

■ From St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite: A “sacred and praiseworthy Piracy”

The Divine Comforter and Orthodox Theology

“The Holy Spirit provideth all things”

1. The “Mystery of True Theology”

W*e are celebrating Pentecost, and the coming of the Spirit!* And who will be the Master of the Feast, to guide us safely to the sacred and sober intoxication of true theology?

St. Cosmas the Melodist, in the first Canon of Pentecost, and also in other of his compositions, employs sacred words from the God-bearing Fathers, and especially from St. Gregory the Theologian.

In order to interpret the Canon of the Divinely-inspired Cosmas, St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite has recourse not only to the namesake of theology, but also to a multitude of sacred Teachers of our Holy Faith.

Of course, he realizes the need to defend *“such a sacred and praiseworthy piracy,”* which he ultimately, and more correctly, views as a *“loan,”* *“or rather, not a loan, but a bounty and a gift,”* because the whole ocean of wisdom, and especially that of St. Gregory the Theologian, is *“poured out upon all Christian people”* and *“invites those so wishing*



to draw from it freely and to drink their fill of its streams as much as they might.”¹

Consequently, it is a great bounty and gift for those who are Faithful and Christ-loving to have, as their guide at this great Feast, St. Nikodemos, this marvel of Athos, the compendium of the Fathers, this new ocean of theology.

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“We proclaim *in Orthodox manner the undivided Nature of God the unoriginate Father, and the Word and the Spirit of equal authority, crying: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers.”²*

By the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who descended today upon the Holy Apostles, *“we proclaim in Orthodox manner the undivided and inseparable nature of the Godhead, known in three Hypostases, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”³*

‘The Holy Spirit,’ says St. Nikodemos, ‘by virtue of being the source of Divine charisms, for this reason, when He descended upon the Holy Apostles, bestowed upon them all of the particular charisms, and through them bestowed these charisms upon us, too,’ ‘and especially did He bestow upon them the charism of the true and unerring theology of the Holy Trinity; and through the Apostles He bestowed this same charism of theology by succession upon us who believe in their preaching.”⁴

Thus, true *“theology”* was bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit: God is a *“Thrice-Holy Unity,”⁵* that is, *“a Unity and a Trinity: a Unity according to Nature, and a Trinity according to Hypostases.”⁶*

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However, “true and unerring theology” was bestowed by the Holy Spirit first and foremost upon the Holy Angels and the other Holy Bodiless Powers.

‘True theology was bestowed upon the Angels,’ St. Nikodemos teaches us, ‘because the Seraphim, who appeared to the Prophet Isaiah surrounding the throne of the Lord of Sabbath, were crying the Thrice-Holy Hymn one to another: “And Seraphim stood round about Him, each one having six wings,” “and one cried to the other, and they said: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’”^{7,8}

St. Athanasios the Great explains that

“the words ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ indicate the trihypostatic nature of the Godhead; by saying ‘Lord’ once, they allude to Its unity and unicity.”⁹

St. Nikodemos continues in greater detail:

‘The Seraphim learned this theology from the Holy Spirit,’ because ‘if they had not been instructed by the Spirit, how could they have said “Holy” thrice and “Lord” once? This declares the Trinity and the Unity: the Trinity of Hypostases, to wit, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the Unity of the Divine Nature and Essence.’¹⁰

This teaching, that the Heavenly Powers are instructed by the Spirit in true theology, is expounded also by St. Basil the Great:

How could the Seraphim say ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ were they not taught by the Spirit how often true piety requires them to utter this doxology? Whether, therefore, all of His Angels praise God or all of His Hosts praise Him, it is through the coöperation of the Spirit that they do so.¹¹

The Holy Heavenly Powers, therefore, were the first to be initiated by the Divine Comforter into the “Mystery of true theology.”

Thereafter,

*The Divine Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost learned the mystery of true theology and were taught the sublime dogma of the Holy Trinity; and the Apostles, in turn, imparted it to their successors.*¹²



To be sure, since our Lady the *Theotokos*, Mary, was also in the upper room of Pentecost, she, too, was initiated into Trinitarian theology: “*These all were with Mary the mother of Jesus.*”¹³

In such a way, by order of the *Panagia*, the Holy Apostle John revealed the **mystery of theology** to St. Gregory of Neocæsarea, as recorded in his Life by St. Gregory of Nyssa:¹⁴

There is one God, the Father of the living Word, Who is His subsistent Wisdom and Power and Eternal Image: perfect Begetter of the perfect Begotten, Father of the Only-begotten Son. There is one Lord, Unique of the Unique, God of God, Image and Likeness of the Godhead, Efficient Word, Wisdom comprehensive of the constitution of all things, and Power formative of the whole creation, true Son of the true Father, Invisible of the Invisible, and Incorruptible of the Incorruptible, Immortal of the Immortal, and Eternal of the Eternal. And there is One Holy Spirit, having His subsistence from God [the Father], and being made manifest by the Son, to wit, to men: perfect Image of the perfect Son; Life, the Cause of the living, Holy Fount, Sanctity, the Endower of Sanctification, in Whom is manifested God the Father, Who is above all and in all, and God the Son, Who is through all. There is a perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, neither divided nor estranged. Wherefore, there is nothing either created or servile in the Trinity, nor

*anything adventitious, as if at some former period it was non-existent, and at some later period it was introduced. And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; [nor is the Unity augmented to a Duality or a Duality to a Trinity], but without variation and without change, They are ever the same Trinity.*¹⁵

Consequently, according to St. Nikodemos, we confess in Orthodox manner that

The Father is unoriginate in terms of causality and does not derive His being from another; the Son is begotten of the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the same Father. Although these two derive their being from the Father, the one by generation and the other by procession, they nonetheless possess the same Authority and Sovereignty as the Father, since they are one in Essence with Him.

*The Orthodox confession of the Holy Trinity means that we do not divide It into unequal ranks or say that the Father is the superior God, while the Son or the Spirit is an inferior God, thereby ascribing degrees of greater and lesser to Persons Who are equal in Essence and Glory, as did the prattlers Arios and Macedonios, lest through a diminution of the Son or the Spirit, we should make the error of insulting also Their natural Principle and Cause, namely the Father; for, although the Holy Trinity is rendered threefold by the three Hypostases, so that the Father is the Originator, the Son the Offspring, and the Spirit He Who is emitted, that is, proceeds, Their Nature is nonetheless one, as are Their Essence, Their Sovereignty, and Their Authority.*¹⁶

* * *

Next, St. Nikodemos informs us that
from this St. Gregory of Neocæsarea the mystery of theology was garnered by St. Athanasios the Great, and espe-

cially by St. Gregory, the namesake of theology, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. John of Damascus, who broadened the theology of the Holy Trinity, inspired, themselves, by the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

To be precise, St. Gregory, that profound thinker, theologized as follows concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

The Father is Father, and is unoriginate, for He is of no one; the Son is Son, and is not unoriginate, for He is of the Father. But if you understand the word 'origin' in a temporal sense, He, too, is unoriginate, for He is the Maker of times, and is not subject to time. The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, proceeding from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by generation but by procession (if I may coin a word for the sake of clarity); for neither did the Father cease to be unbegotten because He begat, nor the Son to be begotten because He is of the Unbegotten—how could that be? Nor is the Spirit changed into Father or Son because He proceeds, or because He is God, though the ungodly do not believe it. For hypostatic properties are unchangeable; otherwise, how could hypostatic properties remain, if they were changeable and could be transferred from one to another?¹⁸

The Holy Spirit, therefore, has taught us that

The Father is 'unoriginate' causally and temporally, but the Son is 'unoriginate,' in the sense that He was 'born,' that is, generated, from the Father timelessly and before the beginning of any times or ages.¹⁹

The holy theologians say "He was born"—"for the Father is unoriginate; from Him the Son was born timelessly"²⁰—to make it clear that "the Father is the root and cause of the Son,"²¹ as the sublimely eloquent St. Dionysios the Areopagite characteristically writes:

That the Father is the originating source of the Godhead while the Son and the Spirit are, if I might so put it, Divinely-planted Offshoots of the God-begetting Godhead,



and, as it were, blossoms and superessential Lights Thereof, we learn from Sacred Scripture; but how these things are so, we cannot say or conceive.²²

In another place, the same Father writes:

*From the immaterial and indivisible Good the interior Lights of Its goodness are born, and they abide inseparably from that state of rest which, both within their source and within themselves and within each other, is coeternal with their blossoming from It.*²³

Other sacred Teachers, such as St. Gregory the Theologian, advert to this issue of the relationship between the Father, as “root,” and the Son and the Holy Spirit:

*If we hear certain things about the Son or the good Spirit in the Divine Scriptures and God-bearing men, to the effect that they occupy second place to God the Father, I bid thee to understand after this manner the words of deep-seated Wisdom: that it referreth to an unoriginate Root and doth not divide the Godhead, that thou mightest have a single dominion to worship, not a plurality.*²⁴

Likewise, the Divine Cyril, the luminary of Alexandria, says the following:

*Just as if one of the most fragrant of flowers were to say, regarding the scent dispersed from itself and shed into the senses of bystanders, ‘it shall receive of mine,’ it would signify a natural affinity and not, I suppose, a separate and derivative affinity, so also should you understand it to be in the case of the Son and the Spirit.*²⁵



This theological perspective of “root” and “offshoot,” however, demands particular attention, lest we be led into a Latin way of thinking.

St. Nikodemos guides us very carefully:

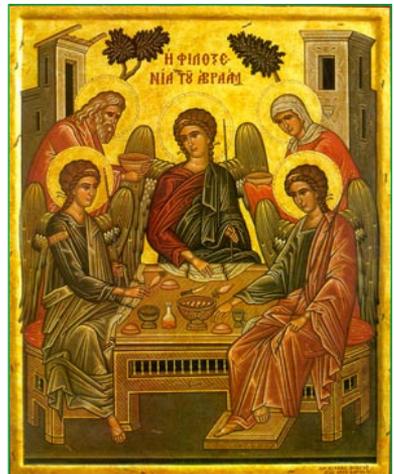
*But know, my beloved, that the theologians do not say that the Father is the ‘root,’ the Son the ‘branch,’ and the Holy Spirit the ‘flower’ from the branch, so that the Father is first, the Son second, and the Spirit third, as the Latins think; no, they mean that the Father is the root of the Divinity of the Son and of the Spirit; the Son and the Spirit are offshoots coeternal with this root, namely with the Father.*²⁶

Furthermore, it is for this reason that Metrophanes of Smyrna writes, in his Canon to the Trinity for the Midnight Office on Sunday:

*A twofold stem hath sprouted from the Father as from a root, even the Son and the Upright Spirit, Who are con-natural and Divinely-planted Shoots and co-unoriginate Blossoms.*²⁷

The Divine Comforter, St. Nikodemos continues, has also taught us the following theology through the Holy Fathers, to wit, that

[t]he Holy Spirit has the same Form, that is, Nature and Essence, as the Father and the Son; and that He has the same Throne, that is, the same Glory, Honor, and Divinity, as the Father and the Son, since He



*is connatural and coëssential with Them; for, 'throne' signifies equality of dignity.*²⁸

And we also learn that

*The Holy Spirit 'shines forth' from the Father alone, that is, He proceeds together with the Son, Who is begotten of the same Father.*²⁹

However, we should make it clear, at this juncture, that when the hymnographer St. Theodore the Studite proclaims the Holy Spirit as "*shining forth from the Father,*"³⁰ he does not equate the manner of the Son's "effulgence" with the manner of the Spirit's "effulgence."

*The hymnographer said 'shineth forth with,' in order to make it clear that the Holy Spirit is superessential Light, as the Areopagite said above, and proceeds from the Father as 'Light of Light,' just as the Son, too, is begotten of the Father before all ages as 'Light of Light'; the Son and the Spirit, therefore, both 'shine forth together' simultaneously from the Father as the ray and the light shine forth from the sun, though not in one and the same way, but differently; for the former 'shineth forth' by generation, while the Spirit 'shineth forth' by procession.*³¹

It is well known from our theological tradition that "to 'shine forth' is always indicative, in theology, of impassible and timeless existence,"³² and that "generation" is a different mode of existence than "procession," as St. John of Damascus says:

*We have learned that there is a difference between 'generation' and 'procession,' but the nature of that difference we have not learned at all. Further, the generation of the Son from the Father and the procession of the Holy Spirit [from the same Father] are simultaneous; 'For though the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, yet this is not 'by generation,' but 'by procession.' This is a different mode of existence, just as incomprehensible and unknowable as the generation of the Son.*³³

Some theologians of our Church have called the “*coëffulgence*” of the Son and the Spirit from the Father “*coëtternal manifestation*.” Among them is Joseph Bryennios, who says:

‘For, although it has been said by some of the Saints that the Holy Spirit proceeds “through the Son,” the word in this context clearly means His “eternal manifestation,” not a procession into existence; the phrase [“through the Son”] denotes His “shining forth” and manifestation from the Son; for it is acknowledged that the Comforter “shines forth eternally” and is disclosed “through the Son,” just as light shines forth from the sun through its rays; it also signifies that He is bestowed upon us, given to us, and sent to us, but not that He subsists “through the Son and from the Son,” or that He receives His existence through Him and from Him.’³⁴

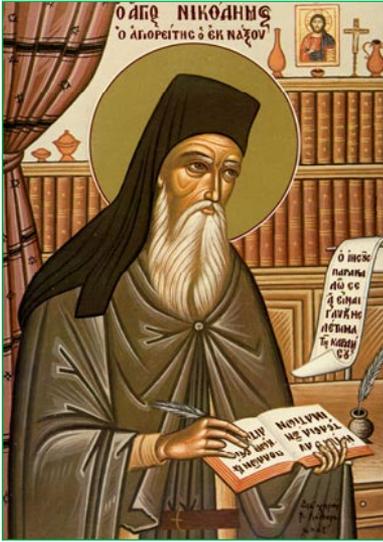
However, in the “*shining forth*” of the Son and the Holy Spirit there was, assuredly, no coöperation of the Father with these two Divine Hypostases, because Their “*shining forth*” from the Father was perfect and supremely perfect; that is, no “*joint cause*” was needed for this.

As St. Nikodemos aptly comments:

Neither does the Son, Who shines forth from the Father ‘by generation,’ coöperate in the effulgence of the Holy Spirit from the Father ‘by procession’; nor does the Holy Spirit, Who shines forth from the Father ‘by procession,’ coöperate in the effulgence of the Son from the Father ‘by generation’; for, the emanation of each from the Father is not imperfect, but they both come from the Father perfectly and in a supremely perfect manner—the Son is generated, and the Spirit proceeds—, although the wrong-believing Latins make the generation of the Son a joint cause of the procession of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

2. The “Charism of Sacred Theology”

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, as a genuine theologian of the Church, after initiating us into the “mystery of true theology,” now proceeds further to teach us about the charism of sacred theology and how to acquire it.



‘I know,’ says the Saint, *that the charism of sacred theology is the loftiest and broadest of all the charisms of the Holy Spirit; hence, it covers them all, just as a bird covers its nestlings, as St. Maximos Kavsokalyvites expressed it proverbially. For this reason, more than the other charisms, it attracts and pricks the heart and its love and desire; for, just as the subject matter of theology is the highest and most desirable, because it is God,*

*the supreme Being and the highest object of desire, so also the theology concerning God is the highest and most desirable of all.*³⁶

Joseph Bryennios defines theology in the same way as

*‘The art of arts and the science of sciences par excellence,’ of which ‘the source, subject matter, and end is God Himself’; for, whereas existing things are the subject matter of philosophy, the end of theology is He Who is above all existing things and the Creator of all; and we must neither suppose that faith is a technique, nor theologize beyond what has been stated by the theologians; for theology is incomparably superior to philosophy and not subject to it.*³⁷

If, then, we truly desire to acquire this charism of **sacred theology**, we must become familiar with and observe the following “*eight points*”:³⁸

I. In the first place, as St. Gregory the Theologian exhorts us, we must keep God’s commandments, so that “*action*” might constitute the ascent to “*vision*”:

*Do you wish someday to become a theologian and worthy of the Godhead? Keep the commandments; proceed on your journey by means of the Divine precepts. Action is a step towards the vision of God; on the basis of your body, attend to your soul.*³⁹

II. Next, we must bring the body and its passions into subjection, and we must likewise purify the senses of the body and the soul.

He who desires the charism of **sacred theology** should keep in mind that

*“[b]efore one purifies himself, it is not safe for him either to assume direction of souls or to theologize.”*⁴⁰

This is precisely the advice that St. Gregory the Theologian gives us:

*I do not reckon it safe either to undertake the supervision of souls or to tackle theology, before I have overcome matter [the matter of the body that drags us down] as much as I am able, and have sufficiently purified both my hearing and my understanding, and for this reason, we must first purify ourselves and then converse with Him Who is pure.*⁴¹

There is, however, one concession:

*If you have not attained to perfect purity, but are still purifying yourself, then it is not inappropriate for you to theologize.*⁴²

And the namesake of theology says:



*It does not belong to everyone to philosophize about God,' because it is permitted only to those who have proved themselves and are proficient in contemplation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified.'*⁴³

That purity and “chastity” are a prerequisite for **theology**, or that **theology** is the culmination of chastity, is also the teaching of St. John of the Ladder:

*'Total chastity is the foundation of theology. He who has perfectly united his senses to God is guided by Him into understanding His words; for, without such a union, it is difficult to speak about God'; 'chastity made a Disciple [that is, St. John the Evangelist] a Theologian, who of himself grasped the dogmas of the Trinity.'*⁴⁴

The same great teacher of the desert considers the mourning involved in repentance to be inconsistent with **theology**:

*Theology will not be suitable for those in a state of mourning; for it is of a nature to dissipate their mourning. He who theologizes is like one seated on a teacher's seat, whereas he who mourns is like one sitting on a dunghill and in sackcloth. And this, I think, is why David, although he was wise and a teacher, gave this reply to those who questioned him when he was mourning, 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land,' that is, 'in the land of the passions?'*⁴⁵

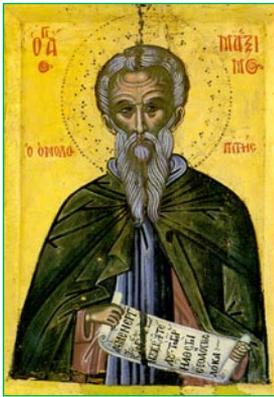
III. Likewise, we should know, continues St. Nikodemos, that

*'There are two kinds of theology, "prior" and "consequent." "Prior" theology is that which speaks about His [God's] existence; "consequent" theology is that which infers, from the creation of, and providence for created things that there is a God Who created all things and provides for them.'*⁴⁶

Thus, Procopios of Gaza says the following in his commentary on the familiar words of God to Moses, “*Thou shalt not be able to see My countenance; for no man shall see My countenance and live*”:⁴⁷

There is the countenance of God, Who is incorporeal, or the 'express Image of His Hypostasis,' as He says: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' This is the 'prior' theology concerning Him, which is in contradistinction to His creation and providence. For, there are two kinds of theology. The first kind speaks about His [God's] existence, which is called a countenance that cannot be seen. According to the second kind [that which is inferred from God's creation and providence], it is possible for His countenance to be seen; hence, Moses prays for the people: 'May He [the Lord] lift up His countenance on thee and bless thee; may He shine His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.' It was from this countenance that Cain went away, no longer reckoning God to be his Creator and Provider.⁴⁸

St. Maximos the Confessor also speaks about two **theologies**, the “*cataphatic*” [affirmative] and the “*apophatic*” [negative], “*the apophatic being higher than the cataphatic,*” and says the following:



He who theologizes cataphatically, from positive statements, makes the Word flesh, not having any other source for knowing God as cause than visible and palpable things; but he who theologizes apophatically, from negative statements, makes the Word spirit, God as He was in the beginning. On the basis of absolutely none of the things that can be known, he comes to know clearly Him Who is utterly unknowable.⁴⁹

St. Dionysios the Areopagite divides theology into two kinds, the “*unitive*” and the “*distinctive*”:

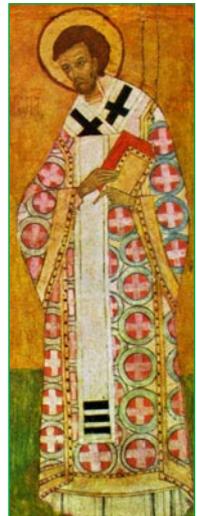
On the one hand, ‘*Unitive theology*’ applies to ‘*the entire Godhead*’; for example, names like ‘*transcendently good,*’ ‘*transcendently Divine,*’ ‘*transcending life,*’ ‘*transcendently wise,*’ unknowability, wholly belonging to the intelligible order, the affirmation of all, the negation of

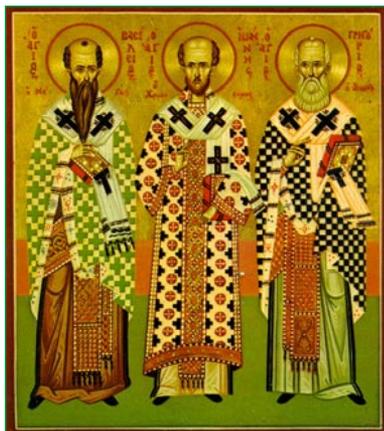
all, that which is beyond all affirmation and negation, *‘and all names which have a causal sense, “good,” “beautiful,” “existent,” “life-giving,” “wise,” and whatever the Cause of all good things is named on account of Its good gifts;’* and, to put it more clearly (St. Nikodemos explains), the natural properties of the Divine Essence, which are common to It, are called *‘unitive theology.’* *‘Distinctive theology,’* on the other hand, consists in *‘the super-essential names and properties of “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit,” which cannot be interchanged and are not held in common. Again, besides this, the all-perfect and unchangeable subsistence of Jesus among us is distinctive, as are all the mysteries of His existence and His love for mankind.’*⁵⁰

IV. As well, we should diligently occupy ourselves *with the reading and study of the Old Testament and especially of the New Testament; for Holy Scripture is called ‘theology’ by Dionysios the Areopagite in very many places, and the Divine Apostles are called ‘theologians’ in the strict sense by the same author.*⁵¹

However, when we study, let us pray to the Divine Comforter to disclose to us the hidden depths of God’s judgments, to grant us, that is, a *“spirit of wisdom and revelation,”* as the Divine Chrysostomos says:

*When expounding Scripture, either yourself, one of the faithful, or another Christian, if the meaning is hidden and obscure, and the Holy Spirit grants that the hidden meaning be revealed, one receives the ‘spirit of revelation,’ that is, the gift of unveiling the depths of Scripture. Hence, the Apostle, wanting the disciples of the true Faith to understand the Scriptures, says: [I pray to God] that [He] may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowledge, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.’*⁵² *Have you seen the ‘spir-*





*it of revelation'? ...Wherever it is necessary to learn the deeper meaning [of Scripture], the 'spirit of revelation' is invoked.*⁵³

Similarly, we ought to apply ourselves to the study

of dogmatic theology, which is, in particular, that of St. John of Damascus, the newly-printed Epitome of the dogmas of the Faith by Athanasios [Parios],

*and the Dogmatic Panoply [of Evthymios Zigabenos], and [also] to the reading of the theological discourses of St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Basil, St. Maximos, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Thessalonica, Joseph Bryennios, and the others; and note down whatever difficulties you find in them.*⁵⁴

V. We should keep in mind the following advice of the Holy Joseph Bryennios:

*It behooves one who theologizes, above all else, to possess expert knowledge of the definitions of the Divine Names and to pay careful attention to their meanings, such as 'what 'Unity' [μονός] and 'Trinity' [τριάς] mean in the case of God; what 'Father,' 'Son,' and 'Spirit' mean; what 'Godhead' [Θεότης], 'essence' [οὐσία], 'nature' [φύσις], 'form' [μορφή], and 'kind' [εἶδος] mean, all of which denote one and the same thing; what 'attribute' [ιδίωμα], 'Hypostasis' [ὑπόστασις], 'Person' [πρόσωπον], 'character' [χαρακτήρ], and 'indivisible' [ἄτομον] mean, all of which denote one and the same thing; what 'enessential' [ἐνούσιον], 'coessential' [ὁμοούσιον], and 'enhyposstatic' [ἐνυπόστατον] mean, and the rest.*⁵⁵

VI. We should be familiar with the following "*Precise Rule*," which the Holy Joseph Bryennios addresses to those who read theological books:

Those listening to theological discourse should take this into account above all, that, as one Essence and three Hypostases are apprehended in the Divine Trinity, all that is said by theologians about God is said either about the one Essence, or about the three Hypostases together, or about any two Hypostases without distinction, or about any one of them in particular, and this is a 'Precise Rule' for those who would listen intelligently to theological discourse; and never should we either apply what is said especially about the Divine Essence to the three Hypostases, or think that what is said specifically about the three Hypostases is common to the Divine Essence, or suppose that what is said about any two Hypostases is common to the other Hypostasis as well, or reckon that what is proper to one of them is proper also to the other two.⁵⁶

VII. We should pay attention likewise to what the God-bearing Maximos, the true theologian, teaches about who is a "great theologian":

If you are intending to theologize, do not seek the principles of God's inner being [that is, His incomprehensible essence and nature], for the human intellect will never discover these, nor will that of any other creature after God; but consider His attributes, as far as possible [that is, the Energies of God], such as His eternity, His infinity and unconditionedness, His goodness and wisdom, His power to create, govern, and judge all existing things. For he is a 'great theologian' among men who discerns, to however small an extent, the principles of these attributes.⁵⁷

VIII. Finally, we should pray to the Divine Comforter to grant us the charism of Sacred Theology:

'Beseech the Holy Spirit, brother,' says St. Nikodemos, that He bestow upon you, too, the gift of Theology, or, to put it better, of the vision of God; for you heard above that Theology is given by the Holy Spirit. Know that whoever is energized by the Grace of the Holy Spirit in his heart immedi-

*ately becomes a theologian, and an unerring and most reliable theologian. He who is not energized in his heart by the Spirit, whatever theological statements he makes are external words that derive from hearing, and not from a heart energized by the Spirit.*⁵⁸

Kallistos Kataphygiotes, that lofty-minded Hesychast theologian, writes the following marvellous words about one who “*is energized by the Holy Spirit*”:

*He who is energized by God in the Holy Spirit...is not excluded from theologizing, but is immediately a theologian by this very fact and cannot endure not to theologize, and that continually; but without the aforementioned heavenly gift, and without the Spirit distinctly and perpetually breathing in his heart, alas, whatever his mind sees are his fantasies, and whatever theological statements he makes are words vainly dispersed into the air, which do not stimulate the intellectual faculty of the soul as they should. [Such a man] is energized from hearing and from words that enter from without—whence access is afforded, quite ruinously, to the most appalling errors regarding noetic realities and theology itself—, and not from a heart energized by the illuminating Spirit.*⁵⁹

He, therefore, who “*theologizes by the energy of the Holy Spirit*” offers glory and honor to God, as it says in the Psalm: “*Bring to the Lord glory and honor.*”⁶⁰ In his interpretation of this verse, St. Basil the Great says:

*“Everyone who theologizes successfully, so as not to fall away from the correct understanding of the Father, of the Divinity of the Only-Begotten, or of the glory of the Holy Spirit, offers glory and honor to the Lord.”*⁶¹



3. “Energized by the Holy Spirit”

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, as a true Hesychast, teaches us, in the end, how to acquire the -Grace of the Divine Comforter, that is, how to become “energized by the Holy Spirit.”

‘We should be diligent,’ says the Saint, ‘to recover the primal Grace [of the Holy Spirit, which we received in Holy Baptism], which is buried in the passions like a spark in ash, and to increase it in our hearts.’⁶²

And how shall we accomplish this?

We must cast out the passions from our hearts as ashes, and place in them, as tinder, observance of the life-giving commandments of the Lord, and thus blow on it by returning the mind to the heart and, through this return, by the noetic and holy prayer: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of God, have mercy on me.’⁶³

When this prayer lingers in our heart, it cleanses and sweetens the heart and illumines the mind:

Such a holy prayer as this, lingering in the heart, not only cleanses it from the ash of the passions, but also uncovers the spark of Grace and kindles a strange and wondrous fire, which consumes the assaults of evil thoughts, sweetens the heart and the entire inner man, and illumines the mind.⁶⁴



St. Gregory Palamas tells us about the actions that the Divine fire of the Comforter performs in the heart:

It is not possible for one who stands in the holy Church of God, collects his mind and raises it up to God, and meditates on and attends to the meaning of the sacred hymns from the beginning to the end, not to undergo a Divine change

*corresponding to his meditation on God and the Divine Scriptures; for a certain warmth is engendered in the heart through this meditation, which drives evil thoughts away like flies, creates spiritual peace and consolation in the soul, and bestows sanctification upon the body, according to him who said: 'My heart grew hot within me, and a fire would be kindled in my meditation.' And this is what one of the God-bearing Fathers also taught us: 'Make every effort to ensure that your inward activity is in accordance with God, and you will overcome the outward passions.'*⁶⁵

* * *

It is necessary, then, that we ascend, like the Divine Disciples, to the 'Upper Room,' that is, that

*'we elevate ourselves above earthly things, above all pleasure, avarice, and love of glory, and above every other passion' and 'have a heart pure of the passions and a soul undisturbed by blasphemous, evil, and shameful thoughts'; for 'it is then that the Holy Spirit descends and comes to us,' since 'a clean heart, like a clean mirror, attracts to itself the rays of the Holy Spirit.'*⁶⁶

Our mind *then* enters into our heart and

*[T]herein, as in a sacred oratory, we pray to God noetically at all times, in accordance with the words 'Pray without ceasing'; for thus were the Divine Apostles in the Temple after the Lord's Ascension, glorifying God; for this reason they received the Grace of the Holy Spirit both sensibly and noetically; [They] were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.'*⁶⁷

In this state the man who loves God is "energized in his heart by the Holy Spirit" and

"[W]hoever has the Holy Spirit in his heart actively, sensibly, and manifestly, is a disciple and friend of Christ, as

Paul says: ‘[I]f any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’”⁶⁸

May we be vouchsafed this most sublime gift, by the Grace and love for mankind of the All-Holy, life-giving, and perfecting Spirit, unto Whom is due all glory, together with His unoriginate Originator and His coëssential Word, unto the ages, Amen.

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**Unto Him that granteth the beginning
and the end glory is due**

Notes

1. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον* [*Festal Sermonary*] (Venice: 1836), p. 524 (“Prefatory remarks on the First Canon of Pentecost”).
2. St. Cosmas the Melodist, Canon for Pentecost. Ode 7, *Troparion* 2.
3. St. Nikodemos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, p. 543.
4. See note 3.
5. *Παρακλητική*, Plagal of the Fourth Tone, Sunday Orthros, Ninth Hymn of Ascent.
6. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Νέα Κλίμαξ* [*New Ladder*] (Volos: Ekdoseis “S. N. Schoinas,” 1956), p. 328.
7. Isaiah 6:2-3.
8. See note 6.
9. St. Athanasios the Great. Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos uses this passage in his own interpretation of the Hymns of Ascent (Ἀναβαθμοί), and St. Nikodemos mentions this (*Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 328).
 - **We** have not managed to trace this citation in the *Patrologia Græca* of Migne, except for the following similar passage, which is probably the one cited by Kallistos, in a free rendering: “The fact that these venerable living creatures offer their doxology three times, saying ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ proves that the three Hypostases are perfect, just as in saying ‘Lord,’ they declare the one Essence” (“Treatise on the Verse ‘All Things Are Delivered Unto Me of My Father’” [§6], *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXV, col. 220A).
10. See note 6.
11. St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* (§38), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXII, col. 140A.
12. See note 6.
13. Cf. Acts 1:14.

14. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLVI, cols. 912D-913A.
15. *Ibid.* (The words in brackets have been added by St. Nikodemos for the sake of clarity—*Trans.*)
16. St. Nikodemos, *Ἐορτοδορόμιον*, p. 543.
17. *Idem*, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 329.
18. St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XXXIX, ‘On the Holy Lights’” (§12), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 348BC.
19. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 330.
20. St. Theodore the Studite, Ninth Hymn of Ascent, Plagal of the Fourth Tone.
21. See note 19.
22. St. Dionysios the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, ch. II, §7, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 645B.
23. *Idem*, *Mystical Theology*, ch. III, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 1033A.
24. St. Gregory the Theologian, *Poems*, Book I, Part I, “Dogmatic Poems” (§3), “On the Holy Spirit,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVII, col. 412A.
25. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Holy and Coëssential Trinity*, Dialogue VI, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXV, col. 1012B.
26. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 331.
27. Metrophanes of Smyrna, *Παρακλητική*, Third Tone, Sunday Midnight Office, Canon to the Trinity, Ode 3, *Troparion* 1.
28. See note 26.
29. See note 26.
30. See note 20.
31. See note 26.
32. Evgenios Boulgares, Archbishop of Cherson, “Ἀνάκρισις περὶ Νικηφόρου τοῦ Βλεμμίδου” [“Inquiry Concerning Nikephoros Blemmides”], citing Joseph Bryennios, *Τὰ Παραλειπόμενα* [*Unedited Works*], 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis “Bas. Regopoulou,” 1991), Vol. III, p. 310.
33. St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, I.8, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIV, cols. 824A, 816C.
34. Joseph Bryennios, “Discourse IX, ‘Concerning the Divine Trinity,’” in *Τὰ Εὔρεθέντα* [*Extant Works*], 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis “Bas. Regopoulou,” 1991), Vol. I, p. 156.
 - **These** two passages are from a work by Gregory of Cyprus (Patriarch Gregory II of Constantinople, reigned 1283-1289), “Exposition of the *Tomos* of Faith Against Bekkos,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXLII, cols. 241A, 240C.
35. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 332.
36. See note 35.
37. Bryennios, “Discourse III, ‘Concerning the Divine Trinity,’” in *Τὰ Εὔρεθέντα*, Vol. I, p. 59; “Discourse V, ‘Concerning the Holy Trinity,’” in *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 101.
38. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, pp. 332-335.
39. St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XX, ‘On Dogma and the Appointment of Bishops’” (§12), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXV, col. 1080B.
40. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 332.

41. St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XX” (§§1, 4), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXV, cols. 1065B-1068A, 1069A.
 - **Regarding** the connection between “purification” and “conversation [with God],” see “Oration XXXIX” (§9).
42. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 333.
43. St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XXVII (First Theological Oration)” (§3), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 13CD.
44. St. John of Sinai, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 30, “On Love, Hope, and Faith” (§§12, 14), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 1157C.
45. *Ibid.*, Step 7, “On Gladsome Mourning” (§26), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXX-VIII, col. 805CD.
46. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 333.
47. Exodus 33:20.
48. Procopios of Gaza, *Commentary on Exodus*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIIIA, col. 677C. Hebrews 1:3; St. John 14:9; Numbers 6:25-26.
49. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Second Century on Theology* (§39), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XC, cols. 1141D-1144A.
50. St. Dionysios the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, ch. II, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 640BC.
51. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 334.
52. Ephesians 1:17-18.
53. St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily ‘On the Holy Spirit’” (§3), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LII, col. 817.
54. See note 51.
55. Bryennios, “Discourse I, ‘Concerning the Divine Trinity,’” in *Τὰ Εὐρεθέντα*, Vol. I, p. 34.
 - **The** words “It behooves...such as” are from Bryennios, while the words “what ‘Unity’...and the rest” are from St. Nikodemos and constitute a summary of what Bryennios goes on to say.
56. *Idem*, “Discourse VI, ‘Concerning the Divine Trinity,’” in *Τὰ Εὐρεθέντα*, Vol. I, p. 114.
57. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Second Century on Love* (§27), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XC, col. 992C.
58. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 335.
59. St. Kallistos Kataphygiotes, *Concerning Divine Union and the Contemplative Life* (§84), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXLVII, col. 928D.
60. Psalm 28:1 (*Septuaginta*).
61. St. Basil the Great, “Homily on Psalm 28” (§1), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXIX, cols. 284C-285A.
62. St. Nikodemos, *Ἐορτοδρόμιον*, p. 583 (“Concluding remarks on the Iambic Canon of Pentecost”).
63. See note 62.
64. See note 62.

65. St. Gregory Palamas, “Homily XX, ‘On the Eighth Matins Gospel’” (§15), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLI, col. 273BC; Psalm 38:4 (*Septuaginta*); Abba Arsenios 9, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 89BC.
66. St. Nikodemos, *Ἐορτοδόμιον*, p. 551 (“Concluding remarks on the First Canon of Pentecost”).
67. *Ibid.*; I Thessalonians 5:17; St. Luke 24:53.
68. St. Nikodemos, *Νέα Κλίμαξ*, p. 136 (“Interpretation of the Sixth Hymn of Ascent, Third Tone”); Romans 8:9.