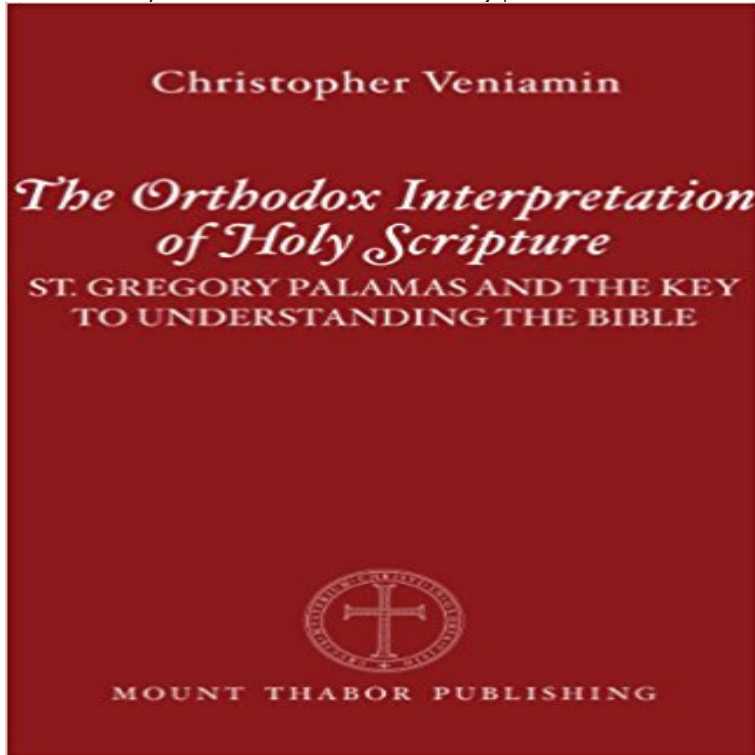


The Orthodox Interpretation of Holy Scripture: St. Gregory Palamas and the Key to Understanding the Bible



This work is a chapter taken from *The Orthodox Understanding of Salvation: Theosis in Scripture and Tradition* (December, 2013). But in the vision of Christ Transfigured, Peter, James and John, first and foremost, behold Christ as God, consubstantial and equal in every respect with God the Father, Whose exact image He is (cf. Hebr. 1:3). No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:18). Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ teaches us that He is the image of the Father: He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9), and that No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6). This has tremendous consequences for our understanding of the divine economy, and for our reading of Holy Scripture. For example, we note the profound significance of the Apostolic greeting in Second Corinthians, which in earliest times marked the beginning of the Liturgy: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Liturgy specifies, God the Father], and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14). The fact that Christ is mentioned first, before the Father, testifies to the Sons equality with the Father in His divine status. Christ is thus homoousios or consubstantial with the Father, and in no way inferior to Him in His divinity. But that is not all that this Apostolic greeting tells us. For in addition to witnessing to the divine equality of the Son and Word of God with His divine Father, it also gives us the shape of the divine economy. That is to say, it bears witness to the fact that in Gods revelation, in His self-disclosure, to the world, Christ is the chief protagonist, the central figure. So, every manifestation of God, every revelation of God, comes in and through Christ, the Son and Word of God the Father. Hence, Christ is at the heart of all the great revelations of God, in the Old as

well as in the New Testament. As examples of this we have: The three men or angels that appeared to Abraham at Mamre: Christ is the central angel (Gen. 18:133).² The man with whom Jacob wrestled at Peniel, which means the Face of God, after which he exclaims, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved [lit. my soul is saved] (Gen. 32:30). And the greatest Old Testament theophany of all: Moses vision of the burning bush on Sinai, with the disclosure of the Name of God, I AM (Exod. 3:24:17). It is Christ that is referred to as the Angel of the LORD, Who spoke with Moses from the Burning Bush; and it is Christ Who is I AM as is also witnessed to most clearly on almost every icon depicting Him. All of these revelations, and many more besides, are revelations of Christ

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