

**“ BARLAAM THE CALABRIAN. ”** (\*)

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## Introduction

Various attribute to Palamas' and Barlaam's methodology made us to go to their main documents, arranged chronologically.

Playing around with documents, regarding the knowledge of God alone, revealed that Barlaam's Orthodoxy is true. Barlaam, by putting himself in his opponent's point of view, challenges that human knowledge can not approach God, or "*things around Him*". In his debate, Barlaam's greatest merit was the distinction between perceptible knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and faith (πίστη); a fact that finally made Palamas to confess to it, in his second letter to Barlaam.

Palamas, using a demonstrative reasoning and the Fathers, on the contrary, tries to distinguish between "*the things around Him*" and "*He Himself*". "*The things*" that are knowable, and one can "*mingle*" through them with God; a problem that, for Barlaam, remains as "*join with*" God, like a relative with its correlative.

This paper ends the issue, where these two men represent "*grace*" and try to work on it.

## Barlaam and Palamas

To show the mistakes in the writing of an educator is much easier than to reveal the advantages and usages of them. Because the former are limited, while the boundary of the latter are immeasurable. The former can be understood easily but the latter require time to be estimated. Therefore, as a member of future generation to Barlaam, I am trying to evaluate his teachings and demonstrate them here, as something reviewable. And as corroboration I will represent Sinkewicz's introduction in his book, called "*Barlaam's Solutions.*"

“Barlaam of Calabria (c.1290-1348) is best known to modern scholars for his role in the controversy with Gregory Palamas over hesychast spirituality and to a lesser extent he is also familiar as an anti-Latin polemicist. The Late Byzantine sources, however, frequently identify him as a philosopher, but his importance as such is still unclear. In this regard poor Barlaam has had a surprising variety of labels stuck to him : Aristotelian, (Neo-)Platonist, Augustinian, Western Scholastic, Scotist, Nominalist, or even Ockhamite.”<sup>1</sup>

Barlaam was born in southern Italy in an Orthodox family. Becoming a monk, he moved to Constantinople, where he was “hegoumenos” of the Akataleptos monastery until 1341. In the mid-1330s he began to attack “Hesychasm” for both its theology and manner of prayer. He accused Gregory Palamas of Messalianism, and argued that the light on the Mt. Tabor at the transfiguration was created and not eternal. The local council of Constantinople of 1341 condemned Barlaam and ordered his anti-hesychast writings burned. He returned to the West, converted to Catholicism at Avignon in 1342 and became bishop of Gerace in Calabria (1342-1348). After his death, he was anathematized by the Orthodox Church in 1351, and most of his anti-palamite works were destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

It is almost impossible, in a discussion, one mentions one side of the Hesychast controversy, and do not name the other side. Thus, let 's take look at the other side, where Gregory Palamas stands.

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<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the knowledge of God in .... , p.152.

<sup>2</sup> The Orthodox Dictionary of Byzantium, p.257.

Gregory Palamas was born in Constantinople (1296). Though he was destined for imperial service, he chose the monastic life instead and went to Athos in 1316. In 1326 he was ordained, and from 1347 till 1359 was the Archbishop of Thessalonice. He died in Thessalonike 14 Nov. 1359. In his debate with Barlaam, Palamas also, in his methodology, uses philosophical terminology, where J. Romanides, quoting Meyendorff's view of Palamas, brings:

*"...an Aristotelian on the question of demonstrative knowledge concerning God."*<sup>3</sup>

Or as M. Fouyas states:

*"Palamas himself was methodologically an Aristotelian."*<sup>4</sup>

However Palamas' ontology remains platonic. As for R. Flogaus, Palamas seems more Platonist and Ps. – Dionysian:

*"Palamas' argument, for instance, that if anything else but God is a being, God is necessarily not a being, is a concept that originates from Plato's Parmenides. Similarly, his tripartite description of being as imparticipable (God's essence and hypostases), participated (God's energy), and participating (the creature), is executed in terms (αμέθεκτον, μεθεκτόν, μετέχον) which, through the mediation of Ps.- Dionysios, go back to Proklos."*<sup>5</sup>

Along with a various attributes to the methodology of these two men, the chronology of their works is discussable. For the latter helps us to understand the growth of their controversy. And because of this understanding, R. E. Sinkewicz, having brought different studies, presented a Chronology of their documents, a summary of which is as follows:

- 1) Early in the spring of 1335 Barlaam presented his two discourses(Or. I-II)
- 2) During the second half of 1335

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<sup>3</sup> The Greek Orthodox Theological ..., Vol.6, No 2, p.189.

<sup>4</sup> The prelude of Helle ..., PBR12 (1993), p.9 (in "St. Vladimir's Theological..., Vol.42, No. 1, by R. Flogous).

<sup>5</sup> St. Vladimir's Theological..., Vol.42, No. 1, pp.8-9.