

The Teachings of St. Gregory Palamas on Knowing God by Experience

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St. Gregory Palamas masterfully explained how we can know God personally by experience and, at the same time, how God is completely beyond us, unreachable, and unknowable. To understand St. Gregory's teachings, one should first realize that he emphasized the necessity of direct, personal knowledge (that is, the *experience* of God), not discursive knowledge acquired by means of reason, which offers only insufficient *concepts* of God.¹ (In other words, there is a difference between knowing God personally and just knowing about God by reading books or philosophically thinking about God.) Mantzaridis wrote that "direct and personal knowledge of God is achieved through a mystical communion with Him. Man gains true knowledge of Him once he is visited by deifying grace and united through it with God. The more man accepts the divinizing transformation worked within him by the Holy Spirit, the more perfect and full is his knowledge of God"² This direct knowledge is a fruit, not of reason or the process of learning external information, but knowledge acquired from within the person united to the One known through personal communion. St. Gregory Palamas said simply, "Contemplation...is the fruit of a healthy soul, outcome and a state which divinize man. It is through contemplation that a person is made divine, not by speculative analogies in the basis of skilful reasoning and observations...but under the guidance of stillness."³

¹ St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, A.Li – Li.20, ed. by John Meyendorff & trans. by Nicholas Gendle. *Classics of Western Spirituality* series (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983), 25-28; St. Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, chapters 24-29, trans. by Robert E. Sinkewicz (Toronto, CAN: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 107-113; Fr. Basil Krivosheine, "The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas," *The Eastern Churches Quarterly*, 1938, no. 4, p. 24; Archimandrite Kallikstos Ware, "The Debate About Palamism," *Eastern Christian Review*, 9:1-2, 1977, 49-59; Johanna Manley, *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press/Monastery Books, 1984), 104.

² Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 114.

³ St. Gregory Palamas, "On the Entry into the Holy of Holies II," *Mary the Mother of God: Sermons by St. Gregory Palamas*, ed. by Christopher Veniamin (Waymart, PA: Mount Tabor Press, 2005), 43.

Although personal knowledge of God involves personal union and participation in God, knowing God does not cause one to be God Himself in a pantheistic way. St. Gregory, as the Fathers before Him, explained very carefully how God is known by first emphasizing the transcendent unknowability of God. St. Gregory insisted that God is unknowable, noting that “nobody has ever seen or declared God’s nature” and “we cannot share” in God’s “undisclosed essence,” which is held in common by the Divine Persons.⁴ If a human person could know God’s essence, which implies union with and participation in the divine essence, then each person who knew God would become a new divine hypostasis, fully sharing the divine essence with the Holy Trinity. Knowledge of God’s essence, which eliminates the created/uncreated distinction, would indeed constitute pantheism.⁵ St. Gregory clarified that “the glory, kingdom and radiance shared by God and His saints are one and the same.... But no one has yet dared to say that God shares one and the same essence with His saints.”⁶

As St. Gregory Palamas stressed that God is unknowable in His essence, he likewise emphasized that God is knowable in His energies. God’s energy does not constitute created power that mediates between the unknowable God and man, but the energy is God Himself. Bp. Kallistos explained that “the energies are not an intermediary between God and man, not a ‘thing’ that exists apart from God. They are, on the contrary, God *himself*, God in action, God in his self-revelation, God as he enters into unmediated communion with his creatures.”⁷ The person who knows “the

⁴ St. Gregory Palamas, “On Faith,” hom. 8, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, vol. 1, ed. by Christopher Veniamin (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002), 89.

⁵ Fr. Basil Krivosheine, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” 24.

⁶ St. Gregory Palamas, “On the Transfiguration II,” *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas* (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2008), 55.

⁷ Kallistos Ware, “God Hidden and Revealed: The Apophatic Way and the Essence-Energies Distinction,” 49, 135.

energies of God does indeed know God ‘as he is’, although not as he is *in himself*,” that is, the person does not know God in His essence.⁸

God is not limited to His essence, but exists eternally in essence and energy. (His existence in energy is not dependent on His act of creation or work within creation.) The energy is distinguishable from the essence, but cannot be separated from the essence as an independent entity. St. Gregory refers to “essence” as “superior divinity” and “energy” as “inferior divinity” only in the sense that the Father can be said to be “superior” to the Son in that the unbegotten Father eternally begets the Son, who is co-equally consubstantial with the Father. The energies may be metaphorically understood (realizing the severe limitation of such analogies) as the rays of the sun while the sun itself is essence. St. John Damascene called energies a “movement” (κίνησις) or “impulse from God” (ἔξαλμα θεοῦ).⁹

The Holy Transfiguration on Mount Tabor served as a prime example for St. Gregory of how the human person can truly know God. St. Gregory Palamas clearly taught that the Light of Mt. Tabor is the uncreated energies of God, not created, material light perceptible to the physical eyes.¹⁰ This energetic light is truly “divinity” (although the term “divinity” can refer to essence in certain other contexts).¹¹ To understand the event of the Transfiguration, one must realize that the vision of uncreated light, which is the vision of Christ in glory, is the acquisition of true knowledge. Met. Hierotheos summarized the reality, writing, “the vision of God in the Person of the Logos is the deification of man” and “deification is man’s union with God and this union offers divine

⁸ Archimandrite Kallikstos Ware, “The Debate About Palamism,” *Eastern Christian Review*, 9:1-2, 1977, 49.

⁹ Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 54-56.

¹⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, The Library of Orthodox Theology, vol. 2 (Bedfordshire, GBN: Faith Press/American Orthodox Book Service, 1973), 131-132.

¹¹ St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 73-74.

knowledge, which surpasses human knowledge.”¹² Vision of the uncreated light involves participation in the uncreated energies, which is to know God by experience. (The truth that Christ’s glory is *uncreated energy* is significant. If Christ’s glory is uncreated *essence*, then to know God is to be God by nature.¹³ Secondly, if His glory is *created energy*, since energy flows from essence and the Son shares the same divine essence and divine energy with the Father, then Christ’s essence would be created.¹⁴ A creature is not the Uncreated God. The vision of such created glory would not constitute true vision of God, noetic knowledge, or deification.) Since we experience this vision by *grace*, the nature of grace as uncreated energy, God Himself, should be kept in mind. As Krivocheine noted, “to express Gregory’s teaching as exactly as possible, we must say that the uncreated Light and its vision are not so much the result of the operation on us of divine grace as the manifestation of grace itself.”¹⁵

Since there is one divine energy, then knowledge of God through His energies is knowledge of the Holy Trinity.¹⁶ St. Gregory the Sinaite emphasized the trihypostatic nature of the light on Tabor, “manifested in and through the resplendent flesh of the Son and Word of God,” the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.¹⁷ The truth that the glory and light of the Holy Trinity is one light and glory is also evident in the teachings of St. Symeon the New Theologian.¹⁸ St. Gregory Palamas wrote the following concerning the unknowable essence and knowable energy of the Trinity,

¹² Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagioraite*, trans. by Esther Williams (Levadia, GRE: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1997), 350-351.

¹³ Krivosheine, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” 24.

¹⁴ St. John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, bk. 2, ch. 23 & bk. 3, ch. 15, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 61.

¹⁵ Krivosheine, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹⁷ Christopher Veniamin, “The Interplay Between Mystical and Dogmatic Theology in Saint Gregory the Sinaite,” *St. Tikhon’s Theological Journal*, vol. 2, 2004, 27.

¹⁸ Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, *St. Symeon the New Theologian: Life, Spirituality, Doctrine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 279-281.

He is not revealed, however, in His essence, for nobody has ever seen or declared God's nature, but in the grace, power and energy common to the Father, Son and Spirit. Each has His own hypostasis, and the characteristics seen to belong to that hypostasis. They have in common not only Their undisclosed essence, which is above all names and in which we cannot share, but also the grace, power, energy, radiance, incorruption, kingdom, and everything else by which God has communion with the holy angels and with men. He is united with them through grace without losing His unity and simplicity either by the division and difference between the hypostases, or the diversity and variety of the divine powers and energies"¹⁹

On Mt. Tabor the disciples saw Christ as He is in His glory, that is, they saw the divine glory previously invisible to them.²⁰ The disciples learned what human persons are called to become. We are called to become by *grace* what Christ is by *nature*, since the glory revealed to the disciples is His own divine glory that shone from His body from the moment He, the Word of God, assumed flesh in the womb of the Virgin. The glory the disciples saw was not added to Christ at the Transfiguration, but the disciples saw as visible the uncreated energy of Christ that had been invisible to them. It had already been visible to His mother and Symeon in His infancy.²¹ The disciples saw a human person deified (our goal by grace) and beheld the vision of the One who Deifies. Christ, by virtue of the hypostatic union, is both the human *example* and, as the Truth Himself, the natural *Source* of knowledge, beauty, and grace for the human person. Significantly, Christ is not the source of deification apart from His body but as the God-Man who has assumed human flesh. Our bodies too, then, participate in the vision and knowledge of God.

St. Gregory taught that “the light beyond our perception and understanding is diffused ineffably within those whose hearts have been purified by holy stillness, and they see God within

¹⁹ Palamas, “On Faith,” homily 8, 89.

²⁰ St. Gregory Palamas, “On the Transfiguration I,” *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas* (Waymart, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2008), 45.

²¹ Ibid., 46; See also Christopher Veniamin, “St. Gregory Palamas: His Theological Perspective,” *St. Tikhon's Theological Journal*, vol. 3, 2005, 6.

themselves as in a mirror” while “He Himself is invisible.”²² For the one who attains deification in this life, “Such is the form reflected in a mirror: it appears but cannot be seen, and it is utterly impossible to see both the reflection in the mirror and the actual object being reflected. This is how God is seen now by those cleansed by divine love, but then, it says, they shall see Him ‘face to face’.”²³

The vision of divine glory, as the acquisition of knowledge (for this is to know God by participation in Him), does not constitute the person encountering God outside of Himself, but occurs within, involving the whole human person. Our participation in the energy of God is to both *see* the Light and *be* the Light (without confusion between the created and uncreated). As Christ possessed two distinct energies, the divine energy and the deified human energy, working together as one, and as the divine will and deified human will moved in harmony, without confusion between created and uncreated, so the created person who acquires knowledge of God lives in union with the Uncreated One.²⁴ St. Gregory affirmed that “anyone fortunate enough to attain to the divine energy, and to undergo divine transformation, himself becomes completely like the light.”²⁵ God, who is Light, “dwells in, and reveals Himself to, those who love Him, and are loved by Him.”²⁶ “The divine light is given by measure and is received to a greater or lesser extent, being distributed,

²² St. Gregory Palamas, “On the Entry into the Holy of Holies II,” 43-44, 48.

²³ Ibid., 48; Concerning seeing God “face to face” at the Second Coming and our resurrection, see St. Gregory Palamas, “On Redemption,” *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas* (Waymart, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2008), 98; Christopher Veniamin, “Saint John Chrysostom and the Light of Tabor,” *Patristic & Byzantine Society* (Merton College, University of Oxford: Hilary Term, 1994), published in *Alive in Christ*, vol. X, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 30; St. John Chrysostom, “Homily LVI on Matthew,” sec. 7, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 14, ed. by Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 349.

²⁴ John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, bk. 3, ch. 19, *NPNF*, 68.

²⁵ Palamas, “On the Entry into the Holy of Holies II,” 48.

²⁶ Ibid.

undividedly divided, according to the worthiness of the recipients.”²⁷ While each person’s ability to receive the knowledge differs, the knowledge given is *whole*.²⁸

Barlaam, an opponent of St. Gregory Palamas, denied that knowledge of God constitutes the vision of God beheld by transformed senses. Instead, he simply considered the light on Mount Tabor to be created light visible to the sensible eyes. Barlaam maintained that the acquisition of knowledge comes through reason.²⁹ Krivocheine wrote, “In accordance with the whole spirit of Gregory’s teaching the body is not here put aside as an element incapable of taking part in the divine life...but is transfigured even here on earth by the power of the Holy Ghost and lives the life of the world to come.”³⁰ As Met. Hierotheos pointed out, “A person sees God through deification, which is a union and offers true knowledge of God.... To break this oneness is to take the person away from knowledge of God. Of course knowledge of God is higher than created human knowledge. Thus the basis of orthodox epistemology is illumination and the revelation of God in the purified heart of man.”³¹ Romanides explained that having been deified, “the whole man, body and soul, sees God in His glory. Thus the Uncreated Light is for man both the Means and the Object of vision, That Which in man sees itself, and That by Which man becomes by grace God.”³² We see in Christ’s humanity who we can become by grace since, as St. John Damascene wrote, “just as his flesh was deified without undergoing change in its own nature, in the same way also will and energy are deified without transgressing their own proper limits.”³³

²⁷ Palamas, “On the Transfiguration II,” 55.

²⁸ Palamas, “On the Transfiguration II,” 55.

²⁹ Hierotheos, *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, 375.

³⁰ Fr. Basil Krivosheine, *The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas*, 40-41.

³¹ Hierotheos, *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, 375-376.

³² John Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Contraversy and Related Topics,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 9.2, 1963, 245.

³³ St. John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, bk. 3, ch. 15, *NPNF*, 61.

We pursue the knowledge of God by living a life of faith and humility, giving thanks to God.³⁴ St. Gregory wrote, “In His flesh and His sufferings,” Christ “became an example of humility and a healing remedy for pride.”³⁵ Christ demonstrated the way of self-emptying (*kenosis*) and showed us how to overcome the self-love (*philantia*) that caused our first ancestors to fall.³⁶ By loving us so much that He humbled Himself to become one of us (having becoming the God-Man, not a God-Angel), he revealed self-giving love.³⁷ We are called to follow the example of Christ, living “according to Christ’s gospel, by which the godly person is nourished, grows and is renewed, making progress day by day in the knowledge of God, righteousness and sanctification.”³⁸ This is a life of prayer.³⁹ Through this process, “Gradually he reduces and cuts away his eagerness for things below, and transfers his longing from what is visible, physical and temporary to what is invisible, spiritual and eternal.”⁴⁰ The fruit of deification is not a passive “neo-Platonic disincarnation of the intellect,” as Barlaam conceived.⁴¹ Instead, “although the physical and intellectual faculties no longer exercise any influence whatsoever on the noetic faculty, they are themselves, however, dominated by the noetic faculty’s unceasing prayer in such a fashion that they are spiritually cleansed and inspired and at the same time may engage in normal activities.”⁴² The perfect example of one who attained this goal, reaching the height of ceaseless prayer, deification, and knowledge of God, is the

³⁴ St. Gregory Palamas, “On the Precious and Life-Giving Cross,” *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas* (Waymart, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2008), 78-79.

³⁵ Palamas, “On Redemption,” 89.

³⁶ Christopher Veniamin, “St. Gregory Palamas: His Theological Perspective,” 8-9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

³⁸ Palamas, “On Redemption,” 97.

³⁹ Palamas, “On the Entry into the Holy of Holies II,” 43.

⁴⁰ Palamas, “On Redemption,” 97.

⁴¹ Romanides, 228-229.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 229.

Theotokos. She demonstrates that the divine life is characterized by prayer for all.⁴³ The one who has attained to the vision of God is a true theologian who, continually glorifying the Creator, is capable of guiding others on the way of salvation toward good health and divine knowledge.⁴⁴

Is St. Gregory Palamas a theological innovator? He is certainly not an innovator who developed new doctrinal theories, constituting “a novel metaphysical *experiment* in Byzantine theology” strange to the unbroken, unalterable Tradition of the Church.⁴⁵ St. Gregory Palamas expressed the same theology as the Fathers preceding him. The essence/energy distinction is found in the writings of St. Basil the Great, who wrote that “we know our God from His energies, but we do not claim that we can draw near to His essence, for His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable.”⁴⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa “echoes the thoughts of St. Basil when he speaks of ‘the energy which alone descends to us.’”⁴⁷ St. John Chrysostom spoke of the essence/energy distinction in terms of essence/condescension or essence/economies.⁴⁸ St. John Damascene wrote about the essence and energy of Christ in his *Exact Exposition*.⁴⁹ St. Gregory Palamas himself appealed to the writings of previous Fathers to show that he taught the same theology of the Father. For example, he cited St. Gregory the Theologian to show that the light of

⁴³ Veniamin, “St. Gregory Palamas: His Theological Perspective,” 10; Palamas, “On the Entry into the Holy of Holies II,” 41, 44.

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, trans. by Esther Williams (Levadia, GRE: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2002), 34-36; “glorification of the Creator”: St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, Li.20, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Rowan D. Williams, “The Philosophical Structure of Palamism,” *Eastern Christian Review*, 9:1-2, 1977, 44. Williams unsuccessfully attempted to understand St. Gregory’s teachings in the context of philosophical categories, rather than the continuing theological experience of the Church. See pp. 41ff of his work.

⁴⁶ The word “energies” is ἐνέργεια; Fr. Anthony Coniaris, *Achieving Your Potential in Christ: Theosis* (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life, 1993), http://theosis.riewe.com/theosis_what_theosis_is_not.htm; This Greek text appears in St. Basil the Great, “Letter CCXXXIV,” *Saint Basil: The Letters*, vol. 3, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1962), 372-373.

⁴⁷ Basil Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 94. See also sec. VII, p. 97 & sec. VIII, p. 102 of the same text.

⁴⁸ Christopher Veniamin, “Saint John Chrysostom and the Light of Tabor,” *Patristic & Byzantine Society* (Merton College, University of Oxford: Hilary Term, 1994), published in *Alive in Christ*, vol. X, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 31.

⁴⁹ See John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, bk. 3, chs. 15-19, NPNF, 61.

the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor was divine light and that “the eternal glory of God is participable, for that which in God is visible in some way, is also participable,” while the essence remains imparticipable.⁵⁰

As the Church has remained authoritative as the treasury of knowledge, St. Gregory’s teaching is authoritative because he taught the knowledge of the Church. St. Gregory certainly quoted the Fathers, but he did far more than *merely* invoke the Fathers and cite their teachings in support of his own. St. Gregory’s teachings expressed the *phronema* of the Fathers, which is the *phronema* of the Church.⁵¹ St. Gregory wrote, “We believe that we have been taught by those enlightened by Christ, things which they alone can know with certainty.”⁵² The Church agrees.

The teachings of St. Gregory Palamas were confirmed as Orthodox doctrine in harmony with the mind of the Church at the Councils of 1351 and 1368 in Constantinople. Furthermore, the Church has canonized St. Gregory Palamas and dedicated the second Sunday in Great Lent to His blessed memory.⁵³ Orthodox dogma does not change and the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas has been fully embraced by the Church. The Orthodox Church has definitively acknowledged St. Gregory as a teacher of the true Faith like the Fathers before him.

How can one claim that the decision of the Orthodox Church is the final word regarding St. Gregory Palamas? The Church can indeed make such a determination since the Church today, as in St. Gregory’s time, possesses no less authority than in Apostolic times. Therefore, the Church can affirm the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas with the same authority with which she affirmed the

⁵⁰ St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, III.i.12 & III.ii.13, 73 & 99, referring to St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily XXVII.31 & Homily XL.6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 109; The word *phronema* means “mind” or “mindset.” Our goal is to acquire through the Holy Spirit the same *phronema* as the Fathers, the one mind of the Church.

⁵² Veniamin, “St. Gregory Palamas: His Theological Perspective,” 7, quoting St. Gregory Palamas, Hom. XXXIV, 17, *The Homilies of St. Gregory Palamas*, vol. 1, ed. by Christopher Veniamin, 288, n. 88.

⁵³ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1963), 236-237; A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol. 2 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 668-669.

consubstantiality of the Son with the Father or confirmed the canon of Scripture. As Florovsky pointed out, “the Church is still fully authoritative as she has been in ages past, since the Spirit of Truth quickens her now no less effectively as in the ancient times.”⁵⁴

The Church’s authority is inseparable from her knowledge. The Church can affirm the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas because the Church possesses authoritative knowledge according to divine revelation. The Church has not gradually gained her treasure of divine knowledge incrementally through the unfolding of historical movements. Instead, the fullness of the knowledge the Church now possesses has been preserved and carried with her through the ages, passed on and actively lived from generation to generation since Pentecost. (More precisely, the Church has experienced the same knowledge through participation in the same divine energy in all times.) As Florovsky noted regarding the Church, “Indeed, there was no decrease of “authority,” and no decrease in the immediacy of spiritual competence and knowledge, in the course of Christian history.”⁵⁵ The Church is called *catholic* “because it has the whole truth, as it was revealed on the day of Pentecost.”⁵⁶ Met. Hierotheos explained,

We believe that on the day of Pentecost the Apostles reached deification, experienced Revelation and so reached the whole truth. Those who through the ages reach deification share in the same experience of revelations. But this truth is formulated and expressed in every epoch, as heresies appear. Thus we have not developed and gone deeper in the faith, but on the one hand, we struggle to live the faith, and on the other hand we are preserving the expression of faith in terms that will protect it from wrongdoings and distortions.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Georges Florovsky, “St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. 1 (Belmont, MA: Norland Publishing Company, 1972), 111-112.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁶ Hierotheos, *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

In opposition to the Orthodox understanding that the Church has possessed the fullness of knowledge at Pentecost, the Western concept of the Church includes a misconception that the Church grows in the understanding of theological knowledge.⁵⁸ As Metropolitan Hierotheos noted, “the scholastic theology of the West teaches that through the ages we have greater deepening in the dogmas of the faith and that they are still developing further. But this is not Orthodox teaching.”⁵⁹ Since the authority of the Church has not experienced a sudden break at any point in history and has not been diminished over time, the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas are recognized within the context of the continual worshipping life of the Church.⁶⁰

St. Gregory Palamas, “the honoured vessel of the Spirit,” is not only offered by the Church as an example of a teacher of theology because he accurately expresses the theology of the Church, but he is set forth as personal example of a true theologian who experienced the theology he professed.⁶¹ On the second Sunday in Great Lent, the Church commemorates St. Gregory as a teacher of true theology and an example of the Life in Christ he expressed.⁶² The Church declares: “Earth and sea acknowledge thee as their common teacher, as the holy pillar of Orthodoxy and sacred armoury of divine dogmas, as a wise and saintly theologian, as the comrade and companion of the apostles.”⁶³ He is in the company of all the Saints, who share in the same divine knowledge.⁶⁴

St. Gregory indeed exhibited *creativity* by how he explained the theology of the Church, but creativity in expression of the unchanging theology of the Church is not the same as attempting to

⁵⁸ Florovsky, 110.

⁵⁹ Hierotheos, *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite*, 58.

⁶⁰ Florovsky, 113.

⁶¹ *The Lenten Triodion*, Second Sunday in Lent, Vespers, 1st stichera on “Lord, I have cried,” 314.

⁶² Veniamin, “St. Gregory Palamas: His Theological Perspective,” 7.

⁶³ *The Lenten Triodion*, Second Sunday in Lent, Matins, canticle 5, second canon, trans. by Mother Mary and Arch. Kallistos Ware (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2001), 322.

⁶⁴ See Palamas, “On Redemption,” 100.

develop new theology. Bishop Kallistos (Ware) noted that “Palamas was himself a traditionalist in this creative sense, and he has for this very reason been attacked as an innovator by some Western critics.”⁶⁵ St. Gregory Palamas may be credited, then, with providing creative elaboration on the same dogma held by previous Fathers.⁶⁶ He is certainly “the champion of true devotion and the adversary of ungodliness, the fervent protector of the Faith, the great guide and teacher, the well-tuned harp of the Spirit, the golden tongue, the foundation that flows with waters of healing for the faithful, Gregory the great and marvelous.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁶⁶ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 46; Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, 104-105; Florovsky, “St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” 113-114; Veniamin, “The Interplay Between Mystical and Dogmatic Theology in Saint Gregory the Sinaite;” J. Van Rossum, “The Λόγοι of Creation and the Divine ‘Energies’,” *Studia Patristica*, 27, 1997, 213-217; See also Krivocheine, *St. Symeon the New Theologian: Life, Spirituality, Doctrine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 279-281.

⁶⁷ *The Lenten Triodion*, Second Sunday in Lent, Vespers, 2nd stichera on “Lord, I have cried,” 314.

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