death.⁽²⁵²⁾

God's method of testing entails stages. First of all the monk is strengthened in prayer and then he enters the stage of the virtues.⁽²⁵³⁾ The tests are many and respond to the various spiritual needs of the monk, but their basic meaning is that of martyrdom. The monk is "lashed" by God.⁽²⁵⁴⁾ He learns to coexist with torments: the sorrows which never allow him to rise above through some kind of spiritual conquest.⁽²⁵⁵⁾ In this way he "does not turn away from God"⁽²⁵⁶⁾ but, on the contrary, remains close to God, conquering invaluable goods.⁽²⁵⁷⁾

Many times God's pedagogy includes sickness, as a situation of testing

and an occasion for intense prayer. Sickness, as a gift of God, is a beneficence, on his part, and token of rich mercy. God allows sickness to attack the fighters of the faith as a special gift. The saints lived in this way and consequently sickness too is a manner of life for the monk, whenever the paedagogue wants it. This is why, according to St Nilus, sickness is a token of God's favour; an occasion for doxology rather than perplexity.(258)

Experiencing the grace of God as sickness and as sorrow the monk does not turn against God, nor does he groan against him. Groaning, whenever it is expressed, reveals displeasure and anger against the Lord(259) and ignorance of the terms and conditions of the monastic life. He who comes to and works for God prepares his soul for temptation and knows how to wait to be tested without being disturbed.(260)

The monk of martyrdom and temptations takes refuge in the Lord, projecting from within every sorrow the good gift of hope.(261) The monk of martyrdom does not groan, but thanks God exactly because he trains him,(262) because he knows that, unless he experiences sorrow, he will not enjoy the heavenly pleasure,(263) which is the gift of God for the labours of the fighter.(264) This heavenly pleasure is the unspeakable joy which follows sorrow.(265) It is the cheerfulness which is greater than the first joy.(266) It is the wealth which follows the poverty, the comfort and refreshment which emerges out of grief. It is the inexpressible grace of the knowledge of God and the betrothal of the resurrection.

BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

A synopsis, in general outline, of St Nilus' theory concerning the monastic life would give us the following diagram of the manner of life of the man who wishes to live the "life of the angels", i.e. the angelic life of the monastic coenobites or the life of the desert.

1. The basic presuppositions of the monastic manner of life are initially connected with the monk's relationship with himself and with his fellow-monks.

The monk learns from the paedagogical trials of the spiritual life to deny his self, not in order to make it an idol, representative, that is, of a certain form of religious life, but in order to understand it with the ease of impartiality and of objective self-examination. Such a stance before himself means acceptance of it in the condition in which it finds itself at every point. On the other hand, the result of this stance is centred on the neutralization of the unconscious procedures inside the depths of the soul which produce the construction of the "false person." The aim of the monk is the "person" and not the "false person", the "mask". He aims at the accomplishment of sanctity as an authentic appropriation of the person, as opposed to the appropriation of an artificially constructed image of himself.

With such an aim, and as long as the monk is found in the ranks of the subordinates, he moves along the field of submission with the enlightenment of self-knowledge which has soteriological dimensions. This is the case of an existential self-knowledge which is appropriated as a guarantee of sanctity. If, on the other hand, this is the case of the advanced monk who belongs to the ranks of the pastors, this kind of self-knowledge constitutes at the same time discipleship in the science of spiritual guidance. In both cases

self-knowledge in the field of monastic life becomes a liturgy of authentic spiritual upbringing and sanctification.

2. The more special value of the existential self-knowledge of the monk, as a liturgy of the Holy Spirit, appears most clearly in the struggle for the basic target of the spiritual fighter which has to do with the "passions". Monastic self-knowledge is targetted at the investigation of the inner impulses of the passions and especially of the manner with which the passions are planted and grow up. It is because the passions are not just psychological elaborations but also the result of demonic methology, that the monk who fights the passions studies at the same time the machinations of the devil and enters into the deeper problem of "nepsis".

3. The battle against the passions is not restricted to an attempt of self-purification with a simple paedagogical meaning. The battle against the passions is a presupposition and a condition of the life in Christ, the study of God, through the rules of the monastic life, but also, of the mysteries (sacraments) through which the Church supplies the charismatic possibility of the salvation which is in Christ. Certainly, however, the monk's personal relation with God is understood as the martyrdom of consciousness, which, in its particular phases, is appropriated as "grief" (*penthos*) for personal sinfulness, as unceasing memory of death, as bloody self-renunciation, as a neptic reminder of human weakness and also of the grandeur of God as supplier of salvation.

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

(1) For witnesses on St. Nilus cf. Georgii Monachi, *Chronicon*, lib. 9, ch.9 (ed. Carolus de Boor), Lipsiae, 1904, p.599,3-6. Also, in Photius the Great: R. Henry, *Photius Bibliothèque*, tom. 3, Paris 1962, p. 100-101. In Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία, PG 146:1256AC.

(2) Cf. the information provided in his Epistles (PG 79,81-582), in *Narratio* (PG 79: 589-694) and in *Oratio in Albanum* (PG 79: 695-712).

(3) At least, this is indicated from the Epistles Ep2:265 (MPG 336AB) and Ep3:279 (521CD) which are entitled " Ἀρκαδίῳ Βασιλεῖ". Cf. R.M.Price, "Holy men's letters of Rebuke", *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985) 50-53. Alan Cameron, "The authenticity of the Letters of Saint Nilus of Ancyra", in *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 17 (1976) 185.

(4) This historical information is provided by George Monachus or Kedrinus (*Chronicon*, 599,3-6). St. Nilus had his own collection of St. Chrysostom's homilies, cf. "Τοῖς λόγοις Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἐπισκόπου ἡδέως ἐντυγχάνεις· ἐξ αὐτῶν δὴ γράψω σοι νῦν ὅπερ ἐζήτησας" (E2:293, 345B). "Ἐπειδὴ ἀγαπᾶς ὑπερβαλλόντως τοὺς λόγους τοῦ θεοτιμήτου καὶ θεοφόρου Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ἐξ αὐτῶν σοι γράψω, περὶ ὧν νῦν ἐπεζήτησας" (E 3:13, 373BC). He, also, expresses his reverence and admiration for St. John in many of his epistles as Dr G.D.Dragas has shown in his recent introduction (Cf. p. 9 of his *Memorandum* to the Athens reprinted edition of PG 79, Athens 1988: Epistles Ep1:184 (152D-153A), Ep1:309 (193D-196A), Ep2:183 (296ABC), Ep3:199, (476BC). Cf. especially Ep2:294 (345CD), where, as Dr Dragas points out, he bears witness to his close relation to St Chrysostom, as he narrates the spiritual experience of St. John, which "τοῖς γνησίοις τῶν πνευματικῶν φίλων διηγῆσατο". On the relationship between St. Nilus with St. Chrysostom cf. also Haidacher, "Chrysostomus-Fragmente in der briefsammlung des hl. Nilus", in *Χρυσοστομικά*, Roma 1908, p.226-234. F. Degenhart, *Der hl. Nilus Sinaita*, Münster 1915, p.16-17. Also cf. the critical study J.Gribomont, "La tradition manuscrite de saint Nil. 1 La correspondance", *Studia Monastica* 11 (1969) 232ff, as well as the brief treatment of the subject by Alan Cameron, "The authenticity ...", p.187ff.

(5) "Διηγῆματα Νείλου μονάζοντος ἐρημίτου εἰς τὴν ἀναίρεσιν τῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σινᾶ μοναχῶν καὶ εἰς τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν θεοδούλου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ", PG 79,589-694.

(6) According to Ph. Mayerson: "Most scholars take it for granted that Theodulus and his father were ordained as priests. The text, however, says much about the bishop's pressing them and about their protests that were unworthy of such a burden, but it says nothing explicitly to the effect that they accepted the Bishop's bid and that they were ordained". Ph. Mayerson, "Observations on the Nilus Narrationes: Evidence from an unknown Christian?", in *Journal of American Research Center in Egypt*, 12 (1975) 73, ft.

31.

(7) Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, PG 146,1256Aff.

(8) It has been claimed that "at least several opening sentences or paragraphs of narrative are lost", something which happened "by design or by accident" and deprived science from some illustrating clues. Cf. Ph.Mayerson, "Observations on the Nilus Narrationes: Evidence for an unknown christian sect?", in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 12 (1975) 54.

(9) See the monumental work by K. Heussi, which changed the course of the study on St. Nilus: "Untersuchungen zu Nilus dem Asketen", *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur*, 1917, pp. 123-159.

(10) "Ἀγκυρανός", as in the codex Ottob. Gr. 250 (11th cent.) which is very important in the study of St. Nilus, cf.J. Gribomont, "La tradition manuscrite ..", p. 233ff.

(11) PG 79,580B-581B.

(12) Denenhardt F., *Der heilige Nilus Sinaita. Sein Leben und seine Lehre von Mönchtum*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens, her. von Ildefons Herwegen, Heft 6), Münster 1915. See the Review of the above work in *Theologische Literatur Zeitung* (1915), col. 402 by Heussi. Also, K. Heussi, "Nilus der Asketen und der überfall der Mönche am Sinai", *Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Alterum*, 37 (1916) 107-121. K. Heussi, "Untersuchungen..", F.Degenhart, *Neue Beiträge zur Nilus Forschung*, Münster 1918. Review of the previous work *Annalecta Bollandiana*, 38 (1920) 420-423 V(an) D(e) V(orst). Also, K Heussi, *Das Nilusproblem*, Leipzig 1921.

(13) According to McCarthy, the Nilus of the *Narratio* is "an unreliable reporter. Even if he was reliable, his evidence comes from the sixth century". Cf. his "The symbolism of blood and sacrifice", in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88 (1969) p. 168.

(14) According to Mayerson the *Narratio* presents elements of Stoic-Cynic philosophical teaching. In his view, the *Narratio* "contains legitimate evidence for an ascetic sect, somewhat Christianized but to what extent, unknown, that maintained itself for a short period of the following the establishment of Christianity in Palaestina Tertia in 359". Cf. Mayerson, "Observations ..", p. 57.

(15) Because the problem of the identity of St Nilus essentially depends on the *Narratio* and its authenticity and because this time the arguments are related to this work, Henniger rejects altogether the historical value of the *Narratio* in his work "Ist der sogenannte Nilus-Bericht eine brauchbare religionsgeschichtliche Quelle?", *Anthropos* 50 (1955) 81-148. McCarthy ("The symbolism ..", p. 168) refers to the trustworthiness of Nilus' *Narratio*. Mayerson disagrees as regards the authenticity, which he accepts, but supports the hypothesis that in the worst case this is "a kind of historical fiction in which the author has placed his major characters, Nilus and

Theodulus, in a setting that is historically true". Cf. Mayerson's "The desert of southern Palestine according to the Byzantine sources", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963) p. 161. Christides comments on this that "the problems of the reliability and date of composition cannot be separated". Cf. his "Once again the Narrations of Nilus Sinaiticus", *Byzantion* 43 (1973) p. 39.

(16) Cf. the dissertation of H. Ringshausen, *Zur Verfasserschaft und chronologie dem der Nilus Ancyranus, zugeschriebenen werke*, Frankfurt/Main 1967. On the Song of Songs see: A. Sovic, "De Nili monachi Commentario in Canticum Canticorum reconstruendo", *Biblica* 2 (1921) 42-52. R. Browning, "Le commentaire de saint Nil d' Ancyre sur le Cantique de Cantiques", *Revue Benedictine* 24 (1966) 107-114. H. U. Rosenbaum, "Der Hoheliedkommentar des Nilus von Ancyra, Ms Ogder 30 und die Katenenüberlieferung", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 91:2-3 (1980) 187-206. Finally, S. Lucà, "Il commentario al cantico dei cantici di Nilo di Ancira", *Studi Byzantini e Neogreci* (1983) 111-126.

(17) In his first attempts towards a critical edition of the *Narratio*, F. Conca had published two communications which prepared the way for this edition. The first one appeared in 1978 and dealt with the problems of the critical edition, citing the codices which preserve the text of the Διηγήματα. Conca distinguishes between two groups "α" and "β" and compares them thoroughly (Cf. his "Per una edizione critica di Narrationes" [PG 79: 589-694], in *Annali della Facoltà di lettere e Filosofia dell' Università degli studi di Milana*, 31 (1978) 37-57). In his second communication Conca examines on the basis of the text which Pierre Poussines published in Paris in 1639 and which was reprinted in Migne's edition whether the *Narratio* of St Nilus could be regarded as a "romanzo". Cf. "Le narrationes di Nilo eil romanzo Greko", *Studi Byzantini e Neogreci*, 1983 pp. 349-360. In 1983 Conca produced his critical edition of the *Narratio*. Cf. the review of P. Georgountzou in *Platon*, 36 (1984) 130-133.

(18) This agonizing care for the life of the monk is most eloquently presented in his admonition "to his own disciple": "Do not say, my brother, that I am like all the other monks. I tell you my son, that there are many plants on the mountains and the hills, on the thickets and the plains, but only the fruit-bearing trees of paradise are of worth; whereas those which bear no fruit are destined for burning", Ep4:1 (54BA). The monastic life is not a self-explanatory quality of life.

(19) The above mentioned Epistle of the 4th book of the Epistles of St Nilus could be justifiably described as an epistle of "agony for pastoral care". There are, of course, other epistles, where St Nilus expresses his thought equally decisively, as for instance in the following: Περὶ ὧν ἠξίωσάς με ἀρτίως, σημαίνω σοι· Σοῦ δὲ τῇ μνήμῃ, ἐγγάραξον διὰ τοὺς λόγους τῆς λήθης" [Ep3:43 (408Dff)]. It is, however, in the first epistle of book 4 where the agony of the pastor for his flock is expressed most explicitly. Perhaps the strongest indication of this is the following phrase: "ἀδελφέ, σὺ οἶδας, πῶς λαλῶ διακρίνων τὰ λεγόμενα ἄ γ χ ἰ ν ο υ ς ὑπάρχων", Ep4:1 (549C).

(20) "κατὰ θεόν", LME 8 , MPG 728B.

- (21) "κατὰ Χριστόν", Ep2:305, MPG 349C.
- (22) "ὕψηλή", TPV 42, MPG 1020C.
- (23) "ἀληθής", LME 1, MPG 720A; 3, MPG 721C; Ep2:54, 224C.
- (24) "κρείττων", Ep3:103, 433A.
- (25) "ἄνω φιλοσοφία", OAI MPG 705A.
- (26) "πνευματικὴ φιλοσοφία", Ep3:72, MPG 421C. Cf. here Warnach's "Das Mönchtum als .." and Zur Theologie ..." (details in bibliography).
- (27) "θεολογεῖν", LME 2, MPG 720Bff; TPV 39, MPG 1017ff.
- (28) LME 1, MPG 720Aff.
- (29) LME 3, MPG 721Bff; TPV 34, MPG 1017Aff.
- (30) "ὁ μόνος παραδείξας ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν", LME 3, MPG 721C.
- (31) LME 4, MPG 721C.
- (32) LME 1, MPG 720A.
- (33) LME 4, MPG 721D.
- (34) OAI MPG 705A.
- (35) "φιλοσοφία γὰρ ἔστιν ἠθῶν κατόρθωσις μετὰ δόξης τῆς περὶ τοῦ ὄντος γνώσεως ἀληθοῦς", LME 3, MPG 721B.
- (36) Ep2:305, MPG 349C.
- (37) Matth. 5:1ff.
- (38) TPV 42, MPG 1020Cff.
- (39) τῆς τῶν παραδεδομένων ἀξιολογίας, *Ibid.*
- (40) "Βίος ἄνευ λόγου μᾶλλον ὠφελεῖν πέφυκεν ἢ λόγος ἄνευ βίου. Ὁ μὲν γὰρ καὶ σιγῶν ὠφελεῖ, ὁ δὲ καὶ βοῶν ἐνοχλεῖ. Εἰ δὲ καὶ λόγος καὶ βίος συνδράμοιεν, φιλοσοφίας πάσης ἀποτελοῦσιν ἄγαλμα", Ep3:242, MPG 496D..
- (41) Ep3:103, MPG 433A.,
- (42) LME 75, MPG 809A; E2:257, MPG 332C.
- (43) TPV 27, MPG 1004Aff.

- (1) Ep2, MPG 21B.
- (2) Ep1, MPG 21A.
- (3) Rom. 1:18ff, 1 Cor. 1:18-31.
- (4) Ep1, MPG 209.
- (5) Ep2, MPG 49.
- (6) 1 Cor. 1:18-31.
- (7) Ep2, MPG 49.
- (8) LME 24, MPG 752ABC.
- (9) 1 Cor. 4:10.
- (10) LME 6, MPG 724D.
- (11) *Ibid.*
- (12) Ps. 21:7.
- (13) LME 5, MPG 724C.
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) LME 6, MPG 724D.
- (16) LME 4f, MPG 724B.
- (17) LME 5, MPG 724C.
- (18) LME 4f, MPG 724B.
- (19) The rejection of the whole man also means awakening of man's consciousness of person which denotes existence.
- (20) Luke 17:10
- (21) TPV 10, MPG 984A.
- (22) *Ibid.*
- (23) TPV 58, MPG 1045C.
- (24) TPV 58, MPG 1048A.
- (25) LME 32, MPG 1008C.
- (26) LME 12, MPG 732D.
- (27) TPV 67, MPG 1060CD.

- (28) Ep2 21, MPG 209A.
- (29) *Ibid.*
- (30) *Ibid.*
- (31) Ep2 33, MPG 393C.
- (32) Ep2 331, MPG 361D.
- (33) Ep1 101, MPG 125B.
- (34) LME 62, MPG 793D,796A.
- (35) Job 12:4.
- (36) Ep2 21, MPG 209A.
- (37) *Ibid.*
- (38) Cf. OPP, MPG 1489Aff.
- (39) TPV 9, MPG 980D,981AB.
- (40) TPV 17, MPG 992ABCD.
- (41) *Ibid.*
- (42) TPV 44, MPG 1024BCD.
- (43) TPV 43, MPG 1024A.
- (44) TPV 45, MPG 1025ABCD.
- (45) TPV 43, MPG 1021BCD, 1024A.
- (46) *Ibid.*
- (47) TPV 45, MPG 1025ABCD.
- (48) *Ibid.*
- (49) TPV 49, MPG 1032C.
- (50) TPV 46, MPG 1028A.
- (51) TPV 48, MPG 1029CD, 1032AB.
- (52) *Ibid.*
- (53) TPV 49, MPG 1032BCD.
- (54) *Ibid.*

- (55) LME 8-9, MPG 728BCD, 729AB.
- (56) TPV 46, MPG 1025D, 1028ABC.
- (57) *Ibid.* Cf also Ep2 11, MPG 205B.
- (58) LUC p. 390.
- (59) *Ibid.*
- (60) *Ibid.*
- (61) TVP 53, MPG 1037CD, 1040A.
- (62) LME 9, MPG 729AB.
- (63) LUC verse 268, p. 690.
- (64) LUC verse 261, p. 390.
- (65) LME 9, 729A.
- (66) *Ibid.*
- (67) *Ibid.*
- (68) Ep2 30, MPG 212C
- (69) LME 28, MPG 765D; Cf. also D&M 76.
- (70) LME 27, MPG 756B.
- (71) LME 22, MPG 749B.
- (72) *Ibid.*, 748D.
- (73) *Ibid.*, 749A.
- (74) *Ibid.*
- (75) *Ibid.*
- (76) *Ibid.*
- (77) *Ibid.*
- (78) "Τίς μὲν γὰρ γελάσεται τὸν χθὲς ἐκ καπηλείῳ ὑδροφοροῦντα, σήμερον ὄρων ὡς διδάσκαλον ἀρετῆς παρὰ μαθητῶν δορηφορούμενον, ἢ τὸν πρῶην τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀναχωρήσαντα κακοπραγιῶν, ὁπέ μετὰ πλήθους μαθητῶν διὰ πάσης σοβοῦντα ἀγορᾶς", *Ibid.*
- (79) "Μὴ ταῖς κατὰ μέρος αὐτοῖς γυμνασίαις εἰς ἕξιν ἢ ἐπιστήμη προέκοψε", MoP 1, MPG 1061A.

(80) "Οὐπω δὲ ἀκροβολισμοῦ τινὸς νοητῆς παρατάξεως ἦσθοντο· οὐπω συνδρομὴν ἀσάρκων βαρβάρων πεπόνθασιν· οὐπω προσήλθον αὐτοῖς οἱ ἀόρατοι πύκται· οὐπω προσήγγισαν αὐτοῖς αἱ πικραὶ καὶ ἀμιδεῖς καὶ σκοτειναὶ τῶν ἐναντίων φάλαγγες· οὐπω ἐπῆλθεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἀσύριος· οὐπω ἐδοκιμάσθησαν· πῦψα διεσείσθησαν καὶ διετινάχθησαν...οὐπω οὐδὲ ἤκουσαν σχεδὸν πολυκινδύνου καὶ πολυμόχθου ἀρετῆς τοῦνομα καὶ ἤδη τοπάζουσιν εἰς τέλος ὑπάρχειν ἀγωνισταί, νικηταί πασῶν ἀντικειμένων δυνάμεων, ἔριθοι παντὸς εὐαγγελικοῦ διατάγματος, τορευταί πρακτικῆς ἐξαιρέτου, ἐπιστήμονες παντοίας πνευματικῆς σοφίας, ὡς μηδὲν ὅλως ἔτι προσδεῖσθαι τῶν διδασκόντων αὐτοῖς", Ep3 153, MPG 456B

(81) LME 21, MPG 748C.

(82) *Ibid.*

(83) "ἄρτι προσελθόντος τῷ μονήρει βίῳ", *Ibid.*

(84) "ἐπισυρόμενοι ὄρμαθὸν μαθητῶν", *Ibid.*

(85) "πάντων μᾶλλον ἐστὶ χαλεπώτατον ψυχῶν ἐπιμελεῖσθαι", *Ibid.*

(86) "ὁ μηδὲν πλέον τῆς σωματικῆς ἀσκήσεως φαντασθεῖς, πῶς διορθώσεται τὰ ἦθη τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων; Πῶς δὲ μεταρρυθμίσει τοὺς τῆς πονηρᾶ συνηθείας κεκρατημένους; Πῶς δὲ τοῖς πολεμουμένοις ὑπὸ παθῶν βοηθήσει, μηδὲ ὅλως τὸν κατὰ διάνοιαν εἰδῶς πόλεμον, ἢ πῶς τὰ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ συμβαίνοντα τὰ τραύματα θεραπεύσει, αὐτὸς ἔτι τραύματι κατακείμενος καὶ καταδέσμων δεόμενος;", *Ibid.* 748D.

(87) LME 30, MPG 757C. Cf. also I. Kornarakis, "Νείλου τοῦ ἀσκητοῦ ψυχολογικὲς προοπτικὲς ὑπὸ τὸ πρίσμα συγχρόνων γνώσεων", Α ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ ΠΟΙΜΑΝΤΙΚΗΣ ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΞΟΜΟΛΟΓΗΤΙΚΗΣ, Θεσσαλονίκη 1981, p. 110.

(88) *Ibid.* 757D.

(89) "ἐὰν μὴ πάντοθεν ἔχη ἠσφαλισμένον τὸν λόγον, κινδυνεύει ἐν τοῖς ἀκούσι τοῦ ἐκπεσόντος τῆς ἀσφαλείας λόγου σκανδάλου ἀφορμὴν τοῖς μαθητευομένοις παρέχοντος", LME 29, MPG 757C.

(90) LME 30, MPG 757D.

(91) Cf. M&D 76: Ἄτεχνος κυβερνήτης ἔτοιμος ναυαγία καὶ ἀνεπιστήμων ἡγούμενος ἀπώλεια μαθητῶν. Ἄπειρος ποιμὴν ἐξέστρεψεν ἀστραγάλους προβάτων καὶ ἡγούμενος ὁδοῦς μαθητῶν. Οὐ διαγνώσεται ἐν ὁμίχλῃ ἀνὰ μέσω προβάτων ἀνεπιστήμων ποιμὴν οὐδ' ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμῶν ἐρεῖ τί συμφέρον διδάσκαλος ἄπειρος.

(92) Ep3 106, MPG 433D.

(93) Ep2 176, MPG 289C.

(94) *Ibid.*

(95) *Ibid.* 289D.

(96) *Ibid.* 289C.

(97) *Ibid.*

(98) "ζηλωταὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων γενόμενοι, λύχνοι τινὲς ὑπῆρχον ἐν σκοτιᾷ φαίνοντες, καὶ ἀστέρες ἀπλανεῖς, τὴν ἀφεγγὴ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου καταυγάζοντες νύκτα, καὶ λειμένων πρόβολοι τῷ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀχειμάσῳ, πᾶσιν εὐκόλον ὑποδεικνύοντες τὸ διαφυγεῖν ἀβλαβῶς τὰς τῶν παθῶν προσβολάς. Αὐτὸς δὲ τοσαύτας ψυχὰς ὑποχειρίους ἔχων, ἐξώρισας μὲν τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ μακρὸν ἐφυγάδευσας, τῷ δὲ σκότει τῆς πονηρίας καὶ τῆς κακοηθείας, τὸ σαυτοῦ πρόσωπον ἠδέως ἐγκαλύπτεις, καὶ εἰς κακοεξίαν καὶ χειμῶνα, καὶ ταραχὰς ἀπαύστους ἐμβάλλεις τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ ἀπολέσαι σπεύδεις τοὺς σωθῆναι ὀφείλοντας. Καὶ τις σε ἄρα λυτρώσει τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως;", Ep2 57, MPG 225A. Cf. also Ep3 329, MPG 541A: Καὶ μὴν μηδὲ ἐκεῖνο ἀγνοήσης· πολλοὶ τῶν ἐπισκόπων ἔχουσι κατακληρονομήσαι τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός.

(99) "Φοβερόν τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας θεοῦ ζῶντος", Hebr. 10:31.

(100) Ep3 195, MPG 473BC.

(101) "πόνους καρτερικωτάτοις, καὶ σκληρωτάτοις ἀγωγαῖς, καὶ τοῖς τοῦ κλαυθμοῦ ρεῖθροις, τῇ τε πολυχρονίῳ κακουχίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀκαταπαύστῳ ταπεινώσει", *Ibid.* 473C.

(102) *Ibid.*

(103) "Εἰ ἀδυνατεῖς ὑπὲρ σεαυτοῦ ἀπολογῆσασθαι τῷ θεῷ, πῶς τὴν ἄλλων ψυχῶν προστασίαν καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν, ἐγχειρισθῆναι σπουδάξεις, ὡ ἀνθρῶπε;", Ep3 141, MPG 448D.

(104) "πάντα ρίψωμεν", LME 21, MPG 748B.

(105) "Ἐφοῖτα μὲν γὰρ πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς καθημερινὴν ὁμιλίαν χρῆζοντα ψυχαγωγίας ἐρημίᾳ τῶν παραμυθουμένων τὴν ἀκηδίαν ἐθελοντῆς αὐτὸς ὁ θεός", TPV 14, MPG 988B.

(106) TPV 46, MPG 1028A.

(107) *Ibid.* 1028B.

(108) TPV 14, MPG 1028BC.

(109) Cf. Rom. 7:22, Eph. 3:16, LUC 393.

(110) Ep2 283, MPG 341B.

(111) "παρακαταθήκη αἵματος καὶ πόνου", LME 27, MPG 756B: "δεῖ τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἐρχομένους [ἐπιστασία ψυχῶν] ἀλείψασθαι πρὸς ἀγῶνα ἐπίπονον".

(112) "δικαίου Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου τῶν ὄλων, τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ τοσαῦτα παθόντα ὑπὸ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ τῶν εὐεργετηθέντων, καὶ μηδὲν κατ' αὐτῶν ἀγανακτοῦντα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν Πατέρα ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐξευμενιζόμενον", Ep3 108, MPG 433D-436A.

(113) "Μὴ πρὸ τοῦ ἀπαρτισμοῦ τῶν ἀρετῶν κατηψηεῖν καὶ μυσταγωγεῖν ἄλλους βούλου φιλοτιμίας χάριν· ἀλλὰ πρῶτον τελεσιουργήσον πάσαν ἀγαθὴν πράξιν, καὶ μετὰ τὴν τούτων λαμπραδουχίαν γενόμενος τέλειος...ἐν παρρησίᾳ παίδευε τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ δίδασκε", Ep3 156, MPG 457C.

(114) Ep3 153, MPG 453A.

(115) LME 31, MPG 760BC.

(116) MoP 8-9, MPG 1069C-1072B.

(117) LME 31, MPG 760B: Μετὰ γὰρ τὸ πάντα ὑποτάξαι τὰ πάθη, καὶ μηδομόθεν ἔτιο πολέμους, ὄχλειν, μηδὲ εἰς ἀνάγκην χρήσεως ἀμυντηρίων ἔλκεσθαι ὀργάνων καλῶν τὸ γεωργεῖν ἐτέρους. Cf also MoP 9, MPG 1072AC and MoP 10, MPG 1072C-1073A.

(118) Is. 2:4. See also MoP 8, MPG 1069D.

(119) LME 32, MPG 760C.

(120) "ἔτι ἐν τοῖς τῆς κακίας ὑλομανοῦσι ἔργοις", *Ibid.*

(121) "καὶ τὴν ἀπόλασιν τῶν γεωργηθέντων κωλύοντος καὶ τοῖς πολεμίοις μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς πονήσασιν τὴν ἀφθονίαν παρέχοντος", LME 32, MPG 760D.

(122) "μετὰ δὲ τὴν τῶν πολεμίων ἐκκεχειρίαν, ταύτην χρήσασθαι (δηλ. τὴ γεωργικὴ γυμνασίᾳ) συμβουλεύει λέγων· "Ὅταν εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, φυτεύσατε ἐν αὐτῇ πᾶν ξύλον κάρπιμον", Lev. 19:25.

(123) "Πρὶν δὲ εἰσέλθητε, οὐ φυτεύσητε· προσυπακούεται γὰρ ἐκεῖνῳ τοῦτο καὶ εἰκότως", LME 32, MPG 760D.

(124) LME 24, MPG 752A.

(125) Ἰωάννου Κορναράκη, *Ibid.* σ. 106.

(126) "ἐτέροις ὑποθέσθαι τὰ τῆς μάχης", LME 24, MPG 752A.

(127) *Ibid.* 752B.

(128) "τὰς ἐπιβουλάς προλέγων τοῦ ἀντιπάλου ἀπονητὶ τὴν νίκην αὐτοῖς βραβεύση καὶ στεφανίτας ἐξαγάγη τοῦ ἀγῶνος", LME 28, MPG 757A.

(129) Jos. 4:1ff.

- (130) "μηδενὸς παραιτεῖσθαι τῶν ἐπερχομένων", LME 28, MPG 756C.
- (131) "αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ μνήμη ρυποῦν τὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ λέγοντος πέφυκε", *Ibid.* MPG 756D.
- (132) "σπάνιος ὁ τοιοῦτος (ποιμὴν), οὐ ραδίως εὕρισκόμενος", *Ibid.* MPG 757A.
- (133) LME 24, MPG 752B.
- (134) Ἰωάννου ΚΟΡΝΑΡΑΚΗ, *op. cit.*, 106. Cf. also "σάλπιγξ διεγείρει προθυμίαν πολεμιστῶν καὶ μαθητῶν σπουδὴν διαδασκαλίᾳ πρακτικῆς ἀρετῆς" (D&M, 76). Practical virtue reveals the spiritual possibilities of the pastor, which are the fruit of personal training and struggle.
- (135) LME 35, MPG 764B.
- (136) "οὐ λόγος, ἀλλ' ἔργον τοὺς ἀρχομένους ἐνάγει πρὸς μίμησιν", LME 25, MPG 752B.
- (137) Judices 9, 48ff.
- (138) Acts 20:34.
- (139) "αἱ πράξεις στερηθεῖσαι τῆς θεωρίας μαραίνονται", LME 25, MPG 753A.
- (140) LME 35, 764B.
- (141) "ἡ τῶν μαθητῶν ἀμέλεια κίνδυνον φέρει τῷ διδασκάλῳ", LME 24, MPG 756A.
- (142) LME 35, 764B. "ἔπειτα γινωσκέτω, ὅτι οὐκ ἔλαττον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀρχομένων ἢ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἀγωνιᾶν ὀφείλει".
- (143) "ὑπὲρ ἐκείνων ὑφέξει λόγον", *Ibid.*
- (144) *Ibid.* 764C.
- (145) "Ἐὰν ἐξαγάγῃς τίμιον ἐξ ἀναξίου, ὡς στόμα μου ἔστι", *Ibid.* Cf. Jerem. 15:19.
- (146) LME 36m 764D.
- (147) LME 41, MPG 772A.
- (148) Gen. 4:8.
- (149) Gen. 24: 1-2.
- (150) MoP 17, MPG 1080D.
- (151) "ὑπὲρ τὴν οἰκείαν ἔξιν ἐγχειρεῖν", LME 47, 777A.

(152) IV Regn. 5:20ff.

(153) Matth. 26:14ff, Mark 14:10ff, Luke 22:3ff, John 13:2ff.

(154) "ὡς εἰ ἔμενον παρὰ τοῖς σωφρονισταῖς οὐκ ἂν ἐπλημμέλησαν ἑκάτερος αὐτῶν", LME 36: 765A.,

(155) "Ὁ λέγων ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο ἀναχωρητῆς γίνομαι, ἵνα μηδένα ἔχω τὸν εἰς ὄργην παρακνίζοντα, οὐδὲ διαφέρει ὁ τοιοῦτος θηρίου ἀλογίστου. Καὶ γὰρ τὰ θηρία βλέπομεν ἠρεμοῦντα, καὶ μηδὲν ὄλως ἀγραινόμενα, ἐὰν μὴ τις ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα εἰς θυμὸν διεγείρει", Ep3 73, MPG421D.

(156) "Ὅσοι μὴ βούλονται διὰ τῆς λόγου ὑπακοῆς καὶ πίστεως σωθῆναι, οὗτοι κατὰ τινὰ ἀπόρρητον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγαθότητα διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀλγεινῶν καὶ σκυθρωπῶν ἐπιφορῶν σωφρονίζονται", Ep3 304, MPG 533B.

(157) LME 27, MPG 756B.

(158) "ὅταν ἐπὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ ἀνεπισημοσύνη ραθυμῶσιν ἐκεῖνοι", *Ibid.* 756A.

(159) LME 36, MPG 765A. The damage caused by the disobedient pupil is described in a variety of ways: "ὁ κηφὴν ἐσθίει μελισσῶν πόνους. In the same way "ὁ ράθυμος ἀδελφὸς ἐλλαττοῖ συνοδίας ἐνάρετον πρᾶξιν". and as "ὁ δειλὸς στρατιώτης ἐκλύει πολεμιστῶν χεῖρας", likewise "ὁ ἀμελής μοναχὸς χαυνοὶ προθυμίαν ἀδελφῶν" (DoM 76, 12-15).

(160) Ezek. 4:3.

(161) "κοινωνία κολάσεως τῷ ραθυμοῦντι", LME 36, MPG 765A.

(162) "ἄλλως γὰρ ὁ τεχνίτης καὶ ἄλλως ὁ ἄτεχνος κρίνει", LME 42, MPG 772A.

(163) *Ibid.* 772B.

(164) "Οὐκ οὖν οἱ ἐπιτρέψαντες ἑτέρους τὴν οἰκείαν σωτηρίαν, ἀφέντες τὰ εἰκότα, τῇ τέχνῃ τοῦ εἰδότος παραχωρεῖτωσαν τῶν ἰδίων λογισμῶν ἀξιοπιστοτέραν τὴν ἐκείνων κρίνοντες ἐπιστήμην", *Ibid.* 772C.

(165) OAI 704AB-705A.

(166) LME 43, MPG 772Dff. As St Nilus certifies: "ἀνήκοος μαθητῆς διεστραμμένον ξύλον καὶ οὐ μὴ ὀρθωθῆ ἑλεγχόμενος συνεχῶς" (D&M 76,8).

(167) *Ibid.* Cf. III Regn. 9:19.

(168) "ἑαυτοῦ ἐπινοίας", LME 42, MPG 42, MPG 772B.

(169) "διατι μῆ καὶ τοῖς τὴν νοσητὴν αἴρειν μέλλουσι κιβωτὸν τὸ αὐτὸ πρακτέον;", LME 44, MPG 773C.

(170) Gen. 37:17ff.

(171) LME 44, MPG 773C.

(172) "ἀρνήσεως ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ θελήματος ὡς μηδὲν ἀψύχου σώματος ἑαυτὸς διαφέρει", LME 41, MPG 772A.

(173) "Οὕτως ὁ διδάσκαλος ἐν τοῖς μαθηταῖς τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐπιστήμην ἐργάσεται ἔχων πειθηνίους, καὶ πρὸς μηδὲν (ὡς ἡ ὕλη) ἀντιλέγοντας (μαθητάς)", *Ibid.*

(174) "Ταχεῖα βελτίωσις ἔσται τῷ μαθητῇ, ἐὰν ὄψει τοῦ διδασκάλου ἢ διὰ παντός", LME 36, MPG 764D.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

(1) Ep2 82, MPG 237B.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Ep3 10, MPG 372C.

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) Ep2 82, MPG 23BC: "Ἡ ψυχὴ ... βαρουμένη οὖν τῷ γήινῳ σώματι διὰ τὴν θνητότητα, εἰκότως νῦν ἐπιθυμεῖ διαλυθῆναι εἰλικρινῶς, καὶ ἀμερίμνως, καὶ ἀφόβιος θανάτου συνεῖναι τῷ Δεσπότῃ, ἀναλύσασα ἀπὸ τοῦ θνητοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀθάνατόν τε καὶ ἄτρεπτον".

(6) "συνδιαγωνίζεαι τῇ ἀλύτῳ εὐφροσύνῃ καὶ τῇ μακαριότητι καὶ τῇ ἀναμαρτησίῳ", *Ibid.*, 237C.

(7) OPP, MPG 1489A.

(8) "νεκρὸς πρὸς πράξεις ἀρετῆς", *Ibid.*

(9) LUC 394, viii 6:96: "τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος ἀγαπηθεῖσαν ψυχὴν θέλει καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐνθυμίοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς πράξεσιν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐνοφραγίσαι ἑαυτὸν, καὶ μόνην ἔχειν τὴν τούτου μνήμην ἐτέρου δὲ μηδενός".

(10) Can, MPG 1660CD.

(11) Ep2 2, MPG 204A: "Ἐπερασιῶ φησὶν ὁ θεός, τῆς πόλεως ταύτης, δι' ἐμέ, καὶ διὰ Δαυίδ τὸν δούλόν μου. Πάλιν νῦν νοήσωμεν τὴν πιστοτάτην ψυχὴν". Cf. IV Reg. 19:34, 20:6.

- (12) Can, MPG 1657BC.
 (13) TPV 42, MPG 1020D.
 (14) TPV 17, MPG 992C.
 (15) TPV 5, MPG 976B.
 (16) "συνδῆσαν", TVP 4, MPG 973D.

- (17) Jac. 1:6.
 (18) Ep3 167, MPG 461C.
 (19) LME 67, MPG 800Df.
 (20) OSM 7, MPG 1152Cf.
 (21) LME 67, MPG 800D.
 (22) OSM 13, MPG 1157D.
 (23) OSM 17, MPG 1161D.

Though this work of St Nilus is regarded by some scholars as inauthentic and is attributed to Evagrius (see: the brief survey in P. Christou's *Patrology*, v.3 p. 234), we follow Disdier, DTC 11(1931) 664, Moiescu (Εὐάγριος Ποντικός, Ἀθήναι 1937, σσ 98f) and Quasten (*Patrology* iii, p.501), firmly believing that it is Nilus' work. Cf. also E. Peterson's "Nilus *De octo spiritibus malitiae* im Isaak Florilegium", *ZKTh* 56 (1932), pp. 596-599.

- (24) Cf. Ep2 120, MPG 252C: "Σώζων σώζε τὴν σεαυτοῦ ψυχὴν".
 (25) Ep1 99, MPG 125A.
 (26) "μεταβαλλομένη καλῶς, ἐξημερωθῆναι, καὶ φιλοκαληθῆναι, καλλιεργηθῆναι τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον μεθαρμοσθῆναι σχῆμα", Ep3 25, MPG 381D.
 (27) Can, MPG 1553B.
 (28) Can, MPG 1617CD-1620AB.
 (29) "ἡ κατάληψις τῆς ἀληθείας", Can, MPG 1568CD.
 (30) Cf. Ep3 152, MPG 453ff, and Ep2 7, MPG 204D.
 (31) "Ἄνθρωπος δειλὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, ἀποστραφῆτω εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ εἰς πόλεμον, ἵνα μὴ δειλιάνῃ τὴν καρδίαν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ", Deut. 20:8.
 (32) "... δύναται (γάρ) τις δειλὸς ὑπάρχων πρὸς πειρασμοὺς καὶ πόλεμον δαιμόνων, παραλύσαι τὴν προθυμίαν τοῦ εὐζώνου πρὸς ἀριστείαν", Ep1 276, MPG 184C:
 (33) Ep3 152, MPG 453C.
 (34) *Ibid.* 453B.
 (35) Ep1 64, MPG 104D.

- (36) Ezek. 3:7.
- (37) Is. 1:16.
- (38) "Ἐκοπασιν τῆς λιθίνης καρδίας", Ezek. 11:19.
- (39) Ezek. 11:20.
- (40) "τὴν διατριβὴν τῶν μετὰ τὸ ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὸν μονήρη βίον τὴν ὑπερηφανίαν ἀσπαζομένων, καὶ τὰς γνάθους φουσιόντων, καὶ ἐξογκούντων τὰ στήθη", Ep3 152, MPG 453C.
- (41) Ep1 65, MPG 112A.
- (42) Ep1 66, MPG 112A.
- (43) Ep1 65, MPG 112A.
- (44) Ep3 220, MPG 484C.
- (45) *Ibid.*
- (46) Ep2 162, MPG 277Bff.
- (47) Ep2 29, MPG 212B.
- (48) Ep2 7, MPG 204D.
- (49) MoP 2, MPG 1064A.
- (50) Ep3 268, MPG 517A.
- (51) "μέχρι ἂν τοῖς πᾶσι μίαν σύμπνοιαν πρὸς τὸν δρόμον ἐμποιῆσει", *Ibid.*
- (52) LME 16, 740B.
- (53) Ep1 275, MPG 184B.
- (54) TPV 22, 997B.
- (55) OAI, MPG 705D.
- (56) Ep1 160, MPG 148B.
- (57) "βδελύσσεται τὸν νοῦν ποὺ προστάσσει μοχθηρά", Ep4 10, MPG 553C.
- (58) "ἐπιλαθόμενος τῶν ἰδίων μέτρων εἰς τυραννίδα ἔλθη, καὶ ὄπλα τολμήσει ἄραι κατὰ τοῦ κτησαμένου", Ep1, 160, MPG 148C.
- (59) OAI, MPG 705D.
- (60) OSM 1, MPG 1145B.

- (61) OSM 11, MPG 1156C.
- (62) OSM 12, MPG 1157C (Νοῦν θεωρητικὸν ἀμβλύνει λύπη).
- (63) OSM4, 1148D.
- (64) OSM 9, MPG 1153C.
- (65) OSM 8, MPG 1153A.
- (66) Cf. TVP 49, 1032Bff.
- (67) LME 46, 776C.
- (68) *Ibid.* ".. σώματι ἐκ μακρᾶς ἀρρώστιας ἀναλαμβάνειν ἀρξαμένω, ᾧ καὶ ἡ τυχούσα πρόφασις τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν νόσον ἀναλύσεως αἰτία γίνεται μῆπω πρὸς ἰσχὺν παγέντι κραταιοτέρα".
- (69) MoP 23, 1088BC. The mastering of the mind is the τροπή τῆς μερίμνης περὶ τὰ λυσιτελῆ, the dialogue with God. The unceasing movement of the mind is not a negative aspect. Its quality depends upon its usage.
- (70) LME 66, MPG 800C.
- (71) Cf. I KORNARAKIS, Ἀνταύγειες τῆς πατερικῆς ἐρήμου μέσα στὸν σύγχρονο κόσμο (ἀπὸ τὸν Ἄλμπερτ Καμὺ στὸν Ἄββᾶ Ἰσαάκ τὸν Σύρο), Θεσσαλονίκη 1982², pp. 59ff.
- (72) "μελέτη γὰρ καὶ γυμνασίᾳ λόγων πνευματικῶν, καὶ προσευχῇ συντεταμένη ἀφίσταται τῶν μὴ ἀρεσκόντων τῷ Θεῷ ὁ νοῦς, καὶ μεθίσταται πρὸς τὰ σπουδαζόμενα κατὰ Θεόν, τούτα ἐνευκαιρῶν, κακείνων λήθην ποιούμενος", MoP 20, MPG 1084D.
- (73) Ep2 173, 289A.
- (74) "ἢ Θεῷ προσευχόμενος ἢ λογιζόμενος τὶ τῶν χρησίμων", OAI, MPG 708A.
- (75) *Ibid.*
- (76) TPV 43, MPG 1021B.
- (77) Ep1 17, 88D.
- (78) *Ibid.*
- (79) Matth. 5:48. Cf. TPV 43, MPG 1024Aff.
- (80) OSM 2, MPG 1145C.
- (81) Ep1 6, MPG 85A.

- (82) EP1 184, MPG 156C; and Ep1 314, MPG 196C.
- (83) MoP 13, MPG 1076C.
- (84) MoP 11, MPG 1073A.
- (85) OSM 5, MPG 1149D.
- (86) MoP 11, MPG 1073B.
- (87) Mark 5:28.
- (88) Ep3 257, 512B: "ὁ ἐπιθυμήσας τὶ πρᾶγμα, εἴτε καλὸν εἴτε κακὸν, ἤδη ἐπλήρωσεν αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ αὐτοῦ".
- (89) MoP 10, 1072C.
- (90) OSM 2, MPG 1145C.
- (91) Ep1 6, MPG 85A.
- (92) Ep2 224, MPG 317A.
- (93) "ρέπει πρὸς τὰ τοῦ χρόνου ἐκβεβλημένα πάθη", *Ibid.*
- (94) "ἡ ἔξις τῆς ἀρετῆς ὀξυρρεπῆς τις ἐστὶ, καὶ ἄγαν εὐκόλως, εἰ ἀμελεῖτο, ταλαντεύουσα ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία", *Ibid.*
- (95) Ep3 148, MPG 425D.
- (96) MoP 8, 1069C.
- (97) Ep3 148, 452D.
- (98) "μονὴ γίνεται τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος εἰρηνευομένη διάνοια", OSM 10, MPG 1156A.
- (99) Can, MPG 1677B: "Οἶκος δὲ τῆς νύμφης, ἢ τὸ ἐκάστου τῶν ποιημάτων ἡγεμονικόν, ἢ αὐτὴ ἡ Ἐκκλησία".
- (100) OSM 5, MPG 1149D.
- (101) Ep1 17, MPG 88D.
- (102) Ep2 6, MPG 204C.
- (103) Ep2 173, MPG 288C.
- (104) Ep3 64, MPG 420B; also Ep2 6, MPG 204Cff.
- (105) Ep3 64, MPG 420B: "Ἀπόκρυφον τῆς ψυχῆς ταμεῖον ἢ καρδία προσεῖρηται, ἐν ἣ πολλὰ γίνονται ἀνομία, ἄς μόνος βλέπει ὁ ἀκοίμητος ὀφθαλμός".

(106) Can, MPG 1660CD.

(107) Matth. 12:33 ("Ἡ ποιήσατε τὸ δένδρον καλὸν καὶ τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ καλόν, ἢ ποιήσατε τὸ δένδρον σαπρὸν καὶ τὸν καρπὸν σαπρὸν· ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ καρποῦ τὸ δένδρον γινώσκεται").

(108) Ep3 40, MPG 405C.

(109) *Ibid.* 405D.

(110) Ep2 6, MPG 204C.

(111) Ep2 7, MPG 204D.

(112) Ep3 185, 469D-472A.

(113) Ep3 268, 517Aff.

(114) "καθέλκει τὴν ψυχὴν πρὸς ἀπρεπῆ ἐνθυμήματα", Ep2 79, MPG 236C.

(115) Ep1 275, MPG 184B.

(116) "Ὁ γὰρ ἕκαστος νοῦς καθάπερ βασιλεὺς ἔσω διατρίβει, θυρωρὸν τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἔχων τὴν διάνοιαν, ἥτις ὅταν τοῖς σωματικοῖς ἐγχειρίσῃ (σωματικὸν δὲ τὸ καθαίρειν πυρούς) εὐχερῶς διαλαθόντες οἱ ἐπίβουλοι θανατοῦσι τὸν νοῦν", LME 16, MPG 740B.

(117) Ep3 148, MPG 425D. Cf. Can, MPG 1667B: οἶξος δὲ τῆς νύμφης .. τὸ ἐκάστου τῶν ποιημάτων ἡγεμονικόν .."

(118) Ep1 17, MPG 88D.

(119) Ep2 162, MPG 277Bff.

(120) There are two very interesting studies on this subject: Jeffrey Burton Russel's *Satan, the Early Christian Tradition*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 1981; and Giovanni Papini's *The devil, notes for a future diabolology*, London 1955.

(121) Ep3 153, 453D.

(122) Ep2 167, 280C.

(123) LME 28, MPG 757A.

(124) Ep3 42, MPG 408B.

(125) Ep3 288, MPG 489A.

(126) Ep1 294, MPG 189C.

(127) Ep3 78, 424Cff.

(128) Ep2 140, MPG 261B.

(129) ".. [ὁ διάβολος] οὐ πάνυ παρὶ [τῶν τοῦ κόσμου] μέλλει, μάλλον δὲ κατὰ τῶν μονήρη καὶ ἡσύχιον ἐλομένων βίον, τὴν ἀμώμητη τῶν μυρίων πειρασμῶν καθ' ἐκάστην ὡς εἰπεῖν, ὥρα φιλοκαλεῖ, καὶ ὀξύνει μάχαιρα", Ep3 153, MPG 465A.

(130) Ep2 238, MPG 321C.

(131) Ep3 42, MPG 408C.

(132) *Ibid.*

(133) Ep3 43, MPG 412AB.

(134) Ep2 167, MPG 280C.

(135) Ep3 43, MPG 409BCD.

(136) Ep2 140, MPG 261A.

(137) Ep1 294, MPG 189C.

(138) Ep2 80, MPG236D.

(139) Ep3 43, MPG 413B.

(140) Ep2 167, MPG 284D.

(141) Ep3 224, MPG 485D.

(142) Ep3 79, MPG 425A: "ἀθλητοῦ ἄδηλος ῥώμη, ἐὰν μὴ ἦ ὁ ἀνταγωνιζόμενος, καὶ χρυσὸς δόκιμος ὢν, ὥσπερ ὁ Ἰώβ, ὥσπερ ὁ Ἰωσήφ, καὶ πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι".

(143) Ep3 80, MPG 425A.

(144) Ep3 40, MPG 408A.

(145) Ep1 25, MPG 92B.

(146) Cf. Ep4 50, MPG 573B: Πειρασμὸς μὲν λέγεται καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ διάβολος· πειρασμὸς δὲ καὶ ὁ τρόπος, καθ' ὃν πειράζει εἴωθεν ὁ ἐχθρὸς τοῦς ἀνθρώπους".

(147) Ep3 40, MPG 405C-408A.

(148) Ep3 78, MPG 424C.

(149) Ep1 25, MPG 92B.

(150) Job 1:9.

(151) Job 1:12.

- (152) Ep2 79, MPG 236C.
- (153) Ep3 288, MPG 489A.
- (154) *Ibid.*
- (155) Ep2 103, MPG 245C.
- (156) Ep3 43, MPG 412Aff.
- (157) Ep3 224, MPG 485D.
- (158) Ep3 238, MPG 321Bf: "τροφή τούτου καὶ σκέπη καὶ πανοπλία τὰ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτήματα, δι' ὧν κατασφάττει καὶ ἀπόλλυσιν ἡμᾶς".
- (159) Ep3 224, MPG 485D.
- (160) Ep2 140, MPG 257D.
- (161) Ep3 78, MPG 424C.
- (162) *Ibid.*
- (163) Ep2 167, MPG 280C.
- (164) Ep2 140, MPG 261B.
- (165) *Ibid.* 260A.
- (166) Ep3 78, MPG 424D.
- (167) Ep2 140, MPG 260B.
- (168) Ep3 82, MPG 425B.
- (169) Ep2 140, MPG 257Dff.
- (170) Ep3 43, MPG 409B.
- (171) Ep2 167, MPG 280C.
- (172) *Ibid.* 281C
- (173) Ep3 43, MPG 409BCD
- (174) Ep3 143, MPG 449C.
- (175) Ep3 43, MPG 413B.
- (176) Ep2 140, MPG 261B.
- (177) Ep 3 43, MPG 413B.

(178) Ep2 140, MPG 261C.

(179) *Ibid.* 261AB.

(180) "φοβηθήσονται σε, οὐς τὸ πρὶν ἐφοβήθης, διὰ τὴν βουλήν, ἣν βεβούληται Κύριος", Ep2 138, MPG 257BC.

(181) *Ibid.* 257B.

(182) "ὅτι ποιήσω ὑμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἔχθραν ὑμῶν, καὶ κατὰ τὸν ζῆλον ὑμῶν, ἐκ τοῦ μεμισηκέναι τοὺς μοναχοὺς, καὶ καταδιῶξαι ἀνθρώπους πένητας καὶ πτωχοὺς, καὶ κατανευγμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ θανατῶσαι αὐτούς", Ep3 99, MPG 432B.

(183) *Ibid.* 432C.

(184) According to Tomáš Spidlik the description of the birth of the passions, owes a great deal to the eastern Fathers and especially to the Sinaitic tradition in which he includes St Nilus, St John of the Ladder, St Hesychius and St Philotheus. Cf. his work *The spirituality of the Christian East*, Michigan 1986, p. 241.

(185) MoP 11, MPG 1073A.

(186) Ep2 142, MPG 265A.

(187) Ep3 74, MPG 424A: "τὰ τῶν δαιμόνων ἐμπαθῆ νοήματα, δίκην λαγῶν πολύγωνα τυγχάνει".

(188) *Ibid.* 424A: "Τὸ γὰρ ὑποβληθὲν τῇ ψυχῇ πονηρὸν ἐνθύμημα πολλοὺς ἄλλους ἀποτίκτει λογισμούς, ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου μεταλλαττόμενόν τε καὶ μεταμορφούμενον".

(189) "Πότε μὲν κρύπτονται ἔνδον παρ' ἡμῖν οἱ δαιμονιώδεις λογισμοί, πότε δὲ διακόπτουσι ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω, κατεπείγοντας ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἁμαρτίαν", Ep2 139, MPG 257C.

(190) "ὡς μὲν γὰρ ὄφις τις ἐπεισέρχεται ἰοβόλος, δῆθεν μετ' ἡσυχίας πολλῆς, ἐπᾶν δὲ ἰσχύση, δάκνει. Κράζει οὖν κατὰ καρδίας ἐπονειδίζων· Εὐγε Εὐγε· ἐπέτυχον γὰρ", Ep3 105, MPG 433B.

(191) Ep1 318, MPG 197A.

(192) Ep3 43, MPG 412A.

(193) "ἐπὶ τὸ χειρὸν ἀλλιωθεῖσα, ἐκνευρίζεται μὲν πρὸς ἐργασίαν τοῦ κρείττονος, ὀρέγεται δὲ τῶν ὀλεθρίων", Ep1 207, MPG 160B.

(194) TPV 7, MPG 477Cf.

(195) Ep3 131, MPG 444D.

(196) MoP 20, 1084C.

- (197) MoP 21, 1085B.
- (198) *Ibid.*
- (199) Ep3 114, MPG 436D.
- (200) Ep3 258, MPG 513BC. Cf. MoP 7, MPG 1068Df.
- (201) Ep1 55, MPG 108B.
- (202) MoP 20, MPG 1084Cf.
- (203) *Ibid.*
- (204) MoP 7, MPG 1068D.
- (205) TPV 24, 1000C.
- (206) Cf. LME 58, MPG 789D.
- (207) LME 37, 765B.
- (208) Ep1 318, MPG 197A.
- (209) Ep2 103, MPG 245C.
- (210) MoP 3, MPG 1064C.
- (211) TPV 54, MPG 1040C.
- (212) LME 37, MPG 765Bf.
- (213) MoP 3, MPG 1064C.
- (214) *Ibid.*
- (215) *Ibid.*
- (216) LME 54, MPG 785C.
- (217) Ep1 314, MPG 196C. Cf. 161D.
- (218) OSM 2, MPG 1145C.
- (219) Ep1 194, MPG 156C.
- (220) Ep1 314, MPG 196C.
- (221) Ep2 128, 253D.
- (222) LME 51, MPG 784A.
- (223) *Ibid.*

(224) Ep3 228, MPG 489A.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

- (1) OAI, MPG 704B.
- (2) I use the present tense because monasticism is a condition of life not for historiography or encomiastic memorials but for a search after God and entry into communion with him. To seek God in solitude is not simply a historical event but a constant existential act which is appropriated moment by moment.
- (3) Ep1 60, MPG 109B.
- (4) Ep1 264, MPG 180C.
- (5) Ep1 278, MPG 521C.
- (6) Ep3 83, MPG 120A; Ep3 164, MPG 460D.
- (7) Ep1 264, MPG 180C.
- (8) Ep3 186, MPG 472A.
- (9) Ep3 15, MPG 377B.
- (10) Ep3 245, MPG 529C.
- (11) Ep3 278, MPG 521C.
- (12) Ep3 99, MPG 432C.
- (13) Ep4 61, MPG 577D where we come across the phrase "ἱστοριῶν Παλαιᾶς καὶ Νέας Διαθήκης". Cf. Ep4 1, MPG 545A: "ἀναγίνωσκε τὴν Νέαν Διαθήκην". According to St Nilus the New Testament does not abolish the Old, but "supplies a second law", as it were, on the grounds of theological maturity, which is a product of the spiritual *paideia* exercised by God. The stones of spiritual sensibility become light and fleshly like the heart (Ep1 63, MPG 109CD; cf. also Ep1 66, MPG 112A). In spite of all this St Nilus in his epistle Ep4 1, without failing to stress that the books of the Old Testament are not unacceptable but have been the product of the Holy Spirit and that without them the Church is not constituted, advises that their reading should be avoided because "μονάζουσι κατάνυξιν μὴ τίκτοντα". Presumably he protects in this way "his own disciple" (cf the title of the Epistle) from exposure to dangers which his experienced insight can foresee. Besides, it should not be forgotten that Old Testament quotations are found everywhere in Nilus' writings with a hesychastic content and that he advances his own interpretation of these verses. Indeed there is an entire commentary on the Old Testament Book of the Song of Songs by St Nilus (Ep4 1, MPG 545A).
- (14) Ep1 63, MPG 109CD.

(15) Ep1 66, MPG 112A.

(16) Ep3 295, MPG 529C.

(17) "Ἐν γὰρ τῷ θείῳ λόγῳ πάσης νοητῆς ἐστὶ βρώσεως ποιότης· τοῖς μὲν ἀναγεννηθεῖσιν ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ Πνεύματος γίνεται ἄδολον γάλα, τοῖς δὲ ἀσθενοῦσιν λάχανον φαίνεται, τοῖς δὲ τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα ἔχουσι πρὸς διάκρισιν τροφὴν ἑτέραν ὁ λόγος χαρίζεται, καὶ τοῖς πᾶσι γίνεται τὰ πάντα, ἵνα σωθῶσι ἄνθρωποι, καὶ καταξιωθῶσι τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς", Ep3 186, MPG 472AB.

(18) Prov 24:13.

(19) "Βρῶσιν δὲ λέγει γλυκεῖαν καὶ μελιτώδη τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν καὶ τὴν μελέτην τῶν λογίων τοῦ Πνεύματος", Ep1 262, MPG 180.

(20) Ep1 264, MPG 180C: "Ψιλὸν τὸ γράμμα τῆς θεοπνεύστου Γραφῆς, κηρίον ἂν λέγοιτο· ὁ δὲ γε ἐν τῷ γράμματι τεθησαυρισμένος νοῦς, μέλι τροπικῶς ρηθήσεται." Cf. Athanasius *Contra Arianos ii*, MPG 26: 241A: "Οὐκοῦν ἀποκαλύπτειν χρὴ τὸν νοῦν τοῦ ρητοῦ, ὡς κεκρυμμένον τε τοῦτον ζητεῖν, καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐν παρήρησίᾳ εἰρημένον ἀπλῶς ἐκλαμβάνειν, ἵνα μὴ παρεξηγούμενοι πλανηθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας". Cf. also *ibid.* 309C-312A.

(21) Ep3 186, MPG 472AB.

(22) Ep3 15, MPG 377B.

(23) Ep2 198, MPG 304C.

(24) *ibid.*, MPG 304D.

(25) Ep2 237, MPG 321B.

(26) Ep2 236, MPG 321B.

(27) Ep1 70, MPG 113A.

(28) Ep1 83, MPG 120B.

(29) Ep2 36, MPG 213B.

(30) Ep2 37, MPG 213C.

(31) Ep3 164, MPG 460D.

(32) "Ὁ γὰρ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπερχόμενος τῇ λιθῶδει καρδίᾳ διχάζει τὰ κακῶς συνημμένα, ὅπως ἂν δυνηθεῖη ὁ ἄνθρωπος διακρίνων ἀκριβῶς καὶ διαστέλλειν τὸ κρεῖττον, ἀπὸ τοῦ χείρονος, καὶ αἰρεῖσθαι μὲν ποτὲ καλὰ, διωθεῖσθαι δι' τὰ ψεκτά", Ep2 237, MPG 321B.

(33) Ep3 278, MPG 521C.

- (34) Ep3 262, MPG 561B.
- (35) Ep3 243, MPG 496D· 497Aff.
- (36) Ep2 310, MPG 352BC.
- (37) Is 8:18.
- (38) Ep1 265, MPG 180C.
- (39) *ibid.*
- (40) Gen 12:3.
- (41) Ps 30:19.
- (42) Ep2 207, MPG 309BC.
- (43) Luke 12:10.
- (44) Ep2 178, MPG 292A.
- (45) Ep4 61, MPG 577Cff. cf. Louis Bréhier, *L' Art Chrétien*, Paris 1928², p. 28.
- (46) Ep4 62, MPG 580Bff.
- (47) On this subject see the studies of: J. Gribomont, "La tradition manuscrite de saint Nil.1 La correspondance", *Studia Monastica* 11 (1969) p. 254; Alan Cameron, "The authenticity of the Letters of St Nilus of Ancyra", *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 17 (1976) 189ff, and of the same, "A quotation from Nilus of Ancyra in an iconodule tract?", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1976) 128-131; H. G. Thümmel & Greifswald, "Neilos von Ankyra über die Bilder", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1978) 10-21.
- (48) Cf the Minutes of the VIIth Ecumenical Council: ". . . Θωμάς ὁ εὐλαβέστατος πρεσβύτερος καὶ τοποτηρητὴς τῶν ἀνατολικῶν εἶπεν: θρυλλοῦσίν τινες περὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Νείλου, ὡς κατὰ τῶν εἰκόνων συγγεγραφότος· ἐπὶ χεῖρας οὖν ἔχομεν βίβλον τοῦ αὐτοῦ πατρὸς καὶ εἴ κελεύετε ἀναγνωσθήτω. Ἡ Ἁγία Σύνοδος εἶπε: ἀναγνωσθήτω: then the reading followed of the text which we find in Ep4 62, MPG 79: 580B-581A, and a discussion is recorded about the way in which the iconoclasts had falsified this text. The conclusion is given in the following text: Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ ὀσιώτατος ἐπίσκοπος Κωνσταντίας Κύπρου εἶπεν: ἰδοῦ ἀποδέδεικται σαφῶς, ὅτε οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος καὶ θεσπέσιος πατὴρ Νείλος τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας ἀπεδέχετο, κατηγορήθη δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ψευδοσυλλόγου ἐκείνου, ὡς κατὰ τῶν εἰκόνων λαλήσας, ὅθεν οὐ μόνον Χριστιανοκατήγοροι εἰσὶν οἱ δαίλαιοι, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἁγιοκατήγοροι, συκοφαντοῦντες τοὺς θείους πατέρας ἐν τῷ ψεύδει" (in Ph. Labbei et Gabr. Cossartii, *Sacrosancta Concilia* (ad Regiam editionem exacta) curante Nicolao Coleti, tom. 8 (687-787), Venetiis 1729, col. 872-880. Cf. Judith Herrin, *The formation of Christendom*, 1987, p. 47).

(49) H. Grégoire - P. Orgeis: "Οὗτος ἐκ χώρας ἦν τῶν Γαλατῶν, Ἀγκύρας τῆς πόλεως, ἀδελφὸς τοῦ ἀγίου Μάρτυρος Ἀντιόχου. Διὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν ὁμολογίαν προσήχθη Ἀγριππίνῳ τῷ Ἡγεμόνι, νέος ὢν τὴν ἡλικίαν. Καὶ τύπτεται ὑπὸ δώδεκα στρατιωτῶν καὶ ἀπλοῦται ἐπὶ κραββάτου χαλκοῦ πυρωθέντος, ραβδιζόμενος ἄνωθεν, καὶ σφαίρας πεπυρωμέναις τὰς μασχάλας καὶ τὰς πλευρὰς διακαίεται· καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ νάτου, ἐν σχήματι λώρου, τὴν δορὰν ἀφαιρεῖται, καὶ τὰς σάρκας ξέεται, καὶ τὰς πλευρὰς ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον, ὡς ἀλλοιωθῆναι τὴν ὄψιν· καὶ τότε τὴν διὰ ξίφους δέχεται τελευτήν" (Μηναῖον Νοεμβρίου, ἔκδοσις τῆς Ἀποστολικῆς Διακονίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, Ἀθῆναι 1973, p. 124).

The date of his martyrdom is given as 296 (Μέγας Συναξαριστῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, vol. 11 (1950), p. 453) and his memory is celebrated on the 18th of November as most codices agree. (Cf. for example, Juan Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Eglise*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 166, tom 2 (1963) p. 258, and 165 tom. 1 (1962) p. iv-v). The exception here is the following: *De Magno Legendario Bodecensi, Apographum in cod. Bruxellensi Bibl. Reg. 8969 fol. 126-127v* where fol. 102.. *I Passio S. Platonis mart. = BHL 6866 Dec. 14* (Ex hoc uno codice edita); cf. *Analecta Bollandiana* 27 (1908) p. 340 and 52 (1934) p. 325.

The date 22 July as commemoration of the saint is discussed by Friedrich Wilhelm Oediger, *Der älteste Ordinarius de Stiftes Xanten*, 1963, on which see *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965) p. 208-210.

Finally cf. P. Th. Ruinart, *Acta Martyrum*, Ratisbonae, 1859, p. 15; *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye, Bruxelles 1902 (Acta Sanctorum, Propylaeum ad Acta SS Novembris) col. 233f; *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959) p. 254; and Elizabeth Dawes-Norman, *Three Byzantine Saints*, Contemporary Biographies translated from the Greek, Blackwell, Oxford 1948 [see Halkin's review in *Analecta Bollandiana* 69 (1951) 163-164].

(50) Ep4 62, MPG 580Bff. As to the philological debate on whether the old man and his son are to be identified with St Nilus and his son, see: Fr Degenhart, *Der heilige Nilus Sinaita*, Munster 1915, pp. 25-26. K. Heussi, *Untersuchungen ...*, pp. 151-152. *Analecta Bollandiana* 38 (1920) pp. 420ff. K. Heussi, *Das Nilusproblem...* pp. 6-10. Philip Mayerson, *Observations on the Nilus Narrationes ...*, pp. 53ff. A. Cameron, *The authenticity...*, pp. 189ff. Fabrizio Conca, *Le "Narrationes" di Nilo...*, pp. 359ff. Π. Γεωργουντζος, *Πλάτων* 36 (1984) p. 131.

(51) Ep4 61, MPG 577D.

(52) *ibid.*, MPG 580A.

(53) "ἐκείνων μιμηταὶ κατὰ τὸν βίον ὑπάρχοντες ἰσχύουσιν, καὶ μόνον φθεγξάμενοι κατασβέσαι τῆς ἁμαρτίας τὴν πύρῳσιν, καὶ ἐξηράναι τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ἡδονῶν, καὶ τὸν θυμὸν μαλᾶσαι καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἐκδιῶσαι, καὶ τὴν κενοδοξίαν ἐκνευρίσαι, καὶ μαρᾶναι τὸν φλογμὸν τῆς φιλοχρηματίας, καὶ ἀθυμίας καὶ λύπης λυτρώσασθαι καὶ ταῖς χειμαζομέναις ψυχαῖς γαλήνην βαθεῖαν ἐνποιῆσαι", Ep2 310, MPG 352C.

(54) "ἵνα ἕκαστος τῶν ἦντινα οὖν ἐπιτηδεύόντων ἀγωγὴν ἐξ ὁμοίων

ὑποδειγμάτων προσάγεται τῇ ἀληθείᾳ", LME 43, MPG 772D.

(55) TPV19, MPG 993B.

(56) "βίους ἀγίων ἀνιχνεύωσαν", OAI, MPG 697A.

(57) "Ἄναγίνωσκε δὲ τὴν Νέαν Διαθήκην, μαρτυρικὰ δὲ καὶ τοὺς βίους τῶν Πατέρων σὺν τὰ γεροντικὰ καὶ πολλὴν ὠφέλειαν καρπώση", Ep4 1, MPG 545A.

(58) OAI, MPG 697C.

(59) *ibid.*

(60) OAI, MPG 700A.

(61) OSM 14, MPG 1160A.

(62) OSM 2, MPG 1145C.

(63) "εἰκόνα ἀρετῆς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ βίον προτιθεὶς τοῖς μανθάνουσιν, ὡς μὴ τοὺς μεταγράφοντας ἐκεῖθεν, ἀμορφία τοῦ σφάλματος ἀμβλῦναι τὸ κάλλος τῆς ἀρετῆς", LME 35, MPG 764B.

(64) TPV 50, MPG 1033B.

(65) Matth. 5:13. cf. MPG 1033C.

(66) TPV 50, MPG 1033D.

(67) "τύπους εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἡμᾶς οἱ θεῖοι βούλονται νόμοι, καὶ τὸ ἀπρόσκοπτον πᾶσι παρέχειν τῷ ἀνεπιλήπτῳ βίῳ", TPV 37, MPG 1013CD.

(68) 2 Cor 6:10.

(69) "πᾶν τὸ μὴ πρὸς ἀρετὴν συντελοῦν ἀνοίκειον ἄχθος εἶναι τῷ ποιοῦντι", TPV 37, MPG 1013C.

(70) TPV 22, MPG 997Bff.

(71) TPV 34, MPG 1009C.

(72) OSM 7, MPG 1152B.

(73) LME 55, MPG 788A.

(74) *ibid.*, MPG 788B.

(75) *ibid.*, MPG 788CD.

(76) "μυκηθμοὺς καὶ βληχήματα καὶ ὀγκηθῶν ὀχληροῖς ἤχοις, δι' ὧν περιεκτυπεῖτο τὰ ὦτα", TPV 15, MPG 989A.

(77) TPV 14, MPG 988C.

(78) TPV 15, MPG 989B.

(79) OAI, MPG 709Bff.

(80) cf. TPV 36, MPG 1012C.

(81) TPV 1, MPG 969C.

(82) The present life is the land of the dead, since "ἡ γὰρ παροῦσα ζωὴ τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ πολλῶν θανάτων συμπληροῦσθαι πέφυκεν, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὰς μεθελικιώσεις μεταβολῇ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατὰ ἁμαρτίαν σώμασι τῶν ψυχῶν". The true land of the living is "ὁ μέλλον αἰών". The characteristic feature of the ontological authenticity of that age in relation to the present one consists of the "ἀναλλοίωτον" of body and soul. There is no alteration of body and soul, change of mind, or transposition of will. That life is based on "stability", whereby that land is "τῷ ὄντι χώρα ζώντων καὶ εὐφραινομένων διηνεκῶς" (Ep2 76, MPG 233C).

(83) OAI, MPG 704B· 712A.

(84) *ibid.*, MPG 709B.

(85) *ibid.*

(86) John 1:10.

(87) "μία γὰρ ἦν ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ θεσπισθεῖσα παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ (ἀκτημοσύνη) καὶ πολιτευομένη πᾶσιν ὁμοίως, ἀμέριμνος καὶ παντάπασιν ὕλος, ἦν ἕτεμον ὕστερον εἰς τὰς διαφορὰς ταύτας αἰ ποικίλως πρὸς ἅπερ ἔπασχον ἐπικλινῶς σχισθεῖσαι γινώμαι ἀνθρώπων", TPV 13, MPG 985BC.

(88) *ibid.*, MPG 985C.

(89) "κωλύει τὸ περίεργον τῆς ἐρεύνης ἢ τοῦ προστάξαντος ἀξία", *ibid.*

(90) *ibid.*, MPG 985D.

(91) TPV 14, MPG 988C.

(92) TPV 13, MPG 985B.

(93) "ἐνύπνιον μάταιον δεικνύμενον ἡμέρας ἐπιλαβούσης", OAI, MPG 709C.

(94) "ἴασιν τοῦ νοός", TPV 49, MPG 1032Cff.

(95) LME 67, MPG 800D.

(96) TPV 49, MPG 1032Bff.

- (97) TPV 3, MPG 973B.
- (98) TPV 5, MPG 976B.
- (99) TPV 4, MPG 976A.
- (100) TPV 5, MPG 976Bff.
- (101) TPV 6, MPG 977Aff.
- (102) LME 64, MPG 797Aff.
- (103) LME 65, MPG 800AB.
- (104) *ibid.*, MPG 797D.
- (105) Cf. H. C. Graef, *St Nilus* ..., p. 225, where St Nilus is compared to St John of the Cross and the psychological influence of ἀκτημοσύνη is elaborated.
- (106) TPV 43, MPG 1021C.
- (107) TPV 67, MPG 1060C.
- (108) LME 60, MPG 793A.
- (109) LME 66, MPG 800Bff.
- (110) LME 65, MPG 797Dff.
- (111) Job 39:5ff.
- (112) Cf. H. C. Graef, *ibid.*, p. 226, where reference is made to the perfection of the dispossessed life of the stylites.
- (113) TPV 18, MPG 993A.
- (114) TPV 3, MPG 972Dff.
- (115) "τῷ καιρῷ τῆς χρείας παραμυθησάμενος τὴν ἀνάγκην καὶ μετὰ τὴν χρείαν οὐκ ὤν (ὁ κξόπος γιὰ τὸ σῶμα), χθὲς χρησιμεύσας καὶ σήμερον οὐ παρών", TPV 4, MPG 976A.
- (116) TPV 27, MPG 1004Aff. cf. TPV 29, MPG 1004D.
- (117) TPV 16, MPG 989D.
- (118) TPV 17, MPG 992B.
- (119) 3 Reg 17:6.
- (120) 4 Reg 4:41· 4:8ff.
- (121) TPV 18, MPG 992D.

- (122) TPV 19, MPG 993Bff.
- (123) 2 Cor 6:10.
- (124) LME 43, MPG 772D.
- (125) *ibid.*, MPG 773A.
- (126) Ep2 206, MPG 309B· 3 96, MPG 429B.
- (127) Ep3 219, MPG 484AB.
- (128) Ep3 290, MPG 528A.
- (129) LME 53, MPG 784D.
- (130) *ibid.*, MPG 785B.
- (131) Sigm. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke, Vorlesungen zur einföhrung in die psychoanalyse*, erster band, London 1948, p. 353ff. and 373ff.
- (132) LME 53, MPG 784D.
- (133) *ibid.*, MPG 785A.
- (134) Ep3 290, MPG 528A.
- (135) *ibid.*
- (136) LME 44, MPG 773CD.
- (137) Gen 37:12ff.
- (138) LME 44, MPG 773C.
- (139) Gen 37:15-17.
- (140) LME 44, MPG 773D.
- (141) *ibid.*, cf. "βάδιζε φεύγων συγγενείς τε καὶ φίλους τοῦτο γὰρ ὠφέλιμον τοῖς ἀρχαρίοις", Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns*, 5, SC 156, 1969, p. 198, 2-4. Cf. also the critical edition, *Symeon Neos Theologos, Hymnen*, prolegomena, Kritischer text, Indices besorgt von Athanasios Kambylis, Berlin-N. York 1976, p. 65, 2-4.
- (142) "κἄν γὰρ ἀπολίπη τις τὴν χαρρᾶν, ὅπερ σημαίνει τὰς αἰσθήσεις· τρῶγλαι γὰρ ἐρμηνεύονται, καὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλάδος χεβρῶν ἐξέλθοι, τῶν ταπεινῶν ἔργων, καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐρήμου, καθ' ἣν ἡ πλάνη γίνεται τῷ ζητοῦντι τὴν τελείωσιν· εἰς δὲ τὴν ἰκανὴν ἔκλειψιν μὴ μετοικήσει, οὐδὲν τὸ ὄφελος αὐτῷ τῆς μακρᾶς ταλαιπωρίας, διὰ τὸ περὶ τὴν συγγένειαν φίλτρον ἀνησφαλισμένῳ τῆς τελειότητος", LME 45, MPG 773D.

(143) Luke 2:43.

(144) LME 45, MPG 776A.

(145) Lev. 14:8. cf. Num. 8:6-7.

(146) "Εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἐκνίψασθαι πρόκειται τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ θεραπεῦσαι πάντων τῶν μολυνόντων, ἀναχωρεῖν πάντων τῶν πραγμάτων ὀφείλουσι, δι' ὧν ὁ ρύπος αὔξεται, καὶ πολλὴν τῷ λογιστικῷ παρέχει τὴν γαλήνην, καὶ μακρὰν τῶν ἐρεθιζόντων γίνεσθαι, καὶ τὰς τῶν οἰκειοτέρων φεύγειν συνδιαιτήσεις, μόνωσιν ἀσπαζομένουσ τὴν τῆς φιλοσοφίας μητέρα", LME 45, MPG 776B. cf. H. C. Graef, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

(147) Cf. "Μοναχὸς ὅστις ἀμιγῆς ἐστὶ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀεννάως ὀμιλεῖ θεῷ μόνῳ, βλέπων βλέπεται, φιλῶν φιλεῖται, καὶ γίνεται φῶς λαμπόμενος ἀρρήτως" (Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymn 3*, p. 188, 1-4, SC 156, Kambylis p. 59)

(148) Ep1 277, MPG 184C.

(149) "θάνατος καὶ ζωὴ ἐν χειρὶ γλώσσης", Prov 18:21.

(150) "κοίτη διαβόλου γλώσσα λοῖδορος", Ep3 299, MPG 532B.

(151) Ep3 230, MPG 489C.

(152) "μέγα ζημιοῦνται καὶ πολλὴν ὑπομένωσι βλάβην" αὐτοὶ ποῦ σχολάζουν στὴ λογομαχία καὶ στὸν κομπασμὸ "σκορπίζοντες τὸν λαμπρότατον νοῦν καὶ τραχύνοντες τὸ λεῖον τῆς φρονήσεως, καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τὰς ἀνεκδιηγῆτους ἐνεργείας τῆς χάριτος, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ προκαθέζεσθαι τῇ θεωρίᾳ τῶν ὄντων, βιωτικὰς πραγματείας καὶ πειρασμῶν ποικιλίας ἐργολαβοῦντες", Ep3 244, MPG 501C.

(153) "ἀπαίδευτη προπετεία καὶ ἀχαλίνωτη γλώσσα", Ep3 299, MPG 489C.

(154) Ps 80:11.

(155) Ep3 195, MPG 473C.

(156) "Ὅτι διαφέρουσι τῶν ἐν πόλεσι ὤκισμένων οἱ ἐν ἐρήμοις ἡσυχάζοντες, κἂν πολλοῖς τῶν ἀπειρῶν τὸ ἐναντίον δοκῇ", PG 79,1061-1094.

(157) MoP 13, MPG 1076Cff.

(158) MoP 1, MPG 1061A.

(159) MoP 6, MPG 1068Cff.

(160) The Cynics do not reject motion. Motion as an existential and objective reality is a fact. What is primary is the balance which is achieved with the philosophical probing into the meaning of pleasure and pain. This

is why παλαιῶν τις τῶν κυνικῶν [Διογένης] τοὺς κατὰ τῆς κινήσεως ἐρωτώμενος λόγους ἀπεκρίνατο μὲν οὐδὲν ἕν, ἀναστάς δὲ περιεπάτει, δι' αὐτῆς τῆς ἐνεργείας, τὴν ἀνοιαν τοῦ σοφιστοῦ ὀνειδίζων" (Sextus Empericus, Πρὸς Φυσικούς, II, 66ff).

For a brief bibliography on the Cynics, see: Abraham Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament", in *Augstieg und Niedergang der römischen welt iii*, edit. by H. Temporini, Berlin 1977; Rogmar Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King, Studies in the Cynic Conception of man*, Uppsala 1948; D. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism, from Diogenes to the 6th century AD*, London 1937; G. A. Gerhard, *Zu Legende vom Kyniker Diogenes*, Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, 15, Leipzig 1912; A. N. M. Rich, "The cynic conception of αὐτάρκεια", *Mnemosyne*, s 4: 9 (1956) 23-29. The Stoics were not very different from the Cynics. They understood the inner harmony of the human being in terms of ἀπάθεια (impassibility), i.e. as a condition of calmness and self-consciousness. Passion is an unnatural motion of the soul, opposed to reason (Zeno), or to the hegemonic will (Chrysippus). According to the Stoics the wise man is he who has emotional outbursts, but is able to be master over them through his reason (Cf. J. Rist, "The Stoics concept of detachment", in *The Stoics*, ed. by J. Rist, 1978, p. 259. See also Rist's *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1969, p. 27).

For a selective bibliography on this see: P. Barth & A. Goedeckemeyer, *Die Stoa*, Stuttgart 1929; A. Duroff, *Die Ethik der Alten Stoa*, Berlin 1897; B. Ἰωαννίδης, Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος καὶ οἱ Στωϊκοὶ Φιλόσοφοι, 1957; O. Luschnat, "Das Problem des ethischen Fortschritts in der alten Stoa", *Reinisches Museum*, n.f. 86 (1937) 140-179; M. Pohlenz, *Stoa und Stoiker*, Zurich 1950; C. Ruether, *Die sittliche Forderung der Apatheia*, Freiburg im Br., 1949.

(161) Diogenes' figure is both historical and legendary. His impassible or impassionate contact was the seal of a personality which withstood the passage of time exactly because he practised what he taught. There is an instance when Diogenes spoke ironically about certain people complaining about lack of resources. It is much preferable, said the philosopher, to be deprived of resources than of freedom. On the contrary, "the mediocre lords" under whom they now serve, "ἐκκόψουσι ὑμῶν τὴν τρυφήν, ὑφ' ἧς διεφθάρητε, ἐμποιήσουσιν δὲ καρτερίαν καὶ ἐγκράτειαν τὰ τιμιώτατα ἀγαθὰ. Ταῦτα οὖν δεξιόντος οἱ ἄνηται ἐστῶτες τῶν λόγων ἠκροῶντο καὶ αὐτὸν ἐθαύμαζον τῆς ἀληθείας..." (Κράτους Ἐπιστολὴ Μητροκλεῖ, in *The Cynic Epistles*, ed. Abr. Malherbe, SBL 12, 1917, p. 84,30. Cf. also p 58,1-10.

(162) MoP 25, MPG 1089C.

(163) MoP 26, MPG 1092C.

(164) MoP 6, MPG 1068C.

(165) MoP 4, MPG 1065Aff.

(166) MoP 11, MPG 1073Bff.

(167) MoP 8, MPG 1069C.

- (168) MoP 9, MPG 1069Dff.
- (169) MoP 13, MPG 1076C.
- (170) MoP 14, MPG 1077Aff.
- (171) MoP 25, MPG 1089D.
- (172) LME 46, MPG 776C.
- (173) "Ἐπίπονος μὲν γὰρ τοῖς νεωστὶ ἀποτασσομένοις ἡ ἡσυχία· τότε γὰρ καιρὸν λαβοῦσε ἡ μνήμη, πᾶσαν ἀνακινεῖ τὴν ἐγκειμένην ἀκαθαρσίαν, οὐ σχολάζουσα πρότερον τοῦτο ποιεῖν διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν περισσευόντων πραγμάτων", LME 45, MPG 776B.
- (174) "πολλὴν τῷ λογιστικῷ παρέχειν τὴν γαλήνην, καὶ μακρὰν τῶν ἐρεθιζόντων γενέσθαι, καὶ τὰς τῶν οἰκειοτέρων φεύγειν συνδιστάσεις, μόνωσιν ἀσπαζόμενος τὴν τῆς φιλοσοφίας μητέρα", *ibid.*
- (175) MoP 18, MPG 1081C.
- (176) MoP 11, MPG 1073C.
- (177) LME 48, MPG 77Cff.
- (178) Cf. LME 47, MPG 77Aff.
- (179) OAI, MPG 697D, "καὶ οὐδὲν πάσχοντες ὡς ἔπασχον πρὶν ἐνεθισθῶσιν τῇ σκληραγωγίᾳ".
- (180) LME 26, MPG 753C.
- (181) "διὰ τὴν οἰκείαν μικροψυχίαν καὶ ἀνυπομονησίαν, καὶ λογισμοὺς τινὰς ἀνθρωπίνους καὶ ἀσθενεῖς", Ep1 295, MPG 189D.
- (182) "ἢ διὰ τὸ μὴ φέρειν τοῦ βίου τὴν ἀκρίβειαν", LME 8, MPG 728C.
- (183) "συνεχῶς μεταφυτευόμενον, κἂν πλουσίως ἀρδεύοιτο", Ep2 71, MPG 232D.
- (184) Ep2 136, MPG 257A.
- (185) "χρῆζει ἐδραιότητος καὶ καρτερίας, καὶ διηνεκοῦς στάσεως καὶ ἀσαλεύτου διαγωγῆς", Ep2 72, MPG 232D.
- (186) "μὴ ὡς ἔτυχε καὶ ἀβασανίστως μετατιθῶμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ τόπων εἰς τόπους, μᾶλλον δὲ στήκωμεν μεθ' ὑπομονῆς προσευχόμενοι", Ep2 117, MPG 252A.
- (187) Ep1 295, MPG 189D.
- (188) "ἀεὶ γὰρ ὁ σατανᾶς ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ταῖς εὐλογοφανείαις

ἀγκιστρεύει τοὺς τῆς κακομηχανίας αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐσχηκότας πείραν", Ep2 62, MPG 228D.

(189) LME 60, MPG 792D.

(190) "καὶ περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, τὰς μὲν χειροῆθεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀποδιδράσκοντες κακίας, καὶ τῶν κατὰ πόλεις πλημμυρούντων ἀλλοκότων πραγμάτων, ὡς ἂν μὴ τῇ ρύμη τῆς φθορᾶς, καθάπερ ὑπὸ χειμάρρου βίας εἰς τὴν τῶν πολλῶν παρενεχθῶσιν ἀδιάφορον ἀνάχυσιν", LME 61, MPG 793B.

(191) Ep1 17, MPG 88D.

(192) "οὔτε γὰρ διδάσκει κακίαν ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν τέθηπε καὶ τιμᾶ. Οὕτω γοῦν τὸν Δανιὴλ ἀπώλεσαν μὲν ὡς ἐδόκουν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, περιέσωσαν δὲ λέγοντες...καὶ γέγονε ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τοῖς μὲν ἀνθρώποις φθόνου καὶ ἔριδος ὑπόθεσις, τοῖς δὲ θηρίοις αἰδοῦς καὶ τιμῆς ἀφορμὴ, ὅσοις οὖν ὁ τῆς βελτιώσεως ἔρωσ ἐνέσπαρται", LME 61, MPG 793C.

(193) Can., MPG 1645B.

(194) TPV 54, MPG 1040B.

(195) "Καὶ συλλήβδην εἰπεῖν, διὰ τοῦτο πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι, ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος, κατέλιπον τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὄπαῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι, τὰς μὲν χειροῆθεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀποδιδράσκοντες κακίας ... χαίροντες δὲ τῇ μετὰ τῶν θηρίων διαγωγῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ τούτων βλάβης ἐλλάττονα τῆς ἐκ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κρίνοντες, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀνθρώπους μὲν ὡς ἐπιβούλους φεύγοντες, θαρρόντες δὲ τοῖς θηρίοις ὡς φίλοις ..." LME 61, MPG 793B.

(196) Ep4 1, MPG 545A.

(197) TPV 34, MPG 1009C.

(198) Cf. description of St Nilus LME 8, MPG 728Bff.

(199) TPV 65, MPG 1057B.

(200) Ep1 37, MPG 100C.

(201) "οὐδὲν δυσχερέστερον καὶ ἐπιπονέστερον τοῦ γνῶθι σαυτόν", Ep3 314, MPG 536C.

(202) MoP 24, MPG 1089Aff.

(203) TPV 6, MPG 977A.

(204) "ὁ γὰρ οὕτω διακείμενος οὐ τοσοῦτον ἐπὶ τοῖς κατορθουμένοις ἐπαίρεται, ὅσον ταπεινοῦται τοῖς λείπουσι τὸ προκείμενον

..." TPV 10, MPG 981D.

(205) Cf. TPV 11, MPG 984B.

(206) "ἐν οικείᾳ αἰσθήσει...οὐ βραδύνει τοῦ Κυρίου ἢ χάρις τοῦ ἐπιφοιτῆσαι αὐτῷ, καὶ δὴ παραγενομένη, τροφή δίδωσι καθάπερ νεοσσῶ τινι κεχρηότι, μεταδίδωσι δὲ, ὡς εἴρηται τῆς θείας παρηγορίας, θείων νοημάτων, θείας γλυκυθυμίας, θείας καταλύξεως, θείου φόβου καὶ σοφίας, καὶ πόθου, θείας χαρᾶς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως μεγάλων μυστηρίων", Ep4 27, MPG 561D.

(207) "τὰ παρανόμως ὑπὸ ὑπερεχόντων εἰς εὐτελεστέρους γινόμενα, ἀδικούντων καὶ ἀδικουμένων, τυραννούντων καὶ τυραννουμένων, ἀποστεροῦντων καὶ ἀποστερουμένων, πάντως καὶ ὄρᾳ καὶ συμπάσχει τοῖς πάσχουσι τῇ διαθέσει πρὸς τούτους, κακείνους μεριζόμενος, ἀγανακτῶν πρὸς τοὺς καταπονούντας καὶ τοὺς καταπονουμένους οἰκτιζόμενος, θυμοῦ πληρούμενος καὶ πρὸς ἔλεον καμπτόμενος, παροξυνόμενος καὶ σπλάγχνα τι τρωσκόμενος, καὶ τῷ ἐφησυχάζοντι τούτοις θεῷ μακροθυμίας ἔσθ' ὅτε μεμψόμενος. Τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ προφήτης ποτὲ παθὼν Ἀββακούμ, δείκνυσι καὶ τοῖς πάσχουσι ὅπερ ἔπαθε, ἵνα τι μοι, λέγων, ἔδειξας κόπους καὶ πόνους; ὁ ἀσεβῆς καταδυναστεύει τὸν δίκαιον, καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐποίησας ὡς ἰχθύας τῆς θαλάσσης καταπινόμενος αὐτούς", Hab. 1:3-4, 14. Cf. Theodori Mopsuesti, *Commentarius in Habaccuci*. MPG 66 429AD.

(208) MPG 27 1092D. Cf. also H. C. Graef's interesting comments, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV.

(1) Ep3 43, MPG 412D.

(2) Cf. Ep1 29, MPG 96D.

(3) TPV 58, MPG 1045Bff.

(4) Cf. here the theological scholium of John Sinaita concerning the possibility of appropriating perfection in its highest expression, *apatheia*: Αὕτη οὖν ἡ τελεία τῶν τελείων ἀτέλεστος τελειότης, καθὰ μοί τις ταύτης γευσάμενος ὑφηγήσατο. John Sinaita, *Oratio 29* Περί Ἀπαθείας, MPG 88, 1148C.

(5) TPV 59, MPG 1048B.

(6) Ep1 29, MPG 96D.

(7) Ep3 272, MPG 520A.

(8) Ep1 157, MPG 148A.

(9) "ἵνα μὴ ἐκπέση τῆς αἰωνίου ἐκείνης καὶ ἀναφαιρέτου κληρονομίας, τῆς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς εὐπρεπισθείσης αὐτῷ καὶ τῆς

ἀκαταπαύστου εὐφροσύνης", Ep2 3, MPG 204B.

(10) "Αὐτὸς γὰρ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἁμαρτῆσαι προτρέπεται, καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ τὸ πραχθῆναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ὠθεῖ πρὸς ἀπόγνωσιν τὸν ἐξαμαρτήσαντα. Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἁμαρτῆσαι, ἀνθρώπινον ὑπάρχει· τὸ δὲ ἀπελπῆσαι, σατανικὸν καὶ πανόλεθρον", Ep2 172, MPG 288B.

(11) Ep3 171, MPG 464C.

(12) Ezech 33:11.

(13) Jerem 8:4.

(14) "οὐκ ἀπελπιστέον σωθῆναι δι' εὐσπλαγχνίας Χριστοῦ", Ep3 172, MPG 464D.

(15) Ep3 254, MPG 509A.

(16) Ep3 135, MPG 445C.

(17) "ἀπογινωσκόμενος τῆς αὐτοῦ σωτηρίας", Ep3 142, MPG 449C.

(18) Luke 12:10.

(19) "οἱ ἀπογινώσκοντες ἑαυτῶν τοῖς ἀσεβέσι συναριθμοῦνται", Ep3 63, MPG 420B.

(20) "ὄθεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ διάβολος ἐκ τῆς ἀπογνώσεως εἰ τοιαύτην ἐξηκοντίσθη ἀπώλειαν, μὴ θελήσας μετανοῆσαι", Ep2 172, MPG 288B.

(21) "ἐπάνοδον εἰς τὸ καλὸν διὰ τῆς μετανοίας", Ep3 171, MPG 464C.

(22) Ep3 270, MPG 517CD.

(23) Ep3 115, MPG 436D.

(24) Ep1 274, MPG 184A.

(25) Novatian was a 3rd century AD presbyter of the Church of Rome who later became leader and Bishop of the Novatian rigorists. For his works see: G. F. Diercks (Ed.), *Novatianus, Opera quae supersunt*, CCSL 4, 1972. Cf. also J. J. Vogt, *Coetus Sanctorum: Der Kirchenbegriff des Novatian und die Geschichte seiner Sonderkirche*, Hanstein, Bonn 1968; and H. Gülzow, *Cyprian und Novatian: Der Briefwechsel zwischen den Gemeinden Rom und Kartago zu Zeit der Verfolgung des Kaiser Decius*, Mohr, Tübingen 1975.

(26) Ep2 155, MPG 273A.

(27) Matth. 11:12.

(28) Matth. 7:7· Luke 11:10.

(29) Luke 11:8.

- (30) Ep3 266, MPG 517A.
- (31) Cf. Ep1 41, MPG 101C.
- (32) Ep2 238, MPG 361A.
- (33) Ep1 64, MPG 109D· Ezech 11:15.
- (34) Ep3 135, MPG 445Cff.
- (35) "ὅταν λυπηρὸν τι ἢ τραχὺ πρὸς σε εἶπη ὁ πνευματικὸς πατήρ, δέξαι καὶ κατάδεξαι φιλοσόφως καὶ μακροθύμως· οὐ γὰρ μετὰ πάθους· ἄνευ πάθους τοῦτο ὁρᾷ", Ep2 333, MPG 364B.
- (36) "ὥσπερ μήτηρ ἐκ μελαγχολίας τῷ τέκνῳ ἐπορωμένη· ὁ γὰρ οὐ κατὰ γνώμην ἐπαρᾶται τῷ γόνῳ, δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ μετ' ὀλίγον εὐθύς μεταμελέσθαι τὴν μητέρα, καὶ πενθεῖν ἄρρωστῆσαν τὸ τέκνον", *ibid.*
- (37) Ep3 39, MPG 4095C.
- (38) Ep2 144, MPG 265Bff.
- (39) Ep3 280, MPG 521D.
- (40) Ep2 144, MPG 265B.
- (41) Ep3 280, MPG 521D.
- (42) Can, MPG 1568CD.
- (43) Canticum 1:14.
- (44) Can, MPG 1568CD.
- (45) LUC 395, MPG 115ff.
- (46) Ps 115:3.
- (47) LUC 395.
- (48) LUC 395, 124-127.
- (49) 1 Cor 11:26.
- (50) "Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ οἱ πατέρες ἀντὶ Μαρτυρίου αἰσθητοῦ, κατὰ συνείδησιν ἐμαρτύρησαν, ἔχοντες ἀντὶ θανάτου σωματικοῦ, τὸν κατὰ προαίρεσιν, ἵνα νικήσῃ ὁ νοῦς τὰ σαρκικὰ θελήματα καὶ βασιλεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν", Πέτρου Δαμασκηνοῦ, "Λόγοι Συνοπτικοὶ κ.δ', ΦΙΛΟΚΑΛΙΑ, τόμ. Γ, 1976⁴, p. 168,18. See also Ep3 71, MPG 421B: 'Ἐὰν μηδεὶς διώκησε τύραννος Ἕλληνα, ἀλλ' ὅμως γίνου ἔτοιμος εἰς μαρτύριον, ἵνα μὴ στερηθῆς τῆς προθυμίας. Κἂν γὰρ μὴ παρῇ διωγμὸς ὥσπερ θέλεις, οὕτως ἐστὶ σοὶ τὰ πράγματα. Μᾶλλον δὲ πάρεστιν διωγμὸς διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου πάρεστι θυμὸς,

πάρεσιν ἐπιθυμία αἰσχροῦ, πάρεσιν ἀθυμίας καὶ λύπης, καὶ ἀκησίας τυραννίς, ἐγγύς σου φόβος ἄκαιρος, καὶ βασκανία παρίσταται, ἐφέστηκέ σοι κενοδοξίας ἄρχων καὶ λαιμαργίας καὶ μεθης καὶ τῶν ἄλλων λυμαντηρίων παθῶν.

(51) Cf. *Textos Eucharisticos Primitivos*, ed. Jesus Solano, s 1, t 2, Madrid 1957, pp 310-312, where one finds a catena of most of Nilus' Eucharistic texts. Solano includes the *Capita Paraenetica* in his sources (cf. p. 312) which are today attributed to Evagrius Ponticos. See here J. Quasten's *Patrology*, tom. 2, 1967, p. 504.

(52) 1 Tim 2:1.

(53) Ep3 238, MPG 443D.

(54) 1 Tim 2:1.

(55) Ep2 196, MPG 301CD.

(56) Ep2 308, MPG 352A· 3 261, MPG 516A.

(57) LME 74, MPG 809A· TPV 27, MPG 1004Aff.

(58) Ep1 13, MPG 88Aff.

(59) Ep1 239, MPG 169D.

(60) Ep3 297, MPG 529D.

(61) "ἄγρυπνος εὐχή", Ep1 30, MPG 97B. Here we find Graef's misunderstanding of Eastern Patristic theology, according to which the Fathers of the East tend towards Pelagianism in their strong recommendation of unceasing and steadfast prayer (*op. cit.* p. 274). For the East, however, prayer is not a legal requirement but a matter of life, inasmuch as it is connected with man's vital relation to God his Creator and Redeemer. In the whole context of monastic life, true prayer is the possibility of the vision of God, i.e. of true knowledge and life.

(62) Ep1 281, MPG 185A.

(63) Ep2 308, MPG 352A.

(64) Ep3 297, MPG 532A.

(65) Ep1 187, MPG 153B.

(66) Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(67) Ep1 239, MPG 169D.

(68) Ep1 10, MPG 85D.

(69) Ep1 239, mpg 169D.

- (70) Ep1 281, mPG 185A.
- (71) Ep3 282, MPG 524A.
- (72) Ep3 261, MPG 516A.
- (73) Ep1 86, MPG 120D.
- (74) Ep3 23, MPG 381A.
- (75) Ep1 30, MPG 97B.
- (76) Ep3 284, MPG 524D.
- (77) "ὅποτεν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὀνομάζεται, καὶ σφραγίς τοῦ κυριακοῦ σταυροῦ ἐπιτίθεται τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ μετώπῳ καὶ τοῖς μέλεσιν, ἀναμφιβόλως λύεται ἡ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ δύναμις, καὶ τρομάσσοντες φεύγουσιν ἀφ' ἡμῶν οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες", Ep3 278, MPG 521B.
- (78) OAI, MPG 708A.
- (79) TPV 27, MPG 1004Aff.
- (80) TPV 28, MPG 1004B.
- (81) TPV 24, MPG 1000Cff.
- (82) TPV 22, MPG997B "Τῶν δὲ σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ὑπόμνησις ὀχληρὰ οὐ μόνον οὐ συγχωροῦσα προσομιλεῖν τῷ Θεῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ φαντασίαις ἐνθυμήσεων αἰσchrῶν ῥυποῦσα τὸν δοκοῦντα προσεύχεσθαι νοῦν".
- (83) TPV 21, MPG 996Dff. This seems to be the case of a phenomenologically contradictory image. Whoever does not combine manual work (cf. the following paragraph which refers to this matter) with prayer is indolent, because he declines to do work; at the same time he is ignorant of the meaning of prayer. The exclusive occupation with prayer is a matter of the grace of God, and is restricted to those who are perfect. Otherwise, the mere occupation with prayer is an apparent pretext for avoiding work, which leads to the loss of the charisma of prayer itself. Cf. TPV 23, MPG 1000B.
- (84) Cf. TPV 22, MPG 997C as an interesting metaphor of St Nilus' theses which is taken up as relevant proposal for the contemporary situation by H. C. Graef (see *op. cit.* p. 228)
- (85) TPV 34, MPG 1009C.
- (86) OSM 1, MPG 1145B.
- (87) OSM 10, MPG 1156A.
- (88) OSM 11, MPG 1156C.

- (89) OSM 14, MPG 1160BC.
- (90) OSM 15, MPG 1161A.
- (91) OSM 19, MPG 1044Cff.
- (92) TPV 57, MPG 1044Cff.
- (93) Ep1 165, MPG 149A.
- (94) Ep2 262, MPG 333C.
- (95) "τὰ τῶν παθῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν στίφη, δι' ἐγκρατείας καὶ προσευχῆς ὀλέθρῳ παραδώσει", Ep3 225, MPG 485D.
- (96) "ἐπήκοος γὰρ ὁ Δεσπότης γενόμενος ἐξ αὐτῆς μέσης ἐξαρπάσας τῆς ἀπωλείας πρὸς ζωὴν αἰῶνιον, καὶ χαρὰν ἀναφέρει", Ep1 139, MPG 141A.
- (97) Cf. Ep3 145, MPG 452Aff.
- (98) Ep1 88, MPG 121A.
- (99) Ep2 329, MPG 361Aff.
- (100) Ep3 90, MPG 428C.
- (101) Ep2 174, MPG 289A.
- (102) TPV 28, MPG 1004Cff.
- (103) Ep3 278, MPG 521C.
- (104) Ep3 197, MPG 473D-476A.
- (105) Ep3 217, MPG 481D.
- (106) LME 74, MPG 808C.
- (107) Ep2 196, MPG 301Cff.
- (108) Ep3 197, MPG 476A.
- (109) Ep3 283, MPG 524C.
- (110) *ibid.*
- (111) Ep3 155, MPG 457Bff.
- (112) Ep3 283, MPG 524C.
- (113) Ep3 148, MPG 452D "ἡ ἀπαρενόχλητος τῆς διανοίας κατάστασις".

- (114) TPV 23, MPG 1000Bff.
- (115) TPV 27, 1004Aff. cf and Tomaš špidlik, *ibid.*, p. 334.
- (116) 2 Cor 12:2.
- (117) Cf. Acts 22:18· 10:9.
- (118) "The south is the destiny of the eagle, because it emigrates there during the winter", Joel Giannakopoulos, *The Old Testament according to the LXX*, vol. 23 (on Job), Thessalonica 1976², p. 235.
- (119) *ibid.*
- (120) TPV 27, MPG 1004BC.
- (121) TPV 4, MPG 973D "... διέτριβον τὰ ἐν οὐρανῷ λογιζόμενοι ἀγαθὰ καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖ ὠφελείας οὐδαμῶς ἀποσπώμενοι ...".
- (122) TPV 29, MPG 1004D.
- (123) *ibid.*, MPG 1005A.
- (124) Ep1 310, MPG 196B "ἡ ἀργία ἀρχὴ κακουργίας"· Ep3 101, MPG 432D· TPV 26, MPG 1001Cff.
- (125) OAI, MPG 708A.
- (126) Acts 20:34· Ep3 101, MPG 432D.
- (127) TPV 21, MPG 996Dff.
- (128) TPV 24, 1000C.
- (129) TPV 25, MPG 1001B.
- (130) Ep1 310, MPG 196B.
- (131) Ep2 225, MPG 317B.
- (132) Sirach 22:2.
- (133) Prov 26:14.
- (134) Cf. Jacques Jarry, *Hérésies et factions dans l' empire Byzantin du IV^e au VII^e siècle*, 1968, p.21.
- (135) The Messalians were a pietistic heretical movement who took their name from the Syriac word ܡܫܐܠܝܐ which corresponds to the Greek term εὐχίται, i.e. "people of prayer". The earliest reference to them is made in the work of St Ephrem the Syrian (+373) in the context of a critical remark about them (*Hom.* 22). Systematic refutations against them were composed by St Amphilochius of Iconium, St Flavianus of Antioch and St

Epiphanius of Salamis, The Messalians were condemned by the Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus in 431, but did survive as late as the seventh century. Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. by Cross), p. 890, and especially the article of G. Mantzarides "Μεσσαλιανοί", in *Θρησκευτική καὶ Ἠθική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία*, 8 (1966) cls. 814-815 where a bibliography is supplied.

(136) "ἕως ἄν ἡ δοκοῦσα προσευχή, οὐκ οὔσα τοῦτο, ὅπερ λέγεται, πάντη ἀπόβληται", TPV 25, MPG 1001B.

(137) 2 Thes 3:6-12.

(138) TPV 26, 1001CD.

(139) LME 16, MPG 740Aff.

(140) Ep3 239, MPG 496A.

(141) TPV 29, MPG 1005A.

(142) Ep3 238, MPG 493D.

(143) Cf. the expression of personal sentiments and also of ancient traditions by Hesiod: "Νῦξ δ' ἔτεκεν στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαινον, καὶ θάνατον, τέκε δ' Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φύλον Ὀνειρώων" (Hesiod *Θεογονία*, 211-212).

(144) Ancient Greek thought produced a cartography as it were of the regions of death and of sleep, on the basis of most intimate existential sources, the godly agony of the philosopher, which allowed philosophy to probe into the unknown. The relativity of the existential experiences is the reason why the philosophical speculations on death and sleep present a certain variety. Their multiplicity is an inestimable source of self-knowledge, of humanism and of the history of progress of human philosophical thought.

According to Heraclitus, θάνατος ἐστὶν ὀτιόσα ἐγερθέντες, ὀτιόσα δε εὔδοντες ὕπνος" (Diels-Kranz 21[64]). The idea presented in this verse is apparently the assertion that genesis is a sort of death. (Cf. Clem. Al. *Strom.* iii, 21, ii:205:7). Creation, or motion has inside it the element of death (ὀτιόσα ... ὀτιόσα). Yet the verb ὀρέομεν belongs to both sentences and, as such, interprets Heraclitus' thought, probably in this perspective: The conscious vital motion (ἐγερθέντες) is called death. The unconscious one is called sleep. Sleep and death have motion as their common element (ἐγερθέντες and εὔδοντες) but they are distinguished by its quality. Essentially, if the ὀρέομεν is to be regarded as a *de facto* qualifier of sleep, then sleep must be also a kind of death.

According to Socrates the opposite to sleep is alertness. Alertness leads to sleep and sleep reaches its terminus in alertness. It is on this basis of the temporary kind of mortification that Socrates begins to prove that in the same way, as life leads to death, death has its end in life. It is nonsensical that one should accept death as the end of life (Phaedo, 71C 16).

Aristotle attributes to the soul that lies asleep the quality of ontological self-awareness. Likewise this quality is present in the separation of the soul from the body, i.e. in death. Here the parallel study of the existential dimensions of sleep and death is apparent. Cf. also the following text:

"ὅταν γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ καθ' ἑαυτὴν γένηται ἡ ψυχὴ, τότε τὴν ἴδιον ἀπολαβοῦσα φύσιν προμανεύεται τε καὶ προαγορεύει τὰ μέλλοντα. Τοιαύτη δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν τῷ κατὰ τὸν θάνατον χωρίζεσθαι τῶν σωμάτων" (Sextus Empiricus, Πρὸς φυσικούς, 1, 21).

(145) Ep1 28, MPG 96C.

(146) Ep3 127, MPG 444A "νεκροποιὸς ὕπνος".

(147) Ep3 318, MPG 537B "ἄφατος χάυνωσις".

(148) Ep1 26, MPG 92D-93A.

(149) "νεκροταφείον, ψυχὴ νεκρὰ ἐν τῷ ζῶντι σώματι", Ep3 317, MPG 536D-537A.

(150) Ps 48:13· cf. Ep1 26, MPG 93A.

(151) Ep3 318, MPG 537Aff.

(152) Ep3 127, MPG 444A.

(153) Ep2 190, MPG 300B.

(154) Matth. 26:41.

(155) Acts 16:25· Ep1 28, MPG 96C.

(156) Ps 101:8.

(157) Ep1 28, MPG 96D.

(158) Ep1 27, MPG 96B.

(159) Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(160) Ep1 26, MPG 93BC.

(161) Cf. Ep3 98, MPG 429Cff.

(162) Ep3 171, MPG 464C.

(163) Ep1 28, MPG 96D.

(164) Ep1 26, MPG 93D.

(165) Ep1 26, MPG 96A.

(166) Ep3 98, MPG 429D· Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(167) Ep2 161, MPG 277A.

(168) The following statement of St Nilus is important here: "Χορδαὶ πλείους ἀρμονίως συντεθειμέναι καὶ μουσικῶς ἐκάστη ἐν οικείῃ

χώρα τεταγμένη, αἱ πολλάί εἰσιν ἐντολαί τοῦ Θεοῦ, καί τὰ περὶ πλειόνων δόγματα, οὐδεμίαν ἔχοντα πρὸς ἄλληλα διαφωνίαν" (Ep 1240, MPG 169D-172A).

(169) OSM 10, MPG 1156A.

(170) Ep2 161, MPG 277A.

(171) Sirach 15:9.

(172) Ep2 161, MPG 276D.

(173) Ep1 234, MPG 169D· Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(174) Ep4 25, MPG 561B.

(175) Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(176) *ibid.*

(177) Ep1 240, MPG 172A.

(178) Ep2 161, MPG 277A.

(179) "ἐντελεχῶς καὶ νουνεχῶς, κατὰ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν τῆς μνήμης τοῦ κρείττονος", Ep3 117, MPG 437B.

(180) "αἰθεροβατώντας τῷ φρονήματι καὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖς νοήμασι", Ep1 30, MPG 97B.

(181) Ep3 98, MPG 429Cff.

(182) Ep2 161, MPG 277A.

(183) "ἐπιλανθάνεται τῶν μιαρῶν καὶ ὀλεθρίων παθῶν, χαρᾶς δὲ ἀνεκκαλήτου πληροῦται, καὶ ποθεινῶς λοιπὸν ἐνατενίζει τῷ θείῳ πρὸς αὐτὸ μόνῃ σπεύδουσα καὶ ἀγωνιζομένη (ἢ ψυχὴ του) καὶ μηδὲν τῶν ὀρωμένων τοῦ κάλλους ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀοράτου προκρίνουσα", Ep1 68, MPG 112C.

(184) Ep3 70, MPG 421AB.

(185) Ep1 96, MPG 124C.

(186) "ἡμερινὸς καὶ φωτεινὸς καλεῖται", Ep3 70, MPG 421A.

(187) Ep3 276, MPG 521A.

(188) TPV 36, MPG 1012C.

(189) Ep3 136, MPG 448A.

(190) OAI, MPG 709C.

- (191) Ps 77· Eccl 6:12.
- (192) Ps 88:10.
- (193) Ep1 183, MPG 152D.
- (194) Ep1 185, MPG 153A.
- (195) TPV 36, MPG 1012D-1013A.
- (196) "εἰς τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος στείρων γεώργια, ἐξ ὧν θερίσαι ἐστι ζωὴν αἰώνιον", Ep1 233, MPG 168C.
- (197) "πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχειν τὴν ἔξοδον τοῦ βίου", Πρὸς Εὐκάρπιον Μοναχόν, MPG 89,357C.
- (198) "ὄθεν οὐχ ὁ καλῶς ἀρχόμενος καὶ κακῶς μετερχόμενος, οὗτος τέλειος· ἀλλ' ὁ καλῶς ὑποτιθέμενος οὗτος δίκαιος παρὰ θεῶ", Ep3 252, MPG 505B.
- (199) "δικαστήριον ἤδη προευτρέπισται", Ep2 234, MPG 320C.
- (200) LME 51, MPG 781C.
- (201) "ἠπειλημένων τιμωριῶν", Ep1 304, MPG 192D.
- (202) Ep1 148, MPG 144C.
- (203) Ep3 177, MPG 521AB.
- (204) Ep1 68, MPG 112C.
- (205) Ep2 143, MPG 265B.
- (206) Ep3 251, MPG 504D.
- (207) Ep3 201, MPG 476D.
- (208) 1 Reg 22:2.
- (209) Ep1 131, MPG 137D-140A.
- (210) Cf. Ep3 201, MPG 476Dff.
- (211) Is 5:18.
- (212) Ep1 77, MPG 116C.
- (213) "τὸ θρηνώδες ἐπίφθεγμα, μύρια προσματρυρόμενον σκυθρωπὰ καὶ ἀνιαρά", Ep1 220, MPG 164A.
- (214) Ep3 221, MPG 484C.
- (215) Ep3 201, MPG 477A.

- (216) Ep1 131, MPG 140A· Ep3 323, MPG 540A· Ep2 236, MPG 360C.
- (217) Ep3 171, MPG 464C.
- (218) Ep3 129, MPG 444B.
- (219) Ep1 150, MPG 145A.
- (220) Ep2 303, MPG 349B.
- (221) Ep3 129, MPG 444B.
- (222) Ep3 255, MPG 509B.
- (223) Ep3 257, MPG 513A.
- (224) *ibid.*, MPG 512B.
- (225) *ibid.*, MPG 513B.
- (226) Ep3 308, MPG 533CD " Ὅσα γὰρ μὴ ἀνύει φιλία (ἐν πρὸς θεὸν), τοσαῦτα ἀνύει προσεδρία καὶ πένθος καὶ δέησις ἐκτενής".
- (227) Ep3 274, MPG 520C.
- (228) Ep3 85, MPG 425Dff.
- (229) Ep3 285, MPG 525A.
- (230) Ep1 287, MPG 188A, cf. Gus George Christofis, *The notions of Martyrdom according to St John Chrysostom*, (Diss.), Durham 1984.
- (231) "ἄπαυστον καὶ ἀνένδοτον σωτηρίαν", TPV 48, MPG 1029C.
- (232) Ep4 1, MPG 544D-545A.
- (233) Cf. TPV 50, MPG 1033Bff.
- (234) OSM 3, MPG 448Bff.
- (235) TPV 50, MPG 1033Bff.
- (236) OPP, MPG 1492BC.
- (237) "ὡσπερ δὲ τινα σύλληψιν τὴν φθορὰν κτησαμένη κυοφορεῖ νεκρωθέντα τῇ σήψει τῶν σπερμάτων τὰ ἔμβρια· καὶ γίνεται μήτηρ ζωῆς τοῖς κακοῖς ἢ νέκρωσις καὶ θάνατος τόκου πατὴρ ἀναδεικνύεται", LME 50, MPG 1033Bff.
- (238) LUC 395, MPG 115ff.
- (239) TPV 49, MPG 1032D.

- (240) Ep2 45, MPG 217A.
- (241) LUC 396, MPG 133-134.
- (242) "οὐ γὰρ ταυτὸν οὐδὲ ὅμοιον δούλον ὑπὲρ δεσπότης καὶ δεσποτὴν ὑπὲρ δούλου ἀποθανεῖν", Ep2 243, MPG 500CD.
- (243) "ἀσκήσεως πολιτείαν ἀρίστην· ἀλλὰ καὶ κατήφειαν γινομένην ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐπταισμένοις καὶ κρουσμὸν μετώπου καὶ παταγμὸν στήθους καὶ γόνυ κλινόμενον, καὶ χειρῶν διαπεταγμὸν μετὰ πόνου καρδίας, καὶ φιλήματα πόρνης τοῦς Δεσποτικούς περιλειχούσας πόδας καὶ ὀδυρτικὸν ἔφ' ἁμαρτίαις φωνῆν καὶ στεναγμὸν ἐκ βάθους καὶ καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ θρῆνου μυρισμὸν καὶ σταγετὸν δακρύων", Ep1 159, MPG148B.
- (244) Ep1 280, MPG 185A.
- (245) Ep1 331, MPG 201C.
- (246) Ep1 302, MPG192CD.
- (247) Ep1 159, MPG 148B.
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- (258) Ep2 45, MPG 217B "Τὸ γὰρ γογγύζειν κῆμα ὑπάρχει ὀργῆς".
- (259) Ep2 43, MPG 216D· Sirach 2:1.
- (260) Ep3 174, MPG 465B.
- (261) Ep3 173, MPG 464D.
- (262) Ep1 317, MPG 197a.
- (263) Ep3 182, MPG 469C.

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