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.*[1] 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

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[1] 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"'.[2] 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.[3]

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'.[4] 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'.[5] 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'.[6] 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.

[2] Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, foreword to *For the Unity of All*, ix–x.

[3] 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.

[4] 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.

[5] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, xvi.

[6] 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?'[7] 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'.[8]

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)?[9]

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.[10]

[7] Ibid.
[8] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, xvii.
[9] Ibid., 52.
[10] 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.[11] 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'.[12] 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 are they 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.[13] The

[11] 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.

[12] Ibid., 51.

[13] '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.'[14] 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'.[15] 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

[14] Ibid., 53.
[15] 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'.[16] 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 lo this or that patriarch or prophet, unless the whole context of the narrative provides us with probable indications.[17]

It is clear that the Augustinian view was shaped by the specific historical context of the second half of the fourth century.[18] 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'.[19] 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

[16] Ibid., 54.

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

[18] 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 Manousssakis'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 Anthropomorphite Controversy of 399 AD', Marquette University, accessed January 20, 2018, http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/morphe.html.

[19] 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)'.[20] 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'.[21] St Ambrose, for example, in his *Commentary on Luke*,[22]

> 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.[23] 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.[24] Only to the pure in heart is this vision granted (Matt 5:8), in this life as well as in the resurrection.[25]

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'.[26] 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

[20] Ibid., 75.

[21] Ibid. Here we can see how a genuine Orthodox theology of the theophanies required a reference to the distinction between nature and will.

[22] Ambrose de Milan, *Traité sur l'Évangile de S. Luc* (SC 45), (Paris: Cerf, 1956).

[23] *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.

[24] Ibid. 26, 1:17.

[25] 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.

[26] 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 Anthropomorphite 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).[27] 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.[28]

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.[29]

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'.[30] 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'.[31] However, such a claim would appear plausible only through the adoption of an Augustinian perspective. At the same time, the author emphasizes

[27] Bucur, 'Theophanies and vision of God', 70.
[28] *De Trinitate, Book III* 4.27, 144.
[29] Golitzin, 'The Form of God and Vision of the Glory'.
[30] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 55.
[31] 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.[32]

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

[32] 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.[33]

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.[34] It should be pointed out that John Manoussakis is not the only contemporary theologian doing this.[35] What is more interesting, however, is his reference to

[33] Ibid.

[34] 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).

[35] 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. Papanikolaou 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).[36] 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'.[37] 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.[38] 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.

[36] 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.

[37] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 139, n. 80.

[38] 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,' *Analogia* 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 Zizioulias, 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.[39] 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.[40] 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

[39] 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.

[40] See, for example, Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburg: 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 Mantė Lenkaitytė Ostermann (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 2017), 387–94.

that 'it is easier to start with the second question, the how question'.[41] 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.[42]

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.[43] 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

[41] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 56.

[42] Ibid., 58.

[43] Panachiotis Christou, 'Uncreated and crated, 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.'[44] 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.[45]

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.[46]

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-

[44] St Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion I*, 17.
[45] Panachiotis Christou, 'Uncreated and Created, Unbegotten and Begotten,' 55.
[46] 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.[47]

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?[48]

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

[47] 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.

[48] 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'.[49] 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?[50]

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.

[49] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 63.
[50] 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'.[51] 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 crisscrossed interlacing.[52]

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

[51] Ibid.
[52] 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.[53] A more detailed exploration of Husserl's[54] and Merleau-Ponty's[55] 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.[56] This might be the reason for the author's quick shift to the discussion of Balthasar's theological interpretation of indication.

[53] 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.

[54] 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'.

[55] 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)'.

[56] 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'.[57] 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 not graspable, it can be experienced as grasping us.[58] 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.

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

[58] 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.[59]

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.[60]

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'.[61]

[59] Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 4, 34.

[60] 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.

[61] Ibid., 235–36.

One could see, for example, a sign of Heidegger's use of the term 'grasping'[62] 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.[63]

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.[64]

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:

[62] 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.

[63] Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 6, 46–47.

[64] 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.[65]

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.[66] 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-

[65] Ibid., 60–61.

[66] 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, has already stepped outside the proper sphere of revelation.[67]

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.[68]

[67] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 6, 10.
[68] 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.[69]

I can see a problem in the statement that 'a mystical experience can never become completely disassociated from a physical locus'.[70] 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.[71] For Akyndinos, the

[69] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 61.

[70] 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).

[71] 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.[72]

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:[73]

> 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.[74]

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'.

[72] 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'.

[73] 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.

[74] 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'.[75] 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.[76] 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.[77]

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*).[78]

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

[75] 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.

[76] I am grateful to Fr Bogdan Bucur, Associate Professor of theology at Duquesne University, for this insight.

[77] 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.

[78] Palamas, *Triads*, 1, 3, 27, in *Ιρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα,* eds. Π. Χρήστου et al., vol. 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κυρομάνος, 1966), 588.

and not to its sensibility per se'.[79] 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.[80]

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.[81] 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

[79] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 62.

[80] 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.

[81] Maximus the Confssor, *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'.[82]

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?[83]

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.[84] 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.[85] 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,

[82] 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.

[83] *Triads* 3, 1, 22.

[84] Hayes, *Deus In Se Et Deus Pro Nobis*, 94.

[85] 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 trough 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*[86] 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?'[87] 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.[88]

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.[89]

[86] *Triads* 2, 3, 55.

[87] 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 Mantė Lenkaitytė Ostermann (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 2017), 387–94.

[88] 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.

[89] 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.[90]

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?'[91] 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.[92]

[90] 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.

[91] Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 64–65.

[92] 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.'[93] 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.[94]

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

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 87.

the Father. The Palamite synthesis eventually consecrated the Hesychast perspective on Sinai and Tabor as the fiery heart of all Christian theology.[95]

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

[95] 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.