

MENTAL IMAGERY IN EASTERN ORTHODOX PRIVATE DEVOTION (Part 2)

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In other words, according to St. Ignatii (Bryanchaninov), purposefully creating images in one's mind, and even accepting those appearing spontaneously, is not only dangerous spiritually, but can also lead to the damage of the soul, or psychological problems, "which," he says, "has happened to many." Undoubtedly, here St. Ignatii refers to the spirituality of some Western saints: "Do not play with your salvation, do not. Take up the reading of the New Testament and the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, but not of Teresa and other Western crazies..." (25) But cases of mental disorders facilitated by improper prayer or state of mind are also mentioned in various Orthodox literature, especially paterikons.

Saint Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022), writing in the late tenth to early eleventh centuries, warns against the method of prayer later used by St. Ignatius of Loyola and other Western saints as potentially leading to mental problems:

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