THE *Philokalia*

A Classic Text
of Orthodox Spirituality

Edited by
BROCK BINGAMAN
BRADLEY NASSIF

Foreword by
KALLISTOS WARE

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For
Amanda
ἰδοὺ εἶ καλή ἡ πλησίον μου ἰδοὺ εἶ καλή
—Brock

and
Barbara
whose virtues and noble character are "more precious than rubies" (Pr. 31:10–31)
—Brad

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FOREWORD

'The Church,' wrote the Russian Orthodox theologian Archpriest Georges Florovsky, 'gives us not a system but a key; not a plan of God's City, but the means of entering it. Perhaps someone will lose his way because he has no plan. But all that he will see, he will see . . . directly, it will be real for him; while he who has studied only the plan, risks remaining outside and not really finding anything.'[1]

What Fr. Florovsky said of the Church is true equally of the *Philokalia*. It is precisely a book that gives us 'not a system but a key'; not an abstract outline of the spiritual way, but the means of ourselves undertaking the journey. It is in that sense an eminently practical book, a book that invites us to 'see directly', to explore and discover for ourselves. It provides not information but wisdom. It is not systematic, and it does not attempt to offer a single, all-embracing 'theory' of the life of prayer. Yet, if read attentively and with an open mind, the texts that it contains—written by some thirty-six writers, extending chronologically over more than a millennium—have the power to alter our inner world, to effect a radical change in our will, and to reveal to us possibilities that previously we never imagined possible. The authors in the *Philokalia* write, not in an academic or scholastic spirit, but on the basis of their personal experience; and they ask of us that in our turn we will read their words in a personal and experiential manner. In the phrase that Cardinal Newman chose as his motto, *Cor ad cor loquitur*, 'Heart speaks to heart.'

The *Philokalia* is not an easy book. We have to make the effort to climb the slopes of the mountain if we are to enjoy the view from the summit. Yet those who persist will find that the basic message of the *Philokalia* is exceedingly simple. It is summed up in the words of one of the authors close to the end of the work, Kallistos Kataphygiotis: 'The greatest thing that happens between God and the human soul is to love and to be loved.'[2] This basic message of mutual love is worked out in terms of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and in terms also of a unified, holistic view of human nature that assigns a positive role to our body. It is this mutual love that gives meaning to the recitation of the Jesus Prayer, about which the *Philokalia* has much to say; and it is this mutual love that leads ultimately, in the experience of the saints, to the vision of divine and uncreated Light. In the philokalic vision of the truth, love is both our starting-point and our end-point.

The authors in the *Philokalia* were writing in a world very different from our own, and yet what they have to say is startlingly relevant. Although this is not its immediate aim, the *Philokalia* has clear and challenging implications for the way in which we confront the major public crises in contemporary society, whether in politics, in international relations, or in the realm of ecology. For it speaks to us not only about inner prayer but also about the transfiguration of the world. It speaks about a God who is totally transcendent yet totally immanent, who is mystery beyond all understanding but who is also directly present in everything that he has made.

It has been said that the translation of the *Philokalia* into English 'might well be one of the greatest single contributions to perpetuating in the West what is highest in the Christian tradition.'[3] Indeed, when the first volume of extracts chosen from the *Philokalia* was published in 1951, *The Catholic Herald* commented, 'This selection is one of the most important spiritual treatises ever to be translated into English.' These are bold affirmations; but readers of the present volume, edited by Dr. Brock Bingaman and Dr. Bradley Nassif, will perhaps begin to understand why such claims have been made. The aim of the editors and contributors will be amply fulfilled if this collective work enables our readers to study the actual text of the *Philokalia* with deeper understanding and with an ever-increasing imaginative sympathy.

Kallistos Ware
Metropolitan of Diokleia

PREFACE

The present volume is the fruit of fine scholars from around the world, from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions. It has been a joy working with these women and men on a project that will initiate further studies into this great collection of Orthodox spirituality known as the *Philokalia*. While we are grateful to each of our contributors for their excellent essays, we are especially grateful for the lifelong work of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. Metropolitan Kallistos, along with G. E. H. Palmer and Philip Sherrard, has translated the first four (of five) volumes of the *Philokalia* from Greek to English over the past thirty years. His scholarship on the *Philokalia*, his lectures around the world in churches and on university campuses, and his passion for philokalic spirituality have sparked much interest in the *Philokalia*. Without his work, this volume would not have come about. Most of our contributors have utilized the English translation provided by Ware, Palmer, and Sherrard. Some have accessed the Greek version of the *Philokalia* published by the Astir Publishing Company (Athens, 1957–63), or modern critical editions.

We are also grateful to the outstanding people at Oxford University Press: Cynthia Read, Sasha Grossman, and Erica Woods Tucker. Their vision, professionalism, suggestions, and editorial input have enhanced this volume. I (Brock) would also like to express my thanks to Mark A. McIntosh, my dissertation director and mentor at Loyola University Chicago, who encouraged my research into Maximus the Confessor from the very beginning. Thanks also to Kristi Peavy, the librarian at Wesleyan College, who helped obtain Greek texts and other helpful sources for researching the *Philokalia*, and to Debra Williams, my student assistant at Wesleyan College who worked hard to put together the index. And a special thank you to my parents, John and Jan Bingaman, who have supported me for over forty years.

My (Brock's) final thanks go to my wife Amanda whose friendship, love, and strength have inspired me (and many others) over nearly two decades, and to our two children, Mia and Jakob, who bring purpose, joy, and fun to life.

I (Brad) also wish to express special gratitude to my wife Barbara whose love, prayers and cheerleading have kept me strong and steady the past twenty-three years; and to my fun-loving daughter, Melanie, whose love for life keeps me laughing—"Go Secretariat!"

Brock Bingaman and
Bradley Nassif

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

CCSG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera
PG	Patrologia Graeca
SC	Sources Chrétiennes

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The *Philokalia*

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Introduction: Love of the Beautiful

Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif

This book is an ecumenical collection of scholarly essays on the *Philokalia*, a title meaning "love of beauty" or "love of what is good." It suggests that God transforms human beings through love, enabling them to share in the divine beauty. The *Philokalia* is a selection of some of the noblest writings to be found in the monastic tradition of the early and Byzantine Church from the fourth to fifteenth centuries. This five-volume anthology of texts on the spiritual life was written by some thirty-six authors and was first collected and published in 1782 by two Eastern Orthodox monks of Mount Athos, St. Makarios and St. Nikodimos. Next to the Bible, the *Philokalia* is the most widely read book in the Orthodox world today.

▪ A BOOK FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

The essays in this volume were written by an international team of theologians from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions. That it is co-edited by Orthodox (Nassif) and Protestant (Bingaman) scholars lends further testimony to the fact that the *Philokalia* is a book for all Christians, not just the Orthodox. Our goal is to explore the history of the *Philokalia*, its theological foundations, and its spiritual practices—subjects that are artificially divided in the table of contents but united in reality. Our intent is to introduce readers to its background, motifs, authors, and relevance for contemporary life and thought. Our hope is that these essays will resonate with the spirit and vision of the *Philokalia*—one of deep reflection and faith.[1]

▪ THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE *PHILOKALIA*

Orthodox spirituality is above all else a gospel spirituality that is centered on Jesus Christ in his trinitarian relations. The centrality of trinitarian grace in the Christian life is evident throughout all five volumes of the *Philokalia*. Nowhere is this made more explicit in the entire corpus of writings in the Eastern Orthodox tradition than in the works of St. Mark the Monk (or St. Mark the Ascetic, as he is often called). In his treatise *Concerning Those Who Imagine That They Are Justified by Works*, Mark explains the meaning of baptismal grace and how the gospel relates to the ascetical practices of keeping the commandments and overcoming the passions. Along with John Cassian, this is one of the few texts in the entire Greek patristic tradition that directly addresses the doctrines of grace, faith and works in categories

that have customarily belonged to the Christian West. Mark argues that prayer, fasting, vigils and all other monastic disciplines will be dangerously misguided without a prior grounding in the "unmerited, free gift" of grace as the prime motivation for all Christian living. Salvation comes by grace through faith. It is the gift of God that does not come from doing good works. Yet the recognition of such grace instills humility that leads to works of gratitude. Grace opposes merit, but it also induces the hard work of holiness.

The goal of the Christian life as envisioned in the *Philokalia,* therefore, is not to achieve great feats of asceticism, but to love as God loves. Such love is the gift of pure prayer. Thus a major concern of the original editors of the *Philokalia*, Makarios and Nikodimos, is to stress the need for keeping the free gift of the gospel clear and central in all our thinking. The gospel of grace is the governing hermeneutic of the Christian life and, indeed, the entire collection of writings contained in the *Philokalia.*

▪ THE SCOPE AND NECESSITY OF THE BOOK

Only a selection of central issues related to the history, theology, and spiritual practices of the *Philokalia* are addressed in this book. We make no pretense of being comprehensive. On the contrary, we are keenly aware of gaps in our presentation of topics. Despite these and other shortcomings, we hope that the book will serve as a pioneering project for future generations to build on and improve.

Shocking as it is, a large lacuna exists in scholarly literature on the *Philokalia*. This we discovered in the give-and-take of research on the *Philokalia* for Dr. Bingaman's Ph.D. comprehensive exams at Loyola University Chicago, during which we worked together as student and committee member. After Dr. Bingaman made the discovery and suggested the possibility of editing a book on the *Philokalia*, we scoured the literature to confirm the range of the lacuna through extensive electronic searches. Only a few isolated scholarly articles could be found in any modern language. Thus this book was born out of scholarly necessity in our attempts to consult critical research on the *Philokalia.*

▪ RENAISSANCE IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

The publication of this book by the distinguished academic press of Oxford University provides further evidence that a renaissance in Orthodox theology is vigorously underway at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A rebirth of the Orthodox vision, however, inevitably brings with it the potential for serious misunderstanding. Nowhere is this more evident than in the way contemporary readers might misappropriate the spiritual teachings of the *Philokalia* and this present collection of essays. Although the two monks who compiled the *Philokalia* did so with the express intent of making Orthodox spirituality accessible to common laypeople who are not monks, they did not wish to revive or transplant the monastic culture of Mount Athos on foreign soil.

Efforts to reenact monastic life and culture in a local parish today are not only historically naïve but theologically indefensible and spiritually dangerous.

A misreading of the *Philokalia* can create a cultic, fanatical religion that once stood in lethal opposition to Jesus Christ himself. We may adopt with great profit the spiritual principles that we find in the *Philokalia*, but we need not apply its monastic practices to our lives in every historical detail.

As the twenty-first century beckons us forward, a parallel rediscovery of the spiritual treasures of the Christian East now lies before us. The *Philokalia* reemerges in a world of massive technological, social, economic, and intellectual forces that are in conflict, and interaction, with each other. There is an enormous sociological dynamic that characterizes our culture and threatens to loose us from our spiritual moorings. It is in the context of the radical changes that are taking place in our time that a joyful rediscovery of the *Philokalia* is transpiring. The fathers of the *Philokalia* present us with a paradoxical worldview. On the one hand, they remind us that Christians are to embrace all that is good and holy within our physical world and we are to contribute toward its social progress. They were not so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good. At the same time, however, they saw the Christian life as one of countercultural engagement. They saw themselves, and all Christians, on the front lines of spiritual warfare where the heart is to be purified, the passions conquered, sin destroyed, and humanity, along with all of creation, renewed. In our quest for material well-being, the fathers of the *Philokalia* serve as a vivid reminder that our ultimate destiny is not in this world, but the next. The unseen world, in their vision, is more real, and therefore more worthy of attention, than the physical world around us (2 Cor. 4:16–17). In his article on "St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*," Bishop Kallistos Ware has stated their modern relevance very well. He compares the contemporary renaissance of the *Philokalia* to a spiritual "time bomb" that was set for the modern world:

> "It is surely astonishing, and also immensely encouraging, that a collection of spiritual texts, originally intended for Greeks living under Ottoman rule, should have achieved its main impact two centuries later in the secularized and post-Christian West, among the children of that very 'Enlightenment' which St. Makarios and St. Nikodimos viewed with such misgiving. There are certain books which seem to have been composed not so much for their own age as for subsequent generations. Little noticed at the time of their original publication, they attain their full influence only two or more centuries afterward, acting in this manner as a spiritual "time bomb." The *Philokalia* is precisely such a book. It is not so much the late eighteenth as the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that is the true "age of the *Philokalia*." (p. 34)

It is our hope that this collection of essays will engender further interest in the *Philokalia*, and that it will serve the original editors' purpose, inviting readers to contemplate the beauty of God and to discover the transformative power of the gospel of the kingdom. As St. Nikodimos says at the close of his preface: "Come, therefore, come. Eat of the bread of knowledge and wisdom . . . and drink a wine that spiritually gladdens the heart. . . . Come, all who are participants in the Orthodox call, both laymen and monks, all who are seeking to find the kingdom of God which is within you, and the treasure which is hidden in the field of your heart . . ."[2]

Brock Bingaman and Brad Nassif
Feast of the Transfiguration, 2011

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PART ONE

History

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1 St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*

Kallistos Ware

AN ENIGMATIC WORK

The *Philokalia*, despite its ever-increasing popularity during the past half-century, remains in many ways an enigmatic work.[1] The title page of the original Greek edition, published in Venice in 1782—a heavy folio volume, running to 1,207 pages in double columns—refers in prominent capital letters to the patron who financed the work, John Mavrocordato.[2] But it makes no mention of the two editors, nor indeed do their names appear at any point elsewhere in the book. We happen to know with certainty who they were: Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805) and Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain (1749–1809), both of them glorified as saints by the Orthodox Church.[3] That information, however, still leaves many other questions unanswered.

The *Philokalia*, as edited by St. Makarios and St. Nikodimos, is a collection of ascetic and mystical texts taken from some thirty-six writers, extending chronologically from the fourth to the fifteenth century. What, we are immediately led to ask, do these thirty-six writers share in common? Why have the editors chosen these thirty-six, leaving out others whom we might expect to be included? What were the specific criteria determining the selection of material? In their choice of texts, were the editors guided by their personal judgment, or were they following an existing tradition? About all this we are told very little in the preface to the *Philokalia*, although it does contain a few valuable hints. The editors are for the most part deliberately self-effacing, and the publication as a whole is marked by a hidden, "apophatic" spirit.

"THE HELLENO-ROMAIC DILEMMA"; THE CONTEXT OF THE *PHILOKALIA*

In order to appreciate the aim and inner unity of the *Philokalia*, let us first consider the broader cultural and religious context in which it was produced. The era in which Makarios and Nikodimos lived and worked, the latter part of the eighteenth century, constitutes a crucial turning point in the spiritual evolution of the Greek people. Notwithstanding the collapse of the Greek empire in 1453, in many respects the Byzantine period of Orthodox history—more exactly, the Romaic period—extended uninterrupted down to the late eighteenth century. The Church continued to play a central part in all aspects of national life. In the realm of theology, despite heavy Western influence, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, a patristic perspective was not altogether lost. Seventeenth-century authors such as Gabriel Severus, Meletios Syrigos, and Patriarch Dositheos of

Jerusalem used the terminology of Latin Scholasticism, but their primary point of reference was still the Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers. When looking back to the past, most Greeks took as their ideal not classical Athens but the Orthodox empire of New Rome.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, however, there was a shift of emphasis. A different *Zeitgeist* began to prevail among educated Greeks: the spirit of modern Hellenism. The new outlook was not explicitly anti-religious, at any rate initially, but in the Neohellenic world-view the Church no longer occupied the central position that it had possessed hitherto. A more secular mind-set emerged. Church teachings and practices, hitherto accepted largely without question, began to be subjected to critical scrutiny. The protagonists of Neohellenism looked back beyond the Byzantine period to ancient Greece, drawing their inspiration from the Parthenon rather than Hagia Sophia, from Plato and Aristotle rather than St. Gregory the Theologian or St. Maximos the Confessor. They shared the Western European admiration for the Athens of Pericles, and they shared equally the Western disdain for Byzantine civilization. They looked for guidance to the Enlightenment, to Voltaire, the French Encyclopaedists, and other such representatives of the *siècle des lumières*. An appreciable number embraced Freemasonry. Many of them welcomed the French Revolution as the dawn of a fresh era of freedom and took this as their model in preparing for the liberation of the Greek nation from Ottoman autocracy.

It is not to be supposed, however, that there was an abrupt transition at the end of the eighteenth century, with the Romaic era coming to a sudden end and being everywhere replaced by the ideology of Neohellenism. The reality is far more complex. In modern Greece during the past two hundred years the two approaches have continued to coexist and overlap, and there is a subtle and pervasive interaction between them. Alexander Solzhenitsyn remarked in *The Gulag Archipelago* that the line of demarcation separating good and evil runs, not between nations or classes or political parties, but right through the middle of every human heart; and this line constantly shifts and oscillates.[4] By the same token it can be argued that the line of demarcation between the *Romios* and the Hellene runs right through the heart of every modern Greek, and this line too is constantly shifting and oscillating.

Forty-five years ago Patrick Leigh Fermor offered a witty delineation of what he styled "the Helleno-Romaic Dilemma," and most of what he says is still true today. As he rightly observed concerning the two outlooks: "All Greeks, according to my theory, are an amalgam, in varying degrees, of both; they contradict and complete each other."[5] If at the end of the eighteenth century the outstanding spokesman for modern Hellenism was Adamantios Korais (1748–1833), then during the same epoch the leading exponent of the Romaic or traditional Orthodox spirit was Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, born just one year after Korais.

Orthodox churchmen of traditionalist outlook, during the later years of the eighteenth century, grew increasingly disturbed by the infiltration of the ideas of the Enlightenment into the Greek world. Matters came to a head with the outbreak of the Kollyvades controversy on the Holy Mountain of Athos.[6] In this both Nikodimos and Makarios were closely involved. So far as the explicit topics of this

controversy were concerned, it was not a conflict between Romaic conservatism and Neohellenic innovation, but a much more restricted debate concerning liturgical practices and sacramental observance. Underlying the whole dispute, however, was the deep suspicion felt by the strongly traditionalist Kollyvades toward the Western Enlightenment and all that its influence represented in the educated Greek world.

The name "Kollyvades" is derived from *kollyva,* the boiled wheat used at memorial services for the departed (*mnimosyna*). It was over the celebration of these memorial services that the dispute initially arose. In 1754 the monks of the skete of St. Anne on the Holy Mountain began to build a new central church (*kyriakon*). To enhance their fundraising, they undertook in the customary way to commemorate the names of the departed relatives of donors. According to the Orthodox *typikon,* the appointed day for *mnimosyna* is Saturday, the day on which the dead Christ rested in the tomb. But many monks at St. Anne's needed to work on Saturdays, and in particular a number of them had to go to Karyes on that day to sell their wares at the weekly market. As the number of names to be commemorated increased, for convenience they began to transfer the *mnimosyna* to Sunday. This, the day of the Savior's resurrection from the dead, seemed to them an equally appropriate occasion on which to intercede for the departed who are awaiting their own resurrection.

This innovation displeased the more conservative monks at St. Anne's and elsewhere on the Mountain. Under the leadership initially of the deacon Neophytos the Peloponnesian (1713–84), a monk at the nearby skete of Kavsokalyvia, the traditionalist party insisted that memorial services continue to be celebrated on Saturday; hence the *sobriquet* "Kollyvades," assigned to them by their opponents. It is tempting to dismiss the whole dispute as nothing more than a fracas about a technical point of church ritual, but in the view of the Kollyvades a far more profound issue of principle was at stake: loyalty to Holy Tradition.

The Kollyvades were concerned, however, not merely with the correct day for *mnimosyna* but with other questions of more obvious importance. In particular they advocated frequent communion—"continual communion," as they termed it—by which they meant the daily reception of the sacrament, if at all possible. This was a highly unusual standpoint in the Orthodox Church at this time. Almost everywhere in Eastern Christendom communion had become infrequent: laypersons usually communicated three or four times a year, and in many cases only at Pascha, while most nonordained monks on Athos received the sacrament no more than once in every forty days.[7] The advocacy of frequent communion by the Kollyvades proved highly controversial, bringing upon them obloquy and persecution, and many of them fled or were expelled from Athos. Nikodimos, in common with Makarios, was a firm supporter of frequent communion and wrote in its defense but was not himself exiled from the Mountain.

In addition to their championship of correct liturgical and sacramental practice, the Kollyvades were also deeply devoted to the hesychast tradition of inner prayer, as taught by such fourteenth-century Athonites as Gregory of Sinai (d. 1346) and Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), and they upheld the Palamite doctrine concerning the vision of the Light of Tabor. More broadly they sought to

promote a far-reaching patristic *ressourcement,* editing and publishing numerous writings of the Fathers; in this ambitious program a central and decisive place was occupied by the *Philokalia.* Here, in the patristic and Byzantine texts that they disseminated, the Kollyvades believed that they could find a "word coming forth from silence,"[8] which might serve as an antidote to the growing secularism within Greek society.

The Kollyvades looked upon this patristic heritage not as an archaeological survival from the distant past, but as a living guide for contemporary Christians. In editing the Fathers, they had a practical purpose in view. It was their hope that the *Philokalia* and other such publications would not simply gather dust on the bookshelves of scholarly specialists, but would be read by the laity as well as by monastics and clergy. As the two editors state on the title page of the *Philokalia,* the book is intended "for the general benefit of the Orthodox." In his introduction Nikodimos maintains that St. Paul's injunction, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), is addressed not merely to hermits in caves and on mountain-tops but to married Christians with responsibilities for a family, to farmers, merchants, and lawyers, even to "kings and courtiers living in palaces."[9] Unceasing prayer of the heart is a universal vocation. The best is for everyone.

Through this patristic *ressourcement,* then, the Kollyvades sought to counteract the new-fangled spirit of the *Aufklärung.* The regeneration of the Greek nation, they were fervently convinced, could come about only through a return to the authentic sources of Orthodox Christianity. Emulating Laocoön as he stood before the Trojan horse, they cried out: "Timeo Francos et dona ferentes."[10] They feared the Franks with their "enlightened" gifts. "Do not trust the West," they said to their contemporaries; "these ill-digested notions will prove in the end nothing but a disappointment and a deceit. Our only hope is to re-discover our true roots in the Divine Liturgy, in patristic theology, and in hesychastic prayer."

Such, specifically, was the standpoint of Nikodimos. Writing with reference to Roman Catholic proselytism, he stated in his great collection of the Holy Canons entitled *Pedalion* ("Rudder"), "Divine Providence has set a guardian over us."[11] The "guardian" that he had in view was none other than the Ottoman empire. His remark can be given a wider application. The Ottoman power constituted, for the Orthodox Christian faithful, a God-appointed protector not only against the emissaries of the Bishop of Rome but equally against the corruptive influences of the Enlightenment. Many traditionalist Orthodox, so far from supporting schemes to rebel against the Turks with the help of Western Europe, felt that they were better off as they were. Despite Turkish oppression, despite the dangers of apostasy and the sufferings of the New Martyrs, to whom Nikodimos had himself devoted a pioneering study,[12] the relative isolation in which the Rayahs existed under Turkish rule could be seen as a blessing. It safeguarded the Greek community from the infiltration of alien ideas, helping it to preserve intact its Orthodox identity.

As regards the immediate outcome of the controversy, the Kollyvades were only partly successful. Contrary to what the traditionalist monks of Athos had maintained concerning *mnimosyna,* in the decrees issued by the Ecumenical Patriarch Sophronios II in 1776,[13] and by the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V in 1819,[14] it was laid down that memorial services may be celebrated not only on Saturday but

on Sunday, and indeed on any day of the week. Yet, on the far more important issue of the frequency of communion, Gregory V in his 1819 decree ruled basically in favor of the Kollyvades. Frequency of communion, he stated, is not to be restricted by any fixed interval of time, such as forty days, but in principle the faithful—provided that they are properly prepared and have made their confession to their spiritual father and been given his blessing to communicate—may receive the sacrament at each and every celebration of the Eucharist; for at each and every celebration they are invited so to do with the words, "With fear of God, with faith and love, draw near."

Unfortunately, despite the strenuous efforts of the Kollyvades, infrequent communion remained the norm almost everywhere in the Orthodox Church during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were scattered supporters of a more frequent reception of the sacrament, such as the widely revered St. John of Kronstadt (1829–1908) in pre-revolutionary Russia, and the members of the *Zoe* movement in Greece, founded by Fr. Evsevios Matthopoulos in 1907. But it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that communion on a weekly basis, or at any rate on most Sundays, became at all widespread in monasteries and parishes. It is still very far from being universal in contemporary Orthodox practice.

When I first visited the Holy Mountain in 1961, it continued to be the normal rule for nonordained monks to receive the sacrament only once every forty days. The only notable exception was the monastery of Dionysiou, where, under the influence of the great Elder Gabriel (1886–1983), abbot for nearly half a century, the monks went for communion once every two weeks, on Saturday (never on Sunday). I recall my astonishment when on that first visit I attended the all-night vigil for the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos (8/21 September) at the Great Lavra. There was a congregation of more than a hundred, both monks and lay pilgrims. About ten priests and several deacons officiated at Vespers and Matins. But, when the time for the Divine Liturgy arrived, this was celebrated by a single priest, without a deacon; and at the moment for communion, out of the entire congregation not a single person came forward to receive the sacrament. Today, I am happy to say, the situation has changed, and at many monasteries on the Holy Mountain it is normal for the monks to receive communion several times a week.

■ "AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ATHONITE LEARNING": THE WORK OF ST. NIKODIMOS

The most prolific author among the Kollyvades, co-editor of the *Philokalia,* St. Nikodimos, has been justly described as "an encyclopedia of the Athonite learning of his time."[15] He was born in 1749 on the Greek island of Naxos, and at the age of sixteen he went to Smyrna, where he studied for five years (1765–70) at the Evangelical School, one of the leading Greek Orthodox educational centers in this period. He proved to be an intelligent and exceptionally industrious pupil. Moreover, he was gifted with a photographic memory, which greatly assisted him when, in later years on Athos, he had to compose many of his works without easy access to a library. It is recounted that on one occasion, when he was attending Vespers on Holy Saturday in

an Athonite hermitage, it was found that they had no book with the fifteen Old Testament readings appointed for the service. Unperturbed, Nikodimos proceeded to recite them all by heart.

Returning to Naxos in 1770, Nikodimos became secretary to the local bishop. At this stage it seemed probable that he would pursue the normal career open to a young Greek with scholarly gifts and ecclesiastical interests; that is to say, he might have chosen to continue his education in the West at a Roman Catholic or Protestant university and then, returning to the Levant, he might have taken up a professorship at some "School of the Nation," eventually becoming a bishop. Instead, contacts on Naxos with three Kollyvades monks, exiles from the Holy Mountain, turned his thoughts in a different direction. Eager to learn more about the Kollyvades movement, he traveled to Hydra to see Makarios of Corinth, thus initiating the contact between the two that was to lead in due course to the publication of the *Philokalia*. Also on Hydra he came to know the Elder Silvester, another of the Kollyvades who had been forced to leave Athos. Probably it was Silvester who initiated Nikodimos into the practice of inner prayer.

These meetings awakened in the young Nikodimos a longing for monastic seclusion and hesychastic prayer. In 1775 he made his way to the Holy Mountain and here, apart from a few outside journeys, he remained for the rest of his life. He was tonsured as a monk at Dionysiou but was never ordained deacon or priest. On Athos, and throughout the Christian East in general, monasticism has always remained predominantly a lay movement. Ordination is seen not primarily as a matter of subjective "vocation," but in functional terms; in most places, only as many monks are made priest as are strictly necessary for the celebration of the services. The fact that a monk is well educated is not in itself a reason for him to receive ordination. Thus the situation of Nikodimos as a learned lay monk was and is by no means unusual in Athonite practice.

Nikodimos did not remain long at Dionysiou. In fact, almost all his time on Athos was spent not in one of the main monasteries but in various kellia or small hermitages. In this he resembled the Athonite hesychasts of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as St. Nikiphoros, St. Gregory of Sinai, St. Gregory Palamas (save for relatively brief periods), and St. Maximos of Kavsokalyvia. While hesychast contemplation is certainly possible in large coenobia, on the whole it has flourished in the remote sketes and isolated hermit cells of the Holy Mountain.

"He repeatedly changed his place of residence," observes Fr. Gerasimos of Little St. Anne in the *vita* that he prepared for the feast of St. Nikodimos.[16] Does this betoken a certain restlessness and lack of stability in the saint's character? I think not; it is to be seen rather as an indication of his kenotic poverty and of his desire to keep himself totally free for the work of writing and editing. For seven years, it is true, he lived with one companion in an isolated hermitage that he had leased, the *kalyva* of Theonas, not far from the monastery of Pantokrator; otherwise he had no permanent home of his own, but preferred to be a guest in kellia belonging to other monks. He never sought to gather around him a group of disciples, as had been done on Athos some twenty-five years earlier by the translator of the Slavonic *Philokalia,* St. Paisy Velichkovsky (1722–94). By contrast Nikodimos had no

pastoral or administrative position, no fixed base, no personal library, no circle of amanuenses and assistants. He worked alone.

In this way Nikodimos chose to reduce his existence to the barest possible essentials, depending on the hospitality of his monastic friends and on the books that he could borrow from others. He always wore sandals, never shoes, and he had no more than a single cassock. In the words of Fr. Gerasimos, "He was simple in his manners, forbearing, sweet and benign in character, devoid of possessions, meek and humble."[17] Truly he was one of the "strangers and pilgrims of this earth" (Heb. 11:13).

Nikodimos's career as an editor began two years after his arrival on the Mountain, when in 1777 Makarios of Corinth visited Athos and renewed the friendship that he and Nikodimos had begun in Hydra. According to the biographer and personal friend of Nikodimos, Hieromonk Evthymios, Makarios brought with him in manuscript form three works that he entrusted to Nikodimos for revision:

> In the year 1777 the Saint [i.e. Bishop] of Corinth Makarios arrived [on Athos], and after going on pilgrimage to the holy monasteries he came to Karyes and was given hospitality in the kellion of St. Antony by one of his fellow countrymen, Elder David. While staying there, he summoned Nikodimos and asked him to revise the *Philokalia.* In this way the blessed one embarked on the task. We may well ask: embarked on *what* task? I am at a loss and know not what to say or how to describe the spiritual struggles and excessive labors of his intellect and flesh. My mind lacks power even to guess at all that. He embarked, I say, on the *Philokalia,* and we have before us the beautiful preface that he wrote, and the brief lives, sweet as honey, of the blessed fathers. He likewise corrected the *Evergetinos* and adorned it with a fine preface. He corrected and expanded the short, all-golden work *On the Divine and Holy Continual Communion.* These the Saint of Corinth received from Nikodimos, and he went to Smyrna to raise money for the costs of printing.[18]

In due course all three works were published at Venice: the *Philokalia* in 1782; the vast ascetic anthology known as *Evergetinos,* compiled by Paul of Evergetis (d.1054), in 1783;[19] and the tract entitled *On Continual Communion,* also in 1783.[20]

Modern writers, when referring to the *Philokalia,* often speak as if Nikodimos were the chief or even the sole editor. If the account by Evthymios is accurate, however, then the part played by Makarios was at least as important as that of Nikodimos; for, according to Evthymios, the original initiative for the publication of the work came from Makarios, and it was he who selected the writings to be included in it. Nikodimos for his part revised and corrected the text, composed the eight-page general preface to the book, and wrote the brief introductory notes on each author. Evthymios does not say that Nikodimos enlarged or altered the choice of texts made by Makarios, but this is of course a possibility.

Other contemporary accounts by St. Paisy Velichkovsky[21] and St. Athanasios of Paros[22] differ from Evthymios in making no mention of Nikodimos's contribution and in treating Makarios as the sole editor of the *Philokalia.* Evthymios, however, who was in close personal contact with Nikodimos, is almost certainly more trustworthy. In particular, there are many similarities in style and content between the preface to the *Philokalia* and other compositions which are undoubtedly by Nikodimos. In other respects, however, as we shall see, Paisy provides valuable supplementary information about the preparation of the *Philokalia.*

Once embarked on literary work, Nikodimos continued to write with indefatigable energy for the remainder of his life. The quantity and range of his *oeuvre* are formidable. 'Who could recount all his labors and all his works of love?' exclaimed the Romanian monk Ioan of Neamț, writing in 1807.[23] In the catalogue of his writings provided by Citterio, there are twenty-six major works, some extending to more than a thousand pages each; most of these are editions and translations, but they include several original writings. Citterio also lists thirty-two liturgical offices and canons and five shorter pieces, in addition to a number of unpublished compositions; there is also the saint's correspondence, little of which has so far appeared in print, but which is said to survive in manuscript.[24] Cavarnos gives a more detailed list of 109 items.[25]

Among the original writings of Nikodimos, the most important is *Symvoulevtikon Encheiridion* [*A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel*], which has been translated into English.[26] This is severe in its warnings to clergy, especially bishops; but Nikodimos had good reason to write as he did. It is severe also in its insistence upon the need to guard the senses and imagination; yet Nikodimos emphasizes at the same time that there is also a good use of the senses, when the beauty of the material creation raises our mind to God the Creator; and likewise a good use of the imagination, when it is employed in meditating on Christ's passion and resurrection. There is a valuable section on the heart and the Jesus Prayer, while the importance of studying Holy Scripture is strongly underlined.

As an editor and exegete, Nikodimos included in his scope most branches of Christian literature. In addition to his work on the New Martyrs,[27] he compiled a general collection of saints' lives for every day of the year, entitled *Synaxaristis*. He wrote commentaries on Scripture, on the Church canons,[28] and on the liturgical texts, all of them richly illustrated with patristic quotations; aided by his photographic memory, he was able to cite the Fathers with astonishing facility. The *Eortodromion* of Nikodimos, interpreting the hymnography of the great feasts, proved a valuable aid to me when working with Mother Mary of Bussy-en-Othe on *The Festal Menaion*.[29]

Equally important are the editions of the Fathers undertaken by Nikodimos. In addition to the *Philokalia* and the *Evergetinos,* on which he worked with Makarios of Corinth, he also edited the correspondence of St. Barsanouphios and St. John of Gaza, and assisted Dionysios Zagoraios with the edition of St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) that was published in 1790 (this appeared under the name of Dionysios alone, but it seems to be chiefly the work of Nikodimos). By an unhappy mischance the three-volume edition of the collected works of St. Gregory Palamas, to which Nikodimos devoted much time and energy, never saw the light of day. The Greek printer in Vienna to whom the manuscript had been sent, George Makridis-Poulios, was a close associate of Rhigas Velestinlis, the protomartyr of the Greek revolution, and he was heavily involved with Rhigas in producing anti-Ottoman propaganda. When, at the prompting of the Turkish authorities, the Austrian police arrested Rhigas in 1798, they seized the stock of manuscripts awaiting publication in Poulios's office, including the edition of Palamas. Most of the text of this was lost, although the introduction by Nikodimos was recovered and eventually published.[30] The destruction of the edition of Palamas was a severe blow to

Nikodimos, and as a result the bulk of Palamas's theological work remained unpublished and neglected for the next 150 years.

A surprising genre among the writings of Nikodimos are the adaptations that he produced of Roman Catholic writings from the Counter-Reformation period.[31] The best known of these is *Unseen Warfare,* based on the *Combattimento Spirituale* of Lorenzo Scupoli (*c.* 1530–1610). Nikodimos did not claim to be himself the author of this work, but merely stated on the title page that it was "composed some time ago by a certain wise man."[32] Although of course well aware of the fact, Nikodimos refrained from pointing out that the "wise man" in question, far from being Orthodox, was actually a Roman Catholic. When Gerald Palmer (1904–84), the co-translator of the English *Philokalia,* was preparing an English version of *Unseen Warfare,* he wrote to his spiritual father the Russian Hieromonk Nikon of Karoulia (1875–1963), asking who the author of *Unseen Warfare* might be, since evidently it was not Nikodimos himself. Fr. Nikon, who had originally suggested to Gerald that he should translate the work, may well have had suspicions about its authorship; but in his reply he simply said in a charming but unhelpful manner, "This beautiful book lies open on my table each morning after breakfast."[33]

In addition to the *Combattimento Spirituale* of Scupoli, Nikodimos produced a Greek edition of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, using the expanded version of Giampetro Pinamonti. Nikodimos's widely respected work on confession, *Exomologitarion,* is also for the most part a direct translation of two books by another Roman Catholic writer, Paulo Segneri, *Il confessore istruito* and *Il penitente istruito.*[34] The work *On Continual Communion,*[35] while drawing extensively on Roman Catholic sources, does not seem to be based on any single Western prototype.

This readiness to disseminate among the unsuspecting Orthodox public Roman Catholic works of piety, largely unchanged, is all the more surprising in that Nikodimos in his *Pedalion* upheld the view that the Roman Church lacks valid baptism, and so its members, if received into Orthodoxy, have to be rebaptized.[36] Why, then, did he choose to make use of Roman Catholic authors in this way? Certainly it cannot have been due to any ignorance on his part of the riches of Greek patristic spirituality, of which he had on the contrary an extremely detailed knowledge, as is evident from his editions of the *Philokalia* and the *Evergetinos,* of Barsanouphios, Symeon the New Theologian, and Palamas. If, then, he drew upon texts from the Counter-Reformation West, it was not because he had no other material available.

Possibly Nikodimos valued the psychological insight displayed by the Western authors as well as their warmly affective tone. He may also have considered that the techniques of discursive, imaginative meditation described by Scupoli and Loyola would help Orthodox who found the imageless, "apophatic" prayer recommended in the *Philokalia* to be largely beyond their capacity. Whatever the reason, the willingness of Nikodimos to draw upon Roman Catholic texts indicates how—despite the bitterly polemical attitude of Greek Orthodoxy toward Rome during the late eighteenth century—it was still possible for a constructive interchange to take place upon the level of spirituality.

Worn out by his unremitting literary labors, Nikodimos died in 1809, at the age of sixty, at the kellion of his friends the Skourtaioi, situated above Karyes. Here his relics are preserved, and the visitor is shown the dark and narrow inner room where he used to say the Jesus Prayer. I remember calling there in 1973, when I was received by the venerable yet lively Fr. Ananias, reputed to be the oldest monk on the Holy Mountain (he claimed to be 105, but I think that he was only 99 at that time; he eventually died in 1977). Apologizing for the somewhat simple hospitality, he explained that he had recently lost the disciple who helped him. "He had no business to die so young," said Fr. Ananias in an irritated tone. "He was only eighty-five."

Two things inspired St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain throughout his years on Athos. The first was a love of *hesychia,* of stillness and solitude. He found constant inspiration in Christ's statement, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21), words that he quoted in the introduction to the *Philokalia*, and he devoted himself unreservedly to the quest for this inner Kingdom. Doubtless it was this longing for stillness that led him to live in the remote hermitages of the Athonite desert rather than in one of the large cenobitic houses. In the second place, however, he was not only a solitary but also, like his contemporary and fellow Athonite St. Kosmas the Aetolian (1714–79), a missionary. He sought to preach the faith not through apostolic journeys but through his writings. With good reason he is shown in engravings and icons holding a pen, with a bottle of ink at his elbow. In this way his life was marked equally by silence and by words: by words that came out of silence, and by a silence more eloquent than any words. He would have agreed, I think, with the saying, "Words are the part of silence that can be spoken."

Learned though he was, Nikodimos never wrote with an exclusively academic aim, but always with a practical and pastoral intent. Not only the *Philokalia* but almost all his works were directed to the laity as well as to monastics and clergy. The patristic *ressourcement* that he and the other Kollyvades promoted was simultaneously both scholarly and popular. Through their publications they sought to change people's lives. And it was precisely because his writings have indeed transformed the lives of countless others that in 1955, at the request of the Holy Mountain, he was officially glorified as a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. His feast is observed on the day of his death, July 14. In the conscience of the Orthodox people he is not remembered specifically as a miracle worker; in Orthodoxy, however, the performance of miracles is in no way essential for the recognition of a saint. The grounds for the canonization of St. Nikodimos were his personal holiness and the outstanding contribution that he made to church life through his writings.

St. Nikodimos was not interested in philosophical speculation, even though he sometimes quoted texts from the Greek philosophers. He was a theologian in the patristic meaning of the term—"If you pray truly, you are a theologian," as Evagrios of Pontos (346–99) put it[37]—but he was not a "systematic theologian" in the modern Western sense. What he sought to convey was not abstract ideas but the living experience of the Church. In his writings he is above all a master of the spiritual life. He is rightly classified as a "conservative," but his conservatism was always

sensitive and intelligent. Yet, despite his conservatism, by a strange paradox—which often recurs in the history of the Church—the future belonged more to him than to the innovators and liberals of his day. Nikodimos's message is more relevant to the twenty-first century than that of Korais. What Fr. Georges Florovsky says of St. Paisy Velichkovsky is true equally of St. Nikodimos: "Paisy lived in the past, in traditions, and in Tradition. Yet he proved to be the prophet and harbinger of things to come. The return to sources revealed new roads and meant the acquisition of new horizons."[38]

■ "THESE WORKS HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED": THE EDITORIAL POLICY OF THE COMPILERS

We now return to the questions with which we began. What criteria guided Makarios in selecting the thirty-six authors included in the *Philokalia*? What do these thirty-six have in common, which made it appropriate to include them in the volume and to exclude others? Are there master-themes throughout the *Philokalia,* which give an overall unity and coherence to the collection as a whole, and how far is it legitimate to speak of a distinctive "spirituality" of the *Philokalia?*

The general arrangement of contents in the Greek *Philokalia* gives us no help in answering these questions. Except at the very end of the work, the texts are simply placed in chronological sequence, according to the supposed dates of the various authors. There is no attempt to group the material thematically, as was done, for example, by Paul in his collection *Evergetinos.* There is also no indication which writings are best suited for "beginners" and which should be reserved for the more experienced.

The title likewise sheds little light on the scope and purpose of the work. Literally the word *Philokalia* means "love of beauty" or "love of what is good." Most commentators on the *Philokalia* therefore interpret the title as signifying love for whatever is spiritually beautiful and good, love for God as the source of all things beautiful, love for whatever leads to union with the Divine and Uncreated Beauty.[39] When applied to a book, however, the word *Philokalia* may also signify no more than "a collection of good things," an anthology. Eusebius of Caesarea, using the word in this sense, states that the third-century Bishop Beryllos of Bostra "left various *Philokalias,*"[40] and when St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus assembled a collection of extracts from Origen, they gave it the title "*Philokalia.*"[41] Is this, then, the meaning of the title in the case of the *Philokalia* of Makarios and Nikodimos? Is it merely an anthology, a selection of texts chosen more or less at random and then bound up for convenience within the covers of a single volume?

If the title "*Philokalia*" is ambivalent, what can be gleaned from the introduction to the work, written by Nikodimos? Here we move on to firmer ground. Without providing an explicit answer to our queries, the introduction supplies several valuable clues. First, as was already noted, Nikodimos insists that the work is addressed not only to monks and nuns but to all Christians.[42] This claim is at first sight surprising, for almost all the works in the *Philokalia* were written by monks, with a monastic audience primarily in mind. Furthermore, except in a few minor instances, the two editors have presented the texts, not in a contemporary demotic

rendering—as Nikodimos does in various other publications—but in the original patristic or Byzantine Greek. This cannot have been easily intelligible to most Greek laity in the eighteenth century, or indeed to most priests or monastics. Even so, Nikodimos surely means what he says when he asserts that the *Philokalia* is intended for the Christian community as a whole.

Nikodimos offers a second clue when he states in his introduction that the *Philokalia* contains works that either are unpublished or else, if published, have grown scarce and unobtainable:

> On account of their antiquity and rarity, and because in many cases they have never been printed, these works have virtually disappeared; and, if some of them have been included in existing publications, yet the books in which they appear have become worm-eaten and totally destroyed.[43]

One criterion, then, for the selection of material in the *Philokalia* seems to have been the availability of texts in existing publications. The editors have left out the readily accessible and chosen the rare or unpublished.

This rationale helps to explain why, for instance, there is nothing in the Greek *Philokalia* from St. Isaac the Syrian (Isaac of Nineveh) (seventh century). Isaac may justly be reckoned as one of Nikodimos's three favorite authors, along with St. Maximos the Confessor (*c.*580–662) and St. Gregory Palamas. Why, then, is Isaac absent? Perhaps Nikodimos and Makarios left him out because a Greek edition of his writings, prepared by Nikiphoros Theotokis, had appeared only a few years before at Leipzig in 1770. Other authors of central importance for the Orthodox spiritual tradition, such as the Cappadocians, St. John Chrysostom, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, and St. John Klimakos—all of whom are regularly cited by Nikodimos in his *Handbook*—are likewise absent from the *Philokalia,* presumably because they too were readily available in existing publications.

Makarios and Nikodimos may also have omitted certain authors from the *Philokalia,* or assigned to them only a limited amount of space, because even as early as 1777 they had begun to plan separate editions of their writings. This is perhaps the reason why, for example, there is nothing in the *Philokalia* from St. Barsanouphios and St. John; although Nikodimos's edition did not actually appear until 1816, he may have started to prepare it at an early stage in his Athonite life. If there is relatively little from St. Symeon the New Theologian, possibly this was so because Nikodimos had begun to collaborate with Dionysios Zagoraios on the edition of Symeon published in 1790. If the choice of texts from St. Gregory Palamas appears somewhat incomplete, the explanation may be that Nikodimos had already started to project the complete edition which was later sent to Vienna and destroyed in 1798.

While pragmatic considerations of this kind may certainly have influenced the two editors of the *Philokalia,* there remains another, more interesting possibility. Perhaps in their choice of texts they were not innovating or relying solely on their personal judgment but were following an existing tradition already well established on the Holy Mountain and elsewhere.[44]

As we have noted, Evthymios, Nikodimos's biographer, asserts that, when Makarios arrived on Athos in 1777, he brought with him, already prepared, the draft version of the *Philokalia;* that is, he had selected and assembled the material