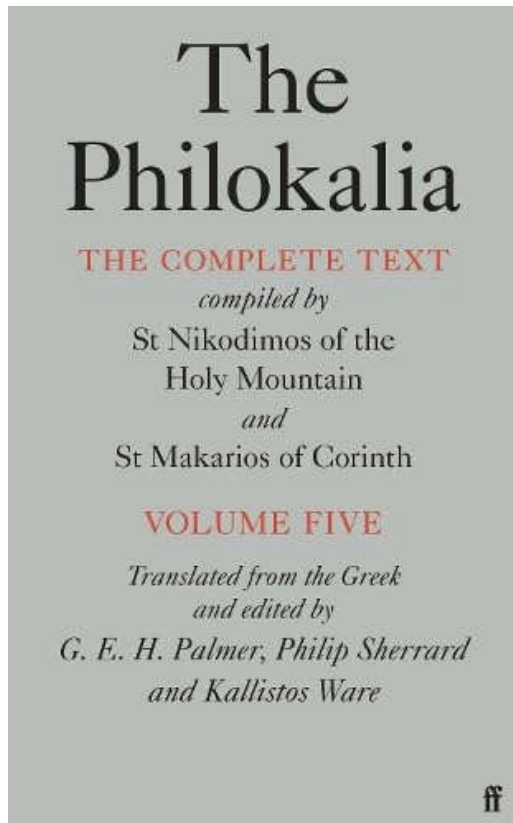


St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Volume Five*. Translated from the Greek and edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Metropolitan Kalistos Ware. London: Faber and Faber, 2023.



*Reviewed by
the Rev Dr Stephen Sharman*

This long-awaited volume completes the work of translating and publishing the Philokalia in English, which began with the publication of volume one by Faber and Faber in 1979. Sadly, this volume has appeared after all three translators, G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Metropolitan Kalistos Ware have reposed in the Lord. May their memory be eternal!

The five volumes of the English translation of the Philokalia are an important contribution to the increase of the knowledge of Orthodox theology in the English-speaking world. Now, English-speaking people have ready access to the treasures of Greek spiritual writing. Hitherto, Orthodoxy has appeared as an 'ethnic world' composed of Greeks, Ukrainians, Russians, Romanians, and others with little space for English-speaking people. English translations of the Liturgy and Liturgies in the English language in congregations of English people have opened Orthodoxy to us and enabled a flourishing English Orthodox Church in the UK, Canada, the USA, Australia, and other countries. Now, with these five volumes, we can grow in the faith and nurture our souls with the spiritual riches of the Greek Orthodox tradition. Thanks be to God!

Each volume contains essential works by spiritual writers. Volume one contained, among others, works by St John Cassian, St Mark the Ascetic, and St John of Karpathos. Volume Two introduces the readers to St Maximos the Confessor, St John of Damaskos, and St Theognostos. Volume three continues with works by Theophanes the Monk, St Peter of Damaskos, and St Simeon Metaphrastes. Volume four contains works by St Symeon the New Theologian, St Gregory of Sinai, and St Gregory Palamas. These are partial lists of the contents of the four volumes. The translators supply each spiritual author's works with an introductory note that describes the author's life and times and explains the importance of the author's work.

Volume Five contains works by these authors: St Kallistos and St Ignatios Xanthopoulos, The Blessed Patriarch Kallistos, Kallistos Angelikoudis, St Symeon Archbishop of Thessaloniki and St Mark of Ephesus. There are also brief works about the Jesus Prayer. This is a complete list of the contents of the volume. The Jesus Prayer is discussed thoroughly in many of these works. Other topics include prayer, stillness, the monastic life, the hesychastic way of life, contemplative life, and holy and deifying prayer. These works were written for people for whom prayer was the centre of their lives. Many were monastics, and some were lay people who devoted part of their lives to prayer. The translators continue their practice of prefixing each author's works with introductory notes. These notes in all five volumes are very useful. Not all of the authors are well known outside the world of the specialist. The notes give the ordinary reader the information needed to understand the authors, their works, and their place in the spiritual tradition.

Much of the material in this volume and its four preceding companions is devoted to the edification of people striving to lead a monastic life of prayer and penitence. Some of the material could also benefit those of us living in the world. For example, in an excerpt from the *Life of St Gregory Palamas*, the author addresses the question asked by people living in this world 'how, then, can we pray unceasingly?' and answers, 'God does not command us to do something impossible; He commands us to do only those things that we can

do.’ This is a very consoling doctrine. We can, therefore, devote time and energy to reciting the Jesus Prayer.

This reviewer recommends that the reader read the book slowly and prayerfully, allowing the contents of the book to speak to his heart and soul. Please remember that this book is not for scholars but for humble souls trying to grow near God in faith, love, penitence, and prayer.

About the reviewer: Father Stephen Sharman is a priest at St. Nicholas parish in Narol, Manitoba. He received his PhD from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in 2013. The title of his dissertation was *Visions of Light in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*.