

Gregory Palamas

His life and Importance
Part II



Thessaloniki



- * 1338 and Gregory is in Thessaloniki & Barlaam is in Constantinople cozying up to the Patriarch
- * Gregory continues his writing and focuses on the interpretation of ascetic ideas and truths writing about the relation of body and soul and holy illumination and perfection.
- * Writes first three sections of his famous work *The Triads*.

Triads

He wrote,

“Our heart [center of soul] is the place of the rational faculty, the first rational organ of the body.”

Must keep watch over and correct our reason by a rigorous discipline

by gathering our mind, which has been distracted by the senses,

and lead it back into the interior, to the selfsame heart which is the seat of our thoughts.

Psycho-physical methods of holding the mind in the body is not a mechanical way of obtaining grace. It is a way for beginners to practically avoid distraction and wandering of the mind.

Triads

- * “*Contemplation...is a union and a divinization which occurs mystically and ineffably by the grace of God, after stripping away of everything here below which imprints itself on the mind, or rather after the cessation of all intellectual activity....*
- * *We intend to show...that though they (the monastics) have indeed seen (the light), yet their organ of vision was, properly speaking, neither the senses nor the intellect.”*

Triads

- * “*Beyond prayer, there is the ineffable vision, ecstasy in union, and the hidden mysteries,...where there is an unknowing which is beyond knowledge; though indeed a darkness, it is yet beyond radiance.*
- * *As the great Saint Dionysios says, ‘It is in the dazzling darkness that divine vision is given to the saint.’*
- * *Most important, this vision is not the divine essence, but a seeing of God by revelation appropriate and analogous to Him.*
- * *For God is not only beyond knowledge, but also beyond unknowing.”*

Barlaam responds

- * How do you suppose Barlaam responded?
- * In *On the Acquisition of Wisdom, On Prayer and On the Light of Knowledge* Barlaam argues that **wisdom comes from secular education and knowledge** of Greek philosophers.

Barlaam Responds

- * Barlaam was in Constantinople at this time (1339) and solicited and received the patronage of John Cantacuzene.
- * Barlaam presents a plan for union of the Churches based on the ideas that Gregory had already criticized. His idea involved establishing a council.
- * As imperial ambassador he met with Pope Benedict XII but his ideas were ignored. Why?
- * Papacy had no intention on compromising its absolute authority to assemble a council to debate differences with the Byzantine whom he regarded as schismatics.

Debate uplifted

- * Gregory writes his **second Triad** in response to Barlaam's new writings.
- * Gregory's former spiritual child **Gregory Akindynos counsels moderation** to Barlaam and opposes Barlaam's attacks on the monks.
- * Barlaam did not take his advice and focuses whole attention to the controversy which has become large in scale.

Monastic Support

- * Now **40**, Gregory journeys with Isodore to mount Athos to seek **approval of the entire Holy Mountain** for a document he wrote condemning Barlaam's views.
- * Known as the ***Hagioretic Tome*** which later was incorporated into the *Philokalia*.
- * Declares the distinction between **essence** and **energies** of God asserting this is true doctrine of the Church. The true mystic **can see God**, not in His essence but **in His energies**.

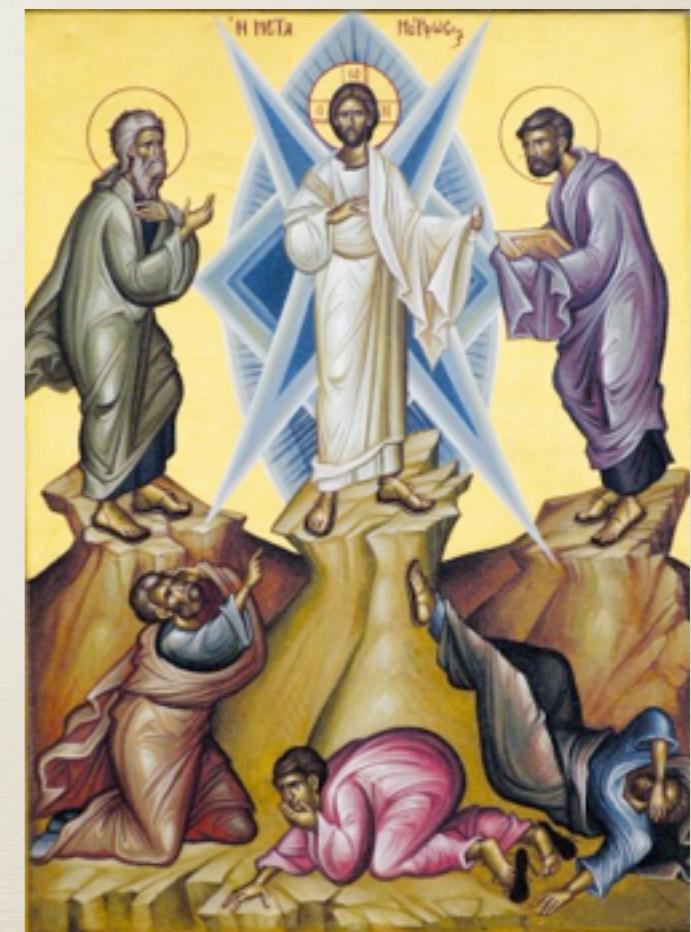
Essence and Energies

- * Essence and energies is important part of Orthodox Doctrine. What is nature of this distinction?
- * Like the **rays of the sun** are not the essence of the sun but its energies. We know the sun through its rays but we do not know its essence.
- * God is **both knowable and unknowable**.
- * **Can participate** in his divinity **through His energies**.
- * Grace is not created but **uncreated** energies of God.
- * This is idea of **theosis** and **work of the Holy Spirit in the Sacramental life** of the Church.



Divine Light

- * Mystics all describe a **divine light** as they approach union with God. Light is often referred to in Scripture.
- * Gregory writes, “*The light properly apprehended by the intellect is other than that apprehended by the senses; the sensible light manifests sensible objects, but the light of the mind is the knowledge contained in thoughts.*”
- * He compares this to the light experienced at the **Transfiguration** of Christ.



Divine Light

- * About the light of the Transfiguration of Jesus he writes:
- * “*He is transfigured, not by assuming what He did not possess, nor by changing into what He was not,*
- * *but by revealing Himself as He was to His disciples, opening their eyes and healing their blindness.”*



Divine light



- * He calls this Light experienced in Christ's Transfiguration "*ineffable, uncreated,...incorporeal, inaccessible,...without end limits.*"
- * He characterizes it as "*the changeless beauty and glory of God, glory to Christ, glory of the Spirit, ray of God.*"
- * This light "*neither comes into being nor ceases to be and cannot be described nor apprehended by bodily powers; it was indeed seen by the eyes of the body...but through a transfiguration of the senses....at that moment they passed from body to Spirit.*"
- * This light is outside the limits of human nature.

Returns to Thessaloniki

- * After gaining approval of the monks on Mount Athos takes this document and **returns to Thessaloniki**.
- * Meets with Barlaam several times and Barlaam promises to forgo censuring the hesychasts and to modify his texts.
- * Gregory has now spent 3 years in Thessaloniki writing and praying in a small chamber he built replicating his life on Athos.

Debate Continues

- * What do you think Barlaam does next?
 - * Comes up with new attack on Gregory, calling him a Messalian
- * Who were the Messalians?
 - * a sect who deny that Sacraments give grace and pretend to see God with their physical eyes.
 - * They were declared **heretical** in the third Ecumenical Council in 431. They practiced an intense form of meditation based only their **own effort** and did not rely on grace.
- * Serious charge. Gregory now writes his **third Triad** refuting Barlaam.

Divine Light

- * Barlaam contends that the light on Tabor was a **sensible light**, physical.
- * Gregory contends that this light **cannot be contemplated independently apart from the divine person** -- Not temporary or something that exists only briefly.
- * To do so necessitates a second God.



Divine Light

- * Gregory writes: “*This is why the saints are the instruments of the Holy Spirit,*
- * [they] received the same energy identical to that of the divinizing essence, and possess it in absolute entirety.
- * However, the divinizing **energy** of the Spirit **cannot be equated with the super-essential essence of God.**
- * It is the the divinizing essence of this divine essence, yet **not the totality of this energy....**
- * Indeed, what created thing could receive the entire, infinitely potent power of the Spirit, except He Who was carried in the womb of the Virgin?”

Appeal to Patriarch

- * Barlaam now goes back to Constantinople to make another complaint before patriarch Kalekas against the monks.
- * He presents his work *Against the Messalians* and somewhat persuades the patriarch by making a political threat claiming that the monks in their unified protest had **encroached on patriarchal authority** by issuing the *Hagioratic Tome*.
- * The Patriarch summons Gregory Palamas.

Constantinople

- * Gregory arrives about the same time as Emperor Andronikos III, childhood friend, schooled together, who wintered in Thessaloniki.
- * A synod takes place in **Hagia Sophia** and lasts only one day.
- * Barlaam spoke first and blundered into a discussion about the energies and then Gregory was allowed to defend himself easily winning the debate



Constantinople

- * Barlaam realizes he has fallen out of favor.
- * Seeks advice of John Cantacuzene who advises him to recognize his error. He concedes and confesses and Palamas freely pardons him.
- * Akindynos even gives a speech celebrating the reconciliation.
- * Patriarch then publishes a letter denouncing what Barlaam has said against the hesychasts.
- * Matter closed, right?

Barlaam Departs

- * On the following day the **Emperor becomes ill and dies.**
- * Who takes over?
- * John Cantacuzene who was serving as Prime Minister effectively rules the empire.
- * Barlaam leaves for Italy and the **Pope appoints him as Bishop of Gerace.** For now Barlaam is removed from the scene.
- * But the controversy is **not over.** What happens next? Who is left?

Akindykos

- * **Akindykos**, Gregory's spiritual student who left him twice and who had befriended Barlaam, **raises the controversy anew**.
- * Another **synod** is called in the galleries of the Hagia Sophia. **Gregory is again victorious** - his teaching is upheld and **Akindynos is condemned** signing a document accepting the decision of the synod.
- * Now political intrigue enters the picture.

Civil War

- * We enter a period of civil turmoil.
- * Death of Andronikos III left his widow Anna and a 9 year old son John V to rule.
- * Anna was a western princess who had no interest in running the empire. So who contends for power?
- * **John Catacuzene** and the **Patriarch John Kalekas**.

Civil War

- * They exchange oaths of mutual fidelity, but....
- * When Catacuzene had to depart for a military campaign in the Balkans the Patriarch summons Gregory to seek his support to take over power.
- * Gregory urges reconciliation and peace which angers the Patriarch.
- * On October of 1341 **Patriarch Kalekas takes the government by force** with the consent of the Empress Anna.
- * What does this do to the Patriarchate?
 - * Becomes polluted with imperial political power

Political Uncertainty

- * Who does Gregory support?
 - * Gregory had more confidence in the Orthodoxy of Cantacuzene than the patriarch. Why?
 - * Patriarch seemed to change his theological views based on what served his political interest.
- * In midst of the political upheaval Gregory continues to write refuting the ideas of Akindynos. He wrote *Dialogue between an Orthodox and Barlaamite*.

Defense

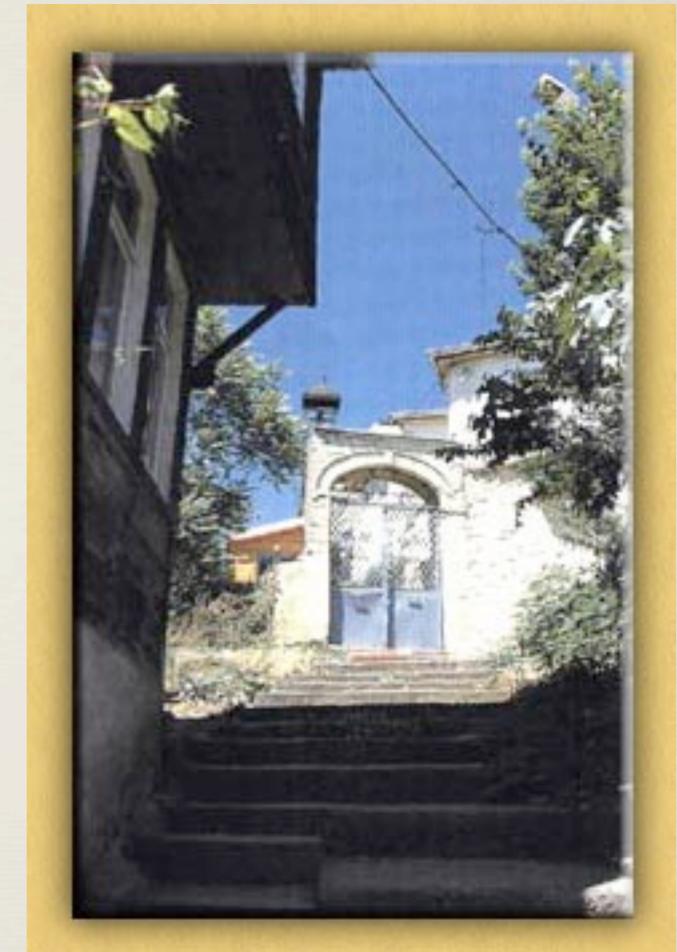
- * He wrote: “*Goodness is not one part of God, Wisdom another, and Majesty or Providence another.*
- * *God is wholly Goodness, wholly Wisdom, wholly Providence and wholly Majesty; for He is One, without any division into parts, but, possessing in Himself each of these energies,*
- * *He reveals Himself wholly in each by His presence and action in a unified, simple and undivided fashion.”*
- * He **again** pointed out that the faithful participating in divine grace do indeed **participate in His essence through His energies.**

Defense

- * In another article, *Theophanes*, he wrote, one “**becomes a god by grace**”
- * He explains this with a scripture verse from Peter’s second letter, “*He hath freely given to us the very great and precious promises, that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature*” (² Peter 1:4).
- * What was it that Peter was trying to express?
 - * The reality of **our participation in the very life of God.**
By “nature” the apostle means **sanctifying and divinizing grace.**

Gregory Retreats

- * Having enough of political intrigue he retreats to Monastery of Saint Michael of Sosthenion on Bosphorus a few miles from Constantinople.
- * Patriarch John Kalekas still fears Palamas and gives Akindynos license to attack Palamas' theology.
- * He sends a missionary to tell Gregory he would stop his attacks if he would no longer support Catacuzene but instead support him. Gregory refuses.



Back to Constantinople

- * Gregory returns to Constantinople on Palm Sunday coinciding with the arrival of a delegation of Athonite monks who came at the invitation of John Cantacuzene to help bring about peace with the Empress Anna.
- * Patriarch sets in motion plans to condemn Gregory by calling a secret council to condemn him.
- * Why does patriarch what to condemn him?
- * Gregory withdraws to Herakleia and in his absence Patriarch Kalekas presides over a synod directing that all of Gregory's writings be destroyed.

Arrested

- * Gregory **placed under house arrest**.
- * Meantime, Akindynos writes seven long treatises between 1342-1344 directed by the Patriarch to condemn Gregory.
- * In May 1343 Gregory and his disciple Dorotheos are put in the **palace prison** along with political enemies. Here he again defends his teaching against the writings of Akindynos titled, *Against Akindynos*.
- * He argues that **if one does not partake of divinizing grace**, one will **remain only a created consequence** of God's creative energy.

Prison

- * Prison life took a toll on his **health**. He was in need of daily medical treatment.
- * Between 1343-1344 he wrote *Confession of Faith* as well as dialogues and letters.
- * In 1344 he wrote *Exposition Concerning the Impious Barlaam and Akindynos* citing 41 heresies into which his adversaries had fallen.
- * He spends **4 yrs in prison** in deplorable conditions and sickness being released in 1347 at the age of **51**.
- * While in prison the **Patriarch unilaterally excommunicates Gregory**.

Empress Anna

- * Empress Anna now realizes the mistake she made allowing Kalekas to use anti-Palamism for political ends decides to **take charge**.
- * She receives a complete anti-Palamism dossier from Kalekas and a report from Gregory
- * Gregory drew on the memory of her late husband Andronikos III who had supported him in 1341.
- * She calls on a learned monk David Dishypatos who supplies her with an anthology of passages from holy Orthodox fathers supporting the theology taught by Gregory.

John Cantacuzene

- * What is happening with John Cantecuzene?
- * He has many followers outside of Constantinople and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Lazarus **crowns him emperor.**
- * He calls a **synod** which **deposes Patriarch Kalekas** on grounds that he has ordained heretics.
- * For followers of John Cantacuzene, Patriarch of Jerusalem has a kind of interim authority.
- * Kalekas who having lost support of Empress, is loosing his influence, so he now seeks reconciliation with Cantacuzene and abandons Akindynos.

Kalekas Deposed

- * Empress calls another **synod** in January of 1347 for purpose to depose Kalekas at which both the Empress and her 15 yr old son John V preside. The **Tome of 1341 was reaffirmed** and **Kalekas was deposed**.
- * Cantacuzene approaches Constantinople with his army and the Empress fearing he would sack the city barricaded herself in the palace awaiting negotiations.
- * Who did she send to negotiate?
 - * Gregory Palamas.

Co-Emperors

- * Agreement worked out where Cantacuzene would reign as **co-emperor** with her son & his daughter Helena would marry his co-emperor John V.
- * Were now **two emperors** and **three Empresses**: Anna, Irene (wife of Cantacuzene), and Helena.
- * Kalekas refuses to acknowledge his disposition as Patriarch because he was absent from it so another synod is convened but he refuses to attend.
- * A new Tome is issued condemning Kalekas as was Barlaam and excommunicated Akindynos signed by twenty Bishops.
- * **Palamas' teaching affirmed again and again.**

Becomes Bishop

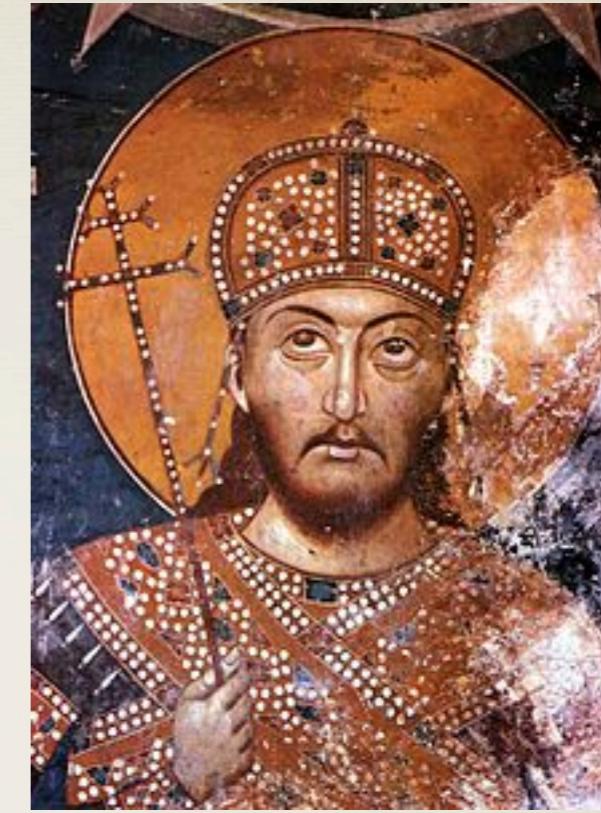
- * Isadore was chosen to take the position of Patriarch and immediately appoints thirty-two new bishops
- * Gregory is elevated as **Bishop of Thessaloniki.**
- * Kalekas exiled to Didymotica and shortly thereafter fell ill and died in December 1347 never accepting amnesty offered by Cantacuzene.
- * Akindynos flees Constantinople and dies in exile in May of 1348 abandoned by most of his friends.

Pastoral Years
His defense of Orthodoxy clearly
affirmed

Zealots

- * Still problems ahead for Gregory as heads to Thessaloniki
- * Thessaloniki was controlled by group called “Zealots” with some Akindynists who refused to recognize the accession of John VI Cantacuzene to the throne.
- * Gregory is blocked from entering the city because they saw him as a Cantacuzenist.
- * Retires to Mt. Athos after having been away for 8 years

- * During his absence Athos came under the control of Sebian Stephen Dushan. He was attempting to create and Eastern Empire of his own uniting both Serb and Byzantine lands.
- * He tried to appoint Gregory to the Chair of the Bulgarian Metropolitan offering him towns churches and lands but Gregory refused.



- * He told him. “ We have no need for political power, land, revenues, rents or wealth. For if someone was to place a sponge inside a cup of water, the sponge can noway soak up the sea. How is this possible? This sponge will naturally reject complete permeation of the sea.
- * It is the same with us here. We have long since learned to live on little and to be content with the bare necessities of daily life.
- * Even if you should immerse us completely in gold, you would see that we cannot be saturated with more than what constitutes our daily food and needs.
- * Therefore, it is not essential that you should allot unto us these excessive gifts and monies.

- * Gregory's presence was greater authority than the emperor Dushan. One of key roles of our monasteries. They protect holy Tradition when it is distorted by political forces through the powers of the Holy Spirit.
- * Gregory left in March of 1348 and attempted to enter his see in Thessaloniki. The Zealots were willing to accept him on the condition that he not commemorate Cantacuzene in the Liturgy. He chose to postpone taking possession of his see and avoid hostility.

- * He was sent by the synod to the island of Limnos hoping his presence would soften the barbarous manners of its inhabitants.
- * This was when the plague struck the capital wiping out eight of every nine inhabitants. The plague also came to Limnos.
- * After fervent prayer the epidemic was halted on Limnos.

Thrssaloniki

- * In 1350 Cantacuzene takes control of Thessaloniki. Immediately representative of clergy and highest dignitaries dispatched representatives seek Gregory to return & take his see.
- * Welcomed with great joy. Huge procession held and one of chanters began to chant Pascal hymn: "*It is the day of the resurrection, let us be radiant, O ye peoples...*"
 - * Gregory's release from prison and exile was like Christ arising out of depths of hades for the people.
 - * The chanters continued with the canon, "*Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ*"...and "*Come let us drink a new drink.*"

Thessaloniki

- * Gregory gave a sermon based on theme of peace, rebuking the excess of the Zealots, but despite all these difficulties he declares he will not sanction a policy of retribution.
- * He says, "*Think no longer of doing evil or of returning ill for ill.*"
- * His sermon moves inhabitants to seek forgiveness from one another.
- * Later he renounces the many social injustices committed by the Zealots and many of this group became his close friends.

New Patriarch

- * In 1351 Patriarch Isadore reposed and Kallistos I was appointed. What happens?
 - * Again issue of Palamas' theology was open for discussion.
- * **Affirmed again** it was summarized as follows:
 - * The **divine essence and energy are distinct** from the other, in that the **divine energy is communicable** and is divisible without division, and is nameable and apprehensible in a certain sense, although obscurely from its effects (Creatures). The **essence however is incomunicable**, indivisible, and nameless, as altogether transcending every name and concept.

Affirmed

- * The Tome of 1341 was read together with extracts from Saint Basil (4th c.), John of Damascus (8th c.), Maximos the Confessor (7th c.) and Gregory of Nyssa (4th c.) along with the Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (7th c.) were presented as evidence favorable to Palamite theology.
- * Kallistos calls on the anti-Palamists to recant and some did repent. Most of the opponents were not punished.

Affirmed Again & Again

- * The synod solemnly recognizes the orthodoxy of the hesychasts.
- * The synodal Tome becomes an ecclesiastical decree and also a ruling of the Emperor John Cantacuzene

New Civil War

- * Gregory's liver ailment grows increasingly worse & he devotes himself to preaching and admin of his see.
- * In 1352 a civil war brakes out between the two emperors. **John V** backed by Venetian money invades his brother in laws territory of Andrianople and **John Cantacuzene** comes to his rescue with Turkish troops.
- * They were not able to restore former order & became subject to savage looting by the Turkish troops.

Civil War

- * There followed a period of civil war Between John V and John Catecuzene.
- * During this period, Gregory is captured by Ottomans who sought ransom for his release and is held in Nicea for over a year.
- * Eventually **John V wins** and tries to make peace with West but unable to get Support of Pope Innocent VI.
- * **Catecuzene abdicates** and enters a monastery and lives as **Monk Ioasaph Christodoule** for another 30 years and no longer takes part in any political activities

- * in 1353 John Cantacuzene made his Son co-emperor
- * In 1352 the Ottoman Turks were seizing territory in Europe and Constantinople was in danger itself.
- * In 1354 Emperor John V approached Palamas asking him to go to the capital to attempt reconciliation.
- * A ship was sent for him and in route He was captured by the Ottoman's and was held in captivity for a year.
- * In captivity he never stopped preaching and was respected by his Muslim captors.

- * While in captivity he neever stopped teaching to the Muslims
- * Gregory was taken to the summer residence of Emir Orkhan where he met his grandson Ismael.
- * They entered into a discussion. He was asked many questions relating to differences between Christian beliefs and practice and that of Muslims.
- * He asked if he loved the Prophet Mohamed.
- * He replied negatively commenting, “If one does not believe in the words of Christ, it is not possible for him to love the Teacher as Teacher.”

- * He was then asked if he loved Jesus, whom they crucified?
- * He replied positively and gave the story of the voluntary and glorious Passion and the dispassion of the divinity.
- * This kind of dialogue went on for some time.

- * The Emir asked Gregory to engage with other non-Orthodox about his beliefs.
- * We have a detailed account between Gregory and the Chiones who were converts to Islam
- * In 1354 he was transferred to Nicaea which was in turkish control since 1329. He continued to enter in to dialogue with Muslims defending the Christian faith.
- * He remained imprisoned until 1355. What the Turks were seeking was a ransom.

- * The trouble in the Capital delayed the sending of ransom money.
- * Emperor John V made an alliance with the Genoese who in 1354 were able to force their way into the capital forcing John Cantacuzene to abdicate.
- * He entered a monastery and lived as Monk Ioasaph Christodoule for another 30 years and no longer took part in any political activities.
- * With all this strife the Byzantine power, monetary wealth and administrative system became impotent.
- * It was the Serbs who came up with the ransom money to free Palamas.

- * Emperor John V facing the armed force of the Ottomans seeking military help took the issue of union with the Roman Church seriously . It appeared that the empire was going to fall either to the Ottomans or the papists.
- * He sent a letter to Pope Innocent VI asking for 5 galleys, 15 transport vessels, 1500 foot soldiers and 500 horsemen. In compensation he promised to convert his Byzantine subjects to the Latin belief within six months!

- * The pope held the opinion that negotiations for union with the Greeks could only be made under the condition of **total subjection** to the papacy.
- * The Pope sent Paul of Smyrna and Gregory spoke for the Emperor. At the center of their discussion was the theology of Palamas which the Latins saw as heretical.
- * Attempts were made to establish an Ecumenical Council but Pope Urban was set against it preferring to organize a Latin Church within the Greek empire.

- * While most Orthodox held to Gregory's theology, the West could not accept that grace was uncreated or could be equated with the divine light.
- * At this time in 1358 he wrote his last article focusing on the nature of the light on Tabor.

- * Gregory asserted that the knowledge of God is always the **knowledge** “*through grace*,” subject to His will and dependent on the act of the condescension of the Almighty God.
- * The angels themselves have need of this divine condescension or they could not see God; therefore by grace, they see God, but not the essence of God.
- * Further this uncreated light is the “*pledge of the age to come*,” or the common reward and garment of Christian divinization.

- * At **62** Gregory has another attack that he suffered with since he was 39. He continued to preach and celebrate liturgies and services.
- * On August 1 he gives sermon on human illness and the following Sunday he could not rise from his bed.

Death

- * He foretold of his death on 13th of November, 1359
- * he uttered, “*My friends, I am going away from you now to the Lord. I know this because Saint John Chrysostom (whom they had commemorated on that day) appeared to me and as a friend with love called me onto himself.*”
- * On the 14th after 12 1/2 years in the episcopacy he departed to the Lord.

- * His last words that could be heard to those attending to him was “*The heavens, to the heavens.*”
- * His soul quietly and peacefully departed from the body. His countenance became radiant and everything in the room became illuminated with light.
- * His radiant countenance was seen by the whole city which flocked to his precious relics for the last kiss.

- * His body was buried in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki.



Saint Gregory

- * There were many miracles recorded upon his repose
- * **9 yrs later** he was **recognized as a saint** in the Church and given a unique place in the Liturgical calendar being assigned to the second Sunday of the Great Fast.
- * Gregory is seen to have saved the truth of Orthodoxy

Summary

- * Main teachings
- * Knowing God is possible through revelation, experience and relationship. It is not possible through philosophy.
- * There are two aspects of God: His energies and his essence.
- * Inner prayer is how we can know God. It is by silence.
“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm (46/45)
- * Not an absence of noise but a **presence of God**. In silence we are able to listen.
- * The way to silence is by **controlling the passions**.

Summary

- * We are all capable of experiencing the divine light that His disciples witnessed on Mount Tabor.
- * This is not a created light as Barlaam contended but an **uncreated light of God Himself**.

Summary

- * Why is his message is critical for today's world?
- * We suffer from a loss of the sacred in our daily lives.
- * We've lost our inner peace due to our attachment to everything of this world and find it difficult to experience the energies of God.
- * It's a noisy stressful world with TV, cell phones, Video games, all kinds of machinery in our homes and outside
- * We pursue pleasures of this world but find this is never enough. Experience lots of depression
- * Through the transforming light of Tabor, Gregory shows us how we can find inner peace and the possibility of eternal life with Christ in His Kingdom.

Next

- * We can now turn to discuss his teachings about **how to gain this inner peace** in our daily lives.
- * Next: Passions & Purification - preparing for our union with God and true joy.