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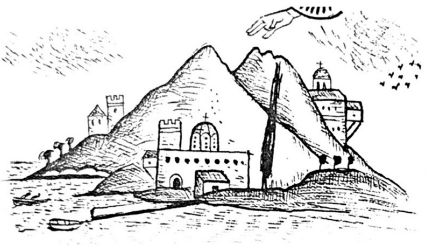
The Works and Days of the Kollyvades Fathers

Protopresbyter
Theodore Zisis



PHILOKALIC RENAISSANCE

The Days and Works of the Kollyvades Fathers





The Choir of the Kollyvades Fathers

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The Days and Works of the Kollyvades Fathers

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Edited by Gregory Heers and Dimitrios Kavadas



Uncut Mountain Press
Florence 2026

PHILOKALIC RENAISSANCE
THE DAYS AND WORKS OF THE KOLLYVADES FATHERS

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Florence, Arizona
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Protopresbyter Theodore Zisis, D. Th., 1941–present.

Philokalic Renaissance: The Days and Works of the Kollyvades Fathers—1st ed.
Translated by Peter Stavrinides.
Edited by Gregory Heers and Dimitrios Kavadas.
Cover design by George Weis.

ISBN: 978-1-63941-096-5

I. Christianity—Eastern Orthodox Church
II. Eastern Orthodox Christian Theology

First printing: August 2026.
Printed in the United States of America.

"We do not move the eternal boundaries laid down by our fathers: rather, we keep the traditions as we have received them; for if we begin to demolish the edifice of the Church, even in the smallest thing, in no short time the whole will fall to the ground."

—Saint John Damascene
On the Sacred Images II.12



The Gathering of the Kollyvades Fathers



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Four Philokalic Fathers.
Clockwise from the top left: Saint Athanasius of Paros, Saint Nephon of Icaria, Saint Macarius of Corinth, and Saint Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain.



PROLOGUE

The three Holy Kollyvades Fathers, Macarius of Corinth, Nikodemos the Hagiorite and Athanasius of Paros, lived in a critical period for Hellenism and Orthodoxy and offered great services to these. The rationalism and enlightenment of the West, defeated in the fourteenth century by Saint Gregory Palamas, reappeared in the eighteenth century with the movement known as the Enlightenment, with Adamantius Koraïs as its leader,[1] to cast doubt on the Tradition of the Church, to turn education and culture exclusively to the Ancient Greek tradition by slandering and showing contempt for Byzantium, and thus to create favorable conditions for the missionary activities of Papism and Protestantism, which had been already corrupted by the Renaissance and by secularization.

Then, as in every age, the confrontation between tradition and renovation was difficult, because the latter appears more alluring and easily acceptable since it rejects the strait and narrow path and preaches the broad avenue of accommodation and ease. Even on Mount Athos, an attempt was made to change the traditions regarding

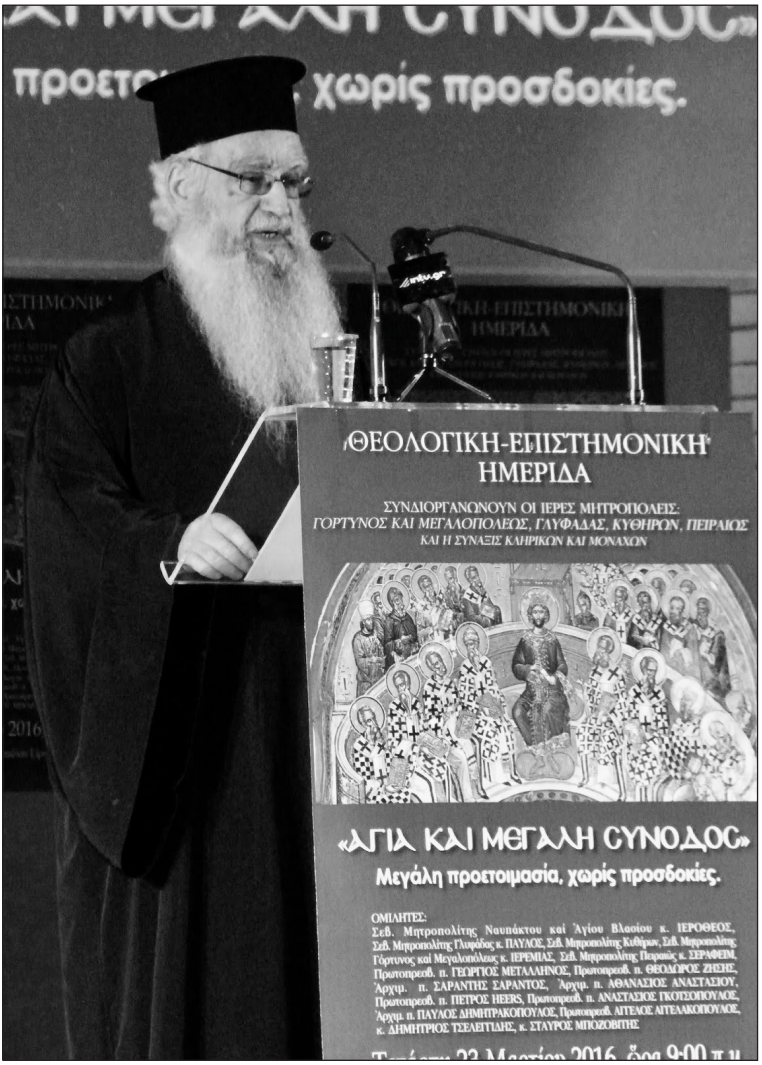
1 The Greek humanist scholar Adamantius Koraïs (1748–1833) was the most prominent figure of the Greek Enlightenment. —English editor

the celebration of memorial services in order to make it easier for the monks to travel to Karyes to buy and sell things—which at first glance does not seem to be some fatal aberration. The Holy Kollyvades Fathers reacted to this change, too, which was simply the flashpoint of the conflict, and undertook an enormous labor, fighting with their words and their pens for the preservation of the Orthodox faith and life, the treasures of which they presented in their numerous writings, interpreted and disseminated, so that the Orthodox faithful, deprived of education by the Turkish yoke, might come to realize their great value and not be seduced by the shiny trinkets of Frankish civilization and suffer spiritual detriment.

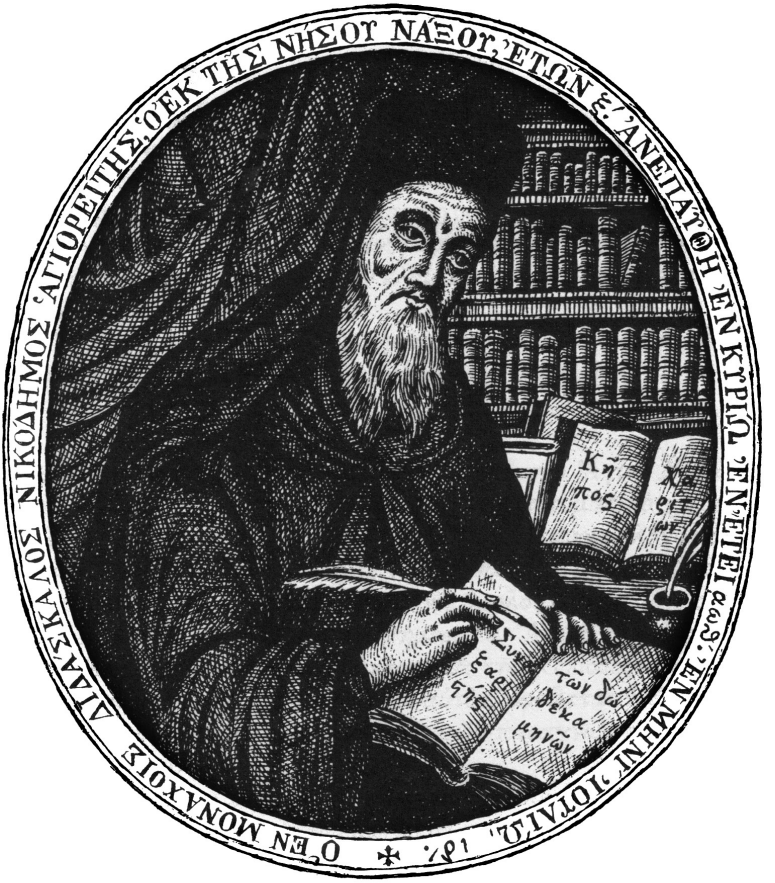
Their work and their stance should serve as an example for our time, which is much more critical, because the wind of modernization and renovation, which is essentially a return and adaptation to the passions of sin, now presented unabashedly as a natural and legitimate choice, is in our day blowing stronger and demolishing accepted principles and values.

In this short book, we present lectures and addresses that we gave at conferences and other events held for the two of these three, for Saint Nikodemos and for Saint Athanasius the Parian. We hope that our words will help in understanding their person and their work.

February 2004
Protopresbyter Theodore Zisis



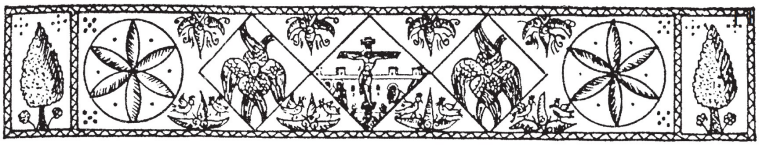
Protopresbyter Theodore Zisis speaking at the Theogical Academic Symposium "Great and Holy Council: Great Preparation Without Expectations," in Piraeus, Athens, Greece, 2016.



„Τίς Νικόδημος ὅτος ὃ κλέος μέγα;
„Ἐν ὀρθοδόξοις καὶ σοφοῖς Ὄρος Ἄθω;
„Ὅς τήν δε βίβλον εὐφυῶς τάξεν φίλε;
„Νάξιος ἀνήρ. εὖγε τῆς εὐφυΐας!

Ἀντεγράφη διὰ χειρός Φωτίου Κόντογλου Κυδωνιέως.
αφμγ΄

19th-century engraving of Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite, "copied by the hand of Photius Kontoglou the Kydonian, 1943"



CHAPTER I

Are There Any Western Influences in the Teachings of Saint Nikodemos?

1. The Old Controversies Have Been Resolved for Researchers

The question of whether there are Western (mainly Roman Catholic) influences on the writings and teachings of Saint Nikodemos has preoccupied researchers for about a century now. At the center of this issue are basically two of the Saint's writings, *Spiritual Exercises* and *Unseen Warfare*.[1] When it was discovered that similar works existed in the West with the same title and the same exact content, and when the comparison that was conducted revealed that the works of the Holy Father are to a great extent verbatim translations of the Western versions, then we would say

1 On this, see Emm. Frankiskos, "'Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος' (1796); 'Γυμνάσματα Πνευματικά' (1800). Ἡ πατρότητα τῶν 'μεταφράσεων' τοῦ Νικοδήμου Ἁγιορείτη" ["'Unseen Warfare' (1796) and 'Spiritual Exercises' (1800): The Authorship of the 'Translations' of Nikodemos the Hagiorite"], *Ὁ Ἐρανιστής* (*Eranistis*), year 25-31, 19 (1993): 104.



CHAPTER II

Saint Gregory Palamas in the Writings and Teachings of Saint Athanasius of Paros

1. Kollyvades or Hesychasts?

The choice of this topic for the present conference in Paros, which was organized thanks to the inspired initiative of His Eminence Ambrose, the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Paros and Naxos, and the Administrative Committee of the Holy Shrine of Panagia Ekatontapyliani, has a double purpose: to present the extent to which Saint Gregory Palamas is used in the writings and in the teachings of the great Parian theologian.

We are not bringing owls to Athens.[44] The facts are fairly well-known to researchers, regarding both Saint Athanasius and the two other great theologians of his time, Saint Macarius Notaras and Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite. All three worked to strengthen Orthodox self-consciousness and to protect the Tradition against powerful

44 An Ancient Greek idiom, equivalent to "bringing coals to Newcastle." The owl was Athena's sacred bird and the emblem of Athens, featured also on Athenian coins. —ENGLISH EDITOR

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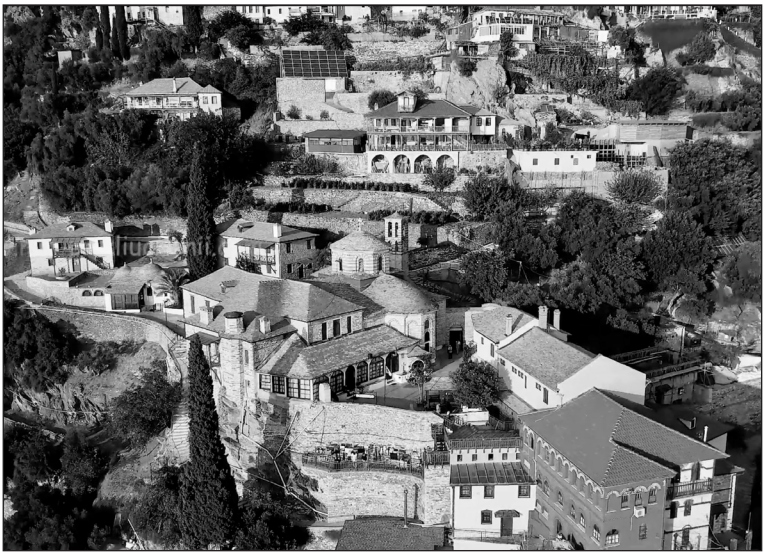
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GLORY BE TO GOD
FOR ALL THINGS

AMEN.

Nikodemos the Hagiorite and Athanasius of Paros proved the most prolific and prominent of all the holy Kollyvades Fathers. Their time was one of historical significance; for the enemy that had been long ago defeated by Saint Gregory Palamas, Barlaam's nascent humanism, once more reared its head, now full-grown, in the form of the so-called Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, seeking a vengeful rematch against the heirs of Palamas. The Philokalic Fathers rose to the challenge. Holy hesychasts themselves and worthy successors of the Holy Fathers of ages past, Saints Nikodemos and Athanasius gave their all to the struggle, promoting and publishing the works of the old hesychasts as well as composing their own original polemic works against such men as Koraïs, the new Barlaam of their day.

In this collection of essays, Fr. Theodore Zisis sheds light upon the life and work of these two champions of the Faith. He refutes the allegations of Western influence on Saint Nikodemos and highlights that the holy father's profound reverence for the Theotokos as seen in his writings. He then offers a sampling of Saint Athanasius's positions on matters of faith, life, and education, dispels misconceptions along the way, and indicates why his words are as timely as ever. Finally, after exploring the role of Saint Gregory Palamas in the teaching of Saint Athanasius, he ends with a general assessment of the Parian's invaluable contribution to theology, education, liturgics and more.



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ISBN: 978-1-63941-096-5 US $15.00
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