

PHILOKALIA

Summary of the AGIOREITIKOS TOMOS of

St Gregory Palamas

We testify by signing at the conclusion of this Tomos, that the treatise of the most reverend Hieromonk Gregory is in agreement with the Teachings of the Scriptures and the holy fathers. Our small experiences regard that his argument *In defense of Those who Devoutly Practice a Life of Stillness*, is consistent with the teachings and the tradition of the Holy Church.

The Grace of the Holy Spirit

We attest that the power of the Holy Spirit which revealed the mysteries of the Christian confession, prior to the fulfillment of prophecies, to only few, the prophets, is revealing to Gregory and the hesychasts the mysteries of the age to come. The Holy Spirit discloses, to a limited extent, to those whom he accounts worthy a foretaste to what is incomprehensible, unreachable and unknown.

The Incarnation was the moment of truth for the prophets of the Old Testament who were condemned because of their prophesized words. What was unheard of and (was) unaccepted to the ears and minds of their listeners became now a doctrine and the focal of our Orthodox Faith. We now believe in one simple, non-composite, uncreated, unseen and incomprehensible tri-hypostatic Godhead where the begotten Son of God and the Holy Spirit are pre-eternal and coeternal with the Father, though the principle of unity does not destroy the Tri-hypostatic Godhead.

Uncreated, Un-generated and Real Energies

The spiritual dispositions of Gregory and the monks who have established themselves in God through sincere prayers, mystical and supra-intellectual union with God are the consequence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These monks have been initiated by their actual experience into what surpasses the intellect.

These spiritual dispositions revealed to these monks that the deifying graces of God are uncreated, un-generated and completely real. They are eternally existent with God, but God surpasses them for He is the Origin of His graces as Dionysius and Maximos testified a long time ago. God is the Cause of His energies. There is not a thing that was

existed prior to God. They were, are and will always exist with God from before the beginning of time and forever. They are uncreated as He is Uncreated though (that) some have been manifested in time. For God's divinity is not a dual divinity; the energies, including those manifested in time, are uncreated for the Transcendent is indivisible.

The uncreated energies do not exist without and beside God. They are not deities by themselves and as such, Gregory and the hesychasts are not ditheists. They are with the same mind of the Church as is outspoken by the teaching of the holy fathers. The ignorant is requested to seek knowledge and he will find only consistency in Gregory's teachings with the fathers.

Union with God

Gregory is correctly declaring that the perfect union with God can be accomplished truly, and only, by the deifying grace of God. It is not achieved merely through contemplation, imagery fashion and personal efforts, but by the indwelling of God Himself in the person. The attainment of deification is not in the capacity of the human being alone and it is not granted to the worthy ones only. The grace of deification is totally unconditional. It is above nature, virtue and knowledge. Our active and ascetic accomplishments do no more than fit us for union with God. They are our own preparation of our expectation and belief. They are our clean up to make our place acceptable for the grace of God in His entirety, and which dwells in our entirety, allowing every pore of our body to breathe Him. Although God penetrates our entirety, His essence remains unknown; we will never be able to know His essence, or else we would become God.

The Light of Mount Thabor

The teaching of Gregory with regards to the light of Mount Thabor is according to the hymns and the teachings of the saints. This light was not an apparition; It was indeed incomprehensible and it was the true uncreated light that radiated from Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. It was the ray of Divinity and the glory of God.

Christ did not replace Himself by another God on Mount Thabor. He remained the same person. He did not add something to Himself, neither did he remove anything. He manifested Himself to His disciples as He really is was and is, without change. He opened the eyes of His disciples allowing them to see His reality reality, which they were unable to bear its brightness. They were thrown to the earth from that majestic

transfiguration, which forced them to cover their faces and to only hear the voice of God from the clouds.

The Age to Come Begins in this Present Age

Gregory and those who have abandoned the pleasures of this age for the blessings of the eternity appropriately believe that their bodies share with their souls these ineffable blessings. This begins in this world through advancing and transcending in the spiritual path. The deifying grace of God through the state of dispassion of the person transforms and sanctifies the purified intellect, and consequently to the activities of the body because the body and the soul share a conjoint existent.

Thus the ineffable blessings are communicated and truly experienced here and now by Gregory and his followers. They become the happy possessors of the sight and the intellect which surpass that of the ordinary man. They are transformed in the manner that *“God alone knows and those in whom these things are brought to pass.”*

Conclusion

We, the undersigned, believe that Gregory is with the mind of the church. His treatise reflects the writings of the Scriptures and the fathers of the Church. The deifying grace of God penetrated him. It did find a prepared clean place empty from passions longing for God and His energies. It did reveal to him in the present, the things of the age to come which allowed him to discern between the uncreated essence and the uncreated energies. It did oblige him to declare plainly and correctly the true faith that was delivered by the saints.

Submitted with God's grace by Deacon Jean El-Murr