

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 Kavasilas 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.

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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 Kalothetos, 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 Αθηνῶν, 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 Kausokalyvites* 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. Constanas, ‘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 δόγματα καὶ ἔργα*, vol. 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ερευνῶν, 1983); and for his *Encomium* on Palamas, see D. Tsames, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ 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. Constanas, ‘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, ‘L’opera teologica 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: ‘Εγὼ 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 Evagrian 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. Constan, '"Nothing is Greater than Divine Love": Evagrius of Pontos, 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 néopatristique orthodoxe du P. Georges Florovsky a découvert dans la tradition palamite la seule pensée susceptible de relever le défi que le secularism modern 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 néoscolastique 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 l'essence et des énergies incréées' ('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 modern 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 δογματικά καὶ συμβολικά 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 (πεῖρα) 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 Ἔργα, Κριτική Ἐκδοσὴ* (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 διάστασις 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 (*τράνως*) 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 *Hagioritic 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 θεολογικοῦ συνεδρίου εἰς τιμὴν καὶ μνήμην τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ Παλαμά (12–14 Νοεμβρίου 1984)* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἱερά Μεγίστη Μονὴ 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 *Verse 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 Neellenici* 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 Βαρθολαῖμ 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 Protagma 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.