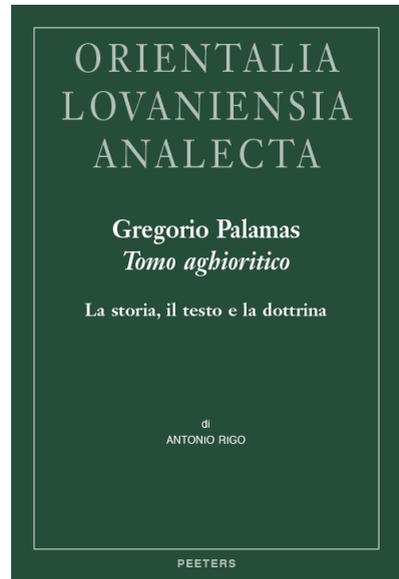


Book Review:

Antonio Rigo, *Gregorio Palamas, Tomo aghioritico: La storia, il testo e la dottrina*. OLA 298. Bibliothéque de Byzantion 26. Leuven: Peeters, 2021. x + 187 p. (with 6 plates). ISBN 978-90-429-4077-2

The publication of the critical text of a work by Gregory Palamas – especially one as important as the *Hagioritic Tomos* – is a cause for celebration. Until now the only Palamas text that has been edited in accordance with the best modern standards is Anne Philippidis-Braat’s ‘Captivity Dossier’ (1979).¹ Even Robert Sinkewicz’s *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (1988) falls a little short in this respect.² With regard to the *Hagioritic Tomos*, we have had to rely hitherto on the very inferior text of Basil Pseftonkas published in 1967 in the second volume of Panagiotis Christou’s edition of Palamas’ collected works.³ Besides making some eccentric emendations of his own, Pseftonkas bases his text on the four earlier printed editions (including Jacques-Paul Migne, which is only a reprint of the text published in the *Philokalia* by Nikodemos the Hagiorite), supplemented by readings from an arbitrary selection of early manuscripts.⁴



¹ Anne Philippidis-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs: dossier et commentaire,” *TM* 7 (1979): 109–222.

² Robert Sinkewicz, *Gregory Palamas, One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988).

³ *PS*, vol. 2, 567–578.

⁴ Some of Pseftonkas’ more egregious errors are silently corrected by Sinkewicz in his helpful English translation of the “Tomos of the Holy Mountain,” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*,

For his own edition, Antonio Rigo, the world's leading Palamas scholar, has collated all twelve manuscripts that contain the text, besides also taking into account the indirect tradition and the readings of the earliest printed edition, that of Dositheos II of Jerusalem (1698).⁵ As a result, Rigo's *Tomo aghioritico* not only establishes an authoritative text that is unlikely to be superseded but also gives us insights into how and when Palamas drafted his *Tomos* and the use he subsequently made of it.

The *Hagioretic Tomos* is a very short document, the Greek text in Rigo's edition occupying barely eight pages (p. 108–127, with facing Italian translation). It is preceded in the *Tomo aghioritico*, however, by an important introduction of 107 pages on the historical context and manuscript tradition that elucidates many interesting details. The first point Rigo establishes is that the *Hagioretic Tomos* is indeed a work of Gregory Palamas. Giovanni Mercati in his classic *Notizie* (1931) had expressed the opinion that the author was in fact Philotheos Kokkinos, who later became *hēgoumenos* of the Lavra and eventually ecumenical patriarch.⁶ This opinion was repeated by Martin Jugie⁷ and as recently as 2006 by Juan Nadal Cañellas.⁸ In 1959, however, John Meyendorff, had shown conclusively that Palamas was the author of the *Tomos*, although Meyendorff was unsure when it had been drawn up, coming down finally in favor of “towards the end of 1340.”⁹ Other scholars, such as Despos Lialiou, have proposed November 1340, or even later.¹⁰ Rigo, however, demonstrates that the *Tomos* was composed by Palamas earlier that year in order to be presented at the *katholikē synaxis* (a kind of annual general meeting) of the Holy Mountain held on August 15, the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. It was then subscribed by a number of

vol. 2: *XIII^e–XIX^e s.*, eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 183–188.

⁵ Dositheos' edition (published in his *Τόμος αγάπης κατὰ Λατίνων*, Iași, 1698, 34*–36*) is based on an exemplar, no longer extant, that once belonged to Athanasios of Kyzikos and witnesses to the second of the two families of manuscripts (group b). Nikodemos the Hagiorite's *Philokalia* edition (Venice, 1782) is based on a very late manuscript of the first family (group a) and, although carefully examined by Rigo, has not been used to establish the text.

⁶ Giovanni Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV* (Studi e testi 56) (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1931), 245–246.

⁷ Martin Jugie, “Palamite (controverses),” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XI (1931): 1784–1785.

⁸ Juan Nadal Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment*, 2 vols (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et documents, 50–51) (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), vol. 1, 150.

⁹ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Patristica Sorbonensia 3) (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 350–351.

¹⁰ Despo A. Lialiou, “Ο άγιορειτικός τόμος ύπερ τών ιερώς ήσυχάζόντων (Είσαγωγικά, ιστορικά, θεολογικά και έρμηνευτικά συμφραζόμενα),” *Κληρονομία* 28 (1996): 31–54.

those present, including the *prōtos*, Isaac, and the ordinary of the Holy Mountain, the bishop of Hierissos, between August 16–20, 1340. This document was to be of capital importance in acquitting Palamas from Barlaam’s charge of heresy, as Palamas (who was living in Thessaloniki at the time) well understood when he ignored the summons of his dying sister, Theodote, in order to dash off to the Holy Mountain to be there in time for the *katholikē synaxis* (Philotheos Kokkinos, *Encomium*, § 55).

Barlaam of Calabria had accused Palamas of Messalianism (i.e., Bogomilism), which Rigo describes as a “real and characteristic obsession of Byzantine heresy-hunters from the twelfth century onwards” (p. 14). It was a serious charge that carried all the more weight because of an episode that had disturbed the Holy Mountain a few years before when a group of monks who actually had held Messalian beliefs had been unmasked, punished, and expelled. The support of the authorities on Mount Athos was crucial to Palamas. For this reason, Rigo gives particular attention to the signatories who subscribed the document. The first of these was the *prōtos* (the elected representative and head) of the Holy Mountain, Isaac of Anapausa. Isaac, as Rigo says, was one of the more notable holders of the office of *prōtos* in the Byzantine period, not only because he was an able administrator who held it for more than 25 years but also because he was regarded as a saint even in his own lifetime. After Isaac’s signature come the signatures of four *hēgoumenoi* (of the Lavra, Iviron, Vatopedi, and Chilandar), then that of the hieromonk Philotheos (Kokkinos) of the Lavra, future *hēgoumenos* and patriarch and obviously already a very senior Athonite monk, then that of 14 more monks, including the *hēgoumenos* of Koutloumus and three monks of Palamas’ *skētē* of Magoula, and finally that of Ioasaph, bishop of Hierissos, the ordinary of Mount Athos. The list is impressive. The fact that all the *hēgoumenoi* of the Holy Mountain did not sign is not significant. The signatories are actually more numerous than in most official Athonite documents of the period and include all the more senior figures.

The document itself was from the beginning called a *tomos*, a document containing a formal disciplinary or dogmatic decision, and was qualified by the term *hagioretikos* as issuing from the monastic synod of the Holy Mountain rather than the patriarchal synod of Constantinople. It is cast in the form of the condemnation of six erroneous propositions, each beginning with “Whoever says” or an equivalent expression. These propositions are (1) that those who hold the deifying grace of God to be uncreated are Messalians or ditheists; (2) that the deifying grace of God is a *habitus* of rational nature attained by imitation; (3) that those who hold the intellect to be located in the heart or the head are Messalians; (4) that the light of Mount Tabor seen by the disciples was merely a phantasm produced by the mind; (5) that only the essence of God is uncreated

and not also his energies; (6) that the body does not participate in the charisms of the Spirit. Barlaam's understanding of these issues is decisively rejected.

Philotheos Kokkinos' account in his *Encomium* of what happened next is not entirely reliable. It appears from Palamas' own writings that he returned to Thessaloniki, where he drew up another *tomos* of very similar content which was signed by the leading hesychasts (but not hierarchs) of that city, including, no doubt, the monk and future patriarch Isidore Boucheir. It is interesting, as Rigo points out, that when Barlaam presented his critique of the Hesychasts (*Against the Messalians*) to the patriarchate, no immediate action was taken. It was only when he began to denounce the two "conventicles," of Mount Athos and Thessaloniki, that proceedings were initiated against Palamas. Barlaam knew about these "conventicles" through engaging with Palamas at a meeting in Thessaloniki in late September/early October. In November both *tomoi* were forwarded to Constantinople. In the meantime, Barlaam had set off for the capital, where he not only denounced Palamas to the patriarchal synod as a ditheist who preached two gods, one superior, the other inferior, but also began an intense lobbying campaign against Palamas on the basis of the irregularity of the two "conventicles," particularly that of Thessaloniki—a clear case of non-bishops trying to put the Church right on a matter of doctrine. These events may be followed closely with the help of Gregory Akindynos' *Report to the Patriarch* (1343), which Rigo regards as an important and relatively objective source that enables us to reconstruct the events after Barlaam's denunciation of Palamas and during the lobbying campaign that was pursued by both parties. This campaign was protracted because a synod to resolve the dispute could not be held until the emperor, Andronikos III, returned to Constantinople from a military expedition in the Balkans. The emperor re-entered the imperial city at the beginning of June 1341, by which time Palamas had gained the upper hand.

The synod that exonerated Palamas and consigned Barlaam's writings to the flames was held on June 10, but the *tomos*, which was issued in July, is problematical because in the interval the emperor had died suddenly and events were moving swiftly towards civil war. The fact that the *Hagioretic Tomos* was laid before the synod is something we only know from two of Palamas' supporters, Dorotheos Blates and Joseph Kalothetos. The *Synodal Tomos* itself makes no mention of it. Moreover, it is almost certain that the Thessalonian *Tomos* was not produced at all. Indeed, this document has disappeared without trace. The issue of "conventicles" was obviously a sensitive one, the *Hagioretic Tomos* surviving because of the official status of its signatories but not the Thessalonian *Tomos*.

The use made of the *Hagioretic Tomos* by Palamas and others after the synod is interesting and reveals a certain evolution in Palamas' thinking. At first, as his letters to John Gabras and Philotheos Kokkinos show, Palamas holds the

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Tomos in high esteem as an authoritative rebuttal of the higher and lower gods theory imputed to him. Later, in his *Refutation* of Gregory Akindynos, he appeals to the *Tomos* more as his personal profession of faith. His opponents, beginning with his unnamed interlocutor in the letter to John Gabras, also made use of the *Tomos* as evidence of the perversity of Palamas' thinking. Its most significant use by opponents, however, comes quite late, after the synod of 1351, with the refutations of Palamite teaching by the monk Niphon, who assigns the text to Philotheos, and John Kyparissiotēs, who claims that Palamas had tricked the Athonites into signing the document.

In sum, through this fine critical edition, introduced by a masterly discussion of the text in its historical setting and accompanied by an Italian translation and a valuable commentary, Antonio Rigo has placed both Byzantinists and Orthodox theologians deeply in his debt.

Norman RUSSELL

*Honorary Research Fellow, St Stephen's House, University of Oxford
normanvrussell@outlook.com*

