

Patristic Orthodoxy



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Path of Hesychasm

Patristic Theology

This path is the embodiment of the Eastern Christian theological tradition and constitutes the very essence and core of the Orthodox doctrine of salvation and deification. It is the path of spiritual asceticism, which embodies the true meaning and purpose of the life of a Christian.

The teaching of the Holy Fathers is the exposition of divinely revealed truths, the source of which is Holy Scripture. These truths in the field of dogmatics and asceticism were confirmed at the Ecumenical Councils. Their meaning was revealed and clarified by the Fathers of the Church.

This was achieved in the contemplative experience of communion with God, with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Such Fathers are “instruments” of the Holy Spirit and “conductors” of the holy divine will. The Lord Himself elevates them to this holy service in due time.

The theology of the Fathers is the theology of *deification*. It is rightly called Byzantine scientific theology, the theology of the era of the ecumenical councils.

The patristic theology is called the vision of God theology as well as the theology of living communion with God. The idea of theology is the main idea of Orthodoxy and is a necessary condition of the doctrine of salvation.

The holy fathers gave contemplative theology in the true sense of the word. Only those who are established in *созерцание* can be theologians. These are not intellectual academic discussions, as in Western theology and scholasticism.

Man is originally destined for the gift of deification. This is his natural Logos of the likeness of God, according to which he was created.. The main instrument of the inner struggle is the method of *Hesychasm*, the direct path and spiritual practice of the deifying grace.

Over time, the inner struggle leads to the dispassion state, when a person, by combination of action and *созерцание*, rises to a supernatural level of being.

It is a complete system, a method of harmonious development at all levels: the magistral way to the purification and enlightenment of the soul and the acquisition of divine grace. The path to the highest state of dispassion, living communion with God and the deification of man.

Path of hesychasm

The foundations of the doctrine of deification are given in the divine revelations of the New Testament. After the period of the apostles, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyons speak of deification and provide the basis for the future theological edifice.

St. Irenaeus puts forward the thesis: salvation is - *deification*. The foundations of this doctrine were formed in the 4th century, and by the 6th century, Byzantine theology was fully formed.

Holy Fathers are a group of ascetic saints at the time of the Ecumenical Councils, who gave the classical theological system of patristic Orthodoxy, in its purest and most complete form. They also gave an ascetic path to deification: a practical method for acquiring uncreated divine energy through personal *inner struggle*.

Athanasius the Great and the Cappadocians: Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great provide the foundations of triadology, Christology and soteriology. Basil the Great provides the foundations of ascetic theology and monastic life (4th century). John Chrysostom provides exegesis and teaches the moral side of Christian life.

The ascetic teaching of созерцаније, the so-called "desert theology", is developed by a group of exceptional ascetics of inner action. St. Macarius the Great of Egypt is not only a practitioner, but also the first great theorist of inner action (4th cent.).

Barsanuphius the Great (6th cent.) is a great contemplative who elaborates on practical asceticism issues. Next come St. John the Ladder of Sinai and St. Isaac the Syrian, whose writings is a kind of ascetic bible, a true school of hesychasm.

The writings of St. Dionysius the Areopagite significantly influenced the course of theological thought. St. Maximus the Confessor developed Christology and the doctrine of theosis (7th century), while St. John of Damascus (8th century) systematized all available theological material.

Symeon the New Theologian, a great practitioner (11th cent.), enriched the theological and ascetic aspects of the teaching, showing that the main path to God is hesychasm, and that every Christian can reach the state of theosis. He summed up the era of the Ecumenical Councils and the thousand-year work of patristic thought.

The patristic tradition is rounded off by two saints of 14th century: St. Gregory of Sinai and St. Gregory Palamas. St. Sinai applied in practice the teaching of inner action, which leads to deification. He founded numerous hesychastic monasteries, preached mental action and provided practical instruction.

According to Gregory the Theologian, those who have purified themselves with inner asceticism and spend their lives in созерцание can reason about God: “The greatest theology is - the knowledge of God, and it is revealed in созерцание, which means uniting with God”.

Palamas provided a synthesis of divinely revealed ideas and brought them to dogmatic perfection. The teaching on the deification receives its most complete theological elaboration, and at the same time the status of the hesychastic method of inner action is canonized, as the main path of Orthodox asceticism.

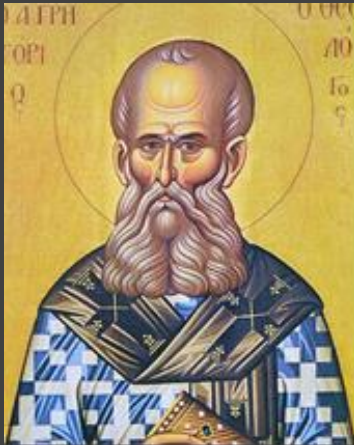
In the tradition of the Church, Palamas is recognized as the fourth theologian. Church connects him with the most exalted saints: Saint John the Theologian, Saint Gregory the Theologian, and Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

Divine truth is comprehended only in a gracious experience, when God reveals Himself to man by the power of His uncreated energies. True theology is enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. No human wisdom or science can lead to this.

The experience of созерцание prayer gave the holy fathers a special power of knowledge, the power of gracious enlightenment. Compared to ordinary methods, созерцание is a completely special path of knowledge, which goes beyond the limits of human possibilities.

Созерцание ability of is not acquired by the development of mental or psychic powers. This Truth knowledge is a special Divine grace gift. It is acquired on the path of combining ascetic feat with the feat of mental and heart action.

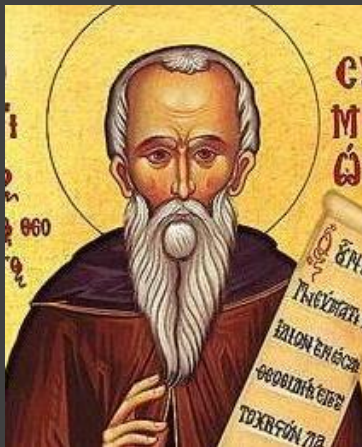
All these saints were true contemplatives. They received their knowledge from the original source, from the mouth of God, in direct prayerful revelation. Through the service of these ascetics, sometimes at the cost of their lives, a monumental edifice of patristic theology was erected, which humanity has inherited.



Gregory the Theologian



John the Ladder of Sinai



Symeon the New Theologian



Gregory Palamas

The Holy Fathers found the hesychastic path prototype in the Old Testament:

In Paradise, God gave man mental and contemplative prayer... the first man was in mental active and grace-filled prayer... in the living vision of God.

In the Old era, the pioneer monks were the prophets Elijah and John the Baptist.

Among the first hesychasts is the Virgin Mary, who from an early age was in constant prayer (silence) and knowledge of God. The example of her asceticism shows that the essence of monastic activity is interior prayer, which the mind performs in the heart.

In the time of the apostles, one could say that all Christians lived as monks and ascetics. Because of this, there was no need to retreat to the desert. The ascetic life that Christ offered is intended for everyone, primarily the laity, since there are no monks in the gospel events. The first Christians achieved purification of the heart-mind through heart prayer and acquired the gift of seeing God.

Since the Church foundation, the Holy Fathers' Tradition has transmitted the method of "secret teaching" (Jesus' prayer), which should remain unnoticed, which is the fulfillment of Christ's commandment "Do not give what is holy to dogs".

This inner asceticism has been enriched for two thousand years by the experience of Christians generation. It acquires unique forms and determinants in accordance with the era, as well as the ethnic and cultural characteristics of its believers.

Along with the well-known examples of this development, in addition to Egypt, Sinai, Syria, Palestine, the Byzantine and Athonite meanders, there is the Georgian mountain desert as well as the Balkan-Slavic line: the Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian schools of hesychasm.

Russia adopts hesychasm simultaneously with the adoption of Christianity. It began in the Kiev Caves, with Saint Anthony, who arrived from Mount Athos in 1028. Russia was covered with a network of remote monasteries and desert cells.

Regardless of geographical specificity, the teaching of inner action forms the main stream in the spiritual tradition of Orthodoxy. Holy tradition never ceases.

Patristic theology

Theology of Contemplation (*созерцание*)

According to Gregory the Theologian, those who have purified themselves through inner asceticism and spend their lives in *созерцание* can reason about God: “The greatest theology is the knowledge of God, and it is revealed in *созерцание*, which means uniting with God“.

True theology is the fruit of revelation that contemplatives receive in direct communion with God. The Fathers of the Church also identify the concepts of theologian and God-seer. Only the one who has seen God and united with Him has true knowledge of God.

Silouan the Athonite: „theology is not reasoning about God, but *созерцание* and participation in the Divine light.“ A theologian is one “who in pure prayer considers himself worthy to attain the *созерцание* of the uncreated light“.

Divine truth is comprehended only in a gracious experience, when God reveals Himself to man by the power of His uncreated energies. True theology is enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. No human wisdom or science can lead to this.

The experience of contemplative prayer gave the holy fathers a special power of knowledge, the power of gracious enlightenment. Compared to ordinary methods, *созерцание* is a completely special path of knowledge, which goes beyond the limits of human possibilities.

The *созерцание* ability is not acquired by the development of mental or psychic powers. That Truth knowledge is a special gift of Divine grace. It is acquired on the path of combining ascetic feat with the feat of mental and heart action.

About the inner peace and immersion in hesychia, Isaac the Syrian says:

When in *созерцание* thoughts calm down, in supernatural peaceful rest, then the mind begins to ponder the mysteries. Then the Holy Spirit begins to reveal heavenly things to the mind, and God dwells in it and resurrects in it the fruits of the Spirit.

Palamas lists the seers from the lineage of fathers: from Athanasius the Great to Symeon the New Theologian. Palamas rose to the highest immaculate theology through unceasing prayer, a state of mental silence, humility and weeping.

Original parental Sin syndrome

The parable of the original sin marks a turning point in the status of the first people, in a paradise environment without traces of any negativity.

Man stumbled and fell when neither sorrow, nor care, nor labor, nor anxiety, nor the agitation of passion had yet seized his nature. He was good in every respect, even “too good.” He was not exposed to any temptations.

Hence, negligence, i.e. lack of concern for a soul safety and spiritual vigilance, with naivety, good-naturedness, and gullibility, arose. Man fell from negligence. If our ancestors had been careful of themselves, they would have been strong.

Eve entered into a conversation with a thought planted by the enemy; she did not cut all off at the very beginning. She fell into a trap. She had no experience in controlling and cutting off thoughts, she did not possess the skill of *трезвение*.

That is why the devil easily succeeded in sowing destructive thoughts. The same applies to Adam: although he was mature in body and spirit, he was still naive and inexperienced. He was in a state of goodness and the absence of the test of evil. He was not tested in keeping the commandments.

When he was expelled from paradise, man was given a direct command from God: to guard against the head of the serpent (the serpent's head should be crushed). Guarding the head is guarding one's thoughts, and what is commanded is the main weapon of defense against the enemy.

Трезвение means: attentiveness of the mind, guarding of thoughts. For the first people, defeat in the spiritual battle was just a mistake. They did not have sobriety, but they had the contemplative ability to communicate with God, which means But we have neither. There was only error in Paradise, but we are under the rule of the old law and our falls happen just as in the case of Eve.

If there was only error in paradise, we are all under the rule of the same law. Our falls occur today as in the case of Eve, we all repeat Eve's mistake.

Every Christian should remember the old law: when engaging in conversation with an incoming thought, a person cannot help but fall under its seduction.

Path of hesychasm

By separation from God, interrupting their live connections with him, the soul ceased to receive the uncreated divine grace The mind was looking for a solution by turning towards the created, material, sensory world for survival.

The soul forces become passion forces. Without spiritual food, the soul seeks bodily. Having lost the source of living water, she is looking for artificial sources, clinging to matter. Internal, spiritual values are replaced by external, sensual.

Man's fall to a lower level of being was reflected in human nature. It is a decrepit nature syndrome: by losing its natural center (a spiritual heart) the mind wander by the outside world, leading man to loss of the connection with reality

While a person remains in a sinful state, his mind is constantly directed towards the external world. Attention is focused on what his senses tell him about objects and phenomena in the surrounding world. This state of mind is called "floating".

With the wandering of thoughts, the mind becomes exposed to the destructive influence of the world, and thus passions are born in the soul. Hence the concept of the world includes the passions that arise from the wandering of the mind. When they are born and reach maturity, passions become sins and kill a person.

Preoccupied with external impressions, a person loses normal self-awareness. He is leaving himself, he lives outside himself. This is what is mentioned in the writings of the Holy Fathers, where the "outer man" is opposed to the inner man.

The mind of such a man is obsessed with external objects... it rushes from one to another. But the further it goes, the more it loses strength... weakened from within, it becomes darkened, and thus unstable - incapable of making correct judgments.

This mental state is called "mind emptiness". Wandering leads to emptiness of thought, and the result is *heart emptiness*. This means that a person forgets about his Creator. The fear of God disappears, as does the ability to feel God's presence.

External impressions penetrate through the sense organs into the soul and occupy the empty heart, which is a sign of the "deadening of the heart to God." The human heart, capable of embracing the entire world of God, becomes so narrowed and withered that only self-love remains.

Essential structure of man

The modern theological thought theorizes about spiritual perfection, but as a rule does not mention the *path* and *methods* of achieving the main goal. It does not point to an ascetic hesychastic method, and therefore there can be no results.

However, apart from the hesychastic method of inner work, there are no other ways to acquire true purity of heart, without which we will not see God.

In order to cleanse our defiled heart, we need to open it, penetrate inside and destroy the passions. Through the action of prayer and the power of grace, through the feat of mental and heart sobriety, a person begins to free his heart for Christ.

God gave man two independent principles: *mind* and *intellect*. The seat of the mind is in the region of the heart, and of reason in the region of the brain. Intellect is an apparatus for understanding the material world, while the mind is something completely different: an organ of communion with God.

The human mind is the organ by which the *созерцание* of God is possible...
by which man sees the Divine light, which is the Kingdom of God. (Palama)

The human mind is a form of energy. It is mobile and can move in different directions and have different types of movement, the two main ones being linear and circular. The latter type is related to the concept of the circular Jesus Prayer.

After the Fall, the mind and intellect lose their independence and merge in the head region. Two essentially different functions: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the world, the higher and the lower, have given rise to a conglomerate in which neither is fully functional anymore.

Our fallen nature implies the property of the mind to always strive towards the external world. This movement of the mind is linear, the mind is directed towards the object of attention in a straight line, from the head to the object.

If the movement of the mind is like this during prayer itself, it would not differ from the movement of prosaic thoughts. The movement of the mind that wants to go beyond the world of matter, to come into contact with Spirit and God, must express itself in some completely different and completely unusual form.

Prayer

Prayer practice takes many forms, depending on the circumstances, with secular or monastic life, in the urban rhythm or in a quiet retreat. Inner work everywhere has its own peculiarities, with special approaches and its own methods.

Understanding one's own life circumstances, one must know the methods for achieving certain prayer states. Starting from personal abilities and predispositions, a person should build his own tactics for inner work.

The path to the soul salvation, the path of repentance, is given to us as a creative task. Personal aspiration is strictly individual, unique for everyone. We are called to the struggle to make our lives the embodiment of God's commandments.

The spiritual ascent to salvation and perfection is determined by man's interaction with God and the Holy Spirit. In this supernatural synergy, man needs a sensitive spiritual intuition to find his own path that leads to the main road.

The Holy Fathers writings describe the joint activity of the Holy Spirit and man in the realization of his salvation, the mutual manifestation of Divine grace and human efforts, human freedom. This is the interaction of God's and man's will.

True prayer is born as the driving force of our struggle, but also as the fruit of synergistic creation. It is a living address to God, an appeal not with words, not even with thoughts, but with the entire composition of our soul - as thought, feeling, will and body.

Such prayer must be learned. It is not enough to pray in simplicity. Prayer requires a certain skill and psychophysical techniques. This involves balancing two principles: a lively appeal to God and mastery of one's body.

The teachings of the Holy Fathers provide a roadmap for achieving a renewed state of consciousness – active *mental-heart* prayer. The result of the return and reunification of the mind with the heart is entry into a new level of being: man enters the space of *spiritual* work.

The initial Jesus Prayer is verbal prayer, followed by mental and mental-heart prayer (active and grace-filled), and the highest prayer level is *созерцательный*.

Active and graceful prayer

Active prayer is appropriate to the lower spiritual status with which we are born. It is available to every Christian, and is fundamentally different from *grace-filled* prayer, which is attainable at higher levels of spiritual life.

Until we attain a state of initial dispassion and move from the lower status of being to the natural state, there will be a period of active prayer. This prayer of the mind and heart is accomplished with considerable human effort and the imperceptible help of God.

In grace-filled prayer, human efforts are no longer decisive. The Holy Spirit Himself prays within man, never leaving his heart. By the power of grace, man contemplates the unearthly world and enters into living communion with God

And then God can grant man the gracious prayer of the mind and heart, which is also called *созерцательная*, which opens the way to the attainment of perfect dispassion, as the ultimate goal of inner mental activity. These are high levels of spirituality, rarely reached, accessible only to those excellent spiritual ascetics.

Active prayer is fundamentally different from grace-filled prayer. If blessed contemplation is granted by God to those who have conquered their passions, active heartfelt prayer is available to all who are well prepared for it.

Preparation for beginners is the transition from verbal to mental prayer, with developing the skill of keeping the mind in the chest area. The essence of that is the process of separating the mind from the intellect, which can take years.

Active prayer of the mind and heart is also available to those who have not yet cleansed themselves of passion. It is a tool for cleansing the inner man, because it frees a person from passionate thoughts, words and bad deeds. With it, one can perfectly cleanse the mind, heart, entire soul and emerge from a passion state

Complete perfection, i.e. purification from passions, is achieved through the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit in the souls of ascetics who are granted the opportunity to enter the second (созерцание), and then the third period of spiritual life: the deification of man.

Path of hesychasm

Magistral Path

It is important for a Christian to recognize and find the main path in Orthodoxy. This path was given by Christ in the Gospel, and it was developed and personified in the inner struggle of His apostle and a whole series of Holy Fathers.

The Holy Fathers speak of the connection between the feat of repentance and intellectual work:

Repentance rests on three virtues: purification of thoughts, constant prayer, and patience in the face of sorrow, which is achieved through mental action.

The patristic tradition speaks of the path of hesychasm as the main path to spiritual perfection, which is the very core of the ascetic direction in Christianity - inner asceticism, inner work, mental work, or holy silence.

This path is a complete system and method of harmonious, comprehensive spiritual development, based on Orthodox theology. It allows us to simultaneously conduct spiritual work at different levels, as well as develop in all directions.

If there is no inner peace, then there can be no hesychia. Anxiety, inner conflicts, worry, fear... prevent entry into the state of initial hesychia.

Hesychia (silence, peace) means spiritual silence, when all thoughts are silenced and a person turns to God with a pure mind. Until such a state is achieved, living communication with God, direct conversation with Him, cannot be achieved.

The main tool on the path is inner, mental action, the so-called inner asceticism. Heart prayer is a special spiritual practice, which, through a combination of active and contemplative asceticism, leads to the acquisition of the grace of deification.

The inner struggle is an ascetic path: narrow and steep, which leads directly and reliably to spiritual perfection, to the highest gift of God-knowledge. According to New Testament understandings, this is the path of a warrior, a warrior of Christ.

A Christian must resist the deadened spirit of the times as well as all the elements of life. This is the scholasticism of anti-hesychasm, the ideology of modernism... everything that in one way or another encroaches on the sacred foundations of living tradition.

Levels of prayer

With the spiritual asceticism stages, the words of the Jesus Prayer are the same, but with the transformation of the mind and soul, prayer changes qualitatively, by four stages: verbal, intellectual, heart, and contemplative (*созерцательный*).

Initially, a man pronounces the prayer words, but verbal prayer is characterized the link of the mind with the intellect and the rectilinear movement of the mind, with the binding of the mind to the words of prayer, spoken or internal.

The verbal level of prayer is mastered when the mind itself is embedded in the words of the prayer. The method of practicing verbal prayer is called “transmitting the mind into words”.

With "Jesus Christ, Son of God..." the mind goes outward, with "have mercy on me" it returns, so on in a circle. But it is not a circular prayer, but only a sequence of two linear movements outward and back inward, between which there is a gap.

This gap in the linear movement of the mind outwards and inwards creates a loss of mental energy. And the energy of the mind is the most valuable thing; it must be gathered and merged with our spirit, which is not possible with verbal prayer.

When a man verbally recites the Jesus Prayer to himself, this will not make the prayer mental. If he focuses his attention on the heart, the prayer will not become heart, but will remain verbal, and he will still mentally recite the prayer in words.

At the stages of mental and heart prayer, thought no longer requires the obligatory embodiment in words. Here, thought is just thought. It flows without uttering words in the mind. A person raises a pure thought to God without expressing it in words.

A man who has acquired the prayer of the heart, when prays silently, can think without words, in concepts. If he reads aloud, this does not mean that the prayer becomes verbal. He prays aloud at the same time from the heart, with his spirit.

Thus, the terms verbal, mental, and heartfelt prayer denote different states of consciousness and certain levels of thought. At each of these levels, a person can pray aloud or silently, in different ways.

External and inner life

There is a direct link between a man's prayer state of mind and his lifestyle. The one who prays at the verbal level has an appropriate level of being, which is defined as an external life, which is also scattered.

The external and inner life are two different beings types and different lifestyles. To live from outside means dependence on external circumstances, constantly responding to external events as well as aspiration towards external value.

By fall into sin, man became disoriented. His feelings, thoughts, and desires pull him in different directions. A man is helpless and powerless. Only the divine grace and the Holy Spirit power gather and unite the scattered energies and sustain man.

In the fallen state of the soul, while man is in a sinful state, his mind is dispersed into outer space, as is the energy of his soul. This mind state is called a "wandering mind," and under the influence of the world, passions arise, which lead to sin.

The mind outwardly jumps from one object to another, and does not dwell on anything. But the further it goes, the more strength it loses, and weakened from within, it becomes darkened. A weakened mind becomes unstable, incapable of making correct judgments.

But, outside there are not only physical and mental values, but also what we consider spiritual values (worship, sermon, reading books...). And all of this is connected to our reaction to what exists outside of us.

Enemies lure us from outside, through external impressions and memories... our memory arises from within, but distracts into without.

A man is determined by what his thoughts and desires are directed towards. He is constantly in a reflective state, whether he lives in the world or in a monastery. All he does is react to external stimuli, positive or negative.

Inner struggle is not possible unless a person withdraws from the world. The task is to ensure that a person does not occupy his mind with the world, but to gather his scattered mind and return it to its place in the spiritual heart, its natural abode.

Hesychia Method

Hesychian Method is a tool for healing the curse of the ancestral fall through a profound transformation of the mind by turning from the external world inward, gathering and uniting in the spiritual heart with the grace of a perfect man and communion with God.

No one can approach God unless he renounces the world... Returning to oneself means aversion to the external world... The foundation of all good begins with *gathering oneself in one place*... only then can the inner life begin. Only then, in the spiritual heart, does spiritual life arise. (Isaac the Syrian)

Through the fall we went outside. Let us return to ourselves, turning from the outside. Reconciliation and union with God are impossible if we do not come inside from the outside. Only the inner life is truly Christian. (Nikephoros a Monk)

In the fallen state of man, his mind and the energy of his soul are dispersed into outer space. Man must, by intelligent action, gather the scattered mind and return it to its place in the spiritual heart, which is its rightful home.

Only when the mind, by turning inward, completely returns to itself and expels from its core everything it has acquired from the outside, will it achieve true purification. Thus pure, the mind will become "deaf and dumb," i.e. it will reach a state of complete hesychia.

At the outside - inside boundary, love for the world dies and love for prayer arises. The entrance in oneself begins. Here the secret of spiritual life is revealed. Without this turning point, man is exposed to the elements of the outside world.

Then the mind, heart, soul and body, hitherto severed by sin, are suddenly united both in man (with himself) and by union in one in the Lord.

This is the path of the Mother of God - contemplative silence. Then the mind acquires *созерцаие* and can "stand before God". Here begins the ascent to perfection. The mind will surpass even its own nature and deify itself through communion with God.

Isaac the Syrian deduces the central law of asceticism:

Without retreating from the world, we cannot draw near to God. A person should not occupy his mind with the world. For the heart cannot remain in silence while the mind is affected by the feelings of this world. Because of our fallen nature, passions and evil thoughts do not rest without withdrawal from the world.

Retreating from the world implies an inner silence (*hesychia*) that collects the mind, calms the soul, and connects the mind with the heart. This is achievable even in a secular environment. Whoever has not attained this state, even if withdrawn into a cave, will not be able to collect his mind, nor to connect it with his heart.

Renunciation of the world is renunciation of passions, the ability to organize oneself in such a way as to escape the influences of the world, even when one is in the midst of this world. This is precisely true renunciation, and according to the apostle, also the crucification of oneself to the world.

Retreating to the desert is deceptive, since the outer desert lulls the passions. We should not pacify our passions, but eradicate them. This is not possible when the passions are asleep, but when they work against us and thereby reveal themselves.

Clinging to the world is not in harmony with the love of God. Purity of heart, as well as soul, is not achieved without renunciation of the world. Hence, every monk and layman, if he is a true Christian, needs an inner renunciation of the world.

Then they will close the gates of the city; feelings are locked in silence and do not rush outside... and one sees what goodness the soul has hidden within itself.

When the mind returns to itself from external entertainment and rests within itself, and the heart awakens, it can move towards spiritual purity.

As man gathers himself together, he gains the opportunity to rise and feel his closeness to the heavenly world. “Enter your cell”, God commanded. When the mind unites with the spirit in the heart, all the human being forces are united there.

Gather all the strength of your soul and body in your heart. Gathering the mind is *attention*. Gathering the will is *трезвение*. Gathering the feelings is *sobriety*. With these three *inner activities*, self-collection and inner abiding are achieved.

The soul of man is turned outward and susceptible to all external influences. The Holy Fathers speak of the distraction of our mind and our entire soul:

The fall of man is that he has lost his concentration. His feelings, thoughts, will, desires pull him in all directions... the person is helpless and powerless.

The Gospel offers a new way of life: it calls for spiritual "suicide" for the sake of spiritual rebirth and the birth of the inner man. The true value is Christ. The Lord reveals to us that He is the source of true being. He is found only within.

To accept the Gospel teaching means to set a new vector for one's life, directly opposite to the old one. This is a life not of this world, but of those who are not of the world. That means "come together and enter into yourself". (John)

The deification is the path of purification and elevation of the mind, and it is the path of inner concentration, self-concentration, that state when there is silence within us and we do not circle around external objects. (Gregory the Theologian)

When a person gathers all his attention that is directed outward and redirects it inward, he crosses the boundary where a true Christian life is born, an inner life, and then a spiritual life that leads to a true encounter with God.

Only such a value reorientation, such an entry into one's own interiority, creates the conditions for inner action and prepares the soul for sincere prayer.

Spiritual life is born deep within, it grows there, and it is vulnerable to attack. That is where one must focus one's attention, stand before the face of the Lord, and accept all that is pleasing to Him. This is the essence of being within. (Theophanes the Hermit)

How do we redirect the ingrained habit of turning the mind outward into a reverse, spiritual perspective that focuses attention inward? How do we transform the entire dynamic of life forces? How to gather ourselves within.

The Lord calls us to a struggle to preserve our mind from disorder and develop its strength and integrity, to gather and purify it, so that it can hear God himself: so that people "come to themselves and enter their inner sanctuary".

How to achieve renunciation of the world and concentration within oneself? The first step is asceticism - the principle of restriction and restraint in order to break attachment to the things of the external world and gradually direct oneself inward.

Without this method, turning to oneself and directing the mind towards God is not possible. But this is a method of external action. This means that it is only preparatory, auxiliary and therefore insufficient. Also, asceticism is denial and to some extent a method of coercion.

We cannot force our outward orientation. It takes something positive and attractive to draw us in. Therefore, the external must be complemented by the internal, in order to achieve stability and harmonious balance.

We need to create something valuable and attractive within ourselves, some alternative to external wealth, a value that would draw us into the inner mine. And the true and most valuable inner wealth is the *Kingdom of God* that is within us.

The true inner treasure for man is the inner mental activity. The pearl is the *Jesus prayer* of the mind and heart, which absorbs the whole person. It becomes the content of man's life, ultimately elevating its owner to the state of sainthood.

To prayer needs to fight. But if the efforts are persistent and accompanied by grace, invoking the Lord becomes a desired, beloved thing. A person discovers the hidden treasure in the soul... and on the path of intelligent action, everyone remains captivated by it.

We invoke Jesus Christ who says: "Until now you have asked nothing in my name, but now ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." And joy is full, God himself begins to cooperate with us in this creative process.

When a person feels the presence of grace in prayer, when his heart is warmed by the living closeness of Christ, he will no longer want to go outside the field of his heart. External values will be devalued, they will not attract him to go outside.

While staying there, a man not only does not want to leave his cell, but he also wants to hide in a ditch dug in the ground, so that there, alone, outside the whole world, he can contemplate the immortal Lord.

To enter into созерцание state, and remain in the spirit, a person must first enter into himself, gather his mind in his heart and unite it with his own spirit, which thereby enlivens it. The spiritualized mind then becomes capable of meeting God.

Gregory Palamas testifies to this:

It is impossible to be close to God if... the mind does not enter only into the heart, but also into itself: the mind within the mind. When the spirit comes to life in the heart, an encounter with the Spirit of God and communion with God are possible.

Hesychia, the method of internal asceticism of mental activity, is considered *magisterial*, unlike other spiritual paths. External asceticism is not capable of elevating a person to dispassion, *созерцание*, and the grace of deification.

But among the saints there are those who during their lifetime were not familiar with hesychasm, nor intellectual work. Nevertheless, in eternity, they shine with glory and grace alongside the great hesychasts. An example of this is the *martyrs*.

This is determined by two principles: 1) in order to reach the heights of holiness in heaven, one must first achieve spiritual perfection on earth, and 2) God has the power to lead and set on the main path anyone who is ready for it at any moment.

A man can wander along the detours of external pursuits, but if he has not lost sight of his goal, with complete dedication, and manages to prepare his soul, the Lord can in an instant extend his hand and place him right on the magisterial path.

This opens a shortcut to holiness and spiritual perfection; it is possible even at the last moment, towards the very end of human life. And the decisive factor for a person's salvation in this case is his inner readiness.

The essential issue is spiritual as well as biological survival. The man's lifestyle is connected with the action of the soul forces. There are three categories here:

- 1) A person leads a purely external life and wastes all his energy in vain.
- 2) A Christian with external feats. Through asceticism he keeps vital energy within himself, but through the cracks the energy leaks out.
- 3) An ascetic, by internal action in the heart, gathers himself and all vital energies. He loves his Lord with all his strength.

Inner action

For a Christian, both monk and layperson, renouncing the world, entering into oneself and renewing one's entire being by uniting the mind, soul and energy of the body represents an inner struggle of returning to communion with God.

Renunciation of the world is not a privilege of the monastic community, it is necessary for everyone, just has different forms. It is the rejection of life according to the world laws, the path of concentration: gathering oneself within oneself.

True renunciation is internal, not merely external, as with many who believe that the rite of monastic tonsure in itself places a person outside the world. Such a fairy-tale idea of spiritual reality is not uncommon among believers.

By entering into oneself, the renewal of the entire spiritual being begins. If the spirit itself is revived in the heart, then this means that with entering into oneself, *spiritual* life is born. In this way, a living communion with God is renewed, which is the ultimate goal of our asceticism.

Life with God does not come about merely through occasional mental activity, observance of the rules, and attendance at church services. This asceticism requires a constant effort of will directed toward God; day and night, comprehensive spiritual work on the mind and soul in all external and internal directions. This is the essence of the *Hesychia method*.

An example of inner asceticism is Theophan the Recluse. By withdrawing from the world, he narrowed his living space, until he completely closed himself off in his ascetic cell. He gathered all his energy until he completely entered into himself.

The Jesus Prayer was a pearl of great price for him. It captivated his soul through all the steps of withdrawal and gathering deep within himself. It brought him a radical change in life, an inner value that overpowered all external values.

The saint possessed a rare combination of spiritual intuition and sober logic. This is a model suitable for understanding the reversal from an external life into evangelical life of the *inner monk*, accessible to everyone, according to life's state. All are called to live in their hearts, to revive their spirit and meet Christ.

Maturation of Prayer

Verbal Prayer

To establish prayer, one must act in a coordinated manner in several directions. Going within oneself provides the foundation and inner conditions for heartfelt prayer to gradually mature in the heart.

Prayer is a state of mind, and states of mind are a direct consequence of lifestyle. As we live, so we pray. Hence, it is important to arrange the conditions for prayer.

Prayer does not arise as a result of our efforts. It is impossible to force it to be born before all the conditions are ready for its conception by the Holy Spirit. And when the spiritual womb is ready, God's grace will fertilize our spirit.

Heart prayer cannot arise in the heart without comprehensive preparation at the stage of verbal prayer. Namely, such preparation is the very process of transitioning from the external to our inner life, that is, gathering ourselves within ourselves.

The active period of the Christian life lasts until a person reaches a state of initial dispassion. Then he enters a period full of grace, contemplation.

Active prayer matures in three stages: verbal, mental, and heart. These are different states of consciousness that correspond to a person's spiritual age and reflect the state of his soul. At each stage, prayer takes on a new, more perfect form.

But each of them can be elevated only with the Divine grace help. The acquisition of each of the three types of prayer is a gift from God. As with mental and heartfelt prayer, the gift of verbal prayer is a God blessing, when He finds it possible.

Prayer is significantly different from external virtues (fasting, reciting prayers...). For a deeper understanding of the mysterious nature of prayer and the working of grace, prayer should be approached humbly, with God-fearingness, in order to enter into prayer easily and harmoniously.

The first step is verbal prayer, which is said aloud or silently. "Verbal" does not mean a form of expression, but a form of thought and describes a certain state of consciousness. The main feature is that the human mind is still connected to reason.

Maturation of prayer

Verbal prayer manifests itself in two ways: when mental energy is collected and held in the head area and when mental energy moves towards the object of attention, externally, outside the body. As a rule, the second option is preferable.

Such prayer, in the action of mental energy, is no different from thinking about prosaic earthly things. On the verbal level, this prayer is not able to go beyond the world of matter and penetrate the spiritual world. Communication with God-Spirit is not available here, because it is possible only through the medium of the spirit.

All actions of the mind on the verbal level are connected with the world of imagination, and this is where the risk arises. When real, living communication with God is unavailable, then there is a danger of replacing it with the play of the imagination. And self-deception is always dangerous.

Our attention in various situations involuntarily rushes into outer space. If we have power over it, we can direct it inward, to the region of the heart. With our prayer, attention will descend in a straight line from the head to the chest.

It is still a verbal, not heart prayer. The focus of attention will not yet lead to the return of the mind to the heart. The mind is still connected to the intellect in the head region and from there directs its mental gaze in different directions.

The mind can look both inside and outside the body, it is a linear movement of the mind and the same location in the head and coupled with reason. This will not change until the mind changes its place of residence, until it descends with its entire energetic complex into the heart.

On the verbal level, there is no communion with God, since it is not capable of entering the spiritual world: a mind has not yet merged with the spirit in the heart. Only a completely purified mind is capable of entering into communion with God.

In verbal prayer, a dispassion state is not necessary. In a hesychia state, the mind cuts off incoming thoughts: it doesn't allow any thought except the prayerful thought on which it is focused. Then the mind remains in a state of relative purity.

The state of pure mind is achieved by a special method called *презвение*, as a sacred method. This method cannot yet be applied to verbal prayer.

At higher levels, sobriety is a tool in the fight against thoughts: the interference of the mind is avoided by cutting off thoughts at the beginning of an attack. This is not possible with verbal prayer, which is susceptible to the layering of thoughts.

To practice *трезвение*, the mind needs to emerge from the cauldron in which it is simmering in the mush of thoughts, along with reason, to observe all thoughts from afar, to be able to grab them at the start and throw them out of the cauldron.

The cauldron is the head. The mind must come out of the head, separate itself from the intellect. That is not enough. It must stand on solid ground, on rock. Our heart is the center of stability of our nature, our inner temple where Christ dwells.

Taken its place in the heart, as ruler, the mind can observe the distractions and keep them away from its heart. It can cut them off and thus contribute to the purification of the heart. The *трезвение* is a method of active mental prayer.

At the verbal level, the state of initial hesychia remains unattainable, and without it, the method of *трезвение* is not possible. At that level, the mind is unable to completely fall silent and remain in the state of hesychia, as the beginning of an inner struggle.

Since spiritual silence (i.e.hesychia) is not possible, verbal prayer is somewhat useless, unpromising, and futile because it does not lead to spiritual growth. Progress is possible only by directing efforts towards acquiring mental prayer.

Still, from the aspect of the general plan of Christian life, oral prayer is certainly a good thing. It is a blessing that a person prays at all and has his own task. He prays as he can... And such prayer, as an unconditional effort, is accepted by God.

Verbal prayer has a preparatory role for moving to the next level. The Holy Fathers do not even consider such prayer to be a full-fledged prayer, but only as a stepping stone. So, at this stage there is really nothing to improv.

The main task of verbal action is to separate the mind from the intellect and develop the connection between the mind and the heart. This is a preparation for acquiring mental and then heart prayer. To break the connection between the mind and the intellect, it is necessary to make special efforts.

Maturation of prayer

During prayer, attention and mind should be kept in the upper chest or in the heart. This should be mastered in different situations and developed as a stable skill.

The second task is the struggle with thoughts. We cannot stop the unwanted flow of thoughts, sensory and volitional impulses and maintain attention. However, this should not confuse us. It is still impossible to defeat the enemy, but we must fight.

The experience of struggling to dismiss thoughts and return attention to prayer is learning prayer in practice. A man acquires the mental warfare skill, trains attention and strengthens the mind. Without this, it is not possible to achieve mental prayer.

While a person is struggling with thoughts, a process of purification is already taking place in the soul. Thus, through oral prayer, a certain protection of the heart from the influence of passions is achieved.

In oral prayer there is a difference between paying attention to the content when simply reciting the prayer and the state when one truly prays with these words. Prayer begins when the mind strictly grasps the meaning of the prayer words.

The mind effortlessly focuses on the text, is fully aware of it, and diligently grasps the content. This state is defined as the union of thought with word.

After reciting a prayer, a person immediately returns to earthly concerns, while after verbal prayer, the soul's connection with prayer remains until the next prayer.

This inertness of prayerful state is a sign of the mind's liberation, i.e. separation of the mind from the intellect, which is a prerequisite for acquiring mental prayer.

When speaking the words of prayer inwardly, we habitually project the image of God and other images because we think figuratively. When we say: "Lord Jesus..." to ask: "have mercy on me," our thought soars into an imaginary "heaven".

God is not seen from afar. We can see Christ only in our soul, in a purified heart, when the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifies our awakened spirit.

The aspects of verbal prayer are: attention is focused on the upper part of the chest or on the heart itself, the mind is held to the words of the prayer (not subject to imagination), with a feeling of living address to God. All this leads to the separation of the mind from the intellect and the stage of mental prayer.

Mental Prayer

The second step on the prayer ladder is mental prayer. Here the mind is already separated from the intellect, but is not yet capable of uniting with the heart. After good preparation, the grace of God transforms verbal prayer into mental prayer.

And at the level of mental prayer, the attention of the mind should be in the upper chest or directly on the heart. It helps in separating the mind from the intellect, as well as in acquiring and strengthening the attention of the heart, as a preparation for moving to the level of heart prayer..

This focus of the mind awakens what is called “heart response,” the compassion with which the spiritual heart responds to a prayerful thought. This makes the prayer both richer and deeper. This develops and strengthens the mental-heart connection, which leads to the union of mind and heart.

If in prayer the mind is kept in the upper chest, as a heart compassion develops, the mind will descend imperceptibly into the heart. The option of paying attention directly on the heart carries a certain risk, due to possible unexpected influences.

In verbal prayer, we follow the words of the prayer in our minds and silently speak them in ourselves. Mental prayer can be practiced without sounding the words in our minds. When we pray mentally to ourselves, the words of the prayer are no longer spoken in our minds, but are simply thought.

In the first case, a muscle of the speech apparatus receives nerve impulses, with micromovements, as when a prayer is said aloud, while in mental prayer we do not follow the silent pronunciation of words, but rather think a prayer purely mentally.

There is no longer any tension in the speech muscles or the neural connection towards our thoughts. There is a feeling of inner relief, of liberation. The prayerful thought flows by itself, the prayer content is transformed into a pure thought.

Verbally, the words of prayer are spoken to oneself. In mental prayer, the entire phrase is a single thought, which content the mind simply grasps immediately.

Such prayer illuminates the mind like a flash. It does not take time for mental articulation: "The mind is sharper than words, thought is swifter than tongue".

Maturation of prayer

Keeping the mind in the chest area establishes a connection between the mind and the heart, which heals our inferior mental-rational nature. As experience accumulates,, the mind finally finds the heart. This happens by the grace of God.

With the grace, the mind unites with the heart and unites in active mental-heart prayer. The mind connects with the spiritual heart, with our spirit. This is a new state of consciousness, a significant step from a subnatural being to a natural one.

Skill is a habit, that which is remembered and repeated. Compared to the mental, the body memory is crude and primitive. But the spiritual organism memory shows itself to be refined, so much so that it extends to the beginning, to primitive times.

In our spirit is stored the memory of the spiritual structure before the fall into sin of our forefathers. The mind-heart connection restores the memory of the original predispositions.

External efforts remain ineffective due to the internal unpreparedness of the man. The decisive factor in the mind-heart link is how much the conditions for link are prepared in the soul, when Divine grace can introduce a man into heart prayer.

Readiness is determined by entering into oneself, by the inner life. It is not just prayer, but a comprehensive set of ascetic and penitential life. Only with the appropriate structure of life, prayer practice gives the desired results.

A sign of readiness is the appearance of moments of initial hesychia in prayer. With the prayer, all thoughts disappear from the mind. Mental silence as a vacuum surrounds the prayerful thought and thoughts do not fall into the sphere of attention.

It is need to feel and catch such moments and hold on to them. We should remain in the mind silence, holding on to prayer as the core, and not allowing any thoughts. Without silence of thoughts, the mind will not move into hidden secrets.

At first, these states occur involuntarily, but with experience it is possible to enter them at will. With this skill, the ability to sobriety is acquired. When the conditions are ripe, we will be introduced to heartfelt prayer. We are asked to prepare ourselves. The rest is in His hands. God's grace cannot be forced to work.

When the mind finds the heart, a state arises that is called active prayer of the mind-heart, heart prayer. The mind is united with the heart, while mental energy merges with the spirit, and the center of this fusion is our spiritual heart.

Active prayer is the initial form of heart prayer, which is transformed into a more perfect grace-filled stage, up to the level of *созерцание* prayer. Our active cooperation creates conditions for the God grace to linked the mind and heart.

Active heart prayer is available to every Christian, even a sinful and passionate. It is precisely for such people that it is intended. Because this prayer is the main tool for the initial purification of the heart, soul and body from sin and passion.

When this purification is achieved to a certain extent and a person attains a state of *dispassion*, a grace-filled prayer is offered, by which the Holy Spirit maintains a unified mind - spirit state of in the heart, without effort on the part of the person.

Thus, grace-filled prayer can become a continuous state, making it possible to fulfill the commandment: "Pray without ceasing". The mind returns to the native abode of the heart, falls to the arms of the spirit, its father, and is reunited with it.

At the mental prayer stage, the mind was not yet able to connect with the heart. With heart prayer, this ability is acquired. Effort is still needed to connect the mind with the heart, but the mind gathered in the heart gradually unites with it.

The mind - heart unification is created by the action God's grace. His inclinations are unfathomable to us. The states of connection are episodic, temporary, and over time the connection becomes permanent, i.e. prayer becomes independent.

In the active heart prayer, the mind at times leaves the heart, becomes distracted and wanders. Sometimes it goes to the head and temporarily connects with reason. But now it easily breaks away from it and gathers itself again in the heart.

. The liberated mind is engaged in restoring the lawful, natural relationship with the heart. Thanks to the efforts of mental prayer, the mind-heart connection is restored and a return to the natural state of being begins, in which the mind and spirit form a single whole in the spiritual heart.

Maturation of prayer

Mind in the heart

When a person acquires the ability of mental-heart emotion, a special state manifests itself during prayer. These moments are called: "active union of the mind with the heart". In that state, a person actually prays from the heart.

The mind's attention is on the "heart place" area and does not leave it. Then, a man can experience spiritual elevation. The mind itself, without much effort, is held in the heart. Prayer becomes very easy, it simply flows from our heart.

A man feels the Divine grace presence in his heart, which makes prayer easier, i.e. it is easier to keep the mind in the heart. The mind is holding on to the heart, and the touch of grace encourages a man to feel the God's presence in his spirit.

This is a premonition of a living meeting. It seems to captivate the mind, encourages it to lean on the heart, to seek and wait for an encounter with the Lord. And the mind no longer wants to leave the heart. It does not rush outside, into freedom, does not want to run away anywhere, as before.

The mind - heart link is not yet stable, it cannot be maintained permanently and prayer is interrupted. And the goal is to keep the mind and heart in a prayerful connection. There are many reasons that prevent to praying with the heart

A common case is external distractions, something attracts the mind's attention and lures it. The mind is distracted by an external stimulus and leaves the heart. Prayer is lost. The mind has not yet been trained to remain firmly in the heart, the connection with happiness is easily broken.

Since attention and mind are not yet stable in the heart, a mind is easily lured by its own reason. This will not distract a man experienced in active prayer, his mind calmly performs its functions from the harmonious union of mind and reason.

Disturbances arise when the imagination is freedom during prayer. These can be images of the heavenly world, as well as earthly desires, worries, and problems.

It is prayer that ennobles our striving and turns it into a truly creative feat. This will attract the Holy Spirit Himself into co-creation. And then the grace of God triggers our creative thought. But, we need to get to that point...

The first words of the prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,” are an appeal, the second: “have mercy on me, a sinner,” are repentance and request. The mind moves in a circle, within the heart space, constantly, without leaving the heart.

When something outside attracts attention, the mind rushes in that direction and leaves the heart. Sometimes a disturbance arises from the depths of memory and captivates the mind. In both cases, the circular mind movement is interrupted.

As soon as the circular motion of the mind is interrupted, its link with the spirit is broken down, the energy ring has opened and the mind energy is no longer spiritualized. Therefore, the mind loses its living connection with the Holy Spirit.

If a mind is occupied with something else, the circular movement in the heart is happening "blindly", as a mechanical mention of the name of God (which is a sin).

If the image of the Lord appears in prayer, etc., the imagination must not draw the mind away from the heart. All ascetic writings warn that the mind must remain formless in prayer. Nicodemus of Mount Athos says:

Know that since God is beyond all senses and all that is sensible, beyond any form, color, measure, or place, then He is completely formless. Although He is present everywhere, He is above all and therefore beyond all imagination.

A mind that has fallen from unity with the spirit, from the spiritual to the mental sphere, has no contact with the God Spirit and cannot establish contact with God..

Two principles, spiritual and mental, are so different that make two worlds. The mind that has fallen from unity with the spirit, from the spiritual to the mental sphere, has no contact with the God Spirit and cannot establish contact with God.

The human mind can be in one of two states: spiritual or mental. The first is sublime, close to the natural level of the soul, and the second is a reflection of the subnatural level of being and the state of our soul. The spiritual state of the mind is achieved through the connection of the mind-heart.

The human spirit and the mind energy form a whole, as originally arranged by the Creator. The mind united in the heart with the spirit is spiritualized, and the ability of *соерцание* is restored to man, the gift of communion with God.

Heart Prayer

By entering heart prayer, the experience of the mind and heart connection is accompanied by a state of initial hesychia. Hints appear already in mental prayer, but at this stage, initial hesychia is the first active stage of inner silence.

A state of mind silence during mental-heart prayer occurs when a mind becomes quiet, and flow of the incoming thoughts stops. This is achieved by significantly reducing the mind activity and collecting mental energy in the heart-spirit.

If we cut off all attachments and listen to the peace in the depths of the heart, we can catch moments of hesychia. Against the background of the silence of the spirit, every thought is immediately noticed, even before the mind accepts it, before the mind merges with the thought.

It is possible to interrupt thoughts immediately, by cutting them off at the very beginning, before they penetrate the heart. This is a revolution in the man's inner life. The main weapon of this spiritual and mental work is the *трезвение* method.

"*Трезвение*" can mean the general structure of Christian life: a cheerful and attentive, alert state of mind, and also the corresponding qualities of the soul.

In asceticism, it is a main hesychastic method for the cleaning of mind and heart from passion. It opens access to our heart for the Holy Spirit. With cooperation of our and the God's spirit, it is possible to completely clean the soul from passion.

The initial hesychia state and *трезвение* are closely connected and intertwined. To rejecting the attack by the *трезвение* method, it is necessary to maintain the hesychia state. Protecting and cleaning the heart from the thoughts, the *трезвение* introduces into the hesychia state and maintains the silence of the mind.

Without the *трезвение* we cannot achieve the state of true spirituality. The link of mind with spirit is only possible if the mind is pure of thoughts. Hence, the *трезвение* practice is the very essence of the feat of an active heart.

Трезвение is the main instrument of cleansing and healing our passionate nature. The cleaning operation itself is done by God's grace. But, unless we master that instrument ourselves, there will be no God's mercy.

The *трезвение* has 3 parts: 1) maintaining a state of hesychia, 2) noticing every thought-sensory impulse against the background of mental silence, and 3) quickly cutting off every suggestion that appears, with the help of the Jesus Prayer.

That's all. It seems very simple. The Jesus Prayer is a sword that cuts through suggestion. The skill of a warrior is to strike the enemy before the weapon connects with the mind. But the thing is, our skill alone is not enough.

This method is holy because it is a synergistic action. *Трезвение* is not possible without the participation of Christ, invoked in prayer, and the help of the Holy Spirit. All we can do is monitor the enemys attacks and call upon Christ for help.

It is not our prayer alone that destroys the obstacles, we are not able to drive out the demon. Only the grace of God, in response to our prayer and our call, burns the demons and repels the attacks. We call upon God, and He cleanses us.

Purity of mind is a powerful weapon. When the mind is pure of thoughts and directed towards God, the heart is filled with the Holy Spirit grace. This is the true presence of God. Demons cannot sow their destructive thoughts at such moments.

As long as our relatively pure mind is in God, we are under the grace protection. The demon cannot attack grace. The heart that cries out in prayer with the name of God is “a shield that repels all the fiery darts of the devil, even if he is among men”.

That is why moments of mental-heart *трезвение* are times of spiritual peace, *hesychia*. With silence under the auspices of grace, we stand calmly and openly before God. Grace permeates our nature, purifies our soul and sanctifies us.

After separating from the intellect and returning to the heart, the mind can be a connection with the outside world. The prayerful state is maintained without breaking the mind-heart connection. It is possible to communicate with people and perform various activities at the same time.

When the first man lost communion with God, he turned completely to himself. This unnatural orientation led to self-sufficiency, to the development of the self. But freedom is not self-love, but the free surrender of oneself to the will of God.

Maturation of prayer

With heartfelt prayer, states of hesychia arise, when the flow of thoughts stops. Very subtle experiences can occur. A bottomless depth is revealed in the heart, a man enters another space, the spiritual, and begins to feel the presence of God.

In these moments, a person clearly feels that he is not alone. There is a fullness in the heart area that testifies that God is, close, with us. As the prayer of the heart matures, these experiences deepen. This naturally creates a state of inner peace.

This experience brings a state of peace in the soul. A man maintains self-control and calmness even in critical situations. God's closeness becomes a reality, the life content. A man can entrust himself to God and surrender completely to His will.

In heart prayer, the human spirit attracts the Holy Spirit, who comes to our heart and touches it with His grace. And in these holy moments, when God is present here with His grace, suggestions disperse and thoughts withdraw.

But the action of grace is not predictable and is not under our control; it moves away and leaves us by the will of God. Our task is to protect our heart from negligence, from all impurity, protecting the grace that has visited us.

Heart prayer and трезвение constitute a necessary tool for the purification of the heart and soul, but this is a preliminary cleansing. The deep cleansing of the soul is beyond our power, in the hands of God's grace. Purification is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A direct link between man and God is possible only by related elements. Our mind becomes linked to the Lord through unity with our spirit. Then we know that we have a spirit and that God is Spirit. This becomes a point of spiritual contact.

The mind in трезвение state repels sensual attack. Hence, it avoids any external influence. Its only content is the name of God, an appeal to Christ. The mind remains pure and guards the heart, which is the optimal state for our fallen nature.

The only content of the quiet mind in these moments is a prayerful address to Christ. The body is silent, there are no earthly thoughts. Our spirit is so pure that this state gives the Holy Spirit the opportunity to communicate with us. The spirit can touch the spirit.

About a human and divine mind comparability Gregory Theologian says:

Man is the God's image, thus in God as well as in man the nature of mind reigns. The man's mind in is the highest, God-like beginning... it is with him that God, the Supreme Mind, can unite as with the closest and most related.

In moments of living connection of spirit with Spirit, God's grace acts on the soul of man. More than that is: the Holy Sacrament of Communion. The Holy Spirit, in direct communion with our spirit, transforms our decrepit nature.

By the breath of the Spirit of God, the mind is permeated with grace and becomes increasingly spiritualized. Over time, the ability to contemplate, which the first people lost, is restored. The human mind once again gains the power to directly perceive the realities of the spiritual world.

The spirit is the core of our being, through it the Lord influences our entire being. Having entered the heart, grace penetrates everywhere: it sanctifies and purifies entire spiritual-soulful-bodily organism: feelings, will, mind and body.

Passing from the mind to the body, grace transforms the body, makes it spiritual, so that it rejects evil bodily desires and no longer drags the soul down, but rises with it, from which the whole man then becomes a spirit. (Palamas)

Grace sanctifies the spirit and soul of man, and then sanctifies the body. This effect extends to external manifestations in which the soul and body participate. All thoughts, words and deeds of man now begin to be filled with grace.

When the mind is in the heart, with a prayerful link to God and a constant flow of grace, every activity will be transformed into a truly creative spiritual endeavor. Even everyday activities then become a service sanctified by grace.

The moments of hesychia become purer and longer. the mind silently holds prayer in the heart. Passions subside, and the spiritual body rises more fully.

Grace will embrace the entire soul... take root in its most secret parts and reign in it. Then the soul accepts its own nature, returns to its purity that it had before the fall, to its *godlike essenc*.