

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 Guiland, 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 Hesy-chasm: 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 Παλαμάς. 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, *Κοινωνία θεώσεως. 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, *Εξί φιλοσοφικές ζωγραφίες* (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 2011), 204–6.

⁴⁷ The main treatments of this distinction are in Christos Yannaras, *Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρως* (Αθήνα: Domos, 1987), §§9, 19–23; trans. Norman Russell, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 28–30, 52–70; and *idem*, *Σχεδιάσμα Εἰσαγωγῆς στὴ Φιλοσοφία* (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 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* 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 Jugie.

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 Μετοχής. Εἶναι καὶ Μέθεξι στὸν Γρηγόριο Παλαμᾶ καὶ τὸν Θωμᾶ Ἀκινάτη* (Athina: 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 ποῖόν 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 contruction 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.