



Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece

Holy Synod in Resistance



The Hesychastic Synods of the Fourteenth Century as the Ninth Œcumenical Synod of the Orthodox Church

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I Introduction

As is well known, in 2005 our Holy Synod in Resistance, struggling against the panheresy of ecumenism, designated as its holy Patrons the Three New Hierarchs, Sts. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas, and Mark Evgenikos of Ephesus, whom it celebrates together on the first Sunday in November each year.

The Holy Synod did this because these Holy Fathers of the Church stand in the direct line of a tradition of opposition to estranged and distorted Western Christianity.¹ As responsible and Divinely enlightened Shepherds of the Church of Christ, and furnished with the weapons of the Spirit, they preserved their peace and love before God, the Truth, and their consciences, and resolutely stamped out alien ideas, from whatever source they derived, in order that the Faith might remain free from innovation, that hope might remain undashed, and that love might remain unadulterated.

¹ Protopresbyter George Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς Πατέρας τῆς Θ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου* [St. Gregory Palamas, Father of the Ninth Œcumenical Synod] (Meteora: Ekdoseis Hieras Mones Megalou Meteorou, 2009), p. 10.

In this sense they are the true benefactors of Christianity in general and of Europe in particular,² since they firmly repulsed heresies of Western provenance that posed a threat to the East, thereby showing the true path of salvation to all.

St. Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, denounced the distortions involving theology (the *Filioque*) and ecclesiology (canonical order)³ introduced by Westerners and vigorously confronted them. St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, faithful to Tradition, re-expressed the Faith confessed by the Fathers in contending with the challenges of rationalism and Scholasticism: he insisted on the distinction between Essence and Energy in God as a precondition for the deification of man.⁴ St. Mark Evgenikos, Metropolitan of Ephesus, delivered the Orthodox Church from a uniate-style subjugation to the oppressive jackboot of Papism, declaring the rottenness of Papal tyranny and trumpeting the victory, the freedom, and the indomitable spirit of the Truth of God, which, as a spiritual and interior reality, is accessible to every man.

II The Eighth Œcumenical Synod

In his festal homily last year on this day [the celebration of the Holy Three New Hierarchs], His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of our Holy Synod, dealt specifically with the struggles of St. Photios the Great and their significance. He also demonstrated that, in the perennial conscience of Orthodoxy, the Great Synod of Constantinople of 879-880, which, under the guidance of St. Photios, rejected the heresy of the *Filioque* and thwarted Papal expansionism, assuredly constitutes the Eighth Œcumenical Synod of the Orthodox



² *Idem*, “Τὸ Μήνυμα τῆς Διδασκαλίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ εἰς τὴν Ἐποχὴν Μας” [The Message of the Teaching of St. Gregory Palamas in Our Age], in *idem*, *Πὰ τὴν Πίστην, τὴν Γλῶσσαν καὶ τὴν Ἱστορίαν Μας* [Concerning Our Faith, Our Language, and Our History] (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 2011), p. 16; see also <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/grigoriospalamas-metallinos.el.aspx>.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, p. 21.

Church. It is the bounden duty of the Shepherds of the Church—with the approval of the faithful People of God, of course—to issue a formal proclamation of it as such.⁵

Bishop Cyprian mentioned, in particular, the initiative of certain members of the Hierarchy of the New Calendar Church of Greece in this direction. Their initiative, however, was rejected by the majority of the Bishops, who refused to discuss the issue. It was, in essence, sidestepped, as being tiresome and undesirable! At the same time, the Synod of the New Calendar Church did not desist from busying itself with secondary and routine matters, which were anything but theological and were, in fact, primarily financial in nature (!), thereby proving very clearly the depth of their decay and secularization.

III

A Proposal regarding the Ninth Œcumenical Synod

Bishop Cyprian also mentioned the effort to have the Hesychastic Synods of the fourteenth century, under St. Gregory Palamas, proclaimed as the Ninth Œcumenical Synod of the Orthodox Church.⁶

However, if there is neither the will nor the disposition to proclaim the Synod under St. Photios the Great as the Eighth Œcumenical Synod, all the more are the innovationist, ecumenist, and Latin-minded ecclesiastical administrations of the official Orthodox Churches going to avoid proclaiming the Synod under St. Gregory Palamas as the Ninth Œcumenical Synod.

Simply put, as one can readily understand, such proclamations would drastically derail the accommodationist course that the ecumenists have been following for several decades and would place matters in a completely different perspective. But this is neither acceptable nor possible for the innovationist Hierarchies, who are lukewarm in the Faith and in whom Godly zeal has long since been extinguished. Compromise, in the form of secular diplomacy and entanglements and in the service of this-worldly aspirations and advantages, is the order of the day.

⁵ Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, “St. Photios the Great and the Eighth Œcumenical Synod: Patristic Conciliarity and Papism,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xxix, No. 1 (2012), pp. 42-51; see also <http://hsir.org/p/jj>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

IV St. Gregory Palamas



Before we deal in brief with the Hesychastic Synods of the fourteenth century, it is necessary to highlight a few facts concerning St. Gregory Palamas. He was born in Constantinople in 1296 to a noble family of devout parents. Steeped in piety from his earliest years, he developed his natural and acquired gifts to the utmost. He studied philosophy and was destined for a brilliant worldly career in the upper echelons of the government. However, his yearning for God, which consumed him, guided his steps towards monastic renunciation. He lived the ascetic life with self-denial and profound awareness on Mount Papikion in Thrace, on the Holy Mountain (his main abode), and in the Skete of Beroia. He lived in obedience, humility, prayer, repentance, abstinence, self-control, study, and service. He was purified and illumined by the Divine Light, for which he had been searching from his youth with true spiritual thirst (“Enlighten my darkness” was his constant prayer!). He gave blood and received spirit.⁷

He received the charism of theology from on high, becoming an unerring theologian of Tradition. As a Prophet of the New Grace⁸ he was able truly to be a spokesman of God, a herald of Grace, and a scourge of heresies.

He also proved to be a Confessor of the Faith. He was imprisoned in 1343, deposed by those sympathetic to heresy in 1344, and was released, vindicated, and consecrated a Hierarch in 1347. He reposed in the Lord in November of 1359. In 1368 his sanctity was proclaimed through an appeal to his many and impressive miracles.

⁷ Many works have been written about St. Gregory Palamas. See, for example, Panagiotis Chrestou, *Ο Κήρυξ της Χάριτος και του Φωτός* [The Preacher of Grace and Light] (Kouphalia: Ekdosis Hieras Mones Hagiou Gregorion Palama, 1984); Monk Theokletos Dionysiates, *Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς: Ο Βίος και η Θεολογία Του* [St. Gregory Palamas: His Life and His Theology], 2nd ed. (Holy Mountain: 1984). For the source of the saying about giving blood and receiving spirit, see the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (Abba Longinos, §5), *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXV, col. 257B.

⁸ Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, “The Three New Hierarchs as New Prophets of Grace,” <http://hsir.org/p/e7d>.

V Hesychasm

St. Gregory Palamas is renowned as a Hesychast theologian and as a champion of Hesychasm.

Hesychasm was not something new in the Church, formed a posteriori and supposedly under the influence of alien principles, systems, and sources.⁹ Hesychasm exists in the essence and at the core of our Evangelical Faith. It is Orthodox piety, the way and method of man's inner purification and his return to God. It is the ascesis and struggle against the passions through repentance and virtue. It is the attentive and persistent expulsion of evil thoughts and the guarding of the heart lest they enter into it. It is watchfulness, that is, the gathering of the mind (νοῦς) in the heart, primarily through the monologistic [*literally*, a single-worded prayer continuously recited] prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" It is mourning (πένθος), self-condemnation and self-reproach, exertion, bodily pain, and a change of orientation towards a correct course and choice of life, so as to elicit Divine mercy. It is sharing in the joy of worship, Eucharistic and liturgical participation, and union with God and men in Truth and Grace. It is a healthy social life of self-sacrifice and self-giving.

From their own experience, informed by the Holy Spirit, the Hesychast Saints, and especially St. Gregory Palamas, knew that God, as He Himself promised,¹⁰ becomes accessible to man, dwells in him, unites Himself with him, and imparts to him His Divine Life, making him God by Grace and deifying him.

God acts, and His Divine and Uncreated Energy, which proceeds naturally from His Essence, becomes participable as Light, divinizing man. This Light is that very Light of the Transfiguration which shone through Christ on Mount Tabor. It is infinitely beyond human knowledge and comprehension.

From this it follows that in God we have a distinction between Essence, which is completely inaccessible and incommunicable to His crea-

⁹ Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos, "Μία Κυοφούμενη Αίρεσι στην Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία" [A Nascent Heresy in the Orthodox Church], http://www.romfea.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8646:1-r&catid=43. Concerning Hesychasm, see an article by the same author at <http://www.paterikiorthodoxia.com/2012/05/663.html>.

¹⁰ See St. John 14:23: "If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

tures, and Energy, which is accessible and communicable, deifying and sanctifying man.

VI

The onslaught of the Latin-minded Barlaam of Calabria

This treasury of good things deriving from the experience of the Saints was not only doubted but also disparaged and insulted by a “Greek Uniate,” Barlaam the Calabrian, a Scholastic theologian and philosopher, who came to teach in the East, employing logic and speculation to the detriment of the vision of God.¹¹

He did not delay in his onslaught against the monks, against prayer, and against the distinction in God between Essence and Energy. He derided noetic prayer, rejected the distinction between Essence and Energy in God and the idea that His Energy is Uncreated, denounced as deluded those who received the Divine Light, and regarded the Light of Tabor as being within our understanding. In contrast, he considered the speculations of our minds as incomparably superior, thereby ascribing a “redemptive” significance to philosophy.¹²

However, if there is no distinction between Essence and Energy in God and if the Energy of God is created, as Barlaam maintained and as Roman Catholics maintain, then there is no possibility of salvation.

If the Noetic Sun of Righteousness exists, but does not shine on the world and ourselves with His Divine rays, in order to vivify us and draw us away, through repentance, from the depth of our falls to the Light of holiness, then He has no connection with us, has no direct influence on us, and thus we remain unredeemed in the fetters of our agnosticism.¹³

The lack of such a distinction as this led Papism to the *Filioque*, to legalism, to moralism, to the conception of the Pope as an intermediary between earth and Heaven, to his twofold authority as “super-bishop” and king or emperor of a temporal state, to the devaluation of the material

¹¹ See Archimandrite Hierotheos S. Blachos, “Τὸ Συνοδικὸν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας” [The *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy], in *Ἐκκλησία καὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικὸ Φρόνημα* [The Church and the Mind of the Church] (Lebadeia: Ekdoseis Hieras Mones Genethliou tes Theotokou, 1990), p. 270.

¹² In general, the anti-Hesychasts “believed that only natural knowledge of existing things leads to the knowledge of God and that this functions as an indispensable tool in man’s redemption” (Charalambos G. Soteropoulos, “Οἱ Καταδικασθέντες Αἰρετικοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἱερῶν Συνόδων Πολέμιοι τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ” [The Heretical Enemies of St. Gregory Palamas Condemned by the Holy Synods] in *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν* [St. Gregory Palamas in History and in the Present] [Holy Mountain: Ekdosis Hieras Megistes Mones Batopaidiou, 2000], p. 575).

¹³ Metallinos, “Τὸ Μήνυμα τῆς Διδασκαλίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ εἰς τὴν Ἐποχὴν Μας,” pp. 11-12.

world, to general and compulsory clerical celibacy, to aspersion at Baptism, to a divergent theological conception of the Incarnation (in terms of expiation) and of the Cross (in terms of forensic satisfaction), to many forms of secularization, etc.¹⁴

This incursion from the West essentially represented a blow against the heart of the East, namely Hesychasm.

But Hesychasm, by God's Providence, had as its champion, at this moment of great need, its most eminent representative, St. Gregory Palamas. The Saint bore the brunt of the struggle against Barlaam's machinations and played a leading rôle in the resolution of the dispute through traditional ecclesiastical means. The struggle was not personal or opportunistic. The Faith needed to be defined and safeguarded from every similar assault in the future, and the means to this end would be the Church's familiar and customary procedure: an ecclesiastical Synod.

VII

The necessity of a Synodal approach

The Orthodox Church regards a major Synod, and an Œcumenical Synod at that, as the supreme criterion of ecclesiality. Such a Synod deals with serious problems of faith and order in the Church, especially when salvation is at stake. That is, it concerns itself with vital issues, which have a direct bearing on man's salvation in Christ.¹⁵

In the case in question, since Barlaam, and later his supporters and continuators Akindynos and Gregoras, created a conflict between East and West¹⁶ by attempting to transplant an heretical and alien Western mentality to the East, this crucial problem needed to be addressed at a Synodal level, if not more broadly.

The principle issue was dogmatic and pertained directly to our salvation. Just as the ancient Arian heretics professed, a millennium before, that the Word of God was a creature, so also Barlaam taught that the Energy of God was created.¹⁷ This issue was a continuation of the teaching of the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁵ Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, pp. 13-14; see also Hieromonk Atanasije Jevtić, "Παράδοσις καὶ Ἀνανέωσις ἐν τῷ Θεσμῷ τῶν Οἰκουμηνικῶν Συνόδων" [Tradition and Renewal in the Institution of the Œcumenical Synods], in *Χριστὸς-Ἀρχὴ καὶ Τέλος* [Christ, the Beginning and the End] (n.p.: Hidryma Goulandre-Chorn, 1983), pp. 149-199.

¹⁶ Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, p. 18; see also Chrestos Giannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση στὴ Νεώτερη Ἑλλάδα* [Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece] (Athens: Ekdoseis Domos, 1996), p. 79.

¹⁷ Archimandrite Hierotheos, "Τὸ Συνοδικὸν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας," p. 258.

Sixth Œcumenical Synod concerning the wills and energies in Christ. Just as the human nature in Christ had a created will and energy, so also His Divine Nature had an Uncreated Will and Energy.

VIII The First Hesychastic Synod of 1341

The First Hesychastic Synod¹⁸ assembled on June 10, 1341 in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Emperor Andronicos Palaiologos III convened and officiated at the Synod. Patriarch John XIV Kalekas (1334–1347), Bishops, Archimandrites, Abbots, senators, and other dignitaries, as well as a multitude of the people, took part. The sessions were open to everyone, and there was intense interest on the part of the general public.

The accusations of Barlaam against the Hesychasts were directed against the Light of Tabor and the Jesus Prayer. St. Gregory Palamas, as an Athonite Hieromonk and leader of the Hesychasts, defended the correct belief on these subjects. The Light of the Transfiguration was not material or transitory; it was not some external glory of the body, but the glory and radiance of the Godhead hypostatically united with the body. In addition, it was not the Essence of God, but His Energy and Grace, accessible and communicable to those worthy of it. Thus, the “ineffable distinction” between and “preternatural union” of Essence and Energy in God was solemnly recognized and the indictment of St. Gregory on the alleged ground of ditheism was rejected.

The Jesus Prayer was given its Scriptural and Patristic foundation and every accusation against it was rejected.

Barlaam, finding himself in a difficult position, asked for forgiveness and pleaded ignorance, but, as became evident in what followed—since he again spewed forth the venom of his heresy and sought refuge in Italy, where the Pope consecrated him a bishop—his remorse was hypocritical and feigned.

• After Barlaam’s flight, the anti-Hesychast struggle was prosecuted by Gregory Akindynos, who questioned whether the dogmatic issue of the distinction between Essence and Energy in God had been resolved. For this reason, a new Synod had to be convened,¹⁹ as a continuation of the previous one, in August of 1341, once again in the Church of Hagia Sophia. This time it was under the presidency of the Great *Domestikos* [the su-

¹⁸ See Benizelos Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδές κατὰ τὸν ΙΔ΄ Αἰῶνα* [The Hesychastic Controversies During the Fourteenth Century] (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Parateretes,” 1993), pp. 49–56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–60.

preme military commander in the Byzantine Empire—TRANS.], John Kantakouzenos, the regent of Emperor John v Palaiologos (who was still a minor), in view of the sudden death of Emperor Andronikos III a few days after the earlier Synod in June. Again Patriarch John Kalekas took part, as did all who had participated in the preceding Synod. The Synod condemned Akindynos and those of like mind as being of the same belief as the heretic Barlaam.

Following this, a *Tomos* of what is reckoned to be the common Synod of June and August of 1341 was drawn up,²⁰ the greater part of it being devoted to the dogmatic issue of the Light of Tabor and expressing the views of St. Gregory Palamas.

• Prior to this, around the end of 1340, St. Gregory Palamas, in order to bolster his impending struggle against Barlaam, went from Thessalonica to the Holy Mountain, where he composed the renowned “Hagiorite Tome on Behalf of the Sacred Hesychasts,” a dogmatic text which had decisive significance in the development of the conflict, in terms of ensuring the ascendancy of the Orthodox viewpoint. It contains a superb summary of Hesychastic theology.²¹

On account of this, St. Gregory declared in retrospect: “The ‘Hagiorite Tome’ and Synodal Tome are our confession.”²²

After the Synod of 1341, all of those in high positions called St. Gregory “a teacher of piety, a yardstick of sacred dogmas, a pillar of right belief, and a champion of the Church.”²³

IX The Second Hesychastic Synod of 1347

In the ensuing period, a grievous civil war broke out in the Empire, owing to interference by Patriarch John Kalekas [in affairs of state—TRANS.],

²⁰ See Ioannes Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [The Dogmatic and Credal Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church], 2nd ed. (Athens: 1960), pp. 354-366.

²¹ See Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδες*, p. 43; for an analysis of the “Hagiorite Tome,” see Monk Theokletos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς*, pp. 152-162. The text of the “Hagiorite Tome” is found in the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL, cols. 1225-1236; for an English translation, see *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, trans. G.E.H Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, Vol. IV (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), pp. 418-425.

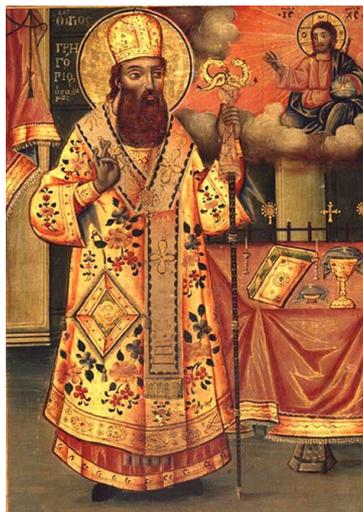
²² See Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδες*, p. 63 (“Refutation of a Letter of Kalekas,” §45, in *Συγγράμματα* [Writings], ed. Panagiotēs Chrestou, Vol. II [Thessalonica: 1966], p. 621, ll. 11-13).

²³ See Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδες*, p. 66 (St. Philotheos Kokkinos, “Laudatory Discourse on the Life of Our Father Among the Saints, Gregory Palamas,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLI, col. 600A).

and the so-called “Hesychastic controversy” recommenced. The Patriarch and St. Gregory disagreed with regard to the warring factions; Akindynos returned to the forefront and resumed his anti-Hesychast activities under the aegis of the now fallen Patriarch;²⁴ and the Saint, having broken communion with the Patriarch, was imprisoned (1343) and was allegedly excommunicated (1344) by the Akindynist Patriarch, who had become extremely dangerous.²⁵ The Saint paid no attention to this excommunication, deeming it—as indeed it was—utterly null and void.

²⁴ In a recent article (“Διαστρεβλώσεις Θέσεων του Ἁγίου Νεκταρίου Πενταπόλεως, Ἀρσενίου Καππαδόκου καὶ Ἰηηγορίου Παλαμᾶ ἀπὸ τοῦς Οἰκουμενιστῆς καὶ τοῦς Ἀποτειχισμένους Ζηλωτῆς” [Distortions of the Views of Sts. Nectarios of Pentapolis, Arsenius of Cappadocia, and Gregory Palamas by the Ecumenists and the Zealots Who Are Walled Off], posted on November 19, 2012 on the “Aktines” website), Protopresbyter Angelos Angelakopoulos from Piræus, shadowboxing against those who are consistent in their opposition to ecumenism and mistakenly supposing that they uphold the unhistorical view that St. Gregory Palamas broke communion with Patriarch John Kalekas prior to the Synod of 1341, endeavors to demonstrate that it did not happen this way! To be sure, St. Gregory did not cease from commemorating the Patriarch before the Synod, because no such issue had arisen. The Patriarch was still of an Orthodox frame of mind and presided over the Synod of 1341 in its two phases (June and August). However, already at the Synod in August the Patriarch evinced a degree of willingness to compromise and succeeded in imposing his demand that Akindynos not be condemned openly and by name, and also composed the *Tomos* of the Synod together with the Saint in order that his own viewpoint might be incorporated into certain sections (for the relevant details, see Christophorides, *Oi Houxasticēs Eridēs*, pp. 61-63). It was subsequently, after the civil war had begun and the Patriarch, in order to fulfill his political ambitions, had taken Akindynos as his ally (see *ibid.*, p. 72), that the Saint broke communion with him, since he had by then rendered himself excommunicate, without even having been judged or condemned by a Synod. This is the important and essential point, and not the erroneous supposition of Father Angelakopoulos, that the Saint allegedly “did not wall himself off before a Synodal judgment, but on the basis of the decisions of the Synod [of 1341].” Since the Patriarch had performed a volte-face, it was entirely natural and to be expected that the Saint would let him be hoist with his own petard, so that his inconsistency and self-condemnation might be plain for all to see. But does the fact that the Saint emphasizes this matter mean that, if it had not been for the Synod of 1341, he would have had no hesitation about communing with the Patriarch, even though the latter would have been “Akindynizing,” there having been no prior Synodal condemnation of anti-Hesychasm? In that case, why was it written very clearly in the “Hagiorite Tome” before any Synod: “We will not accept communion with one who does not agree with the Saints, as do we and our Fathers who immediately preceded us” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CL, col. 1236D)? Was this a matter of “blackmail” for the purpose of ensuring that a future Synod would vindicate the Hesychasts, or was it a case of clear foreknowledge that if a Synod or a Patriarch or anyone else were not to be in agreement with the Saints on the points in dispute, he would be denounced? Therefore, the issue of a Synodal condemnation prior to severing communion with those deviating in the Faith does not arise. In order for walling-off to take place, it suffices that those who deviate in the Faith proclaim their disagreement with the Saints persistently and intransigently, in words and deeds. Such walling-off is the “golden mean of Holy Orthodoxy,” and not communion with the heretical ecumenists of today, who, though they have not yet been condemned synodally, are nonetheless at variance with the Saints in the Faith. On the contrary, Father Angelakopoulos and those like him who are anti-ecumenists in word alone prefer communion with heretics, their putative disagreement with the ecumenists over *their* disagreement with the Saints notwithstanding! Their supposedly discerning stance leads them to this tragic antinomy!

²⁵ Bishop Klemes here makes a pun on the adjective “Akindynist” that is practically impossible to reproduce in translation. He remarks that, as a partisan of Akindynos (Ἀκίνδυνος, lit. “undangerous” or “free from danger”), Kalekas had become dangerous (ἐπικίνδυνος), if not very dangerous (πολυκίνδυνος). For another example of this rather clever play on words, see the Synaxation for the



However, the constant increase in the prestige of the Saint, who continued his anti-heretical struggle primarily through writing, and also by composing outstanding spiritual works, the erroneous and capricious activities of the Latin-minded Patriarch, and the change in the political situation led to the convocation of a new Synod in the imperial palace in Constantinople on February 2, 1347.²⁶ Empress Anna Palaiologina officiated at this Synod, together with her young son, John v Palaiologos. Patriarch John Kalekas, the accused,²⁷ did not take part, but Hierarchs, senators, the *Protos* of the Holy Mountain, monks, and senior government officials did participate. The *Tomos* of 1341 was confirmed, the writings of Patriarch John Kalekas were examined and proved to be cacodox, and thus Akindynos was decisively condemned, St. Gregory was extolled, and the misbelieving Patriarch was deposed for his deviation from Orthodoxy “towards the cacodox doctrines of the Latin Church, among which was recognition of Papal primacy,”²⁸ and also for his unjust condemnation of St. Gregory and for having ordained the heretic Akindynos a clergyman.²⁹ The Synod held other sessions and issued a *Tomos*,³⁰ which was signed by thirty Bishops in all.

Second Sunday of Great Lent, in which Akindynos is called “Polykindynos” on account of his opposition to St. Gregory’s Orthodox teaching on Hesychasm—TRANS.

²⁶ See Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικῆς Ἐριδες*, pp. 75-79.

²⁷ It is worth pointing out that Kalekas, a man who appears to have been devoid of any principles whatsoever, having vainly attempted a reconciliation with St. Gregory and his supporters, whom he had previously slandered and persecuted, now found himself on the receiving end of the political and social ferment that he had stirred up by his jousting with Kantakouzenos over the regency of the Empire: “The Patriarch saw the number of his supporters rapidly melting away. Six bishops, among them Matthew of Ephesus and Athanasius of Cyzicus...addressed a letter to the Empress Anne asking that the Patriarch should be brought to judgment; they accused him of simony, sacrilege and heresy, while also confirming the accusation brought against him at the Council of Adrianople [in May of 1346—TRANS.], that Calecas had ordained condemned heretics [i.e., Akindynos—TRANS.] as priests” (John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, TRANS. George Lawrence, 2nd ed. [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998], p. 79)—TRANS.

²⁸ According to the eminent scholar Gregorios Papamichael (see Monk Theokletos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς*, p. 229).

²⁹ Soteropoulos, “Οἱ Καταδικασθέντες Αἰρετικοί,” p. 589; see also Aristeides Papadakis and John Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), p. 291.

³⁰ See Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, pp. 366-374.

The Hesychast Isidore Boucheras was consecrated Patriarch, and St. Gregory was elected Metropolitan of Thessalonica.

• In spite of this triumph of the True Faith, there was a strong reaction on the part of many Bishops and, it appears, a schism was proclaimed. At least twenty-two of the opposing Hierarchs convoked a counter-synod in July of 1347 and issued a *Tomos* against the “Palamites,” putatively deposing Patriarch Isidore and St. Gregory of Thessalonica as “the author of misbelief”!³¹

X

The Third and Great Hesychastic Synod of 1351

After the deaths of Akindynos and the former Patriarch John Kalekas, the torch of the anti-Hesychast struggle was taken up by the polymath Nikephoros Gregoras, who already in 1346 had begun to write refutatory discourses against St. Gregory Palamas. Following the repose of the holy Patriarch Isidore and the ascent of Kallistos—an Athonite and likewise a



Hesychast, who had clashed with the Akindynists—to the Patriarchal throne (1350), it was judged that a new Synod was required for the sake of restoring peace to the Church and to put a definitive end to the controversy.

The Third Hesychastic “Divine and Sacred Synod”³² was convened on May 28, 1351, in the Palace of Blachernai in Constantinople by Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos and the holy Patriarch Kallistos. It surpassed the preceding two Synods in terms of the number of Hierarchs, and also erudite and wise men, who participated. Taking part in it were thirty-two Bishops—including Gregory of Thessalonica, of course—prominent members of the imperial family, members of the Senate, magistrates, Abbots, Archimandrites, Priests, monks, and laymen. The opposing faction of Nikephoros Gregoras included the Metropolitans who had been deposed by the Synod of 1347, Mat-

³¹ See Christophorides, *Oi Hēsychastikēs Erides*, pp. 80-81.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 85-99.

thew of Ephesus and Joseph of Ganos, and other clergy, who were joined by Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyre, representing the Patriarch of Antioch.

The anti-Hesychasts began by registering their opposition to the addition of Hesychastic expressions to the Confession of Faith of newly consecrated Hierarchs and to certain expressions in the refutatory works of St. Gregory Palamas, but their objections were suitably countered. At the second session, in the face of accusations levelled against him, the Saint submitted a “Confession of Faith” in which he set forth his precise dogmatic position and which received the approbation of the Synod. In the ensuing two sessions, the Truth likewise shone forth: the [examined] *Tomoi* of the Synods of 1341 and 1347 demonstrated the cacodoxy of the anti-Hesychasts and their just condemnation. In a final fifth session the questions posed by the adversaries were discussed and answered concisely and in an Orthodox manner in six dogmatic chapters, which may be summarized as follows:

“1. There is a distinction between Divine Essence and Divine Energy. They differ from each other in this respect, that the Divine Energy is communicated and divided indivisibly, and is named and in some sense comprehended from its effects, albeit dimly, whereas the Divine Essence is incommunicable, indivisible, and nameless, that is, completely above every name and incomprehensible.

2. The Divine Energy is uncreated.

3. This does not give rise to any complexity in God.

4. The Divine and uncreated Energy is called Divinity by the Saints.

5. We know that the Divine Essence and the Divine natural Energy are inseparable. For no energy can exist separately from the essence to which it belongs.

6. The Light of the Lord’s Transfiguration is uncreated.”³³

The Synod confirmed the *Tomoi* of the Synods of 1341 and 1347, anathematized Barlaam and Akindynos, and cut off from the Church those of like mind with them, likewise imposing an anathema on those who knowingly communed with the heretics and reckoning the clergy among them to be completely deprived of “all Priestly ministry.” Those clergy, however, who repented and stated that they had been led astray by the heretics they admitted to ecclesiastical communion without bringing up the issue of their Priesthood.³⁴

³³ Chrestou, *Ὁ Κῆρυξ τῆς Χάριτος καὶ τοῦ Φωτός*, pp. 126-127.

³⁴ Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδεσ*, pp. 98-99; Metropolitan Hierotheos, “Μία Κυοφούμενη Αἴρεσι στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία.”

After the end of the Synod, a *Tomos* was compiled, which was signed in the end by three Emperors, three Patriarchs, and fifty or more Hierarchs.³⁵

• Hesychastic doctrine was incorporated into the “*Synodikon of Orthodoxy*,” which is read every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. The principal dogmatic propositions contained in the “*Synodikon of Orthodoxy*” that express the Patristic teaching of St. Gregory Palamas are the following:

“1. The Light which shone at the Transfiguration of the Lord is neither a creature nor the Essence of God, but uncreated and natural Grace, illumination, and Energy ‘ever proceeding inseparably from the Divine Essence Itself’ (first anathema).

2. Just as there exists in God an unconfused union of Essence and Energy, so there exists also a distinction without separation, which consists primarily in the fact that the Essence is incommunicable, whereas the Energy is communicable (second anathema).

3. The natural Energies of God are uncreated, since the assertion that every natural Energy of God is created necessarily leads to the conclusion that the Essence of God is also created (third anathema).

4. The God-befitting distinction between Essence and Energy does not introduce any idea of complexity in God and does not destroy the Divine simplicity, since Energy is a product of nature (fourth anathema).

5. The term ‘Divinity’ is ascribed not only to the Divine Nature, but also to the Divine Energy, without thereby destroying the single Godhead of the Holy Trinity (fifth anathema).

6. Those who maintain that the Divine Essence is communicable fall into the heresy of Messalianism. According to the teaching of the Church, the Essence of God is incommunicable, whereas the Energy is communicable (sixth anathema).

In every one of the foregoing propositions it is emphasized that this teaching is consonant with the Divinely inspired theology of the Saints and the mind of the Church.”³⁶

XI

The Synod of 1351 is an Œcumenical Synod

In a relatively recent article, a Metropolitan of the New Calendar Church of Greece, in addressing the dolorous phenomenon of a “nascent heresy”

³⁵ Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδες*, p. 100; for the *Tomos*, see Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, pp. 374-410.

³⁶ Christophorides, *Οἱ Ἡσυχαστικὲς Ἐριδες*, p. 101.

in the [New Calendar] Church, takes the view that the Synod of 1351 is the Ninth Œcumenical Synod,³⁷ since

—the *Tomoi* of the preceding Hesychastic Synods of 1341 and 1347 were incorporated into it and thus they can be regarded together as a single Synod, condemning the heretics Barlaam, Akindynos, Gregoras, and those with them;

—it viewed itself as a continuation of the previous Œcumenical Synods, and especially of the Sixth;

—it recorded the opinions of the aforementioned heretics that pertain to the uncreated Energy and the participation therein by the Saints and demonstrated the heretical character of those opinions, proclaiming Hesychasm as a precondition for participating in the Kingdom of God as well as in genuine Liturgical experience of God;

—it set forth the evidence for Hesychastic theology in the texts of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers of the Church, and finally

—it validated the just anathemas against the heretics on the ground that they had not repented and deemed those of like mind with them “cut off and rejected from the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.”

It has also been stated elsewhere with great earnest that the Synod of 1351

deserves to be numbered among the Œcumenical Synods of the Orthodox Church, than which it is not in any way inferior as touching the soteriological significance of its theology. This Synod is proof of the continuity of the conciliarity of the Orthodox Church, of its living experience, and of its theology concerning salvation in Christ.³⁸

This asseveration concerning the Ninth Œcumenical Synod was expressed as far back as the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries by Metropolitan Neilos of Rhodes (with special reference to the Synod of 1341);³⁹ in more recent times great theologians, such as the late Father John Romanides and those who follow his line of thinking, Father George Metallinos and Father Hierotheos Blachos (now Metropolitan of Naupaktos), Father Atanasije Jevtić (now a Bishop), and others, have affirmed and do affirm this view.

Insofar as these Synods were convoked through imperial decrees and held in the presence of Emperors and with their participation; dealt with

³⁷ Metropolitan Hierotheos, “Μία Κυβοφύμενη Αἵρεσι στήν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία.”

³⁸ Hieromonk Atanasije, “Παράδοσις καὶ Ἀνανέωσις,” p. 195.

³⁹ See G. Ralles and M. Potles (eds.), *Σύνταγμα τῶν Θείων καὶ Ἱερῶν Κανόνων* [Collection of the Divine and Sacred Canons] (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1852-1859), Vol. 1, pp. 394-395; Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεία*, p. 351; Panagiotes N. Trembelas, *Δογματικὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [Dogmatic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church], 3rd ed. (Athens: “Ho Soter,” 1997), p. 136.

dogmatic and not with canonical issues, with issues that bear directly on salvation and not with theoretical issues; added their conclusions to the “*Synodikon of Orthodoxy*” and promulgated their decisions with binding force for the entire Church, which in fact endorsed them: they are very clearly Œcumenical in nature.⁴⁰

XII

The need for a formal proclamation of the Ninth Œcumenical Synod

The past century was the century of the ecumenist captivity of the Orthodox Church. The ecumenical fetters forged after the Second Vatican Council fifty years ago and in the wake of the blatant pro-Papism of the leaders of the Orthodox Church have become all the more constricting. A formal proclamation of the Eighth Synod under St. Photios the Great and of the Ninth Synod under St. Gregory Palamas as Œcumenical Synods is extremely timely and is manifestly the Will of God, though only for those who long for deliverance from these stifling bonds. The condemnation of the “Latinizing” anti-Hesychasts of the fourteenth century can be directed in general against the Latin-minded and against the “Latin Church,”⁴¹ which to this day upholds the Barlaamite and the other anti-Hesychast teachings, as well as all of the errors and heresies that relate directly or indirectly thereto.

⁴⁰ Archimandrite Hierotheos, “Τὸ Συνοδικὸν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας,” p. 259.

• The following characterizations of the Ninth Œcumenical Synod are important: “The Canons of the Hesychastic Synod that convened in Constantinople (1351 A.D.) also have an œcumenical character. At this Synod the Divine teaching of the Church concerning the uncreated Light of Tabor was defended. This pertains to the eternal Divine Energies, through which the Triune God is truly present in the history of the world and of mankind. In safeguarding the right Faith from the heretical Barlaamites and witnessing to the truth of the difference between the Divine Essence and the Divine Energy, the Fathers of this Synod, under the leadership of St. Gregory, defended Divine revelation in its entirety and the eternal treasury of the Church’s experience, as well as the possibility of real communion between God and man. Thereby they defended the only hope of mankind and the possibility of his infinite growth through the eternal and uncreated Grace of God. The decisions of this Synod are, as it were, the culmination and conclusion of all the Canons, of all the Œcumenical and local Synods up to that time. These Synods clearly reveal the eternal foundations in the whole world and in man, and the uncreated beauty in the Church as a Theanthropic and Spirit-bearing workshop of salvation, deification, and Taboric transfiguration” (Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and Bishop Danilo of Budapest, *Ὁρθόδοξη Παιδαγωγία* [Orthodox Pedagogy], trans. and ed. Alexios Panagopoulos [Patras: Ekdoseis “Dipso,” 1995], pp. 86-87). • Truly, if the dogma of the Uncreated Energies had no foundation, the soteriological mission of the Church would be relativized, and “man, as a creature of God, would disappear into a void, since the conjunctive tissue of God and man, the Divine Energies, would not exist” (Soteropoulos, “Οἱ Καταδικασθέντες Αἰρετικοί,” p. 591).

⁴¹ Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, p. 348.

The victory over Barlaam was a victory over the West, of which he was a representative, and over Latinism, and the condemnation of Barlaam was a condemnation of “the Latin Church itself,” which is anathematized also by the “*Synodikon of Orthodoxy*.”⁴²

However, herein lies the tragedy that we face today:

The ecumenist and Latin-minded Patriarchs, Hierarchs, clergy, and all of their followers are endeavoring, through a Synod which has been in preparation for fifty years and which is characterized by them as “Holy” and “Great,” to enforce and enshrine their ecclesiologically deadly ecumenist ventures and “achievements”; and not only are they not minded to condemn their “Sister Churches” of the heretical West, but, quite to the contrary, they desire to grant them official recognition and amnesty and, in general, to accept estranged and heretical Christianity as authentic!

From this it is clear that the authentic criteria of truth, that is, Hesychastic criteria, have been lost by those who are by nature and by position administrators and stewards responsible for the affairs and issues of the Church, and thus that they have also lost, along with this, the capacity to tell true holiness and salvation, that is, genuine Grace, apart from the spurious, delusive, and erroneous varieties thereof. It is certain that this darkening of the souls of contemporary “Fathers” is caused by the fact that they do not have the same experience as the Holy Fathers of Orthodoxy, that they are influenced by their hobnobbing with all manner of heretics, and that modern life is secularized and utterly at odds with Hesychasm. Thus, the contemporary Shepherds of Orthodoxy, instead of drawing from the wells of salvation and traversing the purifying way of asceticism and obedience, as indispensable preconditions for a truly Eucharistic participation and experience, so as to receive Light from Light and to impart it to others sitting in darkness and shadow, have turned elsewhere for pseudo-enlightenment, to that place from whence not the Divine and gladsome Light of the Truth is emitted, but the darkness of heresy and of the delusion of self-satisfaction, of rationalism, and of self-will, that is, of Barlaamism, the very epitome of Latinism and of all the errors deriving from it, whose name is “Legion.”

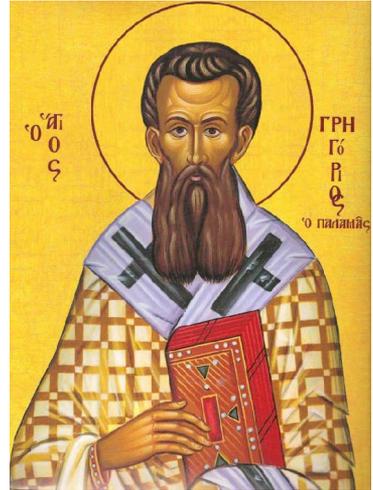
In the face of this depressing realization it has been correctly observed that any Synod that would wish to be characterized as, and truly to be, Pan-Orthodox, and which does not first and foremost proclaim the Eighth and Ninth Ecumenical Synods, will be, and will be characterized thereby as, a pseudo-synod!⁴³ For these [Pan-Orthodox] Synods ward off relativism, er-

⁴² According to Papamichael (see Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, p. 353).

⁴³ See Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, p. 29; idem, “Τὸ Μήνυμα τῆς Διδασκαλίας τοῦ

ror, secularization, and ecumenism, propounding and teaching true unity, communion, and salvation in the one and unique Body of the Orthodox Church of the One and unique Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ.

There exist today grave confusion and deviation in the inter-Christian and interfaith relations of ecumenism, which is universally admitted to be syncretistic. Panheretical Papism, with the deplorably impenitent Pope as its head, claims to constitute the unifying center of a globalized religion in a globalized world.



In this regard, St. Gregory Palamas exudes an attitude of confession, and also of martyrdom. He calls us to repentance, not to complacency. To be sure, he does not proffer us a self-satisfied, narcissistic closing-off of our egos at a personal or an ecclesiastical level. Rather, he hands on to us the method of laying aside the passions and of recovering the Grace hidden within us, for the attainment of true communion, while in ecclesiastical terms he exhorts us to a traditional and yet creative re-expression of the Faith, corresponding to the challenges and needs of our day, but not to a reinterpretation or adulteration thereof. One point alone is certain, at any rate: that those who do not repent and have not purified themselves are unable, and do not have the blessing, to bring forth things that are beautiful and good for the Church.

Likewise, the Saint indicates to us the Synodal way as the only one suitable for the definitive resolution of controversial issues and especially for the correction of heterodox teachings in the Church. By this means the Truth is attested and confessed, on the basis of the criterion of Orthodox Tradition, and those who deviate are called to repentance or are excised from the Body of the Church, in order, on the one hand, to put an end to tumult and bring peace to the body of the Church, and, on the other hand, that the Faith might be delineated and the love of the Truth might shine forth and triumph.

May sound Hesychastic criteria not be lost, at least by all those who represent the conscience of the Church amid the great apostasy of our day. And may these criteria form the basis for a formal proclamation of the

Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά εἰς τὴν Ἐποχὴν Μας,” p. 10.

Eighth and Ninth Œcumenical Synods, as a testimony of truth and hope
and for the condemnation of every false teaching. Amen!

*Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina
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