

English version: Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Orthodox and Roman Catholic Relations from the Fourth Crusade to the Hesychastic Controversy* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2001), pp. 199–232

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## LECTURE 7

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE HESYCHASTIC CONTROVERSY

The Hesychastic Controversy, as I observed in several previous lectures, was without doubt the most significant theological dispute in the later Byzantine Empire. The political and social upheavals that resulted from the civil wars and succession struggles in the age of the Palaeologos dynasty were in one way or another, and to varying degrees, connected with this momentous controversy. At the same time, the theological issues which it brought to the forefront both helped to define and distinguish the peculiar traditions of the Orthodox East and to form the course of future dialogue with the Roman Catholic West. In this latter sense, it was the incisive formulation, by the Hesychasts, of the spiritual “psychology” and theological essence of the Orthodox Faith which doomed subsequent attempts at Church union, if simply because this formulation brought to bear on such efforts the profound chasm, with regard to Church polity, on the one hand, and spiritual life, on the other, that had developed between the Orthodox East and the Roman Catholic West during the age of the emergence of the Papal monarchy and Western Scholasticism. If various union councils during the century that followed the Hesychastic Controversy and closely preceded the fall of Constantinople to the Turks achieved rather remarkable results at a theoretical level and by way of compromise spawned by political expediency, they fell flat and failed at a practical level because of the enduring legacy of the genuine, honest theological debates that marked the dispute over Hesychasm. Holy Tradition, the perpetuation of a theology drawn from common Christian experience, rather than philosophical speculation, and the very goals of spiritual life as the East saw them came into direct

conflict with the rationalistic, Hellenistic presuppositions of Western Scholasticism and the ecclesiological and anthropological foundations of the theory of Papal primacy that Scholasticism, wittingly or otherwise, came to serve in Roman Catholicism.

The primary disputants in the actual *theological* debate that surrounded the Hesychastic Controversy were four: Barlaam the Calabrian, Nicephoros Gregoras, Gregory Akindynos, and St. Gregory Palamas. We are already familiar, from earlier lectures, with Barlaam the Calabrian monk and Gregoras the Byzantine "Patrician" and chronicler. Gregory Akindynos (*ca.* 1300-1349) was an Orthodox monk and a theologian. Though at one time a student of St. Gregory Palamas, he later became a critic of the latter's teaching on spiritual enlightenment, writing numerous treatises against his former teacher. In fact, one factor contributing to Akindynos' *volte face* with regard to Palamas and his teaching—aside from what was obviously, at times, contrived theological propaganda—may have been his desire to be the Bishop of Thessaloniki, where he preached against Palamas, who eventually assumed the See of that city. As for St. Gregory Palamas, he was born in Constantinople. He died in Thessaloniki, sixty-three years later. From an aristocratic court family, he was educated at the University of Constantinople. Despite his imperial connections and brilliance, Palamas decided, in 1316, to enter the monastic life. He became a monk on Mt. Athos in the Spring of 1317, where he spent two decades in study and ascetic labors. Because of the dangers from raids on the peninsula, he interrupted his stay on the Holy Mountain and retreated to Thessaloniki in 1325, where he was Ordained a year later to the Priesthood. Shortly thereafter, he established a small monastic community in Northern Greece, near Verroia (Berea), later to return to Mt. Athos in 1331. On Mt. Athos he was for a short time Abbot of the Esphigmenou Monastery, but in 1335 was

forced to resign, because of the austerity of his monastic governance, and to take refuge at the Athonite Monastery of St. Savva. In 1347, he was appointed Archbishop of Thessaloniki.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now, before outlining the Controversy and summarizing the primary theological issues that it raised, look briefly at what Hesychasm is. It would take a second semester of lectures to answer this question thoroughly, and certainly even an introductory discussion of the theology of Hesychasm itself, aside from the theological disputation which it provoked in the late Byzantine Empire, would require not a lecture, but a book-length treatment. Nonetheless, a few basic things, for the purpose of placing the Hesychastic Controversy in the context of the theological thinking that came to define Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic contacts during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, can be said. Let us begin by saying what Hesychasm was not. It was not a new theory of theology invented by St. Gregory Palamas. It was not, likewise, an Athonite phenomenon or something peculiar to Mt. Athos (though, assuredly, its practice and defense cannot be separated from the experience of that paradigmatic monastic republic). If these affirmations seem unnecessary, let me make mention of several unfortunate comments, one by a Greek Catholic theologian and two others, cited by Professor Hussey,<sup>2</sup> from works by two Western historical specialists. These unfortunate scholarly lapses justify my concern. The theologian in question asserted, a few years ago, that the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas comprise "a highly innovative theology" by an individual around whose person a "cult of infatuation" has been built up.<sup>3</sup> As for Hussey's references, Joseph Gill, in referring to the Hesychastic Controversy in his excellent book on Byzantium and the Papacy, portrays it as "a purely domestic issue";<sup>4</sup> and Kenneth Setton, the author of four very useful volumes on the Crusades and a unique his-

tory of Papism in the Levant, characterizes the dispute as “a retreat into an ivory tower of spiritual and cultural rationalism,” dismissing the Palamite leadership as “obscurantist.”<sup>5</sup>

These unenlightened views remind one of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western polemical scholarship which frequently put forth conclusions about Palamite thought that were, at best, the off-shoots of shoddy research and, at worst, the gleanings of unrefined religious partiality. The repetition of these perceptions of Hesychasm, given tremendous strides in Palamite scholarship in the West—as evidenced by an increasing number of excellent and insightful commentaries on the subject—is unconscionable. As we shall see, Hesychasm is an ancient Christian discipline that was widely practiced in the Orthodox monastic world long before St. Gregory Palamas and which has always been an essential cornerstone of Orthodox soteriology. One would be hard-pressed to present the most basic exposition of Orthodox theological thought without at least touching on a number of the precepts that underlie Hesychastic theology. To miss that point is to miss much about the history of Eastern Christian theology and certainly to misunderstand the development of Slavic Orthodoxy, which was so profoundly influenced by the spiritual traditions of Hesychasm.<sup>6</sup> And to imagine that there is anything obscurantist in Palamite theology would require that one ignore, in examining the materials pertinent to the Hesychastic Controversy, the careful and precise theological language and methodology with which the Hesychasts formulated their arguments against their opponents. As for “cultural rationalism,” this is a neologism better not applied to a profound theological and spiritual tradition, the “ultimate purpose” of which “was to defend,” as Father Georges Florovsky avers, “the reality of Christian experience” at a universal level,<sup>7</sup> theologizing “from the heart of the Church.”<sup>8</sup>

Setting aside the amassed layers of centuries of superficial Western commentaries on Hesychasm, as well as their unexpected residue in the contemporary work of such distinguished scholars as the two cited by Professor Hussey, let us, then, define what it is. Vladimir Lossky writes:

'The power of prayer...fulfills the sacrament [mystery, in the original Greek] of our union with God,' says St. Gregory Palamas....<sup>9</sup> The mystical experience which is inseparable from the way towards union [with God] can only be gained in prayer and by prayer.... The method of interior or spiritual prayer which is known by the name of 'hesychasm,' is a part of the ascetic tradition of the Eastern Church, and is undoubtedly of great antiquity. Transmitted from master to disciple by word of mouth, by example and spiritual direction, this discipline of interior prayer was only committed to paper at the beginning of the eleventh century in a treatise attributed to St. Symeon the New Theologian. Later, it was the subject of special treatises by Nicephorus the Monk (thirteenth century), and above all by St. Gregory of Sinai, who at the beginning of the fourteenth century re-established its practice on Mt. Athos. Less explicit references to the same ascetic tradition are to be found in St. John Climacus (seventh century), St. Hesychius of Sinai (eighth century), and other masters of the spiritual life in the Christian East.<sup>10</sup>

The method of Hesychastic prayer is aptly described by Father George Papademetriou as follows:

Hesychasm is a mysticism in which through spiritual exercises and in quietness the mystic attains the vision of the divine light and the glory of God. It is the vision, not of the 'essence' of God, but His presence and activity, His 'energies.' This is in contrast to the Oriental mysticism of complete absorption of the self in the union with the divine essence. Also, it is in contrast to the Occidental sensual mysticism where the mystic is united carnally to Christ. ...The Hesychastic movement advocated a mysticism which was possible through *hesychia*. The monastic

orders<sup>11</sup> of Mount Athos practiced the hesychastic method to attain the vision of the 'uncreated light' and eternal beatitude. ...Mystics...emphasized the method of contemplation in *hesychia*, wherein one sits concentrating his mind in his heart, the center of the soul, while repeating the Jesus Prayer: 'Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.'<sup>12</sup>

To fill out this definition of Hesychasm as such, I should note that internal prayer (noetic or pure prayer) involves certain physical exercises: the fixing of the eyes on the middle of the body, while seated upright, and the control of breathing in the recitation of the Jesus Prayer. It is for this reason that Barlaam and the critics of Hesychasm often called its practitioners "*omphalopsychoi*," or, literally, those having their souls in their navels, and accused them of trying to "see" God by way of physical means. In combining these practices with the disciplines of fasting, celibacy, and obedience in the monastic life, the Hesychasts were also accused of believing in a *mechanistic* kind of "divine communion." As Lossky correctly observes, however, "the control of breathing, the position of the body during prayer, the rhythm of prayer...[have]...only one object in view: that of assisting concentration."<sup>13</sup> This can be said of these other Hesychastic disciplines and exercises, too. Through concentration and purity of mind and body, with the mind fixed on God, true prayer and illumination come about, inundating the mind with cleansing and purifying light—the "Uncreated Light" (ἄκτιστον φῶς, or *aktiston phos*, in Greek) which surrounded Christ at the Transfiguration. Superficial commentators on the Hesychasts have also suggested that the life that they advocated was one of constant contemplation and, thus, of total isolation from the world. This is not in any sense correct. As Father John Romanides points out, in the Eastern Church, there is no ultimate distinction between the contemplative and active Christian life; moreover, "while in the state of

noetic prayer or glory...one attains to such physical resources that one resists the normal effects of the environment." In short, Hesychasm leads to a life of spiritual realism and active confrontation with the evils of the world, not to contempt of the world and a retreat into mere contemplation.<sup>14</sup>

Let us now briefly explore, with this primary definition of Hesychasm in mind, how it is further defined and distinguished by its place in Orthodox theology. In order to look at the Hesychastic Controversy in proper perspective and to dispel the layers of Western prejudice that have obfuscated its nature, it behooves us to understand that the whole body of Orthodox theology rests, as we have already asserted, on the presuppositions that form the *corpus* of Hesychastic theology. If Hesychasm aims one at union with God, it is because this very notion of union is at the core of an Orthodox understanding of salvation and therefore at the center of the entire spiritual life of the Church. In contrast to the soteriologies of the Western Christian confessions, grounded in notions of atonement and expiation for *original sin*, human salvation for the Orthodox Church rests in man's restoration to Grace by union with the *Theanthropos*, or God-Man Christ, and the healing of the wound of sin inflicted by the *ancestral curse* of Adam and Eve's disobedience in Paradise. As I have observed in my short book on the Roman West and the Byzantine East:

Orthodox theology does not emphasize the expiatory nature of Christ's Sacrifice over and above the consequences of that Sacrifice.... Christ's redemptive act is, for the Orthodox Christian, a merciful act of condescension by which God has redeemed the human from his transgression against the course which God freely offered him. By Christ's sacrifice, man is offered anew the opportunity to pursue a Divine course. ...God, having become man, broke the curse of death which man had imposed, by his deviant course, on himself.<sup>15</sup>

The enlightenment of the soul, effected by the Church's Mysteries (Sacraments) and the vision of the Uncreated Light of God's Energies, is the restorative process by which man is saved. Lossky well recapitulates and expands on what I have said:

[T]he Divine plan was not destroyed by human sin: the vocation of the first Adam was fulfilled by Christ, the second Adam. In the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyon [*sic*] and St. Athanasius the Great, repeated by the Holy Fathers and theologians of every age, 'God became man in order that man might become God.' ...In destroying the domination of sin, our Saviour opened to us anew the way to deification, which is the ultimate end of man.<sup>16</sup>

Hesychasm, then, which is centered on the enlightenment or deification (θεωσις, or *theosis*, in Greek) of man, perfectly encapsulates the soteriological principles and full scope of the spiritual life of the Eastern Church. As Bishop Auxentios of Photiki writes:

[W]e must understand the Hesychastic notions of '*theosis*' and the vision of Uncreated Light, the vision of God, in the context of human salvation. Thus, according to St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite (+1809): 'Know that if your mind is not deified by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for you to be saved.'<sup>17</sup>

Before looking in detail at what it was that St. Gregory Palamas' opponents found objectionable in his Hesychastic theology and practices, let us briefly examine the history of the Hesychastic Controversy proper. Both Professor Hussey and Professor Papadakis, in their studies of the Byzantine Church and the relationship between the Byzantine Church and the Papacy, respectively, offer very good summaries of the events that shaped the controversy. Though Papadakis' consideration of this period is far more extensive than that of Hussey, for our purposes here, the latter's work will serve as an adequate primary guide. The Hesychastic Controversy was directly sparked by the tracts against the *Filioque* clause writ-



ten by Barlaam at the time of the contacts between the Orthodox and Latins at Constantinople, in 1333 and 1334, in which, some argue—on the basis of evidence that I find unconvincing—, that Barlaam participated. At any rate, St. Gregory Palamas took great exception to Barlaam's essentially Scholastic approach in these tracts and impugned his theological methodology, as well as the proposition that the Hellenic philosophers might also have experienced "some enlightenment by God."<sup>18</sup> The testy Barlaam took offense at this criticism and attacked St. Gregory, not only for his theological understanding of the parameters of human knowledge of God and his teachings on man's participation in the Divine Energies through deification, but for the ascetic practices of the Athonite Hesychasts, which the Calabrian derided in a most crude manner and which he wholly and apparently deliberately misrepresented. He also entered into a fierce public debate with Nicephoros Gregoras, who, though he also opposed St. Gregory Palamas, criticized Barlaam for his method of theologizing and for his overbearing demeanor. In the words of Ostrogorsky, in these debates, Barlaam was "worsted...by...Gregoras, as his rationalistic and Aristotelian approach found no response with the Byzantine public."<sup>19</sup>

St. Gregory Palamas responded to Barlaam's attack against him with nine treatises in defense of the Hesychasts, written between 1338 and 1341. Because these discourses are arranged in groups of three, they have been dubbed his *Triads*.<sup>20</sup> He also issued an important work, "The Hagiorite Tome," in 1340, which, though composed by St. Gregory, was signed by a number of important spiritual Fathers of Mt. Athos.<sup>21</sup> These are basically theological and Patristic defenses of the idea that, to quote Hussey, "both here and in the next world man could share [i.e., participate] in God through uncreated energies."<sup>22</sup> Barlaam, in his usual style of hyperbole and insult, responded to Palamas' second *Triad* with a

work that he entitled, *A Tract Against the Messalians*. This was a clever ruse by which to sully the reputation of the Hesychasts by associating their teachings with those of a known and condemned heresy. The Messalians (Euchites, or Εὐχῖται, in Greek) were members of a fourth-century sect that essentially denied the efficacy of Baptism in purifying the spiritual faculties of man and argued that by asceticism and constant prayer, the believer could be assured of what was a "physical" vision of the Godhead. They were condemned by the Oecumenical Synod of Ephesus in 431. Just as some contemporary scholars, wholly misunderstanding the deviations of the Messalians from doctrinal orthodoxy and failing to see the entirely different presuppositions behind their theologies, have drawn rather fatuous lines between this heretical sect and St. Gregory of Nyssa, so Barlaam attempted to draw parallels between the ascetic practices of the sect and the monastic disciplines of Hesychasm. There was certainly no doubt in Barlaam's mind that the parallelism which he suggested fell flat when rigorously applied to Palamas' teachings, but this device allowed him to level crudely caustic accusations against the Hesychasts and, indeed, to condemn Palamas himself to the Patriarch, John XIV. The Patriarch, in response to Barlaam's complaint, summoned a Synod in 1341 to consider the accusations against St. Gregory.

Though the Patriarch proved later to be a harsh opponent of St. Gregory Palamas, the Synod that he convened to hear Barlaam's charges vindicated the Hesychasts and condemned Barlaam's teachings. It also condemned another of St. Gregory's critics, the monk Gregory Akindynos. Though Akindynos did not, in fact, take exception to the ascetic practices of the Hesychasts, and had initially tried to mediate the dispute between Palamas and Barlaam, he subsequently criticized Palamas on the grounds that he had distorted Patristic tradition, in defending the Hesychasts, "acting not as a the-

ologian building on a long-established tradition," but as "an innovator."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Synod forbade further writings on the controversial issue, since the political environment in the Empire was already explosive, without the addition of "theological dissension."<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the death of the Emperor Andronicos III shortly after this Synod, as well as the outbreak of civil war, worked against the Hesychasts, who were, as we have observed, supposedly aligned with Cantacouzenos. Exploiting this misapprehension, and using as an excuse for so doing his continued writings in defense of the Hesychasts, the Dowager Empress and the anti-Cantacouzenos powers at court, with the full coöperation of the Patriarch, imprisoned St. Gregory Palamas and censured him as a heretic. Akindynos was allowed to continue his anti-Palamite rhetoric, and, despite his condemnation by the Synod of 1341, was Ordained a Hieromonk by Patriarch John XIV.

With the eventual victory of John VI Cantacouzenos in the civil war, St. Gregory Palamas was released from prison and Patriarch John was deposed, on the canonical grounds that he Ordained Akindynos to the Priesthood, despite the fact that this anti-Palamite dissenter had, in fact, been condemned by a Synod over which the Patriarch himself presided. In the place of Patriarch John, in 1347 Patriarch Isidore, a supporter of the Hesychasts, was elected to the Oecumenical Throne. As we said earlier, St. Gregory Palamas was immediately appointed Archbishop of Thessaloniki by the new Patriarch. This victory for the Saint, however, was to be followed not only by a delay in taking up his new See, because of the activities of the Zealot party in that city, but by a new manifestation of resistance to the Hesychasts, this time from an intellectual clique headed by the philosopher and scholar Nicephoras Gregoras. In spite of his vast, encyclopedic knowledge, Gregoras was actually unable to understand the subtle philosophy of the Palamites,

and especially their distinction between the Essence and Energies of God. He believed that, in speaking of the Energies of God, that St. Gregory had "implied more than one God." Gregoras, unlike some of his supporters, "was not pro-Latin,"<sup>25</sup> but his opposition to Hesychasm led to his condemnation in May of 1351 at a council held at the Blachernae Palace.<sup>26</sup> Unrepentant in his opposition to the Palamites, he was imprisoned and died in captivity.<sup>27</sup> Though there were subsequent sporadic outbursts of anti-Palamite sentiments among certain monastics and secular thinkers in the Empire, in 1351 the theology of St. Gregory Palamas and the Hesychasts was declared consistent with the official teaching of the Orthodox Church. This final victory was sealed in 1368, when St. Gregory was Glorified (the correct Orthodox word for the Latin term "Canonized") by the Orthodox Church. He is often commemorated in theological texts and pious writings as one of the "Three Pillars of Orthodoxy," along with St. Photios the Great and St. Mark of Ephesus.

As we pointed out, Akindynos and Gregoras were opposed to Hesychasm, not because of opposition to its ascetic traditions and monastic practices, but because of rather minimal and, in great measure, untenable objections to its theological formulation. On the one hand, Akindynos felt that St. Gregory had deviated from *Patristic* tradition in setting forth the principles of the *Hesychastic* tradition; an accusation, to be sure, which is both untrue and impossible to defend within the established *corpus* of Orthodox Patristic writings. That St. Gregory stood in succession to the Fathers, and that his writings and theology are an integral part the Patristic consensus that is the bedrock of traditional Orthodox theology—this is undisputable. Akindynos' opposition to Palamas, whether motivated by his aspiration to become Bishop in Thessaloniki or by the fact that he may not have grasped the magnitude of the dimensions of the

Hesychastic position, in terms of its essential links to Orthodox doctrine, was of little real substance. His arguments collapsed before the defense put forth by the Hesychasts. On the other hand, Gregoras' opposition lay in his objection to the Energies-Essence distinction in the Godhead, a principle which had, in fact, already been accepted and endorsed by the Church at the Council of Blachernae in 1285. At this convocation, Patriarch Gregory II, standing in a tradition as old as St. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389), differentiated between the Essence of God and His φανέρωσις, or "manifestation"—the Energy which surrounds the unknowable essence of God—, in explaining how the Holy Spirit, to quote the later refinement of this distinction in the words of St. Gregory Palamas, "proceeds from the Father through the Son..., but in His very Being and essence...is not from Christ, but from the Father."<sup>28</sup> Gregoras' objections to the Palamite party, like those of Akindynos, were, for the greater part, without merit and theologically somewhat perfunctory; more importantly, however, they did not constitute an assault against the whole of the Hesychastic position. Barlaam's objections, however, *did*. His differences with the Palamites touched on basic disputes over theological method, spiritual experience, and the very doctrinal precepts on which Hesychasm was based.

In examining Barlaam's arguments against St. Gregory Palamas, it becomes abundantly clear to us why the Hesychastic Controversy brought into critical focus the divergent spiritual psychologies of the Orthodox East and the Roman Catholic West. A vivid example of this divergency is the centrality of Trinitarian doctrine to the issues in dispute, a direct reflection of the failure of the East and West to resolve their disagreement over the *Filioque* issue. This was not a confrontation between philosophy and theology, since Palamas and the Hesychasts appreciated philosophy as a tool for expressing the experience of Christianity in theological terms that were

beholden to, but not confined by, philosophical language and images.<sup>29</sup> It was, to a significant extent, a head-on meeting of two ways of looking at philosophy—of two psychologies: in one instance, in the mind of Barlaam, philosophy was a way to talk about theological precepts that could be developed in an analytical and suppositional or hypothetical way; in the other instance, Palamas understood and used philosophy as a tool for restating, formulating, and articulating revealed truths, consciously preserving, in this process, the integrity of these truths in an unbroken chain of experiential commonality that he understood to rise above their mode of exposition. As a result of these differences in cognitive psychology, the confrontation between Barlaam and St. Gregory also reveals to us a clash between two ways of theologizing: one Western (even if Barlaam was an Orthodox monk), speculative, and rationalistic, and the other Eastern, descriptive, and existential. As Professor Matsoukas expresses this: “In the fourteenth century, and especially in the conflicts and deliberations between the Hesychasts and anti-Hesychasts,” there emerges a vision, not only of the vital “difference between Eastern and Western theology,” but of the distinct “theological methodology of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church.”<sup>30</sup> We can see these contrasting elements at every point in which Barlaam came into conflict with the theology of St. Gregory Palamas and the Hesychasts—and these were encompassing and essential, as I noted, since there was little that the two sides had in common.

Because in a lecture of this kind it would be impossible to cover all of the points of departure between Barlaam’s Western Scholasticism and St. Gregory Palamas’ Hesychastic theology, by way of illustration I will address three rudimentary “theological positions” which Father John Meyendorff believes—and rightly so, in my opinion—to provide an adequate summary of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas,<sup>31</sup> examining, in turn, Bar-

laam's objections to each.

The first principle which Father John puts forth with regard to Palamite theology is that of the universality of Christian knowledge through Baptism and the Church's Mysteries:

Knowledge of God is an experience given to all Christians through Baptism and through their continuous participation in the life of the Body of Christ and in the Eucharist. It requires the involvement of the whole man in prayer and service...; and then it becomes recognizable not only as an 'intellectual' experience of the mind alone, but as a 'spiritual sense,' which conveys a perception neither purely 'intellectual' nor purely material. In Christ, God assumed the whole of man, soul and body; and man as such was deified. In prayer—for example in the [Hesychastic] 'method'—in the sacraments [Mysteries], in the entire life of the Church as community, man is called to participation in divine life; this participation is also the true knowledge of God.<sup>32</sup>

This spirituality of participation in, and knowledge of, God through Baptism and the Mysteries was, for Barlaam, an assault on the rationalistic process by which man understands both God and the Sacraments in an essentially symbolic way. It would be wrong to assert that Barlaam was the advocate of mere sacramental symbolism; however, he was an Aristotelian and, in essence, a Scholastic; so, for him the whole Christian liturgical life was deeply rooted in the rational process by which human reason captures, in symbols, the meaning of religious mysteries that are unknowable. The idea that Baptism, the Mysteries, and Christian fellowship constituted an actual "knowledge of God" was for him unthinkable. It is obvious, here, that his Scholastic categories were inadequate in accommodating an experiential view of spiritual life and fellowship that both made manifest and contained the external symbols of God *and*, at the same time, revealed an intimate knowledge and experience of

God Himself. The idea that there was, in fact, an ineffable nexus between God Himself and His Energies (a subject which we will discuss subsequently) that rose above mere symbolism, giving the latter spiritual substance and dimensions—this was outside the strictness of his rationalistic theological methodology and he rejected it as theological fantasy.

The second principle of Palamite theology that Meyendorff cites in summarizing Hesychastic theology concerns the absolute inaccessibility of God in Essence:

God is totally inaccessible in His Essence, both in this life and in the future.... Man, in 'deification,' can become God only 'by grace,' or by 'energy.' ...Affirming the absolute transcendence of God is another way of saying that he is the Creator *ex nihilo*.... [Man]...can participate in His life only as a result of His will or 'grace.'<sup>33</sup>

Barlaam's arguments about the unknowable Essence of God, as St. Gregory Palamas understands it, go beyond a simple rejection of the idea that man can participate in any way in the Divine. Whereas Palamas, as we shall see, juxtaposes the unknowable Essence of God with the knowable Divine Energies, the Calabrian insists on a kind of rational agnosticism. That is, Barlaam argued, in contradistinction to the Hesychasts, that genuine religious experience, as well as the ecstatic spiritual state, was independent of the action of God within the human body and mind: spiritual transcendence rests in a kind of passive, intuitive ecstasy which neither the mind nor body can grasp—the "cloud of unknowing," which is so popular in Western mysticism. At the same time, even though Barlaam was unquestionably in the tradition of the Greek Fathers in arguing that God was unknowable in Essence, he misunderstood the apophatic way. If God could only be described in Essence by negatives, as the apophatic tradition averred, then a knowledge of God in a positive sense (a knowledge of God in His Energies, as St. Gregory would argue), he reckoned, was impossible.



His deviation from Patristic tradition, in this sense, reveals his inability, as we pointed out above, to understand that symbols represent and participate in that which they symbolize and are not, as a rationalistic Aristotelian would argue, markers for some cognitive idea about the Divine. Barlaam was the expositor of a purely Western Christian “mysticism,” in which ecstatic vision takes place, not in an actual bodily and mental state of communion with the Divine (through the transformation and purification of the human body and mind by Grace), but in an intuitive state of inexplicable mystery—a literal, not an apophatic, *unknowing* before the *unknowable* God. His wholly Western view of the spiritual life was totally and inexorably incompatible with that of the Palamites and the Orthodox understanding of *theosis*, which he furiously rejected.

The third principle in Father John’s summary of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas centers on the Energy-Essence distinction made by the Hesychasts:

The full force with which Palamas affirms God’s inaccessibility and the equally strong affirmation of deification and of participation in God’s life, as the original purpose and the goal of human existence, also give full reality to the Palamite distinction between ‘essence’ and ‘energy’ in God. Palamas does not try to justify the distinction philosophically; his God is a living God, both transcendent and willingly immanent, who does not enter into preconceived philosophical categories. [Furthermore]..., Christ’s humanity itself did not become ‘God by essence’; it was penetrated with the divine energy...and, in it, our humanity finds access to God in His energies. The energies...are divine life, as given by God to His creatures; and they are God...<sup>34</sup>

For Barlaam, the nature of the Trinity was a matter of the rationalistic conceptualization of a mystery beyond human ken. For the Hesychasts, Trinitarian theology was rooted in spiritual experience. Thus the Energies-Essence

distinction was not, for St. Gregory Palamas, a philosophical device for resolving the problem of human participation in an unknowable Divine Essence, but a way of expressing the magnitude of the Christian encounter with limitless Being and spiritual existence within that Being: the overwhelming vision, in some way, of what cannot be seen but which is nonetheless made manifest. The Scriptural witness, the witness of the Martyrs and Saints, and the daily experience of monastics and lay-people alike of God's unknowable Essence and knowable Energies were the source of Palamite teachings. Philosophical rigor and fruitless disputation about theological theory without a source in spiritual tradition were not their aims. Nor, indeed, did the Hesychasts vigorously confront Barlaam out of some academic contentiousness, as he clearly did them; rather, they wished to preserve the core of Christian life as they had experienced and lived it. Barlaam and the Hesychasts spoke past one another. As in his grasp of the *Filioque* issue, in which the Orthodox were seeking to speak of the Godhead as it was revealed, rather than attempting to create a philosophically consistent and rigid symbol of the Trinity (setting aside, here, the initial motivations behind the addition, which were wholly inconsequential by the fourteenth century), Barlaam approached the Energies-Essence distinction in an essentially philosophical way. His objections to it as having no witness in historical theology are evidence of his failure to grasp the implications of the Christological controversies, to which St. Gregory Palamas made frequent reference in supporting such a distinction. And this fact, in turn, betrays, once more, Barlaam's methodology: rationalistic agnosticism rooted in a symbolic theology holding forth in an almost autonomous realm of mere intellectual speculation about God, complemented by a spirituality confined to an oddly irrational mysticism. This methodology made him unsympathetic to the Energies-Essence distinction and

made it impossible for him to understand it at any level, let alone endorse it.

If Barlaam's objections to what Father Meyendorff has set forth as the three basic principles of Palamite theology seem redundant, it is quite simply because they are. The entire debate between Barlaam and Palamas, which is infinitely complex and technical and which is presented here in an admittedly simplified synopsis, is in fact tedious, since Barlaam really never understood or acknowledged the framework in which his opponents were speaking. Though Father Meyendorff, in his pivotal study of St. Gregory Palamas, *Introduction à l'Étude de Grégoire Palamas*, published almost four decades ago, opines, in one place, that Barlaam was "au courant" in the Hesychastic tradition and "de la mystique des Pères en général,"<sup>35</sup> in actuality, the Calabrian was not at all capable of grasping the fundamental ideas of Hesychasm or in any way accurate in his reading of the Fathers. Barlaam more often than not simply ignores the arguments of the Hesychasts and repeatedly misquotes and misuses the Fathers. To clarify this important point, let us expand on the principles with which Father Meyendorff summarizes the theology of St. Gregory. Fleshing out this skeleton, we shall see that Barlaam wholly misunderstood and misconstrued the arguments of the Hesychasts, on account of his failure to understand their psychology and their whole soteriological model. At the same time, we shall see that Meyendorff, too, did not formulate his views of the Hesychasts with that model in mind, and thus is often led astray in some of his comments about the dispute between them and their critics. St. Gregory Palamas can be understood *only* within the framework of the therapeutic spiritual model of Orthodox soteriology; thus, his confrontation with Barlaam must be approached with this model in mind.

While it is true, as Father Meyendorff emphasizes, that Palamite theology concentrates on the accessibility

of God to all Christians through the life of the Church; that God's inaccessible Essence is unknowable; and that man can, indeed, come to know and participate in God (metaphorically speaking, "see" God), these elements of Hesychasm must not be understood in a merely formal way; when they are, they become misleading. For example, the knowledge of God in the life of the Church, according to Palamas, cannot be described, as Meyendorff does, as an "intellectual" and "spiritual" experience that is "neither purely 'intellectual' nor purely spiritual." The vagueness of this description is inconsistent with Hesychastic thought and exemplifies a formal model that takes one away from the dynamic soteriological model of the Hesychasts, which draws on and describes active spiritual experience. In the first place, the "life of the Church" is not the focal point of human deification; it is, rather, the *product* of the deification of man: it is life in the very Body of Christ, in which the human is restored. It is the assembly of Saints and of those struggling, within the therapeutic confines of that assembly, for restoration in Christ, as St. Ignatios of Antioch speaks of the Church. In the second place, in a tradition given precise articulation in the ascetic writings of St. Maximos the Confessor, human knowledge of God is not, for the Hesychasts, merely a matter of the externals of the charismatic life of the Church, but the process by which, within and through the efficacious Mysteries of the Church and the life of inner prayer, an individual is cleansed in soul and body. Thus cleansed, the spiritual faculty of man, the *nous* or spiritual mind, comes into perfect interaction with the discursive intellect and the body, the emotions and thoughts and bodily passions transformed by the "Uncreated Light" of Divine Grace. In uninterrupted or ceaseless (noetic or inner) prayer, "the noetic faculty [spiritual mind] is liberated by the Holy Spirit from the influences of the body and the discursive intellect," while these physical and intellectual

faculties, "...dominated by the noetic faculty's unceasing prayer" and "cleansed and inspired," are at the same time engaged "in their normal activities."<sup>36</sup>

It is partly because he fails to work within the Hesychastic soteriological model that, as Romanides points out, Father Meyendorff wrongly attributes to Barlaam an understanding of the Hesychastic method.<sup>37</sup> Arguing against any participation by the body and mind in the ecstatic spiritual state, Barlaam happens to quote a passage from St. Maximos, noting that the spiritual mind (the noetic faculty), in the highest state of prayer, transcends all bodily and mental functions. Meyendorff takes this to mean that Barlaam somehow understood the Hesychastic tradition and attributes to him, as we said above, a knowledge of the Fathers whom the Hesychasts cite in the defense of their theology and spiritual practices. In fact, as Romanides correctly observes, "Maximus, in the very next sentence" quoted by Barlaam, "describes this as a state of *uninterrupted prayer*," understanding the highest state of prayer as one in which the restored and cleansed intellect and body participate, in synergy, in the work of the Holy Spirit acting through them. Neither Barlaam nor Father Meyendorff grasped the therapeutic soteriological model underlying both the Hesychastic notion of deification and the attainment of unceasing prayer. Thus, Barlaam failed to understand the Hesychasts and Meyendorff, attributing to Barlaam knowledge that he did not have, underestimates the extent of this failure. Actually, Barlaam was artless in seeking to argue with the Palamites by using their own Patristic sources, as though mere citations, removed from their textual and overall theological context, were an effective tool in his disputation. Again, he was following the methods of rationalistic philosophy, while the Hesychasts were attempting to define and describe an actual experience. Meyendorff, too, constantly works, in his investigation of the Hesychasts, in the context of

philosophical and theological parallelism, finding at times a commonality of terminology and expression in Barlaam and the Hesychasts which nonetheless exists outside the ultimate criterion of shared experience. He strained to understand the Hesychastic Controversy, not as one of East-West confrontation, but as a mere matter of philosophical or theological *misunderstanding*. Though perhaps somewhat unkindly, Father Romanides asserts that these strained efforts sometimes led Father Meyendorff into technical areas of philosophy which he might more wisely have avoided and to a possibly naïve understanding of the Calabrian's true intentions:

For several years Father Meyendorff has been contending...that the debate between St. Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian does not represent a clash between Latin and Greek theology, but between certain Byzantine humanists and a large segment of Byzantine monastics. Meyendorff frequently [therefore] refers to Barlaam as a humanist, a Platonist, and a nominalist.... Father John claims that the controversy revolved around the interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysios, and claims that Palamas applied correctives to the Neo-Platonism of the Areopagite, with the implication...that Barlaam was not far wrong in his reading of the texts. ...Palamas is represented as a thinker with originality.... Perhaps the most amazing and most revolutionary claim is that Barlaam was both a nominalist and a Neo-Platonist or Platonist. Until now the histories of philosophy and theology have been presenting these traditions as mutually exclusive. ...It is...[also]...very strange that Meyendorff, who published texts of this debate, can make Barlaam out to be a nominalist and Palamas an Aristotelian on the question of demonstrative knowledge of God. Had he said the reverse he would have been closer to the truth. ...Father John was overimpressed by Barlaam's 'anti-Latin' works and did not take seriously the fact that the Calabrian was aiming at a pre-scholastic position, ...which he heroically maintained in spite of all opposition until his condemnation and subsequent return to the Latin Church, where he became a bishop. ...[Bar-

laam] may have been...a good conciliar Latin...who got involved in...cross-talk with people whose theology he did not really understand. ...Father John never adequately answers the question [of] why Barlaam came to the East and then worked for union with the West. ...An explanation either in terms of the traditional Byzantine suspicion that Barlaam was a Latin spy, or in some other terms, is certainly to be expected in...[Father Meyendorff's]...study.<sup>38</sup>

Setting aside Meyendorff's preoccupation with the philosophical roots of the Palamite Controversy and returning to the Hesychastic soteriological paradigm, we might also say that, in emphasizing the transcendence of the Essence of God and the Christocentric nature of human deification in the Energies of God, Father Meyendorff seems to move away from the more practical aspects of the Hesychastic argument. Essentially, the Energies-Essence distinction was made by the Hesychasts in order to identify and define God's actions and synergy with man—in order to show, indeed, how it is that the human mind and body have direct intercourse with God. Likewise, their position with regard to the *Filioque* clause, while rooted, of course, in a concern for preserving the traditions of the Oecumenical Synods—which for them had not just juridical authority but contained and expressed spiritual authenticity and the very conscience and life of the Church—, had a more practical implication. For the Hesychasts, the Energies of God, through which man is deified in Christ, are understood in a natural, spiritual way, such that the Scholastic defense of the *Filioque* and the establishment of some artificial relationship between the Father and the Son from which the Holy Spirit proceeds was wholly absurd to them. Their understanding of the Trinity was formed by their experience within its Energies: by an *encounter* with God in Energy and Essence, by an experience of the known and unknown aspects of the Godhead. Furthermore, the kind of mechanical presentation of the life in Christ by pious

affirmation, by which Father Meyendorff describes the process of human deification, seems to place the issue of the fundamental manner in which that life is actualized in a secondary, rather than primary, position. For, to be sure, if the Hesychasts understood their method of prayers and ascetic practices to be *means* to the end of human purification, they nonetheless considered them *indispensable* means to human purification and transformation, which are also equally and similarly indispensable to the life in Christ. In a talk which I delivered in Athens last year on St. Gregory Palamas, I stated:

Man, if he wishes to restore the image of God within him and return to the path which was set out for us at the beginning..., must imitate Christ in His manner of life.... The imitation of Christ, it goes without saying, entails a change in one's life.... From a practical standpoint, we find in the Mysteriological [sacramental] life of the Church, especially by regular confession and frequent Communion, the medicine of immortality, which helps us to return the spiritual mind, through its cleansing and purification, to the heart (from which, through the effects of sin, the *nous* is separated and alienated), wherein, as St. Gregory tells us, there resides the 'repository of the Holy Spirit.' Our evil thoughts separate us from the heart and, likewise, from God. However, when the spiritual mind returns to the heart, through the control of our thoughts, through the therapeutic application of the Mysteries, and by the recitation, unceasingly and continually, of the entreaty which we make on the prayer rope..., the mind is enlightened by the uncreated and immaterial light of God.<sup>39</sup>

Herein, I centered my comments on *theosis* in Christ as the *Theanthropos* or God-Man, in Whom the potential for human perfection is contained and in Whose example we find an image both of God and perfected man. I placed in the context of our imitation and participation in Christ's perfected humanity the action of the Holy Spirit and the Mysteries of the Church. It is, I tried to



emphasize, in *function* and *action* at a practical and experiential level, and not in philosophical conceptualizations and explications or pious affirmations, that we properly speak of the Hesychastic experience and the Essence-Energies distinction which serves to capture the parameters and empirical dimensions of Orthodox soteriology and, of course, Trinitarian theology.

I would like to make a few final comments about the Hesychastic Controversy that will help us, I believe, to understand why it contains within it all of the elements which defined, shaped, and doomed contacts between the Orthodox East and the Roman Catholic West during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Once more, though this later period is not our specific concern here, the contacts between Byzantium and the Papacy in the final few years of the Byzantine Empire (i.e., in the first half of the fifteenth century) also reflect the centrality and urgency of these elements. First, the dispute between Barlaam and Palamas was clearly a conflict between unionist and anti-unionist sentiments. This is not because all of the parties were initially opposed to union; the matter is not that simple. It is true that Akindynos and Gregoras were anti-Latin. However, St. Gregory Palamas certainly did not confront Barlaam out of an anti-Latin spirit. Rather, it became increasingly clear to the Hesychasts that Barlaam, who favored union by theological compromise, and especially with regard to the *Filioque* clause, and also became a sarcastic critic of the extant spiritual practices of the Orthodox Church (both the spiritual practices of the monastics and the popular spiritual life of the laypeople, as scholars too often neglect to acknowledge), was the product of a tradition in the West that was fundamentally at odds with the piety of the Orthodox Church. Combined with his misuse of Patristic texts, lack of familiarity with the core of Orthodox spiritual practice, and the viciousness of his attacks against the Palamites (resulting in the imprison-

ment and mistreatment of St. Gregory Palamas), this perception of Barlaam *evoked* over time an anti-unionist sentiment among the Palamites. After all, their position had always been that union with the West had to be based on a commonality of theology and spiritual practice (which for the Byzantines were inseparable); seeing in Barlaam a Western tradition which they could not understand, since its Scholastic presuppositions were wholly foreign to their way of theologizing, it was inevitable that they should be transformed into anti-unionists. The firm distrust that they formed of the West (not in the least assuaged by the fact that Barlaam, who seemed to be so sympathetic to the Orthodox Church, became its vicious critic and eventually a hierarch in the Roman Catholic Church) and passed on to their spiritual successors made later union efforts—even when these efforts succeeded in establishing on paper an *official* reconciliation of the Eastern and Western Churches—as fruitless as the ill-fated Council of Lyons.

Second, at the core of the dispute between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church during these centuries of confrontation was the Papacy. In our ecumenically sensitive days, this is difficult to say without risking some accusation of bigotry or narrow-mindedness. But if sincere efforts towards Church union are to succeed, they must begin with a candid and fearless acknowledgement of what history teaches us and of the crucial differences that separate Eastern and Western Christianity. Likewise, historians who fail to show such honesty are not only poor scholars, but they betray the search for that truth in the present that can be better understood when we have an accurate and objective view of the past. Let me boldly say, then, that from the sack of Constantinople to the fall of Byzantium, in every single attempt at union between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, even if these attempts slowly took on a more expansive theological character (and

especially in the late fourteenth and in the fifteenth centuries), one prerequisite was put forth by the Roman Catholic Church, *without exception*: the recognition by the Orthodox of the supremacy of the Pope. In every instance, I can say with equal surety, the inevitable response of the Orthodox Church, and especially when the Faithful themselves reacted against union achieved for political reasons and without their knowledge, was that the idea of Papal supremacy was unknown to the historical consciousness of the Orthodox Church and foreign to its ecclesiology. The East, it was constantly argued, had never done anything more than acknowledge a primacy of honor in the Church of Rome (which was, at any rate, a Greek See in the age of the Early Church), within the context of spiritual honor visited, as well, on the Mother Church of Jerusalem, the Churches of Antioch and Alexandria, and the Church of Constantinople, and this before the Great Schism, when the See of Rome was part of the hegemony of the ancient Christian Patriarchates. Any notion of primacy that violated the equality of all Bishops was, for the Orthodox Church, wholly foreign to its self-identity and the unbroken historical chain that linked it and the consensus of the Church Fathers, the legacy of the common mind of the Church, to Christianity's first communities.

The Hesychastic Controversy, in essence, gave theological expression to the Orthodox resistance to Papal supremacy. Let me explain how. It is a basic precept of the mystical theology of the Eastern Church that the primary goal of the human being is, as Vladimir Lossky puts it, "deification," to the end of which "God has given us in the Church all the objective conditions, all the means that we need...." But the attainment of this goal rests squarely on each individual, who must "produce the necessary subjective conditions for" deification "in...synergy..., in...[the]...co-operation of man with God"; this "subjective aspect of our union with God con-

stitutes the way of union which is the Christian life."<sup>40</sup> Each human being, each member of the Church, strives for deification: "[D]eification is not something for a few select initiates, but something intended for all alike...; the normal goal for *every* Christian without exception."<sup>41</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, in speaking of this deification of man, quotes a very pertinent passage from St. Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022): "Christ, according to Simeon, 'has a union with the Father similar to the one that we have [with] Christ'"; that is, the deified human being is united to Christ. As Pelikan goes on to say, "not only...[do]...the believers become members of Christ, but...Christ... become[s] their member as well: 'Christ is my hand and Christ is my foot, ...and I am the hand of Christ and the foot of Christ.'"<sup>42</sup> These are the kinds of ideas and the tradition which took full theological form during the Hesychastic Controversy. As bold as such statements may seem, they are no bolder than the personal title which the Pope adopted for himself, for the first time, as we noted in an earlier lecture, in the reign of Pope Innocent III (d. 1216): the "Vicar of Christ" on earth (rather than "Vicar of St. Peter," as some earlier Popes had styled themselves). In many ways, then, the Hesychastic Controversy brought Orthodox soteriology into direct conflict with the rise of Papal monarchy. Whereas for the Palamites and for Orthodox soteriology, each individual may attain to the status of "vicar of Christ," by virtue of his transformation, purification, union with God, and deification by Grace, the Papal monarchy came to claim for the person of the Bishop of Rome *alone*, and this by virtue of his election to that See, what was for the Orthodox the universal goal of the Christian Faith, that criterion of spiritual authority that brought Patriarch and pauper into a oneness of spiritual authority and charismatic power. Here, in the collision between Papism and Hesychasm, politics and theology, inextricably bound together in a complex web of historical events, brought

about an extraordinary deadlock in what are to this day “seemingly irreconcilable differences of doctrine”<sup>43</sup> that lay at the heart of Orthodox and Roman Catholic relations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

## Notes

1. For the life of St. Gregory Palamas, see Monk Theokletos of the Monastery of Dionysiou, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμάς: ὁ Βίος καὶ ἡ Θεολογία Του 1296-1359* (Mt. Athos-Thessaloniki: S. Laskarides-P. Alexiades, 1979), pp. 3-41 *pass*. Also see the short monograph by Hieromonk Gregory, “A Comparative Synopsis of the Lives of Saint John Chrysostomos and Saint Gregory Palamas” (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1999).

2. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 259-260.

3. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, *Repentance*, second edition, Vol. III in *Themes in Orthodox Patristic Theology* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1997), p. 24.

4. Joseph Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), p. 204.

5. Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976-1984), Vol. I, pp. 42, 310, note 187.

6. See, for example, Father John Meyendorff’s essay, “The Metropolitanate of Russia: From Kiev to Moscow,” in Aristides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), pp. 341ff *pass*. Also see his *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981), pp. 96ff. In both of these works, Meyendorff shows that Hesychasm had a profound effect on the growth of monasticism in the Slavic countries and was a central theme in Slavic Orthodox theology.

I should note that, disappointingly enough, though Father John was largely instrumental in increasing Western knowledge of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas in the twentieth century, and while he writes so authoritatively and accurately

of its profound influence on Slavic Orthodoxy, he also held some rather bizarre and unfounded ideas about the influence of non-Christian religious traditions on the Hesychasts and was reticent, in many of his writings, to acknowledge the clear nexus of Hesychasm to the most ancient Christian practices. Thus, he characteristically notes that the Hesychastic “method is held by *some* as a return to the origins of monasticism...” (*emphasis mine*). ([Father] John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, second printing [with revisions] [New York: Fordham University Press, 1983], p. 76.)

Vladimir Lossky implicitly rejects such equivocation by identifying Hesychastic principles with the very thrust of ancient Christian theology itself (see references in the text of this lecture). Father Georges Florovsky explicitly associates Hesychasm with the Patristic consensus, part of an unbroken tradition reaching back to the earliest Christian writers and to Scripture itself (see Chapter 7, “St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” [Protopresbyter] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Vol. I in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* [Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975], pp. 105-120). Professor Tsirpanlis defines Hesychasm as a “Christocentric mysticism” practiced by Orthodox ascetics at least “since the fourth century Desert Fathers” (Constantine Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology* [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991], “Glossary,” p. 7, *s.v.*, “Hesychasm”).

As commendable and extensive as Father Meyendorff’s scholarly work in the area of Hesychasm was—indeed, Papadakis, both justifiably, at one level, and yet with what is perhaps injudicious hyperbole at another, calls him the “preeminent modern authority on St. Gregory” (Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, *op. cit.*, p. 300)—, he entered into this endeavor with Western preconceptions that often had serious consequences, as we shall subsequently see, for his overall view and understanding of the tradition.

Among Meyendorff’s major works on St. Gregory Palamas are his *Introduction à l’Étude de Grégoire Palamas (Introduction to the Study of St. Gregory Palamas)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), translated into English by George Lawrence under the

title *Study of St. Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964); his volume on the spiritual teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, *St Grégoire Palamas et La Mystique Orthodoxe (St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Mysticism)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976), which has been translated into English by Adele Fiske (*St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998]); and *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological, and Social Problems, Collected Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), which contains some highly speculative and problematic reflections on Hesychasm that appear, yet again, to be in some instances rather more in the tradition of Western polemical critics than that of Orthodox Patristic scholars.

7. [Protopresbyter] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Vol. I in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

8. *Idem*, "Saint Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. V (Winter 1959-1960), p. 18.

9. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, reprinted (Cambridge and London: James Clark and Co., 1973), p. 207.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

11. The author undoubtedly meant to speak of the "[Hesychastic] *ranks* of monks," rather than "orders," since there are technically no such things as "orders" in Eastern Orthodox monasticism.

12. [Father] George Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), p. 22.

13. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

14. [Father] John Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine: An Interplay Between Theology and Society* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981), pp. 55-56.

15. Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios, *The Roman West and the Byzantine East* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1988), p. 41.

16. Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trs. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), p. 137.

17. Bishop Auxentios of Photiki, *The Paschal Fire in Jerusalem: A Study of the Rite of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, third edition (Berkeley, CA: Saint John Chrysostomos Press, 1999), p. 140. Also available in Romanian: Episcopul Auxentios al Foticeei, *Lumina Sfântă de Paști de la Ierusalim: Studiu Asupra Ritului Luminii Sfinte din Biserica Sfântului Mormânt* (cu o Prefață de Episcopul [Arhiepiscopul] Chrysostomos al Enei și un Prolog de Arhimandritul Ioanichie Bălan), în românește de Vasile Bîrzu (Sibiu: Editura Deisis, 1996).

18. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

19. George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, revised edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 512

20. The *Triads* are entitled "In Defense of the Hesychasts." See the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL, cols. 1101-1118. A complete critical text of the original, with a modern Greek translation, can also be found in Panagiotes Chrestou, ed., *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα* (*Collected Works of Gregory Palamas*) (Thessaloniki: Triantafyllou, 1962), Vol. I, pp. 359-694. Despite its popularity and wide usage, a rather uneven and at times inaccurate French translation of the *Triads* is that of Father John Meyendorff: *Défense des Saints Hésychastes* (*Defense of the Holy Hesychasts*), second edition (Louvain: "Spicilegium Sacrum Louvaniense," 1973), two volumes. There is a partial English translation of this text, translated by Nicholas Gendle and edited by Father John: *Triads* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

This seems an appropriate point at which to emphasize, incidentally, that the works of Barlaam are lost to us, except as they are quoted by St. Gregory Palamas. About his character and what he wrote, we can learn much from his contemporaries. However, it is important to acknowledge in any consideration of Palamas' debate with the Calabrian that the latter's arguments and ideas were selected by St. Gregory on the basis of his own intentions, perceptions, and aims.

21. See the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL, cols. 1125-1236.

22. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 258. An excellent essay by Bishop of Auxentios of Photiki on St. Gregory's defense of the Hesychasts,



written in response to mistaken notions about Hesychasm which persist among scholars who have not carefully read Palamas' apologetic writings, can be found in my book, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Thought: The Traditionalist Voice* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1982), Chapter 4, "Dom Knowles on Hesychasm: A Palamite Rejoinder." See, as well, my essay with Bishop Auxentios, "Saint Gregory Palamas on the Hesychasts," *ibid.*, Chapter 5.

23. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

24. Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-290.

25. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

26. Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

27. J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

28. Quoted in Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, *op. cit.*, p. 237. I have retranslated the text from Chrestou (*op. cit.*, note 20), as cited in Papadakis, *ibid.*, note 99.

29. Papadakis makes this very point, when he speaks of "Byzantine intellectual history," noting that, "[t]o an unusual extent," the Hesychastic Controversy "was not a struggle between philosophy and theology proper. ...To put it otherwise, Hellenic thought was never rejected by the Church or by Byzantium's literate circles. Throughout the Middle Ages the rich legacy of antiquity was an essential component of the Byzantine school curriculum. Palamas himself was to excel in such study; Aristotelian logic was often part of his arsenal and was used openly against his opponents. ...On the other hand, this permanent Byzantine fascination with antiquity did not mean that the precise rôle Greek philosophy should play in the exposition of Christian theology and spirituality was not a recurring question, especially among theologians. In general, Church circles were unprepared to use philosophy in the formulation of religious truth. Neither the minimizing of the 'pagan' implications inherent in ancient wisdom nor the creation of metaphysical systems independent of Christian reve-

lation was in fact acceptable practice" (*ibid.*, p. 293).

30. Nikos A. Matsoukas, *Δογματική και Συμβολική Θεολογία: Εισαγωγή στη Θεολογική Γνωσιολογία (Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology: An Introduction to Theological Thought)*, second edition (Thessaloniki: Pournaras Publications, 1990), p. 137.

31. [Father] John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

35. Father John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'Étude de Grégoire Palamas (Introduction to the Study of St. Gregory Palamas)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), p. 201. I have quoted and used my own translations from the French text.

36. See Reverend John S. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics," Part II, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. IX (Winter 1963-64), p. 229.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

38. *Ibid.*, Part I, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. VI (Winter 1960-61), pp. 186-187, 189, 193-194.

39. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, "In Honor of St. Gregory Palamas," tr. from the Greek by Bishop Auxentios, *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVII (2000), pp. 20-21.

40. Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

41. Timothy Ware, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, new edition (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 236.

42. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, Vol. II in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 257.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 271.