

The Ἐξομολογητάριον of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*

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One of the works by the great Neo-Hesychastic Father of our Church, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite,¹ that has given rise to lengthy discussions is his Ἐξομολογητάριον [*Exomologetarion* or *Manual of Confession*].² Its language and style pose challenges, and the question is often raised as to how one of the redactors of the *Φιλοκαλία* [*Philokalia*]³ could have composed such a work. However, if we are to interpret a text of this kind, we must first come to an understanding of its ecclesiological perspective. The aim of my paper is not to analyze the work, but to provide a psychological and hermeneutical treatment of its overall structure and to ascertain its pastoral goals.

1. *Let us recall the structure and lineaments of the work.* It begins with an address “To the Most Reverend Spiritual Fathers in Christ” (pp. 3-6), to which is added an “Epigram on the Teaching of This Book” (p. 7). There follows: “Part One: Concise and Practical Instructions for the Spiritual Father, Compiled from Various Sources” (pp. 9-111). In Part Two, after brief prefatory remarks about the author thereof, “The Canons of St. John the Faster, together with their Interpretations” are set forth, with explanations by St. Nicodemos (pp. 112-148). To these are added “Certain Important Subjects Not Covered by the Canons of St. John of Faster” (pp. 149-171). This is followed by “Excellent and Concise Advice for the Penitent on How to Confess, Compiled from Various Teachers for the General Benefit of Readers” (p. 173). After a brief address (pp. 175-177), consisting of “Greetings to My Brothers in Christ” and an “Epigram” on the subject (p. 178), Part Three—“Elegant and Concise Advice for the Penitent” (pp. 179-238)—commences. To this is attached a “Soul-profitting Discourse Concerning the Audacity of Those Who Sin With the Expectation of Confessing and Repenting” (pp. 239-282).

St. Nicodemos composed the Ἐξομολογητάριον after occupying himself with the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian,⁴ and therefore in a spiritual atmosphere that was purely Hesychastic and imbued with the precepts of the *Φιλοκαλία*; not only is it evident that

the work is a compilation of texts, but the author himself clearly states this.⁵ Consequently, there is no basis in reality for the idea that we are dealing with a genre “thitherto completely unknown in the Church,”⁶ since this kind of work is not foreign to the literary output of the Greek nation during its enslavement to the Turks. At any rate, it behooves us to locate the sources of this misunderstanding. Gerhard Podskalsky, evidently in order to explain the ostensibly scholastic nature of the work, characterizes it, in terms of its structure, as “probably based on a Latin original.”⁸ But the notion that St. Nicodemos worked from Latin models—which, in the past, led to some preposterous speculations—has now been decisively laid to rest by Mr. Emmanuel Frangiskou,⁹ who, in the wake of his critical intrusion into the debate, has contributed significantly to demolishing an essentially groundless attempt to make unjust war against this Saint; and for this, we theologians are grateful to him.

St. Nicodemos himself states that he used other works for his *Ἐξομολογητάριον* (“compiled from various sources,”¹⁰ “compiled from different teachers”¹¹). He was translating not from a single text (written in Greek or some other language), but was drawing on diverse works of similar character, using the usual method of compilation that he employs in his writings.¹² In any case, with the exception of his wholly original liturgical commentaries, St. Nicodemos, following the mind of the Fathers,¹³ did not consider it a defect to base oneself on the works of others, since in this way the traditional practice of the Church is rekindled and renewed and Her continuity is made manifest by a plurality of voices. Nonetheless, whatever the Saint took from some other writer was always passes through the spiritual “transformer” of his conscience and his purely Orthodox and ecclesiastical mind-set.¹⁴ Hence, he does not hesitate to say: “[W]e have been very assiduous in collecting material from a variety of teachers.”¹⁵ He states that he has before him “the most accurate manuscripts of *Ἐξομολογητάρια* from the Holy Mountain,” which “are profitably used by all of the experienced spiritual Fathers on the Holy Mountain,”¹⁶ and he recommends spiritual Fathers to study the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* by Chrysanthos of Jerusalem,¹⁷ in conjunction with the Sacred Canons,¹⁸ as well as the printed works of Emmanuel Romanitis, *Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Διδασκόμενος* [*Instructions for Spiritual Fathers*] and *Ὁ Μετανοῶν Διδασκόμενος* [*Instructions for Penitents*],¹⁹ the works of an author who, through his translations, provided Nicodemos with material for other of his writings.²⁰ He also uses an *Ὁρθόδοξος Ὁμολογία* [*Orthodox Confession*],²¹ and he is familiar with the “*Ἐξομολογητάριον* printed many years ago by one Neophytos of Cyprus, surnamed Rodinos, who was a heretic.”²² Hereby, he tacitly reproaches the Œcumenical Patriarch Kallinikos III, who republished this work, “with [Neophytos’] name on the title page, but without purging

it of its erroneous ideas.”²³ As well, he mentions a “newly printed Ἐξομολογητάριον for the sick,”²⁴ which had recently been published under the name of St. Nicodemus²⁵ (though His Eminence, Metropolitan Paul of Sweden, considers this a misattribution,²⁶ asserting that the work belongs to Methodios Anthrakitis [†1736]²⁷).

The Ἐξομολογητάριον of St. Nicodemus is based, specifically, on the thirty-eight Canons of St. John the Faster²⁸ and on his seventeen Penances, which were discovered in manuscripts located in Athonite monasteries. He translates these canonical texts, simplifying them linguistically, and also comments on them, adding detailed footnotes, following the method that he employs in the *Πηδάλιον*. He holds St. John the Faster in great esteem: “The Divine Faster, who set forth his Canons with the discernment of the Holy Spirit...”²⁹ He recommends that “spiritual Fathers apply the Canons in the way that St. John the Faster did,”³⁰ and this because of the “condescension” that the latter employed (a spiritual Father should thus tell the person confessing to him: “I have applied the Canons in your case according to the condescension shown by St. John the Faster”³¹). The criteria used by St. Nicodemus in selecting these Canons are pastoral and, as well, purely ecclesiastical (criteria “which the entire Orthodox Church has generally accepted and does accept”).³² The great fall in the spiritual level of humanity rendered it imperative to use St. John’s Canons, which were governed by a spirit of leniency greater than that of the ancient Fathers.³³ St. Nicodemus was also aware that the Faster was “reproached for the small number of years that he prescribed for abstinence from Communion.”³⁴ St. John provided a new yardstick for repentance: he shortened the period of abstinence from the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist,³⁵ but he laid greater emphasis on the ascetical dimension, something which, for reasons that are easy to understand, Hesychasts like St. Nicodemus upheld. The Saint offers a masterly explanation of this shift in the Church’s pastoral practice;³⁶ along with the Faster, he emphasizes an ascetical rule (κανὼν), which, more than anything else, keeps the penitent in a state of constant vigilance and guides him towards true repentance. There is thus a continuity between the category of “mourners” [penitents] that existed in Christian antiquity and those Faithful who put into practice and “fulfill” the ascetical rule given to them. The method changes, but the same spirit is preserved, a spirit which, in both cases, governs the process of repentance and the restoration of the believer to good standing in the Church.

2. *The ideas expressed in the Ἐξομολογητάριον are at odds with the anti-pietistic tendency that prevails in our day.*³⁷ The attempt to overstate the admittedly pernicious spirit of Pietism³⁸ little helps those who ardently apply their anti-Pietistic criteria to approach the *oeuvre* of St. Nicodemus with purely Orthodox ecclesiological criteria.

Somewhere along the line, a delicate balance is lost. At the same time, an evaluation of his works that proceeds from a realm in which asceticism takes priority leads to views that are at times equally hyperbolic; such views constitute a challenge “from the right.” Thus, two diametrically opposed assessments have been formulated.

The second view is expressed by the venerable Elder, Father Theokletos of Dionysiou.³⁹ St. Nicodemus distinguishes himself, according to Father Theokletos, as “a confessor of rare talent.... In this book, he proves to be an expert interpreter of the penances prescribed by the Sacred Canons, a truly Patristic preacher of repentance.... He is so gentle and compunctionate in his exposition of the Mystery of repentance, confession, and forgiveness that he arouses those who are indifferent towards this Mystery to repentance and confession.”⁴⁰ The first view is set forth by Professor Chrestos Yannaras,⁴¹ who summarizes his critique of St. Nicodemus as follows: “It is, rather, inevitable that an ever-increasing number of people should sever their ties with the Church after just one experience of a traumatic confession based on the principles of a juridical transaction”⁴²—and he has in mind, here, the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* of St. Nicodemus. He concludes: “The God of Augustine, Anselm, and Nicodemus, the God Who terrorizes us with His sadistic demands for justice, is of no interest to humanity.”⁴³ These opinions are shared by others, too.⁴⁴ How is one to respond to them?

It is undeniable that the language of the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* appears intensely scholastic at many points, and this is something that cannot be overlooked.⁴⁵ Academic theology in our day has largely recovered its Orthodox identity—primarily in linguistic terms—and its style has been purged of scholastic influences; as such, it views the language of the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* as repulsive and offensive. However, we should not forget that every artifact is a product of its era and embodies the characteristics of that era. The *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, too, is a product of the ecclesiastical idiom that was in vogue during the period of the Turkish domination,⁴⁶ and it echoes both the climate in which it was written and its Western influences,⁴⁷ reformulating the Tradition of the Church with the means provided by that period. This is all the more so because such a work was intended for a broad *stratum* of the people and was couched in terms that they could understand. However, we should not confuse language with the spirit of Holy Tradition, which is preserved, not simply by language and intellectual expressions, but above all by the practice of asceticism and the entire spiritual struggle. St. Nicodemus, despite the language of the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* and other related works of his, is faithful to the Hesychastic tradition and is a successor to St. Gregory Palamas, by virtue of the ascetical experience to which he fully adhered.

Additionally, it is a fact, overlooked by the critics of St. Nico-

demos, that his affinity with the juridical Western theory of “satisfaction”⁴⁸ is only a matter of terminology, and it is this terminological resemblance that allows such critics to put forth their familiar, but superficial, equation of his view with the Western view. Linguistically speaking, of course, the correspondence is easy to demonstrate. St. Nicodemus talks about “an infinite offense,” “an eternal recompense,” “the gratification of Divine justice,” “the wrath of God,” and the like: “Do you wish to understand, O sinner, the infinite offense that sin causes to God? Understand it on the basis of the *eternal recompense* which the Son of God made for it, with so many sufferings and such a shameful death.”⁴⁹ And elsewhere: “For since sin is infinite, according to the theologians;⁵⁰ as an offense to the eternal God,⁵¹ it cannot be destroyed by deeds or by satisfaction on the part of a finite creature, let alone such an unclean creature as a sinner.”⁵² And there are many other similar expressions in the same vein.

“Mortal sins,” St. Nicodemus writes in another place, “render one who commits them an enemy of God and liable to everlasting death in Hell.”⁵³ “Sin does not bring harm (only) to the sinner, but also to God.”⁵⁴ Thus, God becomes a “punisher” and an “avenger” in order to restore order where it has been disturbed: “The impartial justice of God is satisfied in no other way than by the chastisement of that very body which has sinned.”⁵⁵ Penances (that is, penitential “canons” or “rules of prayer”) are “a small punishment” whereby the penitent “appeases the great wrath that God has towards him.”⁵⁶

Admittedly, if these phrases are detached from their context, they immediately take on a cruel, sadistic character, overturning the theology of Divine love which permeates the spirit of Orthodox (ecclesiastical) soteriology (see St. John 3:16, Romans 5:8, etc.). For this reason, it is necessary to place them in the entire context of St. Nicodemus’ thought and activity.

Now, if we study the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* as a whole and put these phrases in its more general theological and pastoral context [and this exhortation applies equally well to the Old Testament and many of its stark words, as they are also seen in the whole context of Scripture and through the eyes of the Fathers—*Trans.*], we are easily led to a diametrically opposed understanding of them. The term “satisfaction” occurs very frequently in this work of St. Nicodemus,⁵⁷ but it has no connection with the vindictive attitude of some inexorable Divine Judge; it has, rather, to do with the “rule” assigned to the penitent.⁵⁸ The meaning of the term is defined by the author himself as follows: “It is the actual *fulfillment* of the rule given by the spiritual Father.” That is, it does not refer to any sadistic authority figure, but indicates the “good pleasure” and “joy” (loving satisfaction) of God over the fulfillment of a rule (the taking of one’s spiritual medicine in its totality) by the spiritually ailing penitent, just as every doctor rejoices

when his patient completes the treatment that he (the doctor) has prescribed. In other words, whereas the Western spirit consists in the vindictive demand on the part of God for the restoration of His wounded dignity, here the love of God is made manifest in the cure of His ailing child. After spending many anguished days examining the relevant passages, I have come to the conclusion that the idea of “satisfaction” (ἱκανοποίησις), in the *parlance* of St. Nicodemos, corresponds to the notion of “being well pleasing” (or “acceptable”) and its cognates (εὐαρεστεῖν, εὐαρέστησις, εὐαρεστεῖν τῷ Θεῷ), which are very commonly encountered in ecclesiastical texts (cf. “[w]ithout faith [total self-surrender] it is impossible to please [God]” [Hebrews 11:6]; “For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” [Romans 14:18]). With regard to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the term “satisfaction” expresses what is meant by the Gospel phrase: “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (St. Matthew 3:17, etc.). Aside from this, it is inconceivable, to put it mildly, that anyone—and especially a theologian—could accept that St. Nicodemos, who was very Patristic and Orthodox in his other works, was caught up in Western error in his *Ἐξομολογητάριον* and elsewhere!

Moreover, it is significant that the Saint draws, in the *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, not on Western sources, but on the work *Περὶ Μυστηρίων* [*Concerning the Mysteries*], by Gabriel Severos of Philadelphia, an authoritative theologian from the period of the Turkish captivity.⁵⁹ In particular, he defines abstinence from Divine Communion as “the satisfaction of satisfactions,”⁶⁰ which is “a necessary constituent of true repentance.”⁶¹ In this context, satisfaction “is divided into two aspects: the physical and the spiritual.” The physical aspect consists in fasting, xerophagy [the consumption of uncooked foods—*Trans.*], prostrations, and almsgiving to all and sundry. The spiritual aspect consists in “compunctionate prayer.”⁶² That is to say, satisfaction is consummated within the boundaries of the process of repentance, and when it is put into practice, it takes on a purely spiritual and totally non-judicial character. Furthermore, it can be documented historically that the practical dimension of the Mystery of repentance was formed by the Church’s monastic practice, that is, by her ascetic practice.⁶³ As a Hesychast, St. Nicodemos remains absolutely faithful to this spirit.

3. *It is from this point on that St. Nicodemos’ language begins to diverge from the Western Anselmian tradition.* Western legalism is defined by Chrestos Yannaras as an “individualistic effort,”⁶⁴ as a “judicial activity of individual propitiation”⁶⁵ by the sinner, who stands “alone and guilty before an implacable Deity, a just and retributive judge, Who thirsts insatiably for the satisfaction of His justice, which human sin has offended.”⁶⁶ Aroused by the “boundless sadism of His wounded ego,”⁶⁷ God demands “the punishment of the sinner.” “Pe-

nances” are understood, “not as an educative therapy provided by God in His lovingkindness for the healing of the sinner, but as a ransom which the sinner must pay.”⁶⁸ These tendencies evolved in the framework of “turning the true Church into a religion” and “reducing it to a form of individualistic moralism.”⁶⁹

It is impossible to identify St. Nicodemus with this mentality, even if only superficially,⁷⁰ for the following reasons: (1) he had no direct contact with Western sources, because at this stage he operated freely within the parameters of hagiographical and Patristic language and tradition; (2) and though his scholastic expressions derive from writers of his era,⁷¹ they take on a purely hagiographical and Patristic meaning. For example, he observes that sin “defiles” the blood of Christ and “insults” His Grace.⁷² However, he accurately quotes Hebrews 10:29: “[Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,] who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?” Corresponding to the participle “treading underfoot” (the Son of God) is the application to God of the verb “to harmed,”⁷³ in which his aim is to make clear to the people, in their own everyday language, the gravity of sin, and especially of mortal sin.

Furthermore, when he writes that sin is forgiven “through the infinite satisfaction of Christ’s sacrifice,”⁷⁴ he faithfully renders St. Titus 3:5: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration,” which is parallel to I St. John 1:7, “...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”; in addition, Christ is “He Who taketh away the sin of the world” (St. John 1:29)—or, as St. Basil the Great puts it, “the remission of sins is set forth in the blood of Christ.”⁷⁵

St. Nicodemus wishes, hereby, precisely to avoid a twofold danger: (1) that the sinner be led into “quaking with guilt” and “the threat of condemnation,”⁷⁶ or (2) that he form the impression that a rule, in and of itself, leads one to salvation. Forestalling similar superficial assurances, he teaches that sins are not forgiven through performing our rule, “but through the mercy of God and through the satisfaction [i.e., the blood] of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁷ “God punished sin in the person of Jesus Christ, but with such harshness, that all of the aforementioned punishments, in comparison with this one, seem like a shadow...”⁷⁸ The purpose of these words, formulated in such a way that ordinary people could understand them, is to show how important the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is and to dissociate the idea of a “rule” from any demand for recompense,⁷⁹ making the faithful aware of the fact that an “ascetical rule” simply makes a man receptive to God’s Grace, by opening him up to It.⁸⁰ This is precisely what he means when he exhorts the sinner “to propitiate Divine justice with this temporal rule”⁸¹: a man

must become receptive to Grace.

The use of the terms “wrath,” “chastisement,” “enemy of God,” “wrath of God,” “guilty,” “punishment,” and the like, is free, in the *œuvre* of St. Nicodemos, from any juridical purport and makes it easy for readers to approach his teaching, which rests on firm hagiographical and Patristic foundations. We do not need to cite actual examples of every term. For the sake of argument, we will confine ourselves to a single passage from St. Gregory of Nyssa concerning the controversial term “punishment”: “Just as every man, as the Apostle says [*cf.* I Corinthians 3:3], shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor, so as a matter of course he shall receive punishment for neglect of labor in proportion to his strength.”⁸² This “idiom,” moreover, is customary in ecclesiastical worship and is therefore familiar to a believer who loves the Divine services. Let us recall that the “Prayer of Manasses, King of Judæa”⁸³ is linguistically at odds with the “Prayer of St. Basil the Great,”⁸⁴ even though both are read at Great Compline. And these are certainly not the only examples.

4. *Any anachronistic hermeneutical approach to the Ἐξομολογητάριον, and to St. Nicodemos more generally, does an injustice to the Saint and his theology.* I have already said that the language of the Ἐξομολογητάριον is repugnant to today’s believer; but it is all the more repugnant to one who moves on the fringes of the Church’s life and experience. In this work, the Saint operates within the soteriological framework of the Church, in the spirit of the *Φιλοκαλία*. It is inadmissible to compartmentalize his personality, which remains forever integrated, unified, and inseparable, in keeping with the Neptic tradition of Orthodoxy (the prayer of the heart).⁸⁵

St. Nicodemos’ sole purpose is to make man aware of the essence of sin and its devastating power, since it jeopardizes his very salvation, depriving him of God’s Grace and, thereby, of the capacity for “adoption into Divine sonship.”⁸⁶ The true Gospel (Good News) is described by St. Nicodemos as “adoption into sonship”: “It is a special and distinctive gift and a charism so sublime that it makes the Holy Spirit dwell in you; He is present in you and acts in you in a way that is peculiar and distinct from His presence and activity in all other places,” because He “makes” man “a son of God and an heir of His Kingdom.”⁸⁷ It is for this reason that St. Nicodemos wishes to make man hate sin⁸⁸ (“hate and loathe sin”⁸⁹). Hence, he covers every possible shade of sin in his analysis of the *Decalogue* and, of course, those that are most common in any age, such as sins of the flesh. Thereby, the Saint presents the struggling believer of his time with a spiritual mirror, although it is necessary that “one be aware (and this includes the spiritual Father, too) of what the illnesses of the soul, that is, sins, are, so that he may know how to cure them.”⁹⁰ This is a matter, therefore, not of Latin “casuistry,” but rather of a medical diagno-

sis that is the necessary prerequisite for any cure.⁹¹

Consequently, the author does not offer any “an impersonal legal code”⁹² but a classification of spiritual diseases, so that a spiritual Father might determine an appropriate prescription. St. Nicodemos always has in view the ideal of the authentic Christian and how a penitent can attain to this ideal. A Christian who does not live “a Christian life” is not a Christian, he observes,⁹³ basing himself on the Fathers.⁹⁴ Nicodemos “has no patience”⁹⁵ for the idea of a Christian committing mortal sins; which is to say, this is for the Sainy intolerable! Indeed, he trembles at the mere thought of it. Thus, he does not offer half measures in the war against sin, but very drastic measures. And there is no measure more drastic than *ascesis*, that is, the spiritual struggle, which is laid down and conveyed by the Tradition of the Church. One who is a Christian only intellectually, and does not cultivate asceticism, cannot understand the spirit of St. Nicodemos, since the Saint regards as legendary the defining characteristics of asceticism, which correspond to the experience of the monastic Saints (e.g. St. Gerasimos, *et al.*).⁹⁶

As we have already said, St. Nicodemos emphasizes the authority of St. John the Faster, because, in place of lengthy abstinence from Divine Communion, he puts the weight of repentance on the “rule” (on “satisfaction”). St. Nicodemos underscores in particular the importance of the ascetical rule, because he wants to help the Faithful to approach Divine Communion more frequently,⁹⁷ without trivializing the Mystery in such a way that it loses its significance and place in the life of the Church. Indeed, the Jesuit Gerhard Podskalsky, in his assessment of the *Ἐξομολογητᾶριον*, observes that its author “is concerned, not only with the validity, but at the same time with the most fruitful possible reception of the Mysteries.”⁹⁸ That is to say, we should avoid communing “unworthily” (I Corinthians 11:27-29).⁹⁹

Consequently, any attempt to interpret the sacred Canons in legalistic or moralistic categories is foreign to St. Nicodemos.¹⁰⁰ The penances, the satisfaction, and the rule imposed by a spiritual Father are not, in the end, a punishment or a chastisement, but, as he points out, entail one’s “salvation.” And here¹⁰¹ he cites the Divine Chrysostomos, who writes: “Let us also learn these laws of charity [which St. Paul had enjoined in the case of the man who had fallen into fornication]. For if you see a horse hurtling down a precipice, you throw a bridle on him; you restrain him forcibly and whip him frequently. Although this is a punishment, yet the punishment itself is the mother of safety. Act thusly, also, in the case of those who sin. Restrain one who has transgressed until he is pleasing to God; do not let him go loose, lest he be bound more tightly by the wrath of God.... Do not suppose, then, that such treatment derives from cruelty and inhumanity; it derives, rather, from the utmost gentleness, excellent medical care, and

great solicitude.”¹⁰²

This passage from St. John Chrysostomos is, I believe, the key to understanding and vindicating St. Nicodemos’ language, too. The Mystery of repentance, in all of its workings—as the Church’s pastoral mechanism *par excellence*—, presents many parallels to medical science, in terms of its language and methods. It is the means by which the Church effects cures, and for this reason it functions in a manner as practical as surgery. To be sure, this kind of language does not belong in a mission to those outside the Church, nor is it suitable for use with neophytes who have not entered into the Church’s spiritual life, since the results would be rather negative.¹⁰³ It is, however, the proper language for dealing with sinners who are conscious of the life of the Church and who sincerely seek to be readmitted into the body of the Church. In them, such language engenders “joyful sorrow” (χαρμολύπη). They feel sorrow and “fear, for they are unworthy because of sin, but joy, on account of their salvation”¹⁰⁴

The most important point, however, is that the Ἐξομολογητᾶριον functions within the framework of the Church and orients the believer, not towards some “individual” justification, but towards readmittance into the life of the Church. Only through ascetical *praxis*, as an endeavor within the realm of this Mystery (and, consequently, one that is centered on the Church), can the believer become receptive to Grace, and this Grace is imparted by the Mystery of the Church. The Ἐξομολογητᾶριον is not without an ecclesiological perspective, for it greets man in the narthex of the Church, in order to lead him to the Holy of Holies. Spiritual Fathers, according to St. Nicodemos, are “those physicians and innkeepers whom the Lord established, in keeping with the Gospel parable, in the inn of the Church to care for the sick; that is, those sinners who are wounded by the noetic brigands, namely, the demons.”¹⁰⁵ The Ἐξομολογητᾶριον always presupposes the Church. She is “the mother [of the believer]...who delivered the Faith to him.”¹⁰⁶ Moreover, it frequently mentions the Saints, the Angels, and especially the *Theotokos*, into whose fellowship the repentant sinner is reincorporated. The author does not neglect to remind us of the category of “mourners,” that is, the penitents of the early centuries of Christianity,¹⁰⁷ who attest to the Church’s abiding penitential practice.

Accordingly, the penitent is called to an awareness that he belongs to a society that is not worldly or secularized, but ecclesiastical. For this reason, in his interpretation of the Canons, St. Nicodemos often explains them in social terms. These explanations impress us even today by their “progressiveness,”¹⁰⁸ and they also liberate the penitent from any individualistic notion of himself. Thus, ascetical “satisfaction” becomes an “ecclesiastical event” and an “act of communion.”¹⁰⁹

In my humble opinion, the process of repentance should never

deviate from the spirit of the Ἐξομολογητάριον of St. Nicodemos—understood and interpreted, of course, in an Orthodox manner. However, a Christian who reads this book today, but who is not familiar with the language and ascetical practice of the Church, should first read an informative introduction, which should constitute the preface to any future reprinting of the book. To be precise, it is my wish that the present text might be of assistance in this regard. □

Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 [2002], pp. 14-31.

Notes

1. For a critical survey of his life, with all of his known writings, see Gerhard Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft (1453-1821)* [*Greek Theology during the Period of the Turkish Yoke (1453-1821)*] (Munich: 1988), pp. 377ff.

2. The Saint's biographer [see Monk Nicodemos Bilalis, Ὁ πρωτότυπος βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἁγιορείτου [*The Original Life of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*] (Athens: 1985) notes: "He...[settled]...in...[his]...kalyve [an Anthonite "hut"] in 1774. There, he corrected and improved the *Εὐχολόγιον* and composed the *Χρηστοθήχεια*, the second Ἐξομολογητάριον, and [commentaries on] the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul and the seven Catholic Epistles, and edited the *Ψαλτήριον* of Ἐνθὺμιος Ζυγαδίνος [*sic*]..." What is meant by "the second" Ἐξομολογητάριον? In all likelihood, it means that he was working on an already existing work, and perhaps on what was later to be known as the first edition. See P.G. Nikolopoulos, «Βιβλιογραφικὴ Ἐπιστολαία τῶν Ἐκδόσεων Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἁγιορείτου» ["A Bibliographical Overview of the Publications of Nicodemos the Hagiorite"], *Ἑπετηρὶς Ἐταιρείας Κυκλαδικῶν Μελετῶν*, Vol. XVI (2000), pp. 489ff. The first edition of the work appeared in 1794, with the following subtitle and publication data: "A most soul-profitting book, divided into three parts, of which the first contains concise and practical instructions for the spiritual Father on how to hear confessions in a fruitful way. The second part contains the Canons of St. John the Faster, accurately explained, together with certain other necessary comments. The third part contains perceptive and concise advice for the penitent on how to confess properly, compiled from various teachers and arranged in the best possible order by the most reverend and learned among monks Nicodemos, and now published for the first time for the general benefit of readers." Venice, 1794. At the press of Nicholas Glykeus of Ioannina" (see G.G. Ladas and A.D. Hatzedemos, *Ἑλληνικὴ βιβλιογραφία τῶν ἐτῶν 1791-1795* [*Bibliography of Greek Publications from the Years 1791-1795*] [Athens: 1970], pp. 283-284, No. 161). The second edition appeared in 1804, with this subtitled and data: "A most soul-profitting book, containing: concise instructions for the spiritual Father on how to hear confessions in a fruitful way; the Canons of St. John the Faster, accurately explained, together with certain other necessary comments; perceptive advice for the penitent on how to confess properly, compiled from various teachers and arranged in the best possible order by the least among monks, Nicodemos; published previously, and now expanded and published for the second time through the generosity and at the expense of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Ioannina, for the general benefit of Orthodox Christians." Venice, 1804. At the press of Nicholas Glykeus of Ioannina. With royal approbation."

In 1799, between the first and second editions, a version of the work was printed in Constantinople in Turkish (though in Greek characters). The third edition was published in 1818, and was frequently reprinted. In this paper, I have used an undated reprint by the “St. Nicodemos Society” (Athens) of the edition published in Venice in 1868. For excerpts from the work in Italian translation, see Angelo Amato, S.D.B., *Il Sacramento della Penitenza nella Teologia Greco-Ortodossa: Studi storico-dogmatici* [*The Sacrament of Confession in Greek Orthodox Theology: Historical and Dogmatic Studies*] (Thessaloniki: 1982), pp. 300-329. For comments on the *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, see pp. 261ff.; cf. Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, pp. 380f.; Monk Theokletos Dionysiates, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης. Ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ ἔργα του (1749-1809)* [*St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite: His Life and Works (1749-1809)*] (Athens: 1959), pp. 181-186; Chrestos Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση στὴ νεώτερη Ἑλλάδα* [*Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece*] (Athens: 1992), p. 201f. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this work was reprinted more often than any other work by St. Nicodemos. For very a concise account of this work, see P. Eliou, *Ἑλληνικὴ Βιβλιογραφία τοῦ 19ου αἰώνα, Βιβλία-Φυλλάδια (1801-1818)* [*Bibliography of Greek Publications in the Nineteenth Century: Books and Pamphlets (1801-1818)*] (Athens: 1997), Vol. I, pp. 95-96 (No. 13). This is a description of the 1804 reprint.

3. See Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, pp. 379f.; Monk Theokletos, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης*, pp. 96ff.

4. See Monk Theokletos, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης*, pp. 175ff. (181).

5. See below.

6. Monk Theokletos, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης*, p. 181.

7. See Amato, *Il Sacramento della Penitenza*.

8. Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, p. 380.

9. Emmanuel Frangiskou, *«Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος» (1796), «Γυμνάσματα Πνευματικά» (1800). Πατρότητα τῶν «μεταφράσεων» τοῦ Νικόδημου Ἀγιορείτη* [Unseen Warfare (1796) and Spiritual Exercises (1800): The Authorship of the “Translations” by Nicodemos the Hagiorite] (Athens: 1993) (reprinted from the periodical *Ὁ Ἐρασιστής*, Vol. XIX [1993], pp. 102-135). “The picture that has hitherto been formed about Nicodemos the Hagiorite’s relationship with the texts of Scupoli and Pinamonti and, beyond this, about the influence of Catholicism on his *œuvre*, is undergoing a radical change. It is clear that this relationship was wholly indirect” (p. 127).

10. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 9.

11. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*: See the title-page of the book and p. 173.

12. Panagiotis Chrestou (*Πατέρες καὶ θεολόγοι τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ* [*Christian Fathers and Theologians*] [Thessaloniki: 1971], Vol. II, p. 324) considers it a demerit that Nicodemos did not apply himself more to composing original works, a view which is repeated also by Podskalsky (*Griechische Theologie*, p. 379).

13. Concerning originality in the Patristic tradition, see the chapter «Τὸ ἔργο τῶν Πατέρων καὶ τὸ ἔργο τῶν Φιλοσόφων» [“The Work of the Fathers and the Work of the Philosophers”], in S.G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία* [*Patrology*] (Athens: 1977), Vol. I, pp. 58ff.

14. Hence, he makes everything Orthodox, such as, for example, the translations of Western works by Emmanuel Romanitis.

15. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 177.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 92. The work in question is *Διδασκαλία ὠφέλιμος περὶ μετα-*

νοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως [Beneficial Teaching on Repentance and Confession] (Venice: 1724).

18. He recommends the study primarily of Canons 11 of the First Ecumenical Synod, 102 of the Sixth; 2, 5, and 6 of the Synod of Ancyra, 1 and 2 of the Synod of Laodicea, 4,5,7, and 8 of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and 2, 3, 74, 84, and 85 of St. Basil the Great, “because these Canons are particularly relevant to the vocation” of a spiritual Father (p. 95).

19. Concerning Emmanuel (or Manuel) Romanitis, Cretan by descent and “Chancellor of Patmos” (secretary of the island community), who flourished in the eighteenth century (he must have died between the years 1758 and 1762), see Frangiskou, «*Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος*» (1796)...» pp. 127f. and n. 15. His works *Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Διδασκόμενος* and *Ὁ Μετανοῶν Διδασκόμενος* (see Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique* [Bibliography of Greek Publications], XVIII, Vol. I, No. 292, pp. 296-298) belong to Paolo Segneri (Frangiskou, «*Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος*» (1796)...» pp. 109-110). See *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, pp. 11, n.1, 31, n. 1, and 62, n.1

20. See note 9 above.

21. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 80. According to Amato (*Il Sacramento della Penitenza*, p. 293), this is a reference to a work of the same title by Peter Mogila (1638-1642).

22. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 77, n. 1. The work is: Neophytos Rodinos, *Περὶ Ἐξομολογήσεως* [Concerning Confession] (Rome: 1630, 1671² (Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, XVIII, Vol. I, No. 202, pp. 275f. and Vol. II, No. 500, p. 66).

23. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, pp. 77-78, n. See Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, p. 203 (and n. 846). Regarding its publication, see Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, XVIII, Vol. II, No. 1197, p. 472. See also the analysis by Amato (*Il Sacramento della Penitenza*, pp. 294f.

24. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 76. The work is entitled *Ἐπίσκεψις πνευματικῆ, ἧτοι μὲ ποῖον τρόπον χρεωστὴ ὁ πνευματικὸς νὰ ἐπισκέπτεται τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς...* [Spiritual Visitation; that is, how a Spiritual Father should visit the sick...] (Venice: 1780 and 1781) (see Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, XVIII, Vol. II, No. 998, p. 328).

25. *Ἐπίσκεψις Πνευματικοῦ πρὸς ἀσθενῆ* [When a Spiritual Father Visits the Sick] (Athens: “Hypakoë” Publications, 1993).

26. Metropolitan Paul (Menevisoglou) of Sweden, «Πεπλανημένη ἀπόδοσις ἔργου εἰς Νικόδημον Ἅγιοράτην» [“The Erroneous Ascription of a Work to Nicodemus the Hagiorite”] *Κληρονομία* Vol. XXIX (1997), pp. 203-210.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 205f. Concerning this author, see Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, pp. 312ff. But see also Fr. B.E. Bouloudakis, *Περί τῆς πατρότητος δύο ἀνωνύμων ἔργων Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου. Ἀπάντησις στὸν Μητροπολίτην Σουηδίας κ. Παῦλον* [Concerning the Authorship of Two Anonymous Works by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite: A Reply to Metropolitan Paul of Sweden] (Athens: 2000).

28. Patriarch John IV of Constantinople (†595). See the article by George Mantzarides in the *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία* [Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics] (Athens: 1965), Vol. VI, cols. 1210-1211.

29. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 88.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 78, n. See also his introductory remarks on St. John the Faster and his Canons (pp. 112-113).

33. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 116, n. 1. He writes: “The only reason why the Fathers prescribed abstinence from Communion as a penance is, I believe, that Christians back then so loved to commune that they considered it the greatest punishment to be deprived of Communion. Because of this, the Fathers of that period could not find any other impediment to sin than abstinence from Communion.”

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 115f., n. (the subject of ecclesiastical *οἰκονομία*).

37. See Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση*.

38. Regarding the essence of Pietism, see the important discussion by Chrestos Yannaras in his book *Ἡ Ἐλευθερία τοῦ Ἠθους* [*The Freedom of Morality*] (Athens: 1979), 2nd rev. ed., pp. 151ff. In theological terms, the author quite rightly calls Pietism “an heresy in the realm of ecclesiology.”

39. From his book *Ἄγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης* (see n. 2).

40. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

41. See n. 2.

42. Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση*, p. 206.

43. *Ibid.* And he adds: “It cannot be proved, but it is reasonable to suppose that the juridical mentality of the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* and the *Πηδάλιον*—which has spread very rapidly, like a plague, in the pastoral practice of the Greek Church—was one of the reasons for the manifestation, even in Greece, of a reaction, at all levels of society, against religion, or ‘secularization,’ as it is called, whereby great masses of the population cut themselves off from the life of the Church; this does not necessarily betoken their acceptance of atheistic ideas, but rather, an entrenched indifference towards all metaphysical problems, a ‘transformation in the religious identity’ of the masses” (p. 206). In response to this it should be pointed out that the spirit of “indifferentism,” which Yannaras equates with “secularization,” was introduced by way of the Enlightenment and does not owe its origins to the works of St. Nicodemos, of which the proponents of the Enlightenment [in Greece—*Trans.*] were totally ignorant. All those who allowed themselves to be influenced by Pietism—whether positively or negatively—in studying the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* and other, related works did so because they were lacking in Orthodox criteria and attempted to interpret St. Nicodemos with purely Western criteria (deriving from the Enlightenment or from Pietism), being complete strangers to the ascetical (Neptic) tradition of Orthodoxy.

44. Prof. Chrestos Patrinelis, for example, in the *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους* [*History of the Greek Nation*], Athens edition (1975), Vol. XI, p. 132 observes: “It is difficult, therefore, to regard the teaching of the *Kollyvades* in its entirety as a ‘ray of Orthodox spirituality,’ as it is often called. Furthermore, the *pietistic* and *casuistic* character of the popular works by Nicodemos, the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* (1794) and the *Πηδάλιον* (1800), are scarcely consistent with the mystical [*sic*] spirit.” We have here, unfortunately, a clear confusion between Pietism (moralism) and the ascetical-Neptic tradition of Orthodoxy, something that is evident from the author’s use of the term “mystical” instead of “spiritual” (Fr. John Romanides correctly suggests that we Orthodox make a distinction between “mystical” and “secret”). Orthodox Patristic spirituality has nothing in common with the “mysticism” of Neoplatonism.

45. See the “Communiqué of the Holy Community of the Holy Mountain,” entitled, «Ἀναίρεσις τῶν πεπλανημένων θέσεων τοῦ κ. Χρ. Γιανναρά περὶ τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις Πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου» [“A Refutation of the Erroneous Views of Mr. C. Yannaras Concerning our Father among the Saints Nicodemos the Hagiorite”], *Ὁρθόδοξος Μαρτυρία*, No. 40 (1993), pp. 2-10. The

authors of this important document boldly aver: "...[I]f certain expressions reminiscent of Scholastic theology, for historical reasons that are easy to understand, *inadvertently* slipped into his work, these in no way affect the generally Orthodox outlook and tenor of his *œuvre*..."

46. Angelo Amato's work (see n. 2) provides samples of this idiom, with particular reference to the practical aspect of Confession.

47. Regarding these influences and their magnitude, see the *Procès-Verbaux du premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe à Athènes (29 Nov.-6 Déc. 1936)* [*Proceedings of the First Congress on Orthodox Theology in Athens (29 Nov.- 6 Dec. 1936)*] (Athens: 1939) (especially the papers delivered by Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Constantine Dyobouniotis, and Georges Florovsky), and the study by John Karmiris, *Λόγοι περὶ τῶν ἐξωτερικῶν ἐπιδράσεων ἐπὶ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Θεολογίαν* [*Discourses Concerning Foreign Influences on Orthodox Theology*] (Athens: 1938).

48. For the substance of this theory, see the entry by Nicholas Matsoukas in the *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία* (Athens: 1965), Vol. VI, cols. 857-858. Matsoukas states in this article that the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian already contain references to the satisfaction of Divine justice through human works (*satisfacere Deo*),

49. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 223.

50. He means Orthodox theologians during the Turkish domination,

51. Only in this way does sin acquire infinite significance!

52. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 87.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 201

56. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 86-87, 88, etc. For a history of the usage of this term, see Fr. B. Kalliakmanis, «Ἡ διδασκαλία περὶ ἱκανοποιήσεως τῆς θείας δικαιοσύνης στὴ νεοελληνικὴ θεολογία» ["The Teaching Concerning the Satisfaction of Divine Justice in Modern Greek Theology"], *Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς*, Vol. LXXI (1988), pp. 529-537. Cf. Fr. George D. Metallinos, «Ἡ "περὶ ἱκανοποιήσεως τῆς θείας δικαιοσύνης" διδασκαλία καὶ ἡ νεοελληνικὴ κατηχητικὴ καὶ κηρυκτικὴ πράξις» ["The Teaching 'Concerning the Satisfaction of Divine Justice' and Modern Greek Catechetical and Homiletic Practice]," in *Λόγος ὡς Ἀτίλογος. Θεολογικὰ δοκίμια* [*Thesis and Antithesis: Theological Essays*] (Athens: 1992), pp. 85-98.

58. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 88. See the relevant comments of Fr. Bouloudakis in his book *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Χρ. Γιανναράς* [*Orthodoxy and Chrestos Yannaras*] (Athens: 1993), pp. 55ff.

59. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 199. The work is entitled *Συνταγμάτων περὶ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἱερῶν μυστηρίων* [*Treatise on the Holy and Sacred Mysteries*] (Venice: 1600) (Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, XV and XVI, Vol. II, No. 998, p. 328). There is a detailed analysis of this work in Amato, *Il Sacramento della Penitenza*, pp. 59ff. Concerning the author, see Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, pp. 118ff. and *passim*. With regard to his introduction of the term "satisfaction," Amato remarks: "Severos bases satisfaction (ἱκανοποιήσις) on Scriptural and Patristic teaching" (p. 67), that is to say, it is purely ecclesiastical (Orthodox) in character. We should pay particular attention to this statement by Amato, a Roman Catholic.

60. *I.e.*, the satisfaction *par excellence* (cf. the Song of Songs).

61. Ἐξομολογητάριον, pp. 204, 79f. Cf. Amato, *Il Sacramento della Pen-*

itenza, pp. 285ff., 68f. (concerning Gabriel Severos, on whom Nicodemus is drawing).

62. Ἐξομολογητάριον, pp. 79-80.

63. See Fr. John S. Romanides, "Man and His True Life According to the Greek Orthodox Service Books," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. I (1954), p. 77.

64. Yannaras, Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση, p. 201: "The pastoral practice of the Ἐξομολογητάριον is based unreservedly on the Roman Catholic distortion of the Church's Gospel of salvation."

65. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

70. See Bouloudakis, Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Χρ. Γιανναροῦς, and especially his comments on St. Nicodemus (pp. 46ff., 68ff.); also, pp. 237ff., where he quite rightly emphasizes the spiritual unanimity of Sts. Nicodemus and Cosmas Aitolos.

71. E.g., Gabriel Severos, George Koressios [a *savant*, physician, and theologian from Chios who flourished during the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century—*Trans.*], and *Orthodox Confessions* from the 17th century, etc.

72. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 223.

73. *Ibid.* Human sin is ascribed to God because it cuts man off from communion with God. Cf. "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee" (Psalm 50:4), and also the prayer from the Kneeling Service at Pentecost, which is an expansion of this Psalm verse: "Against Thee only do we sin, but Thee alone do we worship...."

74. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 223.

75. *Short Rules*, §13; *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXI, col. 1089C. Even the description of carnal sin, which, at first sight, is reminiscent of a Scholastic penitential (Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 123, n. 1), is based on Patristic precedents (pp. 123-124).

76. Yannaras, *Ἡ Ἐλευθερία τοῦ Ἄθου*, p. 246.

77. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 206.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

79. Good deeds, "in and of themselves," do not bring about "salvation," but only "insofar as they are united with the supernatural Grace of Jesus Christ, which comes through faith...and which gives them a specific form, commends them, and renders them worthy of Divine acceptance" (p. 87). "Inward" faith, as this is understood in the *Φιλοκαλία*, endows deeds with salvific potential. A believer fulfills his rule in order to attain to Divine Grace.

80. See Fr. George D. Metallinos, *Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση* [*Worship and Asceticism*], in press. Cf. *idem*, *Θεολογικὴ μαρτυρία τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς λατρείας* [*The Theological Testimony of Ecclesiastical Worship*] (Athens: 1996), 2nd ed., pp. 184ff.

81. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 203.

82. *Against Evnomios*, Discourse 12; *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLV, cols. 884f. Ἐξομολογητάριον, p. 19.

83. "Unbearable is the wrath of Thy threatening toward sinners"; "because I have provoked Thine anger"; "destroy me not with mine iniquities, neither in enmity for ever keep mine evils, nor condemn me to the nethermost parts of the

earth.”

84. “O Lord, O Lord, Who hast delivered us from every arrow that flieth by day...”

85. The discussion of the “Prayer of the Heart” occupies a central place in the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* (pp. 44f.).

86. This is also the case in *Unseen Warfare*. See Bouloudakis, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Χρ. Γιανναράς*, pp. 73ff.

87. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 229.

88. Cf. Monk Theokletos, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης*, p. 185: in this work, “he is at pains to persuade Christians to detest sin, sometimes through fear of punishment, and at other times through the promise of good things in eternity.”

89. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 185.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

91. Angelo Amato observes that Nicodemus combines a juridical scheme with a therapeutic scheme (*Il Sacramento della Penitenza*, pp. 288f.).

92. As Yannaras admits (*Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση*, p. 205).

93. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 224.

94. St. Athanasios; “A Christian is a true and rational house of Christ, constituted by good works and correct doctrines” (*Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 224, n. 1); St. Nicodemus also cites other Patristic views.

95. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 226.

96. It is, therefore, a very serious mistake to adduce the *Epistle to Diognetos* (Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση*, pp. 208-209) in order to prove that St. Nicodemus supposedly deviated from the ancient Tradition of the Church. The spirit and tone of this text are absolutely identical to those of St. Nicodemus. The following phrase, “Christians are known to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible” (VI.4) is to be interpreted historically and ecclesiologically: only their presence in society is known, but not their way of life. The term “godliness” (θεοσέβεια) is completely identical to St. Paul’s phrase “to live in a godly manner” (εὐσεβῶς ζῆν), with its ascetical and Neptic connotations. (Cf. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” [I Corinthians 9:27].) The same idea is contained in the phrase, “[T]hey surpass the laws by their own lives... They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of Heaven” (V.10, 9; cf. Philippians 3:20). Ignorance of this spirit leads us to misinterpret the *Ἐξομολογητάριον* and confirms our alienation [from the authentic Tradition of the Church—*Trans.*]. Cf. the comments of Fr. Bouloudakis on this point (*Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Χρ. Γιανναράς*, pp. 246f.).

97. This is evident from his work *Περὶ συνεχοῦς θείας μεταλήψεως* [*Concerning Frequent Divine Communion*] (Venice: 1777). Regarding the problem of the authorship of this work, see Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, pp. 372f. Nicodemus revised and expanded the Venice edition of 1783. For the spiritual content of this work, see Monk Theokletos, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης*, pp. 108ff.

98. *Griechische Theologie*, p. 380.

99. On this subject, see Metallinos, *Θεολογικὴ μαρτυρία*, pp. 274ff.

100. According to the aforementioned “Communiqué of the Holy Community of the Holy Mountain” (n. 45), “St. Nicodemus lies, as do all of the God-bearing Fathers, between two extremes; that is, between a legalistic understanding of the Gospel versus antinomianism and between moralism versus moral license, which extremes alienate the Christian from salvation in Christ.”

101. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, pp. 202-203, n.1.
102. “Homily 14 on II Corinthians”; *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXI, col. 502.
103. On this point Prof. Yannaras is right.
104. *Doxastikon* of the Praises, Feast of the Universal Elevation of the Precious Cross, September 14.
105. *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 4.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 129, n. 1 and p. 194.
108. *E.g.*: “One even sins against this commandment (the fifth) if he compels his children to marry certain people, or forces them to become monastics, or places them in some other position against their will” (*Ἐξομολογητάριον*, p. 26, n. 4), “or does not teach them reading and writing or some handicraft” (*ibid.*). He affirms and reprints the classic example from Romanitis’ *Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Διδασκόμενος* (pp. 31f.) about the “unsophisticated, but discerning, spiritual Father” and the “king,” who, when he had confessed his sins, “told his spiritual Father, ‘I have nothing else to say to you.’” “How so, O King?” replied the Elder. “How so? Have we finished your confession? No. You have told me the sins of Alexios (calling him by his personal name), if I may so put it; come now, tell me the sins of the King.” By these words, this wise spiritual Father wished to show that every ruler and leader, whether foreign or domestic, should not confess only as if he were a private individual, or be examined by a spiritual Father as a simple layman; but beyond the sins that he has committed as a man, he should also confess all of the good things which he could, as a ruler, have done for his people, but did not do, and all the bad things which happened to his subjects because of him, but which he did not correct, for which he will have to give an exact accounting to God” (pp. 31-32).
109. Yannaras, *Ἡ Ἐλευθερία τοῦ Ἑθνοῦς*, p. 140.

* This article, translated here from the Greek by editorial staff of *Orthodox Tradition*, was originally delivered as a paper at the “First St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite Scientific Congress, September 21-23, 1999,” held at the Holy Monastery of St. Nicodemos in Pentalophos, Goumenissa. It was first printed in Vol. XXXIV of the *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν*.