Evagrius

(De Oratione: CPG 2452)

Translation by Luke Dysinger, O.S.B. (translation in public domain) The Greek text below is based on: PG 79.1165-1200; Philokalia; and Tugwell. It has been updated according to the critical edition of Géhin (SC 589).

On Prayer

Περί προσευχῆς

[I Was] feverish with the inflammation of the passions, when you revived me as you usually do with the [healing] touch of your godly letter, palliating my diseased nous (intellect) in its shameful deformity: and thus you blessedly imitated our great teacher Macarios.

And this is no surprise: for your share was the marked ones like blessed Jacob: you served well for Rachel, received Leah; and now you seek the [real] object of your longing, having fulfilled ‘the week’ [of years] (Gen 29:15-30).

For I do not deny that I had toiled all night and caught nothing: but when at your word I let down my nets (Lk 5:5) I caught an abundance of fish: I do not think...
they are very large, but there are a hundred and fifty-three of them (Jn 21:11); and I am sending them to you in the basket of love (cf. Mt 15:37; Mk 8:8) in an equivalent number of chapters, thereby fulfilling your instructions.

I am amazed at you and very jealous of your excellent purpose. For your do not simply yearn for these texts that came into existence through hands, ink, and paper; rather you yearn for chapters fixed in the nous (intellect) through love and forgetfulness of injury.

Since everything is twofold, each facing the other as the wise Jesus [Ben-Sirach] says (Sir. 42:24), receive these chapters both in letter; and in spirit.

Understand that nous (intellect) takes complete precedence over the letter, since without nous there can be no letter. In the same way prayer also has a twofold mode:

one active; the other contemplative.

And it is the same with numbers:
on the surface there is quantity; while the inner significance is quality.

Therefore, in dividing my saying(s) on prayer into one hundred and fifty-three I am catering for you a ‘fish-[dinner]’ from the gospels (cf. Jn 21:12-13), to delight you with a symbolic number in which you will find both a triangular and a hexagonal form. [These] signify both:

reverent knowledge of the Trinity;
and the boundaries of the orderly arrangement of the universe.

So, while the number one hundred by itself is ‘square’, fifty-three is a combination of ‘triangular’ and ‘spherical’; because twenty-eight is triangular, and twenty-five is spherical (five times five equals twenty-five)

So you not only have a square number, on account of the tetrad of the virtues; but also the wise knowledge of this age that resembles the number twenty-five. 

"Αλλ' ο ἐκατόν άριθμός καθ' έαυτον τετράγωνος εστιν· ο δὲ πεντήκοντα τρίτος, τρίγωνος, και σφαιρικός· ο γὰρ εἰκοστὸς οίκος μὲν τρίγωνος, σφαιρικός δὲ ο εἰκοστὸς πεμπτος· πεντάκις γὰρ πέντε, εἰκοσιπέντε."

"Οὔκοιν ἔχεις τὸ τετράγωνον σχῆμα, οὐ μόνον διὰ τῆς τετρακτύος τῶν ἀρετῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τούδε τοῦ αἰῶνος τὴν ἔνσοφον γνώσιν τῷ εἰκοστῷ πέμπτῳ ἀριθμῷ εοικισι, διά τὸ σφαιρικὸν τῶν χρόνων."

τὸ μὲν πρόχειρον ἐστι προσότης, τὸ δὲ σημαίνόμενον ποιότης.
because of the spherical nature of time.

For week after week, month after month, year after year, [time] rolls on from season to season, as we see in the movements of sun and moon, spring and summer, and the rest.

[Pr. 4.] **THE triangular number** you may take as signifying the knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

Or else, if you obtain a hundred and fifty-three by adding up many numbers, since it is a triangular number, consider it to mean:

1. *praktiké* [asceticism],
2. *physiké* [natural science], and
3. *theologiké* [theology]; or

   1. *faith*
   2. *hope, and*
   3. *love*; (1Cor 13.13) or

   1. *gold*
   2. *silver, and*
   3. *precious stones* (1Cor 3.12)

[Pr. 5.] **ENOUGH**, then, of these numbers. The chapters themselves are humble, but you will not be contemptuous, since you have known both plenty and want (Ph 4:12); and you have certainly not
forgotten him who, far from rejecting the widow’s two coins, welcomed then more than the wealth of the many. (Mk 12:42)

You know how to preserve the fruit of goodwill and love of your genuine brethren; so pray for me in my illness that I may be healed, and then take up my bed and walk (Mk. 2:11) by the grace of Christ Amen.

ON PRAYER § 1 - 153

1. If one wishes to prepare fragrant incense, he should combine clear frankincense, cassia, onycha and oil of myrrh in equal amounts, according to the Law (Ex 30:34-7). This signifies the tetrad of the virtues For if these four are fully present and equally balanced, the nous (intellect) will not be betrayed.

2. A Soul purified through the fullness of the virtues establishes in the nous a position of steadiness, rendering it receptive of the desired state.
3. **PRAYER** is intimate conversation of the *nous* with God. So then, what stable state must the *nous* possess to be capable of stretching out unwaveringly toward its own Master and converse with him without any intermediary?

4. **IF** Moses was hindered when he attempted to *approach the bush* burning on earth, until he had *taken off the shoes from [his] feet* (Ex. 3:2-5); how can you, if you wish to see and converse with him who is above all perception and concepts, not put off every passioned thought (*noema*) from yourself?

5. **FIRST**, pray to receive tears, so that by means of mourning (*penthos*) you may be able to calm the savagery inherent in your soul, and by *confessing your offence to the Lord* (Ps 32.5), obtain forgiveness from him.

6. **MAKE** use of tears to support every petition, for it greatly pleases your Master to receive prayer with tears.
7. **Even** if you weep rivers of tears at your prayer, on no account be inwardly haughty, as if you were superior to others. For your prayer has received this help so that you may be able to [more] easily confess your sins and propitiate the Lord by means of tears. So do not turn into passion the antidote to passions, lest you anger all the more the [One] who gave you this grace.

8. **Many** who weep for their sins, have forgotten the purpose of their weeping, gone insane, and wandered away.

9. **Stand** patiently toiling, and pray well-toned, and put to flight the assaults of anxieties and [tempting-]thoughts: they disturb and trouble you in order to make you relax your tone.

10. **When** the demons see that you are eager to truly pray, they insinuate mental concepts (*noemata*) of certain affairs that seem to demand attention; and within a short [time] they arouse the memory of these things and move the *nous* to seek them out. And
failing to find them, it becomes very sorrowful and disheartened. Then when [the nous] stands for prayer, the demons remind it of the [matters] it had sought and remembered, so that it passively relaxes into knowledge (gnosis) of them and loses its fruitful prayer.

11. **EXERT** your nous to stand at the time of prayer [as if] deaf and dumb, and [then] you will be able to pray.

12. **WHENEVER** you meet with some temptation or contradiction or when some desire to take vengeance on your enemy moves you to anger or to burst out into meaningless cries, remember prayer and the judgment it entails, and immediately the lawless movement of your soul will be quieted.

13. **IF** you take any [kind of] revenge on a brother who has wronged you, it will all become a stumbling block for you at the time of prayer.
14. **PRAYER** is an offshoot of gentleness and freedom from anger.

15. **PRAYER** is the budding forth of joy and thankfulness.

16. **PRAYER** is an antidote to sadness and despondency.

17. **GO**, sell what you possess and give [it] to the poor (Mt/19:21; Mk 10:21), and take up your cross and deny yourself (cf. Mt. 16:24; Mk 8:34) so that you will be able to pray without distraction.

18. **IF** you wish to pray laudably, deny yourself every hour (cf. Lk 9:23), and even if you [pass through] every kind of suffering, study it carefully because of prayer.

19. **WHATEVER** difficulty you patiently endure while carefully studying [it], you will discover bearing fruit at the time of prayer.

20. **IF** you desire to pray as you ought, do not sadden any soul, otherwise you are *running in vain* (cf. Gal 2:2, Phil 2:16)
21. **LEAVE your gift,**” it says, *before the altar, and first go away and be reconciled to your brother;* (Mt 5:24) and after that you will be able to pray undisturbed. For memory of injury blinds the mind (*hegemonikon*) of one who prays, and darkens his prayers.

22. **THOSE** who heap up sorrow and memory of injury within themselves, and then expect to pray, are like people who draw water and pour it into a *perforated wine-jar.* (cf. Pr 23.27)

23. **IF** you are able to endure patiently, you will always pray with joy.

24. **WHEN** you pray as you ought you will come up against matters of the sort that cause you to imagine it would be completely justifiable to use indignation (*thumos*). But there is no such thing as justifiable indignation against your neighbor. If you investigate *this*, you will discover that it is possible for the matter to be settled fairly without indignation. Employ every possible means to avoid bursting out in indignation.
25. **SEE** that you do not infect yourself while trying to heal another, and that you do not [thus] excise your own prayer.

26. **IF** you become indignant [only] sparingly you will yourself be spared: and you will prove yourself prudent and be among those who pray.

27. **IF** you arm yourself against indignation [thumos], you will never tolerate desire [epithumia]; because desire provides the matter for indignation, thus disturbing the noetic eye [and] abusing the state of prayer.

28. **DO** not pray solely with external postures, but instead direct your *nous* towards a sensitivity to spiritual prayer with profound awe.

29. **ON** certain occasions when you stand for prayer you instantly pray well, while at other times, even after hard work you not achieve your purpose. This is so you will seek even more
[vigorously], and upon receiving it keep your success secure.

30. **When** on occasion an angel stands for us, then all who stand against us immediately vanish, and the *nous* is found greatly relieved, praying soundly. But at other times, when the usual battle is raging against us, the *nous* lashes out and is not permitted any concessions; for it has been prematurely aroused by the various passions. Nevertheless, *if it goes on seeking, it will find, and if it knocks vigorously, [the door] will be opened* (Mt 7:8).

31. **Do** not pray that what you **will** should *be done*, because your **[will]** is not in full harmony with the will of God. Pray instead as you were taught, saying, **Let your will be done in me** (cf Mt 6:10, 24:2). And in all matters ask of him in this way that his *will be done*. He *wills* [only] what is good and profitable for the soul; but that is not always what you seek.

32. **I Have** often prayed, requesting that something I thought was good for me be done...
for me, insisting on my request, and irrationally [attempting to] force God’s will. And [thus] I did not leave it to him who knows what is profitable to arrange (cf 1Cor 10:23). And when I eventually received what I asked for, I was very sorry I had asked for my own choice; for the matter did not turn out as I had imagined.

33. WHAT other good is there but God? (cf Mk 10:18) So let us leave to Him everything that pertains to us, and [all] will be well with us. For He is wholly good and the giver of good gifts (cf Jas 1:17).

34. DO not become distressed if you do not receive at once from God [your] request; he wishes to benefit you even more as you continue steadfastly in prayer (Rom 12:12). For what is higher than [enjoying] conversation with God and being taken up [lit distracted] with [conversational] intercourse with him?

35. UNDISTRACTED prayer is the highest noetic [activity] of the nous.
36. **PRAYER** is the ascent of the *nous* to God.

37. **IF** you long to pray, *renounce everything* at once (cf. Lk 14:33) so that you may inherit all.

38. **PRAY:**

1. first, for purification from the passions;
2. and second, for deliverance from ignorance [and forgetfulness];
3. and third, [for deliverance] from all temptation (cf Mt 6:13) and abandonment.

39. **IN** your prayer *seek only righteousness and the kingdom,* namely, virtue and knowledge; and *all the rest will be added unto you* (Mt 6:33).

40. **IT** is just to pray not only for your own purification, but also [to pray] for your own [kindred], so as to imitate the angelic way [lit: the angelic mode].

41. **SEE** whether you truly stand before God in your prayer; or whether you are a slave to human praise and eagerly hunt for it,
using the display of prayer as a cover (cf. Mt 23:5).

42. **WHETHER** you pray with [the] brothers or by yourself, struggle to pray not [only] in the customary way, but [also] with perception.

43. **SENSATION** (=perception) in prayer is concentration (sunnoia), with reverence and compunction and distress of soul, as you confess your failures with silent groans.

44. **IF** the *nous* is still staring around at the time of prayer, it does not yet know how to pray as a monk; it is still a secular, *decorating* the exterior tabernacle (cf. Mt 23:27).

45. **WHEN** you pray, keep powerful guard over your memory: in this way, instead of placing its own passions before you, it will, instead, move you to the knowledge that you stand [before God]. For the *nous* is naturally disarmed [and plundered] by the memory at the time of prayer.
46. **WHEN** you are praying the memory brings you fantasies of either:

1. ancient issues;
2. or new worries;
3. or the face of one who has distressed you.

47. **THE** demon is very malignant towards [any] person who prays, and it employs every means to defeat his purpose. It does not cease [1] moving thoughts (noemata) of matters through the memory and [2] stirring up all the passions through the flesh, so as to be able to impede his excellent course and his departure to God.

48. **WHEN**, despite all his efforts, the malevolent demon is unable to hinder the prayer of one who is earnest, it lets up for a time and then takes its revenge when he finishes praying. It either:

1. enflames him with anger, [thus] ruining the excellent state that, through prayer, has been welded together in him;
2. or it entices him to some irrational pleasure and so commits an outrage on the nous.
49. **HAVING** prayed properly, expect what is improper; and stand courageously to keep guard over your harvest. Indeed from the beginning you were assigned this: namely, to *work and keep guard* (Gen. 2:15). So do not leave your work unguarded after your labor, otherwise you do not receive any benefit from praying.

50. **THE** entire war between us and the impure demons concerns nothing other than spiritual prayer, because it is very hostile and burdensome to them, while it is salvific and very soothing for us.

51. **WHY** do the demons wish to activate in us gluttony, sexual immorality, avarice, anger and memory of injury, and all the other passions? It is in order to coarsen the *nous* through them, so that it is incapable of praying as it ought. When the passions reign through [our] irrational part, they do not allow [the *nous*] to move rationally and to seek the Word of God.
52. We quest for the virtues because of the *logoi* (*inner meanings*) of created things, and for these because of the [*ir*] subsistent Logos; and He customarily appears in the state of prayer.

53. The state of prayer is a habitual condition free from passion (*apathēs*) that elevates to the highest rapture of loving (*eros*) the carefully-studious and spiritual *nous*.

54. It is not only indignation (*thumos*) and desire, (*epithumia*) that must be ruled by one who wishes to pray truly: one must also be free of every impassioned thought (*noema*).

55. One who loves God always converses with him as Father, turning away every impassioned thought (*noema*).

56. The attainment of freedom from passion (*apatheia*) does not [necessarily mean] one is already truly praying: it is possible to have simple thoughts (*noemata*), but be taken up with [*lit distracted by*]

NB: Τὰς ἀρετὰς μετερχόμεθα διὰ τοὺς λόγους τῶν γεγονότων, καὶ τούτους διὰ τὸν οὐσιωδὴ λόγον οὗτος δὲ ἐν τῇ καταστάσει τῆς προσευχῆς ἀναφαίνεσθαι εἴωθε.

ΝΓ: Κατάστασίς ἐστι προσευχῆς ἐξ ἔρωτι ἀκροτάτῳ εἰς ὅψιν νοητὸν ἀρπάζουσα τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ πνευματικὸν νοῦν.

ΝΔ: Οὐ μόνον θυμοῦ, καὶ ἐπιθυμίας δεῖ ἄρχειν τὸν ἀληθῶς προσεύξασθαι βουλόμενος, ἄλλα καὶ ἐκτος νοήματος ἐμπαθοῦς γενέσθαι.

ΝΕ: Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεόν, τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἀεὶ, ἀποστρεφόμενος πᾶν νόημα ἐμπαθοῦς.

ΝΧ: Εἰ ἀπαθείας τετυχηκὼς, ἡδὲ καὶ προσεύχεται ἀληθῶς, δόναται γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ψυλλοίς νοήμασι ἀληθῶς προσεύξασθαι καὶ μακρὰν ἀπέχειν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ.
investigating] their stories, and thus still be far from God.

57. **Even** though the *nous* is not spending time on simple thoughts (*noemata*) of issues, it has not thereby already reached the place of prayer. For it may be contemplating issues, involved in idly meditating on their *logoi* (*inner meanings*). And even if these are simple words, since they are contemplations of issues they stamp [their] impression on the *nous*, and leading it far away from God.

58. **Even** if the *nous* [rises] above the contemplation of corporeal natures, it has still not beheld the perfect place of God: for it may be involved in the knowledge of noetic (*intelligible*) beings [i.e angels] and thus multiform by [focusing] on the *nous*, and leading it far away from God.

59. **If** you wish to pray, you need God who gives prayer to the one who prays (1Sam 2:9). Therefore call upon him saying, *Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come* (Mt. 6:9-10), that is to say, your Holy Spirit and your only-begotten
Son. For He taught you this by saying, *the Father is worshipped in spirit and truth* (Jn 4:23-4).

60. **The one praying in spirit and truth** (Jn 4:23-4) no longer honors the Creator because of [His] creatures, but instead praises Him for His own sake.

61. **If** you are a theologian, you pray truly; and if you pray truly, you are a theologian.

62. **When** your *nous* in great yearning for God gradually withdraws, so to speak, from the flesh; and when it deflects all thoughts (noemata) that come from sensation, or memory or temperament, having become full of reverence and joy, then you may believe it has drawn near the borders of prayer.

63. **The** Holy Spirit, *who sympathizes with our weakness* (Rom. 8:26), repeatedly visits us even when we are impure; and, if he only finds the *nous* loving truth [and] praying to, he lights upon [and disposes] it, dispersing the whole battle-array of [tempting-]
thoughts (*logismoi*) and concepts (*noemata*) circling around it, encouraging it on to the [rapturous] love (*eros*) of spiritual prayer.

64. **The** others implant [tempting-thoughts (*logismoi*), ideas (*noemata*), or contemplations in the *nous* by affecting the body. God, however, does the opposite: he himself lights upon [and disposes] the *nous* and places within it knowledge as he wishes; and through the *nous* he soothes the body’s disharmony.

65. **No** one yearning (*erô*) for true prayer who also becomes angry or remembers injuries can be anything but insane: it is like wishing for good eyesight while tearing at your own eyes

66. **If** you long to pray, do none of the things that oppose prayer, so that God will *draw near and travel* with you on [your] way (Lk 24:15).

67. **Do** not give [any] shape to the Divine in yourself when you pray, nor should you permit any form to stamp an impression on your
nous: instead, approach immaterially what is immaterial; and you will understand.

68. **GUARD** against the snares of the enemies. For sometimes while you are praying purely and undisturbed, suddenly there stands before you some strange and alien form to lead [you] astray into conceit, [by] rashly localizing the Deity in order to persuade you that the Deity is quantifiable: whereas the Deity is not quantifiable and is without shape.

69. **WHEN** the spiteful demon is unable to move the memory during prayer, he strikes out against the body’s temperament to create some strange fantasy in the **nous**, and [thus] shape it. And [the **nous**] will easily yield to its influence, because it is used to dealing in thoughts (**noemata**); so when it was pressing on eagerly to immaterial and formless knowledge, it comes to be deceived into accepting smoke instead of light.

70. “**STAND on your guard,**” (Hab 2:1) protecting your **nous** from...
thoughts *(noemata)* at the time of prayer: and take your stand on your own [inner] quiet, so that He who suffers with the ignorant (cf. Heb 5:2) will manifest Himself to you too; then you will receive a most glorious gift of prayer.

71. **YOU** are not able to pray purely if you are enmeshed in material affairs and shaken about by constant cares, because prayer is [the] putting aside of thoughts *(noemata)*.

72. **IT** is not possible one who is chained to run; nor is it possible for the *nous* to see the place of spiritual prayer while enslaved to passions, for it is carried to and fro by impassioned thought *(noemata)* and can have no firm standing place.

73. **ONCE** the *nous* is praying purely unwaveringly, and truly, [completely] apart from the [passions], the demons no longer insinuate themselves from the left, but from the right. They set before it the glory of God and shape it in the form of things beloved by the senses, so that [the
nous] will believe it has perfectly achieved its goal concerning prayer. An admirable and ascetical (praktikos) man explained that this is caused by the passion of vainglory and by the demon that attaches itself to [a particular] place in the brain and makes the veins pulsate.

74. I BELIEVE the demon touches that place [thus] manipulating the light surrounding the nous however he wishes; and in this way the passion of vainglory produces a [tempting-]thought (logismos) that shapes the nous so that it will foolishly [try to] localize the divine, essential knowledge. This sort of person is not troubled by carnal and impure passions; rather he seems to stand purely before [God]. So he presumes there is no longer any opposing energy at work within him: and therefore he assumes he sees a divine apparition; one that [actually] comes from the demon who very cunningly manipulates by means of the brain the light conjoined [to the nous], thus shaping [the nous], as we have said.
75. **THE** angel of God comes and with a single word makes all the opposing activity within us cease, and moves the light of the *nous* to undeviating activity. [On the light of the *nous* and its possible origins: cf. KG 1.35, 1.74; 1.81, 2.29; 3.44, 3.52, 5.15; Sch.258 on Prov. 23.22; Prak. 64; Gnost. 45; Prayer 75; Thoughts/Peri.Log. 17, 39, 40, 42; Skem. 2, 4, 23, 25, 27; Letter 39.5; Antiret. 6.16.]

ΟΕ´. Ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄγγελος ἐπιστὰς λόγῳ μόνῳ ἅπασαν τὴν ἀντικειμένην ἐνέργειαν παύει εξ ἡμῶν, καὶ κινεῖ τὸ φῶς τοῦ νοῦ ἀπλανῶς ἐνεργεῖν.

76. **THE** saying in the Apocalypse that the angel takes incense to add to the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3) refers, I believe, to the grace that is effected by the angel. He implants knowledge of true prayer, so that from then on the *nous* stands without any agitation from *acedia* or negligence.

ΟΣ´. Τὸ λέγειν ἐν τῇ Ἀποκάλυψει κομίζεσθαι τὸν ἄγγελον ἄγγελον ἄγγελον ἄγγελον <θυμίαμα> ἵνα δῷ τὰς προσευχὰς τῶν ἁγίων, οἰμαι τὴν χάριν εἶναι ταύτῃ διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου ἐνεργουμένην· γνῶσιν γάρ ἐμποιεῖ τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσευχῆς, ὅστε ἐκτάναι λοιπὸν ἐκτὸς παντὸς κλόνου, ἀκηδίας τε καὶ ὀλιγωρίας τὸν νοῦν.

77. **THE** bowls of incense are said to be the *prayers of the saints* that the twenty-four elders offered (Rev 5:8) ‘Bowl’ (*phialēn*) is understood to mean the friendship (*philian*) with God or that perfect and spiritual love in which prayer is effected *in Spirit and Truth*.

ΟΣ´. Αἱ φιάλαι τῶν θυμιαμάτων αἱ προσευχαὶ εἶναι λέγονται <τῶν ἁγίων>, ἄ γάρ ἐμποιεῖ τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσευχῆς, ὅστε ἐκτάναι λοιπὸν ἐκτὸς παντὸς κλόνου, ἀκηδίας τε καὶ ὀλιγωρίας τὸν νοῦν, ἐν ᾗ ἡ προσευχὴ ἐνεργεῖται <ἐν Πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ>.
78. **When** you imagine you no longer need tears for sins in your prayer on account of sin, examine how far you have moved from God, when you are bound to always be in him; and you will weep even more fervently.

79. **Yes**, when you recognize your measure, you will be take pleasure in mourning, calling yourself, like Isaiah, *wretched*, like an unclean person, with unclean lips, living in the midst of a people similarly *unclean* (Is 6:5) So how in the face of this can you stand boldly before the Lord Sabaoth?.

80. **If** you pray truly, you will find very great assurance and angels will accompany you as they did Daniel (Dan 7:6); and they will enlighten you concerning the *logoi* of what has come into being.

81. **Know** that the holy angels urge us to pray and stand with us, rejoicing and praying for us. (KG 3.62 and 3.84) But if we are negligent and [willingly] receive opposing [tempting-] thoughts (*logismoi*), we

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OH'. ᬠHttpPost δόξῃς μὴ δεῖσθαι δακρύων ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ σου δι' ἁμαρτίας, σκόπει πόσον ἁρετήκας Θεοῦ, ὑφειλ' ἐν αὐτῷ εἶναι διαπαντός, καὶ θερμότερον δακρύσεις.

ὉΘ'. Ναὶ μὴν ἐπιγινώσκων τὰ μέτρα σου, ἡδέως πενθήσεις, ταλανίζων ἐκατ' ἑνὶ τὸν Ἡσαίαν· "Πῶς ἄκαθαρτος;" ὄν, καὶ καὶ "ἐν μέσῳ λαοῦ"; τοιοῦτον "ὑπάρχον;," τοιτέστιν ἄναντιν, τομᾶς τῷ "Κυρίῳ Σαβαὼθ"; παροτίθαι.

Π'. Ἐὰν ἄλλης προσευχής, πολλὴς πληροφορίας εὐρήσεις, καὶ ἄγγελοι συνελεύσονται σοι ὡς καὶ τῷ Δανιὴλ καὶ τοὺς λόγους τῶν γεγομένων φωτιοῦσι σε.

ΠΑ'. Γίνωσκε, διτπερ οἱ ἄγιοι ἄγγελοι προτρέπονται ἡμᾶς εἰς προσευχήν, καὶ συμπαρίστανται ἡμῖν χαίροντες ἁμα καὶ προσευχόμενοι ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

Ἐὰν οὖν ἀμελήσωμεν καὶ δεξώμεθα λογισμοὺς ἐναντίυς, λίπαν παροξύσωμεν αὐτοῖς, διτπερ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀγωνίζονται τοσοῦτον, ἡμᾶς δὲ οὐδὲ ὑπὲρ ἐκατον βουλόμεθα ἰκετεύσαι τὸν Θεόν,
greatly provoke them: since although they struggle for us, we are not willing even to supplicate God on our behalf, treating our own worship with contempt and abandoning their Lord and God to consort with unclean demons

82. PRAY:
[1] gently and [2] undisturbed,
SING PSALMS:
[1] with understanding (Ps. 46:8) and
[2] good rhythm; then you will be like the young eagle borne aloft in the heights.

83. PSALMODY calms the passions and puts to rest the body’s disharmony;
PRAYER arouses the nous to activate its own proper activity.

84. PRAYER is the power befitting the dignity of the nous; it is the nous’ highest and purest power and function.

85. PSALMODY pertains to multiform wisdom; (Eph 3:10) PRAYER is the prelude to immaterial and uniform knowledge.
86. **KNOWLEDGE** has great beauty: it is the co-worker of prayer, awakening the intellectual power of the intellect to contemplation of divine knowledge. Cf.

87. **IF** you have not *(yet)* received the gift of **PRAYER** or **PSALMODY**, persevere and you will receive it.

88. **HE** told them a parable so that they would pray always and not lose heart *(Lk 18:1)*. So neither lose heart nor be discouraged in the meantime if you do not receive *(i.e. the gift of prayer or psalmody)*; you will receive it later. And in the parable he continued, *Even if I do not fear God or respect man, still, since this woman is a nuisance, I will judge her case. So too will God similarly avenge those who cry out to him night and day, and he will do it soon* *(Lk 18:4-8)*. So be of good cheer and persevere eagerly in holy prayer.

89. **YOU** should not wish for things that concern you to take place as seems good to you, but
rather as is pleasing to God. Then you will be undisturbed and thankful in your prayer.

90. **Even** if you suppose yourself to be with God, guard against the demon of sexual immorality, for he is very deceitful and extremely vengeful; and he wants to be quicker than the movement and watchfulness of your *nous*, so that he can tear it away from God, while it stands beside Him in reverence and awe.

91. If you are taking care of [your] prayer, prepare for invasions from the demons and patiently endure their scourging. They will come upon you like [wild] beasts and injure your whole body.

92. **Prepare** yourself like a skilled wrestler not to be confused even if you suddenly see some apparition, and not to be upset even if you see a sword drawn against you or a light passing before your eyes, and not become agitated, even if you see some horrible, bloody shape; do not let your soul by completely defeated. Instead, *stand firm, making your*
good confession of faith (1 Tim. 6:12), and you will easily look upon your enemies (Ps. 117:7).

93. If you endure painful things, you will also obtain joyful ones; and one who is patient with unpleasant things will not lack a share in what is pleasant.

94. See that the evil demons do not deceive you with some vision: be deeply thoughtful, turn to prayer, and call upon God to enlighten you himself as to whether the idea (noema) comes from him; or if not, to quickly expel the deception from you. And take courage: the dogs will not stand against you, if you are fiery* in wielding the staff of supplication to God against them. For they will instantly be driven far away, invisibly and secretly flogged by the power of God.

* fiery prayer De Orat. 111; cf. Cassian Conf 9.15]

95. It is [only] just that you not be ignorant of this deceit: at times the demons divide themselves into two groups, and if you appear to be calling for help, the second
enters arrayed as angels and drives away the first group that is assailing you, in order to make you conclude that they are holy angels.

96. **TAKE** care to acquire great humility and courage, and no demonic spite will accost your soul and ‘the scourge will not draw near your tent, for God will give his angels charge over you to guard you’ (Ps. 90:10-11), and unseen they will chase away from you the whole enemy - maneuver.

97. **NOISES**, crashes, voices, and tortured [screams] will he hear - the person carefully attending to pure prayer: but he will not cave in or surrender his rationality, saying to God, ‘**I will not fear evil things, for you are with me,**’ (Ps. 22:4) and other similar [verses].

98. **IN** the times of these sorts of temptations employ brief, intense prayer.

99. If the demons threaten to suddenly appear to you out of the air to shock you and seize your *nous* or to injure your flesh like
[wild] beasts, do not let them dismay you, take no thought of their threats. They are tempting you to fear them, to see whether you bother about them or regard them with total contempt.

100. **IF** it is God Almighty, creator of the universe, provident administrator of all, on Whom you attend in prayer, why do you stand before Him so irrationally as to circumvent by the impassable fear of him, while [yet] alarmed by mosquitoes and dung-beetles? Have you not heard that it said, ‘The Lord your God shall you fear’ (Deut. 6:13) and again, ‘At Whom all things fear and tremble, before the Face of his power’ (Dan. 6:27 [Theodotion] + Joel 2:11?)

101. **JUST** as bread is nourishment for the body and virtue [is nourishment] for the soul, so spiritual prayer is the nourishment for the *nous*.

102. **PRAY**, not like the Pharisee, but like the publican in the holy place of prayer, so that you too may be justified by God (Lk 18:10-14).
103. STRUGGLE not to curse anyone in your prayer, so as not to make your prayer disgusting, [thus] destroying what you are building up.

104. THE debtor who owed ten thousand talents (cf Mat 18:23-35) ought to instruct you: if you do not forgive your debtor, you yourself will not win forgiveness (Mat 6:15). For it says, He gave him over to the torturers (Mat 18:34).

105. DISMISS the necessities of the body during your attendance at prayer, so that you do not lose the great benefit of your prayer through the bite of a flea, a louse a mosquito or a carrion-fly.

106. IT has come to us how, when one of the holy ones was praying, the evil one was so opposed to him that, as soon as [the holy one] raised his hands, [the evil one] changed his shape into that of a lion and, raising his front paws up, fixed his claws in both sides of the muscles of the combatant's thighs and would not move away until [the holy one] lowered his hands. However he did not let
them down before completing his customary prayers.

107. **We** know of another similar monk who lived in a secluded cistern, John the Short - or rather John the Very Great - who remained without moving from his [intimate] communion with God as the demon in the form of a serpent coiled around him and constricted his flesh, disgorging it into his face.

108. **And** you have read the lives of the Tabennesiote monks, where it says that as Abba Theodore was speaking a word to the brothers, two vipers crawled towards his feet; but he, undisturbed, made for them a kind of vaulted chamber [of his feet] and let them stay there until he had finished his word. Then he showed them to the brothers interpreting what had happened.

109. **We** have also read of another spiritual brother who, while praying a snake came and fastened upon his foot. But he did not lower his hands until he had completed his customary prayer,
and was not at all harmed - loving God more than himself.

110. **KEEP** the eye from roaming during your prayer and *deny your flesh and your soul* (cf Lk 9:23), and live according to [the] *nous*.

111. **ANOTHER** holy solitary in the desert was attacked by demons for two weeks while vigorously focusing on his prayer: [as if] playing ball with him, they threw him up into the air catching him on a rush mat. They were completely unable to even briefly bring his *nous* down from its fiery* prayer.  

*fiery supplication DeOrat 94; cf. Cassian Conf 9.15*

112. **AND** [yet] another lover of God was praying with thoughtful foresight while going about in the desert when two angels came and walked on either side of him. But he did not attend to them at all, so as not to lose what was better. He remembered the saying of the apostle that *neither angels, principalities or powers will be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. 8:38-9).
113. **A Monk** becomes equal to the angels (Lk 20:36) by means of true prayer, yearning to see the face of the Father who is in heaven (Mt. 18:10).

114. **Do not seek** in any way at all to receive some form or shape or color at the time of prayer.

115. **Do not yearn** to see angels or powers or Christ through the senses, so as not to become completely insane by receiving a wolf instead of a shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11-12), and worshipping your enemies the demons.

116. **The beginning of deceptive wandering of the nous** is vainglory; by it the nous is moved to try to circumscribe the divine in shape and form.

117. **I will** speak my piece - and to the youngest I have said it: blessed is the nous that, at the time of prayer, has acquired perfect formlessness.

118. **Blessed** is the nous that, praying without distraction,
receives a continually increasing yearning for God.

119. **BLESSED** is the *nous* that at the time of prayer becomes immaterial and wholly dispossessed.

120. **BLESSED** is the *nous* that at the time of prayer acquires perfect insensibility.

121. **BLESSED** is the monk who considers himself the *offscouring of all* (1Cor. 4:13).

122. **BLESSED** is the monk who regards every human being as God, after God. [cf. *Evag. Maxims 2.23*: μετὰ θεόν θεός]

123. **BLESSED** is the monk who looks upon the salvation and progress of all with profound joy, as if it were his own.

124. **A MONK** is one who is both separated from all and joined to all.

125. **A MONK** is one who considers himself to be one with
all, because he continuously thinks he sees himself in each one.

126. **HE** brings prayer to perfection who always offers every first thought *as first-fruits to God* *(Rom 7:4).*

127. **AVOID** falsehood and every oath (if) you yearn to pray as a monk; otherwise you vainly affect an [external] appearance that is not your.

128. **IF** you wish to *pray in spirit* *(cf 1Cor 15:15), hate no one, then you will not have an obstructing cloud [hanging] over you at the time of prayer.

129. **ENTRUST** to God the needs of the body and then it will be clear that you also entrust to Him the needs of the spirit.

130. **IF** you obtain the promises *(Heb 11:33), you will reign. So too if you constantly look to them *(cf Heb 11:26)* you will bear with pleasure the present poverty.

131. **DO** not demand exemption from poverty and afflictions, for
they are the material of weightless prayer.

132. **Virtues** of the body should serve you as a pledge of those of the soul, and they in turn of those of the spirit. And they are a pledge of immaterial and essential knowledge.

133. **Consider** when praying against tempting thoughts whether they abate readily, and why this has happened, lest you fall prey to an ambush and are tricked into delivering yourself over.

134. **Sometimes** the demons suggest tempting thoughts to you while simultaneously seeming to encourage you to pray against them or contradict them. Then they voluntarily withdraw, to deceive you into supposing you have begun to conquer tempting thoughts and frighten the demons.

135. **If** you pray against a passion or demon that annoys you, remember the One who said, ‘I will pursue my enemies and overtake them and I will not turn
back until they turn away; I will crush them and they will be unable to stand, they will fall beneath my feet’ and so forth (Ps. 17:38-9). Say these things at the right time equipping yourself with humility against the antagonists.

136. **DO** not imagine that you have acquired virtue until you have first been prepared to *shed blood* for it. For it is necessary to *resist sin unto death* aggressively (Heb. 12:4) and *blamelessly* (1Cor 1:8), according to the divine apostle.

137. **IF** you help someone you [may] be harmed by another; this [may] cause you, as if having been treated unjustly, to say or do something improper to another. And you will *scatter* in evil what you have *gathered* in good (cf. Mt 12:30, Lk 11:23). This is the goal of the evil demons. That is why we must be attentive and have good sense. (nounechos).

138. **ALWAYS** anticipate persuasive demonic assaults, and reflect on how to avoid becoming enslaved by them.
139. **By** night the evil demons themselves lay claim (cf Lk 22:31) to the spiritual teacher to disturb him, and by day they employ others who encompass him with difficulties and slanders and dangers.

140. **Do** not refuse the wool-cleaners. If they do beat and trample you, stretch and comb you, this is how your garment becomes radiant.

141. **To** the degree that you have not renounced the passions, and your *nous* is averse to virtue and truth, you cannot find the fragrance of incense in your breast (cf. Song 1:12).

142. **The** one yearning to pray has moved from what is here to always have citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20), not merely through simple word[s] but through angelic practice and divine knowledge,

143. **If** you remember the Judge only when things go badly and that He is fearful and impartial you have not yet learned how to serve the Lord in fear and to
rejoice in him with trembling (Ps. 2:11). See, rather, that it is in times of spiritual rest and feasting that it is all the more necessary to worship him with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28).

144. **The** well-informed man is one who, until he has attained perfect repentance, endures the painful memory of his own sins and the just renalty exacted for them in the everlasting fire.

145. **One** who is [still] subject to sins and angry outbursts, and even so shamelessly dares to aspire to the knowledge of more divine things, or to embark on immaterial prayer, should receive himself the apostolic rebuke, that it is not without danger to pray with his head bare and uncovered (1Cor 11:5). *Such a soul*, it says, **ought to have authority over its head because of the angels who stand by** (1Cor 11:10), clothing itself in appropriate shame and humility.

146. **Just** as staring intently and directly at the sun at noon when it shines most brightly does no good...
to one with a eye-disease, and in
So also one suffering from an
impassioned and impure nous
would gain nothing by imitating
the awesome supernatural prayer
that operates in Spirit and in Truth
(Jn 4:23-24). Rather the reverse: it
provokes the divine to be indignant with it.

147. IF God who lacks nothing
and is impartial refused to accept
one who came with a gift to the
altar until he reconciled with the
neighbor who was upset with him
(Mt 5:24), consider what
watchfulness and discernment is
needful to offer a favorable
incense to God at the noetic altar.

148. DO not take pleasure in
material [things] or glory,
otherwise it is no longer on your
back, but on your face, that
sinners will wreak their carpentry
(Ps 128:3) And at the time of prayer
you will be a source of laughter
for them (Ecclus 6:4, 18:3) , as they
drag you off and entice you (Jas 1:14)
with bizarre [tempting-]thoughts.

149. ATTENTIVENESS seeking
prayer finds prayer; for prayer
follows attentiveness, if it follows anything, and it should always be zealously sought.

150. **JUST** as sight excels all the other senses, so prayer is higher than all the other virtues

151. **IT** is not simply quantity, but rather quality that makes prayer admirable. And this is shown by those who went up to the Temple (Lk 18:10-14), and again, ‘When you pray, do not babble on’ (Mt. 6:7) and other similar [texts].

152. **AS** long as you are observing the proportion of your body, and your *nous* is busy looking at the attractiveness of the tent, you have not yet observed the place of prayer: the blessed path is still far from you.

153. **WHEN** standing to pray becomes a greater joy than any other, then you have truly found prayer

Fiery prayer elsewhere in Evagrius:
- fire & knowledge Sch 1 Ps 19.6; ?? 3 on 21.7; 4 on 25.6; 18 on 36.20[1]; !!2 on 49.3; purifying 5 on 57.9; fire=spiritual teaching 1 on 74.4; fire=spiritual power 30 on 104.39; fire
teaches toe souls of men 23 on 138.28;  fire=seed
of spiritual knowledge3 on 147.3;

2[1] The best translation of *De Oratione* currently available, based on the
most reliable manuscripts, is that of Sinkewicz: *Evagrius Ponticus, The

The translation provided on these webpages makes liberal use of the
melifluous version of Simon Tugwell, o.p: *Evagrius Ponticus Praktikos and
Chapters on Prayer*, Faculty of Theology, Oxford, 1987. The Greek text
used in this translation is based principally on *PG* 79,1165-1200 and
*Philokalia* I (Athens, 1957), pp. 176-189. This Greek text incorporates
textual emendations suggested by: [1] Hausherr, Le Traité de l’Oraison
d’Evagre le Pontique in *Rev.d’Asc.et Mys.v.15*, 1934; pp. 34-93, 113-170;
and [2] Tugwell, *Evagrius Ponticus: De oratione* (Oxford: Faculty of
Theology, 1981), *Greek text based on six MSS*.

Additional (older) English translations of *de Oratione* may be found in: [1]
*Early Fathers from the Philokalia* (Faber); [2] *The Philocalia*, vol. 1 (Faber);
and [3] J. E. Bamberger, o.c.s.o, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus, Praktikos and
Chapters on Prayer* (Cistercian).