


# Analogia



ST GREGORY  
PALAMAS

SPECIAL SERIES – PART 2

*For those who exist and live in a divine and supernatural way, the inspired life and grace are most truly divine activity, through which union is effected between God and those who are worthy of God.*

*(On Divine and Deifying Participation 19)*



## EDITORIAL

Following the first volume of *Analogia* dedicated to the theology of St Gregory Palamas, the second volume in this series continues with this theme and has equally important essays to offer on this significant father. The first paper is a masterful translation, by Kirsten H. Anderson, of the crucially important Palamite treatise *On Divine and Deifying Participation* (Περὶ θείας καὶ θεοποιοῦ μεθέξεως). This treatise succeeds in elucidating a significant part of Palamite terminology in just a few paragraphs, representing some further subtle explanations given by St Gregory to Gregory Akyndinos, his friend and initial exponent, who had suddenly turned against his former mentor.

In the second paper, entitled ‘Paul the Hesychast: Gregory Palamas and the Pauline Foundations of Hesychast Theology and Spirituality’, Fr Maximos Conostas skilfully explores the Pauline affiliation of St Gregory’s Hesychast theology, showing that the Hesychast controversy was ultimately a debate about who was a true follower of Paul. This invaluable essay could become the cause of much fruitful theological discussion.

In the “‘The Life and the Light’: The Influence of Saint Symeon the New Theologian on the Teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas’, Fr Porphyrios Georgi insightfully demonstrates the deep existential influence that St Symeon exercises upon Palamas’ thought. As Georgi shows, although the great Hesychast does not intensely quote Symeon, he absolutely endorses his empirical method of divine participation.

Tone Svetelj, in his paper ‘Gregory Palamas and Political Hesychasm in the Fourteenth and the Twentieth Centuries’, successfully explores the relationship between fourteenth-century Hesychasm and the so called Neo-Orthodox movement in the in the twentieth century, analysing the latter’s basic proposal concerning the possibility of reintroducing the concept of autonomous ecclesial community into the modern political debate.

Stoyan Tanev, in his paper ‘Created and Uncreated Light in Augustine and Gregory Palamas: The Problem with Legitimacy in Attempts for Theological Reconciliation’, initiates a serious discussion of Augustine’s and Gregory Palamas’ concepts of the vision of God and the created and uncreated light, triggered by the recent publication of a significant book by an Orthodox theologian.

Finally, Alexis Torrance, in his paper ‘Receiving Palamas: The Case of Cyprus, 1345–71’, exclusively focuses on the Palamite controversies within the Latin Crusader Kingdom of Cyprus. This extremely important paper shows that, contrary to a certain scholarly trend which tends to discover as many types of Palamism as there are Palamites, there exists an impressive convergence among the pro-Palamites, centred precisely on the very core of St Gregory’s theology (i.e., his doctrine of deification).

– *Nikolaos Loudovikos*, Senior Editor



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**GREGORY PALAMAS:**  
**ON DIVINE AND DEIFYING PARTICIPATION**  
**(ΠΕΡΙ ΘΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΠΟΙΟΥ ΜΕΘΕΞΕΩΣ)**

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*Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

*On Divine and Deifying Participation*<sup>2</sup> was written by Gregory Palamas during the middle phase of the Hesychast Controversy, 1341–1347, between his two most important works, the *Triads* (1337–40) and the *One Hundred Fifty Chapters* (1350). Soon after the condemnation of Barlaam at the Patriarchal Synod of 1341, Palamas faced a new opponent in Gregory Akindynos, who had formerly supported and defended Palamas and the Athonite monks through 1341.<sup>3</sup> Akindynos began to have misgivings about Palamas' notion of grace at the Synod, and urged Palamas then to retract from his writings expressions Akindynos thought objectionable, such as referring to the divine 'essence' and 'activities' as 'greater' and 'lesser' divinities. After the Synod, he began official proceedings against Palamas. In response to these new accusations, Palamas wrote six treatises from 1341 to 1342, sometimes called the *Dogmatic Orations*, of which *On Divine and Deifying Participation* is the third. These writings constituted an act of defiance against the prohibition in the Synodal Tome of 1341 of further debate on the subject. Consequently, Palamas was imprisoned for a time, and then temporarily excommunicated in November 1344.<sup>4</sup>

The first two of the six treatises written at this time (*On Union and Distinction* and *Apology*) address the ways we can speak of union and distinction with reference to the divine, arguing that a distinction between 'essence' and 'activities' does not entail a belief in two gods. The third (*On Divine and Deifying Participation*) focuses on the difference between the general participation in God that every creature

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks go to Alexis Torrance, for whose doctoral seminar on the Hesychast Controversy I first translated this text in the fall of 2015, and who gave me many helpful comments on the translation in preparation for its publication.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Palamas, *De participatione quae deos faciat*, in Greek as *Περὶ θείας καὶ θεοποιου μεθέξεως*, in Panagiotes Chrestou, ed., *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1966), 2:137–63.

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of Akindynos' interaction with Palamas, and his later opposition to Palamas' concept of grace, see the introduction in Angela Constantinides Hero, ed., *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Sinkewicz, 'Gregory Palamas', in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, ed. Carmello Giuseppe Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 2:134–35.

naturally shares by virtue of existence, life, or intelligence and the participation in the deifying action of God. The next three treatises (*Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite*, *Theophanes*, and *Barlaam and Akinydnos Divide the One Divinity*) further develop the theme of participation in the context of the ‘essence’-‘activities’ distinction.<sup>5</sup> The debate continued with Akinydnos’ response to the fourth of these six treatises, and Palamas’ subsequent *Antirrhetic Treatises*.<sup>6</sup>

Gregory Palamas’ understanding of participation has been subject to especial critique, both by his contemporaries<sup>7</sup> and ours.<sup>8</sup> Palamas’ position that God’s ‘essence’ is inaccessible and unparticipated while his ‘activities’ are participated has been interpreted by opponents as meaning that God is composed of different parts—one part inaccessible, another part accessible, one part simple, another multiple, one part indivisible, another quantified and divided among many participants. Further, posing the ‘activities’ as intermediate between creatures and the divine ‘essence’ seems to indicate that the saints participate in a ‘lesser’ level of God’s being, or in some mysterious effusion from God that is not really God himself. Defenders of Palamas, on the other hand, maintain that this distinction is the only way to preserve a coherent notion of participation, in which creatures truly participate in God, but do not themselves contain the divine ‘essence’ or become extinguished in fusion with it.<sup>9</sup>

This short treatise, devoted entirely to explicating what Gregory thinks deifying participation in God is, how it works, and what it says about the nature of God, contributes a valuable resource for further study of Palamas’ notion of ‘participation’, and should be taken into account along with the relevant material in the *Triads* and *150 Chapters*.

The main points that concern Palamas in this treatise are three: first, Palamas argues that the saints who are deified participate in God himself, not a created reality; thus, the ‘activity’ of God in the saints is the divine life itself, the indwelling of God. According to Palamas, Akinydnos thinks of grace as a ‘natural imitation’.<sup>10</sup> Palamas argues, in contrast, that what the saints partake of is God himself.<sup>11</sup> Paul says, ‘I live,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 140–41.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>7</sup> Participation becomes a more significant part of the controversy with the accusations of Gregory Akinydnos, but the most vigorous and critique of Palamas’ understanding of participation came later from Nikephoros Gregoras, in his *Antirrhetika*.

<sup>8</sup> One of the more severe critiques can be found in Rowan Williams, ‘The Philosophical Structures of Palamism’, *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977): 27–42.

<sup>9</sup> Some recent voices in favor of reconsidering Palamas’ notion of participation include Eric Perl, ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation’, *Dionysius* 14 (1990): 105–30, and Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antiquity and Early Christian Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). David Bradshaw has also spoken out strongly in defense of Palamas’ distinction, although his treatment of participation in particular is not very thorough. David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Gregory Palamas, *De participatione* 2, 4, 7, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4, 7, 11–13, 20.

but I no longer, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20), and the saints perform that which belongs properly only to God—e.g. raising the dead back to life—testifying to the presence of God himself in them.<sup>12</sup>

Second, Palamas aims to clarify that this deifying participation is 'participation' in the true and proper sense (*kuriōs*), as opposed to that general 'participation' that all creatures have by virtue of their nature as creatures.<sup>13</sup> In one vivid image, he points out that when a pot is in the kiln, it shares in the very life of the fire, taking on its hot and burning qualities, becoming capable of transferring that very 'activity' to something else.<sup>14</sup> When removed from the fire, the pot still participates in the fire's effects (thanks to the fire, it now has a particular colour, hardness, weight, etc.), but it no longer participates in the 'activity' of the fire itself.<sup>15</sup> The participation in the 'activity' of the fire is the truer participation than the participation in the effects. Thus, while all creatures participate in the effects of their creator, not all participate in God's very life; that is reserved for the saints, who have God not only as 'maker', but also as 'Father', through divine adoption.<sup>16</sup>

Third, Palamas argues that God's self-impartment to many participants, in varying kinds and degrees, is fully compatible with divine unity and simplicity. In response to Akindynos' worry that this understanding of participation 'chops God up',<sup>17</sup> making him a composite thing that is divisible among so many different participants, and in so many different degrees, Palamas calls upon the concept of emanation (*aporroia*) to communicate a kind of impartation in which what is given is not cut off from the giver. Thus, like a ray from the sun, divine life may be imparted to creatures without being cut off from God.<sup>18</sup> The unity and simplicity of God are not endangered by this view of creatures' real participation in God's 'activities', because they are neither 'self-subsistent' entities (*authupostata*) nor properties that admit of change in the subject.<sup>19</sup> To maintain that the 'activities' are identical to the 'essence', he claims, would be to believe either in many different Gods or in a totally insubstantial set of properties.<sup>20</sup>

A few words on the translation: I have chosen to translate Palamas' *energeia* as 'activity' rather than the more common rendering, 'energy'. My choice has two motivations: I believe that the English term 'energy' unnecessarily reifies the concept, inviting the misinterpretation of *ἐνέργεια* as some *thing* mysteriously flowing from God, and distinct from him. Further, 'energy' is not immediately recognizable as the same concept as 'activity', 'actuality', or 'operation', the English words with which

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12–14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 25–26.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 27.



*energeia* is generally translated in philosophical and theological writings from Aristotle through the Patristic literature preceding Palamas. The word ‘activity’ more readily suggests this historical continuity.<sup>21</sup>

The Greek vocabulary of participation employed by Palamas comprises verbs and nouns formed by the combination of *meta-* and the verbs *echō*, *lambanō*, *lanchanō*, *didōmi*, and *eimi*. I have tried to capture the nuances evoked by the different base verbs in my choices for translation. For example, *metechō* indicates a *state* of ‘participating’, but *metalambanō* a *process* of ‘getting a share’. *Metalanchanō* similarly represents a *process*, but with a slightly stronger emphasis on ‘receiving’.<sup>22</sup> I have rendered *metousia* as ‘communion’, but the etymological continuity with the other vocabulary of participation, maintained by *meta-*, should be kept in mind.

To describe the obverse of ‘participation’, that is, participation viewed from the side of the giver, God, Palamas consistently uses *metadidōmi* and its variants. No perfect English counterpart exists for this word. Most English translators of Palamas use a variety of terms meaning ‘give’ or ‘communicate’, obscuring both the unity of the concept and its relation to participation.<sup>23</sup> Wishing to preserve in English a similar etymological link between the terms describing the two sides of participation, maintained in the Greek by the shared prefix *meta-*, I have rendered *metadidōmi* as ‘impart’.<sup>24</sup> Erring on the side of redundancy, I have expanded the translation from time to time with ‘a share’ or ‘of oneself’, in order to highlight the self-involvement that the verb *metadidōmi* entails.

### Translation

1) Come, let us set forth now what each side says, when intending to account for the difficulty. Against us they say, ‘If you maintain that grace in the saints is “uncreated” for no other reason than that they participate in God, and all creatures participate in God (for he pervades all and imparts a share to all: to some [a share of] being, and to others, in addition to being, life that is sensitive, rational, or intel-

<sup>21</sup> Several recent works of scholarship dealing with Palamas have adopted the language of ‘activity’ over ‘energy’: Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*; ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation’; and the translation of Gregory Palamas’ *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite*, trans. Rein Ferwerda (Binghamton, NY: Global Publications, 1999). Tollefsen is expressly interested in linking the term with its historical philosophical and theological use (Tollefsen, 186). On the other side, David Bradshaw (*Aristotle East and West*, 238), changes from ‘activity’ to ‘energy’ when he begins his treatment of Palamas, wishing to emphasise the sense of ‘divine power and presence that is perceptible to the purified senses’.

<sup>22</sup> My attention was drawn to this distinction between *state* and *process* verbs of participation by Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan in their translation of Plato’s *Parmenides* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), 26, n. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Other translators of Palamas’ works use a variety of different English verbs for *metadidōmi* within the same work, further obscuring the fact that the term represents a central and unified concept of participation. See for example Robert Sinkewicz’s translation of *150 Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), and John Meyendorff’s translation of the *Triads*, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Eric Perl also uses ‘impart’ for *metadidōmi*, ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation’.

lective), then all things will possess something uncreated: some having being, others life, and still others reasoning and intellection.<sup>25</sup> If we were in perfect harmony with the saints, we would have considered these things unworthy of response. For faith governs Christian doctrine, not rational demonstration. But for the sake of those being swept away by their seemingly plausible arguments, it may be necessary to reply to their accusations with the following: if this is why *you* call divine-working grace in the saints ‘created’, then since all created things participate in God, according to you every created thing will be called ‘holy’ and every creature ‘deified’. Not only will rational creatures be ‘holy’—let alone rational creatures who partake of the deifying gift of the Spirit—but, in addition to these, the non-rational and inanimate. But why, if this is the case, does one receive a share of a better existence and life than another? Even among the saints, you should perceive a difference. Thus, according to you, the bee would be holier than the fly, the lamb holier than the bee, certain others holier than the lamb, and a human being, in turn, holier than these, even if it happens to be Jezebel. And again, an ant would be holier than mosquitos, a ram holier than an ant, and, if you like, a bull or stag or some other wild animal holier still, while a human being would in turn be holier than these, even if he is like Ahab. Even the sort of person who drags us down to such laughable notions through his absurd teachings, who is clearly marshaled against the Gospel of Christ, would be ‘holy’.

2) For if the deifying gifts of the Spirit in the saints are ‘created’, and are ‘like a habit’ or a ‘natural imitation’, as our trouble-maker goes around teaching,<sup>26</sup> then the saints are not deified beyond nature, nor are they born of God, nor are they spirit, as having been born of the Spirit, and, one spirit with the Lord, being joined to him (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). Neither is it only to those who believe in his name that Christ, who resided with us, has given the authority to become children of God (cf. John 1:12). For even before his residence with us, he was already present among the nations—if, that is, he is in us by nature—even now in both the irreverent and ungodly. Listen to the seventh dialogue of Maximus with Pyrrhus, where he says, ‘By the Spirit of God Moses and David were moved (and whoever else became capable of containing God’s activity), when they put off human and fleshly characteristics.’<sup>27</sup> And again, in another place, he says, ‘When the image ascends to the archetype and receives the divine activity (or, rather, when it [the image] becomes god by deification), and when the soul’s enjoyment increases in ecstatic separation from that which by nature

<sup>25</sup> This is not a direct quotation, at least among the texts from Akindynos that we have. Here, as elsewhere in the treatise, Palamas paraphrases his opponent’s accusation.

<sup>26</sup> Palamas attributes this claim to Akindynos in several places (*Epistula* 1.6.6; *Epistula ad Acindynum et Barlaam* 5.15.27; *Orationes Antirrheticæ* 2.11.42; *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* 21. Cf. *Triads* 3.1.25). In his refutation of Palamas’ *Dialogue*, Akindynos responds to Palamas’ accusations against him on this count (*Refutatio Magna* 1.19, 2.30, 2.31). The language seems to derive from Ps. Dionysius’ *Epistle* 2.1.3, where he calls grace an *amimēton mimēma*, or ‘inimitable imitation’.

<sup>27</sup> Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrhus* 165 (PG 91:297A).

belongs to it and is thought to pertain to it, this happens through the triumph of the very grace of the Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

3) Therefore, the deified are not simply improved with regard to their nature; rather, they receive in addition the divine activity itself, the very Holy Spirit. For this is how it is, according to the great Basil: ‘Whenever we reflect upon the Spirit’s proper place, we contemplate him as being with the Father and the Son, but whenever we consider the grace activated in his partakers, we say that the Spirit is *in us*.’<sup>29</sup> But if grace is in the saints just like it is in all creatures, and if God, according to his wise purposes, creates holiness in the saints just like he creates in other creatures whatever is proper [to their nature], what need is there of Christ and his coming? What need is there of his baptism, and of the authority and power given to us from him? What need is there for the Spirit to be breathed forth afresh, sent, and made to indwell? For since he is in everything, he is already in us. If this is so, it will be the case that God creates and deifies in the same way. However, Basil the Great states clearly, ‘If God creates and begets in the same way, then Christ is both our Creator and Father in the same way; for he is God, and has no need of [giving] adoption through the Holy Spirit.’<sup>30</sup> The Apostle says, *He raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that, in the coming ages, he might show the excessive wealth of his grace, through his goodness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone boast* (Eph 2:6–9). Are you trying to fashion deification to be of works alone that proceed from natural imitation, saying that this deifying gift and divine grace is ‘imitation from nature’? *If someone does not have the spirit of Christ, this one does not belong to him* (Rom 8:9), and *the Spirit of God abides in us* (1 Cor 3:16) and *we have all been given to drink one Spirit* (1 Cor 12:13), and *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with him]* (1 Cor 6:17). Christ resides in the hearts of believers through the Spirit, and *hearing the word of truth, and believing in it, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance* (Eph 1:13–14), and *in this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given to us of his Spirit* (1 John 4:13), and *you did not receive a spirit of slavery, but a spirit of adoption* (Rom 8:15).

4) But are you saying that even those who, through the utmost purity of heart, see and experience the brilliance of God, and receive the Son with the Father—when he comes and makes his abode with them, and manifests himself in them according to his promise—are you saying that these partakers are only spectators of created things? What are you saying? *The Spirit of Christ* (Rom 8:9), *the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 3:16), *the Holy Spirit of promise, the pledge of the inheritance for the saints* (Eph 1:13–14), *the Spirit of adoption* (Rom 8:15), *the promise of the Spirit* (Gal

<sup>28</sup> Maximus, *Ambigua ad Ioannem* 7.12 (PG 91:1076C).

<sup>29</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 26, 63 (PG 32:184C).

<sup>30</sup> Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 4 (PG 29:692A).

3:14), which the Son, receiving from the Father, gratuitously bestowed on those who believe in him, which, according to the prophet Joel, *has been poured out on the male and female servants of God from his Spirit* (Joel 2:29, Acts 2:17)—do you think that this Spirit is a natural imitation? And you go about, proclaiming the ‘ungodliness’ of those who ‘do not cease to slander you’? Are you not put to shame by the Apostle when he says that *our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor 6:19)? And again, *You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you* (1 Cor 3:16)? Indeed, was a slave habitation ever permitted the honour of the name ‘temple’? But if he is in us just like he is in everything, then every other non-rational creature, beast, and creeping thing is a temple of God, not to mention the Hellenes who worshipped these creatures and other objects they fashioned for reverence. If this is so, then the Apostle elevates believers and ‘the approved’ in vain when he says, *For do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1 Cor 3:16) *Unless of course you are unapproved* (2 Cor 13:5).

5) But ‘you chop up the divine Spirit’, he says, ‘by calling what is uncreated and transcendent “lower”. And you measure God off by saying that more grace is present in one of the saints, but less in another. And you say that this grace is not that likeness to God which each obtains for himself by imitation, but something else beyond this, from above, both gift and uncreated.’<sup>31</sup> Against whom are you resolved to bring this charge—against us or against the Prophet? Rather, you bring it against the God of the prophets, who said through one of them, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh* (Joel 2:28), and against the Apostle, who says, *apportionments of the Holy Spirit* (Heb 2:4), and against Dionysius, who writes clearly, ‘It is the One whom all “one-like beings” desire, but it is not in a single manner that they participate in him who is one and the same, but as he distributes to each, proportionately according as [each] is worthy.’<sup>32</sup> The Spirit, then, is neither weighed nor measured; rather, the Spirit himself measures what participates, distributing to each according to each one’s own worthy and saving righteousness. It is not that the Spirit is divided into parts, but that we only have room in the smallest degree to contain the whole [Spirit] in a partless way, when he illumines us.

6) Paul too is recorded to have met briefly with the lustre of that great light (cf. Acts 9:3). And on the mountain, those who ascended saw the glory of the Lord, [although] ‘not the whole [of it], lest they throw away their life by such a sight.’<sup>33</sup> Not only is it undivided among the divided, but also, as a unifying power, it unifies the participants to the extent possible, and elevates them to the unity and deifying simplicity of the Father who draws them together. Thus, fittingly, on account of the unity of those under his providence, the Spirit, proceeding forth and multiply-

<sup>31</sup> Palamas’ own paraphrase of his opponent’s argument.

<sup>32</sup> Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1.2 (PG 3:373B; Günter Heil and Adolph Martin Ritter, eds., *Corpus Dionysiacum II* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991], 65).

<sup>33</sup> Third sticheron (second tone idiomelon) at Vespers, the Feast of the Transfiguration (Aug 6).

ing, remains within himself according to his super-essential power. But if such a 'pouring out', 'sending forth', and 'procession' is a manifestation—for, [Paul] says, *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each for benefit* (1 Cor 12:7)—will the Spirit be measurable, who measures out his appearance in proportion to those who mystically petition him? Not being profitable for everyone, he is never manifested completely. Since he infinitely surpasses all manifestation and intellection, is he divided or composed out of something lesser and something greater? Do you, who are wise in every respect, not comprehend that what is manifested or intellectually grasped or participated is not a *part* of God—so that there be division, and that God suffer, as you suppose—but that the whole is both shown somehow and not shown, both understood intellectually and not understood intellectually, and both participated and unparticipated?

7) But if, as even the great Dionysius says, 'deification is a making-like and a union with God',<sup>34</sup> how could we hold deification to be a 'natural imitation'? For, while there is need of our becoming-like, so that we may be harmoniously disposed to that union *through which* deification is completed, yet, apart from union, becoming-like does not suffice for deification. I say that there *also* needs to be a becoming-like, arising from vigilance and practice of God's precepts, but this is not simply accomplished through natural imitation, but through the power of the Spirit, which descends from above at the time of our holy regeneration and adheres to<sup>35</sup> the baptised in an ineffable way. Through this grace, those *born not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God* (John 1:13), like newborn babes, *are able to arrive at the measure of the fullness of Christ* (Eph 4:13). For, Dionysius says, 'No one could know what is divinely delivered, nor indeed would any one be able to practice it, who does not have a divine beginning'.<sup>36</sup> Learn then, beloved friend, 'from the get-go', as they say, the supernatural character of deification. How could this deification, to which nature itself, by its own power, does not give access, be the natural and created *telos* of nature? And if, in its source, it surpasses natural imitation by a wide margin, how will it be a perfected natural imitation? John the son of Zachariah also baptised, but only in water. Jesus the Son of God baptises, but in water and Spirit. What rise in rank is this? Is it in word only? Not at all. It is the divine-working grace and power itself, the Holy Spirit itself, being poured forth on the baptised, not according to essence, but adhering<sup>37</sup> in the manner of the immanent, implanted grace of sanctification. But if this grace itself is a creature, and we who have a share in it have partaken of some created thing, how is the Holy Spirit uncreated?

<sup>34</sup> Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1.3 (PG 3:376A; Heil and Ritter, 66).

<sup>35</sup> Literally, 'grows upon' (*prosphuetai*). Palamas employs organic language like this several times to indicate the manner of the divine life in those being deified.

<sup>36</sup> Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 2.1 (PG 3:392B; Heil and Ritter, 69).

<sup>37</sup> Literally, 'growing round about' (*periphuomenon*).



8) As the great Athanasius says, 'If by communion in the Spirit, we have become sharers of the divine nature, someone would be raving mad to say that the Spirit is of a created nature and not that of the Son.'<sup>38</sup> How then is Christ the Son of God, if he also baptises in a creature, like John did, and instils a created power and grace into the baptised? [How can we say this of him] who is *ordained*, according to Paul, clearly foreknown, and confirmed as *Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead* (Rom 1:4)? Why then, is the power, which reveals and demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God, a creature? And how would he have been made known as God through it? Do not be preoccupied with the power of cleansing the lepers, enlightening the blind, raising the hunched, and straightening the paralysed—for it belongs to pharisaical dim-sightedness to look at that first [power]—rather, consider the power that invisibly loosens the bond of former sins, preparing a place for the Spirit of holiness, setting upright the inward human being and illuminating him, and, through union with God, raises the soul from the dead and causes it to live in a divine manner, granting it the divine and truly everlasting life of God. For the resurrection of the body naturally follows upon the resurrection of soul, just as the death of the body followed upon the death of the soul at the beginning. For this is the death of the soul: alienation from life in God. And such a death is truly dreadful; but the other that comes after, namely the death of the body, can even be prayed for (Phil 1:21–22). For love of humankind is divine, of which the throng of condemned—alas!—will be deprived in the coming judgment. For such a resurrection awaits those who have not used well their 'talent' of God-given divine grace (cf. Matt 25:29–30). This resurrection follows immediately upon that second death, just as John has revealed to us in his *Apocalypse*, and it is worse than death. But if in this manner they live, deathless, although already dead, then also many of those now living are dead, just as the Lord of life and death attested. There is, then, a death of the soul, even if it remains deathless by nature. How then does it live, receiving a share of creaturely life? Actually, it is dead, even while living by its own power. Indeed, to live once more, in a better manner, it must obtain a share of the uncreated life, which is itself not separated from the Spirit. For this reason, Basil, a partaker, says (speaking from experience), 'The life which the Spirit emits to the hypostasis of another is not separated from him, but he holds the life in himself, and those participating in him live in a divine manner, having acquired a divine and heavenly life.'<sup>39</sup>

9) Are you willing for this to be taught clearly, that those made worthy to be deified have a share in the Holy Spirit himself, not according to essence, but according to uncreated illumination and grace? Listen to Dionysius, who says, 'Making-like God and union with him is the aim of the hierarchy, perfecting his worshippers as divine images, clear and spotless mirrors, receptive of the primal light and thearchic

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius, *Epistula ad Serapionem* 1.24 (PG 26:585C–588A).

<sup>39</sup> Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:772B).

ray.’<sup>40</sup> But if, being One, he is participable by all, though not in the same one way, but varyingly, what will prevent both those who are holy and those who are not from participating, but with a difference in their participations, the one being an uncreated kind, and the other a created one? Athanasius the Great said, ‘There is one God, the Father,’ the source of all things, according to the apostle (1 Cor 8:6), ‘and the Word, begotten of him, and the Spirit processed from him.’ Consequently, if someone had asked him, ‘how then, if they come from the Father, do you say that, of all beings, only the Son and Spirit are “true God”, and “undivided from the Father”?’ he would have answered accurately, that this is so because of the difference in the mode of their existence. For the Son and the Spirit exist from the Father as effulgence and ray from light—in a self-subsistent way (*authupostatōs*)—while all other things [exist] as creations of the Creator. So we also say that, [even] if everything participates in God, yet we see that there is a great difference when it comes to the participation of the saints. For how is it, tell me, that of those participating in God by having life (whether sensitive, rational, or intellective), none is said to have a deiform or divinely inspired life, nor is any of them divine or possessed of God or a bearer of God, or rather [simply called] ‘god’, except those who have been deified? There are some that have only the life of the senses, and some that are completely cut off from sensation, and never enjoy a divinely inspired life; nevertheless, even these things participate in God.

10) Do you see how, even if the Divine is in all things, and is participated by all things, yet is in the saints alone, and is participated in the proper sense by them alone? And so this is certain and true: although many are divine and are called such, there is one true ‘God’ for us. Just as many are sons of God and are called such, yet there is proclaimed among us *one* true ‘Son of God’, since he is the only-begotten; so also, of the many—or rather of *all*—who participate in God, only the saints are called ‘partakers of God’ and ‘partakers of Christ’. Since they were not partakers in every way previously, Paul says of them, *For it is not possible that those once illuminated, who have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit...* (Heb 6:4).<sup>41</sup> The Lord has promised to come and to make his abode with them where he was not previously present or residing. It must be, then, that those who have been deified have a great likeness to him who is God by nature, and those who have been made sons, a great likeness to him who is Son by nature. Thus, God alone *is*, he alone lives, alone is holy, alone is good, *alone has immortality, inhabiting unapproachable light* (1 Tim 6:16), even though many others ‘are’, and are ‘holy’, ‘good’, ‘immortal’, and inhabit the light and realm of living things. So also the saints alone are partakers of God, although there are many ‘partakers’.

11) Does the difference in degree of participation seem to you wide enough yet to render the participation of those living in a divine manner to be ‘uncreated’, even

<sup>40</sup> Ps. Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* 3.2 (PG 26:53B; Heil and Ritter, 18).

<sup>41</sup> Palamas quotes only the first part of the verse.

apart from Paul saying, *I live, though I no longer, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20)? And even apart from Maximus saying about himself and those with him that ‘they do not conduct a temporal life, having a beginning and an end, but the divine and everlasting life of the Word who resides in them’?<sup>42</sup> Again, he says, ‘The divine and incomprehensible life, even if it gives of itself to those partaking of it by grace, yet it does not give them a complete grasp. For it remains, even in the participation of those enjoying it, ungraspable, because, according to its nature as ungenerated, it possesses the infinite.’<sup>43</sup> And again, ‘The reward given to those who obey him is ungenerated deification.’<sup>44</sup> And I call it ‘ungenerated deification’ [because it is an] ‘enhypostatic illumination according to its form, which has no generation, but only an inconceivable manifestation in those who are worthy.’<sup>45</sup>

12) The great Athanasius says, ‘That we say that we are partakers of Christ and of God shows the chrism and seal in us that is not of the nature of generated things.’<sup>46</sup> And again, ‘This is God’s love for humankind, that, for those of whom he is Maker, he later becomes “Father” according to grace; and he becomes [their “Father”] whenever created human beings receive *into their hearts the Spirit of the Son, who cries, “Abba, Father”* (Gal 4:6). They would not otherwise become sons, since they are by nature creatures, unless they received the Spirit of him who is true Son by nature. For this reason, *the Word became flesh* (John 1:14): in order that humankind might be made receptive of divinity.’<sup>47</sup> And again, he says, ‘So also to the apostles has the Spirit and the power of the Most High been promised, as they were to the Virgin.’<sup>48</sup> And the great Basil says, ‘Through the Holy Spirit one can become a sharer of the grace of Christ, be called a child of light, and participate in everlasting glory.’<sup>49</sup> And again, ‘The living being, moved by the everlasting motion of the Holy Spirit, became holy. And with the Spirit indwelling him, the human being obtained the honour of prophet, apostle, messenger, god, although formerly he was earth and ashes.’<sup>50</sup> In another place, ‘For he who took the part of a slave is not established as Son on account of being a slave; nor does he have the freedom of calling God “Father” by sharing in the part of a slave.’<sup>51</sup> And again, ‘They participate in the Creator according to the image, but they become this way through the Spirit. For all things made by God are, in respect to their created nature, base and lacking of the Creator’s glory, unless they participate of divinity. And it is an unworthy account of God, which says that he neglects creation, leaving it naked, so to speak, and bereft

<sup>42</sup> Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua ad Ioannem* 10.48 (PG 91:1144C).

<sup>43</sup> Maximus, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (PG 90:644D–645A).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 61 (PG 90:637D).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 61 (PG 90:644D).

<sup>46</sup> Athanasius, *Epistula ad Serapionem* 1.24 (PG 26:585B–C).

<sup>47</sup> Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.59 (PG 26:273A).

<sup>48</sup> Ps. Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem Deiparae* (PG 28:929A).

<sup>49</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 15.36 (PG 32:132B).

<sup>50</sup> Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:741B).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* (PG 29:769B).

of him. Neither is his creation so base, nor God so incapable, that he does not send forth a sacred impartation of himself to his creatures.<sup>52</sup> Once more: 'The creation is new again, when it obtains a share in the Spirit, but grows old when deprived of it.<sup>53</sup>...For it is necessary that the present renewal and conclusion of things agree with the newness of the beginning. He moulds and breathes in, he himself through whom God gave the inbreathing, being no other than the one who breathed from the beginning—before [merely] *with* the soul, but now *in* the soul.<sup>54</sup> Father Chrysostom would hymn the grace of divine baptism this way: '[At that time] *the human being became a living soul*, but now, *a life-creating spirit* (1 Cor 15:45). Much, then, lies between these two. For the soul does not provide life to another, but the Spirit not only lives, but also provides life to others. In this way, the apostles even raised the dead.<sup>55</sup>

13) These things also the divine Cyril sets out in a detailed way, refuting those who say that the divine in-breathing became the soul in [the first] human being. Concluding, he gives these words: 'What has been breathed in is in some way entirely from him, and is understood to be his own, or of his essence. What then? How could the Spirit of God be changed into the nature of the soul? Surely then the living creature was ensouled by God's ineffable power. And by likeness to God he became by nature good and just, and receptive of all possible virtue. But he was made holy by being appointed partaker of the divine Spirit. This he threw away through sin.<sup>56</sup> Where are they who say that the deifying gift of the Spirit is 'a created and natural imitation', not an ineffable and ineffably arising divine activity? Hear the following things said by holy Maximus: 'We experience deification as being above nature, but *we* do not produce it.<sup>57</sup> And again, 'Nothing of deification is producible by nature.<sup>58</sup>

14) Having come full circle, let us proceed in our discourse to what comes next. For, indeed, nothing yet prevents us from saying that, just as *no one is good except one: God* (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19), so also there is no partaker of God except for the good angels and human beings who have mystically received into their souls the divine in-breathing, which originally departed from Adam when he rejected the divine command. Gladly would I question the one who spurns this view. But is it not entirely necessary to assume that what partakes of another is capable of being something in itself previous to participation? Well then, as to those creatures who, by partaking of God, live with sensation, rationality, or intellect, what sort of sensation, reason, or intellect could they enjoy without partaking of God? Could

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. (PG 29:724 A–B).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. (PG 29:728A).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. (PG 29:729A).

<sup>55</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Ioannem homilia* 25.2 (PG 59:150).

<sup>56</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De dogmatum solutione* 2 (P.E. Pusey, ed., *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872], 3:549–566; at 553–4).

<sup>57</sup> Maximus, *Ad Thalassium* 22 (PG 90:324A).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 22 (PG 90:321A).

one say that they have at least the being by which they came into being, without partaking? Even this being they have by participation in God. Rather, it is clear that these do not participate in God in the proper sense, but in the way that the effects of his creative activity and power are said to participate in him: insofar as all artefacts might be said to participate of the intention of the artificer, to the degree of a dim echo, not sharing in the agent's intention in every respect.

15) But the saints, in addition to their previously subsisting created nature, acquire a supernatural and divine participation, not as a yielding substrate receives the effects of handiwork, but as people obtain and acquire knowledge, which is 'always present, but becomes manifest in activity only when there is need',<sup>59</sup> according to the various forms of the Spirit's gifts. 'And as the Word is in us', Basil says, 'so the Spirit is in us, when the Word himself is in our heart—whenever *the Spirit bears witness with our spirit* (Rom 8:16), and whenever *he cries in our hearts, Abba, Father* (Rom 8:25, Gal 4:6)—and when the Word is borne forth by the tongue. 'For you are not the ones speaking', he says, delivering incontrovertible wisdom, '*but the Spirit of our Father is the one speaking in you* (Mat 10:20). Thus, the whole may be known in its parts, through the distribution of gifts', he continues. 'For this reason, *we are all members of one another* (Eph 4:25).'<sup>60</sup> In addition, he says, 'As the power of seeing is in the healthy eye, so the activity of the Spirit is in the purified soul.'<sup>61</sup> Consequently, he himself names the illumination of the Spirit an 'emanation': 'For just as things which lie among the brilliant colours from a surrounding ray of light are themselves coloured, so also the one who is fixed actively on the Spirit is somehow transformed by his glory into something brighter, shined on by the truth of the Spirit, like some light.'<sup>62</sup> And Gregory, called 'Theologian', having catalogued all the people who welcomed his deceased sister Gorgonia, said, 'I know well that your present circumstances are better now and more honourable by far than eye can see: the ringing sound of those feasting, the dance of the angels, the heavenly array, the vision of glory, the illumination—more pure and more perfect than any other—of the exalted Trinity, mingled in its radiance with our souls by the whole light of the Divinity.'<sup>63</sup> Saying these things, he turned back to her, picking up his speech and finishing it off: 'You now enjoy in full all the things of which you had the emanation while still on earth, because of your natural inclination toward them.'<sup>64</sup> For such is the nature of emanation: even imparted, it remains undivided from that which imparts it, which undergoes no diminishment or lessening by the impartation. For how would light suffer on account of its ray or the ray itself on account of its gleam?

<sup>59</sup> Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 26.61 (PG 32:180C–D).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 26.61 (PG 32:181A).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. (PG 32:180C).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 21.52 (PG 32:165B).

<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem sororis Gorgoniae* 23 (PG 35:816C).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



16) And do not publicly charge me with [espousing] ‘material emanations’. After clearing away every unsuitable sense from the word [emanation], look then as you can, for me, to the manner of the abundance of the Spirit toward those who are worthy. How does [the Spirit] ineffably but manifestly illumine all the worthy? ‘Just like the beams of the sun’, Basil says, ‘illuminate a cloud and make it shine too, giving it a golden appearance.’<sup>65</sup> For he knows, it seems to me, that these clouds are the apparel of the light, having the divine sense impression of that light. It is just like [the case of] well-ordered eyes, which, by partaking of light, are naturally disposed to become a similar kind of light, and to be furnished with just such a light. Thus, indeed, the saints, having become divinely inspired and deiform, are the only ones who participate in God in the proper sense—not participating only, but also imparting. They are not only acquainted with things past, but also knowledgeable of some things not yet brought forth from non-being. They are not only living, but also life-making, which does not [otherwise] belong to a created power. Still, we need to hear again from the truth’s heralds the demonstration of the truth that the saints alone, of all the [creatures] mentioned, participate in God. For we always set before ourselves these witnesses of the truth.

17) Thus, the great Basil says, ‘Having been cleansed from the ugliness impressed upon him through vice, having returned to his natural beauty, restoring through purification his ancient form to something like a kingly image, only then can a person approach the Paraclete.’<sup>66</sup> And again, ‘The Holy Spirit is unapproachable by nature, but containable through goodness. [The Spirit] fills all things by his power, but is participable only by the worthy; for he is not participated to the same one degree, but distributes his activity according to the proportion of faith.’<sup>67</sup> And again, he says, ‘Thus, as to that one [the Spirit] which the world cannot contain, which the saints alone can behold through purity of heart, what kind of idea should we have of him, or what sort of honours are fit to belong to him?’<sup>68</sup> And again, ‘Indeed, having testified to his disciples that [their] purity of life came through his teachings (cf. John 15:3), the Lord further granted them to be contemplators and beholders of the Spirit.’<sup>69</sup> And again, he says, ‘For those who have trampled down earthly things and have surpassed them are attested to be worthy of the gift of the Holy Spirit.’<sup>70</sup>

18) To illustrate for you the difference between these participations, take the following example that faintly resembles it: an earthen bowl participates of fire, and after being taken up again for use, it preserves the traces of fire from the furnace: the redness of colour, the appropriate dryness, and stiffness of the material owe directly to the fire. For as the moisture is dried up from it and the fire feeds on it and blackens

<sup>65</sup> Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:769B).

<sup>66</sup> Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 9.23 (PG 32:109AB).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.22 (PG 32:108C).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.53 (PG 32:168C).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.53 (PG 32:168B).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

it, the yellow of the flame is plaited together in the heat with the natural whiteness of what is earthy. Thus, from the combination of yellow, white, and black an outer coating forms on the inflamed mixture, and the loose earth is bound up, while the pores within hiss under the force of the fire. The result is that the bowl no longer has any chink for water to leak through. Because of these features, it is not subject to dissolution or softening when water flows in and around it. But it is lighter by far than a stone of an equal measure, and warmer, doubtless because of what was added to it from the fire. The earthenware participates then of fire, even after being put to [ordinary] use. But it also participates at the time it is placed in the burning furnace and is heated, being in contact with the fire. But *then*, it participates not only of the effects of fire, but also a little of the activities of the fire: it does not lack of the fire's warmth and burning power. It would easily impart a share of that activity, of which it itself has a share, to everything coming close to it (provided that what approached it be suited to getting a share), even though it [the pottery] has an unchanged nature and remains, in itself, earth. And whatever is transported from the furnace for use partakes of the *effects* of the fire's activity, but no longer of the activities themselves.

19) Consequently, having collected as best we could from the materials what is useful for examining the subject before us, pay attention to what I have to say, as to how natural life, existence, knowledge, and the rest are effects of such divine activities, but are not the activities proper. For those who exist and live in a divine and supernatural way, the inspired life and grace are most truly divine activity, through which union is effected between God and those who are worthy of God. The *effects*, then, of the divine activities are created, but these effects—all things that have been produced from nonbeing by the command of the Creator—are not also *activities*. But when he, with the Father, makes his abode in the worthy, as the Lord promised (cf. John 14:23), that which is produced in the God-bearing is perfected—though not by the Creator's command, but by God's divine union and indwelling—through the divine-working power and grace of him who imparts the properties he has by nature to those in contact with him. For the saints do not participate of his effects only, but even of God's very activities, in a manner imitative of and proper to the angels. For the great Basil says that this is the difference between the angels and the Holy Spirit, 'that for the latter, holiness is by nature, but for the former, being made holy happens by communion.'<sup>71</sup>

20) Thus, the just will shine as the Lord shone on the mountain; and they will possess a kingdom that is not created, nor wholly other [than his], but that very one which is his. Just so, then, Christ lives and speaks in Paul; indeed, even *while* Paul is the one living and speaking (cf. Gal 2:20). Just so, Peter puts to death (cf. Acts 5:1–10) and makes alive (cf. Acts 9:37–42), even though it is God alone who puts to death and makes alive (cf. Deut 32:39). Just so, James and John, along with

<sup>71</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 3.2 (PG 29:660B).

him [Peter], beheld on the mountain with their bodily eyes the unshadowed and perpetual light that later shone around Paul, blinding his vision because he could not bear the excess of brilliance (cf. Acts 9:3, 22:6–11, 26:13). For the nature of flesh [in itself] is not capable of the power of that light. So also Stephen looked from earth to heaven even with his body (cf. Acts 7:55). Even through sensible contact of bodily hands the abundance of the Spirit is present, imparting a share to one who genuinely and truly approaches divine activity and grace, which is distributed to another through the first, and through the second, again to a third. And it advances in succession, stretching on forever. O Only-Begotten Word of God, who will worthily hymn the power of your presence on earth? Your divine altar is never ignited with a foreign and *earthly* fire (cf. Lev 10:1); rather, [it is ignited] with a foreign fire of another kind, a *heavenly* flame, by the distribution of the ever-preserved unquenchable fire which you came to earth to spread (cf. Luke 12:49), because of your love of humankind, an incomparable ocean. Of this also your ministering spirits participate (cf. Ps 104:4), and through it the demons are banished. Moses saw it upon the bush (cf. Exod 3:2), and by it Elijah was snatched up from the earth (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11). The band of apostles saw it flowing forth from your body (cf. Matt 17:12, Mark 9:3, Luke 9:29), and through it, Paul was surrounded by light and transformed from a persecutor to a disciple (cf. Acts 9:3, 22:6–11, 26:13). It is the power for resurrection and the actuality<sup>72</sup> of immortality, the illumination of holy souls, and the conservation of all rational powers.

21) But the proof of these things is in the clear signs that were received sensibly at that time, even if the obstinate were not wholly persuaded. For the daughter of the Synagogue official and the son of the widow partook of life by the touch and voice of the Master (cf. Mark 5:41–42, Luke 7:14–15). And both Tabitha in Joppa and the young man Eutychus in Troas partook [of life], the latter by the touch of Paul (cf. Acts 20:10, 12), the former by the voice of Peter (Acts 9:40). Of what sort of life were they participating? Was it not that life which is itself life-creating, that life which the Lord *had*, but of which he did not participate? Can anyone still say that the saints do *not* partake of the natural and uncreated divine activity? I mean those who come to know by grace alone the defect of their nature in the will, and who then receive of this power, in itself, to the same degree that God shared in the weakness of our nature when he was made flesh. Weakness he took, as he knew, by his self-emptying (*kenosis*), in exchange for the deification of those who are saved by grace. And how is it that, as is in fact the case, they will inherit the kingdom of God, which ‘is an impartation by grace of goods that belong to him by nature’?<sup>73</sup> It is through him that they [the saints] enter wholly into him who welcomes them and imparts a share of his own glory and brilliance, which they are utterly unable to discover by

<sup>72</sup> Here, *energeia* is better rendered as ‘actuality’, as Palamas appears to be relating *dunamis* and *energeia* in the Aristotelian manner of ‘potentiality’ and ‘actuality’.

<sup>73</sup> Maximus Confessor, *Capita Theologiae* 2.90 (PG 90:1168C).

themselves. They are like pure air lit up altogether by light; or, rather, like abstracted, unadulterated gold, tried in the furnace by the immaterial and divine fire. 'They have become divine by deification, and have come within reach of the unique divine activity through the completely conquering grace of the Spirit. Thus, there is only one activity through them all, of God and of those worthy of him, as God co-inheres in the worthy, whole in wholes,' Maximus says in an inspired way.<sup>74</sup>

22) Just as everything rubbed bare can participate of a seal, still, each thing is defined in whatever way it is altered. Once one of them receives an impression from a seal, it is no longer able to bear another [impression]. It is altered to be like the archetype, having become that one thing itself, differing only in its underlying matter. Thus when the divine image in us ascends to the archetype, the words of that divine prayer on our behalf are fulfilled: *Grant to them*, he said, *that all may be one, as I, Father, am in you and you in me, that they also may in us be one* (John 17:21) in truth. Thus, *there is one Spirit joined to the Lord* (1 Cor 6:17). So the mystery of the union of bodies in one flesh is great, but [it points] *to Christ and the Church* (Eph 5:32). The seal bestows itself as a whole to that which is impressed, but each thing receives a share of the seal only to the extent it is able, proportionate to its own aptitude—and I am speaking not only of the characters impressed, but also of the union of each thing with that which impresses.<sup>75</sup>

23) Why do you still fear composition in God, if the activities both *are* uncreated and are spoken of as such? Fear much more, rather, lest you make God into a creature, by thinking that his natural activities are created, when the divine Damascene speaks of two activities in Christ, saying that 'the created will shows the created nature, and the uncreated will indicates the uncreated essence. For it is necessary that the [properties] belonging to the natures correspond to the natures.'<sup>76</sup> These words are in harmony with those of the august Maximus: 'If the [distinction between] natural will and the essential activity is obliterated, and that between the divine and human essences, how then will there be either God or man?'<sup>77</sup> What then, is it not that the hypostatic properties of the transcendent Trinity are many, and are uncreated? How are there not many gods, or one composite God, as a result? Or will you say that those properties are the same one thing in every respect, differing in no way from the essence of God, just like you say about the activity? I fear that you are introducing to us a God that is altogether without essence or hypostasis. For all these [properties] of themselves are entirely without hypostasis. But you are maintaining that these properties are identical in every respect to the essence of God, that God is one in every respect and partless. You do not understand that he is multiplied *while*

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 2.5–6 (PG 3:644A–C); Beata Regina Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum I* [Berlin: DeGruyter, 1990], 129).

<sup>76</sup> John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3.15 (PG 94:1056C).

<sup>77</sup> Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91:96B).

remaining one, and is divided *while* remaining partless, and is participated variously *while* being completely undivided, preserving his own unity inseparably, according to his superessential power.<sup>78</sup>

24) Indeed, tell me: are there not many hypostatic properties for each single hypostasis? For the Father is both uncaused and cause, originator and begetter; and doubtless the Father has all these things in an uncreated way. Or do you think that the properties of the hypostasis are in every way the same thing as the hypostasis, just as [you suppose that] the properties of the nature in no way differ from the nature, and the properties of the essence from the essence? Will you say, then, that the hypostatic properties are the hypostasis, just as you have said that the properties of the nature are synonymous, not homonymous, with the nature? But the Fathers do not speak that way. For they speak of these as ‘enhypostatic properties’, but not as the ‘hypostasis’, just as they call the other properties not ‘essence’, but ‘essential’. If we take it the other way, since there are many and diverse properties for each one of the hypostases, how will hypostasis and hypostatic property be the same? Since it is shown that there are many diverse, uncreated hypostatic properties (according to your shrewd, elevated, and unshakable understanding), either there will be many gods, or each of the divine hypostases will be composite. Consequently, you have proclaimed to us a god composed of many elements, you self-appointed defender of a simplicity beyond all understanding!

25) But composites are [made] of independently-subsisting things (*tōn authupostatōn*), and not of accidents in a thing—this is the common teaching, both of those who are wise in profane disciplines and of those who are wise in things above—nor is any being said to be compounded with its own activities. For neither is the power of burning compounded because it gives heat, nor is a ray, on account of its light. But indeed, such would be the case if you maintained that the idea of the uncreated One is indistinguishable in any way from the Three Hypostases. With respect to these hypostatic properties of God, many are joined in one [being], but none of these *is* as an independently-subsisting thing (*en hypostasei hōs authupostaton*), nor were they formerly, nor will they be in the future; nor is it possible for any of these natural properties to exist in some other essence, as natural to it. But everything ‘composite’ is either made up of different essences, by way of expansion, or is [unified] through an uncompounded union. For these [of the latter kind], there are multiple hypostatic properties observed for each, and yet the hypostases are complete, with no more than one hypostasis for each. Otherwise, they would not be ‘one’ or ‘composed’. With regard to these [conditions of composition], the difference is either between different essences, or between the essence and the contrary properties observed in it as in a subject. And indeed, [composition is possible] not in this way only, but also in other kinds of naturally occurring properties, according to

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Ps. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 9.5 (PG 3:912D; Suchla, 210).



which all created things admit of changes in growth and depletion, acquisition and excretion, acting and suffering, and in this way exhibit loss of things they formerly had. Hence, they are shown to be wholly divisible; and everything subject to such division is necessarily composed.

26) But in God, since there is one indivisible essence, there is no depletion, no growth, no addition, no loss; therefore, there is no division that would make apparent to us a previous composition. And ‘however many things God has’, to speak like the great Athanasius does, ‘he has by nature and not as acquired,’<sup>79</sup> and as *acting* only, not *suffering* on account of these things. Therefore, he does not in any way admit of a contrariety that produces change, as he alone has no essential differences. But, as Scripture has demonstrated, he has activities, through which everything is subjected to him like matter (even intellectual beings), to him who bears up all things, transforming them by his utterance (cf. Heb 1:3)—or, rather, by his will, which is to say, by his timeless, tireless, and impassible activity. And you would never see what belongs to him occurring naturally in any other being. And this is the case since he alone acts in this way. *For no one, he said, is good, except one: God* (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19), *He alone is blessed and ruler, he alone having immortality, residing in light inaccessible* (1 Tim 6:15–16). Why, then, do you suspect composition of different natures in God, since he is shown to be unitary from every perspective? Each of the three hypostases is complete and distinct, even in that ineffable union, beyond every thought and word. But no one will be able to conceive of each [Person] alone, as ‘before’ or ‘after’, apart from the others, so that composition might follow therefrom. ‘For no sooner do I call to mind the One’, [Gregory] says, ‘than I am surrounded in light by the Three.’<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, the bond and perfection of the hypostases drives away composition.

27) So, reflect on and guard the divine simplicity, but do not reject his natural processions, as though they *were not*. And do not deem that perpetual light simply to be the Evening Star or the Northern Light, or say that there are two Divinities, two Thearchies, and two Primal Goods—namely, one created and another uncreated, so that there are, in the proper sense, two. Since both are uncreated, both essence and activity, nothing will prevent them from being one, as a ray and the sun are one light. And do not suppose that the very divinity of God is a created kingdom; for God’s activities belong to his nature. Do not drag down his deifying grace to [the level of] creation, or drag down with it the One who has and supplies this grace. Do not treat it as useless that the Son of God became like us. For how would he have thought it fit to become like us, on our behalf, if he had not in fact imparted the Holy Spirit, but some creature; or, further, if he had not given the Spirit of adoption in exchange for the flesh he took of the Virgin, when he became Son of Man? Nor should you

<sup>79</sup> This line does not appear in the known works of Athanasius, but it is frequently attributed to Athanasius by both Akindynos and Palamas.

<sup>80</sup> Gregory Nazienzen, *In Sanctam Baptisma* (Homilia 40) 41 (PG 36:417B).

treat the temples of God, which are obviously holy (cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19), as mere habitations of creatures, nor make yourself so wretched that you not only withhold yourself from the divine and deifying participation, but also end your life without hope of it. And do not make God out to be so powerless that he is unable to imbue his rational and purified creatures with a holy impartation of himself. Further, do not treat him as something without essence and without hypostasis, saying that he is identical to his activities, which by themselves have no essence or hypostasis, since they are clearly not essences and hypostases. Do not treat it as participable, that essence of God, which is beyond being, beyond name, and in itself unparticipable and inexpressible, while you maintain that it is entirely uncreated. Do not show yourself to be another Eunomius, saying like him that, since all the hypostatic properties are uncreated, they are substances, purportedly for the sake of the simplicity of God. Do not become a Monothelete, assuming that the divine nature of Christ does not have a share of activity. Do not be another Sabellius, maintaining in a different way that the names of God are empty of realities, because you take all of them to refer to one signified reality: the essence alone. May you not suffer all these [beliefs], declaring the activities of God to be ‘created’, with hollow fabrications of simplicity that in no way *is*. Believe me: the same God is both divided and undivided, one in differentiation and differentiated in union, inseparable from himself in his processions, ever moving even in his immovability, apportioned partlessly, and wholly participated in the manner of a sun’s ray.

28) But let the great Basil take centre-stage (who preaches—if anyone does—that God is one and simple), and show us clearly that God will not be composite on account of such activities: ‘How’, he asks, ‘could the simplicity according to essence not be uncompounded? For the demonstrable modes of his particularity will not trouble the account of his simplicity, or else everything reckoned as wholly known of him, whatever is said about God, would reveal to us that God is composite. And, as it seems, if we should preserve a concept of the simple without parts, either we will say nothing about God except [that he is] ungenerated, and will refuse to name him “incorruptible”, “unchangeable”, “creator”, “judge”, and all that we now receive in doxology, or, if we accept the names, how will we do so? Will we ascribe them all to the essence? If so, we will demonstrate that he is not only composite, but also compounded of dissimilar parts, because each of the names signifies something different.’<sup>81</sup>

29) Whenever, then, you hear us saying that the essence is one thing and the activity another, let this be understood: when we say ‘one thing and another’, what is signified by each is as the great Basil said: ‘If we thought of the “ungenerated” as *part* of the essence, the Word would have space and be compounded of different things. But if we consider “the Light” or “the Life” or “the Good” to be the essence

<sup>81</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 2 (PG 29:640BC).

of God—whatever is wholly Life, wholly Light, and wholly Good—since Life has the attribute “ingenerate”, how is it not incomposite, being simple according to its essence?’<sup>82</sup> And again, toward those heretics of his time—who were saying the very thing which our opponents are saying to us, that God is simple, and that everything you can enumerate as knowable of him belongs to his essence—he says, ‘This is a sophism having a thousand absurdities, for if such things are enumerated, are these names belonging to the one essence also equal in power to each other?’<sup>83</sup> Again, ‘We say that we know the majesty, power, and wisdom of God, but not the essence itself.’<sup>84</sup> Whenever, then, you hear us saying that the essence of God is one thing and his power or activity is another, know that we are saying this: that the power or activity of God is known in some respect, but the essence is not known by anyone.

30) And the Lord of knowledge, who teaches human beings knowledge, patron of wisdom and the guide to the wise, *in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid* (Col 2:3), *may he give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, and grant you, with the eyes of your hearts illumined, to know, what is the hope of his calling, and the wealth of the glory of his inheritance in his holy ones, and the great excess of his power, for us who believe, according to the activity of his might and strength, which he worked in Christ* (Eph 1:17–20), *to him who is able to do abundantly more than the things which we ask and consider, according to his power working in us* (Eph 3:20), to him belongs glory for ever and ever, Amen.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. (PG 29:640B).

<sup>83</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula* 234.1 (PG 32:868D).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. (PG 32:868C).



# PAUL THE HESYCHAST: GREGORY PALAMAS AND THE PAULINE FOUNDATIONS OF HESYCHAST THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY\*

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The thought of Gregory Palamas is marked by an extraordinary appropriation of Pauline theology that has largely escaped scholarly notice. This paper argues that the Hesychast controversy unfolded around rival interpretations of Paul's theology and visionary experiences, especially his vision of the divine light (Acts 9:3–9) and his ascent into the 'third heaven' (2 Cor 12:1–10), which Palamas and his followers identified with their own understanding of the uncreated light of God and with Hesychast spirituality more generally. Palamas' rich and complex handling of Paul's letters is explored through a close reading of the first *Triad*, along with relevant passages from the other works in the trilogy. The analysis suggests that the Hesychast controversy was in many ways a debate about who was the true follower of Paul.

The last fifty years have witnessed an explosion of Palamite studies, along with growing interest in other theological writers of the period, yet almost no attention has been paid to the Palamite (or Hesychast) use of the Pauline corpus or of Scripture more generally. If we take the standard works of reference as our starting point, we will be told that the Hesychast controversy was a debate about the nature of mystical experience, a clash between ascetic spirituality and scholastic methodology, a chapter in the ongoing quarrel between faith and reason (or between theology and philosophy, or Christianity and Hellenism), or simply an ideological screen for the ambitions of warring feudal magnates set against the background of reviving urban life. As true as these interpretations might be, they do not even remotely suggest that the Hesychast controversy can and probably should be seen as a debate about who was the true follower of Paul.

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To be sure, the primary question between Gregory Palamas (b. ca. 1296, d. 14 November 1357) and Barlaam (b. ca. 1290, d. June 1348) concerned the validity of Christian religious experience as a true contact with God and not with some created reality. Despite the sea changes of imperial politics, this question remained the constant undercurrent throughout the successive waves of controversy, which extended from 1335 to 1351.<sup>1</sup> For both sides, the question was in fact a series of questions touching on the nature of human knowledge. Could human reason, on its own initiative, attain accurate knowledge of God? Was nature the objective ground or medium of that knowledge, or did it have some other, supernatural source? What were the proper means and methods, the concrete practices, necessary for the acquisition of that knowledge? And, finally, what was the best way to build, on the basis of that knowledge, a way of life consistent with it?

It should be emphasized that this was not a debate about human knowledge in general. Instead, the controversy began when Barlaam publicly denounced the monks of Mount Athos, arguing that spiritual perfection in the monastic life—including states of dispassion and divinization—could not be attained without the study of pagan Greek philosophy.<sup>2</sup> That Palamas, an Athonite monk, vigorously refuted Barlaam's arguments comes as no surprise, yet he did not reject secular studies altogether, but merely sought to highlight the uselessness of profane Hellenism for the acquisition of divine grace, along with its inability to bring about mystical union with God.<sup>3</sup>

In his struggle against Greek philosophy, which was mounted in defence of the life of prayer, Palamas found a powerful ally in Paul, who himself was no stranger to these questions. Paul had travelled throughout much of the Hellenistic world, spoke Greek fluently, was reasonably well versed in Greek literature,<sup>4</sup> and came into

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the controversy, see Robert E. Sinkewicz, 'Gregory Palamas,' in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition II*, eds. Carmello Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 132–37.

<sup>2</sup> According to reports received by Palamas, *Triad* 1.1.1 (John Meyendorff, ed., *Grégoire Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes*, 2 vols. [Louvain: Université Catholique, 1973], vol. 1:5–7). For an attempt to reconstruct the theology of Barlaam, see Robert E. Sinkewicz, 'A New Interpretation for the First Episode in the Controversy between Barlaam the Calabrian and Gregory Palamas,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980): 489–500; and *id.*, 'The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Early Writings of Barlaam the Calabrian,' *Medieval Studies* 44 (1982): 181–242.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Palamas, *Triad* 1.1.12: 'We do not prevent those who have not chosen the monastic life from occupying themselves with secular studies, but neither do we advise them to do this for their whole life. For we completely reject the idea that through such studies a person can hope to know with precision anything about the divine, since it is not possible to learn from such studies anything certain about God, for "God has made" such studies "foolish" (1 Cor 1:20)' (1:37, lines 6–12); cf. *id.*, *Triad* 2.1.35: 'The Lord did not categorically forbid secular studies, just as he did not forbid marriage, or eating meat... but according to you, since the Lord did not forbid these things, we are required to indulge in them to full measure' (1:295, lines 17–24).

<sup>4</sup> See Photios, *Amphilochia* 151 (eds. Basil Laourdas and L.G. Westerink [Leipzig: Teubner, 1986], 5:193–94), written in response to a question about the number of pagan quotations in the New Testament, all of which are associated with Paul: Acts 27:28 (= Aratus, *Phaenomena*); 1 Cor 15:33 (= Menander, *Thais*); and Titus 1:12 (= Epimenides, *De oraculis*).

conflict with what he called the ‘wisdom of the Greeks’ (cf. 1 Cor 1:22), that is, with the same philosophical tradition promoted by Barlaam.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, both Paul and his Late Byzantine readers, when confronted with the tradition of Greek philosophy, were situated in more or less the same linguistic and intellectual framework. It was thus that a number of Pauline *loci* quickly moved to the centre of the debate, and that the debate itself became in many ways an elaborate theological exegesis of Paul.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Triads*

Palamas’ use of Paul’s letters is exemplified in the *Triads*, a collection of nine treatises grouped into three trilogies. Written over a three-year period (1338–1340), these seminal writings established the basic Hesychast position and became the principal point of reference for the ensuing debates. The first two *Triads* have overlapping themes and virtually identical structures, each beginning with an extensive critique of pagan Greek philosophy, followed by a defence of Hesychast prayer, and concluding with a discussion on the knowledge of God. The third *Triad* departs from this pattern, focusing instead on the doctrine of divinization, the uncreated light, and the distinction between God’s essence and energies. Of the three *Triads*, the first two make constant reference to Paul, together containing more than one hundred and fifty citations from Paul’s letters, whereas the third *Triad* contains only twenty-five citations.<sup>7</sup> In the following analysis, the focus is on the first *Triad*, which presents a fairly complete picture of Palamas’ use of Paul. Relevant passages from the other works in the trilogy are also included. I engage in a close reading of this work, since this is the only way to appreciate the richness and complexity of Palamas’ handling of Paul’s letters.

<sup>5</sup> From the extensive bibliography on Paul and Greek philosophy, cf. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989); Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); and George H. Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> In describing Palamas’ use of Paul in his *First Letter to Barlaam* (scr. 1336), Hans-Veit Beyer, *Nikephoros Gregoras, Antirrhethika I* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976), 88, states that: ‘Die biblische Autorität, auf die sich Palamas bei seiner nunmehr entwickelten Bildungsfeindlichkeit immer wieder stützen sollte, war der Apostel Paulus, zumal dessen Äusserungen zu Beginn des ersten Korintherbriefes’—a correct assessment that is also generally true of Palamas’ use of Paul throughout the entire controversy.

<sup>7</sup> The impact of these figures is slightly mitigated by the fact that *Triad* 1 and (especially) 2 are lengthier than *Triad* 3, though it is ultimately the nature of the argument that governs the frequency of citation.

*Hebrews 13:9*

In response to a question about the place of pagan Greek philosophy in the monastic life, Palamas begins the first *Triad* with a quotation from Hebrews: ‘Brother, to speak in the manner of the apostle, “it is well that the heart acquire certainty by grace” (Heb 13:9), but how could someone demonstrate by means of reason the Good that transcends reason?’<sup>8</sup> It can hardly be insignificant that Palamas begins the *Triads* with a reference to Paul.<sup>9</sup> Though Hebrews 13:9 does not figure in the subsequent argument, it serves here to make three important points. It enlists the authority of Paul on the side of the Hesychasts; it foregrounds the notion of divine grace; and it emphasizes the need for the heart to acquire ‘certainty’ by means of this grace. In this way, Palamas aligns himself with the apostle and adroitly shifts the terms of the debate from ‘mind’ to ‘heart,’ and from ‘knowledge’ to ‘grace,’ which, as the rest of the treatise will make clear, essentially sums up the whole of his response to Barlaam.

When we look more closely at the text of Hebrews, however, it appears that Palamas has taken the verse out of context. At this point in the letter, the argument is about not being concerned with what the law says about unclean foods, which is the reading of Chrysostom and other patristic commentators.<sup>10</sup> Such disregard for context, as well as for the patristic exegetical tradition, is unusual for Palamas, and raises a question. The answer may be that Palamas is following an interpretation of Hebrews 13:9 such as that found in a homily ascribed to St Makarios the Great. This interpretation brackets the reference to food and associates the phrase with the preceding exhortation to doctrinal purity, noting that Orthodox belief is a corollary of the ‘spiritual works of the inner man.’<sup>11</sup> The Makarian homilies were popular reading in Byzantine monastic circles, and Palamas cites them frequently.<sup>12</sup> We may therefore have a case in which Palamas is following a spiritual exegesis of this passage and not that of the standard commentaries. But Palamas must have known that this particular interpretation is slightly forced, which may be why he never cites this verse again.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Triad* 1.1.1 (1:9, lines 8–10).

<sup>9</sup> Consistent with the patristic and Byzantine exegetical tradition, Palamas accepts the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

<sup>10</sup> Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews* 33.2 (PG 63:226); cf. Theodoret, *Commentary on Hebrews* (PG 82:781B–C).

<sup>11</sup> Makarios, *Homily* 28 (Erich Klostermann and Heinz Berthold, eds., *Neue Homilien des Makarius/Symeon I* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961], 169, lines 24–26).

<sup>12</sup> Around 50 times in the *Triads* alone, generally from the version by Symeon Metaphrastes.

<sup>13</sup> After Palamas, George Scholarios seems to be the only writer who even so much as alludes to this verse, which he does in his epitome of Aquinas’s *Summa*, to highlight the notion that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are established by divine grace (Louis Petit, et al., ed., *Oeuvres complètes de Georges Scholarios* [Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1933], 6:72, line 9).

*Romans 11:34*

The second passage, Romans 11:34, occurs in the middle of the next paragraph, where Palamas cites it to counter Barlaam's claim that the mind can know God through secular studies. Palamas finds this 'outrageous', insofar as 'the apostle says: "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" (Rom 11:34 = Isa 40:13).'<sup>14</sup> This would seem to be a rather devastating proof text, yet this is the only time it occurs in the *Triads*, perhaps because it takes the form of an unanswered question, or because Palamas will shortly come to rely almost exclusively on passages in which Paul explicitly rejects the 'wisdom of the Greeks'. The verse has a long history of citation, and among Palamas' disciples was used by Theophanes of Nicaea (d. ca. 1380/81), who included it in a dense gathering of Pauline *loci*, summing up in large measure the Hesychast interpretation of Paul.<sup>15</sup> The same verse, however, could cut both ways—it was cited twice by Akindynos, who deployed it to undermine Palamas' claim to possess definitive knowledge about the divine energies.<sup>16</sup>

*1–2 Corinthians*

The remainder of *Triad* 1.1.2 through the end of 1.1.9 is marked by a large number of citations from 1–2 Corinthians, which are organized into three groups or textual units. These units present us with impressive examples of Palamas' rhetorical and theological skill in handling material from Paul's letters, and are worth looking at closely.

The first unit begins immediately after the citation of Romans 11:34, noted above. Alluding to 1 Timothy 6:20 (*ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις*), Palamas calls the knowledge promoted by Barlaam a 'pseudo-knowledge' (*ψευδογνωσία*), in support of which he cites three passages from the Corinthian letters and one from Colossians:

<sup>14</sup> *Triad* 1.1.2 (1:11, lines 14–15). I follow Meyendorff in identifying this verse as Romans 11:34, even though Paul uses the same phrase in 1 Corinthians 2:16. Given Palamas' heavy reliance on 1 Corinthians (cf. above, n. 6, and below), the Romans citation should probably be emended to include 1 Corinthians 2:16.

<sup>15</sup> Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Thabor* 2.17 (George Zacharopoulos, ed., *Θεοφάνης Νικαίας. Ὁ Βίος καὶ τὸ συγγραφικὸν τοῦ ἔργου* [Θεσσαλονίκη: Κέντρο Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 2003], 193–94): 'Wishing to show once and for all that the supernatural mysteries of piety (cf. 1 Titus 3:16) are above all human wisdom and knowledge (cf. 1 Cor 2:13, 13:8), and that one must not seek for them (cf. 1 Cor 1:22) without divine illumination (cf. 2 Cor 4:6), the divine apostle says: "We interpret spiritual things to those who are spiritual, because the unspiritual man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are discerned spiritually; but the spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one, for who has known the mind of the Lord, as to instruct Him? (Isa 40:13) But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:13–16)". According to the divine fathers, the "mind of Christ" is the Holy Spirit, through which mind "we know the mind of the Lord", that is, the divine purpose, which is the future divinization of the saints.'

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Antirrhetic* 1.14 (CCSG 31:16, lines 10–11), cites Romans 11:34 to counter Palamas' claim to know that there exists a multiplicity of divine energies, which Palamas had somewhat recklessly described as an 'infinity of lower divinities', and which he believed, according to Akindynos, were 'visible to the eyes of the body'; cf. *ibid.*, 1.50 (60, line 6).

The soul that possesses the knowledge of secular wisdom is in no way borne thence to the Truth Itself, or even to the truth, which is why those who boast about it do so in vain. Let them listen to Paul,<sup>17</sup> who calls secular wisdom ‘fleshly wisdom’ (2 Cor 1:12), just as he calls ‘knowledge that makes one arrogant’ (1 Cor 8:1) the ‘mind of the flesh’ (Col 2:18). How, then, can the ‘wisdom of the flesh’ (2 Cor 1:12) endow the soul with likeness to God? ‘For consider,’ he says, ‘your call; not many of you were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth’ (1 Cor 1:26).<sup>18</sup>

As a bridge to the second unit, Palamas argues that the human mind is marred by sin, and requires purification in order to live with ‘the only wise God’ (Rom 16:27) (*Triad* 1.1.3). He subsequently counters Barlaam’s contention that Christian perfection is achieved through the study of philosophy by citing a passage from Dionysios the Areopagite, in which union with God follows upon ‘love and the keeping of the commandments’ (*Triad* 1.1.4).<sup>19</sup> This is confirmed by the Lord himself (*Triad* 1.1.5), who did not say, ‘If you would be perfect, occupy yourself with secular education,’ but ‘deny yourself, give to the poor, and take up your cross’ (cf. Matt 19:21; 16:24). If what Barlaam says is correct, ‘why did Christ not teach geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and the natural sciences, if such things indeed have the power to banish the darkness of ignorance from the soul?’<sup>20</sup> Palamas’ answer to this question—which calls forth a series of further rhetorical questions—brings us to the second unit, containing five citations from the first chapter of 1 Corinthians:

Why did Christ call as his disciples men who were illiterates, fishermen, and rustics, but not the wise? Was it not so that he might ‘confound the wise,’ just as Paul says? (1 Cor 1:27). Why did God ‘make their wisdom foolish’? (1 Cor 1:20). Why was God pleased to ‘save believers by the folly of Paul’s preaching’? (cf. 1 Cor 1:21). Was it not because ‘the world did not know God through wisdom’? (1 Cor 1:21). And what did those, who you say are wise, do when the Word of God, ‘who became our Wisdom’ (1 Cor 1:30), and who is ‘the light of the World’ (John 1:9), was manifested bodily to the world? They

<sup>17</sup> This is the first explicit mention in the *Triads* of the name ‘Paul,’ who is previously referred to by the epithet of ‘the apostle.’ Palamas’ use of Paul’s name here may be intended to highlight the argument, although for the Byzantines the epithet was used interchangeably with Paul’s proper name.

<sup>18</sup> *Triad* 1.1.2 (1:11, lines 17–27). In this, and in subsequent translations, I frequently condense the expansive rhetoric and syntax.

<sup>19</sup> Dionysios, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2.1 (Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter, eds., *Corpus Dionysiacum* II [Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991], 68, lines 17–20): ‘As the Scriptures teach, assimilation to God and union with Him come about only through love and the keeping of the commandments,’ citing John 14:23: ‘If any man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.’

<sup>20</sup> *Triad* 1.1.5 (1:18–19).

replaced the Light with a tiny lamp, and now encourage others to abandon the way of inner purification and take up secular studies instead.<sup>21</sup>

After a discussion on the nature of knowledge (*Triads* 1.1.6–8), Palamas concludes that human knowledge by itself is utterly useless for the soul's salvation, a view he will corroborate (in *Triad* 1.1.9) with arguments from Paul. With this we arrive at the third and final unit, which also draws extensively from 1 Corinthians, but now with a slightly higher concentration of passages from the second chapter:

What does Paul write to the Corinthians—he who did not wish to ‘speak with lofty words’ (1 Cor 2:1) ‘lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power’ (1 Cor 1:17); who did not ‘address them in persuasive words of human wisdom’ (1 Cor 2:4); who ‘knew nothing else among them but Christ crucified’ (1 Cor 2:2)—what, I ask, did he write to them? ‘Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up’ (1 Cor 8:1).

Describing such knowledge as ‘earthly’ and suited to ‘the old man’ (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), Palamas grants that, whereas it can be ‘fortified by secular education,’ it can never become ‘spiritual knowledge,’ unless it is ‘reborn by means of grace and love,’ becoming ‘new and deiform, so that it can be called a heavenly wisdom, indeed the “wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:21, 24, 2:7; Eph 3:10).’ Knowledge becomes ‘spiritual’ insofar as it is ‘subject to the wisdom of the Spirit, knowing and receiving the gifts of the Spirit,’ which is why ‘the “unspiritual man cannot know the things of the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:14), but deems them “folly” (1 Cor 2:14; cf. 1:18), and seeks only to refute and destroy them.’<sup>22</sup>

Palamas will now draw these arguments to their conclusion, articulating his celebrated doctrine of ‘double knowledge,’ which we will consider in a moment. At this point, a word about his handling of Paul's Corinthian letters is in order. In the texts presented above, we have three inter-related units, unfolding over nine pages (in Meyendorff's edition), and containing a series of more than twenty Pauline citations, taken mostly from 1–2 Corinthians. The first unit, which introduces the basic lines of the argument, uses Paul's language of ‘fleshly wisdom’ (2 Cor 1:12) to establish a series of polarities that lend all three units their tremendous rhetorical energy. In the second and third units, the passages from 1 Corinthians are generally

<sup>21</sup> *Triad* 1.1.5 (1:19, lines 5–23); cf. Palamas, *Against Gregoras* 1.16, who, having ridiculed Gregoras for his life-long study of secular subjects, including ‘grammar,’ wonders if he is unaware of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:20, i.e., ‘Where is the γραμματεὺς? Where is the debater of this age?’ (in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα* [hereafter *Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα*], ed. Panayiotis Chrestou, et al. [Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988], 4:243, lines 22–24).

<sup>22</sup> *Triad* 1.1.9 (1:29–31); cf. Palamas, *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 3.18.85; 4.16.44; and 5.21.82, where 1 Corinthians 2:14 is considered at length (*Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα* 3:222–23; 273; 350–51). See also Birger Albert Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians* (Missoula: Scholar's Press, 1973).



cited consecutively (i.e., from 1 Cor 1:20–8:1), indicating that Palamas is closely following the argument of Paul's letter. The cited passages are not generated through free association, neither is their use simply literary or ornamental. And whereas they do function, in one sense, as 'proof texts', the larger theological argument in which Palamas introduces them is itself profoundly Pauline, being a virtuosic rhetorical *mimesis* of the apostle's own arguments against the proponents of secular wisdom in the church of Corinth. Even though Palamas did not compose these three textual units in the form of a learned commentary or exegetical homily, they are nonetheless a work of biblical interpretation. Palamas' procedures do not of course follow those of a modern biblical critic, but they are common to the patristic and Byzantine use of Scripture in theological controversy. To a reader unversed in the argument of the Corinthian correspondence, Palamas' citations may appear chaotic, or lacking in structure or criteria, but he follows Paul very closely, and none of the citations are quoted out of context or given isolated or extraneous meanings.<sup>23</sup>

If Paul's letters to the Corinthians figure so prominently in Palamas' argument, it is because Paul himself was challenged by similar problems in the church of Corinth. In response, the apostle found it necessary to impress upon his readers that the message of the Gospel is divisive, signaling the apocalyptic division of humanity into two epistemological camps. The cross of Christ, which is the paradoxical manifestation of God in history, creates a series of polarities between those 'being saved' and those 'perishing' (1 Cor 1:18; cf. 2 Cor 2:15; 2 Thess 2:10); between 'divine weakness' and 'human power' (1 Cor 1:25, 27); between the 'mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16) and the 'mind of the flesh' (Rom 8:5–6); between 'divine wisdom' and 'human foolishness' (1 Cor 1:2, 3:18–19); and between the 'wisdom of the world' and the 'Wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1:20–21, 2:6–7, 3:18–19; 2 Cor 1:12). From any merely human perspective, the message of the Gospel can only appear as folly. Yet human wisdom itself is folly in the eyes of God, for it is the 'foolishness' of those 'who consider themselves wise, but in truth are perishing' (Rom 1:22; 1 Cor 1:18).<sup>24</sup> For Paul, God has not simply made wisdom *appear* foolish, but has turned it into its very opposite, namely, foolishness. Palamas' distinction between divine and human wisdom is thoroughly Pauline, and the conclusions he draws from this distinction mark one of his most significant appropriations of the apostle's theology.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the doctrinal and polemical use of Scripture generally induces greater fidelity to literary context than is sometimes the case in other genres, such as liturgy, hymnology, hagiography, and works of edification or spiritual instruction, although this is not to say that patristic and Byzantine exegetes thought or wrote within narrowly construed generic categories.

<sup>24</sup> Note that one of Paul's key verses, 'I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise' (1 Cor 1:19), is in fact a citation from Isaiah 29:14, which represents, not the speech of the prophet, but of God himself, threatening to annihilate the wisdom of the wise, which is God's judgment against Judah, whose political and religious leaders had abandoned God for their own devices.

<sup>25</sup> On which, see Panayiotis Chrestou, 'Double Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas', *Studia Patristica* 9 (1966): 20–29. Barlaam, *Letter* 5 (320, lines 39–40), cites 1 Corinthians 2:13 (not 1 Cor 1:30, *pace* Schiro) to argue for a similar doctrine of 'two wisdoms', based on the fact that 'all beings are double', by

Deeply rooted in the theology of Paul, Palamas' doctrine of 'double knowledge' brings to the fore a fundamental incommensurability between Christian faith and pagan philosophy:

This is why Paul, wishing to show us that the form of wisdom is double (διττὸν τὸ τῆς σοφίας εἶδος), said, 'in God's wisdom, it was not through wisdom that the world knew God' (1 Cor 1:21). Do you see how he distinguishes the two, and how he calls them by different names? And when the divinely wise Paul says that he 'speaks with the wisdom of God' (1 Cor 2:7), does he agree with them, or they with him? Quite the contrary. This is why he adds: 'To the perfect, we do speak wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world, or of the rulers of this world, who are being abolished' and 'who knew nothing of this wisdom' (1 Cor 2:6, 8), a wisdom which is found within us by the grace of Christ, 'who became our wisdom' (1 Cor 2:8).<sup>26</sup>

The radical transcendence of the divine imposed general limitations on all natural knowledge, creating a strong epistemological skepticism and allowing no place for a perfect likeness between knowledge of contingent creation and knowledge of the creator.<sup>27</sup> The Byzantines had tremendous esteem for the life of the mind, but they also recognized its limits. No amount of philosophical learning was sufficient for a correct understanding of God, which emerged, not from knowledge, but from faith, unfolding in response to the gracious gift of God's voluntary self-disclosure. Following Paul, Palamas affirmed that the 'two wisdoms' were profoundly discontinuous, the one being a matter of natural reasoning and the other the result of supernatural grace. A wisdom that was limited, temporal, and at best analogical could not be identified absolutely with the wisdom that was eternal, perfect, and divine.

which he means objects and their images (*eidola*). Yet Barlaam's doctrine is not an ontological distinction between a thing and its appearance, but between realities and mental illusions that deceptively present themselves to the mind in place of those realities. This is not, therefore, a double 'knowledge', but simply a distinction between reality and illusion, and has little to do with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 2:13; cf. *Triad* 1.1.17 (1:49, lines 9–12).

<sup>26</sup> *Triad* 1.1.17 (1:49–51). Note that these Pauline citations are framed by a parallel passage from Dionysios, *Letter* 7.2 (166–67).

<sup>27</sup> John A. Demetracopoulos, 'Nicholas Cabasilas' *Quaestio de rationis valore*: An Anti-Palamite Defense of Secular Wisdom', *Byzantina* 19 (1998): 53–93, argues that Kavasilas offers a positive assessment of 'secular wisdom' in direct opposition to the position of Palamas in the *Triads*. Kavasilas's *Quaestio*, however, is not a defense of pagan Greek philosophy, which he explicitly rejects, but of reason (*logos*) itself, and even Demetracopoulos acknowledges that Palamas is not 'anti-rational'. Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2012), 106, provides a more balanced assessment when he states that Kavasilas is 'by no means inconsistent with Palamas' ultimately positive, if tremendously cautious, approach to philosophy and secular learning. One might even detect in it a critique of the theological skepticism of critics of Palamas such as Barlaam and Gregoras. Rather than a straightforward attack on Palamas, this text is perhaps better read as a reaction to obscurantist and anti-logical tendencies in Palamite and anti-Palamite circles alike.

*Paul the Hesychast*

Thus far Palamas has not addressed the specific origins of Paul's wisdom, although this question was important to him and touches on a key element in the Hesychast understanding of Paul. How did Paul gain access to 'the secret and hidden wisdom of God'? How had he come to know 'what no eye had seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered the heart of man'? How, indeed, had he come to know 'the very depths of God'? (1 Cor 2:6–10). Palamas turns to these questions toward the end of the first *Triad*, and finds their answers in Paul's extraordinary visionary experiences. He believes that the apostle's wisdom was imparted to him through his vision of a 'light from heaven' on the day of his conversion (Acts 9:3–7, cf. 22:6–11, 26:12), and especially through the 'visions and revelations' he received in the course of his subsequent 'ascent to the third heaven' (2 Cor 12:1–4). In discussing these events, Palamas underlines the power of the divinizing grace that transformed a 'Saul' into a 'Paul', and it seems clear that this is the point towards which his entire argument has been moving.<sup>28</sup> Palamas sees in Paul's spiritual experiences nothing less than the definitive embodiment of the Hesychast practices attacked by Barlaam. Palamas does not bring these experiences forward simply as proof texts in support of his theological arguments, but he believes that Paul himself was the founder and model of a form of spiritual life identical with that practiced by the Hesychasts.<sup>29</sup>

*Paul's Rapture*

With this we arrive at the question of Paul's visionary experiences and in particular his ascent or 'rapture' (*ἄρπαγή*) into the third heaven, which many modern scholars find disconcerting, if not a little alarming, inasmuch as the familiar Paul here changes into a believer in celestial wanderings. Accounts of 'visions and revelations' (2 Cor 12:1), and of journeys to 'heaven' and 'paradise' (2 Cor 12:2, 4), make Paul seem more like a medieval Byzantine saint than a modern Protestant pastor, and argue for an image of the apostle as a man of 'mystical' experiences in a way that scholars have found difficult to conceptualize.<sup>30</sup> Yet none of this should be surpris-

<sup>28</sup> *Triad* 1.1.22: 'Our *theosophia* is a gift that transforms "Sauls" into "Pauls", catching them up from earth into the "third heaven", where they "hear ineffable things" (2 Cor 12:2)' (1:61, lines 22–28).

<sup>29</sup> In *Triad* 2.3.24, Paul is described as the 'most divine initiator (*θειότατος ιεροτελεστής*)...inasmuch as he ascended beyond nature, and saw "invisible things" and "heard what cannot be heard" (cf. 2 Cor 12:4)' (1:435, lines 13–17). Palamas recognizes other models for the divinized life, such as Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and St Stephen, but the principal archetype is Paul (*Triads* 3.3.8, 1.3.25; 1.3.30–31). Before Palamas, Gregory of Sinai (d. ca. 1337), *On the Signs of Grace and Delusion*, had already grounded the entire Hesychast project, understood as the manifestation of the 'indwelling grace of baptism', on the teaching of Paul in 2 Cor 13:5: 'Do you not know that Jesus Christ dwells within you?' (*Φιλοκαλία*, [Αθήνα: Παπαδημητρίου-Αστήρ, 1961] 4:67).

<sup>30</sup> Pauline 'mysticism' is now generally referred to as 'participation in Christ', on which see James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 390–412. Dunn notes that, unlike the 'judicial metaphor of justification', the notion of 'participation in Christ' is the 'more natural extension of Paul's Christology', adding that Paul's language of being 'in Christ' is 'much more pervasive in his writ-

ing, since Paul's letters, as well as the depiction of Paul in the book of Acts, provide ample evidence of visionary experiences, revelations, and ecstasies; of miracles; of the indwelling of Christ and/or the Holy Spirit; of experiences of grace and spiritual transformation; and of personal union with Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Paul's account is the only first-hand description of an ascent to heaven to have survived from the first century.<sup>32</sup> It is tantalizingly brief—around fifty words—little more than an elliptical digression about 'visions and revelations' embedded in a larger argument. In the tradition of ironic boasting, Paul writes of 'a certain man' who was 'caught up' into the 'third heaven', although he afterwards states that this man was 'caught up' into 'paradise', where he heard 'certain ineffable words that cannot be spoken'. To complicate matters still further, the apostle repeatedly notes that he does not know whether this experience took place 'in the body or out of the body'. We are consequently left to wonder about the precise relation of the 'third heaven' to 'paradise', which may perhaps be one and the same destination, unless Paul is speaking of a two-stage ascent, or perhaps of two separate ascents.<sup>33</sup> Further ambiguity arises over whether or not this was a spiritual or a bodily experience; and we are told nothing about the content, meaning, or purpose of the revelation, or why the words that were heard cannot be communicated to others.<sup>34</sup>

Despite these ambiguities—or perhaps because of them—this passage attracted considerable interest throughout the patristic and later Byzantine periods. On the whole, the Church Fathers accepted the account as entirely fitting and natural, recognizing in Paul's rapture a paradigm for their own spiritual experiences, a connection authorized by the influential *Life of Antony*.<sup>35</sup> The connection itself, however, is much older, and appears in highly developed form already in Origen's *Commentary*

ings than his talk of "God's righteousness" (390–91), and that the 'study of participation in Christ leads more directly into the rest of Paul's theology than justification' (395). Despite these positive assessments, Dunn devotes only twenty pages to this 'pervasive' theme in a book of some eight hundred pages.

<sup>31</sup> Visionary experiences (Gal 2:2; Eph 3:3–5; Acts 9:3–7, 11–12, 16:9–10, 18:9–10, 22:17–21, 23:11, 27:23–24); miracles (Acts 14:3, 8–10, 15:12, 16:25–26, 19:11–12, 20:9–12, 28:3–6); indwelling of Christ (Rom 8:9; cf. Eph 3:17; Col 3:15); of the Spirit (Rom 5:5, 8:9, 11, 15–16, 26–27; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; Acts 9:17, 13:9); grace and transformation (Rom 6:3–11, 6:22, 12:2; 2 Cor 3:17–18, 4:4–6); union with Christ (Gal 2:19–20, 3:26–28; 1 Cor 6:17; Eph 1:10, 2:5–6; Phil 1:21, 2:5, 3:9; Col 1:24, 2:11–13, 3:1–4; 2 Tim 2:11–13).

<sup>32</sup> Paula R. Gooder, *Only the Third Heaven? 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 and Heavenly Ascent* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), helpfully surveys a century of scholarship. Also helpful is James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent in Greco-Roman, Judaic and Early Christian Context* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986); and Riemer Roukema, 'Paul's Rapture to Paradise in Early Christian Literature', in *The Wisdom of Egypt*, eds. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 267–83.

<sup>33</sup> That Paul experienced (at least) two raptures, one to the third heaven and another to paradise, was a widely held opinion; cf. Photios, *Bibliotheca* 234 (ed. René Henry [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967], 5:85).

<sup>34</sup> Of course, writers of apocryphal works eagerly provided answers to these questions; cf. Gooder, *Third Heaven*, 104–27; and J. Edward Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 148–63.

<sup>35</sup> Athanasios, *Life of Antony* 65.8–9 (SC 400:306); cf. the *Saying* of Abba Silouan, who for hours stood in state of ecstasy, his hands stretched out to heaven; when pressed to reveal what he saw, he replied: 'I was caught up into heaven and saw the glory of God' (PG 65:408).

on the *Song of Songs*, which conflates the connubial ‘inner chamber’ with the apostle’s ‘third heaven’. *The Commentary* survives only in a Latin translation, although the passage linking Paul’s ecstasy with Christian mystical experience is extant in Greek in the *Catena on the Song of Songs* compiled by Prokopios of Gaza (ca. 460–526).<sup>36</sup>

From at least the third century, then, spiritual writers interpreted Paul’s ascent as an expression of the highest level of mystical experience. Undoubtedly the most elaborate example of such an interpretation is found in Maximos the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 20. Maximos interprets the event in the framework of his theology of divinization. He points out that divinization is not a natural potential of human nature, but rather the activity of divine grace, the reception of which requires a person to ‘go outside of himself’, that is, to enter a state of ecstasy, after the manner of Paul. Maximos subsequently embarks on a highly Dionysian interpretation of the apostle’s ascent to the third heaven, which, he argues, unfolded according to the three stages of purification, illumination, and mystical union.<sup>37</sup>

According to Maximos, that Paul did not know whether he was ‘in the body’ or ‘outside the body’ was the natural result of the apostle’s temporary loss of sense perception and intellection. Insofar as Paul had gone outside himself in ecstasy, his power of sense perception was inactive, and thus he was not ‘in the body’. But neither was he ‘outside the body’, insofar as ‘his intellective power was inactive during the time of his rapture’. Maximos avers that this is also why the words Paul heard cannot be repeated, for having, as it were, sounded in a realm beyond mind, they cannot be grasped by ordinary thought, or uttered through ordinary speech, or received by ordinary human hearing. Maximos concludes this complex interpretation by construing Paul’s three-fold ascent as an expression of the spiritual progress that results from a life lived according to the Pauline virtues of ‘faith, hope, and love’ (1 Cor 13:13).

In Maximos’ reading of 2 Corinthians 12:1–4, Paul’s rapture is fully identified with ascetic contemplation and the experience of divinization. The ‘three heavens’ signify—indeed simply *are*—the three stages of the spiritual life and their respective modes of cognition. The movement of ‘ascent’ is thus a progression from lower to higher modes of cognition as the soul is increasingly abstracted from its bodily senses, passing into a realm beyond intellect. The condition of being ‘caught up’, of

<sup>36</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1 (GCS VIII/33:108–9); cf. Prokopios, *Catena in Canticum canticorum* (PG 17:253; PG 87:1552). See Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia in Hexaemeron*, who also describes Paul’s ascent into the third heaven as an ‘entrance into the innermost sanctuary of intelligible nature’ (PG 44:121B).

<sup>37</sup> Maximos is in fact commenting on Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 28.20, which describes Paul’s rapture as a threefold ‘progress, ascent, or assumption to the third heaven’ (SC 250:140, lines 2–3). For *Ambiguum* 20, see Nicholas [Maximos] Constas, ed., *Maximos the Confessor, On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1:408–19. See also Maximos’ *scholion* on the ecstasy of Paul, in Beate Regina Suchla, ed., *Ioannis Scythopolitani, prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum De divinis nominibus* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 188, lines 9–35 (in the apparatus).

being ‘outside oneself’, is a signature Dionysian doctrine grounded on the ecstatic transport of Paul to the third heaven.<sup>38</sup> Consistent with this tradition, Maximos allows for an immediate experience of God in ecstasy, so that Paul’s rapture, far from being a unique or extraordinary event, coincides with the end for which Christian life is a preparation, namely, divinization. Among the Byzantine Hesychasts, this became the standard interpretation of 2 Corinthians 12:2–4, so that every saint becomes ‘another Paul (ἕτερος Παῦλος), caught up to the third heaven of theology’.<sup>39</sup>

Palamas’ understanding of Paul’s rapture falls directly within this tradition of interpretation, being primarily indebted to Maximos and Dionysios. Throughout the *Triads*, Palamas cites Paul’s account extensively, for which Gregoras criticized him, although Palamas says little that is new.<sup>40</sup> Novelty, of course, was not his aim, although Palamas supplied a missing piece of the puzzle about whether Paul was ‘in the body or outside of it’. Palamas’ reading is based on the idea, mentioned a moment ago, that the ecstasy of divinization involves a cessation of sensory and intellectual activities:

Now we see by means of sense perception, created beings, and ‘divisible symbols’;<sup>41</sup> but then, finding ourselves beyond such things, we shall see the timeless light directly, with no intervening veil, just as the most divine initiator (i.e., Paul) into these things revealed, saying: ‘Now (νῦν) we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face’ (1 Cor 13:12).<sup>42</sup> By the word ‘now’ he means the mode of contemplation that is accessible and appropriate to our nature, for he himself, having ascended beyond nature, and finding himself beyond sense perception and intellect, saw ‘invisible things’<sup>43</sup> and ‘heard

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Dionysios, *On the Divine Names* 2.11; 3.2; 4.3 (ed. Beate Regina Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I [Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990], 136–37; 141; 159).

<sup>39</sup> Niketas Stethatos, *Gnostic Chapters* 44 (Φιλοκαλία 3:336–37); cf. *ibid.*, 38 (334–35); *id.*, *Practical and Theological Chapters* 104 (Φιλοκαλία 3:254); Makarios, *On the Freedom of the Intellect* 23 (Φιλοκαλία 3:230; PG 34:957B); and Kallistos the Patriarch, *On Prayer* 45, 49 (Φιλοκαλία 4:329, 332). See also Neilos of Ancyra, *Discourse on Voluntary Poverty* 27: ‘Perfect prayer is the rapture of the mind and the total cessation of sensory perception, and this is why Paul, when he was “caught up into the third heaven, did not know if he was in the body or not” (2 Cor 12:2). The same thing happened to him when he was “praying in the temple and entered a state of ecstasy” (Acts 22:17–18) and heard the divine voice by means of the inner sense of his heart, for the sense of hearing, together with all the other bodily senses, ceases during the experience of ecstasy’ (PG 79:1004B), cited by Palamas at *Triad* 1.3.18. See also Anastasius of Sinai, *Question 3* (CCSG 59:7–9).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Triad* 1.1.22; 1.3.5, 16, 18, 24; 2.1.44; 2.2.13, 28; 2.3.24, 26–27, 37, 56; 3.1.38; and the remarks of Gregoras, *Antirrhetic* 1.2.2 (ed. Hans-Veit Beyer [Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976], 245, 251).

<sup>41</sup> A citation from Dionysios, *On the Divine Names* 1.4 (μεριστῶν συμβόλων) (114, line 6), which I take to be a Dionysian gloss on Paul’s notion that our knowledge, which is ‘divisible’ (i.e., partial = ἐκ μέρους), will be ‘abolished’ in the unmediated vision of God (1 Cor 13:9–11). This passage from the *Triads* is replete with Dionysian allusions, although full annotation is not possible here.

<sup>42</sup> Here Paul says ἄρτι and not νῦν, which latter is a rhetorical refinement introduced by Palamas.

<sup>43</sup> In 2 Corinthians 12:4, Paul speaks only of ‘hearing’, and makes no mention of ‘seeing’, although he does refer to ‘visions’ (ὀπτασίαις) at the beginning of the account (2 Cor 12:1). Psellos, *On the words, “I know a Man in Christ”* (Paul Gautier, ed., *Michaelis Pselli Theologica* I [Leipzig: Teubner, 1989], 111–12),



things that are beyond hearing' (cf. 2 Cor 12:4), receiving within himself the 'pledge' (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5; Eph 1:14) of that 'rebirth' (cf. Titus 3:5) and the vision that accompanies it, which is why he said, 'I knew', and 'I heard', and 'I saw'. These indeed seem to be the activity of perception. But he also said: 'I do not know if it was the intellect or the body that perceived those things'—because this 'perception' is beyond both sensation and intellect, for when one of the two is active, and because it is active, it apprehends and knows. This is why he added: 'God knows' (2 Cor 12:3), for it was God who at that moment was active. Paul himself, however, inasmuch as he had gone beyond what is proper to man by virtue of his union with God, saw invisible realities by means of the invisible, even though those realities, which became visible to him, never departed (*ἐκστάντα*) from their realm beyond perception.<sup>44</sup>

Palamas' interpretation carefully builds on the work of his predecessors, which he deftly intertwines with a range of Pauline themes and images. Paul's ascent to the third heaven is at the heart of Palamas' theological anthropology, with its sophisticated differentiation of human consciousness and complex strategies for uniting the human and the divine. In the ecstatic displacement of the self, the apostle is overtaken by the divine actor, who becomes his centre, as well as the centre of his activity, which is precisely why Paul says: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2:20).<sup>45</sup>

### *The Divine Light*

In addition to Paul's ascent to the third heaven, his vision of the divine light on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:3–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18) also figured prominently in the controversy. As described by Luke in the book of Acts, Paul, while traveling to Damascus, was overwhelmed by a 'light from heaven that flashed all around him'.

argues that Paul was caught up first into the third heaven, where, outside of himself, he was overwhelmed by light (as on the day of his conversion), and by the singing of the angels, the sound of whose voices can be received by God alone. It is only in the apostle's subsequent rapture to the earthly paradise that he is able to 'hear certain sounds' and 'see certain things,' given the relatively sense-perceptible character of paradise; cf. Frederick Lauritzen, 'Psellos the Hesychast: A Neoplatonic Reading of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor', *Byzantinoslavica* 1–2 (2012): 167–79.

<sup>44</sup> *Triad* 2.3.24 (2:435–37); cf. Gennadios Scholarios, *Responses to the Questions of George, Despot of Serbia* 14 (Petit, ed., *Oeuvres complètes*, 4:209–10): 'Paul is in doubt about whether this happened "with or without the body", not because he suspects that his body was taken up along with his soul into heaven, for he knew that this was not possible at that time, for the body was still corruptible; but when it becomes incorruptible and light and bright, as was the body of Christ after the resurrection, then it will ascend to the heavenly paradise, which is the place of the blessed. But he wonders: "Was the soul separated from the body for a time, leaving the body dead until the soul, by some miracle, should return to it, or did the soul remain within the body?" But he was "caught up to heaven", and he was both naturally in the body and in heaven according to activity (*κατ' ἐνέργειαν*), so that the mysteries of heaven might be revealed for the benefit of the world'.

<sup>45</sup> *Triad* 3.1.38 (2:635, lines 2–3).

Temporarily blinded and falling to the ground, Paul heard the voice of Jesus, who called him to serve as the apostle to the gentiles (Acts 26:18). Palamas directly cites Luke's account of Paul's vision only in the last volume of his trilogy, written around 1340.<sup>46</sup> By that time, the debate had shifted away from the epistemological questions described above, and came to focus increasingly on the nature of the divine light, which according to Palamas' opponents was a mere 'symbol' or 'created phenomenon'.<sup>47</sup> Having already argued for the continuity of experience between Paul and the Hesychasts, Palamas affirmed that what the apostle beheld on the road to Damascus was nothing less than the eternal, uncreated energy of God—in other words, the very same divine light seen by the Hesychasts.

By identifying the light of Paul's conversion with the uncreated light of God, Palamas was able to solidify two key points. In the first place, Paul's gift of divine wisdom (cf. 2 Pet 3:13–16) is revealed to have been communicated to him through the medium of the divine light.<sup>48</sup> It was not the 'light of the mind' that illumined Paul, but the 'power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in his soul, and which revealed to him the true knowledge of God'.<sup>49</sup> Receiving the Spirit of God, which 'knows the depths of God' (1 Cor 2:11), Paul was granted to see what 'no eye had seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered the heart of man' (1 Cor 2:9). It was through this same light, moreover, that Paul received both the 'eyes of Christ' and 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16), by means of which he was able to see and know the invisible God, for God is not 'invisible to himself', but 'only to those who see and think with created eyes and minds'. But to those whom 'God has united himself, becoming, as it were, their mind, how would he not give them his own vision and grace?'<sup>50</sup>

The second point follows from the first. If what Paul saw was the light of God, and if the light of God is the uncreated energy of God, then one had to conclude, Palamas pointed out, that what Paul did *not* see was the divine essence.<sup>51</sup> Palamas' opponents of course did not believe that Paul had seen God's essence, but because they refused to acknowledge the existence of the divine energies, they had no choice but to argue that Paul had seen nothing at all.<sup>52</sup> This is not the place to enter into a

<sup>46</sup> *Triad* 3.1.38; 3.1.40; 3.2.1 (2:633, 637, 642). Note that at *Triad* 3.1.38, and 3.2.1, Palamas cites Markarios, *On the Freedom of the Intellect* (PG 34:957A–B), which conflates Paul's vision of the divine light with his ascent to the third heaven, making the divine light the *cause* of the apostle's transport to heaven. He does the same in his *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 5.6.23 (*Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα* 4:303, lines 7–14).

<sup>47</sup> *Triad* 3.1.11 (2:577–79); and id., *150 Chapters* 147 (ed. Sinkewicz, 253).

<sup>48</sup> *Triad* 1.3.10–11 (1:129–33).

<sup>49</sup> *Triad* 3.1.38 (2:633, lines 24–30).

<sup>50</sup> *Triad* 1.3.16 (1:143).

<sup>51</sup> *Triad* 2.3.26 (2:439); cf. Palamas, *Dialogue Between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* 45 (*Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα* 2:208); and, id., *Antirrhetic against Akindynos* 5.2.4–5 (*Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα* 4:289–90), for an extended discussion of this question.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Palamas, *Against Akindynos* 7.12.41 (*Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα* 3:492–93), where Akindynos's equivocation about the light seen by angels, archangels, and by Paul, implies that such visions were demonic deceptions.

detailed discussion of the essence-energies distinction, about which much has been written, and this question need not detain us any further.<sup>53</sup>

Though not a series of exegetical homilies or a biblical commentary in the traditional sense, the *Triads* is nonetheless a work of outstanding Pauline interpretation, a massive appropriation of Pauline themes, rhetoric, and theology. In response to the challenge of fallen Greek wisdom, and in defence of the transforming activity of divine grace, Palamas found his argumentative footing in the letters of Paul. Immersed in the patristic exegetical tradition, Palamas was a careful student of Paul's letters, and it is hard to fault him for reading his own ideas into the texts. The cut and thrust of theological controversy called for a powerful command of rhetoric, and prompted Palamas to assume, not simply the arguments, but the very voice of Paul, amplifying and reinforcing the content of Paul's message. In the course of the debates, it was ultimately the voice of Paul that the Byzantines recognized in the voice of Palamas, in whom they saw 'another Paul'. In a liturgical office for Palamas written shortly after his death, the hymnographer astutely captured these resonances, artfully aligning the sainted bishop with the apostle: 'Through your life of prayer, poverty, and virginity, and in the font of your tears, you purified your heart, O Gregory, and being wholly raised aloft, you were united to Christ, becoming "one spirit with him" (1 Cor 6:17), and thus like Paul you "heard ineffable words" (2 Cor 12:4), and became a "chosen vessel, bearing the Name of the Lord" (Acts 9:15).'<sup>54</sup>

The Late Byzantine period, spiritually invigorated by the Hesychast controversy, was marked by an extraordinary appropriation of Pauline theology that has hitherto escaped scholarly notice. This paper has argued that the Hesychast controversy unfolded around competing interpretations of Paul's theology, with both of the opposing parties claiming to be the true follower of the divine apostle. The close reading of Gregory Palamas' *Triads* offered in this study indicates, not that the teachings of Paul were altered or distorted to suit a theological novelty known as 'Palamism', but rather that the edifice of Palamite theology was built upon principles derived directly from Paul's letters and information provided by the book of Acts.

In Paul's systematic separation of the two wisdoms, Palamas found a fixed point from which to launch his response to the vaunted claims of pagan philosophy. As the apostle had made clear, philosophy does not offer true knowledge of God, which is a gift of grace understood as true contact and union with God. Divine, uncreated grace does not originate from a place within creation but from God himself. For

<sup>53</sup> For discussion, see Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas, The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1988), 40–49; and Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider, eds., *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Philotheos Kokkinos, *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ τοῦ Παλαμά* (Αθήνα, 1980), 102. Palamas died on 14 November 1357, and was proclaimed a saint at an official liturgical ceremony in February or March of 1368. At the time, Kokkinos was patriarch of Constantinople, and presided over the celebration; cf. Antonio Rigo, 'La canonizzazione di Gregorio Palama (1368) ed alcune altre questioni,' *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 30 (1993): 155–202.

the creature to receive the creator, the receiver had to enter a state of prayer, and ultimately be caught up in a state of ecstasy, so that the intellect is increasingly detached, not simply from the 'mind of the flesh' (Rom 8:6–8) but from all created realities. Consistent with the patristic emphasis on the person of Paul, Palamas highlighted the apostle's own spiritual experiences, especially his ecstatic rapture into heaven, which Palamas explicated in light of traditional monastic anthropology. In a defining moment for Hesychast theology, Palamas connected the Dionysian and Maximian notion of ecstasy to the idea of the self as open to the divinizing vision of the divine light understood as the uncreated energy of God. In the life and letters of Paul, Palamas saw what he and other faithful Byzantines had seen in all their saints: a human life overwhelmed by God, transformed by divine grace, and caught up from the present aeon into another beyond it.



# ‘THE LIFE AND THE LIGHT’: THE INFLUENCE OF SAINT SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN ON THE TEACHING OF SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS

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Two saints, Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory Palamas, played a crucial role in reviving Patristic theology during the period preceding the Great Captivity of Constantinople. Both monastic writers are known as the theologians of the Uncreated Light and promoters of Hesychasm, and they remain among the most prominent spokesmen for Orthodox theology until our times. Even though three hundred years separate them, one finds in the writings of Saint Gregory an organic continuity with Saint Symeon's teaching. This article explores Palamas' reception of the New Theologian's theology and the relation between the teachings of these two leading figures of Christian spirituality.

During the period of cultural revival preceding the Great Captivity of Constantinople,<sup>1</sup> there arose in the Church two theologians who renewed Patristic Theology. Their names were Symeon the New Theologian (+1022) and Gregory Palamas (+1359). Originating from Asia Minor, they were both educated in the aristocratic environment of Constantinople and the imperial court before choosing to follow the monastic path. Symeon departed to Studion Monastery while Gregory went to Athos, the Holy Mountain. Around three hundred years separate these two leading figures of Christian spirituality. Nevertheless, one finds in the writings of Saint Gregory an organic continuity of Saint Symeon's teaching. Both monastic writers are known as the theologians of the Uncreated Light and promoters of Hesychasm, and they remain till our present time among the most prominent spokesmen for Orthodox theology.<sup>2</sup> The time in which Palamas lived was a critical moment in the history of Eastern Christianity, a phase of political, cultural, and theological turmoil and travail.<sup>3</sup> Within the vibrant Byzantine setting of the fourteenth century, and as he

<sup>1</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, A History of Development of Doctrine 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 252–54.

<sup>2</sup> Δ. Κουτρομπή, *Ἡ ἐπικαιρότης τοῦ Γρηγορίου Παλαμά*: *Ἡ Χάρις τῆς Θεολογίας* (Ἀθήνα: Δόμος, 1995), 157–69; F. Georgi, *Ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ: Ἡ ἐσχατολογία τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Μπαρμπουνάκη, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> For the historical and intellectual framework of the Hesychastic controversy, see P. Lemerle, ‘Le Tomos du concile de 1351 et l’horismos de Matthieu Cantacuzène’, *REB* 9 (1951): 55–64; A. Papadakis, ‘Gregory Palamas at the Council of Blachernae (1351)’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 10 (1969):



confronted the intellectual elite of the Byzantine Church and society, Saint Gregory found himself having to defend Saint Symeon's approach to Orthodox dogma, theological method, and monastic spirituality.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary interest in the study of the two writers arose in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, with the writings of theologians like Fr Dumitru Staniloae,<sup>5</sup> Saint Justin Popovitch,<sup>6</sup> as well as distinguished scholars of the Russian Diaspora, such as Archbishop Basil Krivocheine,<sup>7</sup> Archimandrite Cyprian Kern,<sup>8</sup> Vladimir Lossky,<sup>9</sup> Fr John Meyendorff,<sup>10</sup> and their contemporaries. Their efforts led to a real abundance of studies on Hesychasm in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, opinions within contemporary academic research into Symeon and Palamas remain divergent and controversial, expressing the multiplicity of the backgrounds of their researchers.<sup>12</sup> Among the theological issues raised, one can

333–42; L. Clucas, *The Hesychast Controversy in Byzantium in the Fourteenth Century: A Consideration of the Basic Evidence*, Microfilm, I & II (PhD diss.: University of California, 1975); Δ. Τσάμης, 'Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς καί ἡ ἐποχή του', in X. Κοντάκης, ed., *Πρακτικά Θεολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμά* (Θεσσαλονίκη: 1985), 51–69; B. Χριστοφορίδης, *Οἱ ἡσυχαστικὲς ἐριδες κατὰ τὸ ἸΔ' αἰῶνα* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Παρατηρητής, 1993); Tsirpanlis C. N., 'Byzantine Humanism and Hesychasm in the Thirteenth & Fourteenth Century: Synthesis or Antithesis, Reformation or Revolution', *PBR* 12:1–3 (1993): 13–23; Δ. Γ. Κουτσούρη, 'Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμάς καί ἡ ἀντιησυχαστικὴ κακοδοξία τοῦ ἸΔ' αἰῶνα' (Σροχαλία: Ἀθήνα, 1996); Γ. Μαντζαρίδης, ed., 'Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς στὴν Ἱστορία καί τὸ Παρόν: Πρακτικά διεθνῶν ἐπιστημονικῶν συνεδρίων Ἀθηνῶν καί Λεμεσοῦ (Άγιον Όρος: Ἱερά Μέγιστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the intellectual identity of the opponents of Palamas, see the debate between Fathers John Meyendorff and John Romanides: J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* 3 (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1959); J. Romanides, 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics: Part I–II', *GOTR* 2 (1960–61): 186–205, 2 (1963–64): 225–70.

<sup>5</sup> D. Staniloae, *Viața și Învățătura Sfântului Grigore Palama* (Sibiu, 1938); see also S.L. Toma, 'H πατερική παράδοση εἰς τὸ ἔργον τοῦ π. Δημητρίου Στανιλοάε καί ὁ σύγχρονος κόσμος' (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> J. Popovitch, *Les voies de la connaissance de Dieu*, trad. Jean Louis Palierne (Lausanne: Age d'homme, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> B. Krivocheine, 'The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas', *ECQ* 3 (1938): 26–33, 71–84, 138–56, 193–215; id., *Dans la lumière du Christ* (Chevetogne, Belgique: , 1980). See also English translation of this book: id., *In the Light of Christ: Saint Symeon the New Theologian: Life-Spirituality-Doctrine*, trans. Gythiel Anthony (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> K. Kern, 'Les éléments de la théologie de Grégoire Palamas', *Irenikon* 20 (1947): 6–33, 164–93. See also his elaborate study on the anthropology of Saint Gregory Palamas: *Antropologia sv. Grigoriia Palamy* (Paris, 1950) (in Russian).

<sup>9</sup> V. Lossky, *Théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* (Paris: Aubier—Editions Moutaigne, 1944).

<sup>10</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* 3 (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1959); id., 'Les débuts de la controverse hésychaste', *Byzantion* 23 (1953): 87–120; *Saint Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe*, *Maitres Spirituels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959).

<sup>11</sup> I. Hausher, *La methode d'oraison hésychaste* (Roma: OCA, 1927); id., *Penthos: La doctrine de la componction dans l'Orient Chrétien* (Roma: OCA, 1944); id., 'Variations récentes dans les jugements sur la methode d'oraison des Hésychastes', *OCP* 19 (1953): 424–28; id., 'L'Hésychasme: Étude de spiritualité', *OCP* 22 (1956): 5–40, 247–85; id., *Nom du Christ et voies d'oraison* (Roma: OCA, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> Π. Χρήστου, ed., *Γρηγόριω Ἀρχιεπισκόπῳ Θεσσαλονίκῃς καί ὑπερμάχῳ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας: Πανηγυρικός Τόμος ἑορτασμοῦ τῆς ἑξακοστῆς ἐπετείου τοῦ Θανάτου τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμά* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἡ Ἱερά Μητρόπολις Θεσσαλονίκῃς καί ἡ Θεολογικὴ Σχολὴ τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκῃς, 1960); E. Behr Siegel, 'Reflexions sur la doctrine de Grégoire Palamas', *Contacts* 12 (1960): 118–25; D. Stiernon, 'Bulletin sur le Palamisme', *REB* 30 (1972): 231–341; K. Ware, 'The Debate about Palamism', *ECR* 9 (1977):

find some initiatives undertaken by contemporary scholars to situate the two theologians vis-à-vis their preceding patristic heritage.<sup>13</sup> Numerous other studies have also attempted to examine the relation of Saint Symeon's teaching to that of Saint Gregory;<sup>14</sup> nevertheless, the question of how to analyse this delicate theme remains open.

This article intends to explore Palamas' reception of the New Theologian's teaching on the vision of the Uncreated Light, in what way he was inspired by him, whether or not he imitated and quoted him directly, and to what extent he was creative or renovative in rearticulating Saint Symeon's theology in the fourteenth century.

45–63; R. Synkevitch, *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition II* (XIIIe – XIXe s.), Corpus Christianorum, éd. C. Conticello et V. Conticello (Tunhout Brepols: Centre d'études des religions du livre, 2002), 131–88; X. Σταμούλη, *Άσκησις αὐτοσυνειδησίας: Μελετήματα δογματικῆς θεολογίας* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Τὸ Παλίμψηστον, 2004), 121–61.

<sup>13</sup> I. Hausherr, *Un grand mystique byzantin: Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949–1022) par Nicetas Stéthatos. Texte grec inédit publié avec introduction et notes critiques*, OC 12 (Roma, 1928); H.-G. Beck, 'Symeon der Theologe', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 46 (1953): 57–62; B. Krivocheine, *Le thème de l'ivresse spirituelle dans la mystique de saint Syméon le Nouveau Théologien*, SP 5 (1962): 368–76; T. Spidlik, *Symeon le Nouveau Théologien*, DS, vol. 14 (1990), col. 1387–1401; A. Golitzin, 'Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their common roots in ascetical tradition', SVTQ 38 (1994): 131–79; H. Alfeyev, 'The Patristic Background of Saint Symeon the Theologian's Doctrine of the Divine Light', SP 32 (1995): 229–331; A. Golitzin, *Symeon the New Theologian. Life, Times and Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); H. Alfeyev, *St Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford—New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Δ. Κοντοστεργίου, 'Η Εκκλησιολογία κατὰ τὸν Συμεὼν τὸν Νέον Θεολόγον', Γ.Π. 83 (2000): 987–1048; Γ. Μαρτζέλου, 'Η θέα τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Συμεὼν τὸν Νέον Θεολόγον', in *Διακονία καὶ Λόγος. Χαρακτήριος τόμος πρὸς τιμὴ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Χριστοδούλου* (Ἀθήνα: Ἀρμός, 2004), 129–56; Β. Τσίγκου, 'Ὁ ἀνακαινισμὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ ἁγίου Συμεὼν τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου' (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρᾶ, 2006); G. Habra, 'The Source of the Doctrine of Gregory Palamas on the Divine Energies', ECR 12 (1957–58): 244–52, 294–303, 338–47; J. Meyendorff, *St Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1959); G. Florovsky, 'St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers', in id., *Collected Works I*, 105–20; L. H. Grondijs, 'The Patristic Origins of Gregory Palamas' Doctrine of God', SP 5 (1962): 323–28; J. Nadal, 'La critique par Aquinados de l'hermeneutic patristique de Palamas', *Istina* 3 (1974): 297–328; G. Mantzarides, 'Tradition and Renewal in the Theology of Saint Gregory Palamas', ECR 1–2 (1977): 1–18; A. (De) Halleux, 'Palamisme et Tradition', *Irénikon* 4 (1975): 479–95; G. Patacsi, 'Palamism before Palamas', ECR 2 (1975): 125–36; A. J. Sopko, 'Palamism Before Palamas and the Theology of Gregory of Cyprus', SVTQ 23 (1979): 139–47; Δ. Μπακάρου, 'Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας', Γ.Π. 64 (1981): 64–68; J. (Van) Rossum, *Palamism and Church Tradition: Palamism and its Use of Patristic Tradition and its Relation to Thomistic Thought* (New York, 1985); J. Garrigues, 'Retour aux sources palamites à la lumière d'une édition critique', *Istina* 20 (1975): 315–20.

<sup>14</sup> B. Krivocheine, 'Grégoire Palamas ou Symeon le Nouveau Théologien', MEPREO 11 (1963): 205–10 and "Other Chapters": St Gregory Palamas or St Symeon the New Theologian', JMP 4 (1986): 69–72; Ι. Ἀλφέγιεβ, 'Τὸ πατερικὸ ὑπόβαθρον τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ ἁγίου Συμεὼν τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ περὶ θεώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου', in *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν: Πρακτικὰ διεθνῶν ἐπιστημονικῶν συνεδρίων Ἀθηνῶν καὶ Λεμεσοῦ* (Ἅγιον Ὅρος: Ἱερά Μέγιστη Μονὴ Βατοπαιδίου, 2000), 95–110.

*The Eternal Light, Reign, and Glory of the Holy Trinity*

As a starting point, it should be noted that the two theologians in many texts acknowledge the divine and indeed the Trinitarian character of the light revealed to the saints through mystical experience. Saint Symeon states clearly that: 'God is light and the sight of him is like a light. It is therefore at the sight of the light that we understand for the first time that God is'.<sup>15</sup> He affirms also: 'The Father is light, the Son is light, the Holy Spirit is light...Indeed, the three are one light, unique, undivided... God is seen completely as a simple light'.<sup>16</sup> Hence, far from any systematisation of theological discourse and terminology, the eleventh-century New Theologian aims at guiding his disciples spiritually by describing his own personal mystical experience: 'I fell into a trance before your beauty and was struck with amazement, O Trinity, my God. The traits in each of the three are the same, and the three are one countenance (*πρόσωπον*): my God, whose name is Spirit, the God of the universe'.<sup>17</sup>

Both theologians distinguish the light that reveals God from the divine essence, identifying it as the *energia* which is common to the three persons of the Holy Trinity. They also identify the vision of light with the manifestation of the divine Reign,<sup>18</sup> Glory, and Beauty of the Triune God. In his twenty-fourth Hymn, Saint Symeon utters, 'Grant me the sight of your face, O Logos, and the enjoyment of your ineffable beauty. Let me contemplate and delight in your vision, the unutterable vision, the invisible vision, the awesome vision. Grant me the telling of at least its energies, if not its essence'.<sup>19</sup> In another text, he clarifies that,

Indeed, there is no other way to know God, if not by seeing the light that emanates from him...the unapproachable glory of his face, the energy and the power of his most Holy Spirit, in other words his light, no one can speak of it, if he does not first see the light itself...and does not know intimately its illuminations and energies.<sup>20</sup>

He also says: 'We bear witness that God is light, that all those who have been deemed worthy of beholding him have seen him as light, for the light of his glory goes before him and it is impossible that he appears without light'.<sup>21</sup>

Saint Gregory Palamas systematises this teaching on the patristic distinction between energy and essence in God. He clarifies that this divine light and *energy* is

<sup>15</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties* V, 278 (SC 129, 100); *Hymn XXIV*, 57 (SC 174, 432; *ibid.*, 103, 436).

<sup>16</sup> *Hymn XXIII*, 3 (SC 174, 412). *Theological and Ethical Treaties VIII*, 104 (SC 129, 208).

<sup>17</sup> *Hymn XXIV*, 251 (SC 174, 244).

<sup>18</sup> The biblical term *βασίλεια τοῦ Θεοῦ* is translated in this paper as 'Reign of God' in order to emphasise the fact that Saint Symeon and Saint Gregory follow their preceding patristic tradition in considering this *βασίλεια* as an uncreated reality identified with the Energy of God (*ἐνέργεια*), his presence (*παρουσία*) and his manifestation (*θεοφάνεια*) and not as a 'kingdom' belonging to the created realm.

<sup>19</sup> *Hymn XXIV*, 6 (SC 174, 226).

<sup>20</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties V*, 256 (PG 129:98).

<sup>21</sup> *Catechesis XXVIII*, (SC 113 and 109, 136).

granted to humanity as the grace of the Holy Spirit, through which God is manifested in the bodies and souls of the saints. This light is therefore called ‘the Reign of God’,<sup>22</sup> it is ‘the divinity of God...the beauty and radiance of the divine nature...the natural ray and glory of Divinity’,<sup>23</sup> or ‘the light of the divine Reign’ and ‘the glory of the divine nature’.<sup>24</sup> Being uncreated, the light is not separated from the One God and the One Divinity, but is rather ‘distinguished from the divine essence as the glory and radiance of this essence’.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, the uncreated divine ‘energy’ and the uncreated divine essence are both considered by Palamas to be ‘Divinity’.<sup>26</sup> By quoting authoritative liturgical texts,<sup>27</sup> Saint Gregory affirms the divine and Trinitarian character of the light of Christ: ‘Let us ascend to the holy and heavenly mountain, let us see the immaterial divinity of the Father and Spirit shining on the face of the Son’.<sup>28</sup>

In his theological syllogism, this identification of the light of the Transfiguration of Christ with the Reign of God is accentuated.<sup>29</sup> He describes the light as the ‘pure Reign of God’ and the ‘benediction that transcends time’, as ‘it would be absurd to believe that the Reign of God had a beginning and that it is limited by centuries and ages’.<sup>30</sup> He explains that ‘the Reign of God, his simplicity, his unlimitedness, his authority, his life are attributes of God (προσόντα τοῦ Θεοῦ)’, divine features that transcend time. However, even though they are ‘eternal and co-eternal with God’, they are not his nature but proceed from his nature and are related to it.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Christocentric Character of Theophany*

Another common focal point attested to by both theologians is the Christocentric character of the manifestation of the Uncreated Light. According to the two saints, the divine Trinitarian light is revealed through the Incarnation of the Son of God. Saint Symeon notes that Christ ‘came into this world to enlighten all those in the world, the ones sitting in darkness...not with borrowed light, but with light from his own glory and his divinity’.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, his insistence on the central role of Christ

<sup>22</sup> Δ’ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 22, 57, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 284; see also: Maximos Confessor, *Κεφάλαια θεολογικά καὶ οἰκονομικά* 2, 88 (PG 90:1168AB).

<sup>23</sup> *Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα* 147, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, 256.

<sup>24</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ’, 1, 23, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 635.

<sup>25</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Β’, 3, 66, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 598–99.

<sup>26</sup> Διάλεξις ὀρθοδόξου μετὰ Βαρλαμίτου 27, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 190; see also: Β’ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 5, 14, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 95.

<sup>27</sup> The second troparion of the ninth ode in the Canon of the feast of Transfiguration, composed by Saint John Damascene.

<sup>28</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ’, 1, 16, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 629.

<sup>29</sup> *Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα* 146, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, 116.

<sup>30</sup> Γ’ Κατὰ Ἱηγοῦ 25, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 335; See also: Maximos Confessor, *Κεφάλαια θεολογικά* 2, 86 (PG 90:1165AB).

<sup>31</sup> Α’ Κατὰ Ἱηγοῦ 29, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 252.

<sup>32</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties XIII*, 266 (SC 129, 418).

in revealing God does not hinder the Trinitarian dimension of the manifestation of divine light. The New Theologian says: 'Even at night, in the heart of darkness, I see Christ...opening the heavens for me, Christ himself who condescends and reveals himself to me with the Father and the Spirit, Light thrice holy, One in Three, Three in One. Certainly, they are the Light, the Three are the One Light'.<sup>33</sup> Saint Symeon clarifies: 'By his manifestation, he grants them the Holy Spirit in person and then, by the Holy Spirit, he himself with his Father abides inseparably with them'.<sup>34</sup>

Appealing to some theological tools from traditional Christological terminology, Saint Symeon notes that Christ 'appears personally and substantially (*ἐνυπόστατος καὶ οὐσιωδῶς*) in the Light'.<sup>35</sup> He states that 'the God, who has two natures united in one person, has made a double being of me. Having made me double, he has given me two names. By nature I am a man, by grace I am a god...see what a union by grace with him represents: in a manner which is sensible and intelligible, essential and spiritual'.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the transcendent God manifests himself in the Incarnation of Christ and grants the saints the experience of his appearance. 'For it is he, the super-essential Uncreated One, who became flesh and appeared to me as one created, deifying me entirely'.<sup>37</sup>

Salvation is expressed by Symeon in a specific Christocentric terminology. However, the spontaneous poetical style that characterises his mystical language keeps emerging and imposing itself in his texts. The same theological truth is expressed by Saint Gregory in a more refined and normative theological language where the experience of the vision of light is based hermeneutically on a systematic interpretation of the Christological doctrines of the Third, Fourth, and Sixth Ecumenical Councils. Palamas refers to the traditional Christological formulations in his teaching on the permeation of the life-giving grace and light of God in human reality. This theophany, prepared in the Old Testament and realised in the Incarnation of the Son of God, is the result of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ in the one eternal Person of the Logos.<sup>38</sup> According to Saint Gregory, the manifested light of Christ 'is...the archetypal beauty of the Logos of God, the radiance and glory of his divinity, which naturally shines from his divine nature and has become the glory common to the divine nature and the divinely-assumed human nature of Christ'.<sup>39</sup> This has been made possible through Christ's uniting in his one person (*ὑπόστασις*) both divinity and humanity. For this reason, Palamas quotes Saint Makarios of Egypt, who calls the light 'the glory of the Spirit',

<sup>33</sup> *Hymn XI*, 35 (SC 156, 234).

<sup>34</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties V*, 422 (SC 129, 110).

<sup>35</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties X*, 887 (SC 129, 322). See also: *Hymn 7*, 25 (SC 156, 210).

<sup>36</sup> *Hymn XXX*, 451 (SC 174, 370).

<sup>37</sup> *Hymn LII*, 46 (SC 196, 202). See also *Hymn XIII*, 48 (SC 156, 260); *Theological and Ethical Treaties II*, 238 (SC 122, 146).

<sup>38</sup> Δ' Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 22, 57, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 284. See also: Maximos the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια θεολογικὰ καὶ οἰκονομικὰ* 2, 88 (PG 90:1168AB).

<sup>39</sup> Δ' Κατὰ Ἱηγοῦρᾶ 1, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 341–42.



being the common light of the persons of the Holy Trinity.<sup>40</sup> He also relies on Saint John the Damascene to assert that the glory that advances from the divine nature in a natural manner became through the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ common to the human body.<sup>41</sup>

In this context, the redeeming act of Christ is interpreted by Saint Gregory within the framework of the theology of light. Accordingly, the fall of Adam is represented as his separation from Beauty and Light, and as the alienation from the divine 'form' (*μορφή*) and the original destiny of humanity. Adam, before the transgression, partook of the divine radiance, which attired in splendour his bodily nakedness, rendering it incomparably beautiful. 'Man rejected light, corrupted his resemblance to the highest light, and wore darkness as a tunic. But Christ, who is naturally good and merciful, condescended in his compassion towards the fallen one, reviving him, and renewing his blackened icon.'<sup>42</sup> He asserts: 'The Logos of God, in his clemency, assumed the nature of man which had become naked and deprived of divine radiance, due to the transgression of the commandment of God. He had mercy on the ugliness of this nature and revealed it to his disciples in its most shining form on Mount Tabor.' Thus, Christ manifested the glory that was granted to human nature and what man, who lives in the likeness of Jesus Christ, shall become.<sup>43</sup>

### *Deification as Union with Light*

According to both theologians, the major fruit of the vision of the divine light is union with divine radiance (i.e., deification). Through the vision of the light of Christ, the saints, united to the will, energy, and radiance of the Holy Trinity, become gods by grace. Symeon mentions clearly that the call of the faithful is to become like gods, possessing all of God's glory within. He implores the Lord, 'But you, O Light, shine upon them, shine that in seeing you they truly believe that you are the true light and that you will make like yourself the ones to whom you are united as light'.<sup>44</sup> Christ grants man deification through union with his light and glory. 'O compassionate One, give me the glory which the Father has given you so that, having become like you as all your servants, I may become god according to grace and may remain with you continually, now and always and unto the ages of ages'.<sup>45</sup> Symeon says: 'The Son of God...gives the grace of the Spirit, that is, divinity,

<sup>40</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων Β', 3, 21, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 557. See also: Gregory Nazianzus, *Λόγος* 40, 6 (PG 36:365A); Makarios of Egypt, *Περὶ ἀγάπης* 21 (PG 34:925C).

<sup>41</sup> Β' Κατὰ Γρηγοῶ 32, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 340. See also: John Damascene, *Ἐκδοσις ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως* 3, 15 (PG 94:1057B).

<sup>42</sup> Β' Λόγος Ἀποδεικτικός 9, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 85–86.

<sup>43</sup> Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα 66, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, 73; Ὁμιλία ΙΣΤ', 38, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 6, 203.

<sup>44</sup> Hymn XXXIV, 103 (SC 174, 436).

<sup>45</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties V*, 458 (SC 129, 112).



to the Saints; it flows from the nature and essence of his co-eternal Father'.<sup>46</sup> The New Theologian further explains that the entirety of the psychosomatic existence of the human being is involved in the union with divine light: 'How strange a marvel, my flesh, that is, the essence of my soul, indeed, of my body, partakes of the divine glory. It shines with divine radiance'.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the divine light abides in man like the flames in the burning bush: 'You see in yourself the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, enlightening and transforming the depths of your heart into a sun...you clearly observe that the miracle of the bush is taking place in your heart, your soul burning in union with the inaccessible fire but without being consumed, as your soul is freed from all passion'.<sup>48</sup>

A major component of the teaching of both theologians is their identification of the grace of deification acquired in the vision of the eternal light with man's appropriation of divine life. The saints partake in divine life in the present age, becoming sons and heirs of God. Saint Symeon says, 'Blessed Lord, you are the One who placed in my heart the light of your commandments and planted in me the Tree of Life. You made me into another Paradise'.<sup>49</sup> He argues that,

He is called light, he who is above any light, because he revives us; he is called life, he who is above any life, because he makes us live. He is called garment, because he surrounds us entirely with his radiance, because he shrouds and makes us warm with the glory of his divinity. Thus, we say that we put on Christ, the One who cannot be grasped and is absolutely impalpable.<sup>50</sup>

Symeon beseeches Christ: 'Your light encompasses me. It is life-giving, O my Christ, for to see you is the source of life, and your life is the Resurrection'.<sup>51</sup> In another prayer he entreats God: 'Do what is profitable for my wretched soul, because you alone are God, the Lover of mankind, uncreated, unending, all-powerful, the life and the light of all who love you and are so loved by you, O Lover of mankind'.<sup>52</sup> He teaches, 'Let us also in the Holy Spirit be taken up spiritually to the true life of the third heaven, or better, to the very heaven of the Holy Trinity'.<sup>53</sup>

In complete harmony with the teaching of Saint Symeon, Saint Gregory Palamas asserts that the pure-hearted perceive and taste the eternal divine light in this present age, assimilating, through the vision of God, the uncreated deifying energy. Saint Gregory explains that, 'the saints do not only see, but they are also affected by

<sup>46</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties I*, 10, 129 (SC 122:260).

<sup>47</sup> *Hymn XXX*, 263 (SC 174, 358). See also *Theological and Ethical Treaties XI*, 83 (SC 129:334).

<sup>48</sup> *Catechesis XVIII*, 293 (SC 104, 288). See also *Hymn XL*, 6 (SC 174, 484); *Hymn I*, 135 (SC 156, 168).

<sup>49</sup> *Hymn LXVII*, 1 (SC 196, 120).

<sup>50</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties VII*, 361 (SC 129, 182).

<sup>51</sup> *Hymn LI*, 1 (SC 196, 184).

<sup>52</sup> *Hymn XLVII*, 76 (SC 196, 126).

<sup>53</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties III*, 559 (SC 122, 430).

the radiance of God'. They are united to the divine energy, since 'the energy of God and of the saints is one'.<sup>54</sup> The Archbishop of Thessaloniki asserts that the vision of the divine light 'grants eternal life',<sup>55</sup> and the pure in heart assimilate through this vision the uncreated divine energy.<sup>56</sup> In this context, Palamas elaborates the Patristic concept of 'true life' (*ὁντος ζωή*).<sup>57</sup> He explains that 'true life' is the common and eternal life of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, and that the gift of 'true life' is the communion of man with God and his participation in the eternal divine life through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian divine life was granted to human nature by the Incarnation and redemptive act of the Logos of God. Thus, man is called to be receptive to the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit, which enriches and transfigures his existence and actualises in his being the gift of divine adoption.<sup>58</sup>

Saint Gregory clarifies that the 'life and light', which the Holy Spirit grants to another person, is not separated from him. Thus, the Holy Spirit, being himself Life, transmits life to those who participate in him. He says,

This light is eternal life, which is also granted to the one who is deified, without being separated from God. Thus, Paul would say, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal 2:20). Maximos also says about Paul that 'he was living the divine and eternal life of the One who had made his abode in him.' And Basil the Great said that 'the life which the Holy Spirit grants to another hypostasis is not separated from him..., thus he has life in him, and those who partake in him live in a godly manner, having acquired a divine and heavenly life.' This is the life which he (St Basil) calls... 'spiritual and eternal movement,' and he says that the one who partakes in it, albeit 'ashes and earth,' shall become a saint.<sup>59</sup>

Elsewhere in his writings, Saint Gregory asserts,

For the Holy Spirit possesses life in himself, and those who participate in him will live in a godlike manner, having attained to a divine and heavenly form of life, for the Glory of the divine nature is, above all, divine life in the saints and their partaking in every blessing.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Πρὸς Γαβριῶν 17, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 344–45; Basil of Caesarea, *Περὶ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος* (PG 52:826); Gregory Palamas, *Πρὸς Δαμιανὸν 9, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 465; Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος 28* (PG 36:29A).

<sup>55</sup> *Ὁμιλία ΚΓ' 11, Ὁμιλίες*, 270.

<sup>56</sup> *ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ' 1, 33, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 646.

<sup>57</sup> *Γ' Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 6, 13, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 170–71; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Λόγος 30 θεολογικός 4, 21* (PG 36:132B); Basil of Caesarea, *Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἴτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ Θεός* (PG 31:345A).

<sup>58</sup> F. Georgi, *Ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή*, 55–143.

<sup>59</sup> *ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ' 1, 38, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 651. See also: Maximos the Confessor, *Περὶ ἀποριῶν* (PG 91:1144BC). Basil of Caesarea, *Ἀνατρεπτικός ἀπολογητικὸς Εὐνομίου 5* (PG 29:772B).

<sup>60</sup> *Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 2, 7, 18, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 98; Basil of Caesarea, *Κατ' Εὐνομίου 5* (PG

*Light and the Knowledge of the Hidden God*

According to both theologians, apophaticism is the attitude manifested in the theology of the human person facing the transcendence of God. In orienting his being towards the Holy Trinity, man does not speculate. Rather, he is transformed. Thus, the manifestation of the divine mystery enriches his existence. Saint Symeon expresses this in his characteristic spontaneous and poetical language:

I do not have the strength to look at you, and yet I am unable not to do so. Your beauty is inaccessible; your splendour has no equal. Who has ever seen you or could see you completely, my God? Truly, what eye has the power to contemplate the All? What mind is able to grasp or understand the One who transcends everything? What intelligence could make itself co-extensive to his totality and contemplate the One who encompasses all beings and completely fills all these in an incomprehensible manner, and always finds himself entirely outside?<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, one encounters in the rigorous traditional theological discourse and terminology of Saint Gregory expressions like, 'sensed and beyond—sense...unapproachable, immaterial, deifying, eternal, radiance of the divine nature, the glory of divinity, the majesty of the heavenly reign' and 'light of the world to come'.<sup>62</sup> It is 'the limpid and unsetting light',<sup>63</sup> 'indescribable...not only transcending the senses, but also transcending the intellect (νοῦς)'.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, the two Hesychast theologians explain that through the union with the uncreated light, the apophatic way of theology is exceeded, since the vision of the divine light is the unique knowledge which examines the depth of God, and does not prohibit his cognition.<sup>65</sup> Symeon says,

Indeed, how can language fathom or express in words 'the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard', things beyond the mind of man? In truth, it is not possible. And if indeed, bearing the God who grants us this, we possess all these things inwardly, we are no more unable to either measure it with our intelligence or express it in words.<sup>66</sup>

The New Theologian clarifies that God in an act of condescendence reveals Himself to Man:

29:772B).

<sup>61</sup> *Hymn XLII*, 74 (SC 196, 42).

<sup>62</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων Γ', 1, 22, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 634.

<sup>63</sup> Β' Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 8, 24, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Β' Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 3, 10, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 91–92.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Περὶ βίου Μωυσέως* 2 (PG 44:376D–377A).

<sup>66</sup> *Action de grâces I*, 232 (SC 113, 324).

You yourself, invisible to all, untouchable, impalpable, appeared to me and seemed to purify my mind, to enlarge the vision of my soul. You allowed me to see your glory more and more. Or rather, you waxed and grew larger as the darkness receded. I discovered that it was you who were about to come near and approach, like the visible things we experience...You, the Unmoving One, the Immovable One, increased; you were taking form, You who are without form.<sup>67</sup>

The New Theologian describes that,

Indeed, just as a blind man, upon recovering his sight progressively, sees the human contour and gradually represents to himself what it is—not that the shape changes; rather, it is the vision in the man's eye that sees the shape more clearly, its traits impressing themselves on his vision, imprinting themselves upon the intellectual part of the soul and the memory as is on a tablet—so you made yourself be seen after purifying my mind completely by the light of your Holy Spirit...You then carried me out of the world...You became resplendent. You made yourself be seen wholly, and I saw you clearly.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, Saint Symeon stresses that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to grant this vision to man: 'Among us, who is able to see him through his own efforts and strength, unless he sends his Holy Spirit to give health, vigour and power to our weakened nature; unless he enables man to contemplate the divine glory which is his?'<sup>69</sup>

Palamas also insists on the fact that, in the illumination of the Holy Spirit, not only does man proceed to the knowledge of God, but God himself draws near to man and reveals himself to him. The divine light allows man to see what transcends him in a fashion that exceeds the capabilities of the human being. And just as the intellect, when united with the senses in an unutterable manner, shows man, symbolically and sensibly, things that are perceivable, a similar thing happens when the senses and the intellect are united with the grace of the Holy Spirit: 'they shall see the invisible light spiritually and are rendered similar to him eternally'.<sup>70</sup> God grants the saints to see beyond the capacities of vision, 'the light and God who is revealed therein'.<sup>71</sup> Saint Gregory confirms that this light is 'neither sensitive nor noetic, but spiritual and divine', and that it transcends all creatures. For this reason, it is submitted neither to the senses nor to the noetic faculty but is perceived by the spiritual power, which is also beyond all the faculties of perception, and which is

<sup>67</sup> *Action de grâces II*, 196 (SC 113, 346).

<sup>68</sup> *Action de grâces II*, 208 (SC 113, 346).

<sup>69</sup> *Hymn XLII*, 120 (SC 196, 46).

<sup>70</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Β', 3, 50, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 582–83.

<sup>71</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Β', 3, 56, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 590; Gregory of Nyssa, *Περὶ βίου Μωυσέως* 2 (PG 44 :376D–377A).

granted only by the grace of the Holy Spirit to pure noetic natures.<sup>72</sup> While Saint Symeon states in his most simple words, 'Christ is the simple light, the one who has his light shining in his mind is said to have the Mind of Christ',<sup>73</sup> Saint Gregory explicates that this is how the Apostles on the Mountain witnessed 'the preamble of his *Parousia*' since 'they were deemed worthy to be granted (spiritual) eyes'.<sup>74</sup>

*'The Light and the Life' of the Age to Come*

The eschatological implications of the vision of the uncreated light are stressed in the writings of Saint Symeon. The partial experience and knowledge of divine realities in the present age awaits a greater fulfilment in the age to come: 'I may share your glory and the joy of your blessings, O Word, even now, as in an enigma, a foreshadowing, a mirror; and then later, may I know you and I have been known'.<sup>75</sup> The vision of the uncreated light procures man with the token of life eternal. Right from this present time, man is called to taste the bliss of eternity,<sup>76</sup> for the eternal glorification of the saints of God starts and is manifested in the present age:

For those who believe in him, Christ will become all this and even more, beyond enumeration, not only in the age to come, but first in this life and then in the world to come. Though in an obscure way here below, and in a perfect manner in the Reign, those who believe see clearly nonetheless and receive as of now the first-fruits of everything they will have in the future life. Indeed, if they do not receive on earth everything that was promised to them, they do not have any part of the foretaste of the blessings to come, their higher hope being set on the hereafter. However, it is through death and the Resurrection that God in his foresight has given us the Reign, incorruptibility, and the totality of life eternal. Given these conditions, we unquestionably become partakers of the good things to come, that is, incorruptible, immortal, sons of God, sons of the light and of the day, inheritors of the Reign of Heaven, since we carry the Reign within.<sup>77</sup>

The completion of the divine promises takes place in the Second Coming, when the light of Christ will transfigure all created natures:

<sup>72</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων Γ', 2, 14, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 668.

<sup>73</sup> *Catechesis XXXIII*, 55–57.

<sup>74</sup> Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα 146, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, 117; see also: Basil of Caesarea, *Ερμηνεία εἰς 44 Ψαλμὸν* 5 (PG 29:400CD).

<sup>75</sup> *Hymn XL*, 92 (SC 174, 492).

<sup>76</sup> *Catechesis II*, 416 (SC 96, 277).

<sup>77</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties X*, 697 (SC 129, 308).

At that moment, he, the God and Lord of the universe, will shine from the glory of his divinity. This will also be the moment at which the literal sun is darkened by the brilliance of the Lord and will become invisible, just as the stars now fade before the sun and are seen no more. And it is only he who will be both day and God, the One who at present is invisible to your eyes. He who lives in unapproachable light will reveal himself as he is. He will fill all things with his own light and for all the saints he will become the day of eternal joy, without waning or end, but entirely unapproachable and invisible to the slothful and the sinners...Indeed, since during their present life such people had no desire to see the light of his glory—a sight resulting from their purification—or to introduce it wholly into themselves, he will be justly unapproachable to them in the future.<sup>78</sup>

Saint Symeon further declares that, 'When the book of the conscience of the saints will be opened...Christ God, presently hidden in them, will shine, as he shone forth from the Father before all ages. Then the saints will be like the Most High'.<sup>79</sup> He also states, as he praises God,

You, Christ, are the Kingdom of Heaven. You, Christ, are the land promised to the meek...You are Gladness, you are happiness; and your grace, O God, will shine in all the saints like the sun, will shine among them and they will shine brightly, to the degree of their faith, their asceticism, their hope and charity, their purification and illumination, by your Spirit, O God.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout his theological controversies, Saint Gregory Palamas goes beyond Saint Symeon in accentuating the eschatological dimension involved in the experience of the vision of light. He uses definitive eschatological language, attesting at the same time to the uncreated and common Trinitarian character of the light. He calls it 'the holy, unsucceedable, unsetting, beginningless and eternal light, the beauty of the age to come and the glory of God the Father'.<sup>81</sup> He describes this same light, revealed to the saints in prayer, as 'the light of the future and perpetual age' and 'our common hope'.<sup>82</sup> He also clarifies that we should commune, starting from the present life, with the 'heavenly light and the promise of the ultimate benedictions', and that on the Day of Judgment 'while the condemned shall be sent to the outer darkness, the righteous shall find comfort in this light that transcends this world'.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties X*, 20 (SC 129, 260).

<sup>79</sup> *Theological and Ethical Treaties I*, 12, 285 (SC 122, 292).

<sup>80</sup> *Hymn I*, 132 (SC 156, 168).

<sup>81</sup> *B' Λόγος Αντιρρητικός 7*, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 89.

<sup>82</sup> *Πρὸς Δανιὴλ Αἴνου 18*, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 390; *Δ' Λόγος Αντιρρητικός 18*, 49, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 277–78.

<sup>83</sup> *Γ' Κατὰ Γρηγοῦρᾶ 24*, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 335; Basil of Caesarea, *Ὁμιλία εἰς τὴν ἐξαήμερον 2*, 5 (PG



One encounters in the texts of Saint Gregory expressions like the ‘light of the world to come’,<sup>84</sup> ‘light of the divine Reign’, and ‘beauty of the future age’.<sup>85</sup> It is described as ‘the essential and eternal majesty of God’,<sup>86</sup> ‘the pledge of the future promise, the grace of adoption, the deifying gift of the Spirit...light of the hyper-inexpressible glory which becomes seen by the saints, enhypostatic (*ἐνυπόστατος*) light, uncreated, ever being from the ever being, revealed to the ones who are deserving and through him revealing God, now partially but in a most fulfilled manner in the future age...’,<sup>87</sup> ‘the light that stays eternally with the saints, the glory of the divine nature, the beauty of the future and unending age, the unbeginning and un-succeeded Reign of God...the substance (*ὕποστασις*) of the future goods’.<sup>88</sup> While stating that, ‘The Son of God, at the end of time, shall come in the glory of the Father and the Holy Spirit, since one is the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’,<sup>89</sup> Palamas asserts that the light, with which Christ shone on Mount Tabor—thus ‘showing the beauty of the age to come’<sup>90</sup>—is nothing but the same light which will shine at the Second Coming of the Lord. For this reason, he names the Transfiguration of Christ the ‘preamble of the last manifestation of light’. He adds that Christ will abide eternally with his saints and will grant them the uninterrupted ‘un-setting day’, which ‘derives from his eternal light’.<sup>91</sup> This ‘limpid and un-setting light’<sup>92</sup> was manifested to the three disciples on Mount Tabor and granted them ‘eternal life and the Reign that never ends’.<sup>93</sup> This experience can be justified only by the fact that ‘they acquired the power and the grace of the age to come’.<sup>94</sup>

Both the New Theologian and Palamas reproduce the teaching of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa concerning the unending progress in the contemplation of God. Saint Symeon affirms that:

Indeed, over the ages, the progress will be endless, for a cessation of this growing toward the end without ending...would be nothing but a grasping at the ungraspable. The One on whom no one can be satiated would then become an object of satiety. By contrast, to be filled with him and to be glorified in his light will cause unfathomable progress, an undefined beginning. Just as those possessing Christ who took form in them stand near the one who

29:40–41). See also: Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 1, 39, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 651–52.

<sup>84</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 1, 22, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 634.

<sup>85</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 1, 23, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 635.

<sup>86</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 3, 9, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 687.

<sup>87</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 1, 6, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 620.

<sup>88</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Β΄, 3, 54, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 586–87.

<sup>89</sup> Β΄ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 7, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 89.

<sup>90</sup> ΣΤ΄ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 10, 24, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 402.

<sup>91</sup> Δ΄ Κατὰ Ἰγρηγόρᾳ 6, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 344.

<sup>92</sup> Β΄ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 8, 24, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 24.

<sup>93</sup> Ὁμιλία ΚΓ΄ 11, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 6, 270.

<sup>94</sup> Β΄ Λόγος Ἀντιρρητικός 3, 10, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 91–92.

shines in the inaccessible light, so does the end become a principle of glory in them, or—to explain my thought more clearly—in the end they will have the beginning, and in the beginning the end.<sup>95</sup>

He adds: ‘Perfection is endless. Even there, the beginning is the end’.<sup>96</sup>

In his turn, Saint Gregory describes the experience of the vision of the light and indicates that the progress of the saints in the vision of God is infinite in the future age, and similar to that of angels. He refers to ‘a desire and longing of those who attain this vision’ which does not stop, because ‘the received grace drives them towards the greatest reception,’ and God ‘bestowing himself is infinite and he grants generously and abundantly’. The sons of the age to come advance in the vision of God, receiving ‘grace upon grace’ (John 1:17) and they ascend ‘the indefatigable ascent’.<sup>97</sup> The continuous and uninterrupted knowledge of God as experienced by the angels, and as shall be experienced by the saints in the age to come, is a continuous progress ‘in the most apparent vision in the unending age’. Nevertheless, man never sees the entirety of divinity,<sup>98</sup> for the unceasing ascent is the substance of eternal life,<sup>99</sup> and this vision of the light and the life of Christ grants ‘eternal life and the Reign that never ends’.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

The above parallelism between the thoughts of Saint Symeon the New Theologian and Saint Gregory Palamas cannot but confirm the common aspect of the mystical experience of the saints of God. Obviously, there exist differences between the two theologians in verbalising their experiences, whether linguistically or methodologically; we believe that this is due to the nature of the historical circumstances and needs that distinguished each of their eras, as well as to the personality and talents granted by the Holy Spirit to each one of them. While Symeon remained to the end of his life an abbot, a Hesychast monk, and a poet of divine *eros*, Gregory had to leave the silence of his hermitage, face turbulent political crises, play a crucial role in the theological debates of his time, and become the Archbishop of Thessaloniki.

There is no doubt that Saint Symeon contributed in inspiring and orienting the teaching of Saint Gregory, especially the inherent structure of his theological thought. However, Palamas did not quote Symeon extensively, and this was because he was defending Symeon’s teaching, which came into question during the Hesychastic

<sup>95</sup> *Hymn I*, 180 (SC 156, 172). See also: *Hymn XX*, 13 (SC 174, 110).

<sup>96</sup> *Hymn XXIII*, 519 (SC 174, 222).

<sup>97</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Β΄, 2, 11, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 517.

<sup>98</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Α΄, 3, 17, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 427; Gregory of Nyssa, *Ἐκκλησιαστήν* Ὁμιλία 4 (PG 44:684).

<sup>99</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων Γ΄, 1, 39, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 651.

<sup>100</sup> Ὁμιλία ΚΓ΄ 11, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 6, 270.

Controversy, by referring to the writings of the most authoritative Church Fathers. Nonetheless, one cannot help but notice the extent to which Saint Gregory borrows concepts and notions from Saint Symeon's writings. Hence, he presents his teaching and school of prayer and ascetism as the legitimate continuation of the Orthodox Patristic Tradition. Saint Gregory's insistence on the concept of 'true life' experienced in the union with the uncreated light revives Saint Symeon's teaching on God, Man, Redemption, Divine Grace, and Salvation. This very same insistence remains primarily functional in revealing the dynamic character of Patristic theology and how it directly touches human life and existence.

Finally, one cannot but remark that the efforts deployed by Saint Gregory Palamas and his contemporary Hesychast theologians provided the teachings of Saint Symeon with a normative character. What is most intriguing in the comparison of the systematic terminology of Saint Gregory with the poetic language of Saint Symeon is how far Symeon's discourse is branded with spontaneity, and how the formulations he uses remain approximate. This freedom in theological language and expression probably renders the New Theologian one of the most creative monastic writers and poets of his time and a genuine forerunner of our modern age.

# GREGORY PALAMAS AND POLITICAL HESYCHASM IN THE FOURTEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

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The revival of the Neo-Orthodox movement in the twentieth century can be understood as a continuation of the hesychast movement and controversy started by Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century. The Neo-Orthodox movement, with its teaching about a 'return to the tradition', expresses in our time much more than a simple religious nationalism in Greece. It seeks 'to ignite a universal religious movement rooted in this particular understanding of the Greek identity, which actually transcends nationality' (Daniel P. Payne). This paper will first explore the social and political context of the Byzantine Empire in the fourteenth century, which provided the framework of the hesychast movement, and where hesychasm offered an alternative hope in the midst of political instability. The interaction between political power and hesychasm in Constantinople was a dynamic one, depending on the agendas of the patriarchs and emperors of that time. It is in such a context that we place Palamas' religious, social and political activities, and preaching. From a broader perspective, Palamas' homilies were aimed at a spiritual and religious renewal of the society of his time. While John Meyendorff argues that there is no anti-Western sentiment in Palamas' teaching, Christos Yannaras claims that the hesychast controversy in the fourteenth century presents much more than internal conflict between certain Byzantine humanists and monastics; it is basically a controversy between East and West. This controversy is resurging in our time as political theology, pointing us to the authenticity of human existence. As an alternative to western secularized society, Yannaras proposes a reintroduction of the structure of the Byzantine autonomous communities, centred around the life of the church or monastery. Such communities would continue the ancient patristic ethos of apophatic knowledge and affirm the identity of the *persona qua persona*—that is, not as an individual, but within the context of community. In this new context, the hesychast life provides a model for human society.

## *Introduction*

In order to explain the rise of religiosity in the post-modern world in general, and in particular the Neo-Orthodox movement in Greece, Daniel P. Payne's book, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm in Contemporary Orthodox Thought*, offers a detailed interpretation of this phenomenon. The Neo-Orthodox movement, with its teaching about a 'return to the tradition', suggests much more than a simple religious nationalism in Greece. The Neo-Orthodox movement seeks 'to ignite a

universal religious movement rooted in this particular understanding of the Greek identity, which actually transcends nationality.<sup>1</sup> The best way to understand this movement would be through 'the lens of social constructivism and globalization theory as a post-modern tribalism that is universal in orientation'.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the Neo-Orthodox movement represents a reaction against the hegemonic spread of western modernity with its theory of secularization and its removal of the influence of religion from society. Payne's claim is based on the theories of social constructivism presented by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Peter Berger states that a deductive response offers the most reasonable interpretation about the rise of religiosity in the post-modern world. This interpretation is based on the assumption that a return to tradition and religion, both in theory and in practice, will provide a new authoritative security and safety to the individual who makes a decision to belong anew to their tradition. Such a return to tradition and religion provides the individual with an original understanding and support against an outside world of globalization that they fail to understand. By returning to tradition and religion, the individual rediscovers a social order and communal society, and through their internalization, a deeper world of meaning. In this context, the Neo-Orthodox movement and its thought seeks to protect Orthodox identity against western globalization, and desires to arrive at a new understanding of one's identity in the globalizing world. Gregory Palamas and the hesychast movement with its spirituality and culture, as it developed in the fourteenth century, presents a platform for the Neo-Orthodox movement in the twentieth century.

### *What Does 'Political Hesychasm' Mean?*

The term *hesychasm* can be traced through different historical contexts, revealing a variety of meanings.<sup>3</sup> From a very broad theological perspective, hesychasm represents a form of religious experience and of self-transcendence. What is then 'political hesychasm'? Apparently, this term was introduced in the 1960s by the

<sup>1</sup> P. Daniel Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm in Contemporary Orthodox Thought* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> According to Kallistos Ware, 'hesychasm', which essentially means 'stillness' or 'quietness', has in the Orthodox tradition at least five meanings ('*Act out of Stillness*', *The Influence of Fourteenth-Century Hesychasm on Byzantine and Slav Civilization*, The 'Byzantine Heritage' Annual Lecture, ed. Daniel J. Sahas; [Toronto: The Hellenic Canadian Association of Constantinople and the Thessalonikean Society of Metro Toronto, 1995], 4–7). (1) It can refer to the 'solitary life', which certain hermits began living in the fourth century. (2) Hesychasm implies 'the practice of inner prayer, aiming at union with God on a level beyond images, concepts and language'. In this context, St John Climacus writes that the hesychast is the one who struggles to confine his incorporeal self within the house of his body, and who is continuously aware of God's presence, which brings him to a level free from mental images and discursive thinking. (3) Hesychasm refers to the quest for such union through the repetition of the Jesus Prayer that brings the hesychast to a transformation of his whole being, allowing for union with God to occur. (4) Hesychasm describes a particular psychosomatic technique in combination with the Jesus Prayer to attain union with God. (5) The fifth meaning is the 'theology of St Gregory Palamas'.

Russian medievalist Gelian Prokhorov. One of his students, Vladimir Petrunin, draws in his book, *Political Hesychasm and its Tradition in the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, published in 2009, a parallel between the late-Byzantine and the post-Soviet periods. Petrunin claims that the late-Byzantine period was characterized by the elaboration of the theology of hesychasm in response to the influence of western scholasticism and humanism. In the post-Soviet period, the Russian Orthodox Church formulated anew its Orthodox social teaching, as presented in *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*.<sup>4</sup> Petrunin states that this document—let us call it Social Doctrine—is a response to Western secularism, liberalism, and capitalism. With ‘political hesychasm’, Petrunin is describing both of these historical periods and their political situation.<sup>5</sup>

In the introduction to his book, Petrunin comments that the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s definition of church independence from the state is based on a principle of non-subordination. This principle does not have a primarily theological background; it is based on custom. Toward the end of the Byzantine Empire, Petrunin argues, the Orthodox Church developed an autonomous political standpoint and strategy vis-à-vis the Byzantine rulers, whom it reproached for their collaboration with western powers and the Roman Catholic Church. Petrunin interprets the tension between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Emperor as a manifestation of the principle of non-subordination and political hesychasm in the fourteenth century, which becomes the paradigm for the further understanding of the church-state relationship. Petrunin sees the Russian Orthodox Church’s renewal after the fall of communism in general, and in particular the aforementioned Social Doctrine, as a continuation of what started in the fourteenth century.

Petrunin, however, is not the first who uses the term political hesychasm. He takes it from his teacher Gelian Prokhorov, who distinguished three periods of hesychasm in Byzantine history: (1) a *private period*, during which hesychasm was practiced by monks and did not have a larger social impact; (2) a *monastic period* in the mid-fourteenth century, which saw the theological elaboration of hesychasm by Gregory Palamas; and (3) a third period of *political hesychasm* from the mid-fourteenth century until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, during which hesychasm became a social phenomenon.

Petrunin uses Prokhorov’s terminology and historical research for his comments and arguments on social doctrine in the Russian Orthodox Church. This was generally perceived as an important step of renewal and self-positioning of the Church after the fall of communism. Petrunin summarizes the elements of political hesychasm

<sup>4</sup> Moscow Patriarchate, ‘Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church’, Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> Kristina Stökl, ‘Political Hesychasm? Vladimir Petrunin’s Neo-Byzantine Interpretation of the Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church’, *Studies in East European Thought* 62 (2010): 125–33; at 126.



from the fourteenth century in nine steps and finally comes to the conclusion that in the year 2000, six hundred years later, these ideas of political hesychasm had found a new embodiment in the *Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, especially in the church-state relationship.

Not all scholars agree with Petrunin's reflection about political hesychasm and his historical reconstruction of the struggles in the fourteenth century. Stökl argues that Petrunin's argumentation about political hesychasm is based on weak historical evidence; in addition, Petrunin's description of political hesychasm is merely a vehicle to build up his thesis that Russian Orthodoxy is once more facing the challenge of fighting off western influence, liberal values, liberal globalism, and that the only means to achieve these goals is again disobedience to the Russian state. The Orthodox Church in Russia is today—just like six hundred years ago in the Byzantine Empire—the only serious and organized opponent to the West. If the Russian government goes down the road of secularization and does not oppose the West and its secular values, then the Church can make use of its right to call the people to civil disobedience.<sup>6</sup>

It seems that there are two arguments present in Petrunin's writing. He starts his argument with the principle of non-subordination or church independence; this principle is not an end in itself, but a means to facilitate the church's opposition to liberal politics. There is no explicit remark in Petrunin's writing about hesychasm or theological literature concerning the renewed interest in hesychasm. Stökl argues, therefore, that Petrunin uses the church document on social doctrine to back up an ideological and domestic political agenda that states that the Orthodox Church is the only institution which represents the interest of the Russian people.

Stökl concludes that social doctrine does not compel us to such a reading; its tone is more moderate. The same doctrine might be read as an attempt to modernize the Russian Orthodox Church in its relationship to a modern secular political order, and not as an opposition to the liberalization, democratization and secularization of the Russian Orthodox Church. Petrunin's interpretation of social doctrine, however, marks a shift in his interpretation of hesychasm: a shift from theological discussion and ascetic practices, distant from political involvement, to hesychasm as an institutionalized ideology. From his perspective, the Moscow Patriarchate with its social doctrine becomes the beacon of modern political hesychasm. The church becomes not a player in the public sphere, but the public sphere itself.

Following Stökl's interpretation, Petrunin's writing can be read as an example of neo-Byzantine ideology, an anti-Western and anti-liberal position of some contemporary conservative Orthodox theologians around the journal *Severnij Katekhon*, supporting the idea that the fall of Byzantine empire was due to its inner weakness and harmful western influences. This should be a lesson for contemporary Russia. In

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 129–30.

other words, Petrunin's writing cannot be read as a study of hesychasm as presented by its main theological interpreters (i.e., as an ascetic and mystical way of life distant from political involvement).<sup>7</sup>

Stökl's presentation and critique of Petrunin's writing on political hesychasm will help us comprehend the so-called political hesychasm of the fourteenth century and Yannaras' interpretation of it in the twentieth century.

### *'Political Hesychasm' in the Fourteenth Century*

The revival of the Neo-Orthodox movement in the twentieth century and its search for Orthodox identity is not something completely new and limited to the Russian Orthodox Church. It is a search for an identity that is universal or transnational, that came from the Enlightenment, and attaining to an identity that is beyond the nation-state, returning to the older hesychast, universal identity of the Byzantine Empire in the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> This century is one of the most important periods in the development of hesychasm because it saw the spread of the Jesus Prayer, on the one hand, while, on the other, Palamas formulated a theological *apologia* of hesychasm against false accusations. He thus integrated hesychasm into Orthodox theology as a whole.

What interests us in this section is the question of how to understand Palamas' theological reflections in general, and in particular his reaction against Greek philosophy re-emerging as a new humanism. Why did Palamas, in his efforts for spiritual and cultural revival, go beyond the solutions proposed by the humanists of his time, and immerse himself in hesychasm?

By 'hesychasm' at this point, we refer to Gregory Palamas' theological defence of the spiritual experience of his fellow hesychasts, which is based on the distinction between the transcendent 'essence' of God and the uncreated 'energies' through which God becomes knowable to man in Christ. Palamas' theological reflection was conditioned by a general religious and cultural revival in the Byzantine Empire, a revival that went beyond spiritual renewal, and which also encompassed culture, politics, literature, and the arts. In his historical investigation of the influence of hesychasm on cultural development in the second part of the fourteenth century, Gelian Prokhorov—as mentioned earlier—uses the term 'political hesychasm', claiming that the religious and theological debates in Byzantium had much more than a purely theological significance.<sup>9</sup> 'Political hesychasm' at this point designates a social, cultural, and political ideology, which originated in Byzantium and had a

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>8</sup> P. Daniel Payne, 'Orthodoxy, Islam, and the "Problem" of the West: A Comparison of the Liberation Theologies of Christos Yannaras and Sayyid Qutb', *Religion, State, and Society* 36, no. 4 (2008): 435–50.

<sup>9</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), 148–49.

decisive impact on cultural and artistic development among the Southern Slavs and Russians.<sup>10</sup>

In the fourteenth century, the Byzantines—the librarians of the Middle Ages<sup>11</sup>—were increasingly aware of their Hellenic cultural background, which also represented a way of opposing the threat they experienced from the West. One group of intellectuals—let us call them humanists—were more and more inclined to Greek philosophy and humanism in general, which represented for them a way to a new cultural, intellectual, and spiritual rebirth, as well as a new identity: Hellenic identity. They believed in the autonomy of human reason and its independence in relation to God. God for them was an impenetrable and inaccessible essence. The union of God and man, realized in the person of Christ, played no decisive part in their thought. If it had been free to develop—Meyendorff believes—this humanism would probably have carried Byzantine culture in the same direction as that followed by Italian and Western European culture.<sup>12</sup>

The position of these humanists was strong enough to challenge the monastic and ecclesial teaching of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, represented by the hesychast movement. Nonetheless, the demarcation line between these two groups was not so clear; many of the hesychasts were also humanists, including Gregory Palamas, who had a positive understanding of secular writing.<sup>13</sup> Even though hesychasm was victorious over humanism as the guiding philosophy, it was not completely opposed to secular humanism. Secular humanism and philosophy as a human form of knowledge are very useful, but they should be kept within their proper boundaries, especially regarding theological matters. Philosophy can prepare or introduce us to the truth, and, as such, it has a propaedeutic function; nonetheless, because of its inadequacy, it cannot open the final doors to the inner wisdom and knowledge of God.<sup>14</sup> As the flesh of serpents can become a useful medicine, if properly separated from the serpent's poison, so profane philosophy can prepare us for our final goal, as Palamas claims in his *Triads*.<sup>15</sup>

Following Payne's interpretation, Palamas seems to be deeply rooted in the traditional understanding of Orthodox monasticism which recognizes two kinds of knowledge: philosophical and theological (i.e., true knowledge). Philosophical knowledge prepares the person for the reception of the Gospel, but cannot, in itself, lead one to the Gospel. Since God is transcendent, and the human mind is limited by its createdness, philosophical knowledge cannot grasp God's essence. Only when

<sup>10</sup> Id., *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological and Social Problems* (London: Variorum, 1974), iii-iv.

<sup>11</sup> Donald M. Nicol, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 34.

<sup>12</sup> John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, trans. George Lawrence (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Id., *Byzantine Legacy*, 133–39.

<sup>14</sup> Nicol, *Church and Society*, 35–36.

<sup>15</sup> *The Triads* I.28, ed. John Meyendorff and trans. Nicholas Gendle (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 28.

the human mind is transformed, can it contemplate the beauty of God and comprehend God's primordial beauty, which goes beyond sense perception or an intellectual understanding of the Scriptures. Such transformation of the mind occurs through mystical union with God, 'After the stripping away of everything from here below which imprints itself on the mind, or after the cessation of all intellectual activity'.<sup>16</sup> At this point, Meyendorff concludes that Palamas transcends any conceptualization of God, both apophatic and cataphatic, and liberates theological methodology from its philosophical mooring. Palamas frees the notion of God from philosophical conceptions; God transcends them all.<sup>17</sup> This opens the door to one real experience: 'the complete and unadulterated existence in us of Jesus'.<sup>18</sup> In this way, Palamas creates a theology based on personal experience, which excludes all definition of divine Being, and at the same time includes the goodness of the human body or the creation in general.

Such a connection of philosophy with theology was unacceptable for Barlaam, who argued that natural knowledge is equal to theological knowledge; both are confined to the human intellect, and thus, unable to ascend to knowledge of God, which can be experienced only by revelation through the human senses.<sup>19</sup>

The theological reflections of Palamas and his defence of the hesychast monks involve a broad discussion on the very nature of the Christian faith, by affirming the possibility of direct knowledge of God and the primacy of incarnational, eschatological, and sacramental values over secular concerns. This is much more than the 'humanist' concern of how to promote the study of Greek antiquity.<sup>20</sup> There are at least two differing conclusions about Palamas' reaction to the humanists of his time and about the place of philosophy in his reflection.

Meyendorff states that Palamas' intention was not to revive the teaching of the ancient authorities, but to 'turn his contemporaries away from them. His thought, taken as a whole, certainly marked a step forward in the progressive liberation of Eastern Christian theology from Platonic Hellenism...to a refusal of the new humanist civilization which the West was in process of adopting'.<sup>21</sup> This opposition to profane philosophy, supported by the advocates of humanism in his time, led Palamas to theological reflection within the hesychast movement aimed at a

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

<sup>17</sup> 'The human mind also, and not only the angelic, transcends itself, and by victory over the passions acquires an angelic form. It, too, will attain to that light and will become worthy of a supernatural vision of God, not seeing the divine essence, but seeing God by a revelation appropriate and analogous to Him. One sees, not in a negative way—for one does see something—but in a manner superior to negation. For God is not only beyond knowledge, but also beyond unknowing; His revelation itself is also truly a mystery of a most divine and extraordinary kind, since the divine manifestations, even if symbolic, remain unknowable by reason of their transcendence', Ibid., 32.

<sup>18</sup> Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 210.

<sup>19</sup> Payne, 'Orthodoxy, Islam, and the 'Problem' of the West', 93.

<sup>20</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 97.

<sup>21</sup> Id., *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 133.

spiritual and religious renewal. For Meyendorff, there is no anti-western sentiment in Palamas' reflection, since the debate was an internal Byzantine philosophical argument and not a larger debate between the eastern and western understanding of metaphysics.

This is not, however, the position of John Romanides, who claims that the hesychast controversy is much more than an internal conflict between certain Byzantine humanists and Byzantine monastics; it is basically a controversy between East and West. Romanides argues that Barlaam was influenced by the thought of Augustine and, as such, he introduced into Byzantine thought Augustinian Neo-Platonism. Consequently, the hesychast controversy is a controversy between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Augustinianism.

In agreement with Kallistos Ware, hesychasm and the hesychast movement in the fourteenth century was much more than a monastic discipline reserved only for some specific groups; it was a universal vocation for all people regardless of ecclesiastical position.<sup>22</sup> Obolensky states that Greek and Slavic monks, as well as highly educated men, came to learn from the master of hesychasm: Gregory of Sinai. His teaching radiated from his monastery in Paroria to the entire Byzantine Commonwealth. Thanks to a network of prominent hesychast intellectuals, different parts of the Byzantine Commonwealth in the last hundred years of its existence were perhaps more connected to each other and to its centre than ever before.<sup>23</sup> In the fourteenth century, hesychasm spread throughout Bulgaria, the Kingdom of Serbia, Romania, and Russia on one side, and to the region of Thebaid in Egypt on the other. As Meyendorff states: "Their essential motivation went certainly beyond "Hesychasm" as a technique of spirituality, and was rather aiming at maintaining the values and structures of the Orthodox faith in the Middle East and Eastern Europe."<sup>24</sup> The theology behind hesychasm enabled Oriental Christianity to survive under the Turkish yoke, and it remains a stranger to the great crisis of secularism brought on by the Renaissance in the West.<sup>25</sup>

Hesychasm represented a spiritual movement and a reform in literature, art, architecture, and also language. This was particularly important for the Slavic churches because they were united by a common ecclesiastical language and liturgy. In other words, the hesychast movement, and Palamas' role within it, is much more than an opposition to the humanist effort to revive Greek antiquity in Palamas' time. The growing interest in the study of Greek antiquity was not something new in Palamas' time, but had been a permanent element in the intellectual life of Byzantium since the ninth century. The conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 pushed

<sup>22</sup> Ware, *Act out of Stillness*, 9–11.

<sup>23</sup> Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1971), 389–90.

<sup>24</sup> Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Id., *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 25.

the Byzantine intellectuals—humanists—to a new search for their cultural identity, which found a way out in ‘Hellenism’ as the ultimate value to be maintained at all costs. As a result of their set of priorities and their concept of the very nature of Byzantine civilization, humanists saw the growing influence of monasticism as a national disaster.

Meyendorff states that the Byzantine humanism of the fourteenth century was primarily limited to Constantinople, Thessalonica, and Mistra, appealing only to a group among the educated elite, while the hesychast movement had a much broader appeal among believers inside and outside the Byzantine Empire. At a time of political instability and weakness within the Byzantine Empire, hesychasm was offering an alternative sense of new hope. When the Empire finally collapsed in 1453, in part due to hesychasm, the church was able to survive by its international and universal character, which went beyond the political structures of Byzantium. It does not follow, however, that the Byzantine Church was completely separated and independent from political power; it continued to promote the ideal of a Christian *oikouménē*, centred in Constantinople and controlled by the emperor. This was not the case with the humanists, whose primary concern was the preservation of Greek civilization.

The interaction between the political power and hesychasm in Constantinople was a dynamic one, depending on the agendas of the patriarchs and the emperors of the time. Patriarch Athanasius I (1289–93, 1303–09) tried to reinvigorate the Church with different reforms: defending the poor, reorganizing the Church by endorsing monastic ideals of spirituality, and strengthening moral principles in social behaviour. While he accepted the Byzantine political ideology of Emperor Andronicus II, he also demanded from the emperor a strict adherence to the faith and ethics of Orthodoxy. The emperor had to promise to keep the Church fully independent and free, and to practice towards the Church a servant’s obedience, submitting to her every just and God-pleasing demand.<sup>26</sup> The emperor was to be obeyed insofar as he followed the teachings and doctrine of the Orthodox Church; otherwise, the Church was not beholden to the state. Once the hesychast movement occupied the patriarchate in 1347, the patriarchs—inspired by patriarch Athanasius I—were zealous to reform society as a whole. For example, under the patriarchs Kallistos (1350–53, 1354–63) and Philotheos (1353–54, 1364–76), their power was understood as the *universal solicitude*.<sup>27</sup> As patriarchs, they had full authority over their jurisdiction, and could also intervene in other churches throughout the entire Orthodox *oikouménē*. The role of the ecumenical patriarch was not defined in terms of his sacramental functions, but rather in his political and social responsibilities. At this point, Meyendorff states that the basis of such authority was not theological but legal, ‘representing Byzantine political ideology’. The Church became the

<sup>26</sup> Id., *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 113.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 115.



guardian of the *oikouménē* and of the ideology that sustained it.<sup>28</sup> The patriarchate had a greater impact on society than the imperial throne, and this impact inevitably carried with it economic and political consequences.

According to Prokhorov and Petrunin, this is the period when hesychasm turns political and becomes a political factor with Eastern European dimensions. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the struggle between hesychasts and rulers grew deeper. The key issue in this struggle was the option of union with the Roman Catholic Church, through the preparation at the councils of Basel, Ferrara, and Florence (1438–39). Petrunin describes this struggle as a clash between the forces of rationalism and secular humanism against Orthodoxy. Stökl disagrees with Petrunin's interpretation because Petrunin uses modern terms (rationalism, secular humanism) and imposes them on philosophical, theological, and political debates from the fourteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

With this rather superficial overview of some intellectual, political, and social issues of the fourteenth century, we can better comprehend Palamas' theological reflection, his role in the hesychast movement, and his reaction against humanism. Palamas, as bishop of Thessalonica, was primarily concerned about the spiritual, sacramental, moral, and cultural revival of the Orthodox Church, while being exposed to the challenges of humanism, Barlaam's teaching, and the social and political issues of his time. It is in this context we must understand Palamas' homilies and his theology developing the existential living experience of the deifying energy of the Holy Spirit, which culminates in the complete union of man with God. For example, after his final arrival in Thessalonica in 1350, he preached on the subject of peace with one another (*Homily 1*);<sup>30</sup> in *Homily 45*,<sup>31</sup> he preaches against usury. In other homilies, he sees human passion as 'senseless', and as impulses and actions against the natural life of man. He repeatedly emphasizes the importance of repentance (*Homily 3, 28, 30, 31*)<sup>32</sup> and so on.

Palamas' role and place within the controversies of the fourteenth century calls for further research, which will most probably lead to different interpretations and conclusions about Palamas' position. Various emphases notwithstanding, the spiritual and theological dimensions of hesychasm as such should always remain the key guidelines for an adequate understanding of Palamas' position.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>29</sup> Stökl, *Political Hesychasm?*, 128.

<sup>30</sup> *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, ed. Christopher Veniamin (Essex: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2016), 1–5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 353–58.

<sup>32</sup> See *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*.

*The Political Hesychasm of Christos Yannaras*<sup>33</sup>

Christos Yannaras, born in 1935, is probably one of the most important theologians of the Neo-Orthodox movement. Unfortunately, he is not well studied because many of his books have yet to be translated. He studied in Germany and France and became very familiar with the existentialism of Martin Heidegger. With his help, Yannaras provides in his theological reflection a critique of Western thought from within; he analyses the Western understanding of individualism, religion, and pietism. He seeks a new theology which stands apart from the Western scholastic and pietistic categories of theology and closer to the hesychastic tradition of the East—especially to the thought of Palamas. By following the patristic tradition of hesychasm, Yannaras offers political hesychasm as an alternative to the modern, liberal, secular state of Greece, an alternative similar to that of fourteenth century Byzantium.<sup>34</sup> Andrew Louth states that Yannaras seeks with his Neo-Orthodoxy to transcend the split between ‘Romaic’ and ‘Hellene,’<sup>35</sup> and recreate a sense of Greek identity against the West, this time based on the classical ‘Hellenic’ past and the spiritual tradition of the Greek Orthodoxy.<sup>36</sup>

The background of Yannaras’ theological position is a strong reaction against Western materialism and individualism. In his book *The Church in Post-Communist Europe*, Yannaras disagrees with Samuel Huntington’s thesis in his famous ‘The Clash of Civilizations’, which claims that cultures based on the Western Christian heritage are making progress toward economic development and democratic politics; the development in Orthodox countries is uncertain, and the prospect of development in the Muslim countries is bleak.<sup>37</sup> Yannaras argues that the true clash takes place between Christianity in the form of Orthodoxy on the one side, and on the other, materialism, which he calls the illegitimate child of Western Christianity.

It is crystal clear that Huntington employs as his criteria of cultural difference among Europe’s *religious* traditions the very products of European man’s *antireligious* rebellion. All of us know that individual rights, political liberalism, utilitarian rationalism, economic development and progress are

<sup>33</sup> The exposition of this section is primarily based on D. Payne’s interpretation.

<sup>34</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 234.

<sup>35</sup> The nineteenth century was an era of nation-state formation in Greece, with two differing ideas as to who the Greeks were. Orthodox Christians under the Ottoman Empire, deriving their heritage from the Byzantines, understood themselves to be Romans, not Greeks. Juxtaposed to this ‘Roman identity’ was the ‘Hellenic identity,’ which supports the idea that the Greeks are descendants of the ancient Greeks of Hellas. Such division is nothing new in the nineteenth and twentieth century. As the first part of this paper shows, Byzantine humanists in the fourteenth century wanted to resurrect their ancient Greek identity. In the early nineteenth century, some Greek intellectuals, who were under the influence of German romanticism and French secularism, once again began to articulate Hellenic identity.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Louth, introduction to *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, by Christos Yannaras and trans. Haralambos Ventis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 29.

the most representative products of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, products of modern Europe's zealous insistence on naturalism (physiocracy) as a substitute for Christian ontology, cosmology and anthropology. It is for this reason that we say that Huntington employs Historical Materialism as the criterion for determining the cultural differences represented by the 'rival' religious traditions of Europe.<sup>38</sup>

In Yannaras' writing, historical materialism is the result of the philosophical and theological development of the Western Christian tradition, rooted in Augustine's political theology as expressed in the *City of God*. There is no way that the uneducated barbarian nations invading Europe in the fifth to seventh century could have understood the elaborate theological reflections rooted in the philosophical achievements of the Greeks. Therefore, the Gospel had to be simplified for the masses, and the Church adopted the Roman legal-juridical tradition, which became instrumental for the control of the invading nations. Charlemagne and his advisors used Augustine's teaching of the two cities as the foundation for the religious, cultural, and political differentiation of the new empire of the German nation. The Germans and Franks had to differ somehow from the only existing empire of that time, the Roman Empire of the East. This differentiation from the East continued up to the official schism in 1054, when the division between East and West reached a new peak.<sup>39</sup>

When Yannaras talks about the West, he refers not only to certain geographical connotations, but also to a basic human posture toward the world and history. The roots of this posture can be traced to Western scholasticism, with its attempt to exhaust the knowable through the intellect, along with its separation of natural and supernatural. With this separation, we lose the unity between the divine and human nature, and the unity of the two natures into one person—that is to say, the possibility of personal participation in the divine truth concerning God. Consequently, man attempts to understand his experience as an individual and as a rational animal not in communion with the whole of reality. The liberal spirit of the Renaissance and the rise of the positive sciences and technology is a visible continuation of this separation, states Yannaras in his article, 'Orthodoxy and the West'.<sup>40</sup> The conceptual explication of revealed truth, the domination of nature and history, the banishment of God to an empirical unreachable realm, the separation of religion from public life, and the elimination of ontology and its substitution by ethics comprise the main western characteristics. To bridge the gap between the world and God's transcendence, the West emphasized the importance of ethical systems, with their peak in

<sup>38</sup> Christos Yannaras, *The Church in Post-Communist Europe* (Berkley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2003), 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Id. *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 236–37.

<sup>40</sup> Christos Yannaras, 'Orthodoxy and the West', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 17 (1972): 115–17.

ethical individualism, Yannaras continues in the same article. Consequently, even Christianity has become a religion of ethics and social action.

Christianity for the most part is an individual ethic—the most perfect, of course, as compared with previous ethics—which finds its high point in the command to ‘love one another,’ that is to say, in the individual’s obligation to show altruism, brotherhood and impeccable social relations.<sup>41</sup>

In Yannaras’s eyes, the West is simply concerned with being a good individual, regardless of truthfulness or authentic human existence. For this reason, Nietzsche’s claim ‘God is dead’ is essentially correct, because God really does not matter anymore for European life. This claim has a long history, stretching back to the scholasticism of the Middle Age, with its rational demonstration of the existence of God, rather than the simple recognition of God’s existence through human experience. The Greek concept of *logos*, which implies a relational, experimental understanding of the truth, translates in the West as *ratio*, referring to the individual capability to arrive at a comprehensive and exhaustive understanding of truth. God becomes an object of the mind, rather than a personal reality. In the natural theology of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, metaphysics is associated with physics.<sup>42</sup>

Yannaras continues by claiming that even pietism presents a step away from metaphysics.<sup>43</sup> Pietism stresses the importance of religious experience and practical piety, which is intrinsically linked with individualism. Good works, daily self-examination, reading of the Bible, practical moral teaching, intense emotionalism in prayer, and a clear break with the world are just a few of the main characteristics. Man’s salvation depends on his moral endeavour and moral improvement. ‘Pietism fostered a conception of religion as more “social”, marked by practical benevolent activities, and presented the Christian gospel as more like an ethical code with consequences for society.’<sup>44</sup>

Yannaras’s ‘A Note on Political Theology’ is important for our reflection. Here he describes political theology as ‘a political theory and action that is not limited merely to social utility or to the conventional rules of human relations—even if these are more efficient—but has as its goal the truth of man and the authenticity of his existence.’<sup>45</sup> Politics and theology, Yannaras continues in the same article, are inseparable because both deal with the meaning of man and with human relations in society:

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>42</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 239.

<sup>43</sup> Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. Elizabeth Briere, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 119.

<sup>44</sup> Id., *Absence and Unknowability*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Id., ‘A Note on Political Theology’, *St Vladimir Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983): 54.

Politics can be considered as a chapter of theology—a true ‘political theology’—when it takes upon itself serving man according to his nature and his truth; and consequently serving the political nature of humanity—i.e., the power of love, which is at the heart of existence and which is the condition of the true communion of persons, the true city, the true πόλις.<sup>46</sup>

This is the point where Yannaras distances himself from western political theology, which is in Yannaras’ reflection associated with Marxist and neo-Marxist political theories. Western political theology, as well as Western Christianity, is caught in ‘the polarization between the transcendent and the immanent, the abstract idealism of unified ruling metaphysic and the immediate affirmation and worth of the material goods of life.’<sup>47</sup> From this perspective, human community is merely utilized for a convenient and efficient regulation of human thoughts and actions, which is not enough; true community aims at the truth of humanity and the existence of that which is most genuine. Such a community can be created only within the Church, where the true nature of the human being is recognized, and where the revelation of the Triune God reveals the truth of the communion of persons as ontological fact, and therefore as the ‘natural’ way of existence.<sup>48</sup>

Yannaras bases his political theology on the Cappadocian fathers and their definition of the Holy Trinity. God exists in a community of persons as a Trinity, each with its own personal particularity. Similarly, man is created in his or her own particularity as a person within the community of the human being. Yannaras defines a person as ‘a mode of being which presupposes natural individuality, but is at the same time distinct from it. Each person is a sum of the characteristics common to all human nature and mankind as a whole, but at the same time he transcends it inasmuch as he is an existential distinctiveness, a fact of existence which cannot be defined objectively’.<sup>49</sup> In other words, all human beings have objective characteristics, reflected in the tripartite mode of existence of rationality, freedom, and dominion, but each person uses his own will in a distinct, unique matter in hypostasizing these objective characteristics. At this point, Yannaras makes an important distinction: in the West, these characteristics comprise the definition of the *imago Dei* in man, while the East believes that these characteristics are the mode in which the image *exists* in man. They are used for man’s distinction from nature, but man is not exhausted by these modes of existence. They only demonstrate that the image of God is in man, but they do not define it.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>47</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Chapters of Political Theology* (Athens: Papazese, 1976), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 10–11.

<sup>49</sup> Id., *Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>50</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 242.

In addition, each person exists in a relationship to the other in community. Man is an existential fact of relationship and communion. As person, *prosopon*, he has his face (*ops*) towards (*pros*) someone or something. He is opposite (in relation to or in connection with) something or someone. My ego or individuality develops only through my relationship with others, which allows me to become aware of my own uniqueness. In and through this relationship with the other, my rationality, freedom, and dominion become something distinct and unique, differentiating me as a person in my uniqueness.

Contrary to the person is the individual, understood as the denial and neglect of the distinctiveness of the person. By defining human existence through the objective properties of man's common nature (i.e. rationality, freedom, and dominion), we destroy what is particular to the identity of the person: his or her relationship. For Yannaras, this can have diabolic results because we wipe out the image of God as a being in relationship, and reduce man to a being an individual, a social unit, bearing some characteristics, which are common to all. Morality, truth, and authenticity of existence become something predetermined by nature and an essential necessity for man.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, ethics becomes understood as conformity by the individual to objective or natural requirements. By making man an individual, man becomes determined by the characteristics of human nature, but man's personal distinctiveness is ignored.

Yannaras argues that the best mode of existence for human beings is possible in the life of the church. 'For the Church is not a religion, it is not a school of spirituality, but a place where we are invited to transform our existence into *being as relationship*. We are invited to a meal, to a banquet—and a banquet is a way of practicing life as communion.'<sup>52</sup> In a church community united with God, man experiences God's love not through his rational faculty, but through experience in loving communion, which is a transformative experience where the realization of the image of God in man takes place. The highest expression of this communion is the Eucharist, where the community is united with God. In this communal mode of existence, the person is transformed into a new being and a new mode of life. This experience opens the person to new knowledge about God.

Such experience of God and of personal transformation entails the true meaning of freedom. Freedom means self-transcendence, or the ability to escape the confines of our nature. Freedom is the 'ability to live our existence as a realization of love, so as to reach the truth of the *person*.'<sup>53</sup> By going out beyond oneself toward the other, the person achieves personhood.

<sup>51</sup> Id., *Freedom of Morality*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Id., 'The Church: A Mode of Being that Can Conquer Death', *Sourozh* 49 (1992): 24.

<sup>53</sup> Id., 'Towards a New Ecumenism', *In Communion* (Dec. 2004), accessed June 22, 2016. <http://incommunion.org/2004/12/13/towards-a-new-ecumenism-2/>.



If the person is defined only by his nature, then he is unable to experience this kind of freedom because the same definition of human nature limits a person's ability to reach out to the other. This is the reason why Yannaras criticizes the western comprehension of freedom as the ability of choosing one action over the other,<sup>54</sup> and opposes any philosophical, social, or religious ethic. These views do not support authentic human existence, the 'salvation of the soul' and the collective attainment of human flourishing. Even the western understanding of human rights falls short in this regard.

By the strengthening of individual rights and protecting the individual's freedom of choice, modern democracy prefers the affirmation of earthly life, the celebration of matter and of the body, and the opportunity for all to advance in material prosperity. Similarly, even religion becomes transformed into a moralism that supports the 'good' life of society. As many other things, religion becomes a matter of choice, consumed for enjoyment and pleasure, far from an ontological transformation through ascetic struggle over biological existence.

As an alternative to Western secularized and democratic societies, Yannaras proposes the Byzantine autonomous communities from the nineteenth century as a model for human society.<sup>55</sup> These communities were centred around the life of the monastery, based on an apophatic knowing, and with a vivid cultural engagement and strong social institutions. All these are necessary conditions for the experience of communal truth, in which the members of the community perceive their identity as persons and not as individuals. In this community, the person is not understood as an object of knowledge, but as a subject that can be known through ecstasy and love. The monastic hesychasm as the exemplary module of ecclesiastical community becomes the model for human society.

Monasticism will be revealed as a dynamic and real witness and reminder of the separation of the Church from the world, of the 'exodus' of the Church from the 'imposition' of the world. The ecclesiastical consciousness will recognize in the monastic life the lost truth of the charismatic union and the real confession of faith: The distinction of the Church from the 'world' will transpose progressively in the separation of the monks from the 'worldly' Christians. Finally, the entire clergy, without denying its obedience to the worldly-political hierarchy, will be clothed in the dress of the monks, enlarging the chasm and its objective difference from the 'popular' or 'worldly' Christians.<sup>56</sup>

In his concluding remarks, Payne claims that Yannaras tries to formulate an authentic Orthodox identity for the modern world through the thought of Gregory

<sup>54</sup> Id., *Freedom of Morality*, 81–83.

<sup>55</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 252.

<sup>56</sup> Id., 'A Note on Political Theology', 204.

Palamas and political hesychasm.<sup>57</sup> In order to do so, Yannaras provides the basis for a society that is antithetical to secular materialism and cleansed from Western elements, such as Western political development, ideas of secularization, globalization, privatization, materialization, consumerism, and modernization.<sup>58</sup>

### Conclusion

The term 'political hesychasm' embraces different meanings, open to diverse interpretations. In Petrunin's writing, political hesychasm refers to the renewal and self-positioning of the Russian Orthodox Church after the fall of communism, which was challenged by the political government and Western influence of liberal values and liberal globalism. Political hesychasm in the fourteenth century seems to be even less determined than Petrunin's one. It would be hard to argue that a pure hesychasm had a direct political or social influence on the society of that time. There is no doubt, however, that hesychasm and the Jesus prayer as a spiritual tradition and teaching represented a spiritual force and motivation, energizing Palamas' teaching and social action, and providing guidance to the followers of Palamas' ideas. Palamas as a spiritual father and church leader was immersed in specific political, social, historical, and religious frames, which shaped his responses. Grounded in hesychasm, Palamas transcended all these frames and gravitated towards a reality beyond those historical coordinates.

Political hesychasm as understood by Yannaras seems to be less descriptive than the one in the fourteenth century. His political hesychasm results in a theological-political program of recovery of the person (i.e., the subject that it is in relationship with. This is not the same as the individual characterized by rationality, freedom and dominion). The difference between person and individual is too easily overlooked by modern secularized society, which overemphasizes the rule of human rights, but forgets the deeper dimensions of human existence.

The invention of political hesychasm, and increasing interest in hesychasm in the last century are part of a complex process of globalization that has triggered a new dynamic. This has emerged not only on the economic and political level, but also through a new search for tradition,<sup>59</sup> its creation and invention,<sup>60</sup> as well as its recovery.<sup>61</sup> This is the framework in which we should place Petrunin's neo-Byzantine interpretation of the *Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church*, as well as Yannaras' theological reflection on the Greek identity.

<sup>57</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 259.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> A. Edward Shils, *Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>60</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>61</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

Next to this increasing interest in tradition, we witness also the phenomenon of subjectivization, what Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead describe in terms of 'spiritual revolution'<sup>62</sup> (i.e., a societal turn away from external, objective or prescribed roles and authority towards life lived in reference to one's own subjective experience). This revolution helps us explain the worldwide increasing interest in religious studies in general, and in our case the increasing interest in hesychasm in modernity. The rapid dynamic of globalization challenges people's multifaceted search for their national identity, which also includes their spiritual identity. Both Petrunin and Yannaras feel challenged by the process of globalization, and their writing results in search of a new identity.

Many religious practices, including the Jesus prayer, have been dislocated and adapted to new settings and environments, and exposed to new ways of interpretation. Thus, we have, nowadays, a wide spread of the Jesus prayer and hesychasm, inside and outside of the Orthodox world, in the monasteries and among laypeople. This phenomenon goes beyond the boundaries of the Orthodox Church, its traditions and nations.<sup>63</sup> I argue that our situation is similar to the one of Palamas; Palamas and the advocates of the hesychast movement in their time were aware that hesychasm as such transcends social, cultural and political ideologies. With this in mind, Palamas wrote his apologetic defence against those who were accusing hesychasm of heresy.

Even though only superficially, we have touched on Palamas' engagement with the religious, social, cultural, and political issues of his time, and his recurring efforts to protect and reinforce the complete union of man with God. Individuals, as well as human society, are to be transformed in a Christian society. It seems that Palamas embraced the modernity of his time and formulated new strategies for individual as well as societal flourishing, beyond the language and cultural boundaries of the fourteenth century. The spread of the hesychast practices created and strengthened a cultural self-image as a form of resistance against the humanism or nationalism of that time.

Let us say that Yannaras, with his critique of Western individualism and its argumentation in favour of human rights wants to break the frameworks of materialism, consumerism, and development based only on economy and free market on the one side, and, on the other, offers a means of identification for modern Orthodox Christians in their ascetic-theological tradition. He introduces a personal ontology that protects the person from the 'diabolic' forces of this world, and allows the person to express her uniqueness within society through a free loving act of communion

<sup>62</sup> Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> Christopher D. L. Johnson, *The Globalization of Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 177–78.

with the other.<sup>64</sup> Yannaras bases his reflection on Palamas' distinction between an individual's essence and energies. The person's essence, which remains unknown to all, is a gift to human society, and cannot be expressed in her uniqueness through exercising her claims of human rights. The person expresses her uniqueness only through going outside of herself and through being in free loving acts of communion with the other. This is the way in which she expresses her humanity. Here, the church plays an irreplaceable role: it protects the essential freedom and dignity of human persons by talking about the injustices of late capitalism; the church as a transnational body challenges the authority of the state in its failure to recognize the ontological freedom of the person.

As Palamas does not seek to articulate an explicit political theology, neither does Yannaras; however, both of them remain concerned with the preservation of a theological tradition and an Orthodox Christian identity through hesychasm. Will hesychasm help create this identity? No, hesychasm will not create identity if we take it as nostalgia for the past, as an elitist mystical experience, or as a conservative critique of modernity; it will help form identity if it instantiates the good news of the Gospel in contemporary culture. Only in this way we can say—in agreement with Charles Taylor's idea of a massive subjective turn of modern culture,<sup>65</sup> or the idea of the spiritual revolution,<sup>66</sup> or Sergej Khoružij's 'anthropological turn in Christian theology'<sup>67</sup>—the hesychast tradition will have an immense political impact in modernity.

<sup>64</sup> Payne, *The Revival of Political Hesychasm*, 262.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 29.

<sup>66</sup> Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*.

<sup>67</sup> Sergej Khoružij, 'Anthropological turn in Christian theology: an Orthodox perspective', Lecture at the Divinity School, University of Chicago, October 4, 2006, Online Library, Institute of Synergetic Anthropology, <http://synergia-isa.ru/english/download/lib/Eng12-ChicLect.doc>.



# CREATED AND UNCREATED LIGHT IN AUGUSTINE AND GREGORY PALAMAS: THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY IN ATTEMPTS FOR THEOLOGICAL RECONCILIATION\*

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In this paper, I discuss a recent publication by Fr John P. Manoussakis, titled 'Created and Uncreated Light—Augustinian and Palamite Approaches', which is the fourth chapter of his book, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West*.<sup>1</sup> My intention is not to provide a book review but a response, or, rather, a reaction to the theological style and stance adopted by the author. In my reaction, I am not looking to engage in rhetorical polemics. I do actually sympathise with the attempt to address a highly relevant theological issue by suggesting a positive and reconciliatory interpretation of the Augustinian theology of the Old Testament theophanies. The idea of engaging in a new reading of the Bishop of Hippo's theophanic theology by tapping into the resources of phenomenology is thought provoking. I have therefore tried to understand the logic and the grounding of Manoussakis's argumentation. Unfortunately, I have failed to see the value of the suggested approach. I find it unsubstantiated, especially with regards to his treatment of the Orthodox position, and therefore ineffective and disappointing in terms of its potential ecumenical value. In this paper, I will try to share the reasons for my disappointment.

## *Introduction*

John Manoussakis dedicated his book to His Holiness, Pope Francis, and His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, on the fiftieth anniversary of the historic encounter between their predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. In the foreword, Patriarch Bartholomew points out that, since the historical meeting in January 1964, in Jerusalem, 'the Orthodox Church and the Roman

\* Acknowledgments: I express my deepest gratitude to Fr Dr Bogdan Bucur, Associate Professor, Department of Theology, Duquesne University, for the fruitful discussions.

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015).



Catholic Church have made significant progress toward reconciliation as obedience to our Lord's prayer and commandment "that His disciples may be one".<sup>2</sup> The interaction that followed this historical meeting enabled a gradual progression from a 'dialogue of love' to a 'dialogue of truth'. His All Holiness emphasises that one of the most significant issues embraced in this dialogue has been 'the difference in methodological and theological approaches to primacy in the Church', pointing out that the main contribution of the book is to the ongoing discussion of this crucial topic.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the introduction to the book, Manoussakis explains the appropriateness of the title and describes his book as an essay in ecumenical theology. He borrows the term 'ecumenical theology' from Fr Robert Taft's call for theologians to engage in 'ecumenical scholarship and theology' as 'a new and specifically Christian way of studying Christian tradition in order to reconcile and unite, rather than to confute and dominate', or as a deliberate intention 'to emphasize the common tradition underlying our differences, which though real, are usually the accidental product of history, culture, and language, rather than essential differences in the doctrine of faith'.<sup>4</sup> For Fr John, the focus on ecumenical theology offers the opportunity to integrate and harmonise his two main engagements—theological philosophy and philosophical theology—by employing philosophy's resources to reconcile seemingly diverging positions and explain some of the points of contention between the East and the West 'which the futile polemics between the two churches passed down to us'.<sup>5</sup> The reconciliation claim, however, goes beyond the context of mere problem solving; it includes the desire to reconcile the differences between the theological styles of the East and the West, and hence the second part of the book, which is titled 'Differences in Theological Style Reconciled'.

The chapter, 'Created and Uncreated Light: Augustinian and Palamite Approaches', is a direct reproduction of a paper by Manoussakis published in 2010 in the journal, *Modern Theology*, under the title, 'Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustinian and Palamite Aesthetics'.<sup>6</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented in 2006 at a panel discussion organised by the Augustinian Studies Group at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. It appears, therefore, that the author had been working on this topic for more than ten years before the publication of his book in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, foreword to *For the Unity of All*, ix–x.

<sup>3</sup> For a critique of Manoussakis's understanding of universal primacy, which is expressed in his third chapter, 'The Petrine Primacy' (*For the Unity of All*, 21–43), see Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 122–24.

<sup>4</sup> R. Taft, 'Perceptions and Realities in Orthodox-Catholic Relations Today: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future', in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. G. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 23–44.

<sup>5</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, xvi.

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Manoussakis, 'Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustinian and Palamite Aesthetics', *Modern Theology* 26, no. 1 (2010): 76–89.

The chapter deals with a very specific theological problem by drawing on phenomenology. The problem emerges from the discussion of the possibility of the experience of God and the nature of such an experience. The focus is on the ancient debate concerning the hermeneutic of Old Testament theophanies: ‘How does God appear to Moses and Elijah and, for the Christian exegete, who—that is, which of the three persons of the Holy Trinity—appears?’<sup>7</sup> His reason for the focus on the hermeneutic of the Old Testament theophanies is the fact that it has been a substantial part of the theological debates between the Augustine-influenced West and the Augustine-opposing East. The two opposing poles of this debate, therefore, need to be properly understood and reconciled. In his own words, the author tries ‘to demonstrate how theology can be done irenically and what the contribution of philosophy, especially contemporary continental philosophy, might be toward such reconciliatory theology’.<sup>8</sup>

*The Roots of the Problem and the Two Positions—East vs West*

The difficulty arises from a specific interpretation of certain passages of the Hebrew Scriptures dealing with the manifestations of God:

Who—that is, which person of the Holy Trinity—speaks and appears to Moses and Elijah on Mt Sinai (Exod 19) or on Mt Horeb (Exod 3 and 33; 1 Kgs 19)? Closely related to this first question (the who question) is another one: how does God appear in these manifestations, given the many scriptural interdictions against such an immediate vision of God (in particular, Exod 33:20)?<sup>9</sup>

The key issue underlying these questions is whether or not the Old Testament theophanies are created or uncreated. Here is how Manoussakis articulates the essence of the problem:

For St Augustine, an uncreated manifestation of God would have made little sense; as uncreated, it would also have been imperceptible and that would have undermined the reality of the theophanic experience in his eyes. In the East, to describe theophanies as created meant that they are no longer about God but merely about creation.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, xvii.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 51–52.

The relevance of the problem is presented in a somewhat ambivalent way. The author starts by pointing out that the issue was a seemingly minor point improperly transformed into a major theological debate between the Augustine-influenced West and the Augustine-opposing East.<sup>11</sup> Such a starting point already shows a bias towards the Augustinian view that the theological interpretation of the theophanies is an area of minor significance for theology. This view contrasts with the established consensus in the Orthodox Church, according to which the theophanies are central to understanding the nature and task of theology. On the other hand, he points out that the divergence of the two opinions ‘is much more than a minor problem of scriptural hermeneutics—in fact, two theological principles of cardinal importance have come to depend upon the way we answer these questions’.<sup>12</sup> The two principles are as follows: first, God can be experienced by man, and that experience is described as a theophany; second, such a theophanic experience must also involve the human body. According to Manoussakis, the Divine Incarnation makes these principles unproblematic. However, once they are considered in a pre-incarnational setting, they inevitably lead to problems with respect to certain important hermeneutical and theological questions (i.e., the ‘who’ and ‘how’ questions of the Old Testament). The two contrasting positions in the debate are found to be rooted in two different theories of signification, concerning which Manoussakis makes rather categorical judgements from the outset by confusing the past and present temporal perspectives. According to the author, the position espoused by Orthodox theology refers to a pre-modern understanding of symbols. On the other hand, the position espoused by Augustine is presented not as what it actually is, but rather as an anticipation or a prefiguring of modern theory of sign. Thus, two opposite directions are very clearly established: Orthodox theology looks back to the pre-modern times, while Augustine looks forward to the modern era.

### *The Emergence of the Augustinian View*

It is important to understand that the initial setting up of the problematics has nothing to do with the theophanic theology of St Gregory Palamas. As Manoussakis rightly indicates, the difference in theological perspectives between the East and the West is grounded in Augustine’s break with the tradition before him. The Eastern Fathers were firm about who appeared in the Old Testament theophanies.<sup>13</sup> The

<sup>11</sup> Author’s intention is to ‘present the reasons that elevate such a seemingly minor point into a major theological debate between the Augustine-influenced West and the Augustine-opposing East’. See Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Theophany permeates Orthodox Tradition throughout, informing its dogmatic theology and its liturgy. That Jesus, Mary’s son, is the very One who appeared to Moses and the prophets—this is the consistent witness of the ante-Nicene Fathers, and remains foundational throughout the fourth century Trinitarian controversies and the later christological disputes’. See A. Golitzin, ‘Theophaneia: Forum on the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality’, *Scrinium* 3 (2007): xviii.

author, however, uses elusive or, rather, inadequate language when referring to their firmness, pointing out that they 'had what seemed to be a reasonable answer: they suggested that it was the Logos, the second person of the Trinity, who, on account of his future manifestation in the flesh, had also appeared in the Old Testament and spoke to and through the prophets'.<sup>14</sup> This statement is particularly worth examining since it replaces the firmness of expression of the Early Church Fathers with present day ecumenical diplomacy or mere academic relativism. What is most interesting here is the kind of linguistic style adopted to address the ecumenical theological concerns of the author. The Fathers '*seemed* to have a *reasonable* answer'; they '*suggested* that it was the Logos, the second person of the Trinity'. The probabilistic nature of these statements obviously intends to undermine the existing patristics consensus on the matter by importing a sense of contingency into their theological views, as well as suggesting that the Old Testament theophanies had a lower degree of relevance for Christian theology in general. After statements like the one above, one might wonder about the nature of Fr John Manoussakis's theological contribution: is this a new and original trajectory of study contributing new insights to an old theme? Is it a type of non-engaging theological essayistics (the author literally claims to have written an *essay* in ecumenical theology), or an attempt at offering a constructive theological perspective that would present the Augustinian view in a way that could be more acceptable to the Orthodox community?

Manoussakis's suggestive linguistic approach is further enhanced by the statement that 'St Augustine's break with the tradition was necessitated in order to defend the Logos' divinity against such subordinationist theologies that would have been ready to demote the Logos precisely on account of his visibility'.<sup>15</sup> He is right, of course, that the opponents of Augustine considered the invisibility of God to be an essential characteristic of the divine nature to the extent that any association of the Logos with visible manifestations would have implied his lack of full divinity. It is obvious that this interpretation *necessitated* a theological reaction by the Church Fathers, including Augustine himself. However, it is not understandable at all how the necessity for such reaction could become a 'good reason' for Augustine to break with the Tradition. The history of the Christian Church has known multiple examples of situations when the theological opposition in a doctrinal controversy tempted the defenders of Orthodoxy to ignore the existing consensus by extrapolating the Orthodox position to such an extent that it was no longer recognisably Orthodox. As we know, some of these moves resulted in suspicions or accusations of heresy against these defenders of Orthodoxy, no matter how good the 'good reason' for their theological extrapolation was.

In his approach to the challenge presented by the subordinationists, Augustine avoided answering the 'who' question of the Old Testament theophanies by focusing

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

instead on the ‘how’. For him, the ‘who’ question is not answerable and ‘we cannot know with certainty whether it was only one of the persons of the Trinity manifested in these theophanies or the Trinity as a whole’.<sup>16</sup> Here is the conclusion in Augustine’s own words:

Finally, to conclude: the first point we undertook to investigate in our threefold division of the field was whether it was the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit who appeared to the fathers in those various created forms; or whether it was sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, sometimes the Holy Spirit; or whether it was simply the one and only God, that is the Trinity itself, without any distinction of persons, as it is called. An examination of what seems a sufficient number of scriptural passages, and a modest and careful consideration of the divine symbols or ‘sacraments’ they contain, all served to teach us, I think, one lesson; that we should not be dogmatic in deciding which person of the three appeared in any bodily form or likeness to this or that patriarch or prophet, unless the whole context of the narrative provides us with probable indications.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that the Augustinian view was shaped by the specific historical context of the second half of the fourth century.<sup>18</sup> A key feature of this context was the unresolved polemical engagement between three parties, including: ‘the Modalists (who denied the hypostatic existence of the Word, claiming that the three hypostases are merely three “modes” of divine manifestation), the Homoians (advocates of the thesis that the Son is “similar,” homoios, to the Father), and the supporters of Nicea. It is this three-side theological conflict that spurs the intense debate over the theophanies that is echoed in *De Trinitate* 1–4’.<sup>19</sup> Augustine’s opponents were most probably Western Homoians, who were using the theophanies as proof that the Son is inherently visible. For them, ‘the Son is, on the one hand, distinct from the Father

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Augustine. *The Trinity (De Trinitate)*, Book II 7:35, ed. John Rotelle and trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New York City Press, 1991), 121–22.

<sup>18</sup> See the insightful paper by Fr Bogdan G. Bucur, ‘Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective,’ *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 52 (2008): 67–93. In my overview of the historical context, I am following Bucur’s logic. It is a pity that Fr John Manoussakis did not refer to his work, since it provides multiple insights that are highly relevant to the discussion. Bucur’s paper was published before Manoussakis’s paper in *Modern Theology* (2010) and his book *For the Unity of All* (2015). Its analysis does not support the optimism of Manoussakis’s reconciliatory approach. Bucur’s analysis refers extensively to Basil Studer, *Zur Theophanie-Exegese Augustins: Untersuchung zu einem Ambrosius-Zitat in der Schrift ‘De Videndo Deo’* (Rome: Herder, 1971); and Michel René Barnes, ‘The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology of 400,’ *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 329–56. I would also recommend the extensive work of Alexander Golitzin, ‘The Form of God and Vision of the Glory: Some Thoughts on the Anthropomorphic Controversy of 399 AD,’ Marquette University, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/morphe.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Bogdan Bucur, ‘Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective,’ *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 52 (2008): 67–93; at 74.

(against Modalists), and on the other, visible and, therefore, inferior to and unlike in nature to the Father (against Nicaea).<sup>20</sup> The reply of the pro-Nicene party was that the Son might have been visible while manifesting himself to the patriarchs and prophets, but he is and remains invisible in his essence: 'Invisible according to nature, the Son is seen in the theophanies according to his will, in condescension to the weakness of human perception.'<sup>21</sup> St Ambrose, for example, in his *Commentary on Luke*,<sup>22</sup>

Distinguishes between will and nature, asserting that the vision of God is not accessible to human powers on their own, but occurs only when God wills to be manifested in an assumed form.<sup>23</sup> In other words, Ambrose reasons that Abraham was able to see God because God wished to be seen, not because Abraham was capable of seeing God or because God's nature was visible. Further, Ambrose insists on the necessity of grace for seeing God, arguing that only the pure in heart will see God. One may see God by obtaining through grace the means of such vision, but most people do not have this grace, and therefore most do not see God.<sup>24</sup> Only to the pure in heart is this vision granted (Matt 5:8), in this life as well as in the resurrection.<sup>25</sup>

To avoid any suspicion concerning a belief in the composite character of the Son, the pro-Nicenes tried to weaken the link between the divine nature and the visible aspects of the theophanies by emphasising their interior, spiritual character, as well as their importance in foreshadowing the Incarnation. Augustine found the pro-Nicene solution to be incomplete and elaborated a position that was 'strikingly different' and, 'indeed, marks a genuine revolution, if not an actual rupture, with regard to prior traditions.'<sup>26</sup> In Book III of *De Trinitate*, Augustine explicitly points out that 'the person of God Himself is not assumed in every event which is a message' from God (3.10.19). He distinguishes three theophanic scenarios: '1) theophanies involving the form of an angel; 2) theophanies involving angels bringing about "a change of some kind" in a pre-existing material body; and 3) theophanies involving a body made for the occasion, which "is again discarded when its mission

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Here we can see how a genuine Orthodox theology of the theophanies required a reference to the distinction between nature and will.

<sup>22</sup> Ambrose de Milan, *Traité sur l'Évangile de S. Luc* (SC 45), (Paris: Cerf, 1956).

<sup>23</sup> *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel according to Saint Luke* 25, trans. Ide M. Ni Riain (Dublin: Halcyon Press & Elo Publication, 2001), 1:16–17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 26, 1:17.

<sup>25</sup> The reference to St Ambrose is from: Kari Kloos, 'Seeing the Invisible God: Augustine's Reconfiguration of Theophany Narrative Exegesis,' *Augustinian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005): 397–420; at 405.

<sup>26</sup> Golitzin, 'The Form of God and Vision of the Glory'. See also: A. Golitzin, 'The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphic Controversy of AD 399,' in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia*, eds. Andrew Louth, et al. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2007), 273–97.



is accomplished, *re peracta rursus absumitur*” (3.10.19).<sup>27</sup> The conclusion of Book III sums up his understanding of the Old Testament theophanies as a result of the mediating role of angels:

It has been established by all rational probability...that whenever God was said to appear to our ancestors before our saviour’s incarnation, the voices heard and the physical manifestation seen were the work of angels. They either spoke or did things themselves, representing God’s person, just as we have shown the prophets used to do, or they took created materials distinct from themselves and used them to present us with symbolic manifestations of God; and this too is a kind of communication which the prophets made use of, as many cases in scripture show.<sup>28</sup>

The clear implication of this statement is that

There were thus no theophanies until Christ. There were only angelophanies, or mere symbolophanies. Augustine requires the radical closure of a tradition of Christian, and before that of Jewish, thought...Properly speaking, the Old Testament manifestations were not really theophanies at all. If by God we can only really mean the shared substance of the Holy Trinity, it is obvious that the latter, being in no way a physical body, can never have appeared to the human body’s senses.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth examining Manoussakis’s interpretation of Augustine’s conclusion above. According to him, the Augustinian answer ‘seems to imply that the divine manifestation took place by means of creaturely signs’.<sup>30</sup> Here we can detect again a convenient change of linguistic style to a more diplomatic and rather forgiving tone (‘seems to imply’). It is hard to see how Augustine’s statement in the conclusion to Book III of *De Trinitate* only seems to imply that the divine manifestations took place by means of creaturely signs. The author points out that Augustine actually ‘follows closely the scriptural accounts’ by referring to natural phenomena (earthquakes, fires, clouds) as means of God’s manifestations and, also, by affirming the reality of these manifestations as ‘real events with real effects that were felt in the realm of our physical world’.<sup>31</sup> However, such a claim would appear plausible only through the adoption of an Augustinian perspective. At the same time, the author emphasizes

<sup>27</sup> Bucur, ‘Theophanies and vision of God’, 70.

<sup>28</sup> *De Trinitate*, Book III 4.27, 144.

<sup>29</sup> Golitzin, ‘The Form of God and Vision of the Glory’.

<sup>30</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

that the creaturely character of the theophanies is exactly where Augustine's interpretation parts ways with the Eastern Fathers:

The concern in the East was not so much to safeguard the reality of the Old Testament manifestations (which was never contested) but their validity as precisely theophanic revelations. The Eastern theologians sought to affirm that it was indeed God who appeared to the prophets. That particular concern led them back to the who question that Augustine had avoided answering.<sup>32</sup>

The last statement is an example of a convoluted logic that appears at several places in the paper. Here is what the convolution looks like. First, it was pointed out that, before Augustine, there was a consensus in the Church about the uncreated nature of the Old Testament theophanies and about 'who' appeared to the prophets. Second, Augustine appears on the scene with his new interpretation of the theophanies, which challenges the existing consensus by avoiding the answer to the 'who' question and regarding the theophanies as creaturely phenomena. Third, the Church Fathers did not accept such a radical and unwarranted innovation, and moved back to the 'who' question and the original consensus of the Church. In attempting to follow such logic, it is impossible to understand how the consistent position of the Church Fathers could be considered as a retreat to something that, for them, had never changed. Manoussakis argues against considering Augustine's new theophanic elaborations as a revolution, but at the same time he himself considers the Augustinian position as a newly established and valuable *status quo* that was challenged by the majority of the Church Fathers. Speaking in such a manner correlates with the initial assessment of the Orthodox theological positions (as pre-modern) and the Augustinian approach (as a modern theory of signification).

### *Misinterpreting St Gregory Palamas*

It is interesting to see how St Gregory Palamas comes into play somewhat through the back door of Manoussakis's essay of ecumenical theology. The first substantial (and pronouncedly negative) reference to Palamite theology occurs in the context of the discussion of the Eastern Church's answer to the 'who' question of the Old Testament theophanies. Here I would like to provide a more detailed citation from Manoussakis's chapter, which is quite indicative of the author's reconciliatory approach:

The answer that the East has to offer us, and especially in the context of Palamite theology and its subsequent reception, is quite unexpected. It is

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

not God the Father who appears in the Old Testament theophanies, nor is it God the Son, nor is it God the Holy Spirit, but rather the divine energies that manifest God. Now, the divine energies, being divine, are fundamentally uncreated. Here we can see the conflict between Augustinian and Palamite theology taking shape: for Augustine the means of God's manifestations is creation touched by God, for Palamas it is rather God appearing to creation. It is interesting to notice how Palamas's suggested solution, instead of solving the problem, re-produces the old dichotomy (the root of the problem) between an invisible God and his visible manifestations, by transcribing it into a new modality—that of the unknown divine essence and the knowable divine energies. By introducing the solution of divine energies the East too avoids answering the disputed who question. Or to put it better, Palamas's answer is not an answer. Here we begin to see how the two questions are interrelated and interwoven, so one cannot be answered without also answering the other. Either both are answered or none.<sup>33</sup>

The discussion of the above statement should start by emphasising that it demonstrates an unfortunate misunderstanding of Palamite theology. But not only that, it appears to be an intentional undermining of a fundamental line in Orthodox theology that can be traced back to St Irenaeus, St Athanasius the Great, the Cappadocian Fathers, St John Chrysostom, St Cyril of Alexandria, St Maximus the Confessor, St John of Damascus, St Symeon the New Theologian, as well as St Gregory Palamas, and a multitude of Orthodox theologians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>34</sup> It should be pointed out that John Manoussakis is not the only contemporary theologian doing this.<sup>35</sup> What is more interesting, however, is his reference to

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alexis Torrance, 'Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers', *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 47–70; Jean-Claude Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, coll. Cogitatio Fidei n° 272 (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Norman Russell, 'Theosis and Gregory Palamas: Continuity or Doctrinal Change?' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 50 (2006): 357–79: 'The opponents of Palamism were not heretics. But, like many of the Fathers of the fourth century who had reservations about the word *homoousios*, they rejected novel terminology and insisted on what they took to be "the ancestral doctrines"—*ta patria dogmata*. Palamas's torrent of treatises convinced some of them but his final victory was chiefly brought about by his supporters' capture of the patriarchal office. His version of theosis was enshrined in Orthodox teaching as a result of his canonization by the synod of 1368, but among the intellectuals for whom it was intended it remained—and still remains—controversial.' See also George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanicolaou, 'Augustine and the Orthodox: "The West in the East"', in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. A. Papanicolaou and G. Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 11–40, at 38: 'The contemporary Orthodox response to Augustine, coupled with the anachronistic emphasis on the essence/energies distinction as the hermeneutical key for interpreting an East/West dichotomy, may have as much to do with Orthodox identity formation vis-à-vis "the West" as it does with genuine theological differences.' See also David Bentley Hart in the introduction to: *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Adrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), xiii: 'Some Eastern theologians might be emboldened partly to abandon the Neo-Palamite theology that has become so dominant

Metropolitan John Zizioulas in support of an impersonalistic interpretation of the Palamite teaching on the divine energies (which has nothing to do with the theology of St Gregory Palamas).<sup>36</sup> Metropolitan John Zizioulas disagrees ‘with Lossky and the Neopalamites, who tend to exhaust God’s soteriological work with the divine energies and undermine the involvement of the divine persons in salvation’. In addition, he disagrees also ‘with anyone who would interpret the Cappadocians and Palamas in the same way and draw conclusions from such an interpretation’.<sup>37</sup> We are initially left with the impression that both Manoussakis and Zizioulas do not disagree with St Gregory Palamas, but with certain ‘Neopalamite theologians’. It is not clear who these Neopalamites really are.<sup>38</sup> On closer examination, it becomes clear, however, that, whoever they are, the ultimate target of the critical remarks towards them is St Gregory Palamas himself, because, as we see, Fr John’s conclusion is that ‘Palamas’s answer is not an answer’. Thus, in the attempt to articulate an ecumenically acceptable theological position (against the phantom group of ‘Neopalamites’), the author appears to be prepared (if I may use a diplomatic tone) to discard some of Palamas’ theological insights, or even detach him from the Tradition. It is true that, according to St Gregory, any interaction of God with the world, with the patriarchs, prophets,

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 in his understanding of divine transcendence than was Palamas (at least, Palamas as he has come to be understood); these theologians might even feel freer to avail themselves of many of the riches of their own tradition that have been forgotten as a result of the triumph of the Neo-Palamite synthesis’. In another publication (‘The Hidden and the manifest. Metaphysics after Nicaea,’ in Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, eds., *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008], 191–226, at 212, n. 39), David Bentley Hart pejoratively points out that it is more than a little debatable how Palamas understood the distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies: ‘And, in fact, a question impossible to settle. If the texts attributed to Palamas are indeed all the work of his hand, then it is quite likely that no one will ever be able convincingly to explain what Palamas meant by the distinction of essence and energies in God, since it is not at all clear that Palamas himself knew what he meant’. See also: John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 26, for whom the teaching of St Gregory Palamas on the divine essence and energies deserves to be mentioned only for historical reasons. For a recent critique of Metropolitan Zizioulas’s interpretation of the teaching on the divine energies, see Jean-Claude Larchet, *Personne et nature: La Trinité—Le Christ—L’Homme* (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 307–12.

<sup>36</sup> In the acknowledgment section of the book, the author points out that the influence of Metropolitan Zizioulas’s theological work can be felt in every page of his book.

<sup>37</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 139, n. 80.

<sup>38</sup> I have been continuously amazed by the use of the ‘neo-Palamite’ label by contemporary Orthodox theologians without any reference to anyone in particular. An exception could be found in a recent paper by Norman Russell (‘Inventing Palamism,’ *Analogue* 3, no. 2 [2017]: 75–96), where he refers to Christos Yannaras and David Bradshaw as having been influential in taking Palamas’ approach seriously on a philosophical level and, as a result, ‘considered by their opponents to be militant neo-Palamites’ (86). I must admit that I have never heard of Bradshaw being called a neo-Palamite. In addition, I cannot see how he could be called a neo-Palamite just because he contributed significantly to the articulation of the distinction between divine essence and energies in a contemporary philosophical perspective. If we were to use this label, we should be at liberty to start introducing other similar labels by calling other contemporary Orthodox theologians, for example, neo-Maximians. I think that, given his substantial contribution to the study of St Maximus the Confessor, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, for example, could rightly deserve such label.

the saints and, as a matter of fact, with any human being in general, is *kat' energeian*, but this does not change the fact that all theophanic visions are of Christ. Neither does it diminish the role of the Church sacraments.<sup>39</sup> The insistence of the role of the divine energies does not overshadow the personal relationship because, for Palamas, any person-to-person relation is *kat' energeian*. This is simply how persons interact, and there is a substantial body of Orthodox theological work focusing on this issue.<sup>40</sup> That is why the statement, 'by introducing the solution of divine energies the East too avoids answering the disputed who question', sounds completely unfounded. Eastern theological language has always employed the distinction between essence and energies in very personal terms. Just as an illustration, one could consider the example of someone knocking on the door of a room while we are inside of it. When we hear the sound of knocking, we do not ask ourselves how exactly we heard the sound but simply, 'Who is knocking?' We know that we hear the knocking as a result of the activity of someone who is knocking, and the most natural question concerns the 'who' and not so much the 'how'. In other words, the language of divine energies does not replace the 'who' by the 'how' question; they remain equally relevant.

### *Is the Translation of Augustine's Creatura as 'Real' a Solution?*

Going back to the dilemma between the 'who' and 'how' questions, Manoussakis ventures to suggest that 'there is only one answer for both questions' and points out

<sup>39</sup> For a systematic treatment of Ecclesiology and the Church sacraments in the light of the teaching on the divine essence and energies, see Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, The Experience of God*, vol. 2 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000); *The Church: Communion in the Holy Spirit, The Experience of God*, vol. 4 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012); *The Sanctifying Mysteries, The Experience of God*, vol. 5 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012). As a side note, I should point out that it is amazing how little contemporary Greek Orthodox theologians refer to the theological insights of Fr Dumitru Staniloae. In the case of John Manoussakis, it is even more amazing how infrequently he refers to the works of his fellow Greek Orthodox theologians who have contributed substantially to this topic.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998). See also: John Meyendorff, 'The Holy Trinity in Palamite Theology', in *Trinitarian Theology East and West: St Thomas Aquinas—St Gregory Palamas*, eds. Michael Fahey and John Meyendorff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), 25–43; Nikolaos Loudovikos, 'Ontology Celebrated: Remarks of an Orthodox on Radical Orthodoxy', in *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Adrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 141–55; Métropolite Amphiloque Radovic, *Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité selon saint Grégoire de Palamas* (Paris: Cerf, 2012) (previous edition in English: Amphilochios Radovic, *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity according to St Gregory Palamas* [Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristics Studies, 1991]); Maximos Aghiorgoussis, 'The Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence and Energies of God', in *Together in Christ, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ecumenism* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012): 1–28; Nikolaos Loudovikos, 'Hell and Heaven, Nature and Person: Christos Yannaras, D. Stăniloae and Maximus the Confessor', *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 5 (2014): 9–32; Georgi Kapriev, 'Die Begegnung Moses' mit Christus (Gregorios Palamas, Triaden, II, 3, 55)', in *Sophia the Wisdom of God—Die Weisheit Gottes*, eds. Theresia Hainthaler, Franz Mali, Gregor Emmenegger, and Manté Lenkaitytė Ostermann (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 2017), 387–94.

that 'it is easier to start with the second question, the how question.'<sup>41</sup> This is actually how he avoids answering the 'who' question, which is exactly what Augustine did. As a solution to this problem, the author suggests a new interpretation of Augustine's view:

It seems, though, that part of the problem with Augustine's exegesis is that his critics read into his texts *their* distinction of created/uncreated for the Eastern Orthodox, indeed, the fundamental distinction in most theological discourse. In doing so, however, Augustine's *creatura* becomes translated as 'created.' I would like to suggest, however, that his concern might not have been to clarify whether the theophanies were created or uncreated at all, but rather to affirm their reality, and therefore a translation of *creatura* that might be closer to the intentions of the bishop of Hippo would be 'real'—in other words, a palpable, experienceable event that was addressed to our physical being and not only *ad mentem*. Read in this way, Palamas could not agree more with Augustine. For it was precisely the reality of the theophanic experience that Barlaam had denied.<sup>42</sup>

The above interpretation is one of the major points in Manoussakis's attempt to offer an ecumenical ground for the reconciliation of the Augustinian and Palamite positions. This argument is not unusual for pro-Augustinian theologians, who tend to think that Augustine is being judged (many centuries after his time) for not being a Palamite. They assert that St Gregory's focus on the distinction between divine essence and energies, and between created and uncreated, has influenced Orthodox theologians so much that they cannot stop reading Augustine in the light of these later dichotomies. It should be pointed out, however, that such a claim is unsubstantiated. The emphasis on the difference between created and uncreated is not an invention of St Gregory Palamas; it was ingrained in the body of Christian doctrine at the First Ecumenical Council and the struggles of the Church during the Arian controversy. This can be clearly seen in the works of St Athanasius the Great, who wrote earlier than Augustine and was a theological authority for the bishop of Hippo. Here, I would refer to an insightful work by P. Christou focusing on St Athanasius the Great's use of the terms uncreated and created, and unbegotten and begotten.<sup>43</sup> According to Christou, there has been an unsubstantiated tendency to articulate the contrast between Orthodoxy and Arianism only in terms of the conceptual difference between *homoousios* and *homoiousios*, and between *homoios* and *anomoios*. His

<sup>41</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 56.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>43</sup> Panachiotis Christou, 'Uncreated and created, unbegotten and begotten in the theology of St Athanasius of Alexandria,' in *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 55–65.



point is that the discussion of these terms was only a tool in the argumentation of St Athanasius helping him to defend Orthodoxy:

These terms did not have quite the importance we attribute to them today... The extent to which Athanasius attributed little significance to these words is apparent in his letters on the Holy Ghost, where he writes: 'It is enough to know that the Spirit is not a creature.'<sup>44</sup> This indicates where the basis of theological disagreement is to be found between the rival parties. What is the Spirit, a creature, or a non-created being? What is the Son, a creature, or a non-created being? Upon the answer hangs all else.<sup>45</sup>

It is clear that the difference between uncreated and created in the theological debates with the Arians cannot be directly translated into the Augustinian context. The focus on this difference, however, demonstrates its relevance for the Early Church Fathers. Given this relevance, it is very hard to accept without serious reservations the author's 'suggestion' that, by using the term *creatura*, the Bishop of Hippo did not want to clarify whether the theophanies were created or uncreated at all, but rather to affirm their reality, and therefore the fact that a translation of *creatura* as 'real' might be closer to his intentions. Such an interpretation simply contradicts Augustine's own summary of his position provided at the end of Book III of his *De Trinitate*, where he clearly points out that the theophanies were the work of angels who 'either spoke or did things themselves, representing God's person, just as we have shown the prophets used to do, or they took created materials distinct from themselves and used them to present us with symbolic manifestations of God'. Despite this, Manoussakis elaborates further his new interpretation as follows:

Augustine's insistence to write '*per creaturam*' indicates...his understanding of the character of the theophany not as created but *through* the created. Of course, whatever appears through the created order cannot be itself created. The light that passes through the glass of my window cannot be of the same nature as its medium because it would never be able to go through it. Similarly, the revelation granted by God appears through the created order precisely because it is not itself created.<sup>46</sup>

This is one of the weakest points in Manoussakis's essay. The author is trying to make a point by mixing up uncreated and created realities, and by using analogies that make little sense even in the realm of the created. First of all, there is nothing novel in the interpretation of Augustine's understanding of the character of the the-

<sup>44</sup> St Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion I*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Panachiotis Christou, 'Uncreated and Created, Unbegotten and Begotten,' 55.

<sup>46</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 58.

ophanies not as created but as manifested *through* the created. Such an interpretation does not make the theophanies less created or almost uncreated. What is more disturbing, however, is the statement that ‘whatever appears through the created order cannot be itself created’, followed by the example that ‘the light that passes through the glass of my window cannot be of the same nature as its medium because it would never be able to go through it’. The least one can say here is that the example of light passing through glass as an analogy of how the uncreated appears through the created is highly inappropriate or rather inadequate. Yes, light passes through glass, but physical light and glass are both created realities even though they are different in terms of their specific created nature. One can find examples in both nature and technology when one light beam passes through or interacts with another light beam, which does not mean that the two beams have different created natures. In addition, there are multiplicities of examples of natural phenomena where physical entities pass through each other and neither of them will help the argumentation of the point about the uncreated the author is trying to make.<sup>47</sup>

Later in the text Manoussakis offers another example of mixing up created and uncreated realities:

Let us ask, what do we see when we look at a van Gogh painting? First and foremost we see van Gogh’s style, that is, we recognize that painting as van Gogh’s work, which means that what is most visible is precisely the invisible (or the nonphysical), for the style of a painting is not itself something physical. Style—that uniqueness through which the painting presents itself—is neither the theme nor the color. It is not the brushstrokes or the lines, but something that exceeds the physical dimension of the work altogether. In fact, were we to look only at the painting as a physical object (the wood of the frame, the cloth of the canvas smeared with colors, etc.) we would render the painting as painting invisible. Let us ask by employing Palamas’s terminology: is style created or uncreated?<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the meaningless rhetorical question at the end of the paragraph, I would point out the provocative but inadequate attempt to interpret the style as something that is beyond or completely unrelated to the visible physical properties of a painting. Yes, style is not only the theme or the colour, but is also in the theme and in the colour. It is something that is articulated in the specific way of doing the

<sup>47</sup> I am aware that some of the Church Fathers use examples of natural phenomena involving two created substances, and even light, as metaphors in support of specific theological statements, but they were usually used in the context of exemplifying specific relationships with a clear awareness of the limitations of any potential analogies. The problem with the example provided by Manoussakis consists in the inclination to claim some degree of explanatory power based on a metaphor that appears to be problematic even in the realm of the created phenomena.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 63.

brushstrokes and shaping the lines. If the style is not articulated in the physical, it would be impossible for people to distinguish between the paintings of Van Gogh and Monet. Again, Manoussakis takes an example from the realm of the created and tries to extrapolate it by drawing insights about the uncreated.

The author uses the example of the painting to demonstrate that a phenomenon is much more than a thing, and to make a radical claim: ‘phenomenology believes that things do not reserve themselves but show themselves fully—indeed, in such a way that their appearance could exceed the limits of the created.’<sup>49</sup> This statement is the basis for me to believe that the author assigns to phenomenology a theological role and authority that it is unable to bear. I wonder exactly what aspect of phenomenology would make it so capable of dealing with the uncreated or the beyond-created, given its tendency to focus on experience in a way that de-hypostasises reality. Neither does it have, due to its creaturely grounding, any special capacities to conceptualise the interface between the created and the uncreated. My fear is that author’s excitement with the theological potential of phenomenology comes from confusing the properties of invisible created realities with uncreated ones. Here is another example of him claiming something about a created reality and then transposing it to the realm of the uncreated:

That said, as the style of a painting is not identifiable with the painting qua object, similarly, style cannot exist apart from the physical dimension of the painting. Thus, a revelation, even a divine revelation, cannot bypass the sensible. It makes no sense to suppose that the creator wills to manifest himself to his creation by disregarding that very creation to which he wishes to reveal himself. If the ultimate revelation of God in Christ conceded so much so as to assume a human body, what gives us the right to entertain the possibility of a revelation that would dispense with the sensible altogether?<sup>50</sup>

In this passage, Manoussakis clarifies his previous point about the style of painting and suddenly uses his clarification as a basis for a conclusion about divine revelation. The problem is that the conclusion seems to consider the uncreated as objectively and unconditionally given to the human senses, as if created human nature possesses all the natural capacities to perceive the uncreated without the transformative role of divine grace. This is a problem that shows up even more drastically in author’s interpretation of St Gregory Palamas’ theology.

<sup>49</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

*Balthasar, Indication, and Phenomenology*

It must be acknowledged that the discussion of Hans von Urs Balthasar's understanding offered by John Manoussakis is thought provoking. It starts with the last statement of the section *Two Questions, One Answer*: the 'theophanic phenomena of the Old Testament are neither mere signs nor symbols but efficacious indications in which he who is indicated makes himself present'.<sup>51</sup> In the next section, which is titled *Indication*, the author demonstrates his mastery of phenomenology in an attempt to integrate and harmonise his two favourite engagements: theological philosophy and philosophical theology. He focuses on the distinction between two forms of phenomenality, namely signification and indication:

In signification, the sign or symbol is merely a *locum tenens* of what it stands for: it is, in other words, nothing more than a *vestigium* or a trace of an absent referent. The formal relationship between signifier and signified—an arbitrary relation, as de Saussure has shown—does not implicate the latter in the former. Indication, on the other hand, not only evokes what indicates but 'entangles' (*Verflechtung*) what is indicated in such a way that the suprasensible is somehow embodied in the sensible and the transcendent in the immanent. This 'entanglement' is, properly speaking, a chiasmus, a criss-crossed interlacing.<sup>52</sup>

The keywords in this paragraph are indication, entanglement, embodiment, chiasmus, suprasensible, or transcendent. Manoussakis attributes the phenomenological understanding of indication to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. According to him, on the other hand, the theological appropriation of the phenomenological concept of indication belongs to von Balthasar, who applied it specifically to answering the how question of Old Testament manifestations.

Before going deeper into the suggested phenomenological interpretation of the theology of Old Testament theophanies, it is worth focusing briefly on the author's quick transition from the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to the theology of von Balthasar. In spite of its ingenuity, this transition appears to be an 'abracadabra' move which intends to justify almost instantly the use of the phenomenological term 'indication' in the theological interpretation of the theophanies. First, the context of embodiment which dominates Husserl's understanding of indication and entanglement—and its creative appropriation by Merleau-Ponty, despite its 'far-reaching implications'—is far too distant from the theological context of the theophanies. I believe that the author makes the same logical mistake here as before by taking an issue from the realm of the created and suddenly extrapolating it into the realm of the uncreated. Manoussakis's engagement with the phenomenological

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 59.

‘nuances’ of Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s thought could be highly felicitous as a tool in his ecumenical theological approach, but I wonder about the ecumenical value of such a move, which draws the reader into such open-ended hermeneutical territory.<sup>53</sup> A more detailed exploration of Husserl’s<sup>54</sup> and Merleau-Ponty’s<sup>55</sup> interpretations of indication and entanglement in the context of embodied conscious behaviour will only show the fragile basis for any potential analogies within the context of the theophanies. Such analogies might have some exploratory speculative role, but would be of little value when transferred into the realm of divine-human communion.<sup>56</sup> This might be the reason for the author’s quick shift to the discussion of Balthasar’s theological interpretation of indication.

<sup>53</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s understandings of indication and entanglement, see Dermot Moran, ‘The Phenomenology of Embodiment: Intertwining and Reflexivity’, in *The Phenomenology of Embodied Subjectivity, Contributions to Phenomenology* 71, eds. R. Jensen and D. Moran (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2013), 285–303.

<sup>54</sup> See for example, the following passage from Edmund Husserl’s *Shorter Logical Investigations* (ed. Dermot Moran [Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2001], 104): ‘A thing is only properly an indication if and where it in fact serves to indicate something to some thinking being. If we wish to seize the pervasively common element here present we must refer back to such cases of “live” functioning. In these we discover as a common circumstance the fact that certain objects or states of affairs of whose reality someone has actual knowledge indicate to him the reality of certain other objects or states of affairs, in the sense that his belief in the reality of the one is experienced (though not at all evidently) as motivating a belief or surmise in the reality of the other.... Plainly such a state of affairs amounts to just this: that certain things may or must exist, since other things have been given.’

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, this passage from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s fourth chapter, ‘The Intertwining—The Chiasm’, in *The visible and the invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 134–35: ‘Hence, without even entering into the implications proper to the seer and the visible, we know that, since vision is a palpation with the look, it must also be inscribed in the order of being that it discloses to us; he who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at. As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision (as is so well indicated by the double meaning of the word) be doubled with a complementary vision or with another vision: myself seen from without, such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible, occupied in considering it from a certain spot. For the moment we shall not examine how far this identity of the seer and the visible goes, if we have a complete experience of it, or if there is something missing, and what it is. It suffices for us for the moment to note that he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it, unless, by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visibles, capable, by a singular reversal, of seeing them—he who is one of them. The visible is not a tangible zero, the tangible is not a zero of visibility (relation of encroachment).’

<sup>56</sup> Please note that I am not saying that such undertakings are useless or unnecessary. My point is that they need to be done properly by addressing the challenges of phenomenality associated with the distinction between visible and invisible, created and uncreated. The key challenge is that ‘theology deals with the event-like phenomena which cannot be presented in phenomenality of objects (what happens in science). Correspondingly, in order to incorporate the givens of theology (the ‘data’ of religious experience) into a philosophical framework, one needs to extend philosophy beyond its metaphysical and transcendental setting.’ (See Alexei Nesteruk, ‘Philosophical Foundations of the Dialogue between Science and Theology’, *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 2/11 [2018]: 376–298). In my own work, I have suggested the adoption of the principle of analogical isomorphism when dealing with conceptual analogies at the interface of theology and science (see Chapter 5, ‘The Possible Ground for a Parallel Study of Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics’, in my *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics: From Controversy to Encounter*, foreword by David Bradshaw [Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017], 85–90). In applying the principle of analogical isomorphism, I have used the insights of Bernard Lonergan in his ‘Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought’, *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan: Collection*, eds. F. Crowe and R. Doran, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Lonergan Research Institute of

With respect to Manoussakis's extensive reference to von Balthasar's use of 'indication' in his theological interpretation of the theophanies, one could start by pointing out that the choice of von Balthasar's works as a source of insights already demonstrates a certain bias against the theology of St Gregory Palamas. For example, in an important paragraph in the sixth volume of his *Glory of the Lord (Theology of the Old Covenant)* Balthasar points out that

The course of revelation shows that God is not only the Lord (der Herr), but the Lord of glory (*Herrlichkeit*), and, conversely that all glory 'is the glory of God the Lord (*die Herrlichkeit Gottes des Herrn*)... We may well prefer the dark secret of our own existence to the whole range of this purely economic glory of God, i.e. to the unknown quantity, the inscrutable being who is concealed by it.' But in the end it would be deadly for faith 'if God were not the God of glory'. On the other hand, 'the glory of God could be seen and understood as dissipated and dissolved because it has no Lord.' This would be the case if we understood it to be something like a 'collection of mighty potencies ..., conceptual forces, of principalities and powers', behind which God's being would withdraw as unknowable. Late Judaism, with its hypostasisations of utterances and attributes, did not wholly evade this danger, and the Church's theology in both East (Gregory Palamas) and West (Gilbert de la Porrée) often approached it. But when this happens the very essence of revelation is destroyed.

It is not by accident that in this paragraph von Balthasar refers to the *Church Dogmatics* of Karl Barth for whom 'What is God as God, the divine individuality and characteristics, the *essentia* or "essence" of God, is something which we shall encounter either at the place where God deals with us as Lord and Saviour, or not at all'.<sup>57</sup> In other words, for Barth the divine essence appears to be equated with the divine characteristics and can be encountered. Even though the divine essence is neither visible nor graspable, it can be experienced as grasping us.<sup>58</sup> This is a background of revelation that does not correlate with the Eastern belief in the distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia* and, respectively, between divine essence and energies.

On the other hand, on the rare occasions when von Balthasar uses the term 'indication' in his *Theology of the Old Covenant*, he does not refer to the works of Husserl or Merleau-Ponty. This includes the text referred to by John Manoussakis:

Regis College, 1988), 133–41.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. 2.1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 261.

<sup>58</sup> Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar, 1997), 27.



The theophanies, of which the most important takes place on Sinai, are intended to be understood as overwhelming events in which the living God becomes present. On the one hand, they occur in such a way that the sensory sphere that belongs essentially to man is brought into play: an experience takes place whereby God is externally 'seen' and 'heard': On the other hand, however, the person involved clearly understands that the sensory manifestation is the indication, as it were a signal or a symbol, for the fact that the absolute, spiritual and invisible Mightiness is here present, comparable to the way a person catches his interlocutor's attention before he begins to speak with him.<sup>59</sup>

The lack of explicit reference to phenomenology in the sixth volume of the *Glory of the Lord* could be misleading because, as recent scholarship has clearly emphasized, von Balthasar has demonstrated a visible indebtedness to Heidegger. According to Fergus Kerr,

Unlike Rahner, Balthasar never attended lectures by Heidegger. Ironically, however, as we shall see, his conception of metaphysics, as well as his massive reinterpretation of the history of Western philosophy in the fourth and fifth volumes of *The Glory of the Lord*, are deeply indebted to his reading of Heidegger. Balthasar is far more radically 'Heideggerian' than Rahner ever was.<sup>60</sup>

Interestingly, Kerr does not make any reference to Husserl or Merleau-Ponty. In addition, he points out that

Heidegger's 'philosophy of being', 'permeated with Christian theological motifs in changed form', is enormously important for Balthasar (see *Gory of the Lord*, 4, 429–50). Indeed, for Christian theology, and particularly for the theology of God's glory—so Balthasar contends—Heidegger's project is by far the most fertile in modern philosophy. Heidegger is the one who keeps the focus on 'the main issue' (for philosophy), which is 'the mystery of the immanent distinction between the to-be of being and the beings that are existent'.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 4, 34.

<sup>60</sup> Fergus Kerr, 'Balthasar and Metaphysics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, eds. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224–38; at 225.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 235–36.

One could see, for example, a sign of Heidegger's use of the term 'grasping'<sup>62</sup> in von Balthasar's discussion of Elijah's encounter with God:

When following the solitary footsteps of Moses in the wilderness, he (Elijah) experiences on Horeb that God 'passes by' him too; and 'God was not in the great storm', and 'not in the earthquake', and 'not in the fire'. God was in the ultimate experience of being grasped by—rather than grasping—the 'gentle breeze', and this can hardly be perceived any longer by the senses and is more non-vision than vision. This experience, however, is not understood as a 'spiritualisation', but as an intensification of the presence of the 'Awesome', the tremendous presence by virtue of which the contradictory signs are what they are meant to be: indicators which are equivocal in themselves but which derive their total clarity from him who is revealing himself in them.<sup>63</sup>

Here is Manoussakis's elaboration on the themes of indication and grasping which appears in his vocabulary as comprehension:

God's self-revelation neither scorns the physical world nor shatters the human senses; indeed, his revelation must involve the human body and its senses. On the other hand, what the senses experience is by no means exhausted by them but remains inexhaustible, excessive, saturated with intuition; thus man knows that he is in the presence of him who is beyond experience and comprehension and his sole experience is precisely the realization that he is not comprehending, but rather comprehended by what he seeks to comprehend (cf. Phil 3:12). It is the experience of an endless indication, that experience itself—the experience of a counter-experience—is the only indication of God, and it is made possible as experience only insofar as it is thus indicated.<sup>64</sup>

One can see the conceptual alignment with von Balthasar's paragraph above. However, in order to 'grasp' the author's insistence on the value of 'indication' and the meaning of 'being comprehended', we should read his next paragraph:

<sup>62</sup> According to Roderick Munday, for Heidegger, 'Grasping is the simple awareness that something present-at-hand has the temporal structure of a pure "making present" of something. In the grasping, those entities which show themselves to be present-at-hand are therefore understood as entities in the most authentic sense. Presence then is literally an interpretation of something with regard to the present (immediacy of perception)'. See the glossary provided in Roderick Munday's 'Being and Time an Explication and Commentary' (2007), accessed January 20, 2018, [http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/b\\_resources/b\\_and\\_t\\_glossary.html](http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/b_resources/b_and_t_glossary.html).

<sup>63</sup> Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 6, 46–47.

<sup>64</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 60.

When God reveals himself to man, when the uncreated enters into contact with the created, that encounter can leave neither the creator nor creation unaffected. In each case a change has taken place. This change is viewed differently from each of the two sides, so to speak, of the point of contact. From the side of God, what is revealed and communicated is indeed God and thus uncreated, but from the side of the creation, this same revelation is manifested through and by means of the physical and the material. Every revelation—from the manifestations to the patriarchs and the prophets in the Old Testament, to the Trinitarian theophanies of the New, to the sacraments of the Church—takes place according to a Chalcedonian duality that needs, by all means and regardless of its paradoxical and antinomian character, to be maintained and upheld. Every revelation involves both orders, created and uncreated, for no revelatory event and no divine manifestation could ever surpass or overcome the incarnation.<sup>65</sup>

The last passage offers the opportunity to point out again that the best way to view John Manoussakis's essay is to consider it as a piece of constructive theology—a valuable effort to interpret Augustine's interpretation of the theophanies in a way that makes his views acceptable to both Orthodox and Roman Catholics.<sup>66</sup> This is especially clear in his discussion of entanglement (*Verflechtung*), indication (*Anzeige*), and the thought provoking analogy with the style of a particular painting. Read through the lens of Husserl's, Heidegger's, and Merleau-Ponty's philosophical insights, as well as through the prism of von Balthasar's theological interpretation of indication, Augustine's theory of signification could probably be understood in a way that makes it more acceptable to the Orthodox. The problem, however, is that this is author's own personal interpretation, or rather extrapolation, of twentieth century phenomenological terminology into the context of the Augustinian understanding of theophanies. In addition, it is an interpretation which is not without inherent problems. After looking more carefully into the last citation and the previous references to Heidegger's grasping and Husserl's indication, one cannot but leave with the impression of the existence of an actual split between uncreated and created, as well as with an understanding of indication as something that merely points to (or is a re-placement of) the reality that is being indicated. The focus on the entangle-

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 60–61.

<sup>66</sup> Manoussakis's approach is articulated very clearly: 'My approach in methodology was informed by the consideration that I write for the Catholic as well as the Orthodox reader, addressing their respective feelings of mistrust toward each other and taking into account the theological argumentation that they have advanced against each other over the past centuries. I write for the Catholic or Orthodox reader who would like to hear something different than precisely such an age-old argument. Finally, I write with the same passion for these issues that kept me up late at night in my junior seminary, believing that the Orthodox Church cannot be kept captive by its own past, ruminating the same line of arguments that first saw the light when Constantinople was still the Queen City of an empire. Thankfully, history did not end in 1453' (*For the Unity of All*, xvii).

ment between an indicator and what is being indicated does not make indication more convincing than what it actually is: a static relation, a link or a reference that could be potentially contemplated or reflected upon. Additionally, the theological emphasis on the Chalcedonian duality of the Incarnation seems to focus on the createdness of human nature and not on the unifying role of the uncreated Logos, the Word of God and second Person of the Trinity. In other words, the Incarnation is seen mainly through the divine assumption of the human nature and not through the synergetic impact of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. This appears to be a narrow view restricted to the created side of the union. A response against such narrowness could be found in von Balthasar himself:

There is no dodging this paradox, which begins with the self-communication of the Wholly Other and ends with the thanksgiving of the creature that has been overtaken. If, under pretext that God's paradox is too steep for him and also too unfruitful because insoluble, a Christian were to turn away from it and seek his alleged salvation by turning exclusively to his fellow creatures (Christ's mission has, after all, directed him towards creatures!), such a Christian would, for himself, have already stepped outside the proper sphere of revelation.<sup>67</sup>

Von Balthasar should be also credited for adopting a more inclusive theological language which allows him to focus better (as compared to Manoussakis himself) on the articulation of divine presence rather than on mere indication, as well as on emphasising the transformative role of theophanies. For example, at the very beginning of the introduction to the sixth volume of his *Glory of the Lord*, he points out that

The theological act is shaped by its content, to which it attains only in an act of transcendence. This transcending occurs not only in the general philosophical sense that applies to every form of knowing, but in the specifically theological sense according to which every act of 'beholding' the living God presupposes a 'transport' of the creature beyond itself and its natural cognitive faculties. For the creature such transport bears the name of 'grace', which enables the creature to withstand the splendour of the Lord's glory as he reveals himself to it...It becomes evident, therefore, that in spite of the fact that even though God uses creaturely guises to speak and act throughout Holy Scripture, what is essentially at stake is solely man's encounter with the divinity or glory of God.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 6, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 6, 9.

*Reading Gregory Palamas in Parallel to Augustine's Theophanic Vision*

The last part of the present analysis will return to the problems of Manoussakis's reading of the theology of St Gregory Palamas from the perspective of the Augustinian theophanic vision:

As St Gregory Palamas rightly realized, Barlaam's refusal to recognize the light of mystical experience as uncreated amounts to a denial of all mystical experience *in toto*, and thus his position is ultimately a form of Arianism. On the other hand, such a mystical experience can never become completely disassociated from a physical locus, be it in the form of the medium through which the uncreated manifests itself, or through the locale at which the manifestation takes place, or the channel through which the manifestation is received. I do not know of any passage in St Gregory's corpus where he speaks of an 'uncreated' earthquake or of 'uncreated' thunder with regard to the Old Testament theophanies.<sup>69</sup>

I can see a problem in the statement that 'a mystical experience can never become completely disassociated from a physical locus'.<sup>70</sup> The author is quite explicit about the impossibility of such disassociation by referring to 'the medium through which the uncreated manifests itself, or through the locale at which the manifestation takes place, or the channel through which the manifestation is received'. The examples he provides are earthquakes and thunders. The examples are completely in line with Augustine's interpretation of the theophanies as created and real. They also seem to suggest a kind of Akindynian perspective on the divine energies. Gregory Akindynos made a distinction between divine essence and energies, but for him human participation is only possible through the created energies of God.<sup>71</sup> For Akyndinos, the

<sup>69</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 61.

<sup>70</sup> I have recently found the doctoral dissertation of Cory Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis: The Transfiguration in the Theology of Gregory Palamas and its Importance for Catholic Theology* (PhD diss.: Duquesne University, 2015). Hayes describes her study as a rare instance of Western engagement with Palamas that does not take the distinction between essence and energy as the only point of departure, but only insofar as it illuminates his teaching on the Transfiguration as theophany and, more specifically, the Transfiguration as an eschatological vision of God in this life. In her dissertation, Hayes specifically discusses the above paragraph of John Manoussakis (referring to the equivalent text in his original paper 'Theophanies and Indication', 82): 'That Palamas never claimed that there is such a thing as uncreated thunder, etc. is certainly true. But, as I have shown, this is because the physical imagery of theophanies is either a linguistic symbol on the part of the visionary, or a created symbol of a future reality according to Palamas. However, I think that Manoussakis is correct in asserting that, for Palamas, theophanic experiences of the glory always have a physical (created) locus. As I show . . . the uncreated glory of God manifests itself in and through the humanity of Christ and in the humanity of the visionary because of his or her participation in Christ, either real or anticipatory. Reinhard Flogaus makes a claim concerning Palamas that is similar to Manoussakis' in "Palamas and Barlaam Revisited", 14, n.71. I judge him to be wrong for the same reasons as Manoussakis' (Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis*, 69, n. 239).

<sup>71</sup> Georgi Kapriev, 'Gregory Akindynos', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (London and New York: Springer, 2011), 437–39: 'Akindynos himself differentiates between two different uses of the term "energy". "Energy" in its improper sense denotes the natural qualities of God, which are

divine energies are contemplated only by faith, through and in reference to created realities.<sup>72</sup>

The parallel mention of Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Akindynos, and Augustine helps in making another important point. This is the fact that, during the Hesychast controversy, the discussions focusing on the uncreated nature of the Taboric light clearly identified a link between the controversial issues and Augustine's theophanic theology. Recent scholarship has demonstrated Barlaam's use of Augustinian ideas as well as references to him by St Gregory Palamas.<sup>73</sup>

Following the Augustinian tradition of the West, Barlaam took it for granted and passionately argued that the glory of God revealed in this life to the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles was a created glory, and that in each separate case of revelation this glory came into existence and passed out of existence, being of only a short duration. Having been theologically formed by such works as Augustine's *De Trinitate*, the Calabrian knew quite well that it was not the uncreated Divinity itself which was revealed in the Old and New Testaments, but temporarily-existing creatures which symbolized divinity, and thereby elevated the minds of those who were the objects of revelation to various levels of the comprehension of ultimate truth.<sup>74</sup>

identical with the indivisible divine essence. This highest "energy" is uncreated and not shared in, it is absolutely inaccessible and indeed invisible. The term "Energy" in its proper sense is used for the Charismata, the Gifts, and other things that were created by God for our good. This created energy is the visible action by which God's deeds are expressed. Unlike Barlaam, Akindynos does not deny the presence of the uncreated energies within creation. But it is the created grace which is the bearer of the uncreated one, which enables the deification of man, i.e., the actualization of the uncreated grace. The deification takes place, thanks to the Incarnation of the divine Logos. The teaching of Akindynos is entirely Christological. According to him there can be no other access to divinity except through Christ, the sacraments and the practicing of supernatural love, called forth by the participation in the sacraments.

<sup>72</sup> John Romanides, 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 9 (1963/64): 225–70, at 261: 'Akindynos, like Barlaam, insists that all revelations of God take place by means of symbols. Thus for Akindynos the light revealed on Thabor is perhaps not a created symbol of divinity, as Barlaam taught (Akindynos tried very hard to avoid repeating what Barlaam had been condemned for), but it is nevertheless symbolic of the knowledge of the divinity of Christ to which the apostles attained by faith. Akindynos claimed that the body of Christ was, on the Mount, the symbol of the uncreated divinity or essence (he identified the two) which the apostles could not see, but came to know by faith. Palamas answers that, "If they saw [the light] of the adorable body, and in such a manner that it remained invisible, they in no way saw it"...But the whole point of the debate is that Palamas rejects the idea that the theophanies are symbolic and strongly refutes Akindynos' claim that a dove manifested the Spirit to St John at the baptism of Christ. Because Palamas believed that the reported Biblical apparitions of fire, light, cloud, and dove were not created symbols, but the linguistic symbols by which supra-rational revelations were reported, Akindynos accused Palamas of worshipping creatures.'

<sup>73</sup> John Romanides, 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1960/61): 186–205; 9 (1963/64): 225–70; Reinhard Flogaus, 'Palamas and Barlaam Revisited: A Reassessment of East and West in the Hesychast Controversy of 14th Century Byzantium', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42 (1998): 1–32; Alexander Golitzin, 'Dionysius Areopagites in the Works of Saint Gregory Palamas: On the Question of a "Christological Corrective" and Related Matters', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 46 (2002): 163–90.

<sup>74</sup> Romanides, 'Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics', 194.



According to Fr Bogdan Bucur, ‘the last time Augustine was taken seriously in a theological manner by Orthodox thinkers was in fourteenth-century Byzantium, when both St Gregory Palamas and his adversaries seem to have known Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and consciously reacted to its theology’.<sup>75</sup> The point here is that St Gregory appears to have been well acquainted with Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. At the same time, he was obviously aware that Augustine is charting a new and unprecedented theological path in Books 1–4.<sup>76</sup> This might be the reason why he does not quote from those parts of the book. We should be therefore very careful not to misinterpret or overinterpret Palamas’ anonymous references to Augustine.<sup>77</sup>

According to Manoussakis, ‘St Gregory seems to go too far, when, for example, he denies that the light of the transfiguration—his favorite scriptural narrative—is sensible’. This statement refers to St Gregory’s discussion of the sensible nature of the light on mount Tabor:

How is it then possible that a sensible light is not seen by the eyes of those animals that can see the sensible? If the light [on Mt Tabor] was seen by the human sensible eyes, it was seen insofar as they exceed those of the animals. In which way do they exceed them? In what other way than by the fact that through the human eyes it is the mind that sees? If not by the sensible capacity—for then even the animals would have been able to see it—then by the intelligible capacity that comprehends through the senses; or rather not even that, for every eye, particularly those nearby, would have seen the light that was brighter than the sun. If then, it was not seen, even through the intelligible capacity, then that light is not strictly speaking sensible. And if it is not sensible, it is eternal; for the divine light, which is also called in many passages ‘the glory of God,’ is without beginning or end. Therefore, it is not sensible (*aistheton*).<sup>78</sup>

In his discussion of the above citation, Manoussakis wonders about the meaning of the statement that the light on mount Tabor was not sensible, assuming that ‘it is rather to the physical (i.e., natural) character of that light that Palamas objects

<sup>75</sup> Bogdan Bucur, ‘Theophanies and vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox perspective’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 52 (2008): 67–93, at 68.

<sup>76</sup> I am grateful to Fr Bogdan Bucur, Associate Professor of theology at Duquesne University, for this insight.

<sup>77</sup> St Gregory Palamas was obviously aware of Barlaam’s affinity for the Augustinian theophanic interpretation and was trying to clarify his own position by adopting the Augustinian language that Barlaam was familiar with for the sake of articulating his own theological position. In this sense, I find inadequate the interpretation provided by Reinhard Flogaus in his ‘Inspiration-Exploitation-Distortion: The Use of St Augustine in the Hesychast Controversy’, in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. A. Papanikolaou and G. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 63–80.

<sup>78</sup> Palamas, *Triads*, 1, 3, 27, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, eds. Π. Χρήστου et al., vol. 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κυρομάνος, 1966), 588.

and not to its sensibility per se.<sup>79</sup> Even though this may appear to be a reasonable assumption, it misses one of the key aspects of Palamite theophanic theology—the transformative and enabling effect of the theophanies in both the Old and the New Testaments. A reference to *Homily 34* of St Gregory Palamas on the Transfiguration of Christ will help in clarifying this point:

The light of the Lord's transfiguration does not come into being or cease to be, nor is it circumscribed or perceptible to the senses, even though for a short time on the narrow mountain top it was seen by human eyes. Rather, at that moment the initiated disciples of the Lord 'passed', as we have been taught, 'from flesh to spirit' by the transformation of their senses, which the Spirit wrought in them, and so they saw that ineffable light, when and as much as the Holy Spirit's power granted them to do so. Those who are not aware of this light and who now blaspheme against it think that the chosen apostles saw the Light of the Lord's Transfiguration with their created faculty of sight, and in this way they endeavour to bring down to the level of a created object not just that light—God's power and kingdom—but even the power of the Holy Spirit, by which divine things are revealed to the worthy.<sup>80</sup>

In this passage, St Gregory referred to St Maximus the Confessor in order to emphasise that it was actually Christ's disciples who were transfigured by the Spirit and made able to see his divine glory.<sup>81</sup> In addition, he relates the experience of the apostles to the experience of Moses:

Everything about the blessed divine nature is truly beautiful and desirable, and is visible only to those whose minds have been purified. Anyone who gazes at its brilliant rays and its graces, partakes of it to some extent, as though his own face were touched by dazzling light. That is why Moses' countenance was glorified when he spoke with God (Exod 34:29). Do you observe that Moses too was transfigured when he went up the mountain and beheld the Lord's glory? But although he underwent transfiguration, he did not bring it

<sup>79</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 62.

<sup>80</sup> St Gregory Palamas, 'Homily Thirty-Four on the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ', in *The Homilies*, trans. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2009), 266–74, at 269.

<sup>81</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Difficulty 10*, in *Maximus the Confessor*, ed. and trans. Andrew Louth (London: Routledge, 1996), 106; PG 91:1125D–1128A: 'They beheld Him transfigured, unapproachable because of the light of his face, were amazed at the brightness of his clothes and in the honor shown Him by Moses and Elijah who were with Him on either side, they recognized his great awesomeness. And they passed over from flesh to spirit, before they had put aside this fleshly life, by the change in their powers of sense that the Spirit worked in them, lifting the veils of the passions from the intellectual activity that was in them.'

about, in accordance with him who said, ‘the humble light of truth brings me to the point where I see and experience God’s radiance.’<sup>82</sup>

Another passage from the *Triads* provides an answer to Manoussakis’s concern about the distinction between the physical and the sensible:

The disciples would not even have seen the symbol, had they not first received eyes they did not possess before. As John of Damascus puts it, ‘From being blind men, they began to see’, and to contemplate this uncreated light. The light, then, became accessible to their eyes, but to eyes which saw in a way superior to that of natural sight, and had acquired the spiritual power of the spiritual light. This mysterious light, inaccessible, immaterial, uncreated, deifying, eternal, this radiance of the Divine Nature, this glory of the divinity, this beauty of the heavenly kingdom, is at once accessible to sense perception and yet transcends it?<sup>83</sup>

The message of these passages is clear—a necessary condition of theophanic experience is that the visionary is in the right state of soul under the influence of grace.<sup>84</sup> The divine light is not accessible to the human capacities in the way they naturally operate. It is physically invisible and inaccessible to them. However, there is more to it. Every human being can prepare by good works, purification of the heart and prayer, but the vision of the divine light is ultimately given by the transformation of the natural human capacities through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Spirit of the Father and the of the Son, who proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son.<sup>85</sup> In this sense, the spiritual empowerment is both Christological and Trinitarian. It is the Trinitarian divine activity that transforms or transfigures the sight of Moses and of the Apostles, originating from the Father, through the Son,

<sup>82</sup> St Gregory Palamas, ‘Homily Thirty-Four’, 271. In this passage, St Gregory refers to St Gregory the Theologian’s *Oration on the Holy Theophany, That is to Say, On the Birth of Our Saviour XXXVIII*.

<sup>83</sup> *Triads* 3, 1, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis*, 94.

<sup>85</sup> Here I am tempted to provide an illustrative example of a nonlinear optical phenomenon—self-focusing of light, which manifests the ‘transformative’ effect of high intensity laser beams propagating through transparent materials such as glass. A self-focusing effect is observed when the intensity of light propagating through a material is so high that it modifies the refractive index of the material, which in turn affects the way the light beam propagates through it. In other words, the high intensity of the light beam affects (transforms) the properties of the material, and the modified properties of the material affect back the efficiency of light-matter interaction in a way that leads to the emergence of a new optical phenomenon such as light self-focusing, which is impossible to observe under normal (low intensity) conditions. The effect is considered as nonlinear because its emergence is conditional upon the existence of some minimum (threshold) level of light intensity below which it is negligible. In this sense, the strength of appearance of the phenomenon is not linearly proportional to the intensity of the propagating light. This example has nothing to do with uncreated light and cannot prove anything in the realm of the uncreated. It could, however, give a sense of what a transformative effect is in the realm of the created and indirectly help in emphasizing the point about the contingency of the theophanies upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

in the Holy Spirit, so that they could start seeing this same Light according to the degree of their receptivity, and according to the divine will for them. It is, however, Christ himself who appears in the theophanies, since it is he who sends the Spirit from the Father, and he is the one in whom all things were created and hold together. Palamas is very clear about this in his *Triads*<sup>86</sup> when he refers to Moses's vision of the heavenly tabernacle (Exod 25:1–9). For Palamas, this Tabernacle, which is not made with hands, was Christ himself, the power and hypostatized Wisdom of God. Here, Palamas refers to St Gregory of Nyssa's *The Life of Moses*, where, at one place, the Cappadocian Father asks: 'What then is that tabernacle not made with hands which was shown to Moses on the mountain and to which he was commanded to look as to an archetype so that he might reproduce in a handmade structure that marvel not made with hands?'<sup>87</sup> And here is the answer which inspired the fourteenth century bishop of Thessaloniki:

Taking a hint from what has been said by Paul, who partially uncovered the mystery of these things, we say that Moses was earlier instructed by a type in the mystery of the tabernacle which encompasses the universe. This tabernacle would be Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God, who in his own nature was not made with hands, yet capable of being made when it became necessary for this tabernacle to be erected among us. Thus, the same tabernacle is in a way both unfashioned and fashioned, uncreated in preexistence but created in having received this material composition.<sup>88</sup>

In the words of Nathan Eubank,

The tabernacle not made with hands is not a finite or localized shelter, but that which shelters the universe. All things are encompassed by it, and the earthly tabernacle is but an imitation of its uncreated glory. The heavenly tabernacle, therefore, cannot be any created thing, but only the one for whom and through whom all things were created, and in whom all things hold together (Col 1:16–17), namely, Christ.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Triads* 2, 3, 55.

<sup>87</sup> Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis*, 132, referring to Nathan Eubank, 'Ineffably Effable: The Pinnacle of Mystical Ascent in Gregory of Nyssa's *De vita Moysis*', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no.1 (2014): 25–41. See also Georgi Kapriev, 'Die Begegnung Moses' mit Christus (Gregorios Palamas, Triaden, II, 3, 55)', in *Sophia the Wisdom of God—Die Weisheit Gottes*, eds. Theresia Hainthaler, Franz Mali, Gregor Emmenegger et Mantë Lenkaitytë Ostermann (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 2017), 387–94.

<sup>88</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* II.170–188 (SC 1), translated in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*, Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 98, paragraph 174.

<sup>89</sup> Eubank, 'Ineffably Effable', 34.

As Cory Hayes points out,

Palamas uses particularly forceful language in order to express his conviction that it is through the incarnation of the Son alone that God's plan of salvation characterized by the vision of God/participation in God is brought about....As the boundary between created and uncreated, the mediation of the God-man is the only means of participation in God or the vision of God. If the vision of God was available to the Old Testament saints as Palamas clearly affirms that it was, then it could not have been so without a relation of dependency on the mediating role of Christ.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to its Christological emphasis, Hayes's remark is valuable in another important way: it shows the relevance of the boundary between created and uncreated, not as a mere divide or chasm between divine and human realities, but rather as the only point of contact with the realm of the Divine.

In the final pages of his chapter, Manoussakis offers a different perspective which concludes his proposal of indication as a solution of both the 'who' and the 'how' questions in the Old Testament theophanies. After discussing von Balthasar's insights about the personal character of every revelation, he reiterates the root of the problem: 'It is precisely because God reveals himself as a community of three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—that his theophanic manifestations in the Old Testament raise the question, which person of the Holy Trinity does appear to Moses and Elijah?'<sup>91</sup> Unexpectedly, the author bases his answer on a discussion of Christ's Transfiguration in the New Testament:

Each of the persons of the Holy Trinity manifests himself in a synecdochal way, or to use a properly Trinitarian term, perichoretically. That means that the Father and the Holy Spirit appear by means of the transformation of the Son but the sonship of the Son is witnessed by the voice of the Father and the 'glory' (the cloud) of the Holy Spirit. Father and Spirit are indicated in Christ and the true identity of Christ indicated by them. One person appears (in this case the Son), but he appears in such a way that the other two persons are indicated in him. It is a special mode of appearance, for the person who appears does so, not only as himself, but also as an indication for the persons who do not, strictly speaking, appear (directly at least) and whose appearance is indicated by the revealer.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis*, 95–96. For a more detailed discussion of the fact that, in addition to seeing the Old Testament theophanies as true visions of God, Palamas also carries on the patristic tradition of seeing them as theophanies of the Pre-incarnate Son of God, see section 3.3 of *ibid.*, 'Old Testament Theophanies as *Verbum Incarnandum*', 101–6.

<sup>91</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 64–65.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

What is interesting in this paragraph is that Manoussakis silently leaves aside his initial intention to address the challenges of interpreting the theophanies in a purely pre-incarnational setting. According to him, the argument based on the Transfiguration explains how the concept of indication answers both the 'how' and the 'who' questions in the context of the Old Testament theophanies as well. Interestingly, however, the 'who' question ends up with an Augustinian answer which undermines the entire reconciliation project: "To the question, "Which of the persons of the Holy Trinity appears in such divine manifestations?" we answer that all three appear by means of indication, and insofar as each of them is indicated by the other."<sup>93</sup> In demonstrating the value of indication, the author mentions the Trinitarian term *perichoresis*. This is quite indicative because it shows that, first, his demonstration is based on a mixture of *theologia* (the relations within the Holy Trinity) and *oikonomia* (the divine manifestations and theophanies) and, second, even if everything else was right, he suggests the adoption of a new phenomenological term only to replace a well-established patristic one. One cannot, then, but wonder about the ultimate purpose of the entire theological enterprise.

In the last paragraph of the chapter, John Manoussakis finally touches on the transformative and eschatological content of the theophanies:

This holds...as a general principle of any theological aesthetics, of which the Old Testament theophanies cannot be an exemption: there is no revelation without a transfigurative sanctification (deification), and there is no deification without revelation. The revealer always gives something of himself (more accurately: he gives himself) to those to whom he reveals himself. That was all too well known to St Augustine.<sup>94</sup>

Given the discussion of the historical context of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, it is very hard to see how the transformative and eschatological aspects of the theophanies were well known to him. For him, the vision of God does not happen in this life (with the Apostle Paul and Moses as exceptions). In addition, the theophanies are neither visions of God, nor transfigurative. Or, in other words,

The theophanies are not the center and commanding force of Augustine's theology. For Augustine, Mount Sinai and Mount Tabor are not the epitome of our journey to God, but rather located at the periphery of Christian dogma and spirituality. East of the Adriatic, however, theology remained decidedly 'theophanic.' The divine manifestations recorded in the Old Testament continued to be seen as divine and deifying apparitions of Christ: Jesus Christ resplendent in the light of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed 'Son' by

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 87.



the Father. The Palamite synthesis eventually consecrated the Hesychast perspective on Sinai and Tabor as the fiery heart of all Christian theology.<sup>95</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The objective of this paper was to provide a response to John Manoussakis's chapter on uncreated and created light in the theophanic theologies of Augustine and Gregory Palamas. The paper offers a critique of Manoussakis's approach to the reconciliation of the two positions. The scope, however, is broader since it touches on other important issues, such as the theological style of ecumenical and reconciliatory efforts. The critique could be summarized as follows:

- Manoussakis engages in an ecumenical reconciliatory effort by adopting a comparative approach to re-examine the theophanic theologies of Augustine and Gregory Palamas. The effort as such could have been valuable as a constructive theological contribution to bridging the gap between the Eastern and the Western positions. Unfortunately, the author's passion and enthusiasm for reconciliation resulted in a misinterpretation of both Augustine and Palamas.
- The author suggests a solution to the problem of the discrepancy between the Eastern (Palamite) and the Western (Augustinian) positions which is based on the phenomenological interpretation of von Balthasar's appropriation of the term 'indication'. The problem with the suggested solution is that it seems to misinterpret von Balthasar himself, who appears to be more subtle than the author in terms of his interpretation of the theophanies through a stronger emphasis on divine presence than on mere indication. In addition, the phenomenological interpretation of indication is forced to fit the context of the theophanies to such an extent that its value becomes questionable.
- The suggested reconciliatory approach grants a theological authority to phenomenology which is unsubstantiated. In addition, the purely philosophical employment of phenomenology is underdeveloped and, thus, not convincing.

Given the above, it is highly questionable how well the theological style adopted by John Manoussakis could help to justify his suggested solution to the problem. My impression is that the author offers a subjective personal perspective which is substantially biased on his phenomenological presuppositions and reconciliatory inspirations. If the essay were to be considered as part of a constructive theological exploration, one could probably find some interesting ideas for future research that

<sup>95</sup> Bucur, 'Theophanies and vision of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate*', 92.

could be further elaborated to the extent that could become ecumenically valuable. The problem, however, is that author's pretence of offering a theological solution of great ecumenical value does not fit the exploratory, constructive, and essayistic nature of the suggested study. I do honestly fear that, even though the author claims to write for both Roman Catholic and Orthodox readers, he significantly misjudges the ecumenical and reconciliatory value of his work. There is therefore a real danger that it will not be taken seriously either by Roman Catholic or by Orthodox circles. The chapter and the entire book, however, could help in opening a fruitful discussion about the legitimacy and style of theological reconciliation efforts.



# RECEIVING PALAMAS: THE CASE OF CYPRUS, 1345–71

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The reception of the thought of St Gregory Palamas in a variety of contexts is a growing field of research. Some of the contours of this field are summarized before turning to an interesting test case in the late Byzantine period, namely, the Latin crusader kingdom of Cyprus. In the few extant sources related to the Palamite controversy on Cyprus we glimpse a generous range of both the theological as well as geo-political factors at play in the heat and immediate aftermath of the controversy. These factors are briefly discussed. On the theological level, it is argued that contrary to a certain scholarly trend that tends to see as many types of Palamism as there are Palamites, we in fact find that in spite of a striking diversity of expression, there is an impressive level of coherence among the disciples and defenders of Palamas in these sources, centred on the doctrine of deification. This is, moreover, a coherence that is not so easily found among the anti-Palamites.

## *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

Among the chief purposes of *Analogia* is to discuss key principles of the Christian faith in fruitful dialogue with the problems of contemporary life. One such problem, at once academic and existential, is reception. It is a problem bound up in turn with the issue of interpretation and hermeneutics: *πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις*; ‘how do you read?’ (Luke 10:26). This question has particular significance in the context of these special issues on St Gregory Palamas. One of the ‘battles’ currently taking place in the study of Byzantine and Orthodox theology concerns the manner in which Palamas is received, interpreted, and re-deployed, both historically and in our current environment.<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, there are two—often interrelated—debates at play. The first has to do with the Byzantine reception(s) of Palamas from the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Alexander Beihammer for giving me the opportunity to present some of this material at the *Knighthood, Crusades, and Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean at the Time of King Peter I of Cyprus* conference held in Rome in 2016, and for the precious feedback I received there. I am also grateful to the journal’s readers for their suggestions, and to Tikhon Pino for his helpful comments (and for catching an infelicity). Any remaining errors are my own.

<sup>2</sup> In the previous journal issue of *Analogia*, Tikhon Pino and Normal Russell offered valuable assessments of several contours of this debate: T. Pino, ‘Beyond Neo-Palamism: Interpreting the Legacy of St Gregory Palamas’, *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 3.1 (2017): 53–73, and N. Russell, ‘Inventing Palamism’, *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 3.1 (2017): 75–96.

the Hesychast Controversy in the 1330s to the Fall of Constantinople and the early Ottoman period (primarily in the person of Gennadius Scholarius). The second debate has to do with the twentieth century reception of Palamas, epitomized on the one side by the damning assessment of Roman Catholic Assumptionist, Martin Jugie (who goes so far as to call Palamas' thought a divine punishment<sup>3</sup>), and on the other by the so-called 'neo-Palamite' thought of Orthodox theologians, such as Dimitru Staniloae, Vladimir Lossky, Georges Florovsky, and especially John Meyendorff.

Among the recent trends in this discussion has been the desire to push back against the kinds of easy dichotomies that have long been at work in the reception of Palamas, especially hesychasm vs rationalism/humanism and East vs West.<sup>4</sup> The fact that one did not necessarily have to be in favour of union with the Latin West to be against St Gregory Palamas (e.g. Gregory Akindynos, Nicephorus Gregoras, Gregory Lapithes), and that one could be intellectually—even 'scholastically'—engaged without necessarily betraying the Palamite cause (e.g. St Nicholas Cabasilas, St Mark Eugenikos, Gennadius Scholarius) is indeed an important point to make. It is also helpful in delineating and tackling separately the different theological issues and principles at stake: the essence-energies distinction, for instance, is not itself inherently anti-intellectual, nor was it discussed by Palamas on the basis of an anti-Western agenda. That said, the elision of these categories is not the pure invention of Lossky or Meyendorff. While the sources allow us at times to bracket off one issue from the other, they are also frequently combined by both sides, as we shall see below: it would be foolhardy to ignore this by simply appealing to ecumenical expediency, or the importance of the life of the mind. The Palamite debate very quickly became, already in the fourteenth century, a debate conditioned by both East-West questions and discussions over the relative importance of intellectual pursuit in the Christian life. Not, of course, *controlled* by these, but most certainly *conditioned* by them.

Two further trends in the discussion are worth highlighting by way of introduction, one relevant to Palamas' modern reception, the other to his late medieval reception. The first calls into question the application of terms like 'existential' or 'existentialist' to Palamas' thought, something that had been developed in earnest by Meyendorff.<sup>5</sup> Meyendorff was concerned to prove the contemporary relevance of Palamas, adapting his thought in a 'neo-patristic' vein to the philosophical categories current in his day. He held such an approach in common with other scholars

<sup>3</sup> M. Jugie, 'Palamite (controverse)', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 11.2 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1932), cols. 1777–1818, reference to Palamism as a punishment permitted by God at col. 1817.

<sup>4</sup> Helpful in this regard is M. Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). There is also the 'creativity-fundamentalism' dichotomy discussed in Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 64ff.

<sup>5</sup> Against this, see especially J. Demetracopoulos, *Is Gregory Palamas an Existentialist? The restoration of the true meaning of his comment on Exodus 3,14: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν* (Athens: Parousia, 1996) and also Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 59–63.

of the *ressourcement* such as Jean Daniélou, though his most direct inspiration was doubtless Georges Florovsky's call for a methodology of 'neo-patristic synthesis'. If one wishes to study St Gregory Palamas from a purely historical-critical and/or philological perspective, taking issue with this methodology makes sense: it is a methodology that draws its meaning from theology. But on its own terms as a theological contribution, it is much harder to delegitimise such an approach. Properly understood, one could even argue that Palamas' theology itself, as well as its immediate reception, is an example, in context, of what Florovsky describes as neo-patristic synthesis: summing up, in a creative and relevant way, the theology of the Fathers. Indeed, this methodological label would fit far more comfortably than the highly charged concept of 'development of doctrine' proffered by Pino to describe Palamite thought.<sup>6</sup>

The last trend I will mention here involves the field of 'Palamism after Palamas', that is, the reception of St Gregory Palamas in the Byzantine world. While earlier discussions (led again by Meyendorff) tended to emphasize the ultimate vindication and victory of Palamas' theology across the 'Byzantine commonwealth' by the late fourteenth century ('Hesychast international'), attention has turned to the possibility that Palamas' theology was somehow 'softened', 'modified', or 'transformed' by the Palamites of the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> This is of course not a new trend, having been inaugurated with Jugie's discussion of 'mitigated Palamism'.<sup>8</sup> This perspective takes the surprising position that theologians consciously and openly defending Palamas' legacy—many of whom were his direct disciples—were simultaneously somehow secretly embarrassed by him.<sup>9</sup>

To do justice to the complexity of Palamas' reception, either in the Byzantine period, the modern period, or in between, is beyond the purview of this article.<sup>10</sup> Neither can each of the enumerated 'trends' be adequately treated here. Rather than

<sup>6</sup> See Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 66–69. In fact, the passage from St Philotheos Kokkinos celebrating Palamas' achievement, which Pino cites in support of his use of the category of 'development of doctrine' is practically a description of neo-patristic synthesis as understood by Florovsky: according to Kokkinos, Palamas is 'seen to synthesize', 'with great understanding and freedom', all that the Fathers had done before him: cited in Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 67. There seems little reason, as Pino does, to elide the concept of a Palamite gathering together, explication (*ἀνάπτυξις*), clarification, or synthesis of doctrine, with the concept of doctrinal 'unfolding' or 'development'.

<sup>7</sup> See especially J. Demetracopoulos, 'Palamas Transformed: Palamite interpretations of the distinction 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.

<sup>8</sup> Jugie, 'Palamite (controversie)', cols. 1795–1802.

<sup>9</sup> The sticking point is generally seen to be the question of whether the essence-energies distinction is a 'real' distinction or simply a 'conceptual' one. More work on this is called for, though see the suggestions in A. Lévy, 'Lost in translation? *Diakrisis kat'epinoian* as a main issue in the discussions between fourteenth-century Palamites and Thomists', *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 431–71, and N. 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. C. Athanasopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 190–98.

<sup>10</sup> See the helpful summary of the historical reception of Palamas in M. Plested, 'Gregory Palamas', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. K. Parry (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015): 293–305.



offer a sweeping assessment, I propose to shine a light on a limited but significant set of texts from the mid-fourteenth century that form a certain microcosm of the Palamite debate, perhaps even a test case for understanding the reception of Palamas more broadly. These texts are all related to the island of Cyprus—at that time a Latin crusader kingdom outside the direct control of Constantinople—and are composed in the heat of the controversy and its immediate aftermath (1345–71). Focusing on a circumscribed area and timeframe such as this allows us to pay closer attention to the arguments of the sources themselves. More than this, Cyprus proves an interesting test case because if anti-Palamism were to have succeeded anywhere, it ought to have been on Cyprus, given both the geopolitical factors at play and the status of the island as a kind of sanctuary for anti-Palamite intellectuals at least until the early fifteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

On the basis of the insights gleaned from these sources, broader (albeit tentative) conclusions can be drawn as to the question of Palamas' reception. The documents of chief concern for our enquiry are the correspondence from the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos to the Cypriot anti-Palamite George Lapithes (dated by Hero to 1345–48);<sup>12</sup> the letter of the pro-Palamite Joseph Kalothetos to certain monks of Cyprus who had petitioned for information regarding the controversy (dated by Tsames to 1346–47);<sup>13</sup> a synodal letter of Patriarch Kallistos from 1361/2 to Cypriot clergy and nobles;<sup>14</sup> and the letter of John VI Kantakouzenos (then monk Joasaph) to Bishop John of Karpasia dated by Darrouzès to 1370/71.<sup>15</sup> It will be argued that the texts defending Palamas' thought and the essence-energy distinction (Kalothetos and Kantakouzenos), while rather distinct in their expressions and approaches, nonetheless share a fundamental theological coherence centred on the possibility and reality of deification. It will be concluded that this unifying coherence among the Palamites is too often overlooked by scholars who, for one reason or another, wish to create

<sup>11</sup> I am consciously using the term 'anti-Palamism' here and elsewhere to describe the thought of the adversaries of Palamas. Russell seems to suggest that these adversaries 'referred simply to his "innovations" or his "heresy"' rather than resorting to the use of slurs like 'Palamite' or 'Palamism': Russell, 'Inventing Palamism', 75. This, however, is not the case. While Jugie may have invented 'Palamism' in a certain sense, Palamas' opponents were quite happy to attack τὰ Παλάμια ('Palamite doctrines') and ἡ Παλαμιτική μανία ('the Palamite madness'), just as Palamas and his disciples were happy to anathematize the 'Barlaamites' and 'Akindynists': see, for instance, Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 62.228, 70.27 in A. C. Hero, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983), 262, 286, and John Cyparissiotis, *Orations against Nil Cabasilas* 4.4.118–19.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 42, 46, 47, 60, pp. 174–87, 194–203, 242–47.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4, in Δ. Γ. Τσάμης [Tsames], ed., *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου συγγράμματα* (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Research, 1980), 385–94. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Darrouzès, ed., *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople* I.V (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1977), No. 2443, 370–72. The text of the letter remains, to my knowledge, unedited, but I am grateful to the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies and its director Professor Symeon Paschalidis for kindly giving me access to the microfilm copy of MS Athon. Stauronik. 62 f. 295–298 in which the letter is found.

<sup>15</sup> In J. Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène relative à la controverse palamite', *Revue des études byzantines* 17 (1959): 7–27 (Greek text of letter at 15–21).

the impression of a virtual theological free-for-all among the partisans of St Gregory Palamas. On the pivotal issues of sanctification and deification, however, there is a clear and united front that has no obvious counterpart amongst the anti-Palamites.

*Cyprus in the Late Byzantine Theological Landscape*

In terms of the direct and active role of Cyprus in late Byzantine theology, several figures, documents, and events have been emphasized in secondary scholarship.<sup>16</sup> Given the status of the island as a Crusader Kingdom from 1192–1489, an overarching theme is, of course, East-West relations.<sup>17</sup> Most of the examples serve as a commentary of one kind or another on this larger question. There is, for instance, the incident of the thirteen monks of Kantara martyred as heretics by the Latins in 1231, an event which fuelled at the time and continues to fuel a certain ideological and even theological stance among the Cypriot Orthodox vis-à-vis Roman Catholicism. Or, conversely, there is the treatise by George Lapithes (whose name will emerge again below) on the seven sacraments. This treatise, influenced by the Latin enumeration and explanation of the sacraments, became popular in the Byzantine theological world into the early modern period.<sup>18</sup> By contrast to the incident of the thirteen monks, here we find a counter-example for those who would rather emphasize the shared theological and (to some extent) liturgical heritage of East and West. Another would be the importing of the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin from the Byzantine rite via Cyprus to the West.

Beyond the incident of the thirteen martyrs and a few curiosities of liturgical history, the theological place of Cyprus in the late medieval period is rarely discussed. An exception to this is the life and work of St Neophytos the Recluse residing near Paphos, who died in 1214. His fame and writings were disseminated beyond Cyprus, and the unique iconographic program in his enclosure (*enkleistra*) continues to be of tremendous interest to Byzantine art historians.<sup>19</sup> Further into the thirteenth century, the figure of Patriarch Gregory II, or Gregory of Cyprus, is of no little significance. Famous as the anti-unionist Patriarch who rejected the Union

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, H. J. Magoulas, 'A study in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox relations on the island of Cyprus between the years A.D. 1196 and 1360', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.1 (1964): 75–106; B. Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus, 4th–20th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), esp. 213–20; C. Schabel, 'Religion', in *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191–1374*, eds. A. Nicolaou-Konnari and C. Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 157–218.

<sup>17</sup> The institutional subjugation of the Greek Church to the Latin during this period is a tragic tale, but one which we cannot deal with here in detail. For more, see esp. Magoulas, 'A study'. Schabel's revisionist account of Greek-Latin relations 'on the ground' (Schabel, 'Religion') does not affect the facts of the real institutional emaciation of the Orthodox on Cyprus under the Latins.

<sup>18</sup> On which, see Englezakis, *Church of Cyprus*, 218.

<sup>19</sup> See C. A. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of St Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 119–206; Englezakis, *Church of Cyprus*, 97–211; and C. Galatoriotou, *The making of a Saint: The life, times and sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

of Lyons (and whose thought was taken up by several Palamites), his ties to the Kingdom of Cyprus, where he was initially educated, remain understudied.<sup>20</sup>

Another person to mention as we come to our main topic is a figure who becomes a hero of the Hesychast movement, namely St Gregory of Sinai (died 1346). His link to Cyprus is small yet intriguing. In his *vita*, composed by the Palamite Patriarch St Kallistos I, he recounts how Gregory, after having been ransomed from captivity at Laodikeia in Syria, sails to Cyprus and becomes the apprentice of a seasoned ascetic there, becoming a rasophore (novice) monk on Cyprus. He does not stay long, and settles into monastic life not on Cyprus, but at Sinai.<sup>21</sup> This would be near the end of the thirteenth century. However, Kallistos records a detail here worth pondering, namely that a certain 'Leo the Cypriot', a learned ascetic who had emigrated to Constantinople, had written glowingly about Gregory's piety and sweet nature.<sup>22</sup>

There is a significance here that begins to open onto the issue of the role of Cyprus in the Palamite Controversy. In a letter written in the summer of 1346 to the Cypriot George Lapithes, the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos urges him to send out more treatises against Palamas, explaining that Lapithes could safely do so via his Cypriot compatriots who reside in Constantinople, who are all treated as fervent anti-Palamites.<sup>23</sup> Cyprus is considered by Akindynos to be a bastion against Palamism, and he perceives it as a base from which anti-Palamite thought can easily be copied and disseminated across the region. What is interesting, however, is that one of the Cypriots at Constantinople that Akindynos assumes is part of the anti-Palamite network is a certain 'Leo'. Is the Leo mentioned by St Kallistos the same as the Leo mentioned by Akindynos? The *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP) equates these two otherwise unknown Cypriot Leos, and there seems little reason not to do so.<sup>24</sup> However, it raises an interesting hermeneutical question. If these two Leos are one and the same, what is the relationship of Leo the Cypriot to the Palamite question? On the one hand, he is recorded as having written a glowing description of St Gregory of Sinai, an ardent practitioner and teacher of Hesychast principles, and on the other as being a safe recipient for the anti-Palamite discourses of George Lapithes. Is there a contradiction here? Perhaps in 1346 Leo the Cypriot was undecided regarding the Palamite affair, or perhaps (like Akindynos) he dissociated the monastic practices and experiences of the Hesychasts from Palamas' teaching on the divine energies, accepting the first but rejecting the second. Or perhaps Akindynos was assuming

<sup>20</sup> For more on Gregory of Cyprus, see A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus* (1283–89) (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), esp. 37–61.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the life of St Gregory of Sinai, see D. Balfour, 'Saint Gregory of Sinai's Life Story and Spiritual Profile', *Theologia* 53.1 (1982): 30–62 and idem., 'Was St Gregory Palamas St Gregory the Sinaite's Pupil?', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28 (1984): 115–30.

<sup>22</sup> The entry for 'Leo the Cypriot' in the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP) is 14772, in vol. 6, 172.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 60, 242–47.

<sup>24</sup> PLP 14772, vol. 6, 172.

that Leo's Cypriot background was enough to make an ally of someone who was not an ally after all. We can only conjecture, although by 1351 Nicephorus Gregoras tells Lependrinus on Cyprus that he no longer wishes to correspond with Leo as their friendship had cooled, perhaps indicating that by then Leo had definitively sided with the pro-Palamas camp.<sup>25</sup> In any case, whatever we are seeing in the case of Leo the Cypriot, it gives us insight into the kind of problems of interpretation that face any scholar of the Hesychast and/or Palamite Controversy, to which we turn.

### *The Initial Controversy*

Before engaging more directly with my chosen texts, it might be worth offering by way of context a brief summary of the issues at stake in the Hesychast debates. As Sinkewicz pointed out some time ago, the initial theological issue that sparked the controversy in the late 1330s was not monastic practice, or theories regarding the light of the Transfiguration, still less Greek versus Latin thought, but the concept of the knowledge of God, which escalated rapidly to the concept of sanctification.<sup>26</sup> Barlaam of Calabria and Gregory Palamas had both written against the Latin doctrine of the *filioque*, but Palamas was dissatisfied with the basis on which Barlaam had rejected it, namely an extreme form of apophaticism that ruled out any positive knowledge of God. From this spark, the debate escalated to matters of monastic practice and experience: Barlaam equated the Athonite spirituality of his day with Messalianism and mocked the alleged visions of divine light experienced by the ascetics. The debate was now to be dominated by the question of sanctification.

Palamas served as a key representative of the Athonite cause, arguing that Barlaam was attacking the very foundations of Christian belief and practice. He maintained that the sanctification experienced by Christian ascetics was God himself present to the believer through his own uncreated activity or energy (*ἐνέργεια*). Its end result was the deification (*θέωσις*) of the human being to an equality with God by grace. This uncreated energy of God that rendered human beings divine was not identical, argued Palamas, with the imparticipable divine essence (*οὐσία*) itself, even if it was properly inseparable from the divine essence and thus could be termed 'natural' or 'essential'. This deifying energy was identical to the glory and light of God, made manifest through the person of Christ to the disciples at the Transfiguration on Tabor, and subsequently to the saints down the ages.

This is the bare bones of Palamas' position, spelled out in detail early on in his *Triads* (1338–40), the *Tomos of the Holy Mountain* (1340), and then throughout his writings until his death in 1359. What is important to emphasize is that his thought

<sup>25</sup> Nikephoros Gregoras, *Letter* 44, 2.155.

<sup>26</sup> R. Sinkewicz, 'The doctrine of the knowledge of God in the early writings of Barlaam the Calabrian', *Medieval Studies* 44 (1982): 181–242.

hinges on the possibility and meaning of sanctification and specifically deification, and it is on this basis that the essence-energy distinction is elaborated.<sup>27</sup>

*Gregory Akindynos' Correspondence with George Lapithes*

We turn now to the texts in question, beginning with the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos (ca. 1300–48), who was at first a mediator between Barlaam and Palamas, but later an enemy of both.<sup>28</sup> His extant correspondence is an extremely valuable source both for the controversy and the figures involved. One such figure, the Cypriot George Lapithes, was the recipient of several letters between 1345–48, though none of his replies to Akindynos or his other anti-Palamite works have survived.<sup>29</sup> What is clear from this correspondence is that Lapithes is perceived as a leader among the anti-Palamites, even an organizing force. He has not only reproached the 'great minds' of Constantinople for not speaking out against Palamas (he is thinking primarily of Nikephoros Gregoras, who will eventually take on the mantle for the anti-Palamites), but even Akindynos himself for speaking too feebly in opposition. There is evidently frustration in Lapithes' mind that Cyprus is not in a closer orbit of ecclesiastical influence.

We glimpse in the letters of 1345–46 a moment of excited opportunity for Akindynos and his sympathizers. He has finally won the support of Patriarch John Calecas and is counting up his allies, although his sense of victory will be short lived. He indulges in an interesting rhetoric of widespread anti-Palamism, boasting amongst others in the support of Cyprus (most particularly in the person of the philosopher Lapithes). Interestingly, in a letter to Nikephoros Gregoras at this time he praises Lapithes as a bastion against both Palamism and 'Latin profane new-fangled talk'.<sup>30</sup> Akindynos remained anti-Latin in the midst of his anti-Palamite diatribes, and seems to have known Lapithes to be likeminded.

It is hard to make any firm judgments on the reception of Palamas on the island of Cyprus at this point, except that treatises and correspondence regarding the controversy were flowing back and forth from a relatively early stage and, as mentioned above, it was, at least assumed by Akindynos, to be a haven for anti-Palamism. The intellectual exchange between Cyprus and Constantinople, particularly via elusive learned Cypriots living in the capital, such as Leo the Cypriot discussed earlier (and Akindynos also mentions a Bartholomew, a Kosmas, and a Blassios<sup>31</sup>), is intrigu-

<sup>27</sup> For more on the importance of this emphasis, see A. Torrance, 'Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers', *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009), 47–70.

<sup>28</sup> For detailed sympathetic discussion of Akindynos, see J. Nadal Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006) and idem., 'Le rôle de Grégoire Akindynos dans la controverse hésychaste du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle à Byzance', in *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, ed. H. P. Monferrer-Sala (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2007), 31–58.

<sup>29</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 42, 46, 47, 60; 174–87, 194–203, 242–47.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 44.56–69, 190–93.

<sup>31</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 60, 244–45.

ing. Another figure among Akindynos' supporters is the Cypriot Hyakinthos, an anti-Palamite elected metropolitan of Thessaloniki in 1345, the predecessor to the see of none other than St Gregory Palamas himself.<sup>32</sup> Are there firm grounds to elaborate a type of anti-Palamite theological network among Cypriot intellectuals by the mid-1340s? This is at least the impression Akindynos wants to make, though to establish it beyond doubt would require further work.

However we deal with the patchy history to be gleaned from Akindynos, Cyprus itself was supplied with a resident anti-Palamite spokesperson, George Lapithes. What was the theological content of his anti-Palamism? One can only assume that his major arguments are similar to those of Akindynos, outlined briefly in *Letter* 42 to Lapithes and in an accompanying anti-Palamite treatise.<sup>33</sup> The main and recurring charge of the anti-Palamites was that the single and undivided Godhead had been cut up into a multitude of countless 'divinities' (θεότητες) via the doctrine of divine energies. This was perceived as a new polytheism, or a species of ditheism (Akindynos also added, like Barlaam before him, the charge of Messalianism to Palamas and his followers). The language of 'higher' (τὸ ὑπερκείμενον) and 'lower' (τὸ ὑφείμενον) in God on any level was repeatedly attacked as execrable.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, for Akindynos the divine energies such as divine life, wisdom, goodness were either simply identical with the one divine essence, or in the context of sanctification, they appear as identical to the Son and/or Holy Spirit (never, that is, a *tertium quid*). Deification, in other words, seems to have a place in his thought, even if, in my opinion, it is rather muted and undeveloped (if not confused). He likewise has a concept of created grace (linked especially to the sacraments), which prepares for, but is not the same as, the deification given by the Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

Without imputing all of Akindynos' views to Lapithes, we can nevertheless be confident that the basic thrust of their anti-Palamism was similar, and revolved around the concern that Palamas was 'cutting up' the one deity into innumerable 'di-

<sup>32</sup> For more on the figure of the anti-Palamite Hyakinthos of Thessaloniki, see K. Π. Κύρρης [Kyres], 'Ὁ Κύπριος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης Ὑάκινθος καὶ ὁ ρόλος τοῦ εἰς τὸν ἀντιπαλαμῖτικὸν ἀγῶνα' ['The Cypriot Archbishop of Thessaloniki Hyakinthos and his role in the antipalamite struggle'], *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 25 (1961): 89–122. See also idem., 'Ἡ Κύπρος καὶ τὸ Ἡσυχαστικὸν ζήτημα κατὰ τὸν XIV αἰῶνα' ['Cyprus and the Hesychast question in the fourteenth century'], *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 26 (1962): 19–32.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 42, 174–87. We do not know which of his anti-Palamite treatises Akindynos sent to Lapithes.

<sup>34</sup> One could almost call it Akindynos' hobby-horse. In a letter to Akindynos early on in the controversy, Palamas may have made reference to the idea of lower and higher divinity in a relative manner with regard to divine energy (participable and thus 'lower') and essence (imparticipable and thus 'higher'). Akindynos refused to interpret this reference as anything other than a thoroughgoing polytheism or dith-eism. For the version of the epistle with this statement, and discussion, see J. Nadal Cañellas, 'La rédaction première de la *Troisième lettre de Palamas à Akindynos*', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 40 (1974), 233–85. For recent further discussion of this epistle, see the collected articles on the topic edited by K. Heyden in *Studia Patristica* 96 (2017), 507–46.

<sup>35</sup> The issue of sanctification and deification in the thought of Akindynos is briefly discussed in J. Nadal Cañellas, 'Gregorio Akindynos', in *La Théologie Byzantine et sa Tradition*, eds. C. G. Conticello and V. Conticello, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 189–314; at 241–50.



vinities'. Akindynos clearly saw Cyprus as a bastion for his cause, and even appears to be making plans to flee there if the going gets too tough for him in the capital.<sup>36</sup> Not all the Cypriots, however, were necessarily on his side.

*Joseph Kalothetos' Letter to Certain Monks of Cyprus*

If an alliance of sorts among Cypriot intellectuals had developed in favour of Akindynos and against Palamas, this was not the end of the story. According to the dating of Tsames, in 1346 or 1347 the ardently pro-Palamite monk Joseph Kalothetos was approached by some monks of Cyprus and asked to give a concise account of Palamite doctrine.<sup>37</sup> Kalothetos was a disciple of Palamas and had become a monk first at Esphigmenou monastery on Mount Athos before eventually becoming the superior of a monastery in Constantinople. His interlocutors from Cyprus were evidently confused by the debate, having no doubt heard the kinds of arguments reflected in Akindynos' correspondence with Lapithes. They wanted to hear the other side, and Kalothetos obliged with what Tsames describes as the 'most beautiful' letter of the collection.<sup>38</sup>

The letter begins with an appeal to following the saints, and argues that if these were to be followed with a rigorous, pious, and upright life, then the issue at hand (namely, the teaching on the divine energies) would be known to us quickly. He will speak to them, he goes on, regarding the natural and essential energies of God (τῶν φυσικῶν...καὶ οὐσιωδῶν ἐνεργειῶν) and similarly 'about the divine light that shone forth on Mount Tabor'.<sup>39</sup>

He argues that one must revere the three divine and uncreated persons, the divine and uncreated essence, and the common divine and uncreated energy of the uncreated essence, such as wisdom, goodness, power, providence, and foreknowledge.<sup>40</sup> As a faithful disciple of Palamas, he introduces the doctrine of the two wills and energies in Christ (divine and human) promulgated at the sixth ecumenical council. He does so both to reinforce a sense of patristic precedence and to argue that the divine energies must be uncreated: 'for all that is of the divinity is uncreated, and all that is of the humanity is created'.<sup>41</sup>

He turns briefly to the light of Tabor, emphasizing that this divine light can neither be an essence nor a creature. Rather, the saints called this light 'a natural glory of God, effulgence, grace, energy, Holy Spirit, chrism, seal, divinity, unapproachable light and diverse other names'.<sup>42</sup> He then continues on to address the

<sup>36</sup> *Letter* 42.182–86, 184–185.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4, 385–94. It is discussed in Tsames, 354–56.

<sup>38</sup> Tsames, ed., *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου*, 354.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.4, 386.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.5, 386.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.6, 387.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.7, 387.

anti-Palamites more directly and attempts to call them out on their own ambiguous and imprecise positions. His opponents state that they only glorify the Holy Trinity and its uncreated essence, whereas any divine energy (including the light of Tabor) is created.<sup>43</sup> But when confronted with the divine energies as uncreated in Scripture, such as divine power and wisdom, they say that the essence and energy are identical, not ‘divided undividedly’ or ‘united dividedly’ (Palamas’ position), but simply completely the same.<sup>44</sup>

Kalothetos is in fact playing on the conflicts within anti-Palamite thought to bolster his case. Once they are ‘stuffed full’ of the testimonies of the saints regarding the distinction between the unnameable and transcendent divine essence and the nameable divine energies, they will say that the Son and the Holy Spirit are energies, which is absurd, or they will propose that the pure partake of the essence of God. When in turn the ‘voices of the theologians’ crowd them out on this point, they will argue that the saints participate in a creature. Notice that it is the concept of deification that serves as the hinge for Kalothetos’ argument. Rather than offer a clear doctrine of sanctification and deification, the anti-Palamites are ultimately happy, he says, to shift from one argument to another, because their goal is not to articulate truth but ‘by treachery to deceive the simple’.<sup>45</sup> In juxtaposing entangled intellectuals and the simplicity of the saints, he is composing a tune that all sides would play, but especially the Palamites.

Having extolled the straightforward and universal witness of the Fathers, and before supplying the standard florilegium of patristic quotations to back up his position, Kalothetos moves on to a more involved theological argument, in paragraphs 9 and 10. This is perhaps the most interesting section because he wholeheartedly uses several terms that constantly triggered the anti-Palamites. In particular, he defends the use of the terms higher/superior (*τὸ ὑπερκείμενον*) and lower/inferior (*τὸ ὑφείμενον*) with regard to God:

The essence of God is said to be ‘higher’, his energy what is ‘lower’...The essence is ‘higher’ according to the principle of cause, of being imparticipable, unnameable, having existence of itself. Again, the energy is said to be ‘lower’ as what is caused, participable, nameable, as not having existence of itself but existing in the essence. The energy is rightly called ‘divinity’ (*θεότης*) by the saints...The essence is also called divinity, but inexactly and not in a proper sense (*καταχρηστικῶς καὶ οὐ κυρίως*).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> This is Barlaam’s position.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.8, 387.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.8, 388.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.9, 388.

He continues in paragraph 10 with even stronger language:

There is, in short, the lower principle and the higher principle and both are named divinities (καὶ τῶν δύο λεγομένων θεοτήτων). While two divinities are named homonymously, yet there is one divinity, insofar as they are united, both the essence and the energy, and [the distinction between higher and lower is maintained] because the natural energy is from the essence, not the essence from the energy.<sup>47</sup>

Kalothetos is living dangerously here. On the one hand, by using the language of higher, lower, and even 'divinities' (or 'Godheads') in the plural in a positive manner, he was supplying fuel to the anti-Palamite fire. On the other hand, he evidently perceives a real need to address the charges regarding these terms that were no doubt being levelled as a constant refrain against Palamas on Cyprus. The fact remains, however, that even St Gregory Palamas tended to be more guarded in his language.<sup>48</sup> Whether Kalothetos' explanation for the use of such terms would satisfy his audience is unclear. He clearly interprets the terms in a manner that precludes, to his mind, any ditheistic or polytheistic implications. Divine energy is, by definition, not a 'substance' with independent existence, but it is thereby also undividedly distinguishable from substance or essence. The divine essence is 'higher' than the energy in the sense of being the unnameable 'cause' of nameable energy. The word 'divinity' or 'Godhead' itself, being a divine name, must properly speaking refer to energy rather than the unnameable essence,<sup>49</sup> even if Kalothetos then awkwardly introduces the language of two 'divinities' or 'Godheads', before pulling back to apply the term 'one divinity/Godhead' to the whole (essence and energy). One can assume that the mere use of these terms would be considered sufficiently damning in the eyes of Akindynos' sympathizers such as Lapithes. While indeed providing, as he had promised, a succinct and useful summary of the Palamite position, Kalothetos' occasional exuberance of theological expression doubtless played into anti-Palamite hands.

### *St Kallistos I and John Kantakouzenos*

Our knowledge regarding the relationship between Cyprus and the Palamite Controversy after the unexpected death of Akindynos in 1347–48 is rather scant. What is clear is that Cyprus continued to serve as a haven for anti-Palamite intel-

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.10, 388.

<sup>48</sup> A direct response by Palamas to the charge of propagating a theory of two 'higher' and 'lower' divinities/Godheads via the essence-energy distinction can be found in his *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 3.19, 3:220–223.

<sup>49</sup> This was already a key argument made by St Gregory of Nyssa against the Eunomians, on which see Torrance, 'Precedents', 64–65.

lectuals and churchmen in the decades that followed. Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch, Metropolitan Cyril of Side, and Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyr all take refuge there in the midst of questions regarding their fidelity to the Palamite cause. We cannot, however, precisely reconstruct their theological positions. The clearest anti-Palamite text attributed to one of these, a letter purportedly sent by Metropolitan Cyril to his *chartophylax* at Side, is recorded in the patriarchal register of Constantinople in 1359/1360.<sup>50</sup> However, under the patriarchate of St Philotheos Kokkinos, this text is declared a forgery by the synod and Cyril is posthumously rehabilitated in 1364/1365.<sup>51</sup> That said, there is a rather consistent unease on the part of the patriarchate regarding the anti-Palamite potential of refugee bishops on Cyprus.

An important example of this is the letter of St Kallistos I (died 1363) to the Cypriot clergy and nobility.<sup>52</sup> It was written in late 1361 or early 1362, and concerns at once the efforts of the papal legate Peter Thomas (soon to become Latin patriarch of Constantinople) to win the island over to obedience to the Roman Church, as well as the arrival on the island of the anti-Palamite Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyre. It is an illuminating instance of the intertwining of anti-Latin and anti-Palamite sentiments among the Palamites. The chief sentiment of the letter is anti-Latin, but it moves easily to an attack on Barlaam and Akindynos, with a warning against welcoming Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyre who had fled for refuge to Cyprus on being condemned by the synod as an Akindynist. The Barlaamites and Akindynists are sharers in the doctrines of the Latins, says Kallistos, and further claims that all their members in Constantinople had colluded with the papal legate when he was there. The episode with Arsenios of Tyre evidently gave the patriarchate the perception that Cyprus had become a dangerous sanctuary for anti-Palamites. Whether he also had in mind the anti-Palamite Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch, who had resided on Cyprus during the reign of Hugh IV, is unclear, but there is no direct record of animosity between Kallistos and Ignatius.<sup>53</sup>

That Cyprus served as an intellectual outpost for anti-Palamites from the 1340s until at least the 1370s if not the early 1400s is clear, though what that meant for theology ‘on the ground’ is far harder to reconstruct. Continuing anxieties regarding the dissemination of anti-Palamite thought on Cyprus was enough for the former emperor John Kantakouzenos (c. 1292–1383), by then monk Joasaph, to send a dogmatic letter and copies of his pro-Palamite *Antirrhetics* against Prochoros Cydones to Bishop John of Karpasia in around 1370/1371.<sup>54</sup> By now, Palamas’ legacy had been liturgically enshrined at Constantinople (his official canonization took

<sup>50</sup> No. 248, in J. Koder, M. Hinterberger, O. Kresten, eds., *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, CFHB 19/3 (Vienna, 2001), 446–50.

<sup>51</sup> No. 247, *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, CFHB 19/3, 442–46.

<sup>52</sup> Darrouzès, ed., *Les Regestes*, No. 2443, 370–72.

<sup>53</sup> See G. Grivaud, ‘Literature’, in Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, eds., *Cyprus*, 219–84; at 233.

<sup>54</sup> The Greek text of Kantakouzenos’ letter can be found in Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 15–21.

place in 1368), but the ideological battle evidently still continued. Kantakouzenos' letter can almost be considered a 'pre-emptive strike' since his main order of business is to refute a set of theses written by the anti-Palamites that have, he has heard, been copied and sent to Cyprus.<sup>55</sup>

Kantakouzenos' letter begins with a historical summary of the Palamite controversy from Kantakouzenos' perspective, mentioning several more anti-Palamites who had fled to Cyprus.<sup>56</sup> He utilizes a classic Palamite comparison between the anti-Palamites and the Arians of old: just as the latter accused St Basil the Great and St Gregory the Theologian of tritheism for worshipping the Holy Trinity, so too the former 'accuse and charge us as polytheists for saying that just as the nature of God is uncreated and uncircumscribed, so also the energy of this blessed essence is uncreated and uncircumscribed'.<sup>57</sup> He goes on to address a series of nineteen specific accusations against the Palamites.

His approach is particularly interesting given what we have seen in Kalothetos' letter to Cypriot monks. Whereas Kalothetos unabashedly uses the language that anti-Palamites found so problematic (divinities, higher and lower in God, as well as divine 'energies' in the plural), Kantakouzenos avoids all these. He talks exclusively of God's *ἐνέργεια* in the singular: there is 'one nature, one power, one energy, one divinity'.<sup>58</sup> He repeatedly anathematizes anti-Palamite slurs like 'lower/inferior divinities' (*ὑφειμέναι θεότητες*), but does not make any effort in doing so to appropriate or explain the Palamite use of some of the underlying terms (which, of course, were never used in this combination even by Kalothetos). Kantakouzenos is content with disowning the slurs and repeatedly affirming the inseparability of the divine essence and energy. This diplomatic approach extends even to offering no Palamite alternative to the accusation that God's energy is self-subsistent as visible light. He simply anathematizes this position without discussing the Palamite view of the light of Tabor. His careful language gave Jugie the impression of a softened or even modified Palamism here.<sup>59</sup> Darrouzès disagrees and views the letter, as a whole, as a work more of diplomacy than theology.<sup>60</sup> Both, in other words, wish to distance us

<sup>55</sup> It might be worth noting that the recipient, John of Karpasia, appears to surface only here in the Greek sources and is thus said by Darrouzès and others to be otherwise unknown. However, Schabel mentions him as having lost a case in the early 1360s to the Latin bishop Leodegar of Famagusta regarding the pastoral care of Syrian (Melkite) Christians in his diocese, with Pierre Thomas arbitrating: see Schabel, 'Religion', 170. Perhaps bishop John of Karpasia's biography is worth revisiting.

<sup>56</sup> They are Antouemes the Coubouclarios, Anthony of Tyre (who had briefly become patriarch of Antioch before being deposed) and, at the time of writing, a certain monk named Anthony Colybas: Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 17.

<sup>57</sup> Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 17.

<sup>58</sup> Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 18 (anathema 8). For Palamas' own discussion of the issue of singular and plural for the divine energy, an issue to which he was sensitive, see his *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 68, ed. and trans. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 162–63.

<sup>59</sup> Jugie, 'Palamite (controverse)', col. 1796.

<sup>60</sup> Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 14.

from the idea that the contents of the letter might be understood as a true reflection of Palamite theology.

If anything, however, I would contend that such assessments reflect the ‘divide and conquer’ mentality among certain scholars who, through a form of hyper-contextualization of the sources, end up proposing nearly as many forms of Palamite theology as there are Palamites. Differences in modes of expression or emphasis need not imply differences in underlying theology. Let us consider a selection from Kantakouzenos’ nineteen anathemas to get a better impression of this:

- 1) For they say that we actually glorify two divinities in God, one essence and another non-essence, to which I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we glorify one divinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 2) Again they say that together with the persons (*hypostases*) of the Holy Trinity, we worship other divinities, to which I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we worship one divinity in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

In these two anathemas Kantakouzenos disowns the language of ‘divinities’. But even Kalothetos’ brief foray into this territory is not necessarily at odds with the monk-emperor’s position. Let us not forget that Kalothetos, in the passage cited above, ends his argument with a clarificatory emphasis that ‘there is one divinity’, and he certainly never suggests that Christians worship multiple divinities. Kantakouzenos’ language here is not, in other words, a ‘modification’ of the theology of the Palamites. He goes on:

- 4) Again they say that we worship uncreated gods of infinite number, inferior (*ὑφειμέντοι*) and issuing (*προιόντας*) from the essence of God, which we properly call gods and divinities: and I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 6) Again they say that we glorify the visible, natural energy of God, subsisting of itself as light: let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we glorify the natural energy of God that does not subsist of itself, but is inseparable from the essence of God, uncreated and uncircumscribed.
- 7) Again they say that we call the uncreated and natural energy of God a different nature (*ἐτεροφυής*) and unlike and lower to an infinitely infinite degree, anhypostatic and non-existent, being to the nature what the Son is to the Father and the Holy Spirit: and I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we say that the uncreated natural energy of God exists inseparably in the nature and that wherever there is the nature, there also is the energy, and wherever the energy, there also the nature.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 18.



As before, Kantakouzenos is disowning the specific use of certain terms, usages that are in fact universally rejected by the Palamites. Kalothetos' particular theological use of the terms 'inferior' and 'divinities', as we saw above, is not put to the service of calling the divine energies 'inferior gods or divinities' that are independently subsistent and worshipped in themselves. In anathema seven, Kantakouzenos is deploying the logic of the sixth ecumenical council, something that is again common to all the Palamites. Consider two further anathemas, each conveying a classic Palamite concern:

14) Again they say that we call effects (*ἀποτελέσματα*) uncreated: let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we say that the effects are creatures (*κτίσματα*), receiving a beginning to their existence: but the power that works these effects is uncreated (*ἡ δὲ δύναμις ἡ ταῦτα ποιήσασά ἐστιν ἄναρχος*).

15) Again they say that we consider the deified body of the Lord—the partaking of which renders us even now communicants of the divine nature—not to be sanctified and deified by that same divinity which sanctified the body nailed to the cross, but by some other non-essential and lower divinity. I say to those who think thus: anathema. Rather we say that that same divine power and divinity which sanctified the body taken from the Virgin, which is forever found to be holy, the same is that which sanctifies the blessed bread and the blessed cup and changes the bread into the same body of the Lord and the fruit of the vine into his same precious blood: and we believe that these things are the precious body and blood of Christ and not another; and whoever is not born again of water and spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, and whoever does not eat of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ and drink his blood, is unable to inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>63</sup>

The distinction between uncreated divine energy or power and its created effects is nothing novel from a Palamite perspective. Kantakouzenos' words are taken practically verbatim from Palamas himself.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the sacramental backdrop of Palamite spirituality is not out of the ordinary.<sup>65</sup>

The last 'anathema' I wish to consider is perhaps the most interesting in that Kantakouzenos does not actually anathematize the position in question. It reads:

<sup>63</sup> Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 19–20.

<sup>64</sup> St Gregory Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 140, 244–45. It is important to clarify here that both Palamas and Kantakouzenos are referring to the created effects of God's activity/energy in a general way. When speaking specifically of deification, there was a limited way in which the *ἀποτέλεσμα* or 'effect' of God's deifying grace could be understood by Palamas to be uncreated (*ἄκτιστος*), inasmuch as the deified saints can rightly be said to become uncreated by grace: see St Gregory Palamas, *Epistle 3 to Akindynos* [Letter 5], 1:308. On the whole, however, this particular argument regarding the term *ἀποτέλεσμα* is rare in Palamas' writings.

<sup>65</sup> On the sacramental dimension of St Gregory Palamas' thought, see G. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

17) Again they say that we consider that which is prepared by God for the saints to be uncreated. In fact, though liars in all things, they have spoken truly on this point, for this is indeed our thinking. They are undone by their own words, however, since in accusing us of this they profess to find satisfaction in some creature. For us, because we have been taught and learned from Christ that he himself is the inheritance of the elect, and of the apostle Paul, that the saints become inheritors of God and co-inheritors of Christ, it follows necessarily that the inheritance of the elect is uncreated. Thus the blasphemy falls on their own head.<sup>66</sup>

The fact that Kantakouzenos gladly takes ownership of this position on behalf of the Palamites tells us something of its centrality to the overall cause. It should come as no surprise that it involves the themes of sanctification and ultimately of deification, themes with which the whole controversy had opened. The monk-emperor might indeed be considered diplomatic and sensitive with regard to certain of his formulations, scrupulously avoiding terms and concepts that would require further elaboration, such as divine ‘energies’ in the plural, the nature of the light of Tabor, higher and lower in God, and the use of the term ‘divinities’. This is to be expected given the text’s genre. Yet there was still something that remained utterly non-negotiable: the eschatological promise of deification, which, by definition, involved for the Palamites a real sharing and communion in the uncreated divine life.<sup>67</sup>

### *Conclusion*

From these few texts directed to the island of Cyprus during the Palamite Controversy we are given a glimpse, perhaps even a microcosm, of the larger intellectual tug-of-war that was taking place in the Byzantine theological world in the fourteenth century. In the correspondence of Akindynos with George Lapithes we were served the essential theological arguments as well as the larger political ambitions of the anti-Palamites: Cyprus and Cypriot intellectuals residing in the Empire were a significant part of these ambitions. The letter of Joseph Kalothetos gave to the Cypriot monks a spirited defence of Palamas’ thought, one which at certain points could, on the level of terminology rather than theology, play into anti-Palamite hands. Neither, incidentally, had combined anti-Palamism with pro-Latin sentiments in their texts. This was to occur in the letter of St Kallistos I, who was incensed by reports of the papal legate Peter Thomas’ conduct towards the Greek clergy on the island. He readily combined anti-Latin sentiment with pro-Palamite thought in his exhortation to the Cypriots, seeing the Latins and anti-Palamites

<sup>66</sup> Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Kantakouzenos mentions deification again in the ninth anathema where the pure, united to God, become gods by grace: Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 18.

as practically co-conspirators. Finally, we discussed John Kantakouzenos' letter to John of Karpasia, which offered a more irenic and terminologically sensitive defence of Palamas' thought, even while holding fast to strong Palamite language of deification by uncreated grace. Reflective of his more diplomatic mould generally, there is no explicit link made in this text between anti-Palamite thought and pro-Latin sympathies.

While we cannot learn in detail from these texts what the Palamite Controversy looked like in the daily religious life of Cypriots at the time, we can at least witness some of the upheaval it caused. Despite the promise Cyprus held in the eyes of Akindynos as an anti-Palamite bastion, an island which, on the surface, boasted seemingly ideal conditions for the incubation and propagation of anti-Palamite thought, our scant evidence indicates that, contrary to what we might expect, it was the likes of Kalothetos, St Kallistos I, and Kantakouzenos who would eventually win the minds and hearts of the island's Greeks. A series of letters at the end of the fourteenth/beginning of the fifteenth century between the Greek Dominican Manuel Calecas and the Cypriot intellectual Manuel Raoul, both ardent anti-Palamites, indicate as much.<sup>68</sup>

Our primary concern has not, however, been to give an in-depth view of ecclesiastical life on Cyprus during this period, but to see the brief but diverse texts under discussion as yielding a helpful microcosm through which to better assess the larger question of St Gregory Palamas' theological reception. The tidy dichotomy of hesychast monk vs intellectual/humanist, or the easy elision of anti-Palamite and pro-Latin, are certainly called into question by what we have examined, but not entirely so. While scholars such as Meyendorff may have taken such characterizations too far, they are nevertheless part of the 'climate' of the debate from its early days. Similarly, while the theology of St Gregory Palamas receives in Palamite authors particular and contextual 'inflections' that, at a superficial level, might appear substantially different if not diametrically opposed to one another, this proves to be more a terminological problem rather than a theological one. There is, I would argue, a definite and deep theological consensus among the Palamites, centred on the reality of the sanctification and deification of the saints through their sharing in the uncreated divine life, a deification begun even now in the ascetic, sacramental life of the Church. This consistency of vision is clearly lacking among the anti-Palamites, whose internal divisions over the question of sanctification and deification are far more theologically problematic than the varieties of expression among the Palamites. Even in the case of Akindynos—who according to Nadal Cañellas embraces hesychast ideals and a notion of deification with a strong ascetic and sacramental component—it is actually extremely difficult to find much positive

<sup>68</sup> Especially Manuel Calecas, *Letter 77*, 275–78, where he laments that the common people on Cyprus have embraced the thought of Palamas.

or detailed evidence for what his thinking on sanctification really was.<sup>69</sup> The whole enterprise of ‘receiving Palamas’ is ongoing: it should be an enterprise—whether dealing with Byzantium, the early modern period, the twentieth century, or our contemporary world—that keeps at its centre the full meaning of deification, the uncreated ‘inheritance of the saints in light’.

<sup>69</sup> This is even apparent in the treatment of this issue by Akindynos’ great modern defender: see Nadal Cañellas, ‘Gregorio Akindinos’, 240–44, where the material he cites only indirectly supports his claims, and arguably raises more questions than it answers.



## 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DIGITAL MEDIA AND ORTHODOX PASTORAL CARE - "THE LIVING WATER"

<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DIGITAL MEDIA AND ORTHODOX PASTORAL CARE</p> <p>18 · 19 · 20 · 21 JUNE 2018 ORTHODOX ACADEMY OF CRETE, Kolymbari</p> <p>"The Digital World as a Sphere for the Reiteration of Pentecost and the 'living word' of Saint Paul the Apostle"</p> <p>Organised under the High Auspices of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew</p> <p>DM OPC 18 "Young Living"</p>		<p><i>Orthodox Academy of Crete, Kolymbari. 18-21 June 2018</i></p> <p>2018 Conference Theme: The Digital World as a Sphere for the Reiteration of Pentecost and the "living word" of Saint Paul the Apostle.</p> <p>102 Speakers from 20 Countries, specialist academics and everyday laborers working discreetly on behalf of the Divine Word in the digital field.</p> <p>DMOPC18 ORGANISERS: PEMPTOUSIA</p>
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