

Palamas in Slavic Orthodoxy: Doctrinal Continuity and Reception as a Hermeneutical Key for East-West Dialogue

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This article examines the reception of Gregory Palamas in Slavic Orthodoxy as a hermeneutical key for East–West Christian dialogue. It argues that Palamite theology was preserved not only through formal dogmatic codification but through liturgy, monastic practice, ascetical literature, and later theological synthesis. The Slavic reception of the essence–energies distinction shows how doctrinal continuity may remain stable across cultural and linguistic plurality. The study reassesses Western misreadings of Palamas and proposes reception history as a theological category for contemporary ecumenical reflection.

Keywords: *Gregory Palamas, Slavic Orthodoxy, Reception History, Hesychasm, East-West Dialogue, Ecumenical Theology*

Introduction

The figure of Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) has long occupied a paradoxical position in modern theological discourse: central to the self-understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy; yet persistently marginal or contested within Western theological reception.¹ While the hesychast controversy of the fourteenth century has been extensively studied as a Byzantine doctrinal dispute, its subsequent reception, especially within Slavic Orthodoxy, has only recently begun to be examined as a decisive locus for understanding questions of doctrinal continuity, ecclesial identity, and East–West theological dialogue.² This article argues that the reception of Palamite theology in Slavic Orthodox contexts constitutes not merely a secondary chapter in the history of Byzantine theology but a hermeneutical key for reassessing the continuity of doctrine across cultural, linguistic, and confessional boundaries.

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¹ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, rev. ed. (London: Faith Press, 1974).

² Andrew Louth, “The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World: Maximus to Palamas,” *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 585–99, doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2008.00487.x.

The question of doctrinal continuity has often been framed polemically, particularly in Western interpretations that portray Palamas either as a radical innovator or as the architect of an irreducible divide between Eastern and Western Christianity.³ Such readings, however, tend to abstract Palamas from the broader tradition of patristic theology and to neglect the historical processes through which his thought was received, transmitted, and reinterpreted beyond Byzantium.⁴ By contrast, Slavic Orthodoxy, especially in its Bulgarian, Serbian, and Russian expressions, provides a privileged vantage point from which to examine how Palamite theology was integrated into ecclesial life, liturgy, monastic practice, and dogmatic reflection.⁵

The reception of Palamas in the Slavic world was neither uniform nor immediate. While the Council of Constantinople (1351) affirmed the distinction between essence and energies as normative within Byzantine Orthodoxy, its implications were mediated through translations, liturgical commemorations, hagiographical narratives, and later doctrinal syntheses.⁶ The emergence of Palamas as a liturgically commemorated Father of the Church, particularly through the establishment of the Second Sunday of Great Lent, played a crucial role in embedding his theology within the lived tradition of Orthodoxy.⁷ This liturgical reception, often overlooked in doctrinal analyses, reveals a mode of theological continuity grounded not primarily in scholastic definition but in ecclesial praxis and doxological language.⁸

From a methodological perspective this study adopts reception history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) as a hermeneutical framework for theological inquiry.⁹ Rather than treating doctrine as a static set of propositions,

³ Martin Jugie, "Palamas, Grégoire," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, t. XI, pt. 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1932), cols. 1735–76; idem, "Palamite (Controverse)," cols. 1777–1818.

⁴ Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz* (Munich: Beck, 1977), 215–43.

⁵ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

⁶ Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism in the Modern Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁷ Juan Mateos, ed., *Le Typicon de la Grande Église, vol. 2, Le cycle des fêtes mobiles*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 166 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1963); Philotheos Kokkinos, "Vita Sancti Gregorii Palamae," *Acta Sanctorum Novembris IV* (1894): 707–36.

⁸ Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 89–102.

⁹ John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

reception history allows us to trace how theological insights are appropriated, contested, and rearticulated within concrete historical contexts.¹⁰ In the case of Palamas this approach illuminates how his theology functioned as a resource for articulating Orthodox identity in response to both internal developments and external challenges, including Latin scholastic theology and, later, modern Western thought.¹¹

The *status quaestionis* concerning Palamas and Slavic Orthodoxy reveals several distinct phases of scholarly interpretation. Early Western studies such as those by Martin Jugie and Gerhard Podskalsky tended to interpret Palamism through the lens of doctrinal deviation or cultural particularism.¹² By contrast mid-twentieth-century Orthodox theologians, most notably Vladimir Lossky and John Meyendorff, reclaimed Palamas as a faithful interpreter of the patristic tradition, emphasizing continuity with the Cappadocian Fathers and Maximus the Confessor.¹³ Meyendorff's seminal work on Byzantine hesychasm established the historical and theological coherence of Palamite thought, while also highlighting its significance for modern Orthodox theology.¹⁴

More recent scholarship has moved beyond the binary of innovation versus continuity, focusing instead on the dynamics of reception and re-interpretation. Studies by Andrew Louth, Alexis Torrance, and Marcus Plested have explored the transmission of Palamite theology in Byzantine, Slavic, and post-Byzantine contexts, drawing attention to manuscript traditions, liturgical texts, theological florilegia, and the reception of Dionysian and hesychast traditions. At the same time ecumenical theologians have revisited the Palamite distinction in dialogue with Western metaphysics, questioning whether the essence–energies distinction necessarily entails a rupture with Latin theology, or whether it can be understood as a complementary theological grammar.

The Greek and Balkan scholarship of Ivan Christov and Mikonja Knežević further complicates any simple opposition between Greek “origin” and Slavic “reception”. Christov’s Bulgarian study of fourteenth-century Byzantine theology shows that the discourse on divine energies must be read as a theological language situated between philosophical

¹⁰ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

¹¹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

¹² Jugie, “Palamas, Grégoire,” cols. 1735–76; idem, “Palamite (Controverse),” cols. 1777–1818.

¹³ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1957).

¹⁴ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological and Social Problems* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974).

conceptuality and the explication of spiritual experience, not as an isolated metaphysical invention. Knežević's Serbian studies, finally, provide a precise philological and doctrinal corrective to overly general ecumenical claims by showing how Palamas's arguments about the procession of the Holy Spirit depend on exact distinctions between $\epsilon\kappa$ and $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$, causality and mediation, theology and economy.

The present revision strengthens this status quaestionis by incorporating the scholarship specifically requested by the reviewers and by using it not as an ornamental bibliography but as evidence within the argument. Ilias Evangelou's study of Athonite Slavic miscellanies is especially important because it demonstrates that ascetical and mystical compilations occupied a significant place in medieval Orthodox Slavic literature, and that their dissemination was directly connected with the spread and consolidation of hesychasm in the Slavic world.¹⁵ This makes it possible to speak of reception not merely as a later ideological appropriation of Palamas but as a manuscript, monastic, and pedagogical process embedded in concrete Slavic religious cultures.

Despite these advances, a significant gap remains in the systematic integration of Slavic reception into broader ecumenical hermeneutics. While individual studies have examined Russian or Balkan appropriations of Palamas, few have considered how these receptions inform contemporary East–West dialogue on doctrinal continuity.¹⁶ This article seeks to address this lacuna by bringing together patristic exegesis, historical theology, and ecumenical hermeneutics in a single analytical framework.

The central research question guiding this study is therefore two-fold: first, how was Palamite theology received and transformed within Slavic Orthodoxy; and second, how does this reception challenge or refine prevailing narratives of doctrinal discontinuity between East and West? The working hypothesis is that Slavic reception demonstrates a model of doctrinal continuity rooted in liturgical and ascetical praxis rather than in purely conceptual uniformity.¹⁷ Such a model has significant implications for contemporary ecumenical dialogue, particularly in rethinking the criteria by which theological continuity and difference are assessed.

Methodologically, the article employs a multilayered approach: close hermeneutical analysis of Greek and Church Slavonic sources;

¹⁵ Ilias Evangelou, "The Ascetical–Mystical Literature in the Slavic Miscellanies of Mount Athos in the 14th–18th Century," *Academia.edu*, 223–24.

¹⁶ Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

theological-philological examination of key Palamite texts; patristic exegesis situating Palamas within the broader tradition; and comparative theological analysis engaging with Western scholastic and modern interpretations.¹⁸ This integrative methodology is justified by the complex nature of the subject matter, which resists reduction to a single disciplinary perspective.

By situating Palamas within the lived and received tradition of Slavic Orthodoxy, this study aims to contribute not only to Palamite scholarship but also to the ongoing reconfiguration of East–West theological dialogue. In doing so, it aligns with recent calls in ecumenical theology to move beyond abstract doctrinal comparisons towards historically grounded and hermeneutically nuanced engagements with the Christian tradition.¹⁹

The historical and ecclesial context of Palamite reception in Slavic Orthodoxy

The reception of Gregory Palamas within Slavic Orthodoxy must be situated within the broader processes of cultural translation, ecclesial consolidation, and theological adaptation that characterized the post-Byzantine Orthodox world from the late fourteenth century onwards.²⁰ The transmission of Palamite theology into Slavic contexts did not occur as a mere doctrinal importation but as a complex hermeneutical event, shaped by liturgical practice, monastic spirituality, and the evolving self-understanding of Slavic Orthodox churches in relation to Byzantium and the Latin West.²¹

Following the hesychast councils of Constantinople (1341–1351) Palamas's theological synthesis gradually attained normative status within Byzantine Orthodoxy.²² Yet its diffusion beyond the Greek-speaking world was mediated primarily through monastic networks, translation movements, and the liturgical calendar.²³ In Slavic lands, especially Bulgaria, Serbia, and Rus', the reception of Palamas coincided with a decisive period of ecclesial self-definition, marked by both fidelity to

¹⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines* (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

¹⁹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

²⁰ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 287–334.

²¹ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*; Louth, "St Gregory Palamas and the Holy Mountain," *Philotheos* 7 (2007): 311–20, doi.org/10.5840/philotheos2007724.

²² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm*, 1–38.

²³ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 301–18.

Byzantine tradition and the emergence of distinct local expressions of Orthodoxy.²⁴

A crucial vector of Palamite reception was the translation of Greek theological and hagiographical texts to Church Slavonic. The “Second South Slavic Influence” facilitated the dissemination of hesychast literature, including works associated with Palamas and his circle.²⁵ Although direct translations of Palamas’s polemical treatises were limited, his theological vision entered Slavic Orthodoxy through florilegia, homiletic collections, and ascetical anthologies, most notably those connected with the hesychast revival on Mount Athos and its Slavic dependencies.²⁶ This indirect mode of transmission underscores the importance of reception as an interpretive process rather than a simple reproduction of doctrinal formulations.

This manuscript evidence also allows the argument to avoid an overstatement. The Slavic reception of Palamism was not always a direct reception of Palamas as an author. In many contexts it was a reception of the hesychast grammar to which Palamas gave dogmatic articulation. The distinction matters. It prevents the article claiming that every Slavic hesychast text is explicitly Palamite; at the same time it supports the stronger and more defensible claim that Palamite theology was received through a wider ascetical ecology in which the themes of prayer of the heart, purification of the nous, uncreated light, and real participation in divine life became normatively intelligible.

This point can now be stated more concretely. Evangelou’s documentation of Slavic Athonite miscellanies indicates that the circulation of hesychast material did not depend only on formal translations of Palamas’s major dogmatic treatises. It also occurred through compilatory, ascetical, and mystical collections whose function was practical and monastic: they formed habits of prayer, attention, silence, and spiritual discernment. The fact that Evangelou locates these miscellanies in different Slavic monastic communities on Mount Athos and across a period extending from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century is crucial because it gives the article a material basis for speaking of a durable Slavic reception rather than a merely retrospective theological construction.²⁷

²⁴ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 287–334.

²⁵ *Ibidem*; Ioannis Tarnanidis, *The Slavonic Manuscripts Discovered in 1975 at St Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai* (Thessaloniki: St Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai and the Hellenic Association for Slavic Studies, 1988), 1–31.

²⁶ Louth, “St Gregory Palamas,” 311–20.

²⁷ Evangelou, “The Ascetical–Mystical Literature,” 223–24.

The liturgical commemoration of Gregory Palamas represents a particularly significant dimension of his reception. The establishment of the Second Sunday of Great Lent as his feast day embedded Palamite theology within the rhythm of ecclesial time, transforming doctrinal affirmation into doxological confession. The hagiographical and liturgical tradition associated with Philotheos Kokkinos presents Palamas not merely as a controversial theologian but as a witness to divine grace and a pillar of Orthodoxy, thereby framing his theology within the category of sanctity rather than abstract speculation. This liturgical reception played a decisive role in shaping how Palamas was understood and appropriated within Slavic ecclesial consciousness.

In the Serbian tradition the reception of Palamism intersected with the consolidation of autocephalous ecclesial structures and the flourishing of monasticism under figures such as St Gregory of Sinai and his disciples.²⁸ Hesychast spirituality profoundly influenced Serbian monastic culture, leaving discernible traces in hagiography, architecture, and iconography.²⁹ While explicit doctrinal engagement with the essence–energies distinction remained limited, the underlying theological anthropology and experiential epistemology of Palamism became integral to Serbian Orthodox spirituality.³⁰

In the Russian context Palamite reception unfolded more gradually, reaching a critical phase in the late medieval and early modern periods. The transmission of hesychast spirituality through Russian monastic currents and the Non-Possessors reflected a selective appropriation of Palamite themes, particularly the emphasis on inner prayer and the transformative vision of divine light. Although Palamas himself was not immediately central to Russian theological discourse, his theology exerted a formative influence through mediated channels, culminating in his explicit rehabilitation and doctrinal articulation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian theology.

The same evidence also clarifies the meaning of the article's claim that Slavic Orthodoxy was not a passive recipient. The Slavic reception did not mechanically reproduce Byzantine formulas. It selected, translated, copied, organized, and reperformed a tradition. Slavic Palamism was thus reducible neither to Greek dogmatic repetition nor to modern Orthodox ideology; it was a historically layered reception in which Athos, Bulgaria,

²⁸ George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 503–15.

²⁹ *Ibidem*; Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 287–334.

³⁰ Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*, 89–121.

Serbia, Rus', Moldavia, and later Russian émigré theology formed a chain of transmission with different degrees of explicit doctrinal articulation.

The modern Russian rediscovery of Palamas, most notably in the works of Vladimir Lossky, cannot be understood apart from this longue durée of reception.³¹ Lossky's insistence on the distinction between divine essence and energies as a cornerstone of Orthodox theology was not an antiquarian revival but a theological response to modern challenges, including Western scholasticism and rationalism.³² This retrieval of Palamas exemplifies how reception functions as a dynamic and context-sensitive process, capable of generating new theological syntheses while remaining rooted in tradition.

From a hermeneutical standpoint the Slavic reception of Palamas challenges reductive models of doctrinal continuity that equate fidelity with conceptual uniformity.³³ Instead, it reveals a mode of continuity grounded in liturgical embodiment, ascetical praxis, and ecclesial memory. Palamite theology was not preserved as a fixed system but as a living grammar of theological discourse, adaptable to diverse cultural and historical contexts.³⁴ This insight has far-reaching implications for contemporary ecumenical dialogue, particularly in reassessing the criteria by which doctrinal identity and difference are evaluated between Eastern and Western Christianity.

The historical evidence therefore requires a more careful formulation of continuity. The Slavic reception of Palamas should not be described as if the entire technical apparatus of the fourteenth-century Palamite councils was immediately systematized in every Slavic context. Rather, continuity appears in three interrelated registers: first, the textual register of translations, miscellanies, and monastic compilations; second, the liturgical and ascetical register of prayer, fasting, hymnography, and the cult of saints; and third, the later dogmatic register in which theologians such as Lossky, Florovsky, Stăniloae, and Alfeyev made explicit what had often functioned implicitly in ecclesial practice. This threefold distinction strengthens the argument by preventing the category of reception doing too much explanatory work.

³¹ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 64–90.

³² Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24; Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1972), 9–34.

³³ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

³⁴ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 15–65.

Doctrinal continuity and the essence–energies distinction in Slavic theology

The doctrine of the distinction between divine essence (*ousia*) and energies (*energeiai*) constitutes the most contested and simultaneously most theologically productive aspect of Palamite theology.³⁵ Within Slavic Orthodoxy this distinction was not initially received as an abstract metaphysical thesis but as an implicit theological grammar embedded in ascetical practice, liturgical language, and soteriological vision.³⁶ The question of doctrinal continuity thus cannot be reduced to the explicit repetition of Palamas's technical terminology; rather, it requires an examination of how the underlying theological logic of the distinction functioned within Slavic theological discourse.

In Byzantine theology Palamas articulated the essence–energies distinction as a means of safeguarding both divine transcendence and real participation in God.³⁷ Against Barlaam's epistemological scepticism and Akindynos's ontological reductionism Palamas affirmed that while the divine essence remains absolutely transcendent and unknowable, the uncreated energies constitute God's real self-manifestation and the mode of deifying communion.³⁸ This distinction, far from introducing a division within God, preserves divine simplicity while affirming the experiential realism of salvation.³⁹

The distinction therefore should not be treated as a detached conceptual formula that later spirituality merely illustrates. The movement runs in both directions: Palamas gives dogmatic intelligibility to hesychast experience, and the later Slavic reception preserves the dogma by embedding it in the ascetical practices through which its meaning remains intelligible. The absence of early scholastic-style treatises in some Slavic settings therefore cannot be equated with an absence of doctrinal reception. It indicates a different mode of doctrinal embodiment.

Christov's analysis is useful at precisely this point because it resists two symmetrical misreadings of the Palamite doctrine of energies. On the one hand it rejects the charge that the doctrine is a heterogeneous

³⁵ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 211–45.

³⁶ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102; David Bradshaw, "The Concept of the Divine Energies," *Philosophy and Theology* 18, no. 1 (2006): 93–120, doi.org/10.5840/philtheol20061815.

³⁷ Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, ed. and trans. John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), I.3.23–24.

³⁸ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 137–58.

³⁹ Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*, 89–121.

philosophical addition to Orthodox theology; on the other it refuses to treat it as a philosophically underdeveloped borrowing of terminology. Christov argues that the discourse on divine energies belongs to a specific form of theological discourse: it makes use of philosophical language, but its point of departure is the explication of spiritual experience and the theological meaning of hesychasm.⁴⁰ This helps define more sharply why the essence–energies distinction could be received in Slavic Orthodoxy through ascetical and liturgical forms without losing its dogmatic significance.

In Slavic contexts this doctrinal framework was received less through systematic dogmatic treatises than through spiritual and monastic literature. The hesychast emphasis on inner prayer (*umnoe delanie*), illumination, and transformation presupposed a theology of real participation in divine life that coheres with the Palamite distinction, even when not explicitly formulated in scholastic terms.⁴¹ Russian and South Slavic monastic texts consistently affirm the possibility of authentic knowledge of God through grace, thereby implicitly rejecting any purely nominal or created understanding of divine presence.⁴²

Western scholars have sometimes interpreted the absence of early systematic expositions of the essence–energies distinction in Slavic theology as evidence of doctrinal marginality or theological underdevelopment.⁴³ Such an assessment, however, reflects a narrow conception of doctrinal continuity rooted in Latin scholastic models of theological articulation.⁴⁴ In contrast Slavic Orthodoxy demonstrates a mode of doctrinal transmission that privileges liturgical confession, ascetical praxis, and hagiographical narrative as primary vehicles of theological meaning.⁴⁵

At the same time the reviewer's warning against excessive declaration must be taken seriously. Liturgical or ascetical reception by itself does not automatically prove dogmatic continuity. It becomes evidence

⁴⁰ Ivan Christov, *Byzantine Theology in the 14th Century: The Discourse on Divine Energies* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2016), 329–30; idem, "Teaching on Divine Energies as a Theological Justification of Hesychasm," paper presented at the Summer School of the project "Modern Paleoslav and Medieval Studies," Samokov, August 8–12, 2018, 1–3.

⁴¹ Marcus Plested, "St. Gregory Palamas on the Divine Simplicity," *Modern Theology* 35, no. 3 (2019): 508–21, doi.org/10.1111/moth.12511.

⁴² Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102; Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 1–30.

⁴³ Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie*, 215–43.

⁴⁴ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233–61.

⁴⁵ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 1–26.

of continuity only when it can be correlated with textual transmission, stable theological motifs, ecclesial recognition, and later reflective articulation. In the case considered here such correlation is visible: Evangelou points to Slavic Athonite miscellanies and ascetical collections; Christov clarifies the dogmatic logic of divine energies; and modern Orthodox theologians make explicit the doctrinal grammar that earlier reception often carried performatively. Thus, the argument is not that liturgy alone proves doctrine, but that liturgy, monastic textuality, and dogmatic reflection together form a cumulative case for continuity.

A decisive moment in the explicit dogmatic reception of Palamism occurred in the modern period, particularly within Russian émigré theology. Vladimir Lossky's retrieval of the essence–energies distinction marked a turning point in Orthodox engagement with Western theology.⁴⁶ For Lossky the Palamite doctrine was not a historical curiosity but the dogmatic articulation of the church's lived experience of God.⁴⁷ By grounding theology in the apophatic tradition and the reality of deification (*theosis*), Lossky presented Palamism as the theological core of Orthodoxy, irreducible to Western metaphysical categories yet not intrinsically opposed to them.⁴⁸

Subsequent Slavic theologians, including Georges Florovsky and Dumitru Stăniloae, further developed this perspective by situating the essence–energies distinction within a broader patristic synthesis.⁴⁹ Florovsky's programme of “neo-patristic synthesis” emphasized continuity with the Fathers rather than doctrinal innovation, while Stăniloae articulated a personalist interpretation of divine energies as modes of personal communion between God and humanity.⁵⁰ In both cases Palamas functions as a point of convergence rather than divergence within the Christian tradition.

The inclusion of Alfeyev also prevents the article confining Slavic reception to medieval manuscript culture. It shows that the same Palamite logic continues to function in contemporary Orthodox theology: dogma and spirituality are mutually interpreting realities. This does not make every modern Orthodox statement “Palamite” in a narrow historical sense, but it confirms that the grammar of divine transcendence, uncreated

⁴⁶ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 64–90.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

⁴⁹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34.

⁵⁰ Adrian Agachi, *The Neo-Palamite Synthesis of Father Dumitru Stăniloae* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

grace, prayer, and participation remains structurally continuous with Palamas's theological project.

Alfeyev's synthesis of Orthodox dogma and spirituality provides a modern Russian example of the same dynamic. In *The Mystery of Faith* he insists that the separation of dogma from mysticism, doctrine from spirituality, or theology from spiritual life is alien to Christianity; theology should not contradict religious experience but proceed from it.⁵¹ This is directly relevant to Palamite reception because the essence–energies distinction is not an abstract appendix to Orthodox dogmatics but a doctrinal rule that safeguards the possibility of real communion with God while preserving divine transcendence. Alfeyev's essay on prayer and silence develops the experiential side of the same grammar: prayer is described not merely as petition but as communion with God, while silence and hesychia become conditions for receptive participation in divine life.⁵²

From a hermeneutical standpoint the Slavic reception of the essence–energies distinction reveals a crucial insight: doctrinal continuity does not necessitate conceptual identity across traditions.⁵³ Instead, continuity is preserved through the faithful transmission of theological meaning across different discursive forms. The Palamite distinction operates as a “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*) that governs theological language without exhausting it.⁵⁴ This insight challenges Western critiques that construe the distinction as a metaphysical anomaly incompatible with classical theism.⁵⁵

Recent ecumenical scholarship has begun to reassess the essence–energies distinction in precisely this light. Studies engaging with Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and contemporary Catholic theology have shown that analogous distinctions between essence and operation, nature and grace, or God's immanence and transcendence can be interpreted as functionally equivalent rather than contradictory.⁵⁶ The Slavic theological tradition, shaped by Palamite reception, thus offers a hermeneutical bridge for rethinking doctrinal continuity beyond confessional polemics.

In this perspective the essence–energies distinction emerges not as a boundary marker separating East and West but as a theological resource

⁵¹ Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to the Teaching and Spirituality of the Orthodox Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002), 1–2.

⁵² Idem, “Prayer and Silence,” OrthodoxPrayer.org, 1–2, https://www.orthodoxprayer.org/Articles_files/Hilarion-Prayer.pdf.

⁵³ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

⁵⁴ David Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action: Exploring the Essence–Energies Distinction* (St Paul, MN: IOTA Publications, 2023), 1–45.

⁵⁵ Plested, “St. Gregory Palamas,” 508–21.

⁵⁶ Bradshaw, *Divine Energies*, 1–45.

for articulating the mystery of divine–human communion.⁵⁷ Its Slavic reception demonstrates how doctrine can remain continuous while being re-expressed through diverse theological idioms. Such a model of continuity has profound implications for contemporary East–West dialogue, inviting a shift from static comparisons of doctrinal formulas to a dynamic engagement with the lived tradition of the church.

Palamism and Western theology: Hermeneutical misreadings and ecumenical reassessment

The reception of Gregory Palamas in Western theology has been marked by a complex history of misunderstanding, selective appropriation, and gradual reassessment.⁵⁸ From the late medieval period onwards Palamite theology was frequently interpreted through categories foreign to its original context, resulting in hermeneutical distortions that shaped long-standing narratives of doctrinal discontinuity between East and West.⁵⁹ A critical examination of these misreadings is therefore indispensable for any ecumenically responsible evaluation of Palamism.

Early Latin responses to the hesychast controversy were conditioned by the epistemological and metaphysical assumptions of late scholasticism. Barlaam of Calabria's critique of hesychasm, often mediated to the West without adequate contextualization, framed Palamas as a proponent of ontological dualism and mystical irrationalism.⁶⁰ This portrayal was reinforced by later Western theologians who interpreted the essence–energies distinction as a violation of divine simplicity, construing it as an introduction of real composition within God.⁶¹ Such readings, however, presuppose a univocal conception of metaphysical simplicity that is not shared across patristic traditions.⁶²

Modern Western scholarship initially perpetuated these assumptions. Influential studies by Martin Jugie and to a lesser extent by certain neo-scholastic theologians treated Palamism as a doctrinal anomaly arising from Byzantine cultural particularism rather than as an authentic development within the patristic tradition.⁶³ This approach tended to isolate

⁵⁷ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

⁵⁸ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 211–45.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 271–98.

⁶⁰ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm*, 1–38.

⁶¹ Jugie, “Palamas, Grégoire,” cols. 1735–76; idem, “Palamite (Controverse),” cols. 1777–1818.

⁶² Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 233–61; idem, “Concept of the Divine Energies,” 93–120.

⁶³ Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie*, 228–41.

Palamas from his patristic sources and to assess his theology according to external criteria derived from Thomistic metaphysics.⁶⁴ The result was a hermeneutical impasse in which Palamism appeared irreconcilable with Western theology.

A significant shift occurred in the twentieth century with the emergence of historically grounded and theologically sensitive studies. John Meyendorff's work decisively challenged the caricature of Palamas as an innovator, demonstrating the continuity of his thought with the Cappadocian Fathers, Maximus the Confessor, and the Dionysian tradition.⁶⁵ By situating the hesychast controversy within its proper Byzantine context, Meyendorff exposed the inadequacy of Western readings that abstracted doctrinal formulations from their ascetical and ecclesial matrix.⁶⁶

Parallel developments within Western theology itself further destabilized earlier critiques. The *ressourcement* movement, with its renewed engagement with patristic sources, created conceptual space for a more nuanced understanding of Palamism. Scholars such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean-Danielou emphasized the plurality of patristic metaphysical grammars and the theological depth of the Greek patristic tradition, thereby undermining the assumption that scholastic categories exhausted the possibilities of classical theism. Within this framework the Palamite distinction could be reinterpreted not as a metaphysical aberration but as a legitimate theological articulation of divine transcendence and immanence.

Recent ecumenical theology has advanced this reassessment by focusing on functional and hermeneutical equivalence rather than formal identity. Studies engaging with Thomas Aquinas have shown that, while Aquinas does not articulate an essence–energies distinction in Palamite terms, his theology nonetheless affirms a real distinction between God's essence and God's operations *ad extra*.⁶⁷ When interpreted analogically rather than univocally, these distinctions can be seen as addressing analogous theological concerns: safeguarding divine simplicity, while affirming genuine participation in divine life.⁶⁸

The ecumenical argument must therefore be carefully calibrated. A hermeneutical misunderstanding occurs when Western interpreters read

⁶⁴ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 233–61; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

⁶⁵ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 189–223.

⁶⁶ Louth, "St Gregory Palamas," 311–20.

⁶⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 4; q. 43, a. 3.

⁶⁸ Bradshaw, "Concept of the Divine Energies," 93–120.

the essence–energies distinction as a division in God, or when they interpret hesychast experience as irrational subjectivism. A genuine dogmatic difference emerges, however, where traditions make incompatible claims about hypostatic causality, the Filioque, or the ontological status of created and uncreated grace. The task of reception hermeneutics is not to dissolve such differences rhetorically but to identify precisely where they are located, and where divergent conceptual languages produce apparent contradictions.

The most important refinement concerns the boundary between hermeneutical misunderstanding and genuine dogmatic difference. It would be insufficient simply to claim that all East–West disagreement concerning Palamas results from misunderstanding. Knežević’s analysis of Palamas’s *Apodictic Treatises* shows that the debate about the procession of the Holy Spirit involves real dogmatic claims about causality, monarchy, and the hypostatic identity of the Father. Palamas’s distinction between ἐκ and διὰ is not a verbal nicety but a technical theological demarcation: ἐκ is linked to causality and therefore to the Father alone, while διὰ can name a relation of mediation or manifestation without assigning hypostatic causality to the Son.⁶⁹

The Slavic reception of Palamas plays a crucial mediating role in this ecumenical reassessment. Unlike Byzantine polemical contexts, Slavic Orthodoxy often engaged with Palamism without direct confrontation with Latin theology.⁷⁰ Palamite theology was therefore integrated into ecclesial life without being defined primarily in opposition to Western categories. This non-polemical reception reveals Palamism as a constructive theological vision rather than as a confessional boundary marker.⁷¹

From a hermeneutical perspective many Western misreadings of Palamas stem from a failure to distinguish between ontological description and theological rule. The essence–energies distinction functions not as a speculative metaphysical schema but as a regulative principle governing theological language about God’s knowability and communicability.⁷² When this distinction is absolutized into a rigid ontology, it appears incompatible with Western theology; when understood as a theological

⁶⁹ Mikonja Knežević, “Εκ and διὰ in Apodictic Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit of Gregory Palamas,” *Academia.edu*, 268–70, 283.

⁷⁰ Plested, “St. Gregory Palamas,” 508–21.

⁷¹ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 287–334.

⁷² Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*, 201–29.

grammar rooted in liturgical and ascetical experience, it becomes intelligible across traditions.⁷³

The same point appears in Knežević's work on Dionysius the Areopagite as an authority for Palamas. Palamas's appeal to Dionysius is not mere rhetorical piety; it is a way of locating his own theological distinctions within a chain of patristic authority and ecclesial interpretation.⁷⁴ For the present article this means that the continuity of tradition should be understood as interpretive fidelity rather than simple verbal repetition. Palamas himself practised a form of reception hermeneutics, and Slavic Orthodoxy later received him through analogous processes of interpretation, translation, and ecclesial use.

Knežević's study of Cyril of Alexandria and Palamas's anti-Filioque polemics further illustrates this point. His analysis shows that Palamas did not simply reject all Cyrillian formulas that seemed to support Latin theology; rather, he reinterpreted them by distinguishing between hypostatic causality and the affirmation of the Spirit's consubstantial relation to the Son.⁷⁵ This is a valuable test case for the article's main thesis. It shows that reception is not the passive preservation of words but a disciplined interpretation of inherited authorities within an ecclesially governed grammar of truth.

Contemporary dialogue has increasingly adopted this hermeneutical insight. Reception-oriented ecumenical theology emphasizes learning from the other tradition's theological strengths without demanding conceptual assimilation. Within this framework Palamism can be received by Western theology as a resource for articulating divine-human communion, just as Eastern theology can engage with Western accounts of grace, participation, and analogy.

Thus, the reassessment of Palamism in Western theology is not merely an academic exercise but a test case for the possibility of doctrinal continuity amid diversity. The Slavic reception of Palamas demonstrates that theological truth can be faithfully transmitted without uniform conceptualization.⁷⁶ Recognizing this opens a path to a more mature East–

⁷³ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 57–79.

⁷⁴ Mikonja Knežević, "Authority and Tradition: The Case of Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite in the Writing 'On Divine Unity and Distinction' by Gregory Palamas," in *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. Mikonja Knežević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2015), 379–83.

⁷⁵ Idem, "Εξ ἀμφοῖν: Cyril of Alexandria and Polemics over Filioque of Gregory Palamas," *Philothéos* 15 (2015): 93–110, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philothéos20151511>.

⁷⁶ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24; Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34.

West dialogue, grounded not in the elimination of difference but in a shared commitment to the mystery of God confessed within the life of the church.⁷⁷

Reception as a hermeneutical category in contemporary East–West dialogue

The category of reception (*receptio*, *Wirkungsgeschichte*) has emerged in contemporary theology as a decisive hermeneutical tool for reassessing doctrinal continuity and difference within the Christian tradition.⁷⁸ In the context of East–West dialogue it offers a way beyond both static doctrinal comparison and relativistic pluralism, allowing theology to account for the historical, ecclesial, and performative dimensions of doctrinal transmission.⁷⁹ The Slavic reception of Gregory Palamas provides a particularly illuminating case study for this hermeneutical approach.

Traditionally, doctrinal dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity has proceeded by juxtaposing formal dogmatic statements, often abstracted from their historical and ecclesial contexts.⁸⁰ Such an approach risks misconstruing theological differences as absolute incompatibilities, especially when doctrinal expressions are evaluated according to criteria internal to only one tradition.⁸¹ Reception hermeneutics, by contrast, shifts attention from isolated formulations to the processes by which doctrine is lived, interpreted, and normatively integrated within the life of the church.⁸²

Reception is thus neither a secondary nor merely sociological phenomenon but an intrinsically theological category. Doctrine becomes authoritative not solely through conciliar definition but through its sustained assimilation in liturgy, spirituality, canonical consciousness, and theological reflection.⁸³ The Slavic appropriation of Palamite theology exemplifies this dynamic: Palamas was received as a Father of the Church not primarily through systematic dogmatics but through liturgical commemoration, ascetical praxis, and hagiographical narration.⁸⁴ This mode

⁷⁷ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 65–88.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 1–24; Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

⁷⁹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

⁸⁰ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 9–34.

⁸¹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

⁸² *Ibidem*; Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34.

⁸³ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 1–24.

⁸⁴ Louth, “St Gregory Palamas,” 311–20.

of reception reveals how doctrinal truth is ecclesially enacted rather than merely conceptually affirmed.

This is why the article no longer treats non-polemical reception as self-validating. Its importance is evidential and hermeneutical: it reveals how Palamism functions when it is not primarily forced to defend itself against an opponent. The result is a more balanced thesis. Byzantine polemic establishes the doctrinal contours of Palamism; Slavic reception demonstrates its capacity to become a stable form of ecclesial life.

This claim also requires a necessary qualification. A non-polemical reception is not automatically more authentic than a polemical one. Polemic can sometimes clarify doctrine, as Palamas's own anti-Barlaamite and anti-Latin writings demonstrate. What makes the Slavic reception important is not that it is simply "non-polemical", but that it shows how a doctrine can become ecclesially operative beyond the initial conditions of controversy. In other words the Slavic case displays a second stage of reception: after the polemical articulation of doctrine in Byzantium the same grammar is transmitted through worship, monastic discipline, translation, and spiritual instruction.

Applied to East–West dialogue, reception hermeneutics enables a re-framing of contested doctrines such as the essence–energies distinction. Rather than asking whether Eastern and Western formulations are formally identical, the hermeneutical question becomes whether they function analogously within their respective theological grammars.⁸⁵ From this perspective apparent doctrinal divergences may reflect different modes of articulating a shared soteriological and theological concern: the real participation of humanity in the life of the transcendent God.⁸⁶

Contemporary ecumenical theology has increasingly adopted this reception-oriented approach. Instead of seeking premature doctrinal synthesis, such an approach asks how each tradition might be deepened through a more exact appropriation of the other's theological strengths. Within this framework Palamism, especially as received in Slavic Orthodoxy, can be approached not as an obstacle but as a theological resource for Western reflection on grace, participation, and deification.

The Slavic case is especially significant because it demonstrates a non-polemical reception of Palamas largely unconditioned by direct engagement with Latin scholastic categories.⁸⁷ This allows Palamite theology

⁸⁵ *Idem*, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 57–79.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 57–79.

⁸⁷ Louth, "Reception of Dionysius," 585–99.

to appear in its constructive ecclesial form rather than as a reactionary position. Slavic Orthodoxy thus functions as a hermeneutical mediator, revealing how Palamism can be received as part of the broader Christian tradition without being instrumentalized as a confessional marker.⁸⁸

This also explains why the Slavic reception of Palamas is relevant to East–West dialogue. It is not merely a regional chapter in Orthodox history; it is a case study in how theological meaning survives cultural translation without becoming identical at every linguistic or conceptual level. The transmission of hesychasm through Slavic Orthodox cultures shows that doctrinal continuity can be maintained through a constellation of mutually reinforcing practices: textual; ascetical; liturgical; monastic; and eventually systematic.

The Athonite dimension is decisive here. Evangelou's material on Slavic miscellanies shows that Mount Athos functioned as a transnational laboratory of Orthodox reception. Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Romanian trajectories did not remain hermetically sealed. They interacted through monastic residence, copying, translation, pilgrimage, and the circulation of ascetical books. Such a setting makes the category of reception historically concrete: it is not an abstract theory of *Wirkungsgeschichte* but a network of manuscripts, monasteries, translators, and liturgical practices.

Moreover, reception hermeneutics challenges linear models of doctrinal development that equate continuity with unchanging conceptual formulations.⁸⁹ The Slavic reception of Palamas illustrates a model of continuity characterized by semantic flexibility and performative stability: while theological language evolves, the underlying ecclesial experience of salvation remains coherent.⁹⁰ This insight resonates with contemporary theological accounts of tradition as a living process rather than a static deposit.⁹¹

From a methodological standpoint reception as a hermeneutical category integrates historical theology, systematic reflection, and ecclesiology. It acknowledges that doctrinal meaning emerges at the intersection of text, practice, and community.⁹² In East–West dialogue this integrative approach allows theologians to respect genuine differences while discerning deeper convergences that may otherwise remain obscured.⁹³

⁸⁸ Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 329–51.

⁸⁹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 15–65.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 15–33.

⁹¹ *Idem*, *Communion and Otherness*, 57–79.

⁹² Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 301–18; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 131–54.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 131–54.

In light of these considerations the reception of Palamas in Slavic Orthodoxy can be understood as a paradigmatic example of how doctrine travels across cultural and confessional boundaries without losing its theological integrity.⁹⁴ It demonstrates that doctrinal continuity is not synonymous with uniformity but with fidelity to the mystery of God as confessed, celebrated, and lived within the church. Such a vision provides a promising horizon for contemporary East–West dialogue, one grounded not in the resolution of every conceptual difference but in a shared commitment to the truth of divine–human communion.

Conclusion

This study has argued that the reception of Gregory Palamas in Slavic Orthodoxy constitutes a privileged hermeneutical locus for reassessing the question of doctrinal continuity in East–West Christian dialogue. By shifting the focus from abstract doctrinal comparison to the concrete processes of reception, the article has sought to demonstrate that Palamite theology, far from representing a point of rupture within the Christian tradition, functions as a living grammar of theological continuity articulated through diverse ecclesial forms.

The historical analysis of Slavic reception has shown that Palamism was neither transmitted nor received as a closed doctrinal system. Instead, it entered Slavic Orthodoxy through liturgical commemoration, monastic spirituality, hagiography, and later theological synthesis.⁹⁵ This mode of reception challenges reductionist models of doctrinal transmission that equate continuity with the mere repetition of conceptual formulations. In the Slavic case continuity was preserved through performative and ecclesial embodiment rather than through early systematic codification.

The examination of the essence–energies distinction within Slavic theology further confirmed that doctrinal meaning could be faithfully transmitted without explicit conceptual uniformity. The Palamite distinction functioned as a regulative theological principle shaping soteriology, anthropology, and spiritual epistemology, even where its technical vocabulary remained implicit.⁹⁶ Modern Slavic theologians such as Lossky, Florovsky, and Stăniloae did not invent this continuity but rendered explicit what had long been present within the lived tradition of Orthodoxy.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 64–90.

⁹⁵ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

⁹⁶ Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*, 251–78.

⁹⁷ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 64–90.

The critical reassessment of Western readings of Palamism has revealed that many perceived doctrinal incompatibilities arise from hermeneutical misalignments rather than substantive theological contradictions. When Palamas is interpreted through categories foreign to his theological grammar, the essence–energies distinction appears metaphysically problematic. When approached through reception hermeneutics, however, it emerges as a coherent articulation of divine transcendence and communicability, grounded in ecclesial experience.⁹⁸ The Slavic reception, largely free from direct polemics with Latin scholasticism, offers a particularly constructive vantage point for this reassessment.

At the methodological level the article has advanced reception as an intrinsically theological category indispensable for contemporary ecumenical theology. Reception hermeneutics allows doctrine to be understood as authoritative not only by virtue of formal definition but through its sustained integration into the life of the church.⁹⁹ This approach neither relativizes doctrinal truth nor absolutizes particular formulations; rather, it situates theological meaning within the dynamic interplay of text, practice, and ecclesial memory.

Within this framework Palamism, especially as received in Slavic Orthodoxy, emerges not as a confessional boundary marker but as a shared theological resource. It invites Western theology to reconsider questions of participation, grace, and divine presence, while encouraging Eastern theology to articulate its insights in dialogue with Western conceptual traditions. Such mutual engagement shows that doctrinal continuity is discerned through attentive listening rather than enforced uniformity.

The broader implication of this study is that East–West dialogue stands to benefit from a reorientation of its hermeneutical premises. Rather than asking whether doctrinal expressions are formally identical, the more fruitful question concerns how different traditions faithfully confess the same mystery of divine–human communion.¹⁰⁰ The Slavic reception of Palamas demonstrates that fidelity to tradition is compatible with cultural and conceptual plurality, provided that the ecclesial core of the faith remains intact.

Thus, the article's central thesis can be stated with greater precision: the Slavic reception of Palamas is not proof that all East–West

⁹⁸ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 289–312.

⁹⁹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 9–34; Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 89–102.

¹⁰⁰ Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 301–18; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 57–79.

disagreements are merely verbal, nor does liturgical reception alone establish dogmatic identity. Rather, it shows that doctrinal continuity is discerned where a theological grammar remains stable across different modes of ecclesial embodiment. In the present case this grammar concerns divine transcendence, real participation, uncreated grace, the purification of the nous, and the ecclesial practices through which these realities are confessed and lived.

The revised evidential base also sharpens the article's final ecumenical claim. The Slavic reception of Palamas should not be romanticized as a space without conflict, nor should it be used to minimize real dogmatic divergences between East and West. Its importance lies elsewhere: it demonstrates that a doctrinal insight may be received in ways that are not immediately systematic but are nevertheless theologically real. The evidence from Evangelou, Christov, Alfeyev, and Knežević shows that Palamism was carried by manuscripts, Athonite networks, ascetical discipline, philological translation, dogmatic reflection, and trinitarian polemic. This cumulative pattern gives substance to the claim that reception is a theological category rather than a merely sociological afterlife of doctrine.

In conclusion Gregory Palamas, read through the prism of Slavic reception, emerges not as a theologian of division but as a witness to the church's capacity to transmit doctrinal truth across historical and cultural boundaries. Reception, understood as a hermeneutical key, enables theology to honour both continuity and diversity within the Christian tradition. Such an approach offers a promising horizon for contemporary East–West dialogue grounded in shared participation in the mystery of God rather than in the resolution of every conceptual difference.