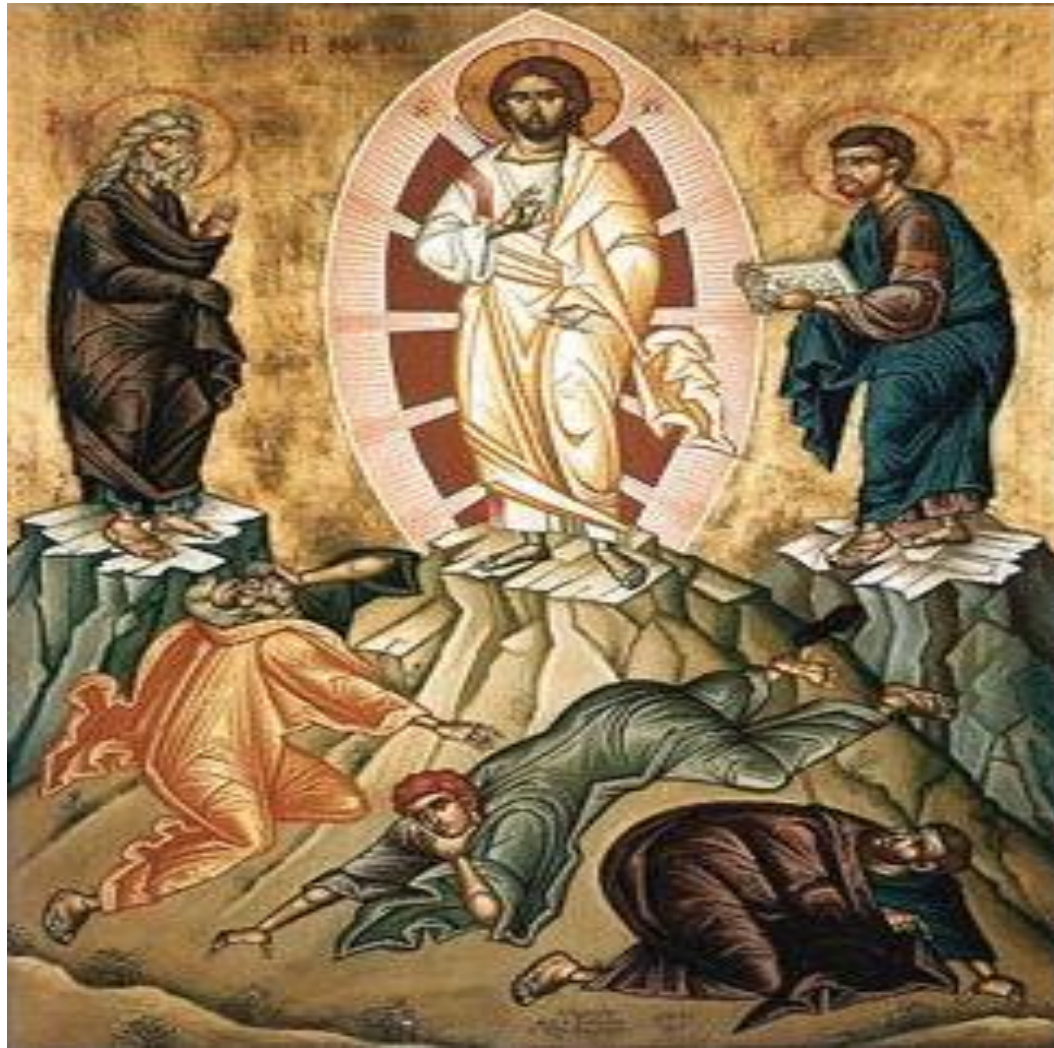


# MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

The Prayer of the Heart

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Transfiguration

- There is an experience of God one may obtain.
- The God so experienced was revealed once for all in Jesus.
- The same God continues to make himself known in and through the life of the Church.

# The Mystery of Israel

- Jacob wrestles with (the Angel of) God and receives a new name as a reward for his struggles (Gen 32:28-30).
- Israel, then, is neither a land nor a people, but both a single being and an aggregate of individuals bound to the common observance of the covenant with the “God of Jacob” given and sealed at Mt. Sinai. (Israel is the Body of Christ, 1 Cor 12:12; Gal 4:26-29; Eph 2:19).

- The covenant at Sinai is foundational for both the Old and New Testaments.
- The people are gathered at the foot of the Mountain and warned through Moses to prepare themselves for God's descent "on the third day." (Ex 19)
- Moses ascends into the "dark cloud" and receives the commandments of God. (Ex 20)
- The covenant is sealed with a sacrifice, the sprinkling of the people with "the blood of the covenant," and by communion meal with the "God of Israel" that takes place up the mountain and includes Moses, Aaron, and the chosen elders. (Ex 24)

- Moses ascends again into the cloud and receives instructions for the building of the Tabernacle. (Ex 25ff).
- Moses descends illuminated with the divine Glory (Ex 34:29).
- Glory fills the newly constructed Tabernacle. (Ex 40).
- “The Glory of God shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it.” (Is 40:5).

- Formal worship is not sufficient. “Be doers of the word.” (Jas 1:22)
- The covenant must be followed: “Let justice flow like water and integrity like an unfailing stream.” (Amos 5:21,24)
- The presence of God at communal worship, in light of the failures of His people, comes not as communion but as judgment. (Amos 5:18-20)
- With the destruction of the Temple, God’s presence is pre-eminently Scripture itself. (Eccl. 24)

- Paul tells us that Moses saw the “glory of Christ” (2 Cor 3:13ff), that same glory that descended on Sinai, was enthroned above the ark, and is now revealed in the person of Jesus.
- On Mt. Tabor Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John. (Mk 9:2-4) His face became “brighter than the sun” (Mt 17:2) and “they saw His glory.” (Lk 9:32)
- Christ is the place of the divine presence, the true Temple.
- “I Am.” (Jo 18:5; cf Ex 3)
- Jesus is the covenant. (Is 63:9; 2 Cor 1:19-20)



- In Baptism we die with Him (Rom 6:3-14), receive the Spirit (Acts 2:38-41). At the Eucharist the celestial Jerusalem and heavenly court are present in the Church gathered for the Lord's meal (1 Cor 10:16-17).
- Jesus is the manifestation of God's unique identity to the whole world (Jo 1:1-17); those who call on the name of Jesus and confess Jesus as Lord are acknowledging the God of Israel to be the one and only true God. (Joel 2:27; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Cor 8:6)
- YHWH is Jesus Christ is God. Jesus is the manifestation of God's unique identity to the world. (Jo 1:1-17)
- All Old Testament theophanies are the appearance of Jesus.

- YHWH texts used by Paul with Jesus Christ as referent:

Rom 9:33	Isa 8:14
Rom 10:13	Joel 2:32; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9; Jer 10:25
Rom 12:11	Ps 2:11; 100:2; 102:22
Rom 14:11	Isa 45:23
Rom 12:11	Ps 2:11; 100:2; 102:22
1 Cor 1:2	Joel 2:32; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9; Jer 10:25
1 Cor 1:8	Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1,11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6
1 Cor 1:31	Jer 9:24
1 Cor 2:16	Isa 40:13
1 Cor 5:5	Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1,11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6
1 Cor 8:6	Dt 6:4
1 Cor 10:22	Dt 32:21
1 Cor 10:26	Ps 24:1

2 Cor 1:14	Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1,11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6
2 Cor 5:11	Isa 2:10,19,21
2 Cor 8:21	Prov 3:4
2 Cor 10:17	Jer 9:24
Phil 2:10-11	Isa 45:23
1 Thess 3:13	Zech 14:5
1 Thess 5:2	Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1, 11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6
2 Thess 1:7	Isa 66:15; Zech 14:5
1 Thess 1:8	Isa 2:3
2 Thess 1:9	Isa 2:10,19,21
2 Thess 1:12	Isa 66:5
2 Thess 2:2	Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1,11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6
2 Thess 3:1	Isa 2:3
2 Thess 3:16	Num 6:26; Ru 2:4

- YHWH texts used by Paul with God as referent

Rom 4:7-8	Ps 32:1-2
Rom 7:14	Gen 17:5
Rom 9:9	Gen 18:14
Rom 9:13	Mal 1:2-3
Rom 9:14	Ex 33:19
Rom 9:17	Ex 9:16
Rom 9:25	Hos 2:25
Rom 9:27-8	Hos 2:1; Isa 10:22-3
Rom 9:29	Isa 1:9
Rom 9:33	Isa 28:16
Rom 10:16	Isa 53:1 LXX
Rom 10:19	Dt 32:21 (see use in 1 Cor 10:22)
2 Cor 6:2	Isa 49:8
2 Cor 6:17	Isa 52:11; Ezek 20:34
2 Cor 6:18	2 Sam 7:14

Rom 10:20	Isa 65:1
Rom 10:21	Isa 65:2
Rom 11:3	1 Kgs 19:10
Rom 11:26-27	Isa 59:20-21
Rom 11:34	Isa 40:13
Rom 12:19	Dt 32:35
Rom 15:11	Ps 117:1
1 Cor 3:20	Ps 94:11
1 Cor 14:21	Isa 28:11-12

- “One person may spend the entire day in prayer and reading Scripture, giving over only a small part to standing in recitation of the Psalter...Another person may be occupied the whole day solely in psalmody, without specifically being aware at all of prayer. Yet another may occupy himself night and day just with frequent prostrations...And occasionally, standing up from there for a while in peace in his heart, he will turn himself for a little to meditating on Scripture. Yet another person may occupy the day in reading Scripture...” Isaac of Nineveh

- There is no common rule for everyone. However, alternating prayer with prayerful reading (recitation) of Scripture allows ideas drawn from Scripture to fill the mind.

- Pray unceasingly. (Ps 119:64; 1 Thess 5:17)

Morning and Evening prayer are the times of the Temple sacrifices (Ps 55:17)

At 9am the Spirit descended upon the Apostles; at noon, Jesus was crucified; at 3pm, Jesus died on the Cross.

Compline is prayer before retiring (Ps 77:6; 88:1; 92:1-2; 119:55)

One rises at Midnight to pray (Ps 119:62) as at the Garden of Gethsemane (Ps 63:6)

- Collect the mind and banish exterior thoughts. Reading and prayer should be done in silence and stillness.
- Reverential outward postures are conducive to inward progress as they train one in a pious attitude to God.
- Outstretched hands promotes concentration of thought and a deep feeling of compunction. (Ps 134:1-2)
- Pray prostrate before the Cross The power of God is present in the Cross, made in the name of that Man in whom divinity dwells and who destroyed the power of sin and death.
- One's own words suffice.



- Nocturnal prayer is encouraged as there is nothing that could distract one from prayer when the world is asleep.
- Fasting is an integral part of prayer life (Mt 17:21; 1 Cor 7:5).
- At prayer, first make a prostration. Then make the sign of the Cross.
- Stand in silence for a while and then pray aloud in one's own words. Bless God and recall one's sins with tears. (Ps 6:7)

- “The beginning of prayer consists in banishing the thoughts that come to us, at their very appearance; the middle is when the mind stays solely in the words pronounced vocally or mentally... Constantly struggle with your thought and, whenever it is carried to and fro, collect it together. God does not require from novices prayer completely free from distractions. Do not become depressed when your thought is distracted, but remain calm, and unceasingly restore your mind to itself.”

John of Sinai

- Read psalms and Scripture aloud.
- Join the breath to the prayer.
- Meditation on God includes remembrance of the whole economy of God concerning humanity, beginning with the creation of man and finishing with the Incarnation. God is love. (I Jo 4:8)
- Withdrawing from people does not mean forgetting them. A merciful heart has pity for all creatures. Remember those who have gone astray and those who have departed this life without repentance and true faith.

- Meditation on God is accomplished by total forgetfulness of this world, penetrating the “dark cloud” of God’s glory.
- When the mind is stilled there is no oblivion or lost personal existence, rather an intense communion of a human person with personal God. God is in charge.
- Silence of the mind not only does not allow one to think of anything vain or sinful, but what is apparently profitable, and even what is spiritual, is banned.

- “Lord, my heart is not proud; nor are my eyes haughty. I do not busy myself with great matters, with things to sublime for me. Rather, I have stilled my soul...” (Ps 131:1-2)
- Instead of all thought, gaze unceasingly into the depths of the heart and say,  
“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

- “To start with you will find there darkness and an impenetrable density. Later, when you persist and practice this task day and night, you will find, as though miraculously, an unceasing joy. For as soon as the intellect attains the place of the heart, at once it sees things of which it previously knew nothing. It sees the open space within the heart and it beholds itself entirely luminous and full of discrimination.”  
(Pseudo)-Symeon
- Prayer is a call to life.

- “If an earthly king were to call us and request us to serve in his presence, we should not delay for other orders, we should not make excuses, but we should leave everything and eagerly go to him. Let us then be on the alert, lest when the King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods calls us to this Heavenly office, we beg off out of sloth and cowardice and find ourselves without excuse at the Last Judgment.”
- John of Sinai

- “There is only one way out of this, namely, total separation from all the world. But withdrawal from the world does not mean physical removal from it. Rather it is the withdrawal by the soul of any sympathy for the body. One gives up possessions, friends, ownership of property, livelihood, business connections, social life, and scholarship... The heart is made ready to receive the imprint of sacred teaching, and this making ready involves the unlearning of knowledge deriving from evil habits. To write on wax, one has first to erase the letters previously written there, and to bring sacred teaching to the soul one must begin by wiping out the preoccupations rooted in ordinary habits.”
- Basil the Great



- “Imagine a man in whom the tumult of the flesh goes silent, in whom the images of earth, of water, of air, and of the skies ceases to resound. His soul turns quiet and, self-reflecting no longer, it transcends itself. Dreams and visions end. So too does all speech and every gesture, everything in fact which comes to be only to pass away...All these things cry out, ‘It is the Eternal One who made us.’ And after they have said this, think of them falling silent, turning to listen to the One who created them. And imagine Him speaking. Himself, and not through the medium of all those things. Speaking Himself. So that we could hear His word, not in the language of the flesh, not through the speech of an angel, not by way of a rattling cloud or a mysterious parable...

- But Himself. The One whom we love in everything. Imagine we could hear Him without them. Reaching out with speeding thought we come to Him, to the Eternal Wisdom which outlasts everything. And imagine if sight of Him were kept available, while all lesser sights were taken away. Think of this encounter, seizing, absorbing, drawing the witness into the depths of joy. Eternal life would be of a kind with this moment of understanding.”

Augustine

- “For what use is existence to the creature if it cannot know its Maker? How could men be reasonable beings if they had no knowledge of the Word and Reason of the Father through whom they had received their being? They would be no better than the beasts, had they no knowledge except of earthly things; and why should God have made them at all, if He had not intended them to know Him? But, in fact, the good God has given them a share... in His own image, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? ...

- Simply in order that through His gift of Godlikeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is, the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only truly happy and blessed life.”

Athanasius

- The Jesus Prayer is rooted in the ancient theologies of God’s Name and Glory (originating in the Old Testament) and applied to Christ in the New Testament (cf Phil 2:6-11; Jo 17).
- The repetition of the Name as a means of access to the divine Glory is witnessed in Jewish apocalyptic literature and likely lies behind Paul’s exhortation to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).

- “He summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases...” (Lk 9:1) “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others...” (Lk 10:1)
- “The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name.’ Jesus said, ‘I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to tread upon...the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’” (Lk 10:17-20)

- “Amen, amen, I say to you,...whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.” (Jo 14:13-14)
- “Amen, Amen, whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you.” (Jo 16:23)
- “God has...bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth...” (Phil 2:9-10)

- Peter cured a beggar in the Temple. The Holy Spirit speaking through him, declared, “The author of life you put to death, but God raised Him from the dead...And by faith in his name, this man, whom you see and know, His name has made strong, and the faith that comes through it has given him this perfect health.” (Acts 3:15-26)
- Ignatius of Antioch (+107 AD) kept the name of Jesus constantly on his lips (because he had the name written in his heart and confessed Him whom he always carried in his heart).

# Unseen warfare

- “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company. Jesus said to him, ‘do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you.’” (Lk 9:49-50)
- But, “some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches...The evil spirit said to them in reply, ‘Jesus I recognize, Paul I know, but who are you.’” (Acts 19:13-16)



- Our battle is with the prince of the air, the cosmic power that rules in the world (Eph 2:2; 6:12)
- “Unless the soul suffers greatly over the shamelessness of sin, it cannot rejoice abundantly over the goodness of justice... Those who desire to renounce their old nature must not sometimes pray and sometimes not, but unceasingly devote themselves to prayer with watchfulness of mind, even when they are outside temples of prayer.”  
(Pseudo)-Macarius

- “The remembrance of the name of Jesus rouses the enemy to battle. For a soul that forces itself to pray the prayer of Jesus can find anything by this prayer, both good and evil. First, it can see evil in the recesses of its own heart, and afterwards, good...The prayer can expose the sin that is living in us, and this prayer can eradicate it...but (it) requires many years and much time. Much time and labor are needed to expel the enemy and install Christ.”

John Chrysostom

- “In my name they shall cast out demons.” (Mk 16:17)
- During the practice of the Jesus prayer, “There is a battle. The evil spirits fight with great confusion and produce by means of the passions a storm and rebellion in the heart; but by the name of Jesus Christ they are consumed and destroyed... Yet when they are repulsed and retreat from the heart, they do not abandon the struggle, but they disturb the mind from without through the exterior senses...

- For this reason the mind does not very soon begin to experience calm and quiet within itself; because when the demons have not the power to disturb the mind in its depths, they disturb it from without by fantasies. And, therefore, it is impossible to be completely free from conflict and not to be attacked by evil spirits. That belongs only to the perfect and to those who are completely detached from everything and whose attention remains constantly in the heart.”

Symeon the New Theologian

- “The chief and most decisive battle awaits us in the hour of death. Who falls at that moment cannot rise again. Do not be surprised at that. For if the enemy dared to approach our Lord, who was without sin, at the end of His days on earth...(Jo 14:30), what can prevent him from attacking us, sinful as we are, at the end of our life?... If this is so, it is impossible not to keep it in view and prepare oneself beforehand to meet that hour and pass through it successfully.”

Lorenzo Scupoli, Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, Theophan the Recluse

- “When the evil enemy begins to sow thoughts of unbelief or, appearing in a visible shape, speaks to you against faith, do not enter into an argument with him, but affirm within yourself faith in what he attacks, and say to him with holy indignation, ‘Out of my sight, Satan, father of lies. I refuse to listen to you; with my whole soul I believe and have always believed in what my mother, the holy Church believes. And this is enough for me.’”

- “Fear at the memory of the multitude of our sins...cannot be avoided; but it is mitigated by belief in the redemption of our sins by the death on the Cross by Christ our Savior...Keep firmly in your heart the faith in the redeeming power of our Lord’s death on the Cross. If, entering the gates of death, you actually experience attacks of hopelessness...realize...that they are the works of the enemy, and not the natural results of the recollection of your sins. This recollection brings humility, contrition, and heartfelt grief...”

- “Never...let your attention dwell on yourself and what is yours, giving way to satisfaction with yourself and with your works, even if your progress in virtues were greater than all the saints. Let all your satisfaction be in God, and place your hope wholly on His mercy and the sufferings of our Lord and Savior; belittle yourself in your eyes to your last breath...”
- “Take refuge in the protection of Divine mercy; yet do not allow yourself to expect it as a reward for...struggles.”



- “If our evil, cunning, and tenacious enemy, who is never tired of tempting us, should attempt to seduce you...by some phantoms, visions, or transformation into an angel of light, stand firm in the consciousness of your poverty and utter nothingness. And say to him from a courageous and fearless heart, ‘Return accursed one, to your darkness. I am unworthy of visions and revelations. Only one thing I need: the infinite compassion of my Lord Jesus Christ, and the prayers and intercessions of our Lady, the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and of all the saints’...

- Humble feelings ...In order to receive and see in one's heart the light of Christ, we must withdraw ourselves as much as possible from visible objects. Having purified our soul by penitence, good works, and faith in Him who was crucified for us, we should close our bodily eyes and immerse our mind in our heart, where we should cry with the invocation of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, according to the measure of his zeal and fervor of spirit for the Beloved, a man finds delight in the name pronounced which arouses desire to seek higher enlightenment. When through this exercise the mind tarries in the heart, then there dawns the light of Christ which sanctifies the temple of the soul with its divine radiance...

- 'To you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise.' (Mal 4:2) This light is at the same time Life, according to the word of the Gospel, 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.'" (Jo 1:14)

Symeon the New Theologian

- The light “is a substantial shining of the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Through this light all knowledge is revealed and God is truly known by the worthy and beloved soul.”

(Pseudo)-Macarius

- “It was (the Eucharist) which first gave me to see, and, through its ruling light, be led up in the light to the vision of the other sacred things.”

(Pseudo)-Dionysius

“Live at peace with all.” (Rom 12:8)

- “Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy mountain? Whoever walks without blame, doing what is right, speaking truth from the heart, who does not slander a neighbor, does no harm to another, never defames a friend; who disdains the wicked, but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath despite the cost, lends no money at interest, accepts no bribe against the innocent. Whoever acts like this shall never be shaken.” (Ps 15)

- “I must not attempt to control God’s actions. I must not count the stages in the journey He would have me make. I must not desire a clear perception of my advance along the road; nor know precisely where I am on the way to holiness. I ask Him to make a saint of me; yet I must leave to Him the choice of the means which lead to it.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta



Kyriakion at Esfigmenou Monastery  
<http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/Athos/>

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- Hilarion Alfeyev, “Prayer in St. Isaac of Nineveh”
- Alexander Golitzin, “Liturgy and Mysticism: The Experience of God in Eastern Orthodox Christianity”