

Analogia



ST GREGORY PALAMAS

SPECIAL SERIES – PART 1

The three-fold nature of our knowledge likewise demonstrates that we, to a greater extent than the angels, are created in God's image. Indeed, this knowledge is not only three-fold but encompasses every form of knowledge.

(Topics of Natural and Theological Science 63)

Analogia is a peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to the scholarly exposition and discussion of the theological principles of the Christian faith. A distinguishing feature of this journal will be the effort to advance a dialogue between Orthodox Christianity and the views and concerns of Western modes of theological and philosophical thought. A key secondary objective is to provide a scholarly context for the further examination and study of common Christian sources. Though theological and philosophical topics of interest are the primary focus of the journal, the content of *Analogia* will not be restricted to material that originates exclusively from these disciplines. Insofar as the journal seeks to cultivate theological discourse and engagement with the urgent challenges and questions posed by modernity, topics from an array of disciplines will also be considered, including the natural and social sciences. As such, solicited and unsolicited submissions of high academic quality containing topics of either a theological or interdisciplinary nature will be encouraged. In an effort to facilitate dialogue, provision will be made for peer-reviewed critical responses to articles that deal with high-interest topics. *Analogia* strives to provide an interdisciplinary forum wherein Christian theology is further explored and assumes the role of an interlocutor with the multiplicity of difficulties facing modern humanity.

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INITIATING THE DISCUSSION

‘FOR THE FALL AND RISING OF MANY’: ST GREGORY PALAMAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INTERPRETATIONS

As an unfailing sign of his spiritual greatness, St Gregory Palamas continues to be a stumbling block for Western and some Eastern theologians alike, and he still emerges like a lonely island in the midst of Christian theology ‘for the fall and rising of many’ (Luke 2:34). Non-Orthodox theologians avoid or reject him, not only because they constantly misinterpret his doctrine of uncreated energies as ‘innovation’ (from Denis Petau to Martin Jugie and Robert Jenson) but also because they suspect him of refuting certain fundamental Western theological concepts concerning grace, synergy, divine unity, the *Filioque*, etc. Some Orthodox theologians, on the other hand, have become ‘Palamophobic’ for some complicated reasons, mainly due to the misunderstanding of the function of selfhood and the significance of psychosomatic participation in Hesychasm, something I have sought to analyse in my book, *Beyond Spirituality: Christian Mysticism of Power, and the Meaning of the Self in the Patristic Era*.¹ But are there any further historical reasons for this ‘conflict of interpretations’, to recall Paul Ricoeur?² As I wrote recently:

The difficulty with Hesychasm is that its absorption into scholarship was interrupted suddenly and early. The gradual collapse and eventual fall of the Empire, the resultant decapitation of the Roman-Greek nation’s scholarship in the fifteenth century, the terrible vicissitudes of the centuries-long, barbarous occupation, and, thereafter, the impositions of the West and the brutal clashes over confessions for a long time forced the Eastern Church to put its energies into preservation and conservation. The Orthodox Church in Russia was unable to undertake the task for the reasons described by Florovsky.³

¹ Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming.

² Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

³ See his *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 1 (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1979).

First, this prevented a real, in-depth dialogue after the Hesychast councils between the victors of the Hesychast conflict—the Hesychasts like Palamas, Cabasilas, Kokkinos, and, later on, Markus Eugenikos *et al.*—and those who were defeated—the Westernizing opponents and their pupils. Second, it prevented a real and deep dialogue with the West, something for which many Western theologians, with their strong confessionalism, are also responsible. George-Gennadios Scholarios, in the fifteenth century, started a deep, unprecedented, and learned dialogue with the West, but by then it was no longer possible to truly hold such a major spiritual and cultural event within the collapsing Byzantine *intelligentsia*. The same is true concerning people like Vikentios Damodos, the great and erudite theologian of the eighteenth century, whose work is, ironically, in great part, still unpublished. There were two appalling consequences as a result of this situation. First, Hesychasm gradually gave the impression of real and substantive opposition to humanism, both classical and medieval, and to the natural, cosmological, and, in part, metaphysical dimensions of philosophy, whereas in fact it represented a drastic reacquisition, critique, and transformation of all these (even though this was formulated largely through thinking and experience, rather than in a systematic manner). It is therefore unfortunate, but true, that a good deal of obscurantism has crept in to Orthodox theology, especially in recent years, making it impossible to hold the potentially invaluable dialogue between Hesychasm and the human sciences and philosophy, which would provide these with new horizons. The second disastrous effect is that Hesychasm was understood as having an *a priori* anti-Western orientation and impetus, something which is of course untrue, since Palamas, along with his cleverer pupils in the centuries that followed, never condemned Augustine or Thomas Aquinas; many Western theologians are also responsible for this supposed hostility since, out of their inability to properly understand Palamas, they created a swarm of monstrous myths about Palamas and Hesychasm, to such an extent that even now all the good and faithful Catholic scholars feel unconsciously compelled to express a sort of theological nausea when they encounter Palamas and his ancient or modern proponents. It is impossible to find even one Western scholar who completely rejects Palamas *due to a deep knowledge of his theology*.⁴

Moreover, and in continuity with the above difficulties, there perhaps exists another series of critical ‘factors’ that have to be taken into serious consideration by both pro-Palamites and anti-Palamites in order for an honest dialogue to be es-

⁴ See Loudovikos, ‘Practising Consubstantiality: The Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary between Synergy and Sophia in St Nicholas Cabasilas and Sergius Bulgakov, and in a Post-modern Perspective’, *Analogia* 1 (2016): 57–58.

tablished. The first factor can perhaps be called ‘the battle of intentions’. What are our ultimate theological intentions when dealing with the Palamite corpus? Is what we usually call an ‘irenic’ and ‘balanced’ (sterilized!) academic approach enough to fathom the wuthering heights and burning depths of St Gregory’s ‘existential’ treasury, acquired in the years of his hermetic self-enclosure in his remote cave at the Veria Skete, where he passed the years of his youth crying to God, ‘Illumine my darkness’? How many of us know, in an existential manner, something about this ‘darkness’ and the quality of its possible ‘illumination’? However, these are not pious excesses, but excessive ‘saturated phenomena’, to use Marion’s phenomenological language,⁵ and something even more profound than this. How many mistakes and how many self-sufficiently blissful misunderstandings of Palamite thought would have being avoided had scholars been able to partake, even just a little, of his divine music? Or, alternatively, how much better would it be to respect what we do not possess and consent to learn from Palamas, instead of putting him constantly upon the Procrustean bed of our narrow and self-sufficient academic mediocrity? It is simply impossible to truly understand Palamas and others like him, East and West, by simply using our habitual scholarly methods and projects. At the same time, Palamas requires another sort of spiritual intention on our part in order to be fathomed. If approached in this way, the synodical reception of St Gregory by the Orthodox Church is not without meaning.

The second factor that must be considered relates to ‘cultural wars’. If on the flag of the anti-Western Orthodox warriors of this long warfare—cultural in its hidden core—is written ‘Spiritual East *versus* Scholastic West’, then on the flags of the contemporary Western (mainly Roman Catholic) anti-Eastern apostles following Jugie’s polemics is inscribed ‘Correct the mistaken Greeks’. If the tension is viewed in this light, there is no value in discussing the difference between Palamas and Thomas Aquinas or Augustine, nor, of course, Duns Scotus. In the view of the anti-Eastern ideologues, Palamas is but a cachectic hybrid of the three western thinkers. Conversely, the so-called ‘Palamite school’—and especially the poor ‘Neo-Palamites’, an expression used by these authors when they want to pour scorn on the work of any Orthodox theologian who disagrees with their methods—represents a parasitic ideological obsession. It is a sort of theological ‘imagined community’—to quote Benedict Anderson—of modern theologians who fight against the perennial glory of Western theology. Furthermore, as these anti-Palamites claim, those modern pro-Palamites have not understood that the very heirs of Palamism had already associated it with the thought of the intellectual giants of the West, and had even altered essential elements of St Gregory’s theology. The exponents of this *ideological rather than theological approach* implicitly follow Jugie, though they have paradoxically reversed his main argument (i.e. that Gregory was a theological ‘innovator’); these

⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 13, 17.

authors, through similar terms possibly found in the writings of different thinkers, tend to establish absolute identifications of meaning. They use philological weapons in order to hide either their lack of genuine theological positions or seek to fulfil the ancient dream of subordinating ‘dissident’ (to again recall Jugie) Eastern theology to blissful obedience to the Holy See—as if such subordination or uniformity ever existed in the united Church of the first millennium. However, it is truly refreshing that today there are some serious scholars, both East and West, who, while being fully aware of the differences between the two theological traditions, search for ways of possible theological communication, dialogue, and, perhaps, a critical convergence, through the use of theological and philosophical criteria. In the East, it is possible to find such scholars even as early as in the fifteenth century. This class of thinkers, East and West, realise that Palamas was not the author of an ‘innovation’ called ‘Palamism’, but that he simply brought our common Patristic tradition to a point of theological maturity, thus responding to exciting anthropological and spiritual problems of his era. These same thinkers also recognise the fact that he was never ‘abandoned’ or substantially ‘altered’ by his theological heirs.

A third factor relevant to this discussion is the ‘spiritual controversies’. It is of utmost importance to admit that discussions about, for example, the possibility of understanding life in Christ as psychosomatic participation rather than intellectual contemplation are not without meaning, since they affect the very understanding of our Christian identity. A discussion concerning the quality of grace received by the Christian—created or uncreated—is not just a scholastic debate but decisively affects our way of living spiritual life. If grace is created, then spiritual life has some obvious limits within my human world, and, moreover, as I argue elsewhere, real divine presence in my created world can, on a metaphysical level, be doubted.⁶

Yet a fourth factor is ‘the Trinitarian quarrels’. Palamas did not accept the Western conception of the *Filioque*, but he nonetheless offered the theological criteria for an Orthodox interpretation thereof. It is also of great theological importance that it is possible for us to discuss, in a most fruitful manner, the *Filioque* through his doctrine of the distinction between the divine essence and energies.⁷

Therefore, to search for the merits Palamas’ thought could potentially bring to ecumenical Christian theology is perhaps not a vain pursuit, provided that it is respected and first interpreted by its own intellectual and spiritual criteria, and only then in dialogue with modern theological and secular thought. Could, perhaps, the following personal *open* suggestions—and this is why I refer here only to my

⁶ See my ‘Being and Essence Revisited: Reciprocal *logoi* and energies in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas, and the Genesis of the Self-referring Subject’, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 72.1 (2016): 117–46.

⁷ See my ‘Consubstantiality beyond Perichoresis: Personal Threeness, Intra-Divine Relations, and Personal Consubstantiality, in Augustine’s, Thomas Aquinas’, and Maximus the Confessor’s Trinitarian Theologies’, *In The Fountain and the Flood: Maximus the Confessor and Philosophical Inquiry*, *Studia Patristica LXXXVIII*, edited by Sotiris Mitralaxis, 51–69. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.

own works, in which I expound these issues, building of course upon the work of many great Orthodox scholars, starting with George-Gennadios Scholarios, and Vikentios Damodos, and ending with Florovsky, Staniloae, Meyendorff, Bulgakov and Lossky—serve as an unconventional way to initiate this serious discussion, and show precisely how serious this discussion can be? I call these suggestions *open* because I understand them as parts of an ongoing dialogue, rather than fixed convictions. As the reader shall see, the authors in the present volume as well as in those forthcoming will have different suggestions to make. These suggestions are elucidated in the following points:

- 1) St Gregory Palamas created an unparalleled metaphysics of the *real presence* of God in creation, based upon Greek Patristic theology of the first millennium, along with a deeper understanding of divine unity. Christian theology can profit considerably from this theological metaphysic.⁸
- 2) Palamas created a theological theory of psychosomatic participation in God, explicitly beyond merely intellectual contemplation.⁹
- 3) He endorsed a holistic understanding of human existence, beyond the temptations of any detached or ecstatic theological mysticism of the mind or of the heart. His theology of prayer involves an entire theory of human unification.¹⁰
- 4) St Gregory represents for the Orthodox a way of a positive understanding of both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, and even, as I suggested recently, a way of a possible theological corrective to some points of their theology.¹¹
- 5) He can help us to understand why the *Filioque* is a problem for the East, and how it may be solved.¹²
- 6) The Archbishop of Thessalonica can open new perspectives in the modern dialogue between theology and philosophical anthropology, depth psychology, and even biological psychology or cognitive science.¹³ Some contem-

⁸ See my 'Being and Essence Revisited', where the deep theological connection between Gregory Palamas and Maximus the Confessor is discussed.

⁹ See chapter 2, 2 of my *Beyond Spirituality*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See my 'Striving for Participation: Palamite Analogy as Dialogical **Syn-energy** and Thomist Analogy as Emanational Similitude', in eds. C. Athanasopoulos and C. Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 2013), 122–48.

¹² See my 'Consubstantiality beyond Perichoresis'.

¹³ See chapter 2 of my *Psychoanalysis and Orthodox Theology: On Desire, Catholicity and Eschatology*, in Greek as *Ψυχανάλυση και Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία: Περί Επιθυμίας, Καθολικότητας και Εσχατολογίας* (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2003); part 2, chapter 7 of my *The Struggle for Participation: Being and Methexis in Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas*, in Greek as *Ο Μόχθος της Μετοχής: Είναι και Μέθεξι στον Γρηγόριο Παλαμά και τον Θωμά Ακινάτη* (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2010). See also my 'Existential Psychology: Modern Psychology in the Destiny of Theology', in eds. G. D. Dragas, P. Pavlov and S. Tanev, *Orthodox Theology and the Sciences: Glorifying God in His Marvellous Works*, (Sofia, Bulgaria, and Columbia, MO: University of Sofia Press and Newrome Press LLC, 2016), 108–19.

porary Orthodox scholars already have put the doctrine of the uncreated energies successfully in dialogue with modern physics.

7) He can offer exciting material for a step-by-step construction of a non-abstract modern social theory.¹⁴

8) The hesychast saint offers exciting theological perspectives for a new understanding of the philosophy of history.¹⁵

9) Palamas offers fertile perspectives to the recent discussions of the ontology of personhood, through what I have called his theology of *inter-hypostatic syn-energy*.¹⁶

10) Finally, he can also show how this life of divine participation is deeply connected with ecclesiology, if it is considered to be, as I have called it elsewhere, a 'lived ecclesiology'.¹⁷

Analogia's announcement of a two-issue series on St Gregory Palamas provoked an unexpected number of responses of high academic quality, and it therefore seems that, in the end, we have a sufficient number of articles to produce a three-issue series. I hope that this will help towards the deepening of this extremely necessary dialogue for the sake of our common Christian theological endeavour today. As indicated in the mission statement of the journal, the floor is open for anyone who would like to respond to any of the articles published in these issues; the author will then be asked to respond, if he/she wishes.

Now, concerning the present volume, the following articles are included: Professor John Farina starts the volume by offering an exciting corrective to the Christian social justice industry through Palamas' theology of an inward transformative experience and vision of God, and against secularism, which is unconsciously endorsed even by some Christian social theories, starting with Scholasticism and ending with Liberation theology; this article is capable of inaugurating a most fruitful discussion. Fr Maxym Lysack offers an overview of asceticism in light of the eschatological and therapeutic orientation given to it by St Gregory's homilies, in which the living experience of God in Christ is suggested not exclusively as a privilege of monks but as something also possible for the laity. Professor Georgios

¹⁴ See my *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 161–78.

¹⁵ See my 'The Open History and its Enemies: Unity of God and Concept of History in Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas', in ed. C. Athanasopoulos, *Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), 154–79.

¹⁶ See chapter 2 of my *Orthodoxy and Modernization: Byzantine Individualization, State and History in the Perspective of the European Future*, in Greek as *Ορθοδοξία και Εκσυγχρονισμός: Βυζαντινή Εξατομίκευση, Κράτος και Ιστορία στην προοπτική του Ευρωπαϊκού Μέλλοντος* (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2006), 61–104, entitled 'Hypostasis and Catholicity in the Greek Theological Tradition: Is it possible to synthesize the Greek Christian with Western Christian Individualization?'

¹⁷ See chapter 2 and the conclusion of my *Beyond Spirituality*, and also my *A History of God's Love*, in Greek as *Η Ιστορία της Αγάπης του Θεού* (Άγιον Όρος: Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαδίου, 2015), 282.

Mantzarides, one of the fathers of Palamite studies in the Orthodox world, offers in his article on the concept of justice in Palamas' *oeuvre* a deep theological analysis of the existential and participatory understanding of justice in the saint's thought. The Metropolitan and Professor George (Chrysostomou), President of the University Ecclesiastical Academy of Thessaloniki, informs us about the liturgical veneration of St Gregory Palamas in the city of Veria, where the famous Skete, which hosted the ascetical struggles of Palamas' youth, still exists. Tikhon Pino strives to clear the way for a fresh historical approach to Palamism beyond Neo-Palamite scholarship, seeking to analyse the problem of development and change in Byzantine theology in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This is a discussion that must indeed go on, though with theological rather than philological criteria. Norman Russell offers an excellent overview of what he so successfully calls 'the invention of Palamism'; this is, I think, an article which has to be read very carefully by all those who legitimately search for new paradigms in the interpretation of Palamite theology. Fr Manuel Sumares in his wonderfully insightful article deals with the possibility of providing an ontology of ordinary life—against the modern Western tendency to alienate life from spirituality—through Palamite theology, which speaks of ordinary life in precisely ontological terms, thus enhancing immanence and transforming it into a sacrament of God's presence. Lastly, I wish to thank Fr Gregory Wellington and Joseph Candelario for helping to proofread the articles of the present volume.

A correction: I think it necessary to add some corrections to my article published in *Analogia* 2.1 (2017), dedicated to St Maximus the Confessor. Two of them appear on page 96, where the word 'hypostasis' is missing twice: in the second line from the bottom in the main body of the text, the phrase 'the Italians cannot make the distinction between and substance/nature' should read 'the Italians cannot make the distinction between hypostasis and substance/nature'; in the sixth line from the bottom, the phrase 'identified the notion of with that of', should read 'identified the notion of hypostasis with that of'. Furthermore, on page 105, in the eleventh line from the top, the phrase 'whose will is totally' should read 'whose divine will is totally'.

– *Nikolaos Loudovikos*
Senior Editor

GREGORY PALAMAS AND CHRISTIAN SOCIAL THEORY

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The construction of any theology is a secularization, which is necessary but risks distorting the distinctive experience that birthed it. Gregory Palamas holds that Christian morality must be based in asceticism. The mediation of Christ, conceived as a series of reconciliations, requires participation in the divine energies through a life of repentance. My project is to suggest that Gregory offers a corrective to much of the Christian social justice industry.

Introduction

In part one of what follows, I will share some philosophical and historical reflections on Christian social theory in the context of secularization. In part two, I will offer specific observations on Gregory Palamas' thought. I will contend that Christian social theory must be moral. That it must argue from the 'is', which is the revelation of God in Christ, to what ought to be. That Gregory holds that the moral is inseparable from the ascetical. Efforts to create mediating moral languages need always to be measured against individual witness. The implications of this are that the Church must practice virtue, not just talk about it, and that Christian witness without a commitment to asceticism runs the risk of losing its distinctiveness. In the end, the Christian life is not just about what we ask of others but about what we ask of ourselves.

Part One: Some Philosophical and Historical Reflections on the Construction of Christian Social Theory

Religion begins with a personal experience of what Rudolf Otto called simply, the numinous.¹ That primitive experience of awe and reverence in the presence of the totally other is not primarily an experience of dread or fear. Paradoxically, there is an attraction to the unknown, a familiarity of the other that draws the individual into a relationship in which she feels herself suddenly in communion. She is part of some larger scheme. She transcends her isolation and experiences the social in its

¹ Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige* (Breslau: Tewendt & Granier, 1917).

most basic form. The experience is at once personal and public, because it is relational and multivalent.

Secondary efforts to represent that experience are part of the construction of a religious system, which might include a political theology.² Ritual, symbol, and the development of a language of theology all follow. With the process comes a transformation. The experience takes on a less unique form. It moves from epiphany to elocution. The epiphany is an experience, ringed off by a mystic fire. The elocution is vulgar, in a common language. The experience is sacred; the theological expression is not. In this way, it can be said that all theology has a built-in secularity. This secularization is beneficial to society and represents one of the key contributions of religion.

René Girard explains the formation of a modern judicial system, which is an example of this dynamic of the secularization of primitive experiences. For Girard, the judicial system is the result of the process of secularization and rationalization of the dynamics of sacrifice. By vindicating the absolute monopoly of legitimate vengeance, the state completes the process begun by ritual sacrifice, greatly rationalizing and developing its effectiveness. Rather than trying to stop vengeance, the legal system rationalizes it. It turns it into an extremely effective technique of healing and of preventing violence.

This is an effective secularization that benefits society and perpetuates the sacred instinct. Religion is not hindered by such secularization, rather it is benefited. It gives its life for the good of society. It sacrifices itself by secularizing sacrifice and saves itself while saving others. The great religions of the world all do this. The cult or new religious movement often cannot do this; it is too interested in creating a unique identity, in setting itself off from the rest of the world. But that is not what makes it live long, like celibate Shakers who never could shed their faith in their peculiar institutions of celibacy and because of that set themselves off from the rest of society so well that only three of them are left in the world today.

Violence, theology, and law are linked in a process of secularization. Should law try to break that linkage, as it does in the case of legal positivism, it becomes arbitrary and capricious. Should theology try to break it, it becomes fundamentalist, cut off from all warrants other than its own assertions.

The mystical dimension of religion will try again and again to distance itself from theology. It refers back to the more primitive moment and rejects the limits placed on it by theology. Yet it is only an *aporia*, lasting for a moment. It cannot

² The term 'political theology' is not used to suggest, as it is often done today by those still influenced by Marx, that all theology is reducible to the 'political'. Nor do I mean to imply a religion that becomes merely a tool for supporting the state, or what some refer to as a 'civil religion'. I have largely avoided the term 'political theology' for those reasons, but use it here to mean 'a theology about politics', or a 'Christian social theory'. Here I wish to emphasize that theology as well as other religious expressions is involved in the process I am describing. I leave for another time a discussion of Carl Schmitt's now famous use of this term.

live without secularization. If it tries to, it remains wholly mysterious, wholly other, inarticulate, crude, silent.

Theologies, because they are social, secular expressions, can be matched to political forms. Mystical experiences cannot. The state can easily endorse the theological enterprise but always remains wary of the mystic. The mystic may also be the prophet, if he speaks forth in a sufficiently primitive language that differentiates itself from the secular theology of the church or the state. The mystic cannot be coopted by the state. The theologian often is. Today we are no longer in the age of Caesaro-papism, and so the cooption might not be obvious. Yet it occurs, coming through conceptions of human rights or individual liberties.

The concept of human rights could well be seen as being grounded in a Stoic, but much more deeply, in a Christian conception of the uniqueness and dignity of the human person. Marx rejected any conception of universal rights as bourgeois values that must be ignored in the construction of a new society, because they were only props of the existing structures of suppression. Yet Marx is not alone in his effort to decouple human rights from the Christian conception of the person, as today's political fights about certain putative human rights illustrate.

How does Christianity allow itself to be secularized for the good of society and its own good? What are the pitfalls it must beware?

At its core is the question of how we move between an experience of God and public morality. This is a problem for any religion, but especially for Christianity. In the New Covenant, little attempt is made to give specific directives for the myriad of situations life might bring. The New Covenant is not the Torah, nor is it Sharia, which start with the attempt to form a comprehensive code of morality and social action. Of course, even in those highly-detailed systems, situations arise which are not explicitly addressed, and theologians must extrapolate the moral principles as best they can. In Christianity, that process begins much sooner. Christians are presented with far fewer directives. Rather, we are told that the 'law' of the spirit of life in Christ has set us free from the 'law of sin and death' (Rom 8:2), the Mosaic law, which functions to show us our need for God's mercy, but never in itself brings freedom. Christians are forced, at least in part, to rely on the development of moral protocols, accessible to all through reason, especially when it comes to ordering society.

Christianity has a long history of this, one that began as early as the second century with the work of Origen. In the West, by the Middle Ages, that tradition had taken on a highly developed, carefully nuanced form, represented most elaborately by the scholastic tradition. That tradition relied on Aristotelean definitions about the world as it was observed without the aid of any special grace. By so doing, all of society could be addressed. A path between the dictates of reason and the world of revelation could be forged. It was an important accomplishment, a project that brought with it an integration of society, a holistic vision of being, arranged logically

and in reference to the Almighty. Yet it carried with it certain dangers. God could be obscured in the maze of syllogisms and fine distinctions that populate the pages of St Thomas. The prophetic dimension of Christian witness could be distorted. The dynamism of Spirit could be trapped in a static system.

Such objections were not lost on Thomas' contemporaries. In 1277, the Archbishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, issued a condemnation of scholasticism, specifically castigating Thomas. He wished to clarify that God's absolute power transcended any conditions of logic that Aristotle or Averroes might place on it. More specifically, he listed 219 propositions held by the scholastics that violated the omnipotence of God, and included in this list were twenty specifically from Thomas. This was a clear effort to stem the excesses of scholasticism, which insisted theology was a science, bound by the same Aristotelian definitions and rules that governed the secular sciences.

Tempier's rebuke, although it had some effect in its day, soon faded. The forces that wanted a mediated science of theology that was compatible with the existing social and legal orders won decisively. In 1323 Aquinas was canonized, and from then on the hegemony of Thomism was unquestioned. In 1879, as part of his attempt to resist the modernist impulse in his church, Pope Leo XIII, in his letter, *Aeterni Patris*, made explicit the church's reliance on Thomistic theological method, insisting that it be taught in all Catholic theologates worldwide, largely to the exclusion of other systems. This was an ironic twist that Thomas, who had done so much to spur the development of secularization by his theological method, was then used as a bulwark against it.

This is explainable partially by the development of still more secularized models of the political order introduced by Machiavelli, Hobbes, and their progenies. Just how much should Christians labor to translate their morality into the political order? What must that translation involve? Is some version of a natural law ethic required that emphasizes the accessibility of God's moral demands through reason?

It is no accident that the emergence of scholasticism and its triumph historically coincided with the emergence of powerful Christian regimes in Europe, which insisted on their own legitimacy apart from the Church. In an era when the Church at times claimed *plenitudo potestatis*, its relation to powerful regimes was fraught. Scholasticism proved an invaluable aid in translating the prophetic, evocative language of religion into the legalistic, regulatory jargon of statecraft. Just as Gothic architecture was born in the nexus of state power and Christian devotion, so too was scholasticism. The edifice of St Denis, the first Gothic cathedral, spoke of the power of the French kings and of the Church. Over the bodies of Clovis and his heirs soared Abbe Suger's magnificent clerestory that created a heaven of its own—perhaps more beautiful than unadorned nature's night sky—which, once entered, might be so pleasing the one would never wish to escape. Yet, unlike nature's heaven, entrance into the church's heaven was only through a well-regulated door, kept by

the priests, bishops, and monks. Your experience of transcendence depended on their rules, their definitions and distinctions, which divided religious experience as carefully as medieval architects divided space.

The Christian natural law tradition is not, of course, limited to Thomas, but has had many Protestant proponents as well, among whom is Hugo Grotius. In his 1624 work *De juri ac pacis*, he uses the phrase *etiamsi daremus Deum non esse*, 'even if we were to accept that God does not exist'.³ Some scholars have seen this as a turning point toward a secular moral system based on reason, but without any specific reference to God. Oliver Donovan is almost certainly right to see that reading of Grotius as an exaggeration, but doubtless there were those in Grotius's day, and many more today, who do not.⁴

With Protestantism, the historical context of a Christian social theory took different directions, which in part, made it more adaptable to the secular state.⁵ The Reformation represented a turn to the individual and a concern for personal salvation. The emphasis on the individual was matched by a focus on the question of justification. The term itself is legalistic and comes from the Jewish concepts of law with which St Paul struggled in his letters to the Romans and Galatians. Luther spoke of the concept of alien righteousness, attributed to us in a juridical transaction, whereby God looks on the righteousness of Christ who stands in our place. We are *simul justus et peccator*. The dichotomies of justice and mercy become the heart of Protestant theology. Given that, it is no wonder that, beginning in the early twentieth century as a response to the excesses of industrialization, the category of 'social justice' enters Protestant theological discourse with thinkers like Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr in the U. S. The early Social Gospel movement was grounded in religious experience. Rauschenbusch started a small group of Protestant ministers in New York City who, while ministering to the needy, met for prayer and the reading of saints like Francis of Assisi and Martin de Porres. Niebuhr similarly led a movement to return the church to witness rather than politics. But the 1970s saw the birth of a theology that attempted to reconcile Marxist ideas about the economy and culture with Christian social concerns. It was concerned with experience, but it was the experience of the poor and oppressed as a class, not as individuals. Their material suffering was the locus of God's action. They suffered not through choices of their own, but through the evil of the socio-economic system. They did not choose to witness to the Gospel, but in their experience of oppression they did. They were 'the least of my brethren' that Christ had described (Matt 24:40). The response of Christians should be to fight against the material structures

³ Hugoris Grotius, *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis. Prolegemena*, par. 11., ed. P.C. Molhuysen (Clark, NJ.: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2005), 7.

⁴ Oliver O'Donovan and Joan O'Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 788.

⁵ See Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How A Religious Reformation Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012).

that inflicted that oppression. Witness in that model meant social action, not acts of self-denial and prayer. And it meant having an awareness of the political dimensions of society. It was not enough to give alms, to reach out personally to aid the poor. Believers should enter the political process and fight, even to the point of violent revolution, for the structural changes necessary. In Latin America, the Boff brothers and Gustavo Gutiérrez explicitly claimed that Marx's harsh critique of religion and embrace of violent revolution was part of the dialectic of history. In North America, Black theologians like James Cone used similar strategies to explain the struggle of Black American Christians.

Alien righteousness can change the moral imperative for Christians. The person never really partakes of the divine nature; she is only allotted a measure of it in the juridical transaction that explains salvation. The political counterpart of this is that personal holiness is not important. What counts is the juridical, social transaction. Praying and practicing ascetical actions as part of a life of repentance is not enough to change society and help the poor. The political process ultimately holds the key for societal salvation. The individual Christian's works are de-emphasized. Her will to choose is all that is required, indeed all that she can ever provide. Repentance can be seen as a choice, that once made, need not be repeated. Christian witness about the structures of society leads to social change, like creating greater fairness or economic equality, but that change does not require that persons change to become like Christ.

In this model it is hard to see what is distinctive about Christian social action. It seems to share with Marxism the claim that all that is required is the right political action, which Christians must bring about as citizens not as believers. The secular state enacts new policies, because they are believed by a majority, or by the revolutionary elite, to be better for the political community. In such a model, it is hard to see how the Church is any different from other political actors. Its power to effect social amelioration is limited to its political effectiveness.⁶

In the East, there is a long tradition of thought about church-state relations. We can think of Nikephorus Blemmydes, who lived a century before Gregory and came to prominence in the courts of Nicaea. His *Andreas Basilikos* is an explication of the emperor's role in Christian society. The king is the foundation of society, and as such he should be given to philosophy and the practice of virtue. A century later, just as the political power of the Byzantine rulers waned, the Eastern Church officially embraced Palamism. Gregory triumphed in his dispute with Barlaam. Yet the Church in the East never let go of the medieval comprehensive view of church-state relations. The Church had a preeminent place in society and deserved a special status in the law and procedures of the Christian state. Palamism in Gregory's hands was

⁶ See Leszek Kolakowski, 'Marxism and Human Rights', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 204–14.

not an explicit rejection of the concept of *symphonia* with its strong, pre-Hobbesian suppositions about a Christian prince.

Symphonia, however, does not survive the secular state. So the challenge is to appropriate Gregory's thought into the modern world. My project is to suggest that Gregory offers a corrective to much of the Christian social justice industry and those who easily bandy about the term 'political theology', the dimensions of which I have only suggested in this brief historical survey but which are not unfamiliar to any of us. The project is ambitious for the reasons suggested and also because it relies on an experience that is aporetic. But such *aporiai* are at the heart of our Christian faith.

Part Two: Gregory's Christian Witness

Gregory, of course, is not known for his social theory. Although he was for a while the bishop of a large city, his writings never show much concern for the structures of society. His writings come out of his monastic experience and are suffused with his never-ending quest for an experience of Christ and a simple insistence on witnessing to that reality through acts of charity.

Maximus the Confessor thought that the reconciliation Christ worked had five elements, which he referred to as mediations: between male and female, paradise and earth, heaven and earth, sensible and intelligible creation, and God and the whole of creation. Gregory Palamas adopts this tradition, insofar as he insists that the restoration of society and the full development of the human person in society are finally brought about through the action of God, just as knowledge of heavenly things is a work of God we must experience, rather than simply deduce by means of syllogistic reasoning.

The reconciliations of which Maximus speaks can be brought about, for Gregory, only through the work of Christ. In the words of Paul, whom Gregory revered as 'the Great Paul, the mouth of Christ':⁷ 'For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. And having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things, whether they be things in heaven or in earth' (Col 2:20). To be reconciled here means to be thoroughly transformed (*apokatallatto*). Paul again in 2 Corinthians: 'If any man be in Christ: a new creation. Old things are passed away; and behold, all things become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:17–19).

Gregory claims that repentance is necessary for us to participate in this life of reconciliation. He quotes Maximus saying that Moses and David became fit for the divine energy by laying aside their carnal properties. They became living icons of

⁷ *The One Hundred Fifty Chapters* 82, trans. and ed. Robert E. Sincewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988).

Christ, a process that takes place more by grace than by assimilation.⁸ Now that the kingdom of God in Christ has drawn near, we must not remove ourselves from it by living an unrepentant life. Rather, Gregory tells us, 'let us acquire works of repentance: a humble attitude, compunction and spiritual mourning, a gentle heart full of mercy, loving justice, striving for purity, peaceful, peacemaking, patient, glad to suffer persecutions, losses, disasters, slander and sufferings for the sake of truth and righteousness'. This is not merely an ascetical formula followed by moral maxim. It is an exhortation to love, based in an experience of love. He continues: 'For the kingdom of heaven, or rather, the King of heaven—O the unspeakable munificence!—is within us.'⁹

This experience is all possible because we have been created in the image of God, which image has been restored in the Reconciliation. The divine nature possesses goodness essentially and transcendentally. Transcendent goodness is Mind, from which the Word proceeds by way of generation. The Spirit and the Word proceed from Mind, and the Spirit is the love of the Begetter for the begotten Word.

This triadic image is in angels and men, but man is more perfectly the image of God, because of his corporality. The person is thus always body and soul. There is no need to escape corporality as a burden that hinders the soul. The mind need not leave the body to be with God. In fact, the body can help the mind to pray, through the recitation of prayer, through kneeling, fasting, etc. A reconciliation can occur between mind and body. The body then can even, in the saints, be a source of grace to others, as it is with the wonder-working relics of the saints.

Because of this reconciliation of mind and body, the created material order becomes part of God's plan, and care for it becomes part of man's duty in his ministry of reconciliation.¹⁰ Stewardship of creation is thus an obligation, not because we are part of pre-existing created essences or ideas in the creation. Creation is *ex-nihilo*. Creation is not the created energy of God or the uncreated; creation is that which is acted upon by God.¹¹ The human person is a superior creation that stands between heaven and earth to beautify both. Our souls are supra-heavenly in their natures, though not in space.

But men and women destroyed likeness with God by disobedience. The only way back to reconciliation is through the gift of God offering us deification through a free collaboration (*synergia*) between the divine energy and human efforts. The fellowship of the soul with the divine energy is *theosis*. The henotic moment, which Gregory stresses, requires our cooperation, our *kenosis*. It is only accomplished through a constant struggle for perfection.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰ E.g. *Triads* 2.2.12, cited in Gregory Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press: Brookline, MA, 2013), 103.

¹¹ *Triads* 1.1.3, cited in Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas*, 117.

So here the ascetical imperative is tied to the moral quest. As we strive for perfection, we are transformed into partakers of the divine nature, that is, his energy, not his essence. This transformation includes, as it did for the Beloved Disciple, the mandate that we love others. 'The love for our brothers is the basic evidence of our genuine commitment to Christ and therefore for our salvation'.¹²

It is telling that Gregory's most comprehensive work of theology, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, is subtitled '*on topics of natural and theological science, the moral and ascetical life, intended as a purge for the Barlaamite corruption*'. The sections dealing with the moral life are, as the title suggests, linked to the ascetical. This linkage, while obviously not unique to the Archbishop of Thessalonica, remains his hallmark. There simply is no interest in this text, or in any of his homilies, in presenting a secular ethics. There is nothing resembling natural law theory here. The good life is the life of repentance and striving to purify our souls so that we may experience the Taboric light. As we know from his own life, this is not a simple notional concept of assent. There is nothing like an Evangelical decision for Christ that results in our assurance of salvation or even of a Rahner- or Fuchs-like fundamental option. No. We must pray without ceasing. Through the Jesus Prayer, the mind (*nous*) enters the heart and there participates in God. We are never passive participants. We are never saved because we are simply part of the elect or of a class. Gregory's emphasis is not on whether or not we are justified but on our entering really and repeatedly into the presence of Christ in our hearts.

This is illustrated by Gregory's appropriation of Gregory of Nyssa's idea of *epektasis*. The perfection that the soul seeks is inexhaustible, because it is rooted in the infinite nature of God. As Palamas puts it:

And this is why the great Macarius said a single ray of this intelligible sun—even though he himself did not see this light as it is in itself, in its full extent, but only to that extent that he was capable of receiving. By this contemplation and by this supra-intelligible union with this light, he did not learn what it is by nature but he learned that it really exists, is supernatural and super-essential, different from all things; that its being is absolute and unique, and that it mysteriously comprehends all in itself. This vision of the infinite cannot permanently belong to any individual or to all men. He who does not see understands that he is himself incapable of vision because he is not perfectly conformed to the spirit by a total purification, and not because of any limitation in the object of vision. But when the vision comes to him, the recipient knows well that it is that light, even though he sees but dimly. He knows this from the impassable joy akin to the vision which he experiences from the peace which fills his mind and the fire of love for God which burns in him.

¹² *Sermon 4* (PG 151:44), in Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas*, 101.

But then note the link to the ascetical:

The vision is granted him in proportion to his practice of what is pleasing to God, his avoidance of all that is not, his assiduity in prayer and the longing of his entire soul for God. Always he is borne on to further progress and experiencing even more resplendent contemplation. He understands then that his vision is infinite because it is a vision of the infinite....¹³

It seems that good deeds that come from that experience have to be different than those that come from some political theory about social justice. Certainly, the two things are not mutually exclusive. But they are profoundly different. Motivations and awareness matter. Christian witness is not simply being on the right side of history. It is not measured by its success or by its popularity, or even by how it conforms to positive law, especially in an era when claims to 'human rights' increasingly include claims to moral practices long condemned by Christians.

This inward transformative experience brings forth the external practice of compassion and good works in the life of the believer. In his sermon, *On Christ's Second Coming*, Gregory offers a straightforward commentary on Matthew 25:37–39.¹⁴ Those who neglected the corporal works of mercy show their hatred for Christ by ignoring their brethren who are sick, poor, or imprisoned. We must be merciful and show loving deeds toward our brethren. Only then will we inherit Christ's everlasting kingdom.

So social change may occur as a result of Christian actions, but there is no substitute for individual action that comes from repentance. Charity is the fruit of conversion. Social change remains rooted in individual moral transformation that always is centered on an experience of the divine that has entered our heart and reconciled us to God, to others, and to the created world.

¹³ Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 3.22.23, in ed. John Meyendorff, *Gregory Palamas: The Triads* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 39.

¹⁴ *Homily 4*, in *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, ed. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), 24–33.

ASCETICISM IN THE HOMILIES OF SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS

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Saint Gregory Palamas was well known as an apologist for hesychasm. The article, however, reveals the Saint as an expositor of the spiritual life and a great Father of the Church. In *The Homilies*, Saint Gregory masterfully uses biblical images to present a theology of fasting. Asceticism is given a strong eschatological and therapeutic orientation. Personal prayer and corporate prayer are held in balance. Fasting is connected with service to the poor. Saint Gregory posits that *theoria*, or the vision of God, was the experience of the Old Testaments Saints, and insists that it is a possible—if not also normative—experience for all Christians. The Father links asceticism and *apatheia* to the Cross, giving the spiritual life a strong Christological context and goal. He unites dogma and spirituality in both his person and teaching, giving us a paradigm for both theology and the spiritual life.

The Importance of Saint Gregory Palamas in Contemporary Orthodox Theology

Saint Gregory Palamas—monk, theologian, apologist, and bishop—was and remains very much today a key figure in the history of Orthodox spiritual and dogmatic theology. His name and writings have become synonymous with Orthodox identity and self-understanding. Indeed, one could argue successfully that the era of the marginalisation of Palamas in Orthodox theology—a period which coincides with what Father Florovsky terms the ‘Babylonian captivity’ of Orthodox theology—reveals a lack of vitality and clarity, a time when Orthodox theology was mimicking a style and form foreign to its very ethos. Conversely, the rediscovery of Palamas, along with that of many other Fathers of great significance to the Orthodox theological tradition, represents a renewal of Orthodox theology itself, a reassertion of a particular spiritual identity, a realignment of its discourse with its very soul. This rediscovery could not but have had profound implications for Orthodox spiritual theology, since it permitted a tradition that is intrinsically empirical to finally express itself in a way consistent with its experience and life.

I do not intend here to trace in detail the development of Orthodox scholarship on Palamas. It is noteworthy, however, that most of the leading Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century were keenly interested in Palamas. Vladimir Lossky, in his

now-classic work *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*,¹ relies heavily on the work of Palamas and includes him among the most important Fathers. Nor was the prominence of Palamas among the Fathers lost on Father Georges Florovsky, whose article 'St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers'² reveals his sentiments in its very title. Father John Meyendorff began his career as a patristic scholar with a major work on Palamas.³ Father Dumitru Stăniloae established his reputation as a theologian in the same way.⁴ The common thread of theological reasoning running through the works of all these authors is that Palamas is a Father of the Church in his own right, and that his teaching is consistent with that of the Fathers who came before him.

The convictions of many contemporary Orthodox theologians regarding Palamas reflect the deeper intuitions that Orthodox Christians have held since the Saint was vindicated in a series of councils held during his own lifetime. These intuitions did not set the parameters for Orthodox theological discourse during the time of Orthodox theology's 'Babylonian captivity', but they were present in the Orthodox spiritual, and therefore theological, tradition in other ways. First of all, not only were the teachings of Saint Gregory Palamas accepted by councils convened in Constantinople in 1341, 1347, and 1351, they were upheld as normative expressions of Orthodox teaching. The opponents of Palamas were therefore anathematized as heretics. Secondly, Saint Gregory is commemorated on the Orthodox liturgical calendar on the second Sunday of Great Lent. This observance gives Palamas a particular prominence in the Lenten liturgical cycle. The position of his feast, however, is quite significant: it follows the Sunday on which the restoration of icons to the Church is proclaimed to the world. The proclamation is in the form of a *Synodikon*,⁵ read by the bishop or, in his absence, the priest, in which the teaching of the Orthodox Church on icons is expounded. The fact that Saint Gregory Palamas

¹ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976).

² Georges Florovsky, 'St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers', in ed. Richard S. Haugh, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, The Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Vaduz, Europa: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 105–20. Reprinted from *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 2 (Winter 1959–60). For an important study on the role of Father Georges Florovsky in reintroducing the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas into contemporary theology, see S. Tanev, 'ΕΝΕΠΙΕΙΑ vs ΣΟΦΙΑ: The Contribution of Fr Georges Florovsky to the Rediscovery of the Orthodox Teaching on the Distinction between the Divine Essence and Energies', *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2, no. 1 (2011): 15–71, <http://www.orthodox-theology.com/>

³ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959).

⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigore Palama: Cu patru tratate*, seria Teologica 10 (Sibiu: Editura Scripta, 1938).

⁵ A *Synodikon* is a statement issued by a synod. In this particular case, the synod (843) reaffirmed the teaching of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787) regarding the theology and use of icons in the Church. The *Synodikon* also contains a summary of the teaching of the preceding six Ecumenical Councils. By placing the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas on the Sunday after the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the Church acknowledges Palamas as a great Father and invests his teaching, at least implicitly, with ecumenical authority.

is commemorated on the following Sunday suggests that his teachings represent, in a sense, a continuation of the proclamation of the Orthodox Faith read on the previous one. The point here is that the liturgical practice of the Orthodox Church reveals Palamas as an accredited Father and authoritative defender of the Orthodox tradition, and not simply as a great ascetic.

Palamas is best known in the West as an apologist for hesychasm. That he played such a role is certainly undeniable; what the conciliar and liturgical traditions indicate, however, is that what he defended in hesychasm was part of the essence of the tradition. Palamas is thus not a defender of a movement within the Orthodox Church, but an apologist par excellence of its empirical theology. This is why no study of Orthodox spiritual theology would be complete without him.

The Homilies

Palamas delivered many of *The Homilies* in his cathedral in Thessaloniki in his capacity as Archbishop of the city. He is eminently practical in his approach to spiritual questions and very sensitive to the pastoral needs of his community. At the same time, he does not shy away from the most central themes in Orthodox theology and is a master in presenting profound doctrinal truths in uncomplicated language. Palamas was Archbishop of Thessaloniki from 1347 until his death in 1359, and the majority of *The Homilies* were written during that period. The number of Homilies that have survived stands at sixty-three. Only recently has a complete collection of *The Homilies* appeared as a critical edition in the Greek original, edited by the scholar and Palamas specialist, Panagiotes K. Chrestou.⁶ Until very recently, only a portion of his homilies were available to the English-speaking world, but this has changed with the appearance of an edition of *The Homilies* translated by Christopher Veniamin, which includes all sixty-three of *The Homilies*.⁷

Many of the homilies I have chosen for this study were preached by Palamas in the pre-Lenten and Lenten periods. My objective in examining them is to present the basic teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas on asceticism. For this particular theme, not surprisingly, the Lenten and pre-Lenten homilies proved to be the richest source of material.

The Origins of Fasting

The theme of fasting allows Palamas to begin his teaching on asceticism on a very practical note. He discusses the origins and history of fasting in Sacred Scripture,

⁶ *Ὁμιλίες 1–63*, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ: ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ed. Π. Κ. Χρήστου, τόμοι 9–11 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πατερικαὶ Ἐκδόσεις Ἱερογέρσιος ὁ Παλαμᾶς, 1981).

⁷ Saint Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, trans. Christopher Veniamin (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009).

obstacles to fasting, the therapeutic effects of fasting, its place in the spiritual life, and its intrinsic relationship to the care of the poor.

Palamas' discussion of fasting brings us right to its very origins: 'It was because we did not fast in paradise that we were thrown out into this life of sufferings'.⁸ Here Saint Gregory identifies fasting with God's command to Adam and Eve to refrain from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Fasting therefore precedes the Fall. It is according to nature in the truest theological sense: it belongs appropriately to humanity in its state free of corruption. In this way, Saint Gregory establishes the normative character of fasting. Furthermore, it provides a fresh understanding of the Fall: sin has its origins, in part, in the refusal of Adam and Eve to fast. Naturally, this paves the way for the Saint to show how fasting might be part of the redemption of humanity. It also allows him to diagnose self-indulgence as unoriginal and therefore unnatural.⁹

The Link to the Transfiguration

In tracing the history of fasting in Scripture, Palamas begins with the broken fast in the Garden of Eden.¹⁰ He then points to Christ, who began his ministry with fasting. His good and perfect fast was a reversal of Adam and Eve's refusal to fast.¹¹ Moses, Palamas indicates, received the Law after fasting. Moses is to be understood as the liberator of Abraham's race, while Christ is the liberator of the human race.¹² Elias encounters the Lord after fasting. The ascension of Elias into heaven prefigures Christ's own ascension.¹³ Moses and Elias, in addition to prefiguring Christ in the Old Testament, are great ascetic figures, as Palamas himself points out.¹⁴ What is also remarkable (and, no doubt, not entirely accidental) is that, with these two Old Testament types placed beside Christ, Palamas has sketched out verbally the icon of the Transfiguration. That Palamas relied heavily on the Transfiguration as a theological source in his apology for hesychasm is more than evident in the *Triads*. The same reliance on the Transfiguration as a source for spiritual theology can be seen in *The Homilies*. Saint Gregory dedicated two homilies exclusively to the Transfiguration,¹⁵ in which the Orthodox doctrines of the uncreated energies of God and the essence/energies distinction are presented and defended. Frequent allusions to the Transfiguration, whether explicit, as in *Homily 12*, or implicit, as in *Homily 6* on fasting, can be found throughout *The Homilies*. By placing a topic such as fasting

⁸ *Homily 9*, 63.

⁹ *Homily 6*, 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹² *Homily 6*, 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Homily 12*, 87.

¹⁵ *Homilies 34* and *35*.

against the backdrop of the Transfiguration, Palamas is locating the practice of asceticism in the context of glorification.

Obstacles to Fasting

Fasting, according to Palamas, as well as asceticism in general, can be undermined by pride: 'When pride is linked with fasting, however genuine, it annuls and destroys the virtues, and how much more so if the fasting is a sham'.¹⁶ The Saint distinguishes fasting through human effort alone from grace-filled fasting that has its origin in God. Pride, he notes, always has the devil as its source.¹⁷ The simple *act* of fasting is not salvific in and of itself. Abstinence can be a purely human virtue. True fasting imparts something of God's gracious character to the ascetic.

Bodily fasting must be practised concurrently with inner or spiritual fasting. Saint Gregory calls hatred and unforgiveness another 'drunkenness', in other words, a form of internal self-indulgence.¹⁸ This spiritual violation of the fast renders any bodily disciplines useless. The image of drunkenness is a fitting one and very contemporary, since it connotes addiction and suggests the necessity of a therapeutic treatment for a gradual recovery. In the same way that an alcoholic has an almost uncontrollable urge to return to his or her self-destructive behaviour, so also a person who indulges the passion of unforgiveness will be drawn to hatred, finding in it a kind of relief from the stress of living without it. This is a primary way used by the devil to sabotage fasting:

This is the drunkenness of hatred which more than anything else causes God to turn away, and the devil attempts to bring it about in those who pray and fast. He prompts them to remember wrongs, directs their thoughts toward harbouring malice, and sharpens their tongues for slander. . . . In this time of fasting and prayer, brethren, let us with all our hearts forgive anything real or imaginary we have against anyone.¹⁹

Palamas mentions two other ways that the devil uses to undermine the efforts of Christians in fasting and prayer: self-conceit²⁰ and vainglory.²¹ All three temptations represent an attempt to undermine fasting and prayer, and with them, the ascetic life in general. Saint Gregory points out that the evil angels have their own pseudo-fast characterized by anger, pride, and rebellion against God.²² The orientation of fasting

¹⁶ *Homily 2*, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Homily 7*, 49–50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁰ *Cf. n. 14.*

²¹ *Homily 7*, 50.

²² *Ibid.*, 53.

and its accompanying inner disposition are of critical importance; fasting must be practised in forgiveness, humility, and submission to God's will. Embracing the body and the soul equally, fasting must be a psychosomatic event.

Fasting as a Therapy for Body and Soul

Precisely because true fasting embraces body and soul, it has the potential to be therapeutic for the entire person: 'Each of the other virtues cleanses and adorns either the soul or the body, or rather, just one part of the soul or body. . . . But fasting and self-control lull the stirrings of the body and quench the raging of anger and desire.'²³ In a parallel passage from another homily, Palamas states that spiritual and bodily fasting, combined with prayer, extinguishes fleshly desire and tames anger.²⁴ He goes on to say: 'We will become partakers of prophetic food with hope, faith and inner vision of the good things to come, and we will be able to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.'²⁵ Fasting as a psychosomatic event not only heals body and soul but initiates the ascetic into an experience of the Kingdom of God. The references to the 'prophetic food' and the 'inner vision of the good things to come' give fasting an eschatological orientation. This combination of the therapeutic with the eschatological is typical of hesychasm and is a hallmark of Orthodox asceticism. Not only does it allow asceticism to have a uniquely Christian character, it places it outside of the practice of simple self-deprivation or bodily discipline and puts it into an entirely new context. This is important, because asceticism was known to the pagan Greeks and practised by some of them. What the Platonic ascetics or the Stoics would not have been able to do, however, is to allow asceticism to be therapeutic for both the body and the soul, and to connect asceticism with a foretaste of the eschatological.

Palamas refers to other therapeutic effects of fasting. He states that fasting weakens the passions and makes them disappear.²⁶ Fasting causes the body to be obedient to the soul and lightens the mind in its ascent to God.²⁷ Furthermore, fasting is a tool to defeat the devil.²⁸ Fasting is therefore not commended to Christians for its own sake, but for its greater therapeutic effects upon the soul.²⁹ In other words, it is a vehicle, not an end in itself.

²³ *Homily 9*, 61.

²⁴ *Homily 7*, 52–53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶ *Homily 10*, 66.

²⁷ *Homily 9*, 62.

²⁸ *Homily 13*, 95.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 95–96.

Fasting and Love of the Poor

Those more skeptical of asceticism might accuse Palamas or other spiritual figures in the Christian tradition of propagating an introverted, individualistic piety that is oriented towards self-perfection and nothing else. Others may be wondering where the horizontal dimension is in the Orthodox practice of asceticism as expounded by Palamas. The latter will not be disappointed by the Saint: Palamas links fasting directly to love for and service to the poor. In an appeal to his flock worthy of one of the Old Testament prophets, the Archbishop says:

When you are fasting and limiting your food, do not store up the surplus for the following day. The Lord made us rich through becoming poor, and you, by your voluntary hunger, should nourish those who are starving against their will. Then your fasting will be like a dove bearing an olive sprig which brings your soul the good tidings of deliverance from the flood.³⁰

Palamas summarises his teaching in the following way:

We must either be poor as He was, and so live with Him, or share what we have with those who are poor for His sake, and so be saved through them. . . . If you join almsgiving to fasting you will blot out every sin, venerate the saving Passion with boldness, join in the rejoicing at Christ's Resurrection and gain eternal redemption.³¹

Three Important Pairs

Palamas makes use of pairs of spiritual realities to help his listeners understand the interrelatedness of certain things in the spiritual life. These pairs are not antinomies or dialectics; they are simply important aspects of the spiritual life held in relationship. We need to understand the pairs as 'married', in the sense of never being separated. One spiritual pair presented by the Saint is fasting and self-control. Fasting is understood by the Archbishop more in the sense of abstaining from food; self-control is seen as a deliberate reduction in the intake of food, sometimes called moderation.

Fasting and Self-Control

Palamas refers to fasting and self-control as being yoked. Speaking of the Lenten practice of the Orthodox Church in his time, he observes that fasting is appropriate

³⁰ *Homily 13*, 97.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

to weekdays, whereas self-control is appropriate to Saturdays and Sundays.³² This particular practice reflects the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, in which Monday to Friday during Great Lent are non-liturgical days, in other words days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated, and Saturday and Sunday are liturgical days. Orthodox Christians fasted on non-liturgical days by abstaining from food all day, eating their first and only meal after Vespers in the evening.³³ This remains the norm in most Orthodox monasteries throughout the world and in Orthodox parishes in certain places. Saturday and Sunday were days in Lent on which the Eucharist was celebrated. Fasting is still considered inappropriate on these days, since the fast is always broken after the Eucharistic celebration. Moderation, however, is exercised on those days, and the Lenten diet of no meat or dairy products is still observed.

The 'yoking' of fasting and self-control is therefore very much related to the liturgical life of the Church and, more particularly, to the rhythm of Lenten Eucharistic celebration. It helps Christians to avoid over-individualising fasting by connecting it, and asceticism in general, with ecclesial life. This, of course, should come as no surprise, since Saint Gregory is teaching his flock about Great Lent, which is first and foremost a corporate fast with a personal dimension. Every Christian must, on a personal level, answer the invitation of the Church to fast, but in so doing he or she also agrees to do so as part of a people. The linking of self-control to fasting also causes the latter to be more nuanced by adding the notion of control to simple denial. This makes fasting always more than starving.

Self-control refers not only to the regulation of food intake, but also to a certain frugality in eating. Palamas specifically encourages simplicity in eating as an expression of moderation.³⁴ Through such frugality, Gideon and his men in Old Testament times found spiritual and physical strength, defeating the Midianites.³⁵ This image is used by Palamas as a type of the spiritual battle in which every ascetic is engaged. Fasting and self-control, however, must not be applied to the body alone, but must also be imposed on all of the senses.³⁶ Since it is to a great extent through the senses that we are led to sin, fasting and self-control must be brought to bear on them, re-orienting them to sanctification. As with the body, they are to be transformed, not suppressed.

Saint Gregory appeals to his entire community to fast, reminding them that there is a totally reasonable way to fast that is possible for virtually everyone. Here too moderation is an important factor:

³² *Homily 10*, 66.

³³ The terms 'liturgical days' and 'non-liturgical days' were used by Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann. See <http://www.schmemmann.org/byhim/lent.html> For a full discussion of the theology of liturgical and non-liturgical days, see Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 45–49.

³⁴ *Homily 9*, 61–62. Here, the frugality is represented by the cake of barley bread seen in a dream (Judg 7:13).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

The forty day [sic] period of the fast is not your whole life, and every day your fasting ends when the sun sets. Going without food to this extent is surely easy and reasonable for nearly everyone. But when we eat let it also be with moderation, so that fasting and eating within due limits, we may not lag far behind those who do not eat at all.³⁷

It is noteworthy that Palamas suggests that limits be applied both to eating and fasting. He seems to recognize that the spiritual disciplines of 'those who do not eat at all' should not be adopted by the average member of his community. A reasonable and balanced fast is perfectly appropriate to them: eating with moderation will allow them to progress in the spiritual life at a pace only marginally inferior to that of the great ascetics. Those who practise a more severe form of fasting have reached that level through years of experience. Palamas does not prescribe for the parish what is suitable for the skete. Showing both wisdom and sensitivity, he guides his flock down the middle path of moderation, leading them to the objectives of the spiritual life, which are common to those in parishes and those in monasteries. The ability to recognize these objectives and prescribe the best way to reach them in differing circumstances is the mark of a competent spiritual guide. Palamas shows himself to be such, and the evidence for this can be found in his nuanced approach to spiritual questions.

A parallel passage on moderation in fasting may be found in *Homily 13*:

Speaking from experience, our fathers whom God inspired do not approve of fasting for days on end. They consider it more acceptable to eat once a day without satisfying your appetite. This is what they refer to as moderate and reasonable fasting, as the Scripture says well: not to be led astray by a full stomach and the pleasure of eating, but to leave your food while still feeling hungry.³⁸

Eating without having one's fill is a practical demonstration of moderate fasting; it shows how and why fasting and self-control are 'yoked'. In this context, we can see why Palamas, speaking on behalf of a time-honoured Christian tradition of asceticism, applies self-control equally to eating and fasting.

Fasting and Prayer

The second important pair we find in *The Homilies* is that of prayer and fasting. Referring to the appearance of Moses and Elias with the Lord on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Saint Gregory says: 'These two men practised prayer and fasting

³⁷ *Homily 9*, 62.

³⁸ *Homily 13*, 96.

more than anyone else, and their appearance while the Lord was praying shows the harmony and concord between fasting and prayer. In their talking with the Lord, it was as if fasting were talking to prayer.³⁹ The communication between prayer and fasting in this illustration serves to further highlight the interrelatedness of the two. Of course, since fasting in Scripture is almost always presented in the same context as prayer, Palamas is not saying anything new. What is unique to Palamas is the virtual personification of fasting and prayer so as to present the two in a dialogical relationship. This characterisation serves to demonstrate, however, that fasting and prayer in the spiritual life do not have some kind of independent existence. Rather, they need to be practised by *persons*. Moses and Elias, as we saw earlier, are key figures in the history of asceticism as presented in Scripture. They are, as we have also seen, great ascetics in their own right who function as types of Christ in the Old Testament. Saint Gregory points out that the event of the Transfiguration is directly connected to the practice of prayer and has immediate relevance to all Christians. It was while Christ was praying that Moses and Elias appeared.⁴⁰ Here again, Saint Gregory finds the Transfiguration a rich and useful source for theology.

At least three factors emerging from the Transfiguration are useful to Palamas in describing the ascetic life. *Firstly*, the Transfiguration took place on a mountain and was therefore preceded by an ascent. The apostles were taken up the mountain to meet the Lord in glory in the same way that Moses went to meet the Lord on Mount Sinai. So also, in the ascetic life, an ascent is needed before one gains a clear vision of the Lord in his glory. *Secondly*, the ascetic ascent leads to a vision of God. The precise nature of that vision of God was one of the main subjects of the exchange between Saint Gregory Palamas and his challenger, Barlaam the Calabrian. Palamas is not interested, however, in Barlaam in this particular instance. Here the vision of God is simply the normal objective of the spiritual life. In other words, asceticism leads to glorification. *Thirdly*, fasting and prayer are linked to authority over demons. Upon his descent from the glorious Mount of the Transfiguration, Christ encounters the father whose boy is afflicted by demons. Palamas spends the better part of *Homily 12* interpreting this passage from the Gospel of Mark.⁴¹ Significantly, however, Palamas ends his discussion of the passage with the following observation: 'Driving away demons, however, is not required of us, and even if we were able to drive them away, it would be no advantage to us if we lived carelessly....It is much more profitable to us to strive to banish the passions of fornication, anger, hatred and pride than to cast out demons'.⁴²

³⁹ *Homily 12*, 87.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Homily 12*, 89–91.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 91.

The authority to cast out demons is a charism given to some in the Church, but the authority over the passions, obtained through prayer and fasting, is necessary for every Christian.

Private Prayer and Liturgical Prayer

The third important pair of spiritual realities that we encounter in *The Homilies* is that of *private prayer* and *liturgical prayer*. In *Homily 7*, Saint Gregory presents both sides of the marriage between private prayer and liturgical prayer. On the one hand, Saint Gregory insists on regular attendance at liturgical worship in addition to personal prayer and fasting.⁴³ On the other hand, Palamas says: 'If someone only wants to pray when he attends God's Church, and has no concern at all for prayer at home, in the streets or in the fields, then even when he is present in church, he is not really praying.'⁴⁴ For Palamas, the life of prayer requires balance. One may not eschew liturgical gatherings for the sake of asceticism, neither is it tenable to suggest that corporate liturgical prayer renders personal prayer superfluous. Each expression of prayer, according to Palamas, facilitates and leads to the other.⁴⁵ Palamas removes any possibility of a false dichotomy between the two expressions of prayer, holding the two together in a kind of symbiotic relationship.

Asceticism, Creation, and Salvation

Saint Gregory Palamas' understanding of asceticism is grounded in a biblical and patristic view of creation and salvation. Following in the great scriptural tradition, the Fathers of the Church consistently refer back to creation, the Fall, and the Incarnation in order to take their cues for other areas of theology. Palamas is no exception among the Fathers. In *Homily 6*, the Archbishop grounds his theology of asceticism in cosmology and soteriology. Palamas observes:

We should bear in mind the fact that just as the earth cannot yield worthwhile fruit without labour, so the soul cannot acquire anything which pleases God or leads to salvation without spiritual struggles. But while it is possible to find earth which is unsuitable for cultivation, every human soul is naturally suited to virtue.⁴⁶

We find here a very simple but important theological premise: ascetic labour is a consequence of our condition. We live in a world where labour is a condition

⁴³ *Homily 7*, 51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Homily 6*, 42.

of our existence. Why would it be different, Palamas argues, in the spiritual life? Asceticism, then, is unavoidable. It cannot be ignored any more than our human condition can be denied. The cosmological and soteriological justification for asceticism puts an end to the argument advanced by certain partisans of *sola gratia* who link the practice of asceticism with a 'works-oriented' soteriology. It likewise provides an excellent apology for those who find in the patristic theology of asceticism hints of Pelagianism. Many of these debates that were raging at the time of the Protestant Reformation (and even earlier) were somewhat circular and closed because of a failure to reposition the discussion within the categories of cosmology, anthropology, and eschatology. Palamas' anthropology, like that of the Orthodox tradition in general, is unfailingly optimistic. There is no human person incapable of virtue. True asceticism is a possibility for anyone.

In *Homily 3*, Palamas refers to creation in very positive terms. His assessment of creation demonstrates that he is part of the patristic tradition, in which a clear break has been made with Platonic philosophy. While some superficially associate everything mystical in the Christian spiritual tradition with Platonism, and even one Orthodox scholar explicitly calls Palamas a Platonist,⁴⁷ there seems to be little in the Archbishop's cosmology and anthropology that would indicate that he is indebted to Plato or Neoplatonism. Referring to all of the aspects of the cosmos, Palamas says: 'None of these signs are necessary to the spiritual Creation, which is above the senses, or to the animals, which live by their senses alone. They were made for us, who by our senses enjoy the other benefits of the visible world as well as its beauty, while in our minds we can apprehend the signs we see.'⁴⁸ The human person, being both a physical and a spiritual being, is able both to enjoy the beauty and majesty of creation and to look beyond it to come to a deeper understanding of its Creator. Creation here has a positive role to play, since through it the human person can contemplate deeper realities. Creation, therefore, has a dual role: on the one hand, it sustains us physically while, on the other, it is a mirror of the spiritual world. Palamas states:

To sustain our bodies our Creator brought this whole world out of nothing before he created us. But to improve our ways and lead us towards virtue there is nothing our benevolent Lord did not do. He made all the visible world like a mirror of heavenly things, so that by contemplating it spiritually we might attain to them as by a marvellous ladder. He put in each of us a natural law, our own conscience. . . . When by means of nature and Creation, he had opened the school of virtues, he appointed guardian angels over us . . . In the end, . . . he gave himself to us for our sake.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Sergius Bolshakoff, *Russian Mystics* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 23.

⁴⁸ *Homily 3*, 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

The contemplation of the visible world as ‘a mirror of heavenly things’ is a clear reference to *physikē*, the second stage in the spiritual life according to Saint Maximus the Confessor and many of the other Fathers. This stage follows *praktikē*, the stage of repentance and purification. The third and final stage is called *theologia*, or very often in *The Homilies*, *theoria*. The final stage, a favourite subject of the Saints, is the vision of God. *Physikē* is meant to further virtue, although it requires the prior stage in order to function well. How is one to contemplate the visible creation through the mind and the heart if they are both desperately in need of purification? The first and the third stages will be discussed at greater length later. In this particular homily, *physikē* features more prominently because of its direct connection to the visible creation.

In *Homily 3*, asceticism is called ‘the school of virtues.’⁵⁰ The school has been opened to us by creation, and God has provided everything for the school to be complete. Three things were necessary: a creation that is fundamentally good, a human person that could relate to creation physically and spiritually, and a God who was willing to take on creation in the Incarnation. This is why Saint Gregory completes his discussion of creation and *physikē* with the words ‘he gave himself for us’. Creation finds its fulfillment in the Incarnation. The latter reality, however, is not unrelated to the former one. Indeed, the Incarnation is itself a second genesis, a renewal of creation. Just as, in the spiritual life, *physikē* points to a deeper reality, so also, in creation, the first genesis points to the coming of Christ, which is the greater reality.

Images from Scripture 1) *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*

In *The Homilies*, Saint Gregory Palamas presents a number of images of asceticism drawn from Scripture. More precisely, Palamas chooses specific passages of Scripture to which he applies an ascetic interpretation. The ascetic reading of these biblical pericopes provides us with invaluable teaching on asceticism, both because it reveals asceticism’s content and because it also demonstrates its very ethos. In *Homily 4*, Palamas refers to the parable of the ten virgins from Saint Matthew’s Gospel. Virginity in this parable is likened to asceticism. This is true, not only in the sense that many ascetics are monastics and therefore celibate, but also in a more existential sense, since a virgin is one who struggles constantly to retain his or her purity. The lamps held by the virgins are interpreted as the minds, which are to be purified and enlightened. The hands that hold the lamps—or, in other words, provide the basis for the enlightenment of the mind—reflect *praktikē*, the first stage in the spiritual life. The oil in the lamps points to love.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Homily 3*, 17.

⁵¹ *Homily 4*, 29.

The ascetic reading of this parable as presented by Palamas provides some basic teaching on the character of Christian asceticism. The virgins in the parable are awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom. The parable has an eschatological orientation, and this same orientation has been transferred to the ascetic life. One struggles to attain virginity or purity, not for its own sake but because it is the appropriate state in which the Bridegroom is to be welcomed. The arrival of the Bridegroom therefore provides all of the meaning to the struggle for purity. In this way, we see that, in asceticism, the present is informed and shaped by the future. The lamps as objects have no meaning until they are lit; analogously, the mind does not reach its full potential until it is enlightened. Illumination is the second stage in the spiritual life, according to the Dionysian rendering: *purification, illumination, vision of God*. These three stages are equivalent to the Evagrian schema preferred by Saint Maximus and employed frequently by Palamas himself: *praktikē, physikē, theologia*. Since neither schema was recognized as the normative description of the progression of the spiritual life in the theological work of the Fathers, a Father such as Saint Gregory would likely be at home drawing his terminology from either model.

The lamps are held or, more appropriately, carried. In the same way that lamps must be held or carried, the spiritual stage of illumination must be ‘carried’ by ongoing *praktikē*, the first stage of the spiritual life. *Praktikē* must remain forever active so that the next two stages can be adequately supported. Finally, the oil that allows the lamps to give their light is love itself. Without love, asceticism loses its purpose in the same way as, without oil, a lamp remains an object that cannot perform its function.

In the same homily, Saint Gregory continues his discussion of the relationship between asceticism and love. Every building must have supporting walls and a roof. The supporting walls are the virtues, and the roof, according to the Saint, is love.⁵² The virtues require love as their cover and completion. Love, however, requires a supporting structure, and that structure is provided by the virtues. This reading of the parable teaches that love and asceticism must be constantly in relationship. True love, in its deepest sense, does not come without sacrifice and ascetic labour. On the other hand, a loveless asceticism is not asceticism in the biblical, and therefore Christian, understanding.

2) *The Anointing of the Head and the Face*

In *Homily 7*, Palamas refers to the passage from Saint Matthew’s Gospel in which the Lord says, ‘When you fast, be not as the hypocrites . . .’, and asks that, when we do fast, we anoint our heads and wash our faces, conducting our fast in secret.⁵³ The passage itself is highly relevant to the practice of asceticism, since it instructs us

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Matt 6:16–18.

how to fast. Saint Gregory's teaching on vainglory as an obstacle to fasting we have already seen at the beginning of this chapter. Particularly interesting here is the ascetic reading of the passage:

We can refer to the *mind* metaphorically as the *head of the soul*, since it is the soul's guiding force and to the imaginative aspect as its face, as this contains the permanent centre of the senses' activity. So it is good to anoint our heads with oil when we fast, namely, to render our minds merciful, and to wash our faces, our imaginations, clean from shameful impure thoughts, anger and everything evil.⁵⁴

Saint Gregory is referring to an inner anointing and a spiritual purification. Anointing the mind with mercy means that forgiveness and tenderness provide a spiritual direction for the soul. Simultaneously, our imaginations, our memories need to be purified from anything that could become a source of temptation. Saint Gregory is not advocating the removal of every impulse or image from the imagination, a kind of washing of the imagination, but rather the purification or restoration of the imaginative aspect in order to enable it to produce something good.

3) *The Paralytic*

Another image from the Gospels selected by Saint Gregory for an ascetic reading is the passage about *the paralytic*, who was let down through the roof of a house into the presence of the Lord.⁵⁵ The paralysis in this case is understood by Palamas to be an addiction to sensual pleasures.⁵⁶ The paralytic needed to be carried to the Lord by four friends, each taking up one corner of his pallet. These four are understood by Palamas as self-condemnation, confession, renunciation of evil ways, and prayer. The roof of the house is the reasoning part of the soul. Its connection to the passions, represented in the parable by the tile, earth, and other materials on the roof, needs to be loosed.⁵⁷

Asceticism in patristic writings generally, and very particularly in Palamas, has a strong therapeutic orientation. Passages of healing are of special interest to the Saint, precisely because their therapeutic content makes them especially suitable to the theology of asceticism. In this particular passage, Saint Gregory is paying very close attention to diagnosis and process. Addiction to passions is a spiritual paralysis. Spiritual growth is not possible because the addiction saps the dynamism from the soul. Once diagnosed, every illness needs to be treated, and the treatment implies

⁵⁴ *Homily 7*, 52.

⁵⁵ Mark 2:1–12.

⁵⁶ *Homily 10*, 71.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

a progression. The process or progression in this case begins with repentance and ends with prayer. Purification without repentance is not possible. The connection between the reasoning aspect of the soul and the passions cannot be loosed without repentance and confession. Nevertheless, the different stages of the ascetic recovery process are not themselves the source of the healing. They help or, rather, bring the paralytic, in whom we may all find ourselves, into the presence of Christ, in whom is the source of healing. When the healing occurs, a proper psychosomatic order is restored in which the body is in submission to the mind. The carrying of the bed by the paralytic after his healing points precisely to this therapeutic reordering.⁵⁸ The bed that previously carried him is now carried *by* him. He is controlled by his addiction no more.

One of the basic assumptions that Saint Gregory makes, an assumption shared by all of the Fathers who teach on the subject, is that therapy in true Christian asceticism has its roots in repentance. This is clear in the ascetic reading of the story of the paralytic, in which three of the four 'friends' that carry the paralytic to Christ are directly connected to repentance: self-condemnation, confession, and renunciation of evil ways. The direct link between repentance and healing is highlighted by Palamas in *Homily 9*: 'When we lie wounded let us call upon the Lord who can soothe and bind up our injuries. Please do not let us give up calling upon him with fasting, vows, tears and every other means, until he draws near and heals us'.⁵⁹ Here the fasting is accompanied by tears—in other words, asceticism is grounded in repentance and therefore leads to healing.

Aspects of the Soul

We have seen already how fasting is a psychosomatic event and thus is therapeutic for the whole person.⁶⁰ It is evident that Palamas operates from the assumption that the human person is a psychosomatic being. He also works, however, from the assumption that the soul itself has different aspects:

For the soul too has members after a fashion: those parts of it concerned with growth, desiring, anger and reason. Therefore true fasting must extend to every part, cleansing and healing them all. Fasting, brethren, gently and kindly restores the soul to health, and that is why our Fathers imposed it on us during these days.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Homily 9*, 64.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

The concept of the soul's possessing 'members or powers', as well as the terminology for these, is drawn from Greek philosophy.⁶² Palamas happily uses the terminology and some of the anthropological assumptions involved, but without canonising them. While receiving from Greek philosophy the assumption regarding the diversity of powers within the soul, he clearly rejects the assumption from Platonism that the body acts as the prison of the soul. It is not difficult to see, however, why any of the Fathers who had a therapeutic understanding of asceticism would have been attracted to the idea that the soul possesses distinct faculties. This distinction between the powers of the soul provided the Fathers, Palamas included, was a very useful diagnostic tool and allowed them to develop a more nuanced and specific therapeutic framework for asceticism.

Diagnosis and Therapy

The diagnostic tools developed by Palamas allow him to identify the prevailing pathologies encountered in the spiritual life. These pathologies are highly nuanced and reveal themselves in different ways, depending on which aspect of the soul is afflicted by them. Collectively, however, they may be identified by one word: passions. Saint Gregory says, 'Let us mortify those parts of us which belong to the earth: fornication, impurity, evil passion and covetousness. . . .'⁶³ The passions are mortified so that the different aspects of the soul might be restored. Palamas states in a practical way what the mortification of the passions entails: 'Crucifying the flesh with its passions and longings means stopping all activity which is displeasing to God.'⁶⁴ Asceticism, then, can be equated with obeying the commandments of Christ. Indeed, since asceticism is taught in the Gospels—though the word itself is not used by Christ—the equivalent term, 'obedience to Christ', may well prove itself to be a useful alternative biblical expression.

Asceticism and the Eschaton

Another basic operating principle of Palamas is the connection between asceticism and the *eschaton*. In *Homily 9*, the Father makes the statement, 'Christ will cut into pieces anyone incapable of being healed'.⁶⁵ There is a further soteriological assumption here that a refusal to engage in therapeutic asceticism is tantamount to a rejection of salvation—a rather imposing premise. It makes complete sense, however, in an eschatological context. Asceticism is itself a vigil in anticipation of

⁶² n. 117, 546–47.

⁶³ *Homily 10*, 65.

⁶⁴ *Homily 11*, 83.

⁶⁵ *Homily 9*, 63.

the arrival of the Bridegroom. Those who consciously reject this kind of asceticism demonstrate that they are not inclined to meet the Bridegroom.

The connection between asceticism and the *eschaton* is made frequently in *The Homilies*. In *Homily 9*, Palamas states, 'Clearly those called by Christ's name must pass their whole lives in self-control and fasting, looking forward with good hope to his terrible Coming Again'.⁶⁶ The eschatological orientation of asceticism in *The Homilies*, however, is not only a reference to the future. There is a realized eschatology at work in *The Homilies* that makes asceticism the appropriate response to Christ's preaching about the imminence of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels. In an appeal to his community, Palamas says: 'Since the kingdom of God is at hand and within us and will soon arrive, let us make ourselves worthy of it by works of repentance. Let us exercise force on ourselves, driving away evil prejudices and habits. For the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt 11:12)'.⁶⁷ The awareness of the Kingdom's presence becomes the driving force behind asceticism. Here it is not a question of moral progress or self-improvement. What we see instead is a radical response to the preaching of Christ. We 'exercise force on ourselves' precisely because the Kingdom is a current and not only future reality. The taking of the Kingdom by force reflects the decision of the Christian to live mindfully of the presence of the Kingdom and to fight the resistance to the Kingdom that comes from the passions within. This deliberate choice to engage the ascetic life does not mean, however, that we practise the ascetic disciplines on our own. Quite on the contrary, it is God's presence that empowers our asceticism and allows it to become salvific:

Let us imitate David, brethren, and not only turn our backs on lush and dissipated living, but undertake fasts, psalmody and prayers, as if God himself were present and watching. We know that fasting, psalmody and prayer cannot save us in their own right but carrying them out before God can. For when the Lord's eyes are upon us they sanctify us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.⁶⁸

The Mystery of the Cross

'But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world'.⁶⁹ In *Homily 11*, 'On the Precious and Life-Giving Cross', Saint Gregory Palamas, through an ascetic reading of Galatians 6:14, initiates his listeners into the mystery of the Cross and the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶⁷ *Homily 10*, 65.

⁶⁸ *Homily 9*, 63–64.

⁶⁹ Gal 6:14 NKJV.

deeper meaning of asceticism. The Saint locates two separate but related mysteries of the Cross in the one verse. The *first* mystery is a movement away from the world, a rejection of sin, through which the world is crucified to the Christian ascetic. The *second* movement is the mirror image of the first. In this case, the Christian does not flee from the passions; instead, the passions flee the Christian. *The first movement is one of struggle, the second an experience of healing.* The first represents a beginning, the second a fulfillment. Palamas describes it this way: 'When, through action [*praktikē*], we approach contemplation [*theoria*] and cultivate and cleanse our inner man . . . then it is that we crucify ourselves to the world and the passions.'⁷⁰ Through *praktikē*, the world is crucified to us. As we are crucified to the world, we reach the vision of God. Palamas goes on to describe this second mystery of the Cross, which he equates with *theoria*: 'Through meditation of this a certain warmth is born in our heart, which chases away evil thoughts like flies, instills spiritual peace and consolation in our soul, and bestows sanctification on our body.'⁷¹ Palamas is clear in stating that the evil passions do not leave us completely unless we enter the stage of *theoria*. This vision of God is also the mystery of the Cross.⁷²

Four Expressions for Christian Maturity

The state that Saint Gregory is describing is that of *apatheia* or dispassion. Palamas describes self-control as 'the mother of dispassion'.⁷³ The Archbishop presents yet another way of describing this state of spiritual maturity that is the objective of asceticism: 'Let him flee lethal self-indulgence and run towards fasting and prayer which make divine. . .'⁷⁴ What we are seeing in Palamas is not the convergence of four separate realities, but four different ways to describe the same thing: *the mystery of the Cross, the vision of God, dispassion, and deification.* Each of the four terms describes the mystery from a different angle. All four describe the goal of the life in Christ.

Theoria in the Old Testament

One final important question needs to be answered by Palamas: Is the state that he is describing in four different ways attainable in this life? To answer this question, the Saint turns to the Old Testament. There he finds examples of the experience of *theoria*. In the same way that the Archbishop presents a history of fasting from Scripture in *The Homilies*, so also he provides a history of *theoria* in the Old

⁷⁰ Homily 11, 76.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Homily 10, 66.

⁷⁴ Homily 13, 95.

Testament. Here we find Moses and Abraham. Moses experienced *theoria* when he encountered God in the burning bush. The three Persons of the Trinity were revealed to Abraham through the angels who came to him by the Oak of Mamre.⁷⁵ Isaac and Joseph were types of Christ in the Old Testament.⁷⁶ Jacob, however, articulates his own experience of *theoria*. Palamas says of him: ‘He actually bears witness himself to his vision and his salvation. “For I have seen God”, he says, “face to face, and my soul is saved” (Gen 32:30 LXX).’⁷⁷ Summarizing his position, the Saint says: ‘Where are the people who still go along with the loathsome prattle of those heretics who have appeared in our day? Let them hear that Jacob saw God’s face, and not only did he not lose his life, as he says himself, he was also saved, even though God said, “There shall no man see me, and live” (Exod 33:20).’⁷⁸ Palamas’ thesis is simple but compelling: if there is clear scriptural evidence that the saints attained to the vision of God in the Old Testament, then how much more must it be possible for the New Testament saints, who live in the ‘latter days’, to attain to the same or even a greater experience of the vision of God? The heretics to whom the Archbishop alludes are those who deny the possibility of attaining the vision of God in this life. While Saint Gregory is almost certainly referring to Barlaam, Akyndinos, and Gregoras, who held that *theoria* was a possibility only in the next life, he is in fact taking a position against all who minimise the potential of the spiritual life. While Palamas does not explicitly do this in *Homily 11*, we can extrapolate and suggest that he is also opposing all who deny the possibility of attaining deification, dispassion, and the mystery of the Cross in this life. Since, as we have already seen, he uses these terms more or less synonymously, such an extrapolation is entirely reasonable.

Conclusion

The *Homilies* reveal Palamas as a spiritual master and a gifted archpastor. The Orthodox Church, as we saw at the beginning of this study, discerned in his ministry the charism of a Father. The occasional passage in *The Homilies* that reflects an apologetical orientation does not, therefore, alter the fundamental character of the latter, or change the basic spiritual identity of the homilist. Instead, it reveals the fundamental unity between the spiritual and dogmatic dimensions in Orthodox theology. I have selected two quotations from *Homily 11* that serve to illustrate this point. In the first citation, Palamas recapitulates his position regarding the attainability and indispensability of *theoria* in the spiritual life here and now:

⁷⁵ *Homily 11*, 77.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

So contemplation in God [*theoria*] and the sacred mystery of the Cross do not just drive away evil passions, and the devils who devise them, from the soul, but also heretical doctrines. They refute the advocates of such ideas, and thrust them outside the boundaries of Christ's Holy Church, within which we have the privilege now to celebrate and declare the grace and energy of the Cross among our Fathers in the time before the Cross.⁷⁹

That there is an apologetical tone to the above statement by the Archbishop is undeniable. It would even be tempting to locate in the above citation more than a hint of triumphalism coming from a newly vindicated apologist—tempting, but not justified, in my opinion. The teachings of Palamas, as noted earlier in this article, were affirmed and proclaimed at several councils of the Church, indicating that in this homily the Saint is expressing an ecclesial opinion, not a personal one.

Palamas bolsters his statement on *theoria* by referring to a slightly different but nonetheless closely related point, that of the distinction between essence and energies in God. The Archbishop says:

The face of God visible at the time of his manifestation to those who are worthy, is his energy and grace. Whereas his face which is never seen is what is sometimes called the nature of God, and is beyond the scope of any manifestation or vision. As it is written, 'No one hath stood in the substance and essence of the Lord' (Jer 23:18 LXX), and either seen God's nature or made it known.⁸⁰

The face of God, which Jacob saw and the New Testament saints experienced, is not God's essence. The saints instead are participating in his divine and uncreated energies. Saint Gregory knows his detractors held that the hesychast position regarding *theoria* was tantamount to pantheism. The doctrine on the distinction between essence and energies allows him to make the teaching on the experience of *theoria* more nuanced, providing it with a theological framework to defend its integrity.

The doctrine of the essence and energies, as well as the teaching on *theoria*, is hardly original to Palamas. The grand contribution of the Archbishop to the enterprise of Orthodox theology was not innovation, but synthesis and articulation. Palamas made explicit what was already known and taught in Orthodox empirical theology. His explication was unusually powerful, however, the scope of his synthesis impressively wide, and his argumentation enormously compelling. While we cannot attribute to Palamas any contribution to the development of Orthodox doctrine—a concept entirely foreign to the Orthodox theological tradition to begin with—we

⁷⁹ *Homily 11*, 79.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

can discover in him a new level of synthesis and theological precision. In his theological work, we encounter a cohesive and nuanced theological articulation of the Orthodox spiritual life. Whether in complex argumentation, as in his apologetical works, or in simple biblical language, as in *The Homilies*, Palamas presents, defends, and preaches the essence of Orthodox empirical theology. In him, the distinction between spiritual theology and dogmatic theology—a distinction generally accepted in the Christian West—disappears. Dogma and spirituality are united in one person, a person who articulates not only his own experience, but also the life of the *ekklēsia*. This is why the Orthodox Church recognized Palamas as a Father, and contemporary Orthodox theologians have understood the necessity of studying his works. The ‘Palamite synthesis,’ to cite the term used by Vladimir Lossky,⁸¹ represents a defining moment in Orthodox spiritual and dogmatic theology—a moment that not only cannot be ignored but has normative implications for the entire Orthodox theological enterprise.

⁸¹ Vladimir Lossky, ‘The Palamite Synthesis,’ in *The Vision of God*, trans. Asheleigh Moorhouse (Leighton Buzzard, Beds: The Faith Press, 1973), 124–37.

THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE ACCORDING TO SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS*

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This paper seeks to elucidate the way in which the principle of justice/righteousness functions in the thought of St Gregory Palamas. As the paper notes, the concept of 'justice' or 'righteousness'—the biblical equivalent of justice—was a central concern to both the ethical systems of the Ancient Greeks and the Judeo-Christian tradition. Following in the wake of these ancient currents, St Gregory regards righteousness/justice as being inextricably connected to divine economy and the human endeavour to respond to the grace it imparts. As such, the 'justice' of Palamas is rather different from retributive and punitive forms of justice and the modern associations therewith. Though justice/righteousness is ultimately a response to the divine call to deification, it is not, in St Gregory's view, indifferent to the realities of social justice.

The concept of justice occupies a central position in human thought and life. For a clearer understanding of this concept, and for a more complete presentation of the particular content it assumed in Christian and Patristic literature, it is necessary to contrast it with the pre-Christian, biblical tradition, and even more so with its significance outside the Bible. In the literature of Ancient Greece, justice was already associated with the notion of virtue, which was taken as the main characteristic of a just man.¹ According to Plato, justice harmonizes the virtues of the tri-partite human soul, while Aristotle considers it to be the sum total of moral virtues. In the Old Testament, righteousness is of great theological significance. The pre-eminent Righteous One is God. People become righteous by aligning their will with that of God and observing his law. We demonstrate our faithfulness to God and his testament through works of the law. However, if the works of the law are interpreted on an individual basis and are practiced independently of any trust in divine righteousness, this undermines communion with God and has a negative effect on relations with our neighbour. In the biblical tradition, God's righteousness is linked to his mercy. The long-awaited Messiah will 'execute justice and righteousness in the land' and in his days, Israel will be saved.² The fullest testimony to this is the incar-

* Translated from Greek by James W. Lillie.

¹ See Theognis, *The Elegiac Poems of Theognis* 1.147–8 (LCL 258).

² Jer 23:5–6.

nation and ministry of Christ. In his comments on the verse in the Psalms, ‘the Lord is merciful and righteous’,³ Basil the Great succinctly observes that ‘Scripture always links God’s mercies with righteousness, teaching us that God’s mercy is not unjust nor is his judgement unmerciful’.⁴

Christ himself calls those who ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness’ blessed.⁵ Naturally, perfect righteousness cannot be achieved by mankind, either as a universal or individual virtue. However, the desire for righteousness, the hunger and thirst for it, which, in final analysis, is the desire and fervent quest for the righteous God, makes us blessed and prepares us for the complete satisfaction of our longing. The Lord is ‘a place embracing the righteous’, and the righteous who receive the Lord within themselves become ‘a place for the Lord’.⁶ Righteous people are humble, ‘never boasting of themselves’. This is why they receive within themselves the grace of God, which is revealed in the world through Christ.⁷ The revelation of divine righteousness rectifies the injustice wrought by people through their failure to follow God’s will by not rendering to him his due. Saint Gregory Palamas points out that none of God’s work is without righteousness, and no work of God involves injustice. This can also be seen in the task of the salvation of the world. The whole history of the divine dispensation is performed with righteousness. God was not unjust even in his treatment of the devil.

The characteristic feature of God’s righteousness is that it is not imposed through force, as is the case with tyrannical authority. Thus, the power of God in the task of our salvation does not precede righteousness, but follows it. This, St Gregory says, is the most excellent order which God observes in the performance of his work. People are invited to be taught this in practice during their mortal life, so that they may also retain it steadfastly when they are in the realm of immortality, when they will obtain power.⁸ God’s righteousness is not applied as punishment towards the unrighteous, but as the therapeutic grace of his love, which vindicates us and prepares us for our eternal edification. This righteousness appears to come into conflict with righteousness in the sense of distributive or legal justice. It is presented as an act of leniency and, from that point of view, is unjust. This is why Saint Isaac the Syrian says: ‘Do not call God just, because his justice is not recognized in your affairs’.⁹

However, this is precisely where the essential difference between divine righteousness and human justice lies. It does not return wickedness for wickedness, which compounds the evil and extends its presence in the world, nor does it treat

³ Ps 114:5.

⁴ Basil the Great, *Homilia in psalmum* 114.3 (PG 30:489A).

⁵ See Matt 5:6.

⁶ Basil the Great, *Homilia in psalmum* 32.1 (PG 30:324D). Cf. Ps 32:1.

⁷ See 1 Cor 1:39; Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 2.3, in *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, ed. Christopher Veniamin, 2nd ed. (Dalton, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2014).

⁸ See Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 16.2.

⁹ Isaac the Syrian, *Λόγος* 60, in *Τοῦ ὁσίου Ἰσαάκ τοῦ Σύρου. Τὰ εὐρεθέντα ἀσκητικά* (I. Σπετσιέρη: Ἀθῆναι, 1895), 215.

wickedness as though it had never occurred, which would do away with righteousness altogether. In contrast to human justice, though, which condemns the unrighteous while not addressing the injustice, God's righteousness addresses the injustice while exonerating the unrighteous person, God suffering the injustice himself.¹⁰ In this way, God's righteousness comes across as an extremely positive and therapeutic action which limits the spread of evil.

Christ restores righteousness in a twofold manner. He vindicates God before mankind, because he was sacrificed for us out of boundless love; but he also vindicates man before God by submitting entirely, as a human person, to God the Father.¹¹ In this way, God's righteousness remains untroubled and eventually vindicates the sinful person. Christ, who at his baptism fulfilled 'all righteousness', opened the heavens to us, says Saint Gregory Palamas.¹² Furthermore, as the Sun of Righteousness, he also shines upon us and opens our eyes to the path to deification. Just as the visible sun, with its dawning, creates the time for bodily work, by the same token the Sun of Righteousness provides us, through his manifestation, with the time for spiritual work. Whereas bodily work, which is carried out in the light of the visible sun, is interrupted at sundown, and people work 'until the evening',¹³ the unwaning light of the Sun of Righteousness provides us with the opportunity for uninterrupted spiritual work.¹⁴

The preeminent task of man is spiritual work. It is this work which establishes us as being created 'in the image and likeness' of God. In his epistolary composition, *To the Reverend Nun Xenia*, the aforementioned passage from the Psalms is elevated by Saint Gregory Palamas to the spiritual level and is linked to another passage in the New Testament: 'until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts'.¹⁵ He writes: 'When the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts, according to the chief among the Apostles, then, in the same way, according to the prophetic saying "the true man will go out to his true work", ascending in the light the road that leads to the eternal mountains. In this light—what a miracle—he surveys things beyond this world'.¹⁶

Man's vindication in Christ opens up to us boundless horizons and limitless prospects along vertical and horizontal dimensions, inviting us, at the same time, to make an appropriate response. This response becomes effective when it proceeds,

¹⁰ See Rom 5:6 ff.

¹¹ See Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou, *Αναφορά στη θεολογία του Γέροντος Σωφρονίου* (Εσσεξ: Άγγλιας, 2000), 59.

¹² *Homily 60.9.*

¹³ See Ps 103:23.

¹⁴ See Gregory Palamas, *Homily 49.2*

¹⁵ 2 Pet 1:19.

¹⁶ Gregory Palamas, *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* 59, in *The Philokalia*, ed. and trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1995), 317. *Πρὸς Ἰωάννην καὶ Θεόδωρον τοὺς φιλοσόφους* 18, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, Συγγράμματα*, ἔκδ. Π. Χρήστου, τόμος 5 (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1992), 224.

not from the psychological level, but from our deeper being, whence it pours out in two directions: towards God and towards our neighbours who are 'in the image of God'.

Our being desires righteousness and seeks the divine privileges that were given to us as part of our nature. Testimony to this are the enduring struggles and endless efforts of people for equality and justice. As long as these struggles and efforts are motivated by a worldly perspective and are directed by egocentrism and impassioned self-love, they deteriorate and eventually have the opposite results. Our natural desire is changed and this often results in unnatural animus. Ignoring God's due, that is his commandments, is a slight to his eternal vindication. Claiming individual rights which express egocentric self-love undermines the universal rights which are sought by our deeper being, our existence 'in the image and likeness' of God.

The justice which Christians are called upon to exercise presupposes the complete renewal of the intellect and the whole of their being. People who are estranged from God are invited to repent, to clothe themselves in and to activate 'the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness'.¹⁷ In place of the old Adam, who committed 'the ultimate injustice', there comes the new Adam, 'the noetic Sun of Righteousness',¹⁸ the Father 'of the future age and founder of eternal life'.¹⁹ On this new basis, justice takes on an eschatological perspective, in the sense that its implementation is not restricted to the realm of history, but extends into eternity. More accurately, this justice is inspired from the level of eternity and is experienced in history with the light of eternity, and the practice of this eschatological justice is our primary aim. This is our task as the creation made in the image of God and it is realized when 'the day dawns and the morning star rises', namely the Sun of Righteousness.

Christians are not called upon to cultivate some sort of legal justice, as the Israelites did. Saint Gregory notes that Christ said: 'Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'.²⁰ Christ's righteousness, which is the sum total of his virtues, is encapsulated in love. This love is expressed as a humble response to the love which God had shown him: 'for he first loved us'.²¹ In the end, our justice is identifiable with our gratitude to God, the Giver of good, because all the virtues are divine gifts, which only become ours when we attribute them to God, in gratitude.²² Furthermore, the 'excess' of our justice cannot be other than an 'excess' of our gratitude.

¹⁷ Eph 4:24; Gregory Palamas, *Πρὸς Ἰωάννην καὶ Θεόδωρον τοὺς φιλοσόφους* 18, 224.

¹⁸ Taken from the Troparion of Christmas Eve.

¹⁹ See Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 54.10.

²⁰ Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 54.4; cf. Matt 5:20.

²¹ 1 John 4:20.

²² See Maximos the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια θεολογικά* 5.29 (PG 90:1272B–C). Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Πρὸς Ἀθανάσιον Κυζίκου* 27, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, Συγγράμματα*, ἔκδ. Π. Χρήστου, τόμος 2 (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1966), 438.

The hesychast spirit of Saint Gregory does not overlook the importance of social justice. Indeed, on the contrary, it highlights it with its radical biblical character. Indicative of this is the way he understands the anti-social nature of the behaviour of the two rich men in Christ's parables. One of these was the rich man whose fields were so productive that he thought he would raze his storehouses and build bigger ones, to take in the whole of his harvest;²³ the other was the man who wore rich clothing and lived in luxury, but was indifferent to the poverty of Lazarus.²⁴ Neither of them was condemned for committing a transgression, but because, despite all the things they had acquired, they did not help others.

Any time the faithful hang on to things they no longer need, this constitutes an injustice to others who need them and do not have them. It demonstrates a blatant lack of sympathy and that our love for things is greater than that which we have for other people. The 'surplus' belonging to the faithful should supply the 'wants' of the poor. According to Saint Gregory Palamas, this surplus is the 'mammon of injustice', which should be deposited in the communion of love;²⁵ 'for the treasures of the common coffers of God's possessions are common to all'.²⁶

There is, of course, an even graver injustice which is committed by the rich and powerful through their exploitation and depredation of the poor and weak. In this case, we have greed, the 'second idolatry', which is the root of all evils.²⁷ The hesychast theologian and Archbishop of Thessaloniki castigated the prevailing social injustice, and, in fact, attributed to it the disturbance and turmoil of his time, although he also considered that external dangers and challenges played a part.²⁸

These radical social views, which also inform Saint Gregory's critique of social life,²⁹ are founded in his evangelical theocentrism. Justice, as a universal virtue of people made 'in the image and likeness' of God, calls upon us to form a godly ethic. It invites us to attribute to God his due measure, and when we do so, we attribute everything, since we have nothing and everything belongs to God. It is precisely then, that everything is granted to us, and we become gods in all things 'without identity of essence'.³⁰

Within this perspective, human justice becomes unlimited as regards its content. It becomes righteousness, which justifies the work of God, a reflection of divine righteousness which vindicates this world of injustice.³¹ The demand for justice, which is always linked to love, binds the faithful in their relationship not only with the world and with God, but also with themselves. The just behaviour of Christians is

²³ See Luke 12:16 ff.

²⁴ See Luke 16:19 ff.

²⁵ See Gregory Palamas, *Homily 48.5*; Cf. Luke 16:9.

²⁶ Gregory Palamas, *Homily 13.8*.

²⁷ See Col 3:5; Gregory Palamas, *Homily 39.6*.

²⁸ See, e.g. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 63.11–12*.

²⁹ See, e.g. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 63.11*.

³⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum 41* (PG 91:1308B).

³¹ See Rom 1:17.

expressed not only through their fair and charitable dealings with others or through gratitude to God, but also through their dutiful response to the invitation of God, who offers them the gift of glorification.

When people make no effort to respond to this invitation, they become recipients of things which do not belong to them. They show themselves to be ungrateful. This ingratitude is not only unjust towards God, but also to themselves. Through their behaviour, they cancel out God's work of renewal as regards themselves. This is because the 'locus' where God's work of renewal is confirmed in the world is the human person. In the person of Christ, God's righteousness towards the world is revealed. In the person of a believer, divine justice within the world is effected.

Finally, it is clear that our unjust behaviour towards God and ourselves has cosmic dimensions. Our task as people is not merely our personal perfection through purification from the passions and everyday wickedness,³² but in drawing in and offering the whole of creation. This is how the image of God within us is completed and vouchsafed: when our intellect, as Saint Gregory Palamas says, 'brings every created thing closer to God, for it now participates in all things and even in Him who is above all things, since it has faithfully conformed to the [divine] image'.³³

The injustice now being committed, centred on the human person with social and ecological dimensions, has global repercussions and enduring consequences for the future and the generations to come. The care for the environment, restriction of social and ecological pollution, and destruction on the part of each and every person likewise has global repercussions and enduring consequences. It is care which reins in the injustice being practiced. In this way, people, with God, become fellow custodians and fellow creators of the world. We do not create anything from nothing, as God does. However, as a creation 'in the image and likeness' of God, we take part in the creation of the world through the personal image each one of us creates for ourself and for the world. The perfection of human justice coincides with the manner in which we manage to conform to the image of God in our life.

³² See Matt 6:34.

³³ See Gregory Palamas, *To the Reverend Nun Xenia* 59.

THE LITURGICAL VENERATION OF ST GREGORY PALAMAS IN VERIA*

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This paper provides a brief overview of the historic relationship between the ancient city of Veria and the saintly family of St Gregory Palamas. In addition to covering some historical milestones in the Palamas family's sojourn in Veria, the paper also discusses some of the specific churches and monasteries with which St Gregory and his family had personal connections, sites that contain objects of veneration and have remained prominent destinations for pilgrimages up to our current era. Finally, a brief description is given of modern sites and celebrations that honour the Palamas family, including the canonisation of St Gregory's parents and siblings in 2009.

Veria, an ancient town honoured by the visit and preaching of the Apostle Paul, has shown itself to be fertile ground for sainthood. Throughout time and on multiple levels, it has had on offer rich spiritual nourishment emanating from the lives and works of apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, monastics, and saintly families. Included in this saintly host, is an entire family of seven, the saintly Palamas family.¹

The memory of St Gregory Palamas, but also the presence of all of you here today in the apostolic city of Veria, gives us an opportunity to highlight some of the lesser-known aspects of the saint's life relating to our town and its surroundings.²

St Gregory Palamas and His Brothers in Veria

Let us take a look at some milestones in the life of St Gregory Palamas in relation to Veria:

* Introduction to the International Scientific Conference, entitled: 'Η θεολογική και φιλοσοφική σημασία του έργου του Αγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά αρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης' (Θεσσαλονίκη-Βέροια, 7–15 Μαρτίου, 2012). First published in *Βελλᾶ Ἐπιστημονική Ἐπετηρίδα* 7 (2013–2015): 121–36.

¹ On the Family of Saints, cf. Ἀρχιμ. Γεωργίου Χρυσοστόμου, 'Καθημερινή ζωή και Παύλεια πνευματικότητα στίς ἀκολουθίες τῶν Ἁγίων Οἰκογενειῶν', in *Πρακτικά Διεθνoῦς Ἐπιστημονικοῦ Συνεδρίου, Ἡ οἰκογένεια: Παύλεια θεολογία καί σύγχρονη θεώρηση* (ΙΕ Παύλεια) (Βέροια, 2009), 321–56.

² The saint's first biographer was the student of Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople. Cf. *Βίος Γρηγορίου Παλαμά* (Θεσσαλονίκη: 1984). See also Μοναχῆς Ὀλυμπιάδος Ντίτορα, *Τό θαῦμα τῆς χάριτος. Ἀφηγηματική βιογραφία τοῦ Αγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ* (Βέροια: Ἱ. Μ. Ἁγίου Ἀθανασίου Ἀγκαθιάς, 2009).

1296—He was born in Constantinople, the son of Constantine and Kali.

1303—His father, now monk Constantine, reposes.

1310—Nephton, a native of Veria, becomes Patriarch of Constantinople. The Palamas family subsequently becomes acquainted with the town through him.

1341—Nephton elevates his native Veria to the status of Metropolis and consecrates the Church of Christ in the presence of Emperor Andronikos II Palaeologos.

1316—Gregory leaves Constantinople together with his brothers Theodosios and Makarios.

1324—He is ordained to the priesthood in Thessaloniki and departs for Veria.

1325— Gregory retreats to the Veria Skete. His mother, now nun Kalloni, reposes. His sisters, Epichari and Theodoti, enter the urban convent of Panagia Kyriotissa in Veria, while Theodosios and Makarios withdraw to the Skete. Theodosios reposes while at the Skete.

1331—Gregory and Makarios leave Veria for the Holy Mountain.

1340—Theodoti reposes (22 August).

1368—Constantinople: Palamas is recognised as a saint.

2009—Veria: the other members of the Palamas family are canonised.

St Gregory Palamas in Local Worship

The liturgical veneration of St Gregory Palamas in Veria and the entire surrounding region was and continues to be noteworthy.

1) It goes without saying that the epicentre of this veneration was the renowned Veria Skete, the place of monastic retreat for St Gregory and his brothers, Theodosios and Makarios. It must be noted that the Skete in the Aliakmon Valley had at that time become the cradle of hesychasm. The Veria Skete, a grouping of fifty monasteries, is the oldest organised monastic settlement in Greece, with a great spiritual legacy and stunningly beautiful natural surroundings. At the Skete, the cave where St Gregory lived has survived, as has the holy spring named after him. The *katholikon* features a treasured icon of saints Dionysios of Olympus and Gregory Palamas from 1834. Until twenty years ago, the bishop's throne held an icon from the seventeenth century depicting St Gregory enthroned. The presence of such a depiction, rather than of Christ the High Priest, should not surprise us, depictions of a monastery's patron saint being customary in monasteries. Regrettably, the icon was lost. The *katholikon* also contains a treasured relic from the saint's body. Feast days at the Skete are the fourteenth of November and the second Sunday of Lent. The second Sunday of Matthew (the Sunday after All Saints)

is also a feast day, celebrating the *Synaxis* of All Saints of the Skete, among whom are Gregory and his brothers, Theodosios and Makarios.³

2) Veneration of the saint was also notable in the city of Veria itself, as can be seen in the iconographical depictions of St Gregory. Specifically, the Byzantine church of St Nicholas '*Archontos Grammatikou*' features a preserved fresco of the saint dating back to the fourteenth century. This means that Gregory Palamas was honoured as a saint in Veria immediately upon his repose in 1359. More recent depictions of St Gregory can also be found in other Byzantine-style churches, such as the eighteenth-century church of the Hypapantē (Presentation of the Lord in the Temple) of Kyriotissa. That St Gregory is honoured in the parish of Kyriotissa is a natural given—as we have already said—that this is where his sisters Epichari and Theodoti embarked on monastic life, today's parish church having originally been the *katholikon* of an urban monastery. The church is obviously also associated with the saint himself, as he would not only have visited his sisters there but would also have celebrated the Divine Liturgy and other holy services. This is supported by the fact that Kyriotissa was situated very near to the city's southern gate, which led out to the Aliakmon Valley, and thus to the Skete. It goes without saying that modern murals and portable icons of the saint adorn many a church and monastery.

3) The same veneration can also be observed in the wider region outside Veria, albeit to a lesser extent. In particular, St Gregory is one of the patron saints of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Dovra, which houses a piece of his relics. Indeed, the large church of St Luke the Physician, which is currently under construction, will feature a chapel in honour of St Gregory and his saintly family. At the village of Chariessa, beneath Naoussa, St Gregory is honoured annually as the second patron saint of the local parish on the fourteenth of November. In the parish church in the village of Palaios Prodomos, there is an icon of the saint, which its inscription dates to 1861. An old 1867 edition of a joint service to St Philip and Gregory Palamas, appointed for the fourteenth of November, survives in the parish archives of the village of Mesē.⁴

³ Cf. Γερασίου Μοναχοῦ Μικραγιαννανίτου, *Ἀκολουθία τῶν ὁσίων καὶ θεοφόρων πατέρων ἡμῶν τῶν ἐν τῇ Σκήτῃ τῆς Βερ[ρ]οίας ἀσκητικῶς διαλαμπάντων* (Βέροια, 1983). This particular service naturally does not include Macarius and Theodosius, since these had not yet been canonised at the time of its composition.

⁴ Φυλλάδιον περιέχον συναρμολογημένας τὰς δύο ἱεράς ἀκολουθίας τοῦ τε ἐνδόξου καὶ πανευφήμου ἀποστόλου Φιλίππου καὶ τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ Παλαμᾶ (Θεσσαλονίκη: Νικολάου Βαγδαμάλη, 1867).

Events Held in Honour of St Gregory and the Palamas Family

In terms of non-worship events, we should make mention of two important celebrations held in Veria in connection to the life of St Gregory Palamas: celebrations for the seven hundredth anniversary of his birth were held in 1997, while celebrations for the six hundred fiftieth anniversary of his repose were held in 2009.⁵

1) The first anniversary celebration took the form of church services at the Skete and the town of Veria itself, in addition to a one-day seminar entitled 'Asceticism and Deification: The Life and Teachings of St Gregory Palamas', which was held on Saturday, 22 March 1997 at the Holy Monastery of Panagia Sumela. Invited to participate were hierarchs, other clergy, and around two hundred monks and nuns from various monasteries in northern Greece.⁶

2) As already mentioned, the second anniversary celebration took place in 2009, on the occasion of the six hundred fiftieth year of the saint's repose. The celebration of this anniversary began with the publication of the annual pocket calendar which, as expected, was dedicated to St Gregory.⁷

In connection with the same anniversary, the Holy Metropolis produced a thirty-five minute long DVD, which has also been uploaded to the internet with English subtitles.⁸

Throughout 2009, a number of events were held in honour of St Gregory. On Saturday, 14 March, a one-day clergy seminar was organised under the title, 'St Gregory of Palamas: Herald of Grace', in which all the clergy of the Holy Metropolis took part.⁹ In early May, the holy relic of the saint was brought to the town of Galați, Romania, where events were organised in honour of St Athanasius of Patellaros (1580–1854), a follower of St Gregory's Palamite hesychast method,¹⁰ who had brought hesychasm and the philokalic spirit to the Danubian principalities, as well as Russia and Ukraine, where he subsequently reposed.¹¹ On Saturday, 13 June, a

⁵ On the year of death, see Κωνσταντίνου Δυοβουνιώτου, 'Τό ἔτος τοῦ θανάτου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμά', *Επιστημονική Ἐπετηρίς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν* 1 (1924): 7.

⁶ See Παύλειος Λόγος 16–17 (1997): 20–23.

⁷ *Εγκόλπιον Ἡμερολόγιον 2009* (Βέροια: Ἱερά Μητρόπολις Βεροίας, Ναούσης καί Καμπανίας, 2008).

⁸ The content of the DVD is also available online with English subtitles at: <http://www.imkallipetras.gr/?p=165>.

⁹ See Παύλειος Λόγος 78 (2009): 28.

¹⁰ On Palamite teaching, see Μοναχοῦ Θεοκλήτου Διονυσιάτου, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμάς. Ὁ βίος καί ἡ θεολογία του* (Ἀθήνα: Σπηλιώτη, 2001). See also Γεωργίου Μαντζαρίδου, *Παλαμικά* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Π. Πουρναρά, 1973), and John Meyendorff, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμάς καί ἡ ὁρθόδοξη μυστική παράδοση* (Ἀθήνα: Ἀκρίτας, 1983).

¹¹ Despite this, Patellaros has been characterised as 'pro-Western' according to sources. For more on this point of view, see Ἀθανάσιος Καραθανάση, 'Ἀθανάσιος. Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Ὁ Γ', Πατελλάρος', in *Μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη Χριστιανική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία*, τ. 1 (Ἀθήνα: Στρατηγικές Ἐκδόσεις, 2010), 297. However, this cannot be taken in an absolute sense considering his contribution to the development of Orthodoxy, further affirmed by his canonisation, first by the Ukrainian Church and later the Romanian Church. See relevant information in Γερασίμου Μπεκέ, 'Ἅγιος Ἀθανάσιος Πατελλ[λ]άρος, ὁ καθιστός ἅγιος στό Χάρκοβο', *Παύλειος Λόγος* 94 (2011): 20–23. We encounter similar phenomea

monastic one-day seminar on ‘female monasticism’ was organised, with one hundred fifty nuns taking part. The seminar was part of the fifteenth *Pauleia* events.¹²

It was within the context of these festivities that St Gregory’s family—or simply ‘the Palamas Family’, as we refer to them—was canonised, that is, recognised as saints of the Orthodox Church.¹³ In accordance with ecclesiastical protocol, the Metropolitan of Veria submitted the proposal for canonisation to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. The Metropolitan’s proposal was supported by various historical documentation as well as the opinions of two professors of the Theological School of Thessaloniki, Antonios Papadopoulos and Georgios Mantzarides. The affirmative decision of the Holy Synod was then forwarded to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which eventually issued a Patriarchal Act by which St Gregory Palamas’ parents and siblings were to be ranked among the saints of the Orthodox Church. The first Sunday after the feast of St Gregory, that is the first Sunday after the fourteenth of November, was determined as the date on which their *synaxis* would be celebrated.¹⁴

The canonisation of the Palamas Family was held in Veria with every mark of solemnity and honour befitting the new local saints. On Friday the eighteenth and Saturday the nineteenth of December 2009, a scientific symposium was held. On the following day, Sunday the twentieth, the ecclesiastical canonisation ceremony was held in the holy Cathedral of Veria, presided over by His Beatitude Hieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, in the presence of the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and many other hierarchs from Greece and abroad.¹⁵ It must be noted that our Holy Metropolis currently has one archimandrite with the

throughout the period of Turkish rule. A typical example of this is that of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite. It has been claimed that pastoral aspects of his *Exomologitarion* are based on Roman Catholic distortions of the Gospel, something which is not entirely correct. See Gheorghios Chrysostomou, ‘L’esercizio della paternità spirituale nell’ “Exomologhitáron” di Nicodemo l’Aghiorita’, in *La paternità spirituale nella tradizione ortodossa. Atti del XVI convegno ecumenico internazionale de spiritualità ortodossa* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2009), 185–186, and *id.*, ‘Η πνευματική πατρότητα στο “Εξομολογητάριον” Νικοδήμου του Αγιορείτου’, *Βελλᾶ Ἐπιστημονική Ἐπετηρίδα* 5 (2009): 135–36.

¹² For more, see ‘Ο γυναικεῖος μοναχισμός. Σύναξη Μοναζουσῶν στήν Ἱερά Μονή Ἀγίας Κυριακῆς’, *Παύλειος Λόγος* 79 (2009): 22–23.

¹³ The sanctity of the members of the Palamas family is clearly attested to by St Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople. See Δημητρίου Τσάμη, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικά ἔργα, Α΄ Θεσσαλονικεῖς Ἅγιοι* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1985), 423–591. See also Θεοκλήτου Μοναχοῦ Διονυσιάτου, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς. Ὁ βίος καί ἡ θεολογία του*, 1–7; 29–32; 163–65.

¹⁴ On the process of canonisation, see Γεωργίου Χρυσοστόμου, *Ἡ ἀναγνώριση τοῦ Μαξίμου Γραικοῦ ὡς ἀγίου καί ὁ καθορισμός κοινῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς πράξης ἀναγνώρισης ἀγίων ἀπό τήν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία* (Ἄρτα: Σκουφᾶς, 1989), 5.

¹⁵ See *Παύλειος Λόγος* 82 (2009), 16–25.

name 'Gregory,'¹⁶ two others called 'Palamas,'¹⁷ and a deacon named 'Theodosios'.¹⁸ It is the intention of our Metropolitan to name other monastic individuals, men and women, after other members of the saintly Palamas Family.

Finally, I would like to point out that today's event, graced by the presence of elected councillors, represents yet another opportunity for our local congregation to honour our local saints, with our great father St Gregory Palamas foremost among them. For this reason, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for your decision to include our town and Metropolis on the programme of this international conference.

¹⁶ Archimandrite Gregorios Sofos, a hierokerykas of the Metropolis. See *Δίπτυχα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Ἀθήνα: Ἀποστολική Διακονία, 2004), 447.

¹⁷ Archimandrite Palamas Tsilipakos, priest of the Holy Church of St Nicholas in the village of Anatonlikon, and Archimandrite Palamas Kyrillides, abbot of the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos at Kallipetra. See *Δίπτυχα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, 406.

¹⁸ Deacon Theodosios (birth name, Angelos) Ermides, monk of the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos at Kallipetra.

BEYOND NEO-PALAMISM: INTERPRETING THE LEGACY OF ST GREGORY PALAMAS

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This paper seeks to clear the way for new historical-theological research into the corpus of St Gregory Palamas and his followers in late Byzantium. While recognizing the immense impact and the extraordinary contribution of pioneering scholars such as Fr John Meyendorff, this paper examines the methodological and hermeneutic questions that dominated Neo-Palamite scholarship in the twentieth century. Attempting to move beyond dated paradigms and narrow interpretive categories, the paper seeks to make room for the wealth of new sources that have been made available in the decades since Meyendorff's groundbreaking work. Calling attention to the wider school of Palamite theologians writing between 1339 and 1445, this paper specifically analyses the question of theological *development* and the problem of *change* in Byzantine theology. It also examines the question of Nicholas Kavalas and his relationship to the Palamite cause in an effort to illustrate the complexities surrounding the broader Palamite movement. Precisely because Neo-Palamite scholars have been so influential in propagating the field of Palamite studies, their contributions must be extended and built upon with renewed, objective research into the complex world of Palamite theology.

*Introduction*¹

Palamite theology is not easily reduced to simple categories. Boasting an extensive corpus, and a network of authors writing over the course of an entire century, the theology of St Gregory Palamas and his followers has presented a challenge to researchers and scholars, who have only recently begun to apply the tools of critical inquiry to the field. The twentieth century thus saw the rise of heuristic categories and hermeneutical models for understanding and describing the Palamite controversy. In addition to finding parallels with medieval Western theology, scholars applied to the theology of St Gregory Palamas the problematics of modern theological discourse. Yet the desire to extrapolate larger interpretative structures from the original theological disagreements has resulted in a distorted and often anachronistic portrait of the debates.

¹ I am grateful to Fr Maximos Constas for his encouragement and advice throughout the writing of this paper, and to Dr Marcus Plested, Christiaan Kappes, John-Mark Miravalle, and John Taylor Carr for their valuable feedback. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

As a complex philosophical and religious movement, Palamite theology does not fit easily into black and white categories, especially those developed outside of its natural environment. Nor has the state of research reached a level sufficient for the proliferation of viable generalizations. The past thirty years have seen the publication of critical editions of works by a number of important Palamite theologians: Philotheos Kokkinos, David Dishypatos, John VI Kantakouzenos, Joseph Kalotheos, Neilos Kavasilas, Philotheos of Selyvria, Kallistos Angelikoudes, Kallistos I of Constantinople, Manuel II Palaiologos, and Mark Eugenikos. Yet very little of the data contained in these resources has been incorporated into the study of Palamite theology, whose lineaments were traced out and secured long before most of these texts were available.²

By challenging some of these older paradigms, this paper seeks to move beyond the interpretative foci that have hitherto dominated the study of Palamite theology in order to make room for new research and new insights based on a wider selection of sources and a richer experience of Palamite theologians. In particular, we shall examine the fraught question of theological method and the development of doctrine, as well as the specific case of the Palamite Nicholas Kavasilas.

Old Dichotomies

In his groundbreaking *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*,³ Fr John Meyendorff did not limit himself to outlining the theology of St Gregory Palamas and his opponents or to chronicling the controversy that unfolded between them. Instead, he took the opportunity to offer a full diagnosis of the theological disagreements as such, drawing general conclusions about the very nature of the problems at stake and relating them to modern problems in theological hermeneutics and method.

Among Meyendorff's more well-known conclusions was that Barlaam and his followers were not simply heretics, opposing the essence-energies distinction and the uncreated character of the divine light. They were also, fundamentally, 'humanists' and 'nominalists',⁴ harbingers of the decline of faith associated especially with the Renaissance. As something of an avatar of medieval Western ills, then, Barlaam represented for Meyendorff the road not taken by Orthodox theology: a road that we now know would end for the West in disasters of all kinds, not least the upheavals

² Cf. the observations of Antonio Rigo, 'Premessa', in ed. *id*, *Gregorio Palamas e oltre: Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), viii.

³ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959).

⁴ I cite here from the second edition of the English translation by George Lawrence, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), both for convenience and because, as Meyendorff states in the Foreword, this version contains corrections and updates by the author (*ibid.*, 7).

of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Thus, 'by approving Palamas' thought, the Byzantine Church resolutely turned its back on the spirit of the Renaissance'.⁵

The characterization of the Palamite controversy as a battle between proto-renaissance humanism and monasticism is by now little more than a cliché.⁶ It suffices here to note that many of the supporters of Palamite theology themselves pursued interests in astronomy, mathematics, rhetoric, philology, and philosophy. These include Thomas Magistros,⁷ Makarios Makres,⁸ Joseph Bryennios,⁹

⁵ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 239.

⁶ It nevertheless remains common to read the whole history of late-Byzantine culture as a struggle between intellectual humanism and obscurantist monasticism, a dichotomy that has all the markings of a gross oversimplification and distortion; see D. Nicol, 'Saints and Scholars: The "Inner" and "Outer" Wisdom', in *id.*, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 31–65. For a snapshot of how this dialectic has colored historical treatments of the Palamite 'victory', see J.N. Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas: Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 102, n. 351.

⁷ That Magistros was a supporter of Palamas is the claim of Philotheos of Selybria, *Dialogue* 1899–1900, ed. M. Vakalopoulou, *Φιλόθεος Σηλυβρίας: Βίος καὶ Συγγραφικὸ ἔργο* (Doctoral Diss., Εθνικὸ καὶ Καποδιστριακὸ Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, Φιλοσοφικὴ Σχολή, 1992), 253. Cf. Demetrios Kydones, *Apologia to the Patriarch* 204–21, in ed. G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1931), 202–3. On Magistros, who was famed for his commentaries on Pindar and Greek tragedy, among other achievements, see H. Hunger, 'Von Wissenschaft und Kunst der frühen Palaiologenzeit', *Jahrbuch der Österreichische Byzantinische Gesellschaft* 8 (1959): 123–55 (143–45); N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011). Though Meyendorff states that Magistros, early on, 'was also, like many humanists, opposed to the theology of the monks', (*A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 82), this is merely deduced from a letter of Akindynos decrying Magistros's lack of support (*Letter* 56, trans. Angela Constantinides Hero, *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* [Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983], 229–35). But even if Magistros had initially supported Akindynos, there is no reason to suppose this was based on humanist prejudices.

⁸ Makarios had even continued his studies of rhetoric, geometry, and logic under the supervision of his spiritual father as a monk on Mt Athos; see S. Kapetanaki, 'An Annotated Critical Edition of Makarios Makres' *Life of St. Maximos Kausokalyves, Encomion on the Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, Consolation to a Sick Person, or Reflections on Endurance, Verses on the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, Letter to Hieromonk Symeon, A Supplication on Barren Olive Trees*' (PhD Thesis: University of London, 2001), 11. In his *Life of St. Maximos Kausokalyves* 36, Makarios recounts the Hut-Burner's own disdain for Akindynos, whom he calls *polykindynos* (see *ibid.*, 171, l. 5).

⁹ On Bryennios' library, which included books on grammar, prosody, poetry, rhetoric, geometry, music, geography, and works by Ptolemy, Aristotle, Planudes, and Magistros, see his *Diataxis*, in ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca Sacra* (St Petersburg: Kirshbaum, 1909), 295, l. 30–296, l. 11. According to Martin Jugie, 'C'est une vrai disciple de Palamas que nous trouvons en Joseph Bryennios' ('Palamite [Controverse]', *Dictionnaire du théologie Catholique* 11.2:1799). For Bryennios' defense of the essence-energies distinction and other Palamite tenets, see E. Voulgaris, *Ἰωσήφ Μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου, Τὰ εὐρεθέντα*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1768; repr. Θεσσαλονίκη: Β. Ρηγοπούλου, 1990), 99–119; vol. 3 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1784; repr. Θεσσαλονίκη: Β. Ρηγοπούλου, 1990), 54–62.

John Chortasmenos,¹⁰ and the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos.¹¹ Several of these also served as teachers to prominent Palamites of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including Philotheos Kokkinos¹² and Mark Eugenikos.¹³

That Barlaam was himself ‘western educated and imbued with the spirit of the Italian Renaissance’¹⁴ has also since been disproven by Antonis Fyrigos.¹⁵ The idea that Barlaam, who seems to have gone by the name Bernard until his monastic tonsure, was originally a Roman Catholic, or even a kind of Latin spy, is itself an old accusation, and is no doubt bound up with the fact that Barlaam did eventually convert to Catholicism.¹⁶ The Palamite Patriarch Kallistos I refers to Barlaam as

¹⁰ On the polymath John Chortasmenos, later Ignatios of Selyvria, see H. Hunger, ‘Johannes Chortasmenos, ein byzantinischer Intellektueller der späten Palaiologenzeit’, *Wiener Studien* 70 (1957): 153–63. Chortasmenos’ *Ethical Instructions* contain an important articulation of the ‘two wisdoms’ (1 Cor 1:17–2:24) akin to that found in the *Triads*, showing that, for at least some intellectuals, excellence in profane learning was not incompatible with its ultimate subordination to spiritual goods; see H. Hunger, *Johannes Chortasmenos: Briefe, Gedichte, und Kleine Schriften* (Vienna: Institut für Byzantinistik der Universität Wien, 1969), 238. For an analysis of Palamas’ Pauline doctrine of the two wisdoms, see M. Constan, ‘The Reception of Paul and of Pauline Theology in the Byzantine Period’, in eds. D. Krueger and R. S. Nelson, *The New Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2016), 165–69.

¹¹ For a sense of Manuel’s immersion in classical literature, see G. T. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1977). The emperor’s *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* contains a lengthy defense of the essence-energies distinction; see Ch. Dendrinos, ‘An Annotated Critical Edition (Editio Princeps) of Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus’ Treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*’, (PhD Diss.: University of London, 1996). This text is currently being prepared for publication in *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* (Brepols).

¹² Kokkinos was one of the most active and influential promoters of the theology of St Gregory Palamas. A co-author of the *Tomos of 1351*, and later Patriarch of Constantinople, Kokkinos would extend the Palamite legacy beyond the Byzantine Empire to Bulgaria and Russia. For an overview of his life and works, see D. Tsentikopoulos, ‘Φιλόθεος Κόκκινος, Βίος καὶ Ἔργο’ (Doctoral Diss., Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, 2001). For his writings on the essence-energies distinction, see D. Kaimakes, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου δογματικά ἔργα*, vol. 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ερευνῶν, 1983); and for his *Encomium* on Palamas, see D. Tsames, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, vol. 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ερευνῶν, 1985). On the relationship between Magistros and Kokkinos, cf. Demetrios Kydones, *Apologia to the Patriarch* 204–221 (ed. Mercati, 202–3).

¹³ Mark is best known for his presence as Metropolitan of Ephesus at the Council of Florence (1438–1439). He was a devoted Palamite who dedicated several treatises to defending the essence-energies distinction; see C. Chivu et al, *Sfântul Marcu Evghenicul: Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Gândul Aprins, 2014); M. Pilavakis, ‘Markos Eugenikos’ First Antirrhetic against Manuel Calecas’s *On Essence and Energy*: Editio princeps with Introduction and Commentary’ (PhD Diss.: King’s College, University of London, 1987). Mark himself, like many other Palamites, boasts of humanist credentials himself; for an example of his immersion in classical culture, see his *Thrēnos* for the fall of Thessalonica, in ed. M. Pilavakis, *Ἐάλω Θεσσαλονίκη* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαδημητρίου, 1997). On Chortasmenos as a teacher of Eugenikos, see N. Constan, ‘Mark Eugenikos’, in eds. C. G. and V. Conticello, *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition 2* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 412–13; for Mark’s *Epitaph* for Bryennios, see Voulgaris, *Ἰωσήφ Μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου* 3:30.

¹⁴ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 42; cf. G. Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro: Epistole greche: I primordi episodici e dottrinari delle lotte esicaste* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neogreci, 1954), 24; J. Bois, ‘Les débuts de la controverse hésychaste’, *Échos d’Orient* 5 (1902): 353–62; at 357.

¹⁵ ‘Barlaam Calabro e la Rinascenza italiana’, *Il Veltro* 31 (1987): 395–403. This is on the presumption that a typical fourteenth-century scholastic education was not itself opposed to ‘the spirit of the Italian Renaissance’, but that the two are invoked as kindred species of rationalism.

¹⁶ On the conversion of Barlaam, and the question of his background, see Fyrigos, ‘Ἐπερα theologica di Barlaam di Seminara’, in ed. S. Leanza, *Calabria Cristiana: Società Religione Cultura nel territorio della Diocesi di Oppido Mamertina-Palmi*, vol. 1 (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1999), 155–57; M. Jugie, ‘Barlaam

a *Latinophron*,¹⁷ and John VI Kantakouzenos suggests that it was insidious intent that brought him to Greece in the first place.¹⁸ Even the anti-Palamite Nikephoros Gregoras insistently refers to Barlaam, in his proud disdain, as a Latin.¹⁹ Still, far from channeling Western rationalism, Barlaam's early critique of Latin theology, and of Thomas Aquinas in particular, would in fact echo in the writings of subsequent polemicists, including the Palamites Neilos Kavasilas, Kallistos Angelikoudes, Joseph Bryennios, and Mark Eugenikos.²⁰

In a similar manner, Meyendorff's famous alignment of Barlaam with the nominalism of William of Ockham²¹ is also now seen as a simple anachronism.²² For Meyendorff, the Calabrian and the English Franciscan shared a fundamental skepticism 'about the power of the human intellect by itself to know God', so that Scripture and the Fathers became oracular sources of knowledge that was beyond human reason.²³ The result was that, for both, Scripture became 'a source of quotations and references, and not a means of living communion with the Spirit of God'.²⁴

The oracular quality that Meyendorff imputes to the theology of Barlaam and Akindynos, and which he associates with nominalism, is especially problematic in that it resembles assertions made by Palamas himself:

We know that whatever things one desires to say about divine matters are beyond *logos*, since these are also according to a transcendent *logos*, for they are not outside of *logos* according to deficiency, but are outside of the human *logos* that we have dwelling within ourselves, and which we bring forth from ourselves into the hearing of others. For neither could the latter explain them

est-il né catholique? Suivi d'une note sur la date de sa mort', *Échos d'Orient* 39 (1940): 100–125.

¹⁷ Kallistos I, *Dogmatic Discourse* 1.3, ed. C. Paidas, 'Editio princeps of an Unedited Dogmatic Discourse against the Barlaamites by the Patriarch of Constantinople Kallistos I', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 105 (2012): 117–30; at 123. Cf. Philotheos Kokkinos, *Antirrhetics* 12.19–36 (ed. Tsames, 480).

¹⁸ *Histories* 2.39, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri IV*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Weber, 1828), 543, ll. 10–15.

¹⁹ See his *Historia* 11.10, ed. L. Schopen, *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Weber, 1829), 555, ll. 11–12; 559, ll. 11–13; 19.1, ed. L. Schopen, *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Weber, 1830), 918, ll. 19–21.

²⁰ See G. Schirò, 'Il paradosso di Nilo Cabasila', in *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 9 (1957): 362–88. But cf. the important remarks of A. Fyrigos, who distinguishes diverse approaches to the rejection of the syllogism among Barlaam, Demetrios Kydones, and the Palamites ('Tomismo e antitomismo a Bisanzio', in ed. A. Molle, *Tommaso D'Aquino (†1274) e il mondo bizantino* [Venafrò: Eva, 2004], 60–72, esp. n. 119; see also 36–39, 53–54); R.E. Sinkewicz, 'The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Early Writings of Barlaam the Calabrian', *Medieval Studies* 44 (1982), 181–242.

²¹ Cf. G. Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro: Epistole greche*, 24; K. Ware, 'The Debate about Palamism', *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 9 (1977): 45–63; at 53.

²² The characterization of Barlaam as a nominalist was criticized early on by H.G. Beck, 'Humanismus und Palamismus', in *Actes du XIIe congrès international d'études byzantines à Ochrid, 10–16 Septembre 1961*, vol. 1 (Belgrade, 1963), 72–73; J. Romanides 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1960): 186–205. See, also, the more recent remarks by Sinkewicz, 'The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Early Writings of Barlaam the Calabrian', 239.

²³ Cf. De Halleux, 'Palamisme et Scolastique', *Revue théologique de Louvain* 4 (1973): 409–42; at 433.

²⁴ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 116.

by interpretation, nor could the former attain them of its own accord by investigations. Not to ourselves, then, should we turn to say anything about God, but rather we should direct ourselves to those who speak the things of the Spirit in the Spirit, even when our adversaries require a *logos* of us.²⁵

As André De Halleux pointed out in 1974, the ‘agnosticism’ associated with the figure of Ockham is in fact strikingly similar to the theology and rhetoric of the Palamites, to the extent that the latter were also opposed to a prevalent rationalism in speculative theology and were oriented to an ‘anti-essentialist’ doctrine of God, whose absolute power is not confined to ‘nature’.²⁶

For Meyendorff, nominalism was also the ideological vehicle of *symbolism*, especially in art. ‘Symbolism flourished to such an extent in Byzantine art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that one cannot fail to see this as a result of the humanist Renaissance’.²⁷ Opposed to this nominalist symbolism was Gregory’s ‘realism’, which reflected the theology of icons enshrined in the Seventh Ecumenical Council.²⁸ This realism extended especially to eschatology, giving us a *realized* eschatology,²⁹ as well as a *sacramental* theology, particularly in the doctrine of the Eucharist.³⁰ Indeed, for Meyendorff, ‘symbolic’ is interchangeable with ‘nominal’.³¹ Openly comparing the Church’s rejection of these trends to the Counter-Reformation efforts against Protestantism (whose roots Meyendorff also traces to nominalism), Meyendorff notes that, ‘The essential difference is that, in the East, the defenders of sacramental realism were unaware of the philosophical categories inherited from scholasticism, and only used traditional Biblical and Patristic formulas to counter their adversaries’.³²

Thus the alignment of Barlaam with Luther, the heir of Ockham, overtly follows the hermeneutic of Louis Bouyer, whom Meyendorff invokes explicitly.³³ As Bernhard Schultze pointed out already in 1951, this identification of Barlaam with nominalism was an inherited feature of the Russian reception of Palamism, and can be seen in the master narrative of Western decline associated with the Slavophiles.³⁴

²⁵ 150 Chapters 80, in *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, ed. and trans. R. E. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pont. Inst. Of Med. Studies, 1988), 176–77 [modified].

²⁶ De Halleux, ‘Palamisme et Scolastique’, 433.

²⁷ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 188. Meyendorff develops this claim in his ‘L’Iconographie de la Sagesse divine dans la tradition byzantine’, *Cahiers archéologiques* 10 (1959): 259–77.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

³² *Ibid.*, 195.

³³ ‘Humanisme nominaliste et mystique chrétienne’, *Nouvelle Revue Théologie* 79 (1957): 905–14, at 913; cf. L. Bouyer, *Du Protestantisme à l’Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1954).

³⁴ ‘Die Bedeutung des Palamismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart’, *Scholastik* 26 (1951): 392. On the Slavophiles and the question of Russian national identity, see S. Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (Albany: SUNY, 2006).

De Halleux is therefore correct to note that, in Meyendorff too, we are given ‘*une dialectique grandiose du destin des deux cultures chrétiennes, qui n’est pas sans rappeler la vision slavophile de l’histoire des églises*’.³⁵ Among the consequences of such an approach is that Orthodox theology, long neglected in the West, is inserted into the grand dialectic of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, even foreshadowing such venerable developments as a realized eschatology and a sacramental approach to theology.

Directly related to this dialectic is Meyendorff’s characterization of Palamite theology as personalist and existentialist, as opposed to nominalist and essentialist. By ‘personalist’, Meyendorff means that, ‘The presence of God in us is... a personal existence and it excludes all definition of the divine Being in the context of an essentialist philosophy’.³⁶ The existential, for Meyendorff, is exemplified by the revelation to Moses on Mt Sinai,³⁷ and is distinguished by the marks of personhood, history, and freedom.³⁸ As an antidote to rationalism, ‘the existentialist attitude which [Palamas] adopted in theology, led him to start, not from arguments, but from actual and historical assumptions, not from abstract concepts. The nominalist agnosticism of Barlaam was repugnant to him because it deprived men of a personal and active God’.³⁹

This person-essence dichotomy is, of course, contextualized by the familiar juxtaposition of Eastern and Western approaches to the Trinity: the theology of Augustine, on the one side, and that of the Greek Fathers, on the other.⁴⁰ Towards the end of his *Introduction*, Meyendorff makes clear that this means that, ‘the Greek conception of the Trinity’⁴¹ gives priority to the persons, while the West, ‘moulded to the shape of St Augustine’s essentialist philosophy’, subordinated the persons to the essence.⁴² This paradigm, which has increasingly been abandoned as an oversimplification, if not a distortion, was by no means the idiosyncratic theory of neo-Palamites generally or John Meyendorff in particular.⁴³ Yet the paradigm, itself

³⁵ De Halleux, ‘Palamisme et Scolastique’, 434.

³⁶ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 210. Cf. n. 25 above.

³⁷ See De Halleux, ‘Palamisme et Scolastique’, 427; cf. J. Demetracopoulos, *Is Gregory Palamas an Existentialist? The Restoration of the True Meaning of his Comment on Exodus 3, 14: ‘Εὐὸ εἰμι ὁ ὢν’* (Athens: Parousia, 1996).

³⁸ De Halleux, ‘Palamisme et Scolastique’, 427. See the remarks of Torstein Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 212–14.

³⁹ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 210. This echoes the claim of Dumitru Staniloae, two decades earlier, that only the essence-energies distinction is able to overcome the remote Divinity of Aristotle and render God participable and shareable. Staniloae specifically blames the rationalistic approach of scholasticism for the rise of secularism; see his *Viața și învățătura sfântului Grigorie Palama* (Sibiu: Scripta, 1932), 5. Cf. Von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), 410–11.

⁴⁰ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 166.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 228.

⁴³ See Michel R. Barnes, ‘Augustine in Contemporary Theology’, *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237–50; *id.* ‘De Regnon Reconsidered’, *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 51–79. Meyendorff himself, like other

the fruit of Western scholarship, serves a particular function in Meyendorff's *dialectique grandiose* by cementing Barlaam's relationship to the West, and tracing the line between Barlaam, the Renaissance, and Luther further back to Augustine himself.⁴⁴

For Meyendorff, essentialist metaphysics themselves derive from Greek philosophy, while personalism and existentialism are the biblical and patristic model.⁴⁵ 'It is Christian existentialism that Palamas opposes to the nominalist essentialism of his adversaries... he sees no other means of maintaining Biblical and Patristic realism'.⁴⁶ A species of the humanist-monastic dichotomy, this dialectic is familiar from the work Bauer and Von Harnack.⁴⁷ For Meyendorff, Gregory's 'biblical' theology is thus opposed to both the Platonic, dualist intellectualism of Evagrius and the Neoplatonism of Dionysius.⁴⁸ Against both, Meyendorff articulates Gregory's 'monist' doctrine, opposed to the spiritualizing and dualistic tendencies that lingered in Greek theology.⁴⁹ Whereas Barlaam 'was a disciple of the Pseudo-Dionysius',⁵⁰ Meyendorff believes that Palamas only countenances Dionysius to the extent that theologians of this period were forced to, under the assumption that this was not a pseudonymous collection of writings but the work of an important Church Father. Meyendorff himself, liberated from this misconception, feels no obligation to defend Dionysian theology, whose true heir he sees in Barlaam.⁵¹ 'When Palamas reproaches him [Barlaam] for borrowing his symbolism from "Hellenic sciences", he was really complaining about the Areopagite himself'.⁵² Meyendorff thus posits a now well-known 'Christocentric' and 'Christological' corrective in Gregory's appropriation of Dionysius, openly invoking the work of Oscar Cullmann in order to oppose to Dionysian anagogy 'a theology of history'.⁵³

neo-Palamites, openly cites De Regnon as a support for this hermeneutic. For a fuller discussion of how this paradigm has affected perceptions of the relationship between Palamas and Augustine, see Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30–34.

⁴⁴ In this, Fr John Romanides, for all his criticism of Meyendorff's labels, exceeds Meyendorff himself. For, though he attempts to overturn every hermeneutical category in Meyendorff's work, from nominalism to personalism and everything in between, he argues in an even more extreme manner for the Augustinianism of Barlaam; see 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1960): 186–205; 9 (1963): 225–70.

⁴⁵ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 226. Cf. *ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁸ Meyendorff will speak of the triumph of Palamism as the 'liberation from the Neo-Platonic categories which always constituted the great temptation for Greek mysticism' (*Ibid.*, 240).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137, 147, 172.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 185–86. Cf. *Ibid.*, 189: 'He came into such a clear opposition to Dionysius that he had to resort to a forced and artificial exegesis of this thought, in order to avoid a direct attack on so venerable an authority. ... Palamas could not dismiss the views of one whom he, and all his contemporaries, considered as a disciple of St Paul'. For a more positive appraisal of Dionysius, see John Meyendorff, *Le Christ dans la théologie byzantine* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 121–47.

⁵² Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 187.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 189. Cf. *ibid.*, 186, 209. Cf. De Halleux, 'Palamisme et Scolastique', 427. In Meyendorff's appeal to Cullmann, Romanides sees an 'obvious attempt to make Palamas appealing to the modern theologian', and he mocks Meyendorff for his 'obsessed struggle to depict Palamas as an heroic Biblical theologian

Meyendorff's suspicion of Dionysius is not unusual for the period,⁵⁴ though more recent researchers have begun to look more positively on the Christian credentials of the Areopagite's Neoplatonism, not least Meyendorff's student, Alexander Golitzin.⁵⁵ As regards Gregory's transcendence of Evagrius intellectualism, Antonio Rigo has pointed out that Meyendorff's understanding of Gregory's spiritual synthesis rests on '*una lettura bipolare della spiritualità bizantina*', which Meyendorff reproduces throughout his writings.⁵⁶ Ultimately, this reading rests on the schema of Irénée Hausherr, articulated in 1934–1935, which divides the Byzantine contemplative tradition into intellectualist and affective strains.⁵⁷ These are the well-known 'head' and 'heart' schools associated with Evagrius, on the one hand, and Macarius-Symeon, on the other. In the past thirty years, this narrative has been challenged on every side, with revisionary scholarship on both Evagrius and the Macariana leading the charge in the deconstruction of old truisms.⁵⁸ A more probing and comprehensive account of Byzantine spirituality as a whole in fact shows that '*les grands courants*' cannot really be reduced to these two broader genera.⁵⁹ Of particular consequence for Meyendorff's work, Hausherr's paradigm had especially overlooked the place of Dionysius in the development of Byzantine spirituality.⁶⁰ Yet modern research has

putting to the sword of Christological Correctives the last remnants of Greek Patristic Platonic Apophaticism and its supposed linear descendants, the Byzantine Platonic-nominalistic humanists' ('Notes on the Palamite Controversy', 264, 250).

⁵⁴ Among many other examples, see the work of H. F. Müller, *Dionysios, Proklos, Plotinos: Ein historischer Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Philosophie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 19262); A. Nygren, *Eros och Agape* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1930–1936); J.M. Hornus, 'Quelques réflexions à propos du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et la mystique chrétienne en general', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 27 (1947): 37–63; J. Vanneste, *Le mystère de Dieu* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959).

⁵⁵ See his 'Dionysius Areopagites in the Works of St. Gregory Palamas: On the Question of a "Christological Corrective" and Related Matters', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 46.2–3 (2002): 164–90. Cf. E. Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: SUNY, 2007).

⁵⁶ See, also, his *Saint Grégoire et la mystique orthodoxe* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 18–24; *Byzantine Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 83–86.

⁵⁷ Antonio Rigo, 'La spiritualità bizantina e le sue scuole nell'opera di Irénée Hausherr', *OCP* 70 (2004): 197–216 (211–12). See I. Hausherr, 'Les grands courants de la spiritualité orientale', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 1 (1935): 114–38; at 132–37. Hans Urs von Balthasar also opposed the 'incarnational' theology of Maximus the Confessor to the 'intellectualism' of Evagrius; see his 'Die Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Ponticus', *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik* 14 (1939): 31–47.

⁵⁸ On Evagrius, see the work of G. Bunge, 'Evagre le Pontique et les deux Macaire', *Irénikon* 56 (1983): 215–28, 323–60; *id.*, 'The "Spiritual Prayer": On the Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius of Pontus', *Monastic Studies* 17 (1986): 191–208. On Macarius, see C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); M. Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Plested discusses Meyendorff's dichotomy on pp. 60–61.

⁵⁹ All the more reason the reductive dichotomy should have been abandoned in the much more recent study of J.N. Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 21 n. 74. Cf. the remarks of Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 55–56 n. 89; and the review of Cañellas by Fr Andrew Louth in *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007): 346–48.

⁶⁰ Hausherr, 'Les grands courants', 124–126; *id.*, 'La contemplation chez les Grecs et les autres Orientaux chrétiens', *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique* 26 (1950): 121–72, at 130; see Rigo, 'La spiritualità bizantina', 212–13. For other places in which Meyendorff treats Dionysius, see his *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, DC: SPCK, 1969), 75–84; *id.*, *Byzantine Theology*, 37–39. On the place of Dionysius in Byz-

increasingly shown the importance of *all* of these sources—Evagrius, Macarius, and Dionysius—for the development of the theological tradition that would culminate in St Gregory Palamas, not least through the synthesis of St Maximus the Confessor.⁶¹

Ironically, Meyendorff's retrieval of Palamas as a quintessentially biblical theologian would expose the late-Byzantine author to renewed charges of Neoplatonism. Gregory's theology had been accused of Neoplatonism by early researchers such as Martin Jugie.⁶² The correlation itself dates to the lifetime of Palamas, when Nikephoros Gregoras identified the theory of the divine energies with the Proclean doctrine of participation.⁶³ After the appearance of Meyendorff's *Introduction*, the association was revived by Gerhard Podskalsky and the contributors to the journal *Istina*, who resumed the Harnackian tug of war in an effort to discredit Palamas as a traitor to authentic Christian tradition.⁶⁴ Today this polarity has begun to be transcended, and few would draw a hard line between what is commonly called Neoplatonism and the developments in Christian theology, Eastern or Western. As unsympathetic a critic of Palamism as John Milbank has recently criticized Palamas not for being Neoplatonic, but for embracing the *wrong kind* of Neoplatonism: Plotinian instead of Iamblichean.⁶⁵ Though this still leaves us in the world of either-or, there is never-

antine spirituality, see A. Rigo, 'La spiritualità monastica bizantina e lo Pseudo-Dionigi l'Areopagita', in eds. M. Sheridan and M. Bielawski, *Classics Texts and Themes of the Christian Monastic Tradition* (Rome: Lipa, 2002); *id.*, 'Il Corpus Pseudo-dionisiano negli scritti di Gregorio Palamas (e di Barlaam) del 1336–1341', in ed. Y. de Andia, *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Acts du Colloque international (Paris, 21–24 Sep. 1994)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 519–34.

⁶¹ See, e.g., L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: Open Court, 1965), 244–460; M. Plested, 'The Ascetic Tradition', in eds. P. Allen and B. Neil, *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 164–76; M. Constatas, "Nothing is Greater than Divine Love": Evagrius of Pontus, St Maximus the Confessor, and the *Philokalia*, in eds. A. Andreopoulos and G. Speake, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Oxford: Peter Lang 2017), 57–74; *id.*, 'Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism', *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1–12.

⁶² Martin Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire', *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, 11.2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1931), 1761. In a slightly less polemical spirit, Endre Von Ivánka examines the Platonic themes in Palamas in a series of articles collected in *Plato Christianus*, 389–445.

⁶³ *Historia* 35.13–15, ed. I. Bekker, *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 3 (Bonn: Weber, 1855), 481, l.5–482, l.12.

⁶⁴ See G. Podskalsky, 'Gottesschau und Inkarnation', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 35 (1969): 5–44; and the entire issue of *Istina* 19.3 (1974). Cf. H.G. Beck, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* 3.2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968), 606. The popular essay by Rowan Williams, 'The Philosophical Structures of Palamism', *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 9 (1977): 27–44, is thus derivative in its accusations, a fact alluded to by Kallistos Ware in the same issue of *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 9 (1977): 46. Nor does Williams offer a very probing treatment of historical Neoplatonism, to say nothing of its relationship with Palamism.

⁶⁵ 'Christianity and Platonism in East and West', in eds. C. Athanasopoulos and Ch. Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 158–209. Milbank's handling of historical Neoplatonism is not much deeper than that of Williams, though he recognizes that Williams's 'strictures on Neoplatonism now appear dated' (*ibid.*, 158, n. 1). Milbank also seems unaware of the article by Eric Perl, which appeared in the time between his own essay and that of Williams: 'St. Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation', in *Dionysius* 14 (1990): 105–30; nor does he much engage David Bradshaw's genealogy of *energeia* and participation in *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

theless a growing recognition that the Hellenization thesis, in one form or another, is inadequate for understanding the developments in medieval Christian theology.

For Meyendorff, words such as biblical, patristic, personalist, incarnational, sacramental, and realist are all synonyms, and form the opposite of such undesirable categories as philosophical, essentialist, nominalist, and symbolic. Meyendorff does not hide the fact that he is anxious to recommend Palamas as an answer to peculiarly modern questions. 'We do find', he states, 'in his thought, taken as a whole, a constructive answer to the challenge to Christianity of the Modern Age: a personalist and existential theology and a spirituality which, freed from Platonic spiritualizing, integrates the whole man in the new life'.⁶⁶

Fr John Meyendorff can hardly be blamed for directly relating the subject of his study to the relevant issues of his day. It is precisely because he attempted to make these connections that Palamas now has a voice in academic and ecumenical theology.⁶⁷ Indeed, his championing of existentialism, as well as his polemic against nominalism, merely mirrors the emphases and concerns of countless other theologians and philosophers in post-war France.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a properly historical analysis of the Palamite controversy must look beyond these attempts, however noble, to relate a late medieval, and non-Western, controversy to the reigning concerns of twentieth-century Europe. The ambitious narrative that connects Palamas with the problems of nominalism, essentialism, the Renaissance, and the Reformation, risks distorting many of the details and intricacies crucial to a nuanced understanding of the actual Palamite debates and disagreements.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 240. Cf. De Halleux, 'Palamisme et Scolastique', 438: 'L'école néoplatonicienne orthodoxe du P. Georges Florovsky a découvert dans la tradition palamite la seule pensée susceptible de relever le défi que le *secularism* moderne adresse au christianisme'. Cf. n. 38 above. Ironically, Meyendorff (*A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 202) rejects 'comparisons with writers from a completely different background of spiritual thought and philosophical method', specifically Duns Scotus, with whom Palamas had been compared since the early modern period; see D. Petavius, *Opus de theologicis dogmatibus* 1.12 (Antwerp: G. Gallet, 1745), 76–79.

⁶⁷ As noted by De Halleux, Meyendorff is, in this sense, 'un second vulgarisateur de Palamas en Occident', since the accommodation of Palamite theology to the problems of contemporary European questions was inaugurated by Vladimir Lossky. 'Lossky, impressionné par le renouveau de la néoscholastique catholique, aurait entrepris un recentrement néopalamite de la dogmatique de son Église, en opposant au principe thomiste de la distinction de l'essence et de l'être créés celui de la distinction d'essence et des énergies créées' ('Palamisme et Tradition', 480). De Halleux nevertheless denies the related proposition that Neo-Palamism was itself born as a reaction to Catholic criticism of Palamas (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ Cf. De Halleux, 'Palamisme et Scolastique', 439. 'S'il n'était impertinent de taxer la thèse magistrale du P. Meyendorff de subtilment tendancieuse, on pourrait lui reprocher d'avoir trop bien assimilé les idées régnant dans l'intelligentsia chrétienne de France au cours de la première décennie de l'après-guerre.... Tout se présente comme s'il avait décrypté les théologiens byzantins du XIV^e siècle à travers cette grille, pour ranger son héros du côté de la théologie ressourcée, et refouler les adversaires dans les ténèbres de l'essentialisme scolastique'. See, also, Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 30, n. 2; 54, n. 78.

⁶⁹ Cf. De Halleux, 'Palamisme et Scolastique', 436; *ibid.*, 439: 'Il convient d'ailleurs de se méfier de l'anachronisme que toute terminologie moderne introduit fatalement sans la pensée ancienne et médiévale'.

Fundamentalism and Creativity

Another dichotomy, which has not received the same amount of critical attention, is that between lifeless fundamentalism and theological creativity. That the essence-energies distinction was introduced by St Gregory Palamas as an *innovation* (καινότης, καινοτομία, etc.) was a common charge against the Palamites.⁷⁰ Long before Martin Jugie, or, indeed, Garrigou-Lagrange, Akindynos spoke of the Palamites as *nouvelle theologiens*.⁷¹ 'The ancestral dogmas of piety are cast away as impious, while the new and fresh ones, opposed to those that are established, are received as pious. When one speaks the Christian notion that the divinity is one, simple, and invisible, he seems out of date (Κρονικός) and old-fashioned (Διπολιώδης)'.⁷² A principal concern of Meyendorff's *Introduction* was thus to show that Palamas was not in fact an innovator, but merely a disciple of patristic tradition.⁷³ As such, he characterizes Palamas as 'a spokesman of conservative Orthodoxy',⁷⁴ defending the continuity and received character of the essence-energies distinction.

Yet, as we have already seen, Meyendorff was an apologist not only for Gregory's orthodoxy, but also for his relevance to modernity. Anxious to show that Palamas was, 'in some respects...more in tune than others with the preoccupation of modern thought',⁷⁵ Meyendorff took pains to show that the hero of his narrative did not merely parrot the formulae of his forebears. Meyendorff speaks of Palamas as being 'on the side of those who, not satisfied with the sterile repetition of hoary arguments had a lively reaction to the problems of their own day. Conversely, as usual, the adversaries of Palamism urged a formalistic scholasticism'.⁷⁶ This particular statement is made specifically in relation to Gregory's dialogue with the Latins, wherein Palamas is 'much more open towards the West than was the case with many of his contemporaries'.⁷⁷ Yet, as the statement implies, Meyendorff sees this characterization as paradigmatic of the Palamite controversy as a whole. Akindynos is, in general, treated as a poor intellect, and an unimaginative theologian, 'characteristic

⁷⁰ As found, for example, throughout the *Letters* of Akindynos; see 10.203–204 (καινοφωνία); 21.20 (καινοπραγμοσύνη); 27.76–77; 28.31; 30.27; 31.30; 34.26; 36.15; 37.91, 95; 40.42, 126; 42.100; 56.12; 66.28; 67.32; 70.64 (ed. Hero, 46, 76, 92, 100, 124, 128, 134, 152, 156, 230, 282, 288).

⁷¹ See, e.g., Akindynos, *Letter* 34.18 (ed. Hero, 124). Cf. Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire', *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique* 11.2:1759, 1762; 'Palamite (Controverse)', *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique* 11.2:1777, 1784.

⁷² Akindynos, *Letter* 66.46–50 (ed. Hero, 276). Cf. *ibid.*, 424.

⁷³ This was, in part, motivated by criticism from a long line of modern Roman Catholic scholars, who renewed Akindynos' accusation that Palamas was an 'innovator'. Cf. Ware, 'The Debate about Palamism', 61. To name just one example of early twentieth-century anti-Palamism on the part of Roman Catholic scholars, in addition to those already mentioned, see M. Candal, 'Innovaciones palamíticas en la doctrina de la gracia', in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, vol. 3 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946), 65–103.

⁷⁴ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

of medieval Byzantine scholasticism'.⁷⁸ Meyendorff thus speaks of 'two forms of conservatism' that came into conflict: 'formal conservatism which consisted in verbal repetition of formulas of the Fathers, and the truly traditional spirit which wished to share the living experience of the Fathers, always accessible in the catholic life of the Church, and not only the words they spoke'. The former, again, was the terrain of 'the humanists'.⁷⁹

These sentiments would be echoed by Fr Alexander Schmemmann, who notes that, 'The conflict in question was primarily a clash between that traditional Eastern theology, of which Palamism...was an organic development, and something which might tentatively be called Byzantine scholasticism'.⁸⁰ The latter is described as 'formalism',⁸¹ and,

The only force capable...of opposing [to this] a truly creative interpretation of the Orthodox Tradition...was the Hesychast theology of Palamas. In the hermitages of Athos, in monasteries in the provinces and in Constantinople itself there were still men at that time who sought and found not a mere formal identity with the writings of the Fathers, but an identity of *experience with them*.⁸²

As with the dichotomies encountered above, the creativity-fundamentalism paradigm seeks to recommend Palamite theology to a modern audience and contemporary theological concerns. Furthermore, it also reflects a desire on the part of Orthodox theologians, particularly in Europe and North America, to transcend the stigma of stagnation and ossification attached to Orthodox theology, a critique leveled both from without and from within. Associated especially with the so-called Neo-patristic Synthesis, the rhetoric of creativity is particularly averse to what Florovsky called 'a theology of repetition'.⁸³ Thus, in his opposition to Akindynos and others, Palamas is seen to be 'stimulating thought anew, in the face of a dominant "theology of repetition" and "preservationism"'.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

⁸⁰ 'St Mark of Ephesus and the Theological Conflicts in Byzantium', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 1 (1957): 11–24; at 18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 20, 21.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 23 (emphasis in the original).

⁸³ Florovsky, 'St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers', in *id.*, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA.: Nordland, 1972), 111, 114; reprinted from *Sobornost* 4 (1961): 165–76. For Florovsky, as for Meyendorff and Schmemmann, the 'theology of repetition' is 'a peculiar form of imitative "scholasticism"' (110).

⁸⁴ J. Payton, 'Toward a Russian Orthodox Worldview', in eds. J. Sutton and W. Van den Bercken, *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 304. According to Paul Gavrilyuk, 'A "theology of repetition"...still paralyzes Orthodox efforts in the area of biblical studies, political theology, moral theology, as well as science and religion, to name only a few examples' ('Florovsky's Neopatristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology', in eds. G. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions of the West* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2013], 122).

Any anachronism in this characterization of Palamite theology must certainly be rejected. It hardly needs to be said that most Byzantine theologians would have been loath to claim any originality in their theological writings. Nor would they have recoiled at the idea of ‘merely’ repeating the doctrines and expressions of the past. Indeed, this was the sought-after and recommended path. A familiar feature of Byzantine theological texts is thus the proclamation, as a kind of disclaimer, that a work contains *nothing* that has not been passed down from the Fathers.⁸⁵ Similarly, the *Tomos of 1341* quotes Canon 19 of the Council in Trullo, stating that, when preaching on Scripture, the clergy ‘should not interpret it otherwise than the luminaries and teachers of the Church established in their own writings. Let them prefer what is written there rather than laying out their own words, lest, when they do hazard this, they fall into something unseemly’.⁸⁶

Yet the concerns of Schmemmann and Meyendorff are not entirely without foundation. During the proceedings of the Synod of 1351, Palamas himself defends the recent additions to the episcopal Confession of Faith as an explication (ἀνάπτυξις) of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.⁸⁷ This language of *anaptyxis* had been used by Patriarch Isidore I Boucheiras (d. early 1350), to defend his Palamite additions to the Confession of Faith, along with his liturgical compositions, contending that they are not an addition (προσθήκη) at all, but an explication and clarification of what the text already contained.⁸⁸ The problem of adding to, as opposed to unpacking, the Orthodox faith, was, for the reasons outlined above, a delicate issue. It is precisely around this issue (*explicatio* vs. *additio*) that discussions of the Filioque at the Council of Florence (1438–1439) would revolve.⁸⁹ Yet the *Tomos of 1351* makes it clear that, for the Palamite party, the essence-energies distinction was a lawful, and wholly traditional, articulation of a truth that had been defined long ago at Constantinople

⁸⁵ The most well-known example is from St John of Damaskos: Ἐρῶ τοιγαροῦν ἐμὸν μὲν οὐδὲν, τὰ δὲ σποράδην θείοις τε καὶ σοφοῖς ἀνδράσι λελεγμένα συλλήβδην ἐκθήσομαι (*Dialectics* 2 [PG 94:533A]; cf. 525A). Even here the Damascene eschews originality, since the disclaimer itself appears borrowed from Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 4.1 (200C), ed. G. Heil and A.M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 26 (an insight I owe to John Demetracopoulos).

⁸⁶ *Tomos of 1341*, 6 (ed. Karmires, *Τὰ δογματικὰ καὶ συμβολικὰ μνήμεια τῆς Ὁρθοδόξης Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. 1 [Αθήνα, 1952], 301). Cf. G.A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. 2 (Αθήνα: Γ. Χαρτοφύλακος, 1852), 346.

⁸⁷ The Confession of Faith pronounced by a bishop at his ordination had been expanded after the Synod of February 1347 to include a repudiation of Barlaam, Akindynos, and Patriarch John Kalekas; see J. Darrouzès, *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople* 1.5 (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines, 1977), 224; H. Hunger et al., *Das Register des Patriarchates von Konstantinopel* 2 (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995): 444–46.

⁸⁸ *Testament* 117–27, ed. Hunger et al., *Das Register des Patriarchates von Konstantinopel* 2:434–36. As regards Isidore’s hymnography, both Isidore and Gregoras (*History* 16.5.10) seem to suggest that it centered especially on the *Triadika*, but the identity of the texts in question is no longer known; cf. J. Darrouzès, *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople* 1.5:239.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Andreas de Santacroce, *Acta Latina*, Sessiones Ferrariensis, Collatio III (16 October 1438), VIII (8 November 1438), XIII (13 December 1438), ed. G. Hofmann, *Concilium Florentinum Documenta et Scriptores* B6 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1955), 30, ll.23–25; 44, ll.15–17; 58, l.30; 121, ll.12–14; 128, l.36–129, l.11.

III.⁹⁰ This determination would be reinforced at the Synod of 1368, when it was proclaimed that the *Tomos of 1351* itself was ‘the pillar of Orthodoxy, the firm rule of the pure dogmas of our faith, and the explication (ἀνάπτυξιν) and exegesis of the sacred Gospels and divine Creed’.⁹¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that there develops within the Palamite school an apologetic tradition defending and celebrating the unique contributions of Palamas. Gregory’s friend and encomiast, the patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, describes Gregory’s theology as a singular and unprecedented synthesis and recapitulation of the whole patristic tradition. Speaking of the distinction between God’s essence and energies, Kokkinos says that,

Many great men have spoken exaltedly and philosophized about such things, by the divine Spirit, for different reasons and on different occasions. They have given themselves to a discussion of this or that problem, some to a few and some to more. But none of the ancients, or those before us, engaged every last one of them. He alone, of all of them, and after all of them, was seen to synthesize (εἰς ἓν συνειλοχῶς), in so wondrous a manner, what all of them had done. He expanded upon it brilliantly in speech and in writing, with great understanding and freedom. He brought greater harmony to difficulties that are understood supernaturally, from experience, and he polished, so to speak, and explicated (ἀναπτύξας) the things they had said summarily and succinctly.⁹²

For Kokkinos, then, Gregory’s theology is not only the sum of the patristic tradition, but its capstone and perfection.⁹³ Specifically, Kokkinos notes that it was his experience (πειρα) that gave Palamas the liberty to exegete and unfold the received tradition in this unprecedented way.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Cf. *Tomos of 1351*, 12–13, 30 (ed. Karmires, 317–19, 327–28); Theodore Dexios, *Appellatio* 22 (ed. I. Polemis, *Theodori Dexii Opera Omnia* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 50–53.

⁹¹ *Tomos of 1368*, 873–76, ed. A. Rigo, ‘Il Tomo Sinodale del 1368’, in ed. *id.*, *Gregorio Palamas e oltre*, 130–31.

⁹² *Encomium* 51.1–11 (ed. Tsames, 482).

⁹³ Such exalted praise for Palamas can be observed throughout Kokkinos’ writings; see, e.g., his *Akolouthia* to St Gregory, ed. P. Kourtesidou, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Κοκκίνου Ποιητικά Έργα, Κριτική Έκδοση* (Doctoral Diss., Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, 1992); cf. T. Pino, ‘A Spiritual Legacy for Holy Rus’: Gregory Palamas as a Model of Deification in the Writings of Philotheos Kokkinos’, in eds. V. Tchentsova and S. Shumylo, *Rus’ and Mount Athos: a Millennium of Spiritual and Cultural Ties* (Chernihiv, Ukraine: forthcoming).

⁹⁴ Cf. St Maximus the Confessor: ‘Our blessed father Saint Gregory [Nazianzen], being utterly purified by practical philosophy from all that habitually defiles human nature, and with his intellect thoroughly imbued with the qualities of the Holy Spirit (owing to his dedication to divine contemplations), through his true initiation into true knowledge, experienced the same things as the holy prophets’ (*Ambiguum* 19.2; ed. and trans. N. Constatas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers* [Cambridge, MA: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014], 402–3). Kokkinos goes on, in this same section of his *Encomium* (51.11–15, 21–22) to describe a similar divine inspiration and διάσταις from the necessities of the body in the case of Palamas (ed. Tsames, 482).

Conscious, then, of the reality that there was indeed something unique in the synthesis and contributions of St Gregory Palamas, Palamite theologians did not shrink from explaining the essence-energies distinction as a true *development* of doctrine. One of the more famous examples comes from St Mark Eugenikos. In his *Syllogistic Chapters against the Akindynists*, Mark states explicitly,

We need not marvel that the distinction between the divine essence and operation was not revealed distinctly (*τρανώς*) and in detail by the saints. For if now, after the truth has been so firmly established, and the *monarchy* is understood all over the world, those who rely on secular learning, or, rather, foolishness, have brought such charges against the Church, even accusing her of polytheism, what would they have done then, they who boast and seethe with empty wisdom, and who are eager to lay hold of some excuse against our teachers? For this reason the theologians appear to emphasize the simplicity of God more than the distinction. For it was not proper to further impose the distinction of operations on those who had not yet accepted in a pure manner the distinction of hypostases. For each of the divine dogmas is divided in its own time, economically, the ineffable Wisdom making opportune use, as is customary, of the madness and hostility of the heretics (*cf.* 1 Cor 11:19).⁹⁵

Consciously replicating St Gregory the Theologian's more or less canonical explanation for the fourth-century developments in Trinitarian theology,⁹⁶ Mark applies the logic (and, by implication, the authority) of Nicene Orthodoxy to the Palamite developments of the fourteenth century.⁹⁷ Just as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was articulated slowly and prudently, 'by gradual additions', so the essence-energies dis-

⁹⁵ *Syllogistic Chapters against the Akindynists*, ed. M. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica Orientalium Christianorum*, vol. 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), 102, n. 3. 'Hoc caput deest in editione...a W. Gass [*Die Mystik des Nicolaus Cabasilas* (Griefswald, 1849)]. Illud exscribimus ex *cod. Canon. Oxoniensis*, 49 [Canonicianus gr. 49]'. The passage is also absent from the new edition of C. Chivu et al., *Sfântul Marcu Evghenicul: Opere* 2:456–490.

⁹⁶ *Oration* 31.26: 'The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son less distinctly. The New Testament made manifest the Son and pointed to the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells in us, providing a clearer demonstration of himself. For it was not safe, while the divinity of the Father was yet not confessed, to proclaim the Son openly; neither when the divinity of the Son was not yet recognized was it safe for the Holy Spirit to be made (to use a rather rash expression) a burden on us. Otherwise we would be in danger of losing even that which is within our power, as when a man is weighed down with food exceeding his strength, or as when eyesight yet too feeble is struck with the light of the sun. So it was necessary that the light of the Holy Trinity illumine the more luminous by gradual additions, by, as David says, ascents (Ps. 83:6), and by advances and progressions from glory to glory' (ed. P. Gallay, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours* 27–31 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978], 326, ll.4–17).

⁹⁷ Mark's explanation itself builds on the prologue to the *Hagioretic Tome*; see the text as edited by V. Pseftonkas, in ed. P. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κυρομάνος, 1942), 567, l.1–569, l.2.

tion was advanced only in accordance with a historical dispensation (*oikonomia*) of the inner truth.

Palamite theology, then, even from the standpoint of actual Palamite theologians, is not a simple case of either-or in the face of creativity. Indeed, it resists the conservative-progressive dichotomy, simultaneously surpassing modern sensibilities in its devotion to the past and tracing out newer, more precise formulations of doctrine on the authority of so exceptional a figure as St Gregory Palamas. Far from opposing creativity to stale repetition, the Palamites and their opponents struggled to be faithful to their ancestral faith without rejecting new contributions in principle nor seeking to move beyond the inherited patrimony for its own sake.

Was Akindynos opposed to such a balanced approach? There is little evidence that Akindynos insisted, in principle, on a mechanical, verbal repetition of patristic formulae without the possibility of living, pastoral exegesis. This is, in part, because such an approach has all the markings of a straw man, which no theologian, however conservative, would likely embrace.⁹⁸ It would be unfair, then, to criticize Akindynos for doing what all Byzantine theologians outwardly sought to do, specifically to remain faithful to the patristic heritage without addition. It is for this reason that he is called by the Palamites a heretic and not a fundamentalist.⁹⁹ The latter category, like other hermeneutical anachronisms already encountered, provides little insight into the actual dynamics of the controversy as it unfolded in the fourteenth century and beyond.

Nicholas Kavalas

The tidy categories created by modern interpreters for the Palamite controversy have left one theologian, specifically Nicholas Kavalas, as something of an outlier. Precisely because he does not fit easily into the pre-determined polarities of the period, Kavalas has come to be seen as a figure far ahead of his time, transcending the loyalties of the essence-energies debate. Cast as an irenicist, and even something

⁹⁸ A possible exception may have been Theodore Dexios, who opposed, as a theological conviction, discussion on matters not already defined by the Fathers; see, e.g., his *Appellatio* 16 (ed. Polemis, 34–35). Even this, though, is probably an oversimplification, since the claim that we should say no more than we have received from the Fathers admits of multiple interpretations, and clearly serves, here, an important function in the attempt to overthrow Palamism. The extent to which Akindynos believed in such an approach is certainly open to further study, but the fact remains that an appeal to tradition per se, and the unwillingness to accept Palamite theology as anything but an innovation, is not enough to characterize these figures as rigid scholastics.

⁹⁹ In other words, Akindynos is never reproved because Scripture and the Fathers, to which he clings, are insufficient sources of truth. He is never encouraged to go *beyond* them or their expressions. He is reproved, rather, for interpreting both incorrectly and failing to discern the truth of the essence-energies distinction even in the very sources he claims to follow; see, e.g., the *Tomos of 1351*, 14, which speaks of the anti-Palamite ‘twisting and distorting’ the words of the Fathers (ed. Karmires, 319).

of an ecumenist,¹⁰⁰ Kavasilas has lately come to be excluded altogether from the Palamite camp.¹⁰¹

In Kavasilas' *De rationis valore*—a defense of the place of human reason in Christian life¹⁰²—scholars have noted specific parallels with, and tacit refutations of, positions outlined in the *Triads* of Gregory Palamas.¹⁰³ The implied dialectic, based on real parallels, relies on the familiar opposition of humanism and monasticism, in this case 'the monastic knowledge-fighting tradition'.¹⁰⁴ John Demetracopoulos, the editor of the critical text, even speaks explicitly of 'reversing' Meyendorff's hermeneutic, so that Kavasilas is seen to develop the line of Barlaam against Gregory's nominalism, rather than vice-versa.¹⁰⁵

Scholars such as Marie-Helene Congourdeau have found the charge of an 'anti-Palamism' in Kavasilas exaggerated.¹⁰⁶ Most recently, Marcus Plested has endeavored to show that Palamas himself cannot be considered anti-rational in any real sense.¹⁰⁷ Rather, Plested suggests the existence of a spectrum within the Palamite camp itself, so that Kavasilas' defense of reason, while negating 'some of the more stringent anti-philosophical remarks in the *Triads*', might function as something of a corrective to extreme positions *within* the Palamite school. In this case, Kavasilas' defense of reason would not necessarily contradict Palamas, but merely serve to qualify, in a more general way, claims made in a specific polemical context.¹⁰⁸

Yet it is equally problematic to distinguish, as does Congourdeau, Kavasilas' personal affection for Palamas from his theological sympathies.¹⁰⁹ Kavasilas'

¹⁰⁰ Congourdeau seems to misread Kavasilas' point about the Latin epiclesis, taking him to mean that '*contrairement aux apparences, les Latins ne sont pas hérétiques*' ('Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', in ed. A. Rigo, *Gregorio Palamas e oltre*. 206 n. 64). In fact, Kavasilas' intention is clearly to defend the Orthodox claim that an epiclesis is indeed necessary for a Eucharistic consecration. Against the Latin criticism that an epiclesis is superfluous, he demonstrates that the Latin anaphora itself contains an implied epiclesis, which puts the lie to the Latin polemic, which he further relativizes by noting that the rejection of an epiclesis is by no means universal in Catholicism. See *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* 29–30, ed. S. Salaville et al., *Nicolas Cabasilas: Explication de la divine liturgie* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 178–98.

¹⁰¹ For the history of this debate, see Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 192–95. Cf. J. Demetracopoulos, 'Palamas Transformed', 370, n. 328.

¹⁰² Cf. Kavasilas, *Letter 11: To Synadenos*, ed. P. Enepekides, 'Der Briefwechsel des Mystikers Nikolaos Kavasilas. Kommentierte Textausgabe', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 46 (1953): 18–46; at 36, which makes the same defense.

¹⁰³ See I. Polemis, 'Notes on a Short Treatise of Nicholas Cabasilas', *Revue des études Byzantines* 51 (1993): 155–60; at 156–58; J. Demetracopoulos, 'Nicholas Cabasilas' *Quaestio de rationis valore*: An Anti-Palamite Defense of Secular Wisdom', *Βυζαντινά* 19 (1998): 53–93 (62–74).

¹⁰⁴ Demetracopoulos, 'Nicholas Cabasilas' *Quaestio de rationis valore*', 87.

¹⁰⁵ 'Nicholas Cabasilas' *Quaestio de rationis valore*', 53 n. 4; see Meyendorff, 'Humanisme nominaliste et mystique chrétienne', 912.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 206; *ead.*, *Correspondance de Nicolas Cabasilas* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2010), 59.

¹⁰⁷ See Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 44–57.

¹⁰⁸ *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 104–5.

¹⁰⁹ Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 206–7. Kavasilas was close to Palamas in life. He seems to have accompanied him to Thessalonica in 1347, by order of the emperor, and then remained with him on Athos; see Loenertz, 'Chronologie de Nicolas Cabasilas', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1955): 216–20; at 209.

friendships indeed bridged the religious divide of the period, famously including Demetrios Kydones even after his apostasy.¹¹⁰ But even ignoring that Kavasilas had as his spiritual father the hieromonk Dorotheos Vlates,¹¹¹ Kavasilas' relationship with Palamas clearly extended beyond personal sympathies to explicit theological support. Kavasilas' *Discourse on the Inanities of Gregoras* speaks of the 'impious' things that the Philosopher spoke concerning God, and 'the fire that issued forth against him from the tongue of the wondrous Metropolitan of Thessalonica'.¹¹² Congourdeau herself notes the sarcasm marking the *Contra Gregorae Ineptias*.¹¹³ This, combined with the fact that he repeatedly refers to Gregoras' teaching, and the 'heresy' of Barlaam and Akindynos, as blasphemy,¹¹⁴ cannot be understood as a merely *personal* defense of the one he calls 'the great glory of eloquent men'.¹¹⁵ Thus one cannot agree with Congourdeau that Nicholas's expressions of support for Palamas 'ne se font pas sur des critères idéologiques'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., Kavasilas, *Letter* 15 (ed. Enepekides, 42), and Kydones, *Letter* 213 (ed. R.-J. Loenertz, *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance*, vol. 2 [Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956–1960], 92), written between 1379 and 1382. Kavasilas is hardly the only Palamite, or anti-Latin, to maintain his friendship with Kydones. In addition to the well-known example of the emperors John VI Kantakouzenos and Manuel II Palaiologos, see Joseph Bryennios, *Letter* 4: *To Demetrios Kydones* (ed. Voulgaris 3:140–142). 'Apostasy' is the word used by Bryennios.

¹¹¹ For his spiritual relationship with Vlates, see Kavasilas, *Letter* 5.22–24 (ed. Enepekides, 33). Vlates was a companion of Palamas, with whom he was imprisoned (see E. Trapp, ed., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologienzeit* [Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–1994], no. 2817); see A. Rigo, 'Le Mont Athos entre le patriarche Jean XIV Calécas et Grégoire Palamas (1344–1346)', in eds. B. Miljković and D. Dželebdžić, *ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ: Књига I Зборник у част Мирјане Живојиновић (Београд: Византолошки институт Српска академија наука и уметности, 2015)*, 280. Together with his brother Markos Vlates (PLP 2818), Dorotheos founded the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessalonica, an important center for the propagation of Palamas's legacy; see Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Vlatadon Monastery* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1987); *ead.*, 'Οι πρώτες απεικονίσεις του Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά στη Θεσσαλονίκη', in *Πρακτικά θεολογικού συνεδρίου εις τιμήν και μνήμην του έν άγίοις πατρός ήμών Γρηγορίου άρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης του Παλαμά (12–14 Νοεμβρίου 1984)* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ίερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου, 1986), 247–57.

¹¹² *Against Gregoras* 18–19, 13–14, ed. A. Garzya, 'Un opusculé inédit de Nicolas Cabasilas', *Byzantion* 24 (1954): 521–32; at 524, ll. 18–19, 13–14.

¹¹³ Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 206, n. 64.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52–55, 59–61 (ed. Garzya, 'Un opusculé inédit', 526).

¹¹⁵ *Versé for the Canon of St. Gregory Palamas of Thessalonica*, ed. A. Garzya, 'Versi inediti di Nicola Cabasila', *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 10 (1956): 52–50; at 58. The contribution of Kavasilas to a cause as theologically charged as the veneration of Gregory Palamas is itself a testament to his doctrinal sympathies with Palamism. On the canonization of Palamas, see A. Rigo, 'La canonizzazione di Gregorio Palama (1368) ed alcune altre questioni', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 30 (1993): 155–202.

¹¹⁶ Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 206. The question of the compatibility between the theology of Palamas and Kavasilas is actually more complex than these two issues. In addition to (1) the relationship between faith and reason and (2) Kavasilas' support for the essence-energies distinction, it extends to (3) Kavasilas' emphasis on the accessibility of hesychast spirituality to the laity, (4) his *un-realized* eschatology, and (5) his appropriation of Latin theology. Plested's *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (pp. 29–60) includes a discussion of the supposed tension between Palamism and Latin theology. As to the lay spirituality associated with Kavasilas, it suffices to point out that this spirituality itself derives from the circle and activity of the Palamite Isidore Boucheiras at Thessalonica (see Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 203; cf. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 34–35). Furthermore, it is not at all clear that Palamas leaves no room in his theology for the non-monastic emphases found in Kavasilas, an issue that requires further exploration. Lastly, that 'la contemplation parfaite n'existe pas dans le monde pres-

The effort to cast Kavasilas as an irenic non-partisan appears to have led scholars to ignore some obvious signals. Whereas Kavasilas may have been a comparably irenic writer, or uniquely uninterested in adding to the voluminous bibliography of the debates,¹¹⁷ he was hardly 'above controversy'¹¹⁸ and he made his positions sufficiently, if succinctly, clear. The nuances and complexity in Kavasilas' broader oeuvre are therefore perplexing only when nuance and complexity themselves are excluded from our understanding of Palamite theology.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

As a generalizing examination of generalizations, the foregoing is by no means an exhaustive overview of the hermeneutical categories that continue to dominate interpretations of Palamite theology. Among other things, we have left aside the fraught topic of Thomistic influence, whether 'latent', 'crypto-', Palamite, or anti-Palamite.¹²⁰ We have also passed over the complicated relationship between Palamism and Byzantine politics.¹²¹ However, what has been said above can be applied equally

ent' (*Life in Christ* 7 [SC 355:101]; see Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas', 201) is not necessarily a point of conflict with Palamas, who has a similar, if more elusive, distinction in his works between contemplation *in via* and *in patria*, even if he makes the former a pledge of the latter (see, e.g., *Triads* 1.3.18, 36; 2.3.66; 3.1.10). This point, too, requires further exploration; but a detailed study of these issues is beyond the scope of this essay.

¹¹⁷ Kavasilas' relative distance from the controversy is significant. He was twice asked to enter the debate, by Akindynos, *Letter* 14 (ed. Hero, 60–62) and by David Dishypatos (ed. D. Tsames, *Λόγος κατὰ Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκινδύνου πρὸς Νικόλαον Καβάσιλαν* [Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ερευνῶν, 1973]). There is also a conspicuous absence in Kavasilas' writings of any reference to the light of Thabor or the essence-energies distinction as such (see Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 202; Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 105). Nevertheless, these intriguing and important facts do not themselves contradict the position staked out, however briefly, in the texts discussed above.

¹¹⁸ Congourdeau, 'Nicolas Cabasilas et le Palamisme', 207; *ead.* *Correspondance*, xv.

¹¹⁹ This is not, of course, an indictment of Congourdeau herself, whose reading of Kavasilas is very rich. I merely extend here the observation that she herself makes: 'Cabasilas est l'homme des nuances' (*Correspondance*, 59).

¹²⁰ See Demetracopoulos, 'Palamas Transformed', 327, 342, 348, 367; cf. J. Van Rossum, 'Palamism and Church Tradition: Palamism, Its Use of Patristic Tradition and Its Relationship with Thomistic Thought' (PhD Diss.: Fordham University, 1985), 34–38. I examine this topic in more detail in my forthcoming dissertation, 'The Palamite School: The Followers of St. Gregory Palamas and the Reception of the Essence-Energies Distinction'.

¹²¹ The second phase of the Palamite controversy (1341–1347) overlapped with the Civil War between the house of John V Palaiologos and the Grand Domestic John VI Kantakouzenos. The theological controversy, which involved both emperors as well as Anna Palaiologina and, eventually, Matthew Kantakouzenos, did not divide neatly along partisan lines. Though John VI, both as emperor and as the monk Joasaph, was among the leading advocates of the Palamite position, both John V and his mother Anna would, in the end, repudiate Akindynos and his protector, the Patriarch John Kalekas. Kalekas himself had injected politics into the controversy, openly opposing Kantakouzenos, only to be deposed by Anna and the Synod in February 1347. Among the Palamite hierarchs, Kallistos I, who supported Palaiologos, and Philotheos Kokkinos, who supported his adversary, would take turns on the patriarchal throne, alternating two times each between 1350 and the death of Kallistos in 1363, as the fortunes of Kantakouzenos wavered. Both had played a critical role in the Synod of 1351 and were avid supporters of Palamas. Similarly, the friends and allies of John VI included such anti-Palamites as Demetrios and Prochoros Kydones. As with all else in this period, reductive categories are incapable of accounting for the diversity and complexity

to all labels. When dealing with a complex theological tradition, comprising three unique phases within the life of Palamas alone and a century of theological literature thereafter, the sheer number of personalities, texts, and contexts resists facile reduction and categorization. Modern theological categories, contemporary discourse, and especially modern *kulturkampf*, in particular, are applied to late-Byzantine theological controversies only at great peril, since the ideological battles that permeate our own world do not map neatly onto the ecclesiastical disputes of late Byzantium. What is needed, instead, is a more nuanced approach that will allow us to engage individual authors, and the diachronic development of Palamite theology, more objectively and more scientifically. However, regardless of the ultimate value of master narratives, there remains much more work to be done in analysing the details of Palamite theology before enduring interpretative paradigms can be constructed.¹²² Over half a century after the magnum opus of Fr John Meyendorff, there await a growing number of critical texts and a host of unique voices waiting to tell a complicated story about the development, and reception, of the theology of St Gregory Palamas.¹²³

of the reality. For a defense of Palamas himself as an essentially neutral party, and for some discussion of the complicated alliances and loyalties of the period, see Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 64–85. For an overview of the two decades of upheaval in ecclesiastical life, see Darrouzès, *Les registes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople* 1.5:162–389. Cf. Rigo's detailed historical reconstructions of the events of 1346–1347: 'Il Prostagma di Giovanni VI Cantacuzeno del Marzo 1347', *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 50 (2013):741–762; 'Il Rapporto dei metropolitani ad Anna Paleologa e altri eventi del 1346', *Byzantion* 85 (2015): 285–339; and the collection of essays on the period from 1351–1368: A. Rigo (ed.), *Gregorio Palamas e oltre: Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004).

¹²² Cf. Sinkewicz, 'Gregory Palamas', 171: 'As more and more of the very large dossier of hesychast, Palamite, and anti-Palamite texts is now becoming available, it will be possible for Byzantinists to explore the different historical dimensions of this period of Byzantine religious culture with the hermeneutic methods of modern scholarship'.

¹²³ Eastern European scholars in particular have begun to make fuller use of the corpus of Palamite authors and their writings in order to widen the discussion of Palamite theology as such. In addition to authors already cited, see, e.g., C. Chivu, et al., 'Un veac de isihasm: de la Grigorie Palama la Marcu Evghenicul', in eds. *id.*, *Sfântul Marcu Evghenicul* 2:7–52; D. Biriukov, 'Hierarchies of Beings in Patristic Thought: Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and the Palamites', *Scrinium* 10 (2014): 275–300; *id.* et al., *Монах Давид Дисипат: Полемические сочинения* (Moscow: Smaragdus Philocalias, 2012); D. Makarov, *Мариология Феодана Никейского в контексте византийской богословской традиции VII–XIV вв.* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012); B. Lourie, 'L'attitude de S. Marc d'Ephèse aux débats sur la procession du Saint-Esprit à Florence: Ses fondements dans la théologie post-palamite', *Annuaire Historica Conciliorum* 21 (1989): 317–33.

INVENTING PALAMISM

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Palamism is a modern term coined in the early twentieth century by the Assumptionist Martin Jugie. Jugie's aim was to demonstrate that the Orthodox Church was guilty of 'innovation' by its endorsement of Palamas' essence–energies distinction in the Godhead and could therefore not accuse the Roman Catholic Church of being alone in introducing new doctrines. John Meyendorff set out to answer Jugie by proving Palamas' continuity with the patristic tradition, but against Jugie's neo-scholastic construction of Palamism set up an existentialist and personalist construction of his own. Modern Western scholars have tended to follow Jugie rather than Meyendorff. Since the 1960s, however, the publication of Palamas' entire corpus of writings has led to a series of studies that have deepened our comprehension of Palamas' thinking. 'Palamism' today is moving beyond its original ideological construction, and although still controversial has the potential to enrich the understanding of both Orthodox and Western theologians as to how human beings are able to participate in God.

Why is Gregory Palamas such a figure of contention? More than six hundred fifty years after his death he is often attacked or defended with a fervour which no other ancient or mediaeval theologian (with the possible exception of St Augustine) can evoke. The passion aroused even today in both his defenders and his adversaries suggests that we need to look for the reasons not so much in the voluminous texts of Palamas himself as in the structures of our own thought worlds.

'Palamism' is a modern term. It seems first to have been used by Martin Jugie in the early twentieth century to characterize an Orthodox—he calls it a 'Graeco-Russian'—doctrine which he wanted to brand as quasi-heretical. There is, of course, a sense in which Palamas' theological justification of Athonite hesychasm, with the special terminology he developed centred principally on the essence–energies distinction, may legitimately be distinguished from the teaching of contemporary hesychasts such as Gregory of Sinai, who makes no mention of essence and energies. But Palamas' fourteenth-century adversaries referred simply to his 'innovations' or his 'heresy'. The term 'Palamism' has a ring to it suggesting a system of thought, a counterpart perhaps to 'Thomism', which is precisely why Jugie adopted it. From the start it had a polemical colouring.

Martin Jugie's Palamism

Martin Jugie (1878–1954) was one of the most learned Catholics of his day in all matters concerning the Orthodox.¹ At the age of seventeen he entered the Augustinians of the Assumption, an order founded in France in 1845 with the specific mission of Catholic evangelization. Only two years later, he made his solemn profession at the Assumptionists' house in Jerusalem. Since the seventeenth century French religious, principally Jesuits and Franciscans, had been active in the Ottoman Empire, where under the terms of successive treaties with France (known as the 'Capitulations') they were allowed to proselytize among the Orthodox, the conversion of Muslims being, of course, forbidden. In the last years of the Ottoman Empire the Assumptionists followed in the footsteps of the older orders. In 1895, the year in which Jugie joined them, they founded an educational institute at Kadiköy, on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople, with the aim of encouraging the 'return' of 'separated brethren' to Rome in accordance with the appeal to the Orthodox of Pope Leo XIII in his Apostolic Letter, *Praeclara gratulationis publicae* (20 June, 1894). Jugie was sent to Kadiköy in 1902 and remained there until the outbreak of the First World War, teaching Greek at first, and then dogmatic theology and canon law, to young men who were recruited with a view to being trained as Uniate priests.

The Assumptionist institute at Kadiköy rapidly became an important seat of learning. Two years after its foundation it launched the *Echos d'Orient*, which under the editorship of Louis Petit (editor from 1897 to 1912, and subsequently Latin archbishop of Athens) became the leading Western journal dealing with the Christian East.² Jugie's colleagues included well-known scholars such as Jules Pargoire (1872–1907) and Siméon Vailhé (1873–1960). It was at Kadiköy, in pursuit of the plan to train Uniate clergy who would work discreetly within the Orthodox world to bring about conversions to Rome, that Jugie laid the foundations for his immense learning.

After service in the French army during the First World War (French clergy were not exempt from military service), Jugie was called to Rome, where he was appointed to teach at the recently founded Pontificio Istituto Orientale. In 1922 the Orientale was placed by Pope Pius XI under the presidency of the Jesuit Michel d'Herbigny (1880–1957), who was to direct the institute's work until his downfall (for reasons that are still obscure) in 1933.³ D'Herbigny's imagination was fired by the possibilities for Catholic proselytization that he could see arising in Russia as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution. Like most Catholics until the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) he could only conceive of the reunion of Christians in terms of

¹ On his life and work see V. Laurent, 'L'œuvre scientifique du R. P. Martin Jugie', *Revue des études byzantines* 11 (1953): 7–32.

² During the Second World War *Echos d'Orient* was renamed *Études byzantines*, and then in 1946 refounded in Paris as the *Revue des études byzantines*.

³ For a detailed discussion of d'Herbigny's career see Léon Tretjakewitsch, *Bishop Michel d'Herbigny SJ and Russia: A Pre-Ecumenical Approach to Christian Unity* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1990).

the return of Protestant and Orthodox 'dissidents' to obedience to the Holy See.⁴ Jugie fully shared this outlook. His master-works, the double article on Palamas and the Palamite controversy in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (DTC), and the massive five-volume survey of Orthodox theology, belong to this period.⁵ As a person, his colleagues found him 'humble, shy and even self-effacing',⁶ but as a writer he was clear, trenchant and polemical.

Jugie knew the sources very well, having read widely in the manuscripts as well as the printed material. His account of Palamas' thinking is detailed and factually reliable; it is his interpretative framework that makes it contentious. In the opening columns of the DTC articles he states his viewpoint clearly: 'Palamas' system is undeniably a novelty in the history of Byzantine theology.'⁷ Describing Palamas' thinking as a novelty was in itself nothing new. Western theologians had been doing so since the time of Petau.⁸ What was new was its characterization as a *system*. Palamas was not in fact a systematic thinker, and Jugie was fully aware of this, pointing out that Palamas chose to conduct his polemics not on the philosophical level but on the religious and theological levels.⁹ To represent his thought as a system betrays Jugie's own neo-Thomist assumptions. It is not that Jugie constantly compares Palamas with Thomas point by point. His aim is to construct 'Palamism' as a set of propositions, a coherent body of thought, which he can proceed to judge first on rational grounds, then in relation to the patristic tradition, and finally in the light of the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

Palamas has sometimes been described as a Platonist or Neoplatonist. Jugie is not convinced of this because Palamas does not posit any intermediate entities between God and the world. Indeed, Palamas does not seem to Jugie to take the transcendence of God seriously enough. He faults him on rational grounds for conceiving of God in far too anthropomorphic terms. The soul and its faculties is an image Palamas frequently uses to suggest the way in which the energies are related to the essence, the soul's faculties maintaining a reality of their own but not an independent existence. The sun and its rays is another favourite analogy, the rays emanating from the sun like the energies from God without causing any change in their source. The transcendence of the divine essence escapes Palamas, says Jugie (ignoring the

⁴ His main publication was entitled, significantly, *Un Newman russe: Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900)* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1911), translated into English by A. M. Buchanan as *Vladimir Soloviev: A Russian Newman (1853–1900)* (London: Washbourne, 1918).

⁵ Martin Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire' and 'Palamite (controverse)', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 11, part 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1932), 1735–1818; *idem*, *Theologia dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium ab Ecclesia catholica dissidentium* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1926–35).

⁶ According to the obituary on the Assumptionist website: <http://www.assomption.org/fr/media-theque/necrologies/martin-etienne-jugie>.

⁷ Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire', 1758.

⁸ Denis Petau (Dionysius Petavius) (1583–1652) was a Jesuit dogmatic theologian whose great work, *De theologicis dogmatibus* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1644–50), deals with Palamas in vol. 1.1, chapters 12 and 13, and vol. 3, chapter 5.

⁹ Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire', 1761.

apophatic side of his theology), because Palamas discusses God as a being in the same sense that creatures are beings.¹⁰ In consequence, he treats God as a composite entity consisting of primary and secondary elements.

If Palamas is unsatisfactory on the rational level, perhaps he does better with his patristic arguments. Not at all, says Jugie. He abuses the authority of the Fathers, manipulating them to suit his purposes. The most egregious example, in Jugie's view, is the way Palamas appeals to the Cappadocians to support his argument that, if the hypostases can be distinguished from the divine nature common to them without destroying the simplicity of God, the energies can be distinguished likewise. Another example is the claim Palamas made at the Constantinopolitan council of 1351 that by distinguishing between the essence and the energies he was only offering an explication (*anaptyxis*) of the Definition of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.¹¹ The Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 680–81 to decide the Monothelite question, decreed that Christ has two wills, a divine one and a human one, each with its own *energeia*, or operation, but with the human will always submitting to, and following, the divine. The intention of the Council Fathers was to assert that Christ was a single agent while at the same time preserving both his divine and his human natures. The argument which Palamas drew from the Definition, namely, that if the human operation is really distinct from the human nature, then the divine operation (*energeia*) is really distinct from the divine nature, seemed to Jugie perverse.

The ultimate standard by which Jugie judges Palamism, however, is that of papal and conciliar authority. Two centuries before Palamas, Gilbert de la Porrée had been censured by the Council of Reims (1148) for making a real distinction, comparable to that of Palamas, between the divine essence and the divine persons. At the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) Joachim of Fiore's Trinitarian doctrine was condemned posthumously for a similar error that made a real distinction between the divine essence and each of the divine persons in order to define the character of three ages of human history, the age of the Father (in the pre-Christian past), the age of the Son (under the dispensation of the New Testament), and the age of the Spirit (still to come). Palamism also contradicts the Catholic doctrine of justification as set out by the Council of Trent (1545–63), and the dogmatic definition of the First Vatican Council (1869–70) which proclaimed that God is an entirely simple spiritual substance. All this is asserted by Jugie with much citing of Denzinger. For him, ecclesiastical authority trumped any rational argument or the adducing of any patristic texts.

Towards the end of the second of the *DTC* articles, which discusses the history of the Palamite controversy, Jugie is at pains to show how Palamism in his own day was a dead letter: 'not only is it forgotten, but it is openly contradicted in the theologi-

¹⁰ Jugie, 'Palamas, Grégoire', 1760.

¹¹ Synodal Tomos of 1351, §6 (Ioannes Karmiris, *Dogmatica et Symbolica Monumenta Orthodoxae Catholicae Ecclesiae* [Graz: Akademische Druck, 1968], 378).

cal teaching [of the Graeco-Russian Church].¹² Why, then, did he bother to expend so much effort in refuting it? A few columns later, the answer becomes apparent. Catholic theologians, he says, do not find it difficult ‘to demonstrate by clear and decisive arguments that the dissident church of the East is not the true Church.’¹³ The Easterners respond by attacking Catholicism on the grounds that it is guilty of introducing innovations whereas their own Church has preserved the pristine Christian faith unchanged. The Palamite controversy is one proof among many that this is simply not true. If the Latins have introduced the *Filioque*, as the Easterners claim, the latter have introduced their own innovation, Palamism, even if they are too embarrassed to admit the fact now.

Palamism as a ‘system’ was thus invented by Jugie as part of the armoury of weapons he could use against the Orthodox Church in order to undermine confidence in it as a reliable vehicle of salvation and so encourage conversions to Catholicism. There was nothing particularly unusual about this approach at the time, alien as it might appear in the light of the ecumenism prevalent (at least in the West) today. The Catholic Counter-Reformation of the late sixteenth century, with its assumption of the soteriological exclusivity of the Roman Catholic Church, had little interest in the kind of ‘corporate reunion’ that the Council of Florence had tried to achieve in the previous century. The path to salvation in the new era lay in the submission to Rome of individual believers. In the seventeenth century, the Jesuit François Richard had published a work in vernacular Greek attacking Palamas as a heretic precisely for this reason, to encourage conversions.¹⁴ To the fury of the Greek hierarchy, it circulated widely in the Ottoman Empire until the Ecumenical Patriarch, Parthenios IV, managed to have it suppressed.¹⁵ Jugie was working within a long-established tradition.

John Meyendorff’s Palamism

John Meyendorff’s landmark publication, *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas*, which appeared in 1959,¹⁶ was conceived specifically as a response to Jugie and other contemporary detractors of Palamas. In this work, as in his earlier articles of the 1950s, Meyendorff seems to have had no qualms about referring to ‘the triumph of Palamism’ or describing Palamism as the ‘official doctrine of the

¹² Jugie, ‘Palamite (Controverse)’, 1810.

¹³ Jugie, ‘Palamite (Controverse)’, 1816.

¹⁴ François Richard, *Τάργα τῆς πίστεως τῆς ῥωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησίας εἰς τὴν διαφένδουσιν τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας* (Paris: Claude Cramoisy, 1658).

¹⁵ On this episode see Norman Russell, ‘From the “Shield of Orthodoxy” to the “Tome of Joy”: The Anti-Western Stance of Dositheos II of Jerusalem’, in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, eds. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 71–82, at 74–5. Dositheos’s *Shield of Orthodoxy* (the acts of the Council of Jerusalem of 1672 published in Paris in 1676), as the name indicates (*targa* meaning ‘shield’), was specifically a response to Richard’s book.

¹⁶ Jean Meyendorff, *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959).

Byzantine Church'.¹⁷ But by the time he came to supervise the English translation of the *Introduction* in the early 1960s,¹⁸ he seems to have wanted to distance himself from the term. In the English translation, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 'Palamism' has been retained when referring to Jugie's views, but in most other passages has been excised.¹⁹ The original French edition is more clearly positioned than the English translation as a polemical response to Jugie.²⁰ In the French edition Meyendorff still accepts Jugie's term, but he attempts to give it a new signification, one that would make it a badge of Orthodox distinctiveness in the Francophone Catholic world.

John Meyendorff (1926–92) belonged to the second generation of the Russian emigration that came to the West in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent Civil War. He was born in France at Neuilly-sur-Seine, and apart from a few years at the Institut Saint-Serge, where the medium of instruction was Russian, was educated almost entirely within the French educational system.²¹ At the Sorbonne (the arts faculty of the University of Paris) he obtained a *licenciat-ès-lettres* in 1948, a *diplôme d'études supérieures* in 1949, a *diplôme de l'école pratique des hautes études* in 1954, and finally a *doctorat-ès-lettres* in 1958. It was his doctoral thesis, supervised by the distinguished Byzantinist, Rodolphe Guilland, that was the basis for the *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*.

Although Meyendorff's studies at the Institut Saint-Serge were subsidiary to his main work at the Sorbonne, they were far from insignificant. Saint-Serge had been founded in 1925 by Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievskii) (1868–1946) as a theological institute to train Orthodox priests for the Russian emigration. Metropolitan Evlogy felt keenly that without an educated clergy the Russians in the West would lose their sense of Orthodox identity. His motivation, however, was not purely defensive. He writes in his memoirs:

¹⁷ For example, 'le triomphe du palamisme' and 'la question du Palamisme—doctrine officielle de l'Eglise byzantine' in Jean Meyendorff, 'Humanisme nominaliste et mystique chrétienne à Byzance au XIV^e siècle', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 79/9 (1957): 905–14 (reprinted in John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm: historical, theological and social problems* [London: Variorum Reprints, 1974]), at 906 and 907; 'la victoire du palamisme' in Jean Meyendorff, *St Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 137.

¹⁸ Meyendorff says that the English version gave him 'an opportunity to correct a few errors and to give consideration to several pertinent remarks of my critics' (John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, trans. George E. Lawrence [Leighton Buzzard: The Faith Press, 1964], 7).

¹⁹ Most strikingly in the peroration, where the words, 'La victoire du palamisme acquiert ainsi une valeur permanente' (Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 326) become: 'There is a permanent importance in Palamas' victory' (Meyendorff, *Study*, 240).

²⁰ The polemics are conducted mainly in footnotes that have been dropped from the English translation. The first footnote of the chapter which comes as the climax of the second part of the work (entitled 'Une théologie existentielle: essence et énergie'), for example, begins with the words 'Nous avons ici, surtout, en vue les analyses du P. Jugie...' (Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 279, n. 1). The corresponding chapter in the English translation replaces this with a new footnote citing Lossky's *Vision of God* (Meyendorff, *Study*, 202, n. 1).

²¹ Meyendorff followed courses at Saint-Serge (which he completed in 1949) concurrently with his undergraduate studies at the Sorbonne.

The opening of the Theological Institute precisely in Paris, in the centre of Western European culture, which is not Russian, but Christian, was very significant, since it foreordained an ecumenical orientation for our higher theological school in formulating certain theoretical problems and practical religious tasks, in order that Orthodoxy would no longer be hidden under a bushel, but would gradually become the inheritance of all Christians.²²

Metropolitan Evlogy's ecumenical vision was eventually to bear fruit, but not in his own lifetime. A year before the metropolitan's death, Archimandrite Kiprian Kern (1899–1960), who taught liturgical studies and subsequently patristics at Saint-Serge, defended the institute's first doctorate, a study of the theological anthropology of St Gregory Palamas.²³ This was an important event for Saint-Serge. Invitations were sent to the auxiliary bishop of Paris and to leading French theologians, but to Kern's intense disappointment only two or three Catholics attended the defence, none of them of any note.²⁴ The fact that the thesis, and presumably also the defence, were in Russian cannot have made the occasion particularly appealing to the French. But more importantly, the official Catholic line towards the Orthodox in 1945 was still that of Leo XIII and Pius XI.

It was at about this time that Meyendorff began his studies at Saint-Serge under Kiprian Kern, who had succeeded Georges Florovsky as professor of patristics in 1940. Kern regarded Palamas as seminal theologian, one who was fully within the Orthodox tradition yet at the same time a thinker who opened up new horizons and outlined new paths for the exploration of Christian thought. Meyendorff was inspired by him to make Palamas the subject of his own research. Here was a Church Father who could represent an Orthodoxy 'that would no longer be hidden under a bushel' (in Metropolitan Evlogy's phrase) but would take its place in the spiritual reconstruction of post-war Europe and would also, incidentally, counter Roman Catholic triumphalism. The apologetic potential of Palamas' thinking attracted Meyendorff and he developed it with enthusiasm.

The Palamism that Meyendorff presents in the *Introduction* reflects this apologetic concern. It is fully Orthodox, summarizing as it does (with a few corrections) the hesychast tradition of the previous thousand years. But it is also an 'existential theology' fully in rapport with the philosophical movement dominant in France in the immediate post-war period. To demonstrate the orthodoxy of Palamas' teaching, Meyendorff argues (against Jugie) that the essence–energies distinction is not an

²² *My Life's Journey: The Memoirs of Metropolitan Evlogy As Put Together according to His Accounts by T. Manukhin*, trans. Alexander Lisenko, Part Two (Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014), 513.

²³ Published as Kiprian Kern, *Антропология св. Григория Паламы* [The anthropology of St Gregory Palamas] (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1950).

²⁴ I owe this information to Fr Antoine Lambrechts, the Librarian of Chevetogne, who very kindly consulted the unpublished letters of Archimandrite Kiprian to Dom Olivier Rousseau and Dom Clément Lialine for me.

innovation but a legitimate development of Cappadocian thinking on the Trinity, and (against von Ivanka) that Palamas is not a slavish follower of Dionysius the Areopagite (which he accepts would turn Palamas into a Neoplatonist), but corrects Dionysius to make him orthodox from a Christological point of view.²⁵ As evidence of Palamas' existentialism, Meyendorff argues that Palamas develops the 'theological personalism' of the Cappadocians and St Maximus the Confessor.²⁶ It is by virtue of this personalism, by which God makes himself participable to human beings, that Christians have the possibility of sharing in the life of God, of being deified, and thus attaining the ultimate fulfilment of their creaturely existence.

Meyendorff had read widely in the sources, which he had consulted in manuscripts held in the libraries of Paris, Mount Athos, Moscow and elsewhere, as most of the texts had not yet been published at all, let alone in critical editions. His account of Palamas' life in the *Introduction* is rooted in these sources, which lends his book a lasting value. His interpretative framework, however, derives from modern authors, not only from his Orthodox predecessors in the study of Palamas (Dumitru Stăniloae, Basil Krivoshein, Kiprian Kern, and especially Vladimir Lossky) but also from contemporary French exponents of existentialism and personalism.²⁷

Vladimir Lossky (1903–58) is cited comparatively rarely in the *Introduction*, but his outlook—his apophaticism, his insistence on the importance of antinomy, his account of the essence–energies distinction—colours the whole book. Lossky sets out his views on Palamas most clearly in an article first published in 1945 in the first issue of *Dieu vivant*, a journal he had helped found with Jean Daniélou and others who worked for the *ressourcement* of Catholic theology through a return to the Greek Fathers.²⁸ The journal was a pioneering venture in Roman Catholic–Orthodox ecumenism. Lossky discusses Palamas not in a confrontational manner

²⁵ Meyendorff holds that 'the problem of the exegesis of Dionysius was at the centre of the argument in the Byzantine controversies of the fourteenth century' (*Study*, 204).

²⁶ 'Theological personalism is the fundamental feature of the tradition to which Palamas belonged; in that we shall find the key to the understanding of his doctrine of the divine energies' (Meyendorff, *Study*, 212–13).

²⁷ Juan Nadal Cañellas points out that the existential philosophy of Jean Wahl (1888–1974) was particularly influential—Nadal says 'à la mode'—at the Sorbonne during the time of Meyendorff's study there (*La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), vol. 1, xviii). Meyendorff's theological personalism would have come from Emmanuel Mounier (1905–50), who belonged to a group of personalists who used to meet at Nicolas Berdyaev's house on Sunday afternoons. In 1932 Mounier founded the journal *Ésprit* as a vehicle for what he called *personnalisme communautaire*. One of Meyendorff's specific sources for Mounier's personalism appears to have been Serge Verkhovskoy's book, *Бог и человек* [God and man] (New York: Chekhov Publishing Company, 1956), which he warmly commends (Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 302, n. 96). There was also a 'Thomistic personalism', based on indications to be found in Aquinas, which was promoted by Jacques Maritain and Lossky's teacher, Étienne Gilson (both of whom attended Berdyaev's Sundays).

²⁸ Vladimir Lossky, 'La Théologie de la Lumière chez saint Grégoire Palamas', *Dieu vivant* 1 (1945): 94–118; reprinted as chapter 3 in Lossky, *À l'image et à la Ressemblance de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967); English trans. ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird, 'The Theology of Light in the Thought of St. Gregory Palamas', in Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 45–69.

but ‘for us to know one another better’ and overcome the numerous misconceptions ‘which are a great obstacle to the understanding of the true value of what in the West is called “Palamism”’.²⁹ For Lossky, Palamas is both the summation of Dionysian apophaticism and also the point of departure for antinomic theology, a theology ‘which proceeds by oppositions of contrary but equally true propositions’³⁰ to assert both the unknowability of God and the possibility of knowing him—not by intellectual analysis but experientially.

This is precisely the viewpoint that Meyendorff adopts. Lossky, clearly alluding to Jugie’s neo-scholastic critique of Palamism, had said that for a rapprochement to be possible ‘we must agree to see and judge this tradition otherwise than through the rigid concepts of an academic theology which is foreign to it’.³¹ Meyendorff rightly insists that the Palamite controversy is not an East–West dispute but a controversy within the Byzantine tradition, which he saw as centred on the correct interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite. However, while he rejects neo-scholastic concepts, he introduces other concepts from contemporary French thinking which some of his critics found equally foreign. Basil Krivoshein (1900–85), for example, who had become a bishop in the Western exarchate of the patriarchate of Moscow a few months before the *Introduction* was published, berates Meyendorff in a review of his book for attempting to modernize Palamas by discussing him in contemporary philosophical terms as an existentialist and a personalist rather than study him in relation to the patristic roots of his thinking.³² Even a sympathetic Catholic scholar such as André de Halleux (1929–94) was unhappy about Meyendorff’s deciphering the Byzantine theologians of the fourteenth century, as he puts it, against a modern grid.³³ If Jugie’s Palamism is a polemical neo-scholastic construction designed to undermine confidence in the orthodoxy of ‘the Graeco-Russian Church’, Meyendorff’s is an apologetic existentialist and personalist construction designed to refute Jugie and present Palamas as an orthodox theologian who could become ‘the inheritance of all Christians’. But Jugie’s Palamism was too well grounded in the study of the texts and in the Western intellectual tradition to be refuted so easily. Meyendorff’s Palamism, while initially commanding much respect, has itself been subjected to searching critiques since the 1970s,³⁴ and indeed has fared rather less well than Jugie’s version.

²⁹ Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 45, 46.

³⁰ Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 51.

³¹ Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 69.

³² Basil Krivoshein, ‘Sviatoi Grigorii Palama. Lichnost’ i uchenie po nedavno opublikovannym materialam’ [Saint Gregory Palamas. Personhood and doctrine according to recently published materials], *Messenger de l'exarchat du patriarche russe en Europe occidentale* 9, no. 33–34 (1960):101–4.

³³ André de Halleux, ‘Palamisme et Scolastique. Exclusivisme dogmatique ou pluriformité théologique?’, *Revue théologique de Louvain* 4 (1973), 409–42, at 439.

³⁴ See, for example, the special issues of *Istina* 19 (1974) and the *Eastern Churches Review* 9, 1–2 (1977) devoted to Palamas.

The Byzantinists' Palamism

Western Byzantinists (and not only Western) from the Hungarian aristocrat Endre von Ivanka (1902–74) to the Spanish Jesuit Juan Nadal Cañellas (1934–2016) have tended to find the arguments of Palamas' fourteenth-century critics much more convincing than those of Palamas himself. Although committed to scientific historical principles, they all work within the framework established by Martin Jugie, namely, that Palamism was the result of a forced interpretation of the Patristic tradition which was imposed (in a 'mitigated' form) on the Byzantine Church as a result of the Palamite capture of the patriarchate, and thus of the major sees of the empire, in the second half of the fourteenth century.³⁵ It was then largely forgotten but was revived in the early twentieth century by Russian émigré theologians and persists, in the Byzantinists' view, as a neo-Palamism which modifies Palamas' authentic teaching in some respects, especially concerning the nature of the essence–energies distinction (real in Palamas, conceptual in his modern apologists), and is promoted by its adherents as the official teaching of the Orthodox Church.³⁶

The Byzantinists' findings are nevertheless to be taken seriously from a philosophical and theological point of view. Their close study of the texts has brought many significant facts to light which help us to understand more fully what the Palamite controversy was about and how it was conducted. Thus Gerhard Podskalsky has elucidated some of the methodological aspects of the debate between humanists and Palamites in fourteenth-century Byzantium.³⁷ Ioannis Polemis has demonstrated how not only adversaries of Palamas but even leading Palamites made use of texts of Aquinas newly translated by the Kydones brothers.³⁸ Reinhard Flogaus and John Demetracopoulos have proved that Palamas himself studied Augustine's *De Trinitate* and found some of its insights helpful.³⁹ Whatever the Palamite controversy was about, it was not a conflict between Eastern and Western versions of Christianity.

³⁵ This is not to say that Jugie's framework has not itself been subjected to scholarly investigation, but even the very detailed analysis of John Demetracopoulos ('Palamas transformed. Palamite interpretations of the Distinctions between God's "Essence" and "Energies" in Late Byzantium', in *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger and C. Schabel [Leuven, Peeters, 2011], 263–372) has only confirmed Jugie with the additional refinement that even Palamas' closest allies 'mitigated' his Palamism.

³⁶ Endre von Ivanka, 'Le fondement patristique de la doctrine palamite', in *Πρακτικά τοῦ Θ' διεθνoῦς βυζαντινολογικοῦ συνεδρίου*, vol. 2, eds. S. Kyriades, A. Xygopoulos, and P. Zepos (Αθήνα, 1956), 127–32; *idem*, *Plato Christianus: la réception critique du platonisme chez les Pères de l'Église*, trans. Élisabeth Kessler (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990 [German original, 1964]), 406.

³⁷ Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1977), 124–73.

³⁸ Ioannis D. Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea: His life and Works*. Wiener Byzantinische Studien 20 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996).

³⁹ Reinhard Floghaus, 'Der heimliche Blick nach Westen. Zur Rezeption von Augustins *De trinitate* durch Gregorios Palamas', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 46 (1996): 275–97; *idem*, 'Palamas and Barlaam Revisited: A Reassessment of East and West in the Hesychast Controversy of 14th Century Byzantium', *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 42 (1998): 1–32; *idem*, 'Inspiration – Exploitation – Distortion: The Use of St Augustine in the Hesychast Controversy', in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 63–80. John A. Demetracopoulos, *Αὐγουστίνος καὶ Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς. Τὰ προβλήματα τῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν κατηγοριῶν καὶ τῆς τριαδικῆς ψυχοθεολογίας* (Αθήνα: Παρουσία, 1997); *idem*, 'Palamas transformed', 276,

The Return to the Texts

The most important event in Palamite studies in the second half of the twentieth century was the publication in the 1960s of critical texts of the entire corpus of Palamas' writings. Unfortunately, the Thessaloniki edition under the general editorship of Panayiotis Christou does not meet the highest standards that we have come to expect from such publications. No justification is offered for the selection of the base manuscript, no stemmata have been constructed to show how the manuscripts are related to each other, and the readings that have been chosen are often arbitrary. Nevertheless, the edition is a vast improvement on the selection of texts previously available in Migne.⁴⁰

The new accessibility of the texts encouraged a flowering of Palamite studies in the last quarter of the twentieth century. While most Western scholars still worked within a Jugiean perspective, the best studies, such as those of the current Orthodox metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, Amphilochios Radović (1938–) and the Canadian Dominican Jacques Lison (1952–), on the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the on the Holy Spirit, respectively, investigate the thinking of Gregory Palamas with scarcely a mention of 'Palamism'.⁴¹ The lack of confessional animus is striking in these scholars, as it is in others, both Western and Orthodox, who have approached Palamas in a scientific spirit in order to deepen our understanding of Palamas on his own terms.⁴² The same may be said of scholars, such as Nadal, who have studied the thought world of Palamas' adversaries in the conviction that it is more firmly rooted in the patristic tradition than that of Palamas. Indeed, Nadal, far from bearing any animosity against modern Palamites, undertook his work on Gregory Akindynos at the suggestion of his 'very good friend', the father of modern Palamite studies in Greece, Georgios Mantzarides.⁴³

n. 34.

⁴⁰ These criticisms do not of course apply to the excellent edition of Palamas' *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, in *Gregory Palamas, The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, Robert E. Sinkewicz ed. and trans. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988).

⁴¹ Radović's work, based on a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Athens in 1973, was published in English as *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity according to St Gregory Palamas* (Thessalonike: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1991), and in French as *Le mystère de la Sainte Trinité selon saint Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2012). Lison's work, based on a doctoral thesis (supervised by André de Halleux) submitted to the University of Louvain in 1991, was published as *L'Esprit répandu: la pneumatologie de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994).

⁴² These include, notably, the essays by Georgios Mantzarides collected in his *Palamika* (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Pournara, 3rd ed., 1998) (English translation of the sixth part by Liadain Sherrard, as *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984]); Stavros Yangazoglou, *Koinonía theώσεως. Η σύνθεση Χριστολογίας και Πνευματολογίας στο έργο του αγίου Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Δομός, 2001); the various articles of Robert E. Sinkewicz, culminating in his indispensable 'Gregory Palamas' in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition. II. (XIIe–XIXe s.)*, eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 131–82; and Håkon Gunnarsson, *Mystical Realism in the Early Theology of Gregory Palamas: Context and Analysis* (Göteborg: Institutionen för religionsvetenskap Göteborgs Universitet, 2002).

⁴³ J. Nadal Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas*, xix.

A Palamite Counteroffensive: Christos Yannaras and David Bradshaw

Anna Williams cautiously predicted at the close of the twentieth century that ‘close interpretation of the primary texts will break through many of the hoary battle lines of the past.’⁴⁴ This has proved true up to a point. Since the Second Vatican Council, most Catholic scholars have accepted the observation in *Lumen Gentium* that ‘many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside of its [the Catholic Church’s] visible structure,’⁴⁵ some scholars even including the teaching of Gregory Palamas among those elements. Jugie’s proselytizing approach is now officially superseded. On the Orthodox side, besides the studies of the particular dogmatic themes already mentioned, there have also been attempts to take Palamas’ approach seriously on the philosophical level. Two thinkers who have been particularly influential in this respect (and are therefore considered by their opponents to be militant neo-Palamites) are Christos Yannaras (1930–) and David Bradshaw (1960–). Neither is interested in defending ‘Palamism’ as a system—that would be to accept Jugie’s categorization—but both regard the thinking of Palamas as thoroughly coherent and of crucial importance for defining Orthodox identity today.

Yannaras approaches Palamas as a philosophical and theological conversation partner in his struggle to articulate a metaphysics that is credible in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. What he finds most suggestive in Palamas is his essence–energies distinction, particularly his analysis of the consequences that are entailed by its denial.⁴⁶ To understand what Palamas means by the terms ‘essence’ and ‘energies’, in Yannaras’s view, we need to distinguish between the ontic and the ontological versions of Being.⁴⁷ The ontic version identifies *ousia* (‘substance’ or ‘essence’) with onticity. Rather than *ousia* being an event of participation in being (the ontological version), it ‘is the definitive identity that emerges from the package as whole of properties and determinations of each onticity.’⁴⁸ By contrast, the ontological version denies that Being can be defined, for simply by trying to define it we are assuming that it has a definitive and static character.

In articulating the ontological version of Being, Yannaras borrows the language of Heidegger, who first gave it coherent expression. Heidegger’s inspiration for his concept of Being came partly from his study of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Heraclitus. Yannaras, too, finds Heraclitus seminal,⁴⁹ but what is even more important

⁴⁴ A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26.

⁴⁵ The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), §8.

⁴⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζωγραφίης* (Athina: Íkaros, 2011), 204–6.

⁴⁷ The main treatments of this distinction are in Christos Yannaras, *Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρως* (Athina: Domos, 1987), §§9, 19–23; trans. Norman Russell, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 28–30, 52–70; and *idem*, *Σχεδιάγραμμα Εἰσαγωγῆς στὴ Φιλοσοφία* (Athina: Íkaros, 2013), §§26–28; trans. Norman Russell, *The Schism in Philosophy* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2015), 165–210.

⁴⁸ Yannaras, *Schism*, 182.

⁴⁹ Particularly Heraclitus’ assertion that rationality is constituted by participation: ‘when we share

for him is the encounter between the Greek philosophical tradition and the Greek Fathers of the Church. The Fathers sought to reconcile the unchanging oneness and unity of the divine substance, as conceived by the Greek philosophers (the logical necessity of God), with the triadic God revealed temporally by the Incarnation (the historical experience of the personal God). The solutions of Sabellius (modalism) and Arius (subordinationism), which were in conformity with the determinism of the Greek philosophical tradition, were rejected by the Cappadocians in favour of the ontological priority of the hypostasis which participates in Being-in-itself: 'We know Being only as a hypostasis of personal otherness, and otherness signifies freedom from any predetermination of substance or nature.'⁵⁰ In doing so, the Cappadocians and their successors (especially Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas), while marking a discontinuity with earlier Greek philosophy, interpreted Aristotle's thinking more correctly than the mediaeval Western scholastics.

It was Aristotle who first made the distinction between *ousia* and *energeia*, essence (substance) and energy (activity or actuality). The ontic version of Being (such as that of the scholastics) makes 'a causal distinction between beings and Being the point of departure for his [Aristotle's] ontological theory'.⁵¹ But in Aristotle being is the actualization of form (*eidos*). 'Without the actuality that is realized by the actualization, nothing is.'⁵² The connection between Being and beings as a relation of cause and effect can be found in Aristotle, yet at the same time 'Aristotle detaches Being from its correlation with beings when he refers the problem of Being to the first mover', a detachment which draws on the double sense of *energeia* as both activity and actuality.⁵³ Being is not simply nature (the cause of beings), as the scholastics saw it,⁵⁴ for in his discussions of God, Aristotle repudiates any deterministic relationship between God and nature. Yannaras's conclusion is worth quoting in full:

Ultimately, Aristotle's first mover—God—transcends not only the definition of the cause of that which exists naturally but also human thought itself, which derives its definitive character from nature. The human mind thinks by referring to intelligible things, which means that as thinking it distinguishes itself from the object of thought, defining the object of thought in an ontic manner (i.e. as an entity). Only God is 'a thinking on thinking' (*noēsis noēseōs*), an identity of the mind and the object of thought. Only he thinks without defining the object of thought and without being defined with regard to the object of thought. We must consequently transcend human thinking

something in common we express the truth, and when we hold something in private we deceive ourselves' (Yannaras, *Schism*, 45–6).

⁵⁰ Yannaras, *Schism*, 205.

⁵¹ Yannaras, *Schism*, 169.

⁵² Yannaras, *Schism*, 169.

⁵³ Yannaras, *Schism*, 176.

⁵⁴ Cf. Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 56 (§20).

in order to see (contemplate) God beyond the defining fragmentariness of thoughts. It is on this double transcendence of both human nature and human thought that Aristotle bases his ultimate approach to the truth of Being.⁵⁵

It is this double transcendence on which the later Christian Greek tradition draws for its own distinction between essence and energy. As Yannaras interprets the terms, following a Maximian and Palamite hermeneutic, essence and energy are not simply a nature and its manifestation; they are *both* ‘modes of existence’.⁵⁶ The primary ontological category is love, ‘the only mode by which Being [i.e. the Being of God] is realized hypostatically as freedom and otherness’.⁵⁷ By the same mode God also hypostasizes the *energeia*, or activity, of his personal freedom in the world which he creates. The knowledge of God is not the result of rational inquiry but is a fact of personal relation. The power of experiential knowledge ‘derives from personal “sharing” and “participation” in the essence or nature, without the participation also signifying identification with the nature’.⁵⁸ Thus Maximus the Confessor says that ‘the whole of God’ interpenetrates ‘the whole of those who are worthy, as befits his goodness’,⁵⁹ and Gregory Palamas insists that ‘even if deifying grace...is not the nature of God—for the latter is imparticipable—it is nevertheless a natural energy of God, naturally consequent on God and always contemplated inseparably around him’.⁶⁰ To accept the essence–energy distinction with Palamas and the tradition he crowns is to embrace an ontology which makes the personal experience of God possible. To deny the distinction in a mistaken attempt to safeguard the divine simplicity makes participation in the divine life ultimately impossible.⁶¹

David Bradshaw covers much of the same ground as Yannaras and from a similar viewpoint.⁶² Like Yannaras, he sees the divergence of the Eastern and Western traditions on the knowledge and experience of God as stemming from two different interpretations of Aristotle. His thesis in his book *Aristotle East and West* is that the Aristotelian distinction between *ousia* and *energeia* was better understood in

⁵⁵ Yannaras, *Schism*, 177–8, with reference to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 12.9.1074B15–1075A10. Note the epistemological basis here of ‘antinomic’ thinking.

⁵⁶ For an excellent analysis of this, see Dionysios Skliris, ‘Η Οντολογία του Τρόπου στη σκέψη του Χρήστου Γιανναρά’, in D. Angelis et al., *Χρήστος Γιανναράς* (Αθήνα: Manifesto, 2015), 91–124.

⁵⁷ Yannaras, *Schism*, 208.

⁵⁸ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 60 (§21).

⁵⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1076C).

⁶⁰ Gregory Palamas, *Apologia* 28 (Christou 2, 116. 24–28; Perrella 1, 1024. 23–27).

⁶¹ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 62–66 (§22).

⁶² Curiously, there is only one reference to Yannaras in Bradshaw’s magnum opus, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). This is to the article by Christos Yannaras, ‘The Distinction between Essence and Energies and Its Importance for Theology’, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 19 (1975): 232–45, which was a response to the articles in the special Palamas issue of *Istina* 19 (1974). Presumably Bradshaw was unaware of Yannaras’s later discussions because of the inaccessibility of his work in demotic Greek. It is only in the last decade that books such as *Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρω*s and *Σχεδιάσμα Εἰσαγωγῆς στὴ Φιλοσοφία* have begun to circulate in English.

the East than in the West. It was the achievement of the Cappadocians to build on the distinction so that the *energeiai* manifest the divine *ousia* in a dynamic fashion but without constituting it.⁶³ In the Eastern tradition, *energeiai* are forces that can be shared in. The Latin translation of *energeia* as *operatio* does not do justice to the association of *energeia* with actuality. Thus the notion of participation in the divine *energeiai* did not gain much traction in Western thought, whereas in the East participation came to mean not simply, as in the West, conforming the human will to the will of God, but sharing dynamically in the *being* of God.

Palamas, confronted by the Augustinian metaphysics of Barlaam (*either* the divine substance *or* creatures, without any middle way), was forced to bring together in a systematic fashion (though without creating a 'system') a number of elements which had hitherto been independent of each other. These were the uncreated light of the hesychast tradition, the 'things around God' and the divine *logoi* of Maximus the Confessor, the characterization of the divine names as *energeiai* by Gregory of Nyssa, and the references in Paul's letters to the divine *energeia* at work within the human person. 'All,' as Bradshaw says, 'are to be understood in terms of the manifestation of God through His uncreated energies.'⁶⁴

The question then arises: How is it that if the energies are divine realities that are participable by creatures they do not compromise the simplicity of God? Palamas' answer is that the energies are not hypostases—they are real but without a self-subsistent reality. Nor are they subject to change in the way that all composite realities are: 'it is not acting and energy but being acted upon and passivity which constitute composition.'⁶⁵ Bradshaw is satisfied that by positing the energies as participable 'realities' (*pragmata*) between the divine essence and creatures Palamas is not introducing multiplicity into the Godhead. But there are aspects of Palamas' account of the essence–energy distinction that do cause him unease. For example, he does not find that Palamas makes any connection between the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the energies. 'Thus, although he affirms both the traditional teaching about the inner life of the Trinity and the distinction between essence and energies, he does not relate them to one another.'⁶⁶

In an article published in a philosophical journal two years after *Aristotle East and West*, Bradshaw returns to the topic of the divine energies in an effort to persuade Western theologians and religious philosophers to take Palamas seriously.⁶⁷ After summarizing the Greek philosophical and patristic tradition relating to

⁶³ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 170–71.

⁶⁴ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 238.

⁶⁵ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 241, quoting Palamas, *Capita* 150, §145 (trans. Sinkewicz, modified).

⁶⁶ Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 242.

⁶⁷ David Bradshaw, 'The Concept of the Divine Energies,' *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006): 93–120, reprinted in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 27–49.

energeia, he offers several reasons for regarding this (Palamite) tradition as superior to the Western tradition based on Augustine and Aquinas. First, Palamite apophaticism allows for a more profound idea of God than one which sees him as pure act and therefore as intrinsically intelligible, even if not fully comprehensible because of the limitations of the human mind. Second, an ever-deepening participation in the divine energies, which engages the body as well as the soul, is more satisfactory than a purely intellectual attainment of the beatific vision through the infusion of the blessed with the *lumen gloriae* to enable them to apprehend the divine essence. Third, divine simplicity is better preserved by the essence–energy distinction than by treating God’s will as identical with his essence. The latter raises more problems than it solves, for it would seem to limit God’s freedom or else make him subject to change: either God can only act as he does, or if he responds to creaturely initiatives, creatures would in some way determine the divine essence. Bradshaw’s ‘Palamism’ is thus a challenge to the Western tradition of philosophical theology to reconsider some of its fundamental positions.

At the beginning of his article Bradshaw acknowledges that even though there is ‘virtually unanimous acceptance’ that Palamite theology represents the authentic teaching of the Orthodox Church, and ‘widespread although far from unanimous acceptance’ that Palamas is in full continuity with the Greek Fathers, the assertion that his teaching ‘is of essential value today, representing the best and most cogent way of understanding the relationship of God to the world’ has received ‘not even much attention, to say nothing of agreement, beyond the bounds of Eastern Orthodoxy’.⁶⁸ It was in response to this observation that a further colloquium was held in Cambridge in 2008 to debate the differences and similarities between Palamite theology and various Western positions and see what each could learn from the other(s).⁶⁹ The answer at first sight would seem to be not much. A number of the contributors to the volume resulting from the colloquium take the view that Aquinas and Palamas are incompatible, with Palamas offering a much better account of the relationship between created and uncreated than Aquinas, a view endorsed by Bradshaw at the end of the volume. But that is not everyone’s position. John Milbank takes the opposite view, arguing that Aquinas was more successful than Palamas in giving an account of mediation between creation and the Godhead ‘without endorsing the idea that God requires the aid of a mediating sphere between divine and non-divine reality’ in the Plotinian manner.⁷⁰ Between these two poles lie

⁶⁸ Bradshaw, ‘The Concept of the Divine Energies’, 27–28. Christos Yannaras has frequently lamented the fact that apart from the essay of the young Rowan Williams on his 1970 doctoral thesis (R. D. Williams, ‘The Theology of Personhood: A Study of the Thought of Christos Yannaras’, *Sobornost* [1st series] 6 [1972]: 415–30) no Western theologian or philosopher has paid any serious attention to his work. He is still awaiting a critique.

⁶⁹ The papers given at the colloquium together with Bradshaw’s 2006 *Philosophy and Theology* article were published five years later in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*.

⁷⁰ John Milbank, ‘Christianity and Platonism in East and West’, in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, 158–209, at 174.

Nikolaos Loudovikos and the Dominican Antoine Lévy. Loudovikos admires both Aquinas' insistence on divine unity and Palamas' account of the existential realization of participation in God, cautiously suggesting that the two are contiguous: 'Thomas concludes with what Palamas started and tries to defend in his lifetime'.⁷¹ Lévy likewise regards the thinking of Palamas and Aquinas as dissimilar but complementary, different accounts of divine activity within a unified Eastern and Western whole.⁷² One interesting paper by the Greek-Australian philosopher, Nick Trakakis, leaves aside the attempt to reconcile Palamas with Aquinas and tries to make sense of the essence–energies distinction in modern philosophical terms.⁷³ Trakakis is not happy with accounts of the distinction (under the logical form: the essence is unknowable; the energies are knowable; both are God; therefore God is both knowable and unknowable) that complacently fall back on the notion of antinomy. 'Of course, a paradox or an antinomy,' he says, 'is not yet a formal contradiction, but theologians would do better to vigorously attempt to resolve antinomies or paradoxes, rather than jumping at the first opportunity to embrace and proclaim them—as though this was the surest sign that one had scaled the heights of the divine mystery'.⁷⁴ Trakakis himself attempts to resolve the antinomy by using Gottlob Frege's distinction between 'reference' (*Bedeutung*) and 'sense' (*Sinn*), the divine essence and the divine energies having the same reference but different senses. There is no ontological division between essence and energy but equally the energies and names of God are more than merely nominal in nature: 'The Fregean way out is to say that the energies are modes of presentation that reflect, not a division in the divinity, but a way of perceiving God—one that is not simply the product of the human mind, but accurately represents who God is'.⁷⁵ Bradshaw in his comment on this suggestion, however, objects to interpreting the energies as 'ways of perceiving' and 'modes of presentation'. In the Fregean scheme, he says, these would be 'senses' rather than 'references'. The energies 'are not modes of presentation, but God conceived under various such modes, and the same is true of the divine essence'.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Nikolaos Loudovikos, 'Striving for Participation: Palamite Analogy as Dialogical Syn-ergy and Thomist Analogy as Emanational Similitude', in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, 122–48, at 148.

⁷² Antoine Lévy OP, 'The Woes of Originality: Discussing David Bradshaw's Aristotelian Journey into Neo-Palamism', in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, 96–121. Lévy's conclusions are broadly similar to those of A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union*.

⁷³ N. N. Trakakis, 'The Sense and Reference of the Essence and Energies', in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, 210–31.

⁷⁴ Trakakis, 'Sense and Reference', 218. Trakakis adds in a footnote: 'This is not to deny the value of antinomy in theology, but to point out that antinomies may only require us to modify our principles of logic rather than to reject them outright.'

⁷⁵ Trakakis, 'Sense and Reference', 223.

⁷⁶ David Bradshaw, 'In Defence of the Essence/Energies Distinction: A Reply to Critics', in Athanasopoulos and Schneider, *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, 256–73, at 261. In Trakakis' case, logic has proved to be inimical to faith. Since the publication of his article he has announced his renunciation of Christianity on the grounds that any kind of religious belief is incompatible with the pursuit of truth through philosophy (N. N. Trakakis, 'Why I am not Orthodox', posted on the ABC Religion and Ethics

Palamite Theology Contested: David Bentley Hart and John Milbank

The Orthodox philosophical theologian David Bentley Hart (1965–) is no friend of Palamas. He finds his essence–energies distinction incoherent (doubting whether even Palamas himself knew what he meant) and regards the whole neo-Palamite project from Lossky onwards as driven by little more than identity politics.⁷⁷ For him *ousia* or ‘essence’ is simply a term to emphasize that God in himself is transcendent and incomprehensible. It has no reference to any reality beyond Father, Son and Spirit; the three persons of the Trinity *are* the essence—there is nothing else. All talk about the essence—whether by Palamites or Thomists—as something that is seen or not seen in the beatific vision is simply ‘an empty reification’. There is no problem in his view about the knowledge of God that is not solved by Trinitarian theology: the Father is revealed to us by Christ through the Spirit and that is the end of the matter.⁷⁸

This opinion, expressed in a paper given at the Orthodox Readings of Augustine conference held at Fordham University, New York, in 2007, sounds curiously like that of the Lutheran scholar, Dorothea Wendebourg, who represents Palamas’ thought as ‘the defeat of Trinitarian theology’.⁷⁹ In the footnotes to the published version of his paper Hart makes some characteristically trenchant remarks about the contrary opinion expressed by David Bradshaw at the same conference, to which Bradshaw responds in an equally acerbic postscript to his own paper.⁸⁰ Hart was not persuaded to change his mind. In the 2009 foreword of a book recording the proceedings of a conference held in Cambridge in 2005 to explore what common ground there might be between Eastern Orthodoxy and the mainly Anglican Radical Orthodoxy movement (but published the year after the New York Orthodox Readings of Augustine conference), Hart calls on Eastern theologians ‘partly to abandon the Neo-Palamite theology that has become so dominant in their Church since the middle of the last century, and frankly acknowledge its incoherence, and come to recognize that in many ways Augustine or Thomas was closer to the Greek Fathers than was Palamas (at least Palamas as he has come to be understood)’.⁸¹ Despite his Orthodoxy, Hart aligns himself firmly with Jueie.

website: <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2015/12/07/43>).

⁷⁷ David Bentley Hart, ‘The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics after Nicaea’, in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 191–226, esp. 212–14.

⁷⁸ Hart, ‘The Hidden and the Manifest’, 214.

⁷⁹ Dorothea Wendebourg, *Geist oder Energie. Zur Frage der innergöttlichen Verankerung des christlichen Lebens in der byzantinischen Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser-Verlag, 1980); *idem*, ‘From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology’, *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 194–97.

⁸⁰ David Bradshaw, ‘Augustine the Metaphysician’, in Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, 227–51. For the sharp exchange between Hart and Bradshaw see esp. 212–14 and 244–51.

⁸¹ Hart, ‘Foreword’, xiii. Hart, who speaks in his writings of God not as a super-being but as the condition of existence itself, opposes, like Yannaras, the ontic version of God but without the metaphysical justification that Yannaras offers.

At the same conference, one of the Anglican leaders of Radical Orthodoxy, John Milbank, also expressed reservations about Palamite or neo-Palamite theology, but in a more nuanced way.⁸² In a sympathetic critique of Bulgakov's sophiology, he compares Bulgakov to Palamas to the disadvantage of the latter. Although he accepts that Palamas' essence–energy distinction does not 'entirely forego the divine simplicity', he thinks that even what he regards as Palamas' formal distinction (not a real division but nevertheless one that is more than simply conceptual) still gives rise to a subtle onto-theology that sets intermediaries between God and the created world:

Clearly for Bulgakov, the Palamite energies played the same role as Sophia, and infused human actions with theurgic power. Nevertheless, sophiology is superior to the Palamite theology precisely *because* it moves away from a literal between and allows the energies simultaneously to be identical with the divine essence itself and yet also to be created as well as uncreated. This actually brings Eastern theology more in line with the best Thomism for which grace has to be created as well as uncreated if it is ever to reach us—but occupies no phantom and limboesque border territory.⁸³

Milbank will not allow even a formal distinction between essence and energies. In his view two dangers arise from such a division. First, it makes deification 'merely an irradiation by the light of the divine energies'. Secondly, it seems to drive an ontological wedge between divine light and divine darkness, so that the (apophatic) darkness greatly exceeds the (cataphatic) light, giving immediate access to God beyond all images, even that of light.⁸⁴

One of the main Orthodox contributors to the conference, Nicholas Loudovikos, denies that Palamas makes a formal division between essence and energies in the way that Milbank suggests, rightly claiming that the distinction in Palamas is *kat' epinoian*—'not a *separation* but an expression of the fundamental *distinction* between will and essence in God which is not of course a separation either'.⁸⁵ The energies are not to be ontologized. They 'are not quasi personal agents, mediating the divine

⁸² John Milbank, 'Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon', in Pabst and Schneider, *Encounter Between Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, 45–85.

⁸³ Milbank, 'Sophiology and Theurgy', 71.

⁸⁴ Milbank, 'Sophiology and Theurgy', 71. This is what he thinks Vladimir Lossky does in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke, 1957), 23–44.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Loudovikos, 'Ontology Celebrated: Remarks of an Orthodox on Radical Orthodoxy', in Pabst and Schneider, *Encounter Between Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, 141–55, at 148–9. Ever since Jugie, who argued in his *DTC* articles that Palamas' successors taught a 'mitigated Palamism' because unlike Palamas himself they held that the essence–energies distinction is *kat' epinoian*, it has been customary to distinguish Palamite from 'neo-Palamite' theology. I believe Loudovikos is right to reject this. For my own perspective on Palamas' *kat' epinoian* see Norman Russell, 'The Christological Context of Palamas' Approach to Participation', in *Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 190–98.

perfections to lower beings but personal acts of an “*ek-sisting*” God’.⁸⁶ This ‘standing-outside’ is not outside of the divine nature but is ‘an *ek-stasis* of the nature itself in the Holy Spirit’.⁸⁷ The divine energies are God as he manifests himself *ad extra*, which does not imply in a symmetrical fashion that the essence is God *ad intra*, for the essence is God as he is in himself.

In his response to Loudovikos, Milbank takes issue with the essence–energies distinction as a satisfactory ‘solution’ to the problem of participation in God. For him, paradoxically, ‘all participation is in the imparticipable’ because there are no parts to God.⁸⁸ He is not persuaded that the Cappadocians regarded the distinction between the divine essence and the energies as anything more than a mental distinction. Nor does he think that Paul’s talk of *energeia* is betrayed by Aquinas, whose *actus purus* Milbank regards as synonymous with *energeia*. Moreover, Aquinas seems to him to interpret Maximus’ doctrine of the *logoi* in an entirely acceptable way without any ‘betweenness’ interposed between God and creation. Bulgakov also seems to him to get it right: ‘Sophia lies on both sides of the creator/created divide and does not hover in any imagined middle limbo.’⁸⁹ So how does the human person participate in God without the participable energies? Milbank appears to be satisfied with Aquinas’ doctrine of created grace, and regards Bulgakov’s sophiology as an acceptable alternative expression of it. The key issue is clearly the nature of participation in the light of the simplicity of God.

Nikolaos Loudovikos and the Concept of Participation

In the following year Loudovikos published in Greek an important study of participation in both Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas, which brought together three essays that had previously appeared in English (including two I have already cited), supplementing them with a study of participation in Thomism from a Palamite point of view.⁹⁰ In the Preface to the book, Loudovikos expresses his satisfaction that new readings of both Aquinas and Palamas are enabling Orthodox as well as Western Christians to get away from stereotypical interpretations of their respective cynosures.⁹¹ He recognizes that for the Orthodox in the theological climate following

⁸⁶ Loudovikos, ‘Ontology Celebrated’, 149.

⁸⁷ Loudovikos, ‘Ontology Celebrated’, 151.

⁸⁸ John Milbank, ‘Ecumenical Orthodoxy—A Response to Nicholas Loudovikos’, in Pabst and Schneider, *Encounter Between Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, 156–64, at 161.

⁸⁹ Milbank, ‘Ecumenical Orthodoxy’, 161.

⁹⁰ Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Ὁ Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς. Εἶναι καὶ Μέθεξι στὸν Γρηγόριο Παλαμᾶ καὶ τὸν Θωμᾶ Ἀκινάτη* (Athens: Armos, 2010). The essays that had previously appeared in English are: Nikolaos Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation’ (Part I); *idem*, ‘Ontology Celebrated’ (Appendix I); and *idem*, ‘Eikon and mimesis Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Ecclesial Ontology of Dialogical Reciprocity’, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, nos. 2–3 (2011): 123–36 (Appendix II). The new material, which is on participation in Thomism, constitutes Part 2: ‘Τὸ ψυχοσωματικὸ ποιοὺν τῆς μετοχῆς στὸν Θωμισμὸ μὲ τὰ μάτια τοῦ Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ’.

⁹¹ In this connection, Marcus Plested has made a welcome contribution with his *Orthodox Readings of*

the so-called ‘Babylonian captivity’ (Florovsky’s phrase), ‘Palamas offered an easy schematization of Orthodox experience, in such a way that the whole of Orthodox theology could be transposed into Palamism and, in this manner, be turned into an ideology’.⁹² Even if Aquinas discusses his topics systematically in accordance with the School tradition, neither he nor Palamas were *ideological* thinkers. A proper appreciation of this by theologians of both traditions would enable them to join in a common search for truth, not fudging any issues or conflating doctrines in a spirit of ‘ecumenism’, but engaging in what Loudovikos calls a shared journey towards ‘the greatest and most honourable’ goal.⁹³

This goal is for us to become in Christ ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4). Deification in Palamas is not identical with participation, but there is a profound ontological connection between them, for deification is the eschatological foundation of participation. The shorthand expression Loudovikos uses for participation is ‘dialogical syn-ergy’. This is more than simply conforming our will to the will of God (a moral union); it is fundamentally a Christological concept which may be extended, *mutatis mutandis*, to ordinary human beings: ‘in Christ we do not have a confusion of natures but a hypostatic union through the perfect *perichoresis* of the two natures, through the complete dialogue of created and uncreated energies in him. Christ’s theandric energy is nothing other than a dialogical syn-ergy of his two natures that make them perfectly co-exist and collaborate’.⁹⁴ Essence and energy are related differently from the two natures in Christ, energy being ‘the willed personal expression of divine being’.⁹⁵ Participation in the divine energies is analogical, analogy in Palamas (though not in Aquinas) always meaning ‘a synergetic dialogical reciprocity’ because an analogical action is something that takes place between different beings: ‘analogy... refers not to a similitude of essences but to an analogous action between different agents in order for them to achieve union’.⁹⁶ This is not an individualistic enterprise. Before my entering into union with God through the vision of the divine light ‘becomes a syn-ergy/dialogue with God, my action has to become a syn-ergy/dialogue with the other’, that is, pre-eminently by the Eucharist, ‘since it is in the Eucharist where this double participational analogy of this dialogical syn-ergy is accomplished’.⁹⁷ To English ears the expression ‘dialogical syn-ergy

Aquinas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹² Loudovikos, ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 9.

⁹³ Loudovikos, ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 10.

⁹⁴ Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation’, 127; ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 32.

⁹⁵ Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation’, 145; ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 75.

⁹⁶ Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation’, 131; ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 39. See also the discussion of analogy in Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 217–20, where Loudovikos compares Aquinas’s *analogia entis* with the Greek patristic version of analogy as dialogue.

⁹⁷ Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation’, 132; ‘Ο Μόχθος τῆς Μετοχῆς’, 42–3.

of reciprocity' may sound somewhat rebarbative, but it encapsulates strikingly the nature of Palamas' teaching on union with God attained in perfect freedom.

Conclusion

The polemical construction of 'Palamism', a term apparently coined by Jugie, has not entirely been left behind. Ecclesiastical triumphalism may now be out of fashion, but there is still a tendency to pit 'our man' against 'yours'. There is a certain logic to this. Aquinas and Palamas stand at the summit of their respective traditions. These traditions, however, are not entirely equivalent to each other. On the one hand we have the close-knit professional guild of theologians with their intellectual centre at the University of Paris, whose main concern was to attain conceptual clarity, and on the other, the monastic institution of Mount Athos, whose hesychasts, confident in their interpretation of the mind of the Fathers, were intent on defending their experience of deification.⁹⁸ It is wrong to claim that Aquinas and Palamas were really saying the same thing. But it is not misleading to suggest that their lines of thought converge. Indeed, what we know about the last three months of Aquinas' life strongly hints that when confronted with the reality of God he tacitly acknowledged the limitations of human reasoning. After his (visionary?) experience while celebrating Mass on 6 December 1273, he taught and wrote nothing more until he expounded *The Song of Songs* (the great mystical text of the Middle Ages) to the Cistercian monks of Fossanova as he lay dying at their abbey in the first week of March 1274. Some of the most fruitful work in recent years has been in the comparative study of the two great Doctors of Eastern and Western Christianity.

'Palamism' may still be a pejorative tag for those who work, consciously or unconsciously, within Jugie's terms of reference, but most contemporary scholars have tried to leave this hostile construct behind. Equally, work on key topics such as the nature of divine simplicity, the meaning of participation, and the relationship of the essence-energies distinction to Trinitarian theology by a number of scholars, has already modified the defensive mid-twentieth-century narratives of Lossky and Meyendorff. Gregory Palamas may still become, in the course of the present century, 'the inheritance of all Christians'.

⁹⁸ For an illuminating analysis, see György Geréby, 'Hidden themes in Fourteenth-Century Byzantine and Latin Theological Debates: Monarchianism and Crypto-Dyophysitism', in Hinterberger and Schabel, *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History*, 183–211.

THE LIFE OF ORDINARY LIFE: HESYCHASM AND IMMANENCE

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Following upon the effects of modernity, the regulation of ordinary life relative to the practicalities of human existence became a sphere of its own with no need of ontological justification. Charles Taylor's monumental works on modern identity and secularisation represent a valuable resource in appreciating a situation that may be Western in inspiration but is, in fact, ultimately global and, thereby, affects the potential of Orthodox thought, and, more particularly that of Saint Gregory Palamas, to make a difference. However, the apparent inability for Western thought to provide an ontology for ordinary life offers an opening for reactivating the potential of Hesychast spirituality to speak of ordinary life in ontological terms. After considering Taylor's contributions, we turn to Saint Gregory's critique of 'Hellenic error' in order to suggest an ontological revalidation of ordinary life through the enhancement of immanence and to point to its permanence in the Orthodox Church.

In the epilogue to his *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, George Mantzarides briefly raises the issue of the Orthodox Church's effective reception of Palamite teaching on ordinary pastoral life. It seems to him to have been, for all practical purposes, forgotten. In this notable introductory work, he provides a concise presentation of Palamas' doctrine of *theosis*, having gathered into itself the dominantly Christocentric perspective of the Greek Fathers with the mystical, Spirit-centred practices of the Hesychasts. However, in evaluating its posterior fate in the concrete realities of church life, he observes that, 'The vision of uncreated light, which for the Hesychasts and Palamas was the most exalted and mystical form of man's divinising communion with God, soon became neglected to the point of virtual disappearance'.¹ He is aware of the distance between the cultural ambience of the early centuries of Christendom, as well as the hesychastic experiences, and that of secularised contemporary society. Yet, Mantzarides believes that the ideal of deification ought to be more than a 'pious hope'. By this, I take him to mean something more than religious sentiment. What matters truly is its ontological content (i.e., actual participation in a transformative reality), the kind that reflects Christian revelation in its fullest sense as the experience of *theosis*. Just how this is

¹ George Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 129.

to be envisaged pastorally is ultimately dependent on practical decisions and on the degree of personal commitment. However, Mantzarides's remarks *en passant* about what should be a concern for Orthodox people strike at an underlying difficulty. Stated simply, following upon the effects of modernity, the regulation of ordinary life relative to the practicalities of human existence became a sphere of its own with no need of ontological justification.

In the last lines of his work, Mantzarides offers a suggestion of how Palamite teaching might become more relevant to contemporary concerns by appealing to the man-as-priest-of-creation tradition that occupies an important place in Orthodox spirituality. For him, the Church could strategically engage contemporary humanity's sovereign authority over the world. In this case, the Church must seek to baptise this aspiration in the spirit of Palamas and the Fathers, and direct attention to the reality of the divine image that they bear and their likeness to the Prototype of humanity 'in order to attain their sovereignty over creation in *theosis*'.² Our approach in this article concerns less the relevance of contemporary issues but rather utilises a corrective critique by Saint Gregory of a philosophical syntax supportive of a problematic tension between ordinary practical life and the kind of sanctified life proposed in ecclesial discourse. We hold that neither Orthodoxy in general nor Hesychasm in particular can be substantially assimilated by the same cultural process that has separated ordinary life from its ontological roots. Moreover, in the midst of his rigorous defence of Hesychasm, Saint Gregory advances a revitalising critical turn to the notion of immanence, giving it a richer ontological sense than the utilitarian and naturalist forms it has taken in modern and contemporary thinking.

In relation to the regulation of ordinary life, Charles Taylor's work on modern identity and Western secularism is especially valuable, particularly for the complicity that he sees between this and the rejection of theistic metaphysics.³ Along with the quality of his genealogical hermeneutics of the Western mind, Taylor's discreet acknowledgement of Eastern Christianity and its difference, most notably in *A Secular Age*, provides a point of reference for what we shall say later about Palamas.⁴ However, it is also the clarity with which he, a Christian philosopher,

² *Ibid.*

³ *Qua* theme, that of ordinary life represents the central section of Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Of five parts that comprise the book, 'The Affirmation of Ordinary Life' constitutes its third and middle. But, more relevantly, it represents a transitional concept that, within the process of modern identity, finds its particular valorisation, 'in some ways too pervasive to be noticed', in conjunction with the moral notions of freedom and benevolence (*Ibid.*, 498).

⁴ Taylor demonstrates an awareness of *theosis* but his view implicitly suggests that its acceptance is practically impossible with the rise of Providential Deism in the West. In the ancient faith, he states in *A Secular Age*, 'God's intervention in history and in particular the Incarnation, was intended to transform us, through making us partakers of the communion which God already is and lives. It was meant to effect our deification (*theosis*).'⁷ (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007], 278). In the same context, he contrasts the loss of the theological perspective with dominance of Deism with contributions of Saint Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers in regard to the meaning they gave to the concept of

states the ‘maximal demand’ that motivates and guides his research that is helpful in revealing to us: ‘how to define our highest spiritual or moral expectations for human beings, while showing the path to the transformation involved which does not crush, mutilate, or deny what is essential to our humanity’.⁵ Besides the spirit of compromise that Taylor’s maximal demand expresses, which we shall question below, the larger issue is just why it is that it takes the form that it does. ‘Essential to our humanity’ is, seemingly, taken by Taylor to mean generically ordinary, bodily life and all that which is necessary for its physical and social sustenance. How have we come to the point of conceiving ‘our highest spiritual or moral expectations’ as potentially crushing and mutilating in regard to ordinary life? Would this apply as well to Hesychasm?

The Question about the Place of Ordinary Life, Ontologically Speaking

Nicholas Loudovikos offers an illuminating assessment concerning the state of Western thought in relation to human society: ‘...it never became possible in the West for a social reality to acquire an ontology’.⁶ In the context of this commentary, he is specifically taking aim at Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiology: ‘Communion here is just a sort of historical necessity, it does not refer to any primordial and absolute change of mode of Being of beings, that is to say, it does not refer to their first ontology’.⁷ Such a positioning encourages the setting of the ontological above the ontic (i.e., above the doings of ordinary life in its materiality), and creates a space for will to exercise its power of influence. In other words, it enables the ideologisation of the ecclesial discourse that subordinates human sociality and ordinary life, to transcendent goals, precisely the situation that led to the modern dialectical reversal of the problematic: the absorption of the ontological into the ontic and the endeavour to discover there the proper place for humanity and its aspirations. In other words, it ultimately lays the ground for modern nihilism, the making of nothing (i.e., the idolatrous production of the [self-] will, into something ‘real’), reinforced by a collective agreement about its status as reality.

hypostasis: no longer substance as defined by pagan philosophy, but person. Moreover, at least to Orthodox ears, Taylor appears to be aware of Orthodox language of worship: besides the ‘*hoi aiōnes tōn aiōnōn*’ (*Ibid.*, 195), the propensity to use ‘again and again’ (fifteen times) in the book is also a curious *fait divers*.

⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 639.

⁶ Nicholas Loudovikos, *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality*, trans. Norman Russell (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2016), 161.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 162. Loudovikos has Rahner in mind, whom he considers the greatest of the Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. Although Loudovikos’s point is generally well taken, many would see Henri de Lubac, for whom Loudovikos expresses some admiration, in that category. In view of his thesis, this is worth mentioning because de Lubac, along with other Jesuits of his generation, were significantly influenced by the Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel, whose ‘method of immanence’, applied to the explication of human action, does appear to ‘ontologise’ social reality. See my ‘Post-Secularity and the Theosis Factor: Blondel and St. Gregory Palamas’, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 67, no. 1 (2011): 81–102.

Loudovikos deems this to be a ‘shocking fact’, presumably because it is hardly noticed. His observation is, in any event, noteworthy because significant contemporary Catholic-minded authors such as Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and Taylor himself have written influential works precisely on the damaging effects of the slide into secularism. The gradual transition from nominalism, to the Protestant Reformation, to secularism is, for them, parasitic in relation to its Catholic matrix, a significant part of which became, in varied ways, the object of protest and rejection. An insidious and heretical mode of thought insistent on subjective autonomy and primacy of will thus became normative. In view of this, an appeal by such authors is made on behalf of a half-turn toward pre-modernity in order to recuperate an ontology that still could offer substantive consistency to life as we now live it.

In MacIntyre and Milbank, the balanced and comprehensive synthesis achieved by Aquinas serves as point of reference for what has been lost, but still may hold promise of sanity and wisdom for the current times in the wake of the implosion of modernity’s project of emancipation. In regard to MacIntyre, this would be in the form of rationality, demonstrated in the process of reasoning adopted by Aquinas that, anchored in sacred doctrine, proceeds dialectically to absorb the best accounts from rival traditions into Catholic Truth. For Milbank, post-modernity permits a renewed metanarrative that incorporates the truth as conceived by Aquinas, overcomes the regnant ontological violence through an ontology of pardon, and foresees the Church as ‘Cosmopolis’, as an explicit manifestation of the effects of supernatural charity upon human lives, a trans-organism that brings into the *ordo amoris* humankind’s multifaceted *Lebensformen*.⁸ However, this still begs the question of whether the conceptualisation of a reconciling discourse is sufficient to realise the strong sense of ontological participation that brings people to ‘will communion’ and actually experience, in their lifetime, the consubstantial reality of the self-donating and ever-communicating God, as Loudovikos would expect from his Orthodox perspective. Moreover, there is much in Taylor’s study that confirms Loudovikos’s suspicions about Western Christendom.

To begin with, Taylor shows no particular sympathy for Aquinas. He does, however, write with admiration of the Platonic confidence in the Ideas, pre-eminently the Idea of the Good, as sustaining the cosmic order—the ‘ontic logos,’ as he expresses it in *Sources of the Self*. Yet, for the purposes of his genealogy of moral vision and the secularist mind, Augustine comes under special scrutiny. In a passage from *Sources of the Self*, Taylor notes,

⁸ In regard to MacIntyre, see especially his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1990); for Milbank, especially his already classic, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) and his most recent *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2013).

The Pauline opposition of spirit and flesh is repeatedly being pulled out of its hinges and aligned with the Platonic-derived opposition between the immaterial and the bodily. Augustine is one of the principal offenders in this respect, but lots of others have made similar elisions on their own, most notably Descartes and the whole band of rationalists and empiricists influenced by him.⁹

The older Catholic tradition, that to which Augustine belonged and influenced, maintained an ontology of the good, inherited from Plato onwards, and an eschatology that comprehended the cosmos in its scope. As Taylor puts it, ‘the first millennium Church did not forget that, while God indeed wills human flourishing, there is a difference between “thy will be done” and “let humans flourish”’.¹⁰ The newer tradition, gradually leaving behind the Platonic features that remained in Augustine’s thinking, affirmed more emphatically in its development the latter formulation. Serving God begins to entail the free reordering of public space for the sake of human flourishing. Worshiping God is expressed in daily cares and activities, none of which is relegated to the realm of the profane. The truly desired order is that of economic and familial harmony which is not the work of a spiritual effort toward self-transcendence, to quest after a reality beyond ordinary human flourishing.

With the Reformation, we find a modern, Christian-inspired sense that ordinary life was...the very centre of the good life...the life of the God-fearing was lived out in marriage and their calling. The previous ‘higher’ forms of life were dethroned, as it were.¹¹

...that this affirmation of ordinary life...has become one of the most powerful ideas of modern civilisation. It underlies our contemporary ‘bourgeois’ politics, so much concerned with issues of welfare, and at the same time powers the most revolutionary ideology of our century, Marxism, with its apotheosis of man the producer...Along with the central place given to autonomy, it defines a version of this demand which is peculiar to our civilisation, the modern West.¹²

A decisive aspect of his account of the modern self, Taylor thus sees the affirmation of ordinary life *qua* thesis as intending to accentuate the displacement of the vectors of a good life from higher and more contemplative activities to the pro-

⁹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 220.

¹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 17.

¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 12.

¹² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 13.

duction of goods and reproduction, associated with our lives as sexual beings. The resulting perspective would increasingly see the best form of ordinary life as binding individual freedom to a widened conception of rights and dignity, generally attached to the ideal of reducing, or avoiding, suffering as a finality extended universally to all of humanity. Persistently associated with the quest for freedom, individual rights, and dignity, the promotion of ordinary life signifies the erosion of hierarchy and the progressive annulling of racial, sexual, and social differentiation.

We find it hardly certain that what has come to be accepted as givens in democratic and liberal societies necessarily contradicts the 'beyond human flourishing' conviction by which many Christian believers still live. The difficulty lies in the content of the belief to which they hold and in the acceptance of self-renunciation as part of it. A Christian faith, accentuating the experience of the heavenly God 'beyond human flourishing', gave way to one that wished to hallow the practical and sensitive order of ordinary life. This naturally carries with it the implication that the visible Church had become entangled in a dilemma. In aiming so high, with an emphasis on the superiority of the ascetic life, it is purported to harm the dignity of ordinary life; in eventually aiming so 'low', belief in an actively intervening and supposedly philanthropic God became useless in the general endeavour to improve the human condition.

Our own proposal in dealing with Taylor's notion of maximal demand, and eventually the life of the Church, will call upon the perspectival shift provoked by a genuinely Orthodox acceptance of negative theology, assumed in hesychastic practices. These differ, I suggest, from the unorthodox kind, advanced by contemporary authors who exercise apophatic rigour without the cataphatic counterpart of effective ontological participation. Again, the latter will imply what is most contested in the West: the ontological (and not merely institutional) status of the Church as ecclesial and Eucharistic event.¹³ The crushing, mutilating, or denying of what is essential to our humanity, whether this be thought of in terms of disdain of the body and sexuality, or a 'hyper-Augustinian juridical moralism', are out of the question. Moreover, perhaps, at the end of the day, the difficulty does not confine

¹³ On both the kinds of apophaticism and the ontological character of the Church, Christos Yannaras's *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite* (London: T&T Clark, 1985/2005) is an important source for us. The subject of apophaticism is also taken up by him in *Postmodern Metaphysics*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1993). As a brief statement of what he means in his thesis, for Yannaras, Heidegger's version of apophaticism, and that of those who follow him, is an 'apophaticism of essence' limited to the conviction that we might assent to the essence of an entity about whose existence we might have a concept, but whose reality cannot be known and, thereby, cannot be participated in. On the other hand, an Orthodox apophaticism is not a method. It is rather a mental stance and discipline. Expressed philosophically, it refers generically to an 'epistemic gap' between experience and the attempt to know it (i.e., the inability to translate adequately into conceptual terms what one actually knows through participatory belonging to what is effectively experienced). As far as the Church is concerned, she is the objective possibility through which apophatic knowledge of God may be attained. The signifying potential of this knowledge of God resides in the experience of the Eucharistic body, realised by the life-giving Spirit of God and provider of salvation.

itself to Western Christendom and the civilisation it has inspired. Perhaps, it instead results from a prolonged, consequential, and dramatic expression of what afflicts, *tout court*, human nature, namely, the existential inarticulacy of human and divine desiring, namely, the generally suppressed yearning of the synergetic bond in human being, already and always in need of realisation. In any event, and for this reason, what seems to be at issue is the struggle for a conceptual understanding of the Incarnation capable of substantially shaping our understanding of immanence, and which underscores the potential for enhancing ordinary life.

The idea of the immanent frame appears in the later sections of Taylor's *A Secular Age*, coming at a time in the general argument where he most insistently underscores the narrowness and contingency of the secularist project. His treatment of the idea, conceived from his genealogical and descriptive approach to his theme, adopts the usual immanent/transcendent dichotomy. In so doing, the thinking of transcendence is conceived in terms of an ultimate exterior horizon, the world, and the 'ontic logos'. In other words, it will fatally lead him, as Loudovikos intuitively, to stop short of ontologising social reality.

The Immanent Frame and Belief Dependence

Among his final considerations about the secularised state of contemporary Western humanity, Taylor concedes that contemporary people live prevalently with the conviction that whatever has import in our lives occurs within an immanent frame. Also, for the most part, they believe that the immanent frame presupposes not a second-tier transcendence like that predicated by the religion that had hitherto shaped the cosmic imagination of the populations, but a 'Closed World Structure'. Yet, this wide consensus that has become literally common sense for them does not, he argues, account by itself for a persistent desiring among human beings to live beyond this double enclosure. There is evidence that a wide range of artistic activity and spectacle, including—we might add—sports, in secularised societies has replaced for its populations institutional religion as the *locus* of 'epiphanic' experiences. In this, Taylor recognises the inner capacity in human beings to will and search for alternative outlets for their projects, to allow different languages and images to resonate and develop in their psyche.¹⁴ The immanent frame, and thereby the secularist narrative, is not immune to challenge by an alternative sense of selfhood that may not ultimately conceive of the frame as closed. It can potentially be open to the experience of more, of overcoming, worked, 'spun' by symbols and narratives that

¹⁴ Taylor's general approach has a family resemblance to the understanding/explanation distinction that Paul Ricoeur identified as the 'hermeneutical problem', derived from Wilhelm Dilthey's situating human-lived experience as different quantifiable natural sciences. Taylor's own *Explanation and Behaviour* also insists on the purposiveness of human agency as opposed to explanatory theory. For his sympathy with the 'retrieval of the lived experience' and phenomenology see, *Sources of the Self*, 470–71.

resist enclosure. Taylor qualifies this as the 'Jamesian open space' (i.e., the recognition that any construal of reality may be open to contestation and is largely determined by a mode of belief). The picture of the world that seems to hold us captive may be seen as such (i.e., as one potentially among many, some more meaningful than others). At the end of the day, a decision lies therein and it effectively touches on the direction of belief and personal context.

What pushes us one way or the other is what we might describe as our over-all take on human life, and its cosmic and (if any) spiritual surroundings. People's stance on the issue of belief in God, or an open versus closed understanding of the immanent frame, usually emerge out of our general sense of things.¹⁵

Surely reasons will be sought to sustain one version or the other. They have, however, an affective context-contingent beginning from which the rational process moves on; rationality does not operate without a cultural matrix that does indeed provide 'our general sense of things'. The immanent frame, then, is hardly neutral when seen thus from the perspective of human action; it is the result of persistent practices and speculative insights that precede theoretical constructs. So, it is that the 'closed world structure' that has undergirded secularism and has justified laicism in governance does so 'not primarily...[as] a conscious theoretical move, but rather [conceived] through certain deep pictures, which give further specificity to the pictures which underline the frame itself'.¹⁶ This, however, begs the question that will need some response about those 'certain deep pictures' which eventually feed into frames that articulate specific kinds of goods. However, for now, let us allow for its contingency and potential reworking of the ingredients that ultimately configure the 'picture', or discourse, and how they are punctuated.

Taylor himself raises this kind of interrogation in the context of the dilemmas that haunt contemporary life, namely, violence and death, advancing the notion that the secular mind ought not close itself off from the transformative potential the Christian faith might provide in regard to both of these dilemmas. The immanent frame may be affected and broadened from within the lived experience of human subjects toward other possibilities.

In societies where the general equilibrium point is firmly within immanence, where many people even have trouble understanding how a sane person could believe in God, the dominant secularisation narrative, which tends to blame our religious past for many of the woes of our world, will become less plausible over time...At the same time, this heavy concentration will

¹⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 550.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 557.

intensify a sense of living in a 'waste land' for subsequent generations, and many young people will begin to explore beyond boundaries.¹⁷

Taylor's prognostics in this passage for the world under the spell of secularism is telling for the sequence that it expresses and how it may apply to ordinary life. Facets of our current social reality seem to be simultaneously turning upon themselves and projecting themselves in different directions. In paraphrase, the sense of simultaneity and open-ended sequence may be formulated as follows:

- a) The time will come, or perhaps has already come, where theism turns out to be psychologically questionable option in the context where mental soundness is equated with acceptance of the secularist narrative; ordinary life is decidedly this-worldly, values efficiency, seeks productivity, and constitutes the ambit of reasonable and sharable values.
- b) The time will come, or perhaps has already come, when the secularist narrative, grounded in opposition to its own religious origins, is deemed noxious to human development; its turn toward a more utilitarian and naturalist project is no longer entirely convincing or satisfying (i.e., its own belief system and dogmas merit critical appraisal of its criteria for mental soundness). The instrumental stance taken as the measure of rationality is challenged by broader considerations of human subjectivity, encouraged by Romanticism and the increasing role of art in provoking epiphanic experiences; regulated ordinary life needs intensive moments of rupture, or rapture.
- c) The time will come, or perhaps has already come, when, for the most critical and dissatisfied, the kind of immanence postulated by secularism will appear to be empty of life and promise, will provoke a quest for something more; new languages, or revived older ones, will influence how people think, act, and conceive the worth and scope of ordinary life.

We seem to be at the point where the original goals of instrumental reason, namely, efficiency and controlled production, that created the space for ordinary life over against theistic metaphysics, have not exactly been lost but have been substantially altered, precisely under the pressure of subjective freedom and its 'feeling' of nature (i.e., its impulses) from within. Expressivity becomes an ingredient of ordinary life. In the place of disenchanted nature, a consequence of modernity's rejection of divine action in the physical cosmos, the poetics of subjective life engenders an enchantment of its own derived from its own inner depths. No longer the inwardness that Taylor noted as beginning with Augustine and culminating with Descartes's disengaged self, it now becomes the interiority of expressivity and its own epiphanic potential, closely identified with the nature and situation of the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 700.

self-creating artist *qua* artist. As a general definition, 'The epiphany is our achieving contact with something where this contact either fosters and/or itself constitutes a spiritually significant fulfilment of wholeness'.¹⁸ But, in the contemporary environment, it emerges exemplarily within the actual working of the artist who cannot be separate from it.

Impacted by Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's grounding of individual will within the impersonal Will and power inscribed in the cosmos, fuller affirmation of self translates into empowerment, resulting in the release of nature and desire from the constraints of religion and whatever metaphysics still remained residually in it. 'The source of unity and wholeness which Augustine found only in God is now to be found within the self'¹⁹—that is, what is good corresponds to the sentiments that appear to one as authentic; the source of moral vision is internalised. The occurrence of the epiphanic as part of the flow of the experience, though still conceived within the immanent frame as 'genuinely mysterious and possibly contains the key—or a key—to what is to be human', constitutes a moment of transcendence supported by the regularity that ordinary life, though affected by it, still represents its counterpoint.

In both of Taylor's works with which we have been dealing, we note concluding recommendations that suggest that we are, at the end of the day, left with the need to negotiate between the two ultimately disjointed dimensions of human being. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor resigns himself to the situation in which, 'Human life is irreducibly multileveled. The epiphanic and the ordinary but indispensable real can never be fully aligned, and we are condemned to live on more than one level—or else suffer the impoverishment of repression'.²⁰ In sum, the maximal demand for morality remains unresolved. In *A Secular Age*, the onus of repression lies with the Church and its legacy, but his expression of what is hoped for accentuates still further the power of the immanent to dictate the terms of the negotiation: 'And one needs today to explore again the profound interpenetration of eros and the spiritual life. This terribly fraught area in Western Christendom, where the sexual meets the spiritual, urgently awaits the discovery of new paths to God'.²¹ Speaking then for himself, Taylor envisages a release of the Church from that 'hyper-Augustinian juridical-penal framework', to a fuller embracing of divine *agape*, a non-power of self-donation and source of those epiphanies that are salvific. The picture of the Gospel as counter-violence, as response of healing forgiveness, can be conceived within the immanence of Jamesian open-space. Citing conversions (principally Catholic examples) and the literature that they have produced, disruption of the

¹⁸ Taylor, *Sources of Self*, 425.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 480.

²¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 767.

immanent order is possible by a creative appropriation of the spirit of tradition, the still fertile forms from a deeper past.

However, the question of discovering 'new paths to God' that he associates with new and more subtle languages still involves the matter of the content of experience and a certain arbitrariness in how it is conceived. It is arguable that the aggravated dichotomisation, the inarticulacy, in Western-inspired secularism lies in its propensity to create the semantic frameworks that it finds most accommodating to its project of emancipation, lending to it a provisional content, and ultimately an expression of 'will to power'. It is also an issue that Saint Gregory Palamas seems, *avant la lettre*, to have seen in his crucial commentary on the possibilities and limits of philosophy in the first part of the *Triads*.

The Hellenic Error and Beyond

In the midst of his defence of the Holy Hesychasts, Palamas defined what he called 'the Hellenic error' at the root of Barlaam's apology for the usefulness of pagan philosophy in the formation of the Athonite monks:

...to make the mind 'go out' not only from fleshly thoughts, but out of the body itself, with the aim of contemplating intelligible visions—that is the greatest of the Hellenic errors, the root and source of all heresies, an invention of demons, a doctrine which engenders fully and is itself the product of madness. As for us, we recollect the mind not only within the body and heart, but also within itself.²²

For Palamas, it is one thing to see the use of thought for ascetic purposes—to control the passions and the effects they might have on our mind (i.e., 'fleshly thoughts')—for the acquisition of virtue requires rational examination. It is quite another for thinking to separate itself from the very organism from which it is derived to establish in the mind's eye a realm of ideas that it takes for the reality that sustains the cosmos. To have fallen into this temptation is tantamount to an ancestral sin of sorts, affecting the practice of philosophy in general, namely, to overly accentuate knowing as seeing and creating concepts and placing them before us as if they were objects to be examined. The psychosomatic factor in the experiential knowledge of God and His uncreated energies brings with it a concomitant transformation of subjective life and divine illumination within bodily life that can be taken to be ordinary (i.e., 'human, too human') and, indeed, to be an index of what is most true about that life.

²² Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, trans. John Meyendorff (Mahwah, N.J: Paulist Press, 1983), 44.

Palamas' accusation consists thus in the following: making the 'mind "go out" of the body', of 'contemplating intelligible visions' for their own sake is not only an error but the root cause of unsound thinking: 'doctrine and source of all heresies, an invention of demons, a doctrine which engenders fully and is itself the product of madness.' This position would strongly suggest that something unreal—namely and eventually, the secularist narrative inspired by the instrumental stance—was gradually asserted and vigorously promoted against a more grounded sense of a mind that searches for the source of illumination and of bodily transformation from within the body.

Part of the defence of the Holy Hesychasts deals with the recognition, generally accepted in Orthodox spirituality as understood by the Athonite monks in their prayer life, that the noetic process is bodily and anchored in the heart. It is an invisible and incorporeal activity that is conjoined to the incensive centre of human being that we call the heart (i.e., 'that "body" most interior to the body').²³ The upshot of this usage of the 'heart', especially as governing under grace through prayer both the thinking faculty and the affections, is to postulate a transcendental activity within immanence. The cosmos is surely lived and known, but it is a result of the exercise of the whole human organism, set within the dynamics of self-giving Life that transmits to it power, or the energy, to do so. The illuminating *Logos* is the measure of reality made intelligible in Christ, who is unceasingly communicable to living human beings who believe and, thereby, see. This would surely be the work of grace apt to be lived, and most fully so, in ecclesial terms as liturgical and sacramental participation in the Body of Christ. That is, it is apophatic knowledge beyond the exercise of human reason but effectively experienced and capable of assuming, without violence or distortion, the practical order of ordinary life. Rather, the ontological participation and the consequent praxis that it encourages thereby renders to it the consistence that it is meant to have.²⁴

Philosophically speaking, Saint Gregory's 'de-constructive' observation about pagan philosophy merits special attention. Besides the support that it lends to the legitimacy of Hesychast spirituality as lived in the Orthodox Church, it suggestively points towards a fuller sense of the ontological weight of immanence. In a curious way, and at least on this point, it engages modernity's rejection of metaphysical realism as conceived in the scholastic tradition. The shift in focus becomes fixed on the inner-workings of subject life as the transcendental source of the conditions for

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴ From within the polemics with Barlaam over the use of Greek philosophical culture to acquire 'the wisdom of God, or even human wisdom in general', Saint Gregory sees the whole enterprise as destined for failure. In the spirit of apophaticism, he recommends a radical reduction of any good that could come from philosophy by comparing it to what good might come from a snake: you must begin to cut off its head, or 'wrong opinions concerning things intelligible and divine and primordial', and then proceed to sever the tail, 'the fabulous stories concerning created things'. The body that is left may, at most, have some therapeutic value, 'a gift of nature, and not of grace' (*Ibid.*, 29).

right thinking and right practice. However, for modernity and its sense of self, this movement inward resulted in a notion of immanence that became naturalised and, indeed, a frame assumed by secularised humanity as universally normative. As Taylor recognises, subjective life, immanent by definition, rests uneasily in enclosure: the exterior world may be disenchanted, but even in the process of secularisation and the loss of an all-defining religious reference, the sources of the modern self gradually discovered motives of enchantment in the arts and disciplines, like psychoanalysis. The symbolising of reality stems from the structuring of inner-life and the power of will. The human subject becomes a vehicle of transformation through his inner-powers, the success of which depends on the stance taken in regard to self and the world. Impinging on ordinary life, challenges to the immanent frame takes the form of retrieval of lived experience as a sign of rejection of the disengaged reason and the instrumental stance that it encouraged. Or, still within the terms of Taylor's long reflection on the genesis and character of the modern secularised world, there is a significant portion of this world that seeks openings in the Jamesian-space. They do so in desiring to see their ordinary life inspired by some kind of epiphanic experience that speaks to and from their subjective adherence to Life in a grander ontological sense that is also ecclesial. This may imply the adoption of a liturgical manner of living impelled by Eucharistic yearning. It is precisely here that we might recognise the contemporary pertinence of Hesychasm as magnifying the dimensions of transcendental immanence: we are always already *within* the self-giving reality of triadic divine reality operative in creation; every aspect of our bodily and spiritual life is, or is called to be, consubstantial, envisioning while actualising communion beyond the dichotomies of the ages.

In Conclusion

Taking him at his word, St Gregory noted a fault line in pagan philosophy that would affect the intellectual history of the West long after his lifetime. Moreover, it is one that escaped Nietzsche and Heidegger, authors of highly influential readings of Western civilisation. Both also sought to read the destiny of the West as intimately related to mutations occurring within Greek philosophising, and as having lasting repercussions. But Palamas' remark about the Hellenic error ought to appear to contemporary eyes as even more radical, that is, more literally at the root of a mode of conceptualising the human quest for self-understanding. This Hellenic error would eventually affect both Nietzsche and Heidegger, along with their considerable post-modern and poststructuralist progeny. For the most part, these were convinced of the generalised malaise of European-inspired civilisation, and that this pathology somehow relates to the Christian religion. Most of these were also intent on a soteriological mission to reconceptualise the human condition and bring it to a modicum of health, and were locked into the conviction that the intelligibility of their concep-

tualisations and arguments in support thereof is at least necessary, if not sufficient, to improve things.

However, though largely unbelieving, the modernist celebrating of subjectivity and the desire to retrieve the immediacy of experience, with its possible epiphanic dimension against instrumental reason, does, after all, resist the pervasive levelling of differences through its appeal to interiority as an instance of solace in relation to a closed world system. Yet the view of this interiority is severely truncated, coming as it does from within the process of secularisation. Thus, self-limited, it remains uncomprehending of the true reach the noetic process at work in the embodied existence of human being. As signalled in the Incarnation, the human body is *capax Dei* and, as a consequence, the human mind is enabled to participate in divine reality. The attaining of mental soundness entails the full synergetic involvement of the bodily powers with the *nous*, rooted in the economy of self-giving Life that descends, as it were, transcendently into human praxis, into ordinary life. It is the Life of ordinary life.

If tenable (i.e., actually liveable), it gives Spinoza's radical question about what the body can do an entirely renovated sense, with respect to late modernity's fixation on liberating the body's potential from the restraints of religious morality and vitality for the sake of personal expressivity in the name of authenticity. And it is precisely in the name of authenticity that Saint Gregory, following the Apostle, asserts the fundamental principle of the body's flesh as good. What is 'evil' is the 'law' of sin that occupies and persistently accuses it. Guided by Pauline doctrine, Palamas declares, 'there is nothing evil in the fact that the mind indwells the body; what is evil is "the law which is in our members", which fights against the law of the mind'.²⁵ Complicit with the law of sin is the law imposed from without, as in Pharisaic law, that sets out to formulate a rational procedure, making the mind go out of the body, to dictate the contours of the acceptable. Put otherwise, truncated interiority goes together with a truncated conception of the mind—or the 'buffered self', as Taylor describes it in *A Secular Age*. The Palamite response is decidedly ontological in relation to the law of the mind, the power of the soul: crucially, 'we recollect the mind not only within the body and heart, but within itself',²⁶ as exemplified by the hesychast, who aims to conform 'to the inner movement he seeks for his mind; [recalling] into the interior of the heart a power which is ever flowing outwards through the faculty of sight'.²⁷ Passions purified, mind illumined, the world is seen aright.

Being in *theosis*, the intention of both mind and flesh are transformed from within, and immanence is enhanced by the divine energies. The ascetic practices and prayer that make spiritual progress possible cultivate sensations that result from the struggle to dominate the passions and engage with the permanent energy

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

of the grace rooted in the soul/self. These 'blessed' practices and the intensity of their spiritual attainment provide the concrete context for manifestations of divine action that are incomprehensible to onlookers. '...it is through the mediation of [the Hesychasts'] souls and bodies that God effects things supernatural, mysterious and incomprehensible to the wise of this world'.²⁸

What we should like to retain here from the circular and self-transcending noetic movement is its engagement with self-giving divine life; together they are ontologically constitutive of subjective life that is transcendental and unitive. The acquired power is always already a gift for greater life and the ground for goods and rights that are not conquered against but attained with and within the absolutely eternal, apophatic in essence but liveable as all-embracing immanence and Life itself for all things, unto social reality.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

BOOK REVIEWS

*Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—
The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory
Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*

ED. CONSTANTINOS ATHANASOPOULOS

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This volume contains the proceedings of the International Conference on the Philosophy and Theology of St Gregory Palamas held at Thessaloniki, Veroia, and Mount Athos in March 2012, supplemented by a few further papers delivered at the World Congress of Philosophy in Athens in August 2013. Although it is a hefty volume containing twenty-six papers, not all that were delivered at the conference are included here, and at least one important contribution has been published elsewhere (that of Richard Swinburne, published in *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking*, edited by Andrew Schumann).

The papers cover a wide range of topics, and I can offer here only a brief overview. One group explores neglected themes in Palamas' theology as they emerge in works not related to the hesychast controversy. First within this group are papers by Dimitrios Tselengides, Georgios Panagopoulos, and Mikonjia Knežević dealing with Palamas' teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit in his *Apodictic Treatises*. All three authors argue for a close linkage between Palamas' rejection of the filioque and his use of the essence/energies distinction, and Knežević in particular offers a careful account of the difference between the hypostatic procession of the Spirit from the Father and the energetic manifestation of the Spirit from the Father through the Son. Next, Fr Manuel Sumares offers an interesting reflection on Palamas' view of the Theotokos, arguing that for Palamas the Theotokos effectively displaces Moses as the paradigmatic mystical theologian. Finally, Stavros Yangazoglou and Fr Demetrios Harper attempt to situate Palamas' Eucharistic theology in relation to his views on hesychasm, arguing that deification for Palamas depends not only on the uncreated divine energies but on the restoration and fulfilment of human nature by Christ, and so requires participation in the life of Christ through the Eucharist.

Although these last two papers are undoubtedly correct in broad outline, they raise many questions. If the Eucharist is truly essential, what are we to make of hermits who go many years without it? And why does Palamas say so little about it in his hesychast works? Conversely, could not Palamas say most of what he wishes to say about the Eucharist without invoking the essence/energies distinction? It seems

to me that, despite these two fine essays, more needs to be done to knit together these two sides of Palamas' theology.

Another group of papers examines philosophical themes and influences in Palamas' work. Within this group we find Filip Ivanovic critiquing the notion that there is a 'Christological corrective' in Palamas' adaptation of the Areopagite; Georgios Mantzarides on Palamas' treatment of divine simplicity; Patricia Calvário on the ontology underlying Palamas' teaching on deification; Dan Chițoiu on the 'existential realism' of Palamas' account of the divine energies; Christophe Erismann on Palamas' use of Aristotle's categories (arguing, in contrast to Chițoiu, that Palamas is a non-realist); and two papers by Fr Michael Pacella noting some common sources and aims of Palamas and Aquinas.

Two further papers in this group call for particular comment. Stephen R. L. Clark provides a wide-ranging comparison of Palamas with Plotinus. Although Clark is an eminent scholar and his engagement with Palamas is certainly to be welcomed, it seems to me that he strains too hard to minimize real differences on topics such as divine freedom and the need (or absence thereof) for a saviour. Plotinus was by his own choice not a Christian, and we do him no service by attempting to baptize him *post mortem*. In another very interesting paper, Fr Nikolaos Loudovikos contributes a sophisticated argument that the rival theologies of Aquinas and Palamas lead to different views of history: Aquinas to an 'antagonistic' view in which God remains aloof from any real engagement with his creatures, and Palamas to a view in which there is real 'dialogical reciprocity' between God and man. Loudovikos argues that the Thomistic view laid the foundation for the subsequent secularization of history in authors such as Vico and Hegel. I found this a fascinating paper full of rich insights, although parts are in need of fuller exposition. For example, more attention is needed to precisely what Aquinas means by denying that God has a 'real relation' to creatures, a claim that for him carries a specific technical meaning.

The third group of papers deals with aspects of Palamas' influence and reception. This group includes a paper by Anna Koltiou-Nikita on Demetrios Cydones; Elena Dulgheru and Spyridon Panagopoulos on the influence of Palamas in late medieval iconography; Oleg Dushin on the revival of Palamite studies among twentieth-century Russian scholars; and papers by Archimandrite Ephraim of Vatopaidi, Monk Adrianos of Vatopaidi, Hieromonk Melchisedec of the Monastery of St John the Baptist, and Georgios Mantzarides on the influence of Palamas on contemporary Orthodox monasticism. (A further paper, by Dimitar Atanassov on Byzantine attitudes toward nudity, bears little relation to Palamas.) Perhaps most interesting, at least from my point of view, is a careful discussion by Norman Russell of why Palamas' followers described the essence-energies distinction as conceptual (*kat' epinoian*) even though Palamas himself seems to have deliberately avoided doing so.

The 2012 conference was such a success that three of the participants (Professors Athanasopoulos, Chițoiu, and Dushin) have begun organizing regular international

Palamas colloquia. Let us hope that these meetings will lead to further publications on this important saint and father of the Church.

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THE EDITORIAL TEAM of *Analogia* is pleased to announce that the originally planned two-volume special series on St Gregory Palamas has been expanded to three volumes due to high interest from the scholarly community. The second issue of the three-volume series is to be released in winter 2017–18. The third and final volume will be released in spring 2018.

Following the series on St Gregory Palamas, *Analogia* will feature an issue dedicated to the Byzantine reception of Aristotelian thought to be released fall of 2018.



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