

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE DEIFIED FLESH. GLORIFICATION (δεδοξασμένη) AND DEIFICATION (θέωσις) INTO A CONTINUUM OF THEOPHANIES

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ABSTRACT. Saint Paul refers to Christ's ability to radiate his divine light of himself while other OT luminaries like Moses could only reflect that light. This experience of *theosis* is being, also, described as "transformation into unveiled glory" (2 Cor. 3.7-18). By this verse deification through the vision of God becomes an immanent and mystical event. This aspect of deification as transformation into glory (*glorification*) is both an inward quality of spiritual knowledge and an outward radiance. The nature of the *glory* of Moses and the visible splendour shining from his face from his direct contact with God (Exod 34.29) signifies God's visible, divine presence. As all believers encounter God directly (with *unveiled faces*) through the Spirit's presence they reflect this glory as mirrors and are themselves glorified in the process (*from glory to glory*). The transformation into this glory is not only noetic but also embodied because it is a visible manifestation. The noetic enlightenment is associated with participation in divine glory in 2 Cor 3-4 and is correlated to the somatic experience of glory in 2 Cor 4:16-5:5. Paul speaks also of this epistemic process of contemplation which generates the ontological mirroring process. And, because for us there is no veil over the face, we all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are being transformed (*μεταμορφούμεθα*) into his image (*τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα*) with ever-increasing glory. But Luke is the only evangelist to use the word "glory" (*doxa*) and the only to mention that Jesus and the three apostles went up the mountain specifically to pray (Lk 9:29-31). This is a detail in spiritual tradition of hesychasm which was richly developed, the vision of light at the culmination of intense periods of prayer is the deification of our nature. This light is an enhypostatic symbol, the uncreated radiance of God, a divine energy. This manifestation of Christ in the divine nature is not something external to ourselves. It is interiorized through the life of ascetism and prayer. Christ will radiate within us. But this pneumatic nature of Christ's luminous body is experienced through Eucharist as well. This holy sacrament accesses the divine light, veiled by Christ's visible body. Also, Sebastian Brock extends forms of light comparison to the internal light of Mary's womb when bearing Jesus. Christ's light transforms her body in which He resided, as it 'gleams from within'. In her, the light-bearing Christ is 'woven' as a garment. Speaking of the hesychast method of prayer and transformation of the body,

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Gregory Palamas also uses this Pauline theology of 2 Corinthians in Tr. I.2.2. But he adds that “We carry this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). So we carry the Father’s light in the face (*prosōpon*) of Jesus Christ in earthen vessels, that is, in our bodies, in order to know the glory of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, during the hesychast controversy, St Gregory Palamas defends the reality of the encounter with God of those monks who reported seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. For the light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accessible to the senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves.

Keywords: Glorification, Deification (*Theosis*), uncreated energies, Kabod (*Doxa*), Thaboric light, *Shem*, Name of Christ, Hesychastic prayer, *Shekinah*, Uncreated light, somatic experience of glory, Eucharist, robe of glory, Theophanies (revelation), Christification, Hesychastic Mariology.

INTRODUCTION

God is both absolutely transcendent and immanent with his creation, so that revelation and redemption are possible through God’s energies. Divine energies are God Himself as He has manifested Himself to us. These energies were originally identified as the „uncreated light” encountered through theophanic experiences. For example, all the „anthropomorphisms in Scripture refer not to God in his essence, but to how he acts according to and through his energies”.¹ Father Staniloae argues that „*through apophatic knowledge we gain a kind of direct experience of His mystical presence*”.²

For Gregory Palamas this essence-energies distinction is rooted in God’s very being, as „*transcendent and immanent revealed in the Incarnation itself*”, but this distinction may seem „*incoherent in light of formal logic, but coheres perfectly with the logic of deification*”.³ Paweł Rojek tried to show that „*Palamas’*

¹ Jordan Cooper, *Christification. A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock, 2014), 5. Jordan Cooper propose that a thoroughly Reformational understanding of justification can exist with a patristic understanding of theosis.

² Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God, Vol. 1: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 95.

³ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God. Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 13, 30. Dionysius and Gregory Palamas are the two great synthesizers of theological apophaticism and the essence/energies distinction. To Palamas this distinction at the heart of Christian ontology become the dogmatic basis for *union with God* in terms of a *real* communion between the created and the uncreated (Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, 11, 25).

teaching on energies and deification is no less rational than any other ontological positions".⁴

Deification, however, is the event of a *real* divine-human communion and leads necessarily to antinomy, but „it is validated doxologically, in that the soteriological principle of deification is a praise of the love of God toward creation”.⁵ Palamas is only a witness of this Tradition of union with the transcendent and immanent God in which *theosis* sums up the divine economy.⁶

Within a „mystical realism”⁷ based on participation in God as light, St. Gregory Palamas identified three fundamental themes of Eastern Christian spirituality: theology as apophaticism, revelation as light and salvation as deification (*Triad* I.3.17).⁸ But Palamas’s theology has been criticized for creating a new conception about „*theosis*”, identified with „*theoria*” or the vision of God’s glory, separate from „*deification*” of the old Holy Fathers, which is strictly the reverse of Christ’s incarnation and kenosis.⁹ St. Gregory Palamas developed a theory of deification through participation in the divine energies. Tabor Light is the intelligible manifestation of the divine glory, this light is like other divine energies, distinct from God’s essence. The light of ineffable glory seen by the saints is the enhypostatic, uncreated light. This same vision was seen in the present age by the chosen among the apostles on Thabor, by Stephen when he was being stoned, and by Anthony in his battle for inner stillness Palamas also affirm that the prophets and patriarchs were not without experience of this light. Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic were visibly *transformed by divine light* (*Tr.* II.3.9). The hermeneutic key is the transfiguration of Christ, because He himself is the deifying light (*Tr.* III.1.16).

Deification is a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (*Tr.* III.1.33). Therefore, in our study we aim to present the roots of the fourteenth century hesychast concept of deification in a holistic

⁴ Paweł Rojek, „The Logic of Palamism,” in *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking*, edited by Andrew Schumann (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 74-75.

⁵ Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, 25-27.

⁶ Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God. Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press Crestwood, 2009), 53.

⁷ Håkan Gunnarsson, *Mystical Realism in the Early Theology of Gregory Palamas* (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2002), 33-78, 212-24 and 333-43.

⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom 600–1700* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 264.

⁹ Reinhard Flogaus, *Theosis Bei Palamas Und Luther: Ein Beitrag Zum Okumenischen Gespräch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 1996), 77-284. Another questions which arises is the following: does the real distinction in God contradict the apophaticism or has Palamism sacrificed the divine simplicity in favor of deification? See: André de Halleux, „Palamisme et Tradition,” *Irenikon* 4 (1975): 479-494; André de Halleux, „Palamisme et Scolastique. Exclusivisme dogmatique ou pluriformité théologique,” *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 4 (1973): 409-442.

view, at the same time biblical, mariological and sacramental: from prophetic vision (glorification, *theoria*) through hesychast Mariology (*deiform* life in Temple) and Tabor light (enhypostatic illumination) to sacramental Christomorphisation (*clothed* in Christ).

**1. KABOD as divine light (theosis as 'glorification' during theophany).
Theophanic Kabod - participatory doxa (revelation and salvation)**

According to Palamas' interpretation of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, the terms *θέωσις* (deification), *ένωσις* (mystical union) and *δρασης* (vision) are synonymous.¹⁰ This means that everywhere Palamas speaks of union between the prophets of the Old Testament and the glory of God or about prophet's vision of the glory of God he is actually speaking of divinization. So, father Romanides said that the Old and New Testaments term for *theosis* (*θέωσις*) is "glorification" („lifted up in glory", cf. Exod 15:1; „glorified", cf. John 12:16).¹¹

Therefore, the presence of God is commonly said to be associated with light, especially in the act of the transfiguration on Mount Tabor (Matt.17:1-9), but there is precedens for such an association in Old Testament such as the light that shone on Moses' face after being in God's presence (Exod 34:29-35). This light is also seen by Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-9) and Stephen at the moment of his martyrdom (Acts 7:54-60). Barlaam argued that such an experience of light was either a mere symbol of God or an angelic presence. In contrast to this, Palamas purported that a vision of light is a display of the uncreated energies of God and these visions of God's energies have a deifying effect. In this regard Mantzarides states that "*the hesychast monk of Mount Athos, in receiving the radiance of uncreated light, were experiencing direct communion with God, together with all the regenerative and deifying consequences of this*".¹² Thereat, Stephen Thomas submits that to read the Bible "is not only to gain guidance about how to be deified: it is actually *part of the process* of our deification, as we are lead up into the presence of God".¹³

¹⁰ Grégoire Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, 2 vol., trans. John Meyendorff, (Leuven-Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1959), 575: "ή μεν ούν ένωσιν ... ή θέωσις έστι". St. Dionysius says exactly the same: "ή δε θέωσις έστιν ή προς Θεόν, ως εφικτόν, αφομοίωσις τε και ένωσις" (*De Ecc. Hierarch.*, I.3, P.G., III, 376A). Also St. Gregory says, "ή δε του φωτός ένωσις, τι γε άλλο η όρασις έστιν" (II.3.36, in Palamas, *Défense*, 359).

¹¹ For the theological background of this debate see: Flogaus, *Theosis bei Palamas und Luther*, 262-68.

¹² Georgios Mantzarides, *Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 99.

¹³ Stephen Thomas, *Deification in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Biblical Perspective* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2007), 74.

The Eastern Fathers speak of the Old Testament theophanies as appearances of the Logos (simultaneously with the concept of “glory of God” as a manifestation of the uncreated divine presence).¹⁴ The problem occurs when Augustine understands the nature of revelation as *sight of God in the truth of the intellect* (the third type of theophany, the *intellectual* one, alongside *physical* and *spiritual*).¹⁵ In *De Trinitate* II, 19-20 and III, 27¹⁶ Augustine’s solution to the theophanies problem is the most drastic in the literature of the period. Properly speaking, there have been no theophanies until Christ, they were only angelophanies (*corporales species*) or simple symbolophanies.¹⁷

I see the biblical foundations of *theosis* in the terminology of *kabod* (gr. *doxa*), because within the Old Testament texts *kābôd* is closely associated with divine light (Exod 24:17; Lev 9:23f.; Ezek 1:27f.; 10:4; 43:2) or „*shine forth*” (Deut 33:2; Ps 49:2; 79:2; 93:1). This texts are certifying the existence of light that occurs in conjunction with a theophany.¹⁸ The conception of God’s presence in

¹⁴ Robin Margaret Jensen, *Face to Face. Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). See especially chapter 3: „The Invisible God and the Visible Image. Justin Martyr: Refutation of Idols and Divine Theophanies” (Jensen, *Face to Face*, 69-99). In his study, Jensen enable us to understand the function of prophecy while analyzing the nature theophany. So, Justin, thereby, „explains all the Old Testament theophanies as christological events” (Jensen, *Face to Face*, 72) and „Word, has the capacity to become visible... [He] makes God known to humans through the gift of prophecy and visions” (Jensen, *Face to Face*, 75).

¹⁵ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 234-37.

¹⁶ Augustin, *De Trinitate*, in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin* 15, 2^{ième} serie: *La Trinité*, ed. M. Millet and T. Camelot, (Paris: Éditions Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 183-321. See also: *De Trinitate* II, 19-20 (*La Trinité*, 230-239) and III, 27 (*La Trinité*, 332-334).

¹⁷ Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy – God experience in Orthodoxy. Studies of Mystical Theology*, trans. and presentation by Ioan I. Ică jr. (Sibiu: Deisis, 1998), 209-212. See Bogdan G. Bucur, “Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: an Eastern Orthodox perspective”, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 52/1 (2008): 67-93. John Romanides argued that St. Gregory must have positively rejected the polemics of *De trinitate* I-IV, which was used by Barlaam on the question of the biblical theophanies, and where Augustine broke with prior tradition in order to deny the *Visio Dei* to the saints. See: John Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics I”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1959-1960): 186-205, for here 194-8 and Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite II,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 9 (1963-1964): 225-270, here at 247-9 and 257-62).

¹⁸ Kerry Muhlestein, “Darkness, Light, and the Lord: Elements of Israelite Theophanies,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 232-54. See also: Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1995), 333-82; George W. Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 49-189; Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria’s Appropriation of His Background* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 123-37. Choufrine conclude that the Light that illumined Abraham is for Clement, just as it is for Philo, the Logos. In Clement’s interpretation the Transfiguration and the Sinai theophanies suggest that for him a theophany is a manifestation of God as Light, and its cognitive correlate is illumination. So, the theophany is a Christophany as a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ, who, as the Logos, is the one who reveals God.

the sanctuary was attached to the notions of *kābôd* (the central term of the Priestly theology), and *šēm* (the corresponding key term of the Deuteronomistic tradition). The differences between these theologies may not be neglected: „*Kabod theology follows the theology of immanence promulgated by the Zion-Sabaoth theology, while the Name theology emphasizes instead God's transcendence*”.¹⁹

In Priestly traditional material (Exod 40:34-38 and Ezek 43:1-9) *kābôd* is said to fill the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-38), because *kābôd* was conceived of as continuously present, visible above the *kapporeth*. The basic notion here is that of divine immanence, divine *kābôd* is constantly present in the tabernacle. If *kābôd* denote a divine attribute in pre-exilic times, now designates God himself, as referring to the complete manifestation of divine majesty. *Kābôd* is used in Ezekiel as a central theological term in text where visual contact with God is important.²⁰ The omnipresence of God is complementary, rather than contradictory, to his immanence in the Temple.

The *kabod* consists of unspeakably bright light, and this was the semblance of the form of *YHWH's kabod* (Ezekiel 1:26-8). Similarly, in Jeremiah 14:9 the presence of God in the people's midst is equated with God's *shem*. As Benjamin Sommer emphasizes, the notion of 'shem' functions outside deuteronomic and priestly texts both as a “*synonym for God and as a hypostasis or emanation of God that is not quite a separate deity*.”²¹ A similar ambiguity can be found in many uses of the term *kabod* which in biblical Hebrew means God's body as “*divine Presence*”: “*kabod* might be a body of God without being *the* body of God; it might be an emanation from but not the entirety of the divine self.”²²

Therefore, the central theme of priestly tradition is “*the desire of the transcendent God to become immanent on the earth this God had created*”.²³

The culmination of the experience into the late currents of mysticism of *merkabah* (hermeneutics) and *hekhalot* (experiential) is transformative, in the sense that the Jewish and Christian mystics “*thought they could be glorified in*

¹⁹ Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The dethronement of Sabaoth: studies in the Shem and Kabod theologies* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 133.

²⁰ Mettinger, *The dethronement of Sabaoth*, 106-7. At the same time the frequent use of words like *demut* „likeness”, *mareh* „appearance” and *tabnit* „form” serve the same purpose as the smoke and the train on the mantle in Isaiah's throne-vision.

²¹ Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 59. The term “name” in ancient Near Eastern cultures can refer to the essence of any thing and hence can be a cipher for the thing itself. An Orthodox understanding of this spirituality of God's name is provided by the hesychast method of prayer; cf. Kallistos Ware, *The Power of the Name. The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1989) 13-59.

²² Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 60-62.

²³ Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 74.

body".²⁴ Thus, the persistent core of early Jewish and Christian mysticism is the belief that God or his manifestation can be experienced directly and immediately ("as a rapture experience or as one solicited by a particular praxis"²⁵), not just after death or eschatologically on the last day. The centerpiece of this cosmology is the belief that God has a "body," called the "Glory" or *Kavod* of Yhwh. Here we note the paradox of the Hidden God whose very countenance or face cannot be seen, but only the luminous mask of the Glory that simultaneously covers and reveals him: "This luminosity of the *Kavod* acted as a mask or screen, functioning in such a way that protected the seer from direct gaze of Gods body."²⁶

This Jewish *Kavod* doctrine had a profound impact on the development of early Christian mysticism: „*eschatology, the secret revelation of the imminence of the end, is only part of the discussion. The other part is the mystical, the belief in the immediate and direct experience of God.*"²⁷ But the terms of *ruach*, *pneuma* and *shekhinah* also served as "ways of referring to God's presence and activity, rather than to a being or beings hypostatically distinct from God".²⁸

Another issue is found in some scriptural texts in which glorification (i.e., *deification*) is understood as a *re-creation in the Glory Image*. This state is shown through metaphor of clothing (*put away unclean robes – put on clean robes*). Paul focuses on and adopts this metaphor of putting on God's likeness like clothing. The putting on of the clothing of holiness follows a putting off of unfit clothing (Eph 4:22, 24; Col 3:9, 10 as in Zechariah 3). Another component of the Glory likeness is the *visible glory of transfiguration*, an outward luminosity, a physical radiance. This visual glory is eschatological and it is the glorification that "the redeemed will experience when they behold Jesus, arrayed with the Glory-Spirit, coming in the clouds of heaven".²⁹ In this context you have to mention that the act of "clothing in the garments of skin" hold the meaning of a "*re-investiture with priestly status and dominion. Clothing made of animal skin had to be procured through sacrificial death.*"³⁰

²⁴ April D. DeConick, "What Is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism" in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1-26, for here 2.

²⁵ Peter Schafer, "The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," in *Hekhalot-Studien*, ed. Peter Schafer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 289-95; Joseph Dan, *Three Types of Jewish Mysticism* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 1984), 8-16.

²⁶ DeConick, *Paradise Now*, 12.

²⁷ DeConick, *Paradise Now*, 18.

²⁸ Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit. Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 41, 57.

²⁹ Meredith G. Kline, *Glory in our Midst. A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah's Night Visions* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 114.

³⁰ Kline, *Glory in our Midst*, 115. Priestly office and function given to man in heaven was taken over by the cherubim (Gen 3:24; cf. Exod 20:26; 28:42). Skin clothing operates as a symbol of messianic restoration until the time when through baptism is received again the light clothing lost in Paradise, but, until then, dressing with in skin clothing is represent by the sacrificing the animals in the temple's Levitical priesthood ministry.

Other issues on the interpretation of Old Testament theophanies are related to their angelomorphism. The angelology is very complex, but usually there is one highly exalted angel, such as the “Angel of the Lord,” the “Angel of the Countenance,” “Metatron,” or “Christ.”³¹ Sometimes, says DeConick, it is difficult “to differentiate between this exalted angel and God’s glorious manifestation, the *Kavod* or *Doxa*, who is enthroned on the *merkabah* seat in the holy of holies, the *devir*, the highest of the heavens.”³²

The hesychasts in fact never claim that the deifying light is an angel. *“The vision of angels takes place in various ways, according to the capacities of those who behold it: sometimes in the form of a concrete essence, accessible to the senses, and visible even to creatures full of passions and totally foreign to all initiation; sometimes under the form of an ethereal essence which the soul itself can only see in part; sometimes as a true vision, which only those who are purified and who see spiritually are worthy to behold”*.³³

Bogdan Bucur also reaches to underlining the *the “face” mentioned in Matt 18:10 is none other than the Son. The angels do not have direct access to the Face, but they are rather enabled to see, guided and illumined by the Holy Spirit.* Bucur understands that angelomorphic pneumatology as centered around the phenomenon of prophecy.³⁴ The prophetic-visionary context leads us to recognizing their mystagogic role. As emphasized by Bogdan Bucur to Gregory Palamas angelomorphism of the Spirit designate the divine energies: *“This author is uninhibited in using precisely those biblical verses that had once supported angelomorphic pneumatology”*.³⁵

³¹ Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origins of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 177-91, 319-29.

³² DeConick, *Paradise Now*, 15. The celestial *merkabah* is the special wheeled chariot made of four sacred creatures whose outspread wings formed the seat itself, much like the ark of the covenant in the earthly temple.

³³ Tr. II.3.10, in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, trans. by Nicholas Gendle, introduction by John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 58.

³⁴ Bogdan Gabriel Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology. Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 69. By analyzing theological authors like Justin, Clement, Aphrahat in there using specific biblical texts (Matt.18:10; Zech 3:9; 4:10; Isa 11:2-3) lead B. Bucur in establishing a connection between “Face” Christology and angelomorphic pneumatology: *“Face’ Christology never became a major player in classic definitions of faith. Like ‘Name’ christology, ‘Wisdom’ christology, or ‘Glory’ Christology - once crucial categories in the age of Jewish Christianity - this concept went out of fashion, giving way to a more precise vocabulary shaped by the christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries... The Shepherd of Hermas and Aphrahat illustrate the link between angelomorphic pneumatology and early Christian ascetic theory”* (Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, 190).

³⁵ Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology*, 192: “In his *Fifth Antirhetikos against Akindynos* (ch. 15; 17), Gregory Palamas identifies the seven gift’s of the Spirit in Isaiah 11 with the seven eyes of the Lord (Zech. 4:10), the seven spirits of Revelation, and the “finger/spirit of God” (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28). All of these, he says, designate the divine *energies* referred to in Scripture as seven, and should therefore not be considered created. The exact same cluster of passages occurs also in Palamas’ *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (chs. 70-71), and in his *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* (chs. 27).”

To Barlaam “*the best of our theologians is inferior to the least of the angels*”, thus says him, “*a man can only meet God through the mediation of an angel, for we are subordinate to the angelic hierarchy*”. Palamas’s answer is emphatically expressing his entire conception on the distinction between theophanies and angelophanies: “Tell me, which of the angels was it that said to Moses, ‘*I am He who is, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*,’ (Ex. 3:14-15) if not the Son of God, as the great Basil has written? (C. Eun. 11.18, PG 29, 609B). What do these words of Exodus signify: ‘*The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*’? (Ex. 33:11) And if He Who spoke to Abraham and ‘*swore by Himself*’ (Gen. 22:16) was only an angel, how could the Apostle have said, ‘*He could not swear by one greater than Himself*’? (Heb. 6:13) But if God saw fit to speak Himself to those Fathers in the shadow of the Law, how much the more has He manifested Himself directly to the saints, now that the truth has appeared, and the law of grace has been shown forth! According to this law of grace, it is the Lord Himself who has saved us, “*not an angel or a man*,” (Isa. 63:9)? (...) Did He not deign to make His dwelling in man, to appear to him and speak to him without intermediary”.³⁶

Stephen was not surrounded with angelic assistance when he saw what he did; but, full of the Holy Spirit, saw the glory of God and the only Son of God (Acts 7:55-56). For it is not possible to see the light without seeing in the light, this vision is accessible through the Spirit, and it’s not a form of cognition or an act of the intellect, but a direct vision of the uncreated glory of the Trinity through the grace of the Spirit.

Palamas goes on to mention examples from the OT of God appearing to the Patriarchs and Prophets without intermediary. He intends showing how “The Lord dwells in men in different and varied ways according to the worthiness and way of life of those who seek Him. He appears in one way to an active man, in another to a contemplative, in another again to the man of vision, and in yet different ways to the zealous or to those already divinised. There are numerous differences in the divine vision itself: among the prophets, some have seen God in a dream, others when awake by means of enigmas and mirrors; but to Moses He appeared ‘*face-to-face, and not in enigmas*’ (Num. 12:8).”³⁷

The experience of God’s hiddenness, just as the experience of his presence, is an integral part of Israelite faith. Both experiences derive from the nature of God himself who is both hidden and present.³⁸ Generally, the dichotomy “hidden vs. manifest” is usually expressed by two connected symbols (“cloud” vs. *kabod*, *shem* vs. *kabod*, God’s “face” vs. hidden God). Instead of describing

³⁶ Tr. III.3.5, cf. Gendle ed. (1983), 103-4.

³⁷ *Triads* II.3.59 and III.1.28, Gendle (1983), 83-84.

³⁸ Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 164-175.

the dazzling light of God or asserting the impossibility of seeing the divine face, Philo³⁹ translates, through the distinction *ousia-hyparxis*, this ancient biblical dichotomy between the hidden and the manifest dimensions of the divine.⁴⁰ Therefore, says Giulea “*christians theologians elaborated the apophatic philosophical language predominantly within the exegetical context of the Old Testament theophanies of the kabod.*”⁴¹

2. Theosis as mirroring „unveiled glory (δόξα)”. Identification of Jesus Christ with kabod (inter-Trinitarian reciprocal glorification and its somatic experience)

Kabod is the most important term in the Bible defining God’s glory and it is shaped the *doxa* of the New Testament. This glory is seen in theophanies, when God’s manifestations as kabod of God proves itself to be much more immanent than transcendent.⁴² This glory is intrinsic to God (1 Chr 29:11), not a peripheral manifestation of God’s character but an essential quality of His personhood.⁴³ The *participatory doxa*, as revelation of God is not only manifested as kabod, but also as salvation (*yeshua*, cf. Isa 62:1; 58:8).⁴⁴

Dragoş Andrei Giulea looking into the origins of Kabod soteriology, he sees the connection between the vision of the divine light and the idea of salvation to be an old credence in ancient Israel according to which God’s shining face or presence (פְּנִים) procures salvation (יְשׁוּעָה). So this salvation comes through the manifestation of God’s glory and consists of living before the Divine Face: “*the expectation of the visio Dei becomes a key social-soteriological feature*”.⁴⁵

³⁹ See David T. Runia, “Philo in the Patristic Tradition: A list of Direct Reference” in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 268-286.

⁴⁰ Jean Daniélou, *Philo of Alexandria* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 90-110. David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Assen-Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1993), 99-101, 103, 224.

⁴¹ Dragoş A. Giulea, “The Divine Essence, that Inaccessible *Kabod* Enthroned in Heaven: Nazianzen’s *Oratio* 28,3 and the Tradition of Apophatic Theology from Symbols to Philosophical Concepts,” *Numen* 57 (2010): 1-29, ad 20-21.

⁴² Philippe Paul-Luc Viguier, *A Biblical Theology of the Glory of God* (California: Sun Valley, 2012), 15-16. God’s glory is used nearly 200 times in the Old Testament, and comes from a root meaning “weight.”

⁴³ Viguier, *Biblical Theology of the Glory*, 17.

⁴⁴ Viguier, *Biblical Theology of the Glory*, 21-23.

⁴⁵ Dragoş Andrei Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts. The Case of the Divine Noetic Anthropos* (Leiden: Brill 2014), 99-103. While in Ps 67:1-2, 80:3, and 80:7 God’s shining face or presence (פְּנִים) procures salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), Psalm 104 makes clear that the manifestation of פְּנִים is the way God grants life to all creatures. Ps 104:1 articulates, the terms of הַדָּר (splendor) and הַדָּר (majesty) seem to refer to Yahweh’s garments.

God's doxa, in the New Testament, is more than a continuation of the OT kabod, but make a decisive breakthrough by applying the full weight of the term to the person of Jesus Christ. The „otherness“ of Jesus proposed by the Transfiguration narrative (“the appearance of his face become different [*heteron*]” Luke 9:20) becomes a matter of faith.⁴⁶ The union in God's glory begins the process of knowing God, which is indeed eternal life (John 17:3), but this “union in God's glory becomes union with Christ”.⁴⁷ Also, *God's glorification is seen in terms of inter-Trinitarian works of love*, as John depicts the reciprocal glorification of the Trinity.⁴⁸

Salvation, therefore, comes through the divine *kabod* and essentially consists in living within the glory of God: “*glory enacts its salvific operations through direct manifestation.*”⁴⁹ Christian glory soteriology distinctive element resides in the identification of Jesus Christ with the *kabod*. In 1 Cor 2:8 Christ receives the title “Lord of Glory” (*Κύριος τῆς δόξης*), a designation of Yahweh used throughout the Old Testament. Regarding *Christ and the Glory-Temple*, Meredith G. Kline refers to the heaven and earth thus have the character of a temple, a place where God's Glory-Presence is revealed. The cosmic Glory-temple, as God's own self-manifestation, constitutes a perpetual epiphany of the divine Presence: “Incarnate Son and endoxate Spirit are alike epiphanic embodiments of the God of Glory.”⁵⁰

Likewise, Luke's narrative obviously identifies Mary's baby with the Lord of Glory descended to earth as a veiled divine throne (*merkavah*) in 2:8-20. The old priest Symeon compares the baby with the glory, therefore with the *kabod*: “a

⁴⁶ Eugen J. Pentiu, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

⁴⁷ Viguer, *Biblical Theology of the Glory*, 28. The author says that God's *Shekinah* represents His dwelling place and continuous presence with mankind, manifested with theophanic evidence of glory. The term *Shekinah* gained importance as it replaced *kabod* in later Jewish literature (Targums, Talmuds and Midrash). This is developing of biblical theology: such as the usage of *Memra* for the Word (logos), recognized of speaking of God's own name and character, and of *Shekinah* referring to the second person of the Trinity. The *Shekinah* in Hebrew, like the *doxa* in Greek, becomes mostly associated with light: “*In effect, the Shekinah emphasizes greatly the transcendental aspect of God, found in His light and sublime appearance, and not as much His immanence and man's ability to know Him personally. The God of the rabbinical Shekinah is distant, difficult to understand, and uneasy to describe. This, as we have studied and proven, is contrary to the God of Scripture who manifests Himself*” (Viguer, *Biblical Theology of the Glory*, 34)

⁴⁸ Joong Suk Suh, *The Glory in the Gospel of John: Restoration of Forfeited Prestige* (Oxford, OH: M. P. Publications, 1995), 71-73. Father's glorification through the Son (13:31; 17:1,4) and of the Son through the Father (7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31; 17:1,5). The Spirit is also said to glorify Christ (John 16:14), which is seen by His work implementing the salvific power of Jesus (John 14:12).

⁴⁹ Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 105.

⁵⁰ Kline, *Glory in our Midst*, 225-6.

light (*φῶς*) for revelation to the nations, and the glory (*δόξα*) of your people Israel" (Lk. 2:29-41). Into John's Gospel, one notes the depiction of the event of the incarnation, in glory terminology, as the coming of the divine light. It is obvious that "salvation is instantiated through direct intervention of the divine light."⁵¹ Also, Matthew's translation of Emmanuel (1:21-3) applies to Jesus the functional, messianic character of the divine presence formula, "God with us", Matthew has given his audience the restoration of the OT promise of divine presence: a static nature (Matt.18.20), with cultic connotations, and, also, a dynamic presence (Matt.28.20). The tradition of Jesus' naming as "Emmanuel – God with us" and his Yahwistic "I am with you" declaration were provocative,⁵² describing "God's saving immanence, retrospectively and immediately, 'with' his people".⁵³

But Luke is only evangelist to use the word "glory" (*doxa*) and only to mention that Jesus and the three apostle went up the mountain specifically to pray (Lk 9:29-31). This is a detail in spiritual tradition of hesychasm which was richly developed, the vision of light at the culmination of intense periods of prayer is the deification of our nature. This light is enhypostatic symbol, the uncreated radiance of God, a divine energy. This manifestation of Christ in the divine nature is not something external to ourselves. It is interiorized through the life of ascetism and prayer.⁵⁴ Christ will radiate within us like to the desert Fathers: Pambo, Sisoë, Silvanus, Ramfors. In the later monastic tradition apocalyptic visions recede and ecstasies come to be connected more with the vision of light (St. John Climacus in 7th and St Simeon the New Theologian in 10th century). Transfiguration becomes an interior experience to St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) and Archimandrite Sophrony (1896-1991).⁵⁵

This "glory soteriology" doctrine sees salvation coming through the theophany of the divine glory. Now, still remaining in the context of the New Testament we will be searching into the Pauline theology the basis of "biblical theosis" and its link to with theophanies. Thus, drawing from 1 Cor. 15:10, 42-49; 2 Cor. 3:13-18; Rom. 8:14-16, 28 and Phil. 3:21 Stephen Finlan focus on the

⁵¹ Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 107-8.

⁵² David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel. Divine presence and God's people in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 169, 220, 241. This movement entails the dramatic transfer of *exousia* to Jesus (Matt. 11.27 and 28.18).

⁵³ Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel. Divine presence*, 238-39.

⁵⁴ Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer that Tunes the Heart to God* (Orleans: Paraclete Press, 2009), 3-32; George Maloney, *Prayer of the Heart: The Contemplative Tradition of the Christian East* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), 11-34, 127-146.

⁵⁵ Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 20-21; Archimandrite Sophrony, *We shall See Him As He Is* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988), 155-156.

association of Pauline theology and *theosis*. He highlights Paul's use of the terminology of being "transformed into Christ likeness, which can truly be called *theosis*". For Finlan "*theosis* in Paul always involves both cruciform and *anastasiform* living (Phil 1:23)".⁵⁶ Becoming like Christ or *christification*, is equivalent to becoming like God or *deification*. Christopher Barina Kaiser is looking for the traces of this „*Kyriocentric Visions*” in 1 Cor. 9:1-2. Here Paul justifies his apostleship on the basis of his having seen the Lord Jesus. Paul's language here is clearly visionary – he had never seen Jesus in the flesh (Gal. 1:11-12, 15). The Kyriocentric nature of the vision he describes is indicated by the combination of the verb *to see* (ὁράω, *horáō*) with the title *Lord* (Κύριος, *ho Kyrios*).⁵⁷

Theosis, also, is described as “*transformation into unveiled glory*” (2 Cor. 3.7-18).⁵⁸ By this verse (2 Cor. 3.18) deification through the vision of God become an immanent and mystical event. This aspect of deification as transformation into glory (*glorification*) is “both an inward quality of spiritual knowledge and an outward radiance”.⁵⁹ The nature of the δόξα (*glory*) of Moses and the visible splendour shining from his face (πρόσωπον) from his direct contact with God (Exod 34.29) signifies “God's visible, mobile, divine presence”⁶⁰ and “*by virtue of the fact of his presence with God, Moses face was glorified (δεδοξασμένη)*”.⁶¹ As all believers encounter God directly (with *unveiled faces*) through the Spirit's presence they reflect this glory as mirrors and are themselves glorified in the process (*from glory to glory*).

⁵⁶ Stephen Finlan, “Can We Speak of *Theosis* in Paul?” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen, Jeffery A. Wittun (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 68-80, here 78. Finlan describes this as a three-stage process: dying to sin, reflecting light and receiving a glorious body.

⁵⁷ Christopher Barina Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory. Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 121-148.

⁵⁸ N.T. Wright, “Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18” in *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, ed. N. T. Wright (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 175-92, at 184; Morna D. Hooker, “Beyond things that are Written? St Paul's use of Scripture” in *From Adam to Christ. Essays on Paul*, ed. Morna D. Hooker (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 139-154, at 149-50.

⁵⁹ S. Finlan, “Can We Speak of *Theosis* in Paul?,” 75.

⁶⁰ Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 190; David A. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 103; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 408, n. 229.

⁶¹ Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 159. About the “glory” of Moses see: Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory. Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* (New York: T&T Clark, 1991) 297-302; Paul B. Duff, *Moses in Corinth: the apologetic context of 2 Corinthians 3* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 145-148.

But Christ is not merely reflecting the glory of God as Moses did, He is the glory of God, He is the light of this glory. Therefore, transformed into Christ's divine glory, believers are participating in the divine presence. For Paul εἰκὼν is fundamentally somatic and this implies that the "transformation into this glory is not only noetic but also embodied because it is a visible manifestation".⁶² The noetic enlightenment is associated with participation in divine glory in 2 Cor 3-4 is correlated to the somatic experience of glory in 2 Cor 4:16-5:5. So, we "cannot separate christosis from theosis". Participation plays the structural role within this christo-form soteriology which includes a "holistic - noetic, moral, and somatic - transformation of the human modelled around Christ's restoration of humanity".⁶³ In a similar context, speaking of the hesychast method of prayer and transformation of the body, Gregory Palamas also uses this Pauline theology of 2 Corinthians in Tr. I.2.2: „Paul says: 'God, who has ordered light to shine from darkness, has made His light to shine in our hearts, in order that we may be enlightened by the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6); but he adds, 'We carry this treasure in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. 4:7). So we carry the Father's light in the face (prosōpon) of Jesus Christ in earthen vessels, that is, in our bodies, in order to know the glory of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁴

Therefore, in 2 Cor. 3:18 Paul present a Christian version of theosis as "sharing in God's reality in Christ".⁶⁵ Michael Gorman says that this text would "become foundational for the doctrine of theosis".⁶⁶ For him the best description of Paul's soteriology is "cruciform theosis" as transformative participation in Lord' kenotic life.⁶⁷ Paul speaks also of a noetic illumination through the intimate cooperation between mind (νόημα, 2 Cor. 3.14) and hearts (καρδιά, 2 Cor. 3.15).⁶⁸

In anthropological terms of the theosis, man is *the mirror of divine glory* (δόξα). In pre-nicene christological theology, borrowed from Jewish mystique of the second temple, Adam's prelapsarian ontological status was presumed to be that of a glorious being, it was luminous and quasi-angelic.⁶⁹ The 1 Cor 11:7 illustrates clearly that Paul conceives of the human being as the image of God:

⁶² Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification*, 175.

⁶³ Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification*, 246-247.

⁶⁴ Tr. I.2.2, cf. Gendle ed. (1983), 42.

⁶⁵ M. David Litwa, "2 Corinthians 3:18 and Its Implications for Theosis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 2 (2008): 117-134, here 117.

⁶⁶ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009), 120.

⁶⁷ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 162.

⁶⁸ See the link between δόξα and εἰκὼν in 2 Cor. 3.18 and 4.4.

⁶⁹ Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 150.

“A man (άνήρ) must not cover his head, because man is the image (εἰκών) of God and the mirror of his glory (δόξα).” Also, in 2 Cor 3:18 the increasing glory of the human being comes actually as the result of contemplating Jesus’ divine glory as in a mirror.⁷⁰ *Eikonic* soteriology, therefore, represents the transformation from being the *eikon* of Adam into the *eikon* of the glorious Jesus (τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης; Phil 3:21).⁷¹ All those who will be saved and deified will be transformed through *Μορφὴ Θεοῦ*, the Jesus’ Pre-Incarnate and eschatological Form. But this pneumatic nature of Christ’s luminous body is experienced through Eucharist as well. This holy sacrament access the divine corporeality of light, veiled by Christ’s visible body. The Eucharist is subsequently identified with the “great body of Christ” on which the “light of the world” is set (ἔδω).⁷² In order to access the divine corporeality of light, veiled by Christ’s visible body, Christians need to be initiated. Thus, Jesus unveils his Divine and Glorious Form on the Mount of Transfiguration.⁷³ So, the event of the transfiguration plays the significant pedagogical role of revealing both “*the pre-incarnate Form of the Logos and the paradigm and telos of human destiny, its eschatological, deified, and glorious condition*”.⁷⁴

3. MOTHER OF LIGHT concealed in the light of her Son. Mary the first fully deified human hypostasis (*deification precedes salvation*)

At St. Gregory the deiform life from the Holy of holies of the Virgin has a similar interpretation, says John Meyendorff, as the one gave by Gregory of Nyssa to the ascent of Moses on Sinai, expression of the mystical ascent of the soul to God⁷⁵. Thus, in *Homily 53*⁷⁶ the Virgin Mary is seen by Saint Gregory Palamas as the biblical prototype of this hesychast life. She realizes in herself the likeness of God, and through the the grace of deification gains the form of God (*morphe tou Theou*; cf. *Hom. 53, 61*). Her deification precedes the Incarnation,

⁷⁰ Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 153. The “epistemic process of contemplation generates the ontological mirroring process”: because for us there is no veil over the face, we all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου), and we are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into his likeness (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) with ever-increasing glory (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν).

⁷¹ Again, human beings are not transformed into Adam’s prelapsarian image or glory, as in Qumran theology, but into Christ’s image: the *eikon* of the Heavenly Anthropos and the second Adam; cf., Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology*, 227, 250-1; Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 156.

⁷² Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 298-300.

⁷³ John McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 155-7.

⁷⁴ Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology*, 301-3.

⁷⁵ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1959), 391.

⁷⁶ *Homily 53*, in Saint Gregory Palamas: *The Homilies*, ed. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2014), 339-345.

„God being united with her flesh after she has previously united her mind with Him”.⁷⁷ In the Holy of Holies attained to the highest and most perfect realization of quiet and mental prayer (*νοητήν σιγήν*).⁷⁸

In the *Triads* Gregory had laid emphasis on deification as an experiential reality (*Tr.* I.3.5).⁷⁹ Papanikolaou says that Incarnation gives priority to ontology over epistemology. The type of knowledge that results from union with God is manifested in one person – the Theotokos. As a deified person, the Theotokos experiences the fullness of union with God. By being united to Christ through the Incarnation, she offered her human nature to Christ and receives it purified. Therefore, „*Theotokos manifests in her person all the glory that is the goal for all individuals, but also the church*”.⁸⁰

In his Mariological homilies, St. Gregory Palamas’ intuition of the relationship between deification and salvation, shows a Byzantine theological theme concerned by soteriological report of Virgin Mary and Her Son. Thus, developed on the same hesychastic line by Nicolas Cabasilas, too, Mariology becomes in his case a launching deck of the Orthodox apology of deification, as creational vocation of the human being, in the byzantine-scholastic debate of oikonomic axes (creation-deification versus sin-salvation).

Cabasilas’ movement of terminology from the deification to Christomorphisation led him withal to the assertion of a theocentric humanism, represented by the central figure of the Virgin Mary. Adam’ predestination was mariological one, man being made in order to Virgin Mary’s appearance.⁸¹ Marian *homilies* of Nicholas Cabasilas could be a chapter of the *Life of Christ*, given their complementarity. Thus, gravitating around the the central theme of byzantine mariology (hidden life of the Virgin Mary), Saint Nicholas Cabasilas theological synthesis represent a mystagogical complementarity to the Palamism doctrine, which provides an ontological content to deification, understood as Christification.⁸² The American Greek Theologian, Constantinos Tsirpanlis⁸³, demonstrates that at the basis of Cabasilas’s humanist Mariology is a completely different theological anthropology than that of Augustin. He insists upon the ascetic-spiritual nature of purity and

⁷⁷ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 214-5.

⁷⁸ *Homily 53*, in Veniamin (ed.), p. 339-345. This „silence of mind” (noetic prayer stops in ecstatic union), the hesychasm fruit, is achieved when nous unites itself with the Divine Mind beyond its own nature.

⁷⁹ Norman Russell, “Theosis and Gregory Palamas: Continuity or Doctrinal Change?,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 50/4 (2006): 357-379, ad 377.

⁸⁰ Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, 45-46.

⁸¹ Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă* (Sibiu: Deisis, 1999), 266.

⁸² Nichifor Tanase, “Deification and redemption. Introduction to a mariological hesychasm and theocentric humanism of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas”, in *Sv. Nikolaj Kabasilas. Problematika teologie, mistiky a filantropie*, ed. Jan Šafin, et al. (Prešove: Prešovska University Press, 2013), 54-88.

⁸³ Constantinos Tsirpanlis, “The Mariology of Nicholas Cabasila,” *Kleronomia* 11 (1979): 273-288.

holiness of the Virgin, giving expression to a “mariocentric christology” as synthesis between a “mariocentric humanism” and an “anthropological Christology.”⁸⁴ Marian homilies could be a chapter of Life in Christ, due to their complementarity and his „marianocentrism completes his christocentrism”.⁸⁵

For Sherwood, Mary, in Byzantine theology, is co-dweller with Him in the eternal tabernacles and there having obtained unceasing intercession to Him: “*the ascription of the fulness of grace is grounded in her role as Theotokos*”.⁸⁶ And to Behr-Sigel “*this acquisition of the fulness of grace appropriate to the age to come, could only happen to a deified being*”.⁸⁷ Also, Lossky notes that “*Incontestably she who was chosen to be the Mother of God was at the summit of Old Testament holiness*.”⁸⁸ In such a context Lossky says that the Roman Catholic dogma of the *Immaculate Conception* places her outside the rest of humanity-before-Christ and “seems to break up this uninterrupted succession of instances of Old Testament holiness”.⁸⁹ Here, in the above statements, the two strong currents of Marian thought, that we have met in Palamas and Cabasilas, come together.

The Scripture and Church tradition only emphasize the three prerogatives: Mother of God (*Theotokos*), Ever-Virgin (*Aeiparthenos*) and over worship (*hyperdoulia*)⁹⁰, but Mary's life has as its own characteristic the fact that “*she remains hidden in her Son's light*”⁹¹.

The Ascension of Virgin Mary was not seen because the Light covered her completely, an absorption of materiality in the light of her Son's glory. As Indicated by Stăniloae “*the creature deified by God equates with her enveloping and covering by God's glory*”⁹². And this hidden into the light also means a double paradoxal “humbleness” (ascension is humbleness in Orthodoxy). This aspect of Virgin Mary's humbleness, of her hiding into the light of her Son is, in fact,

⁸⁴ Christopher Veniamin, *The Orthodox Understanding of Salvation. „Theosis” in Scripture and Tradition* (Dalton PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2014), see, especially, the chapter: “The Sinlessness of the Mother of God according to Saint Nicholas Cabasilas,” 45-59.

⁸⁵ Yannis Spiteris, *Cabasila: teologo e mistico bizantino. Nicola Cabasilas Chamaetos e la sua sintesi teologica* (Roma: Lipa, 1996), 45-58.

⁸⁶ Polycarp Sherwood, “Byzantine Mariology,” *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8 (1962): 107-137, here 120-121 and 134.

⁸⁷ Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (New York: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1990), 91-92.

⁸⁸ Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), Chapter 11: “Panagia,” 195-210.

⁸⁹ Sherwood, “Byzantine Mariology,” 130-131. Lossky's doctrine on the Mother of God is clearly in the Palamite tradition; equally clearly it is indebted to Scripture.

⁹⁰ Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the creation of Christian Constantinople* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 53-141.

⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Învățătura despre Maica Domnului la ortodocși și catolici,” [The doctrine of the Virgin Mary at Orthodox and Catholics] *Ortodoxia* 4 (1950): 559-609, here 561.

⁹² Stăniloae, “The doctrine of the Virgin,” 601.

also a so complete union that (as Teophan of Nicaea shown), “*there is a single energy of the Son and His Mother, the uncreated divine energy*”. So, the Son is inseparable from both His Father, by hypostatic relationship, and from his Mother, by energy relationship. Christ sent all His graces through His Mother, so all our prayers to Christ passes through her. Prayer is the maximum effect of union with God, while her mediation means her diving and covering in Christ and in the light of His glory. Her Glory is always a glory from Christ and in Christ. Thus, in his Mariology, “*Orthodoxy reconciles the glory of the Virgin Mary with the most categorically christocentrism*”.⁹³

Mother of God is full of the divine energies more than anyone else, energies poured from His humanity; therefore, she is “the real mediator of divine energy.” As a result, “all the gifts and graces ontologically pass from Christ to us through her” and then “to be united with Christ” means, at the same time, “to be united also with his Mother”: “*The idea that Mother of God is also an irradiator, irradiating of the divine energy, not only a prayer to God, can not be taken into discussion without undermining all the essential principles of orthodox spirituality and thinking*”.⁹⁴ According to Gregory Palama and Teophan, Mother of God is “*God’s laboratory of exchanges with us*”: through Mother of God we gave Him the humanity in the act of incarnation, so the Son of God doesn’t offer us instead deification without mediation of the Virgin.⁹⁵ Mother of God is a “*torch full of divine light, one that captures all the light of which creation is capable of*”. Becoming light herself, she is “the creation in which God is even from now all in all”, in who was accomplished “the mystery of her supreme union [*theosis*] with God”.⁹⁶ Resurrected and raised beyond death and and judgment, on the throne at the right of her Son in His glory (new *merkabach*), Mother of God is also icon of eschatological glory to which the entire humanity is being called; she is also the anticipated vivid image of accomplished redemption. Mariology represents the inner organic structure and logic of Orthodoxy.

In *Homily 57*, St Grigory Palamas claims that the purity of the Virgin for the the Son of God’s incarnation from her, was prepared by the purity of a whole series of predecessors.⁹⁷ By preparing herself through personal efforts, Virgin Mary reduced the ancestral sin from her to a pure passive potency, man’s condition before the Fall, the ideal original beauty of the adamic man. Also, for Teophan of Nicaea, the “Mariologue” of Byzantine theology, Mary became both Mother of God

⁹³ Stăniloae, “The doctrine of the Virgin,” 608-9.

⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Virgin Mary as mediatrix,” *Ortodoxia* 5/1 (1952): 79-129, here 84.

⁹⁵ Stăniloae, “Virgin Mary as mediatrix,” 95.

⁹⁶ Stăniloae, “Virgin Mary as mediatrix,” 125-6.

⁹⁷ *Homily 57*: „concerning the genealogy according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Ever-Virgin Mother of God who bore Him in virginity”, Christopher Veniamin ed., 2014, 468-476.

and Mother of rational creatures - angels and humans – “deified in Christ through her”. And this is because, in Teophan’s view, “*the first created receptacle of graces or of divinity’s plenitude is Christ’s humanity, and the second - the one through which He is disseminated to all rational creatures - is Mother of God*”.⁹⁸

A deep theological meditation upon the Annunciation reflected in the episode Lucan’s prologue is commented by father Stăniloae starting from amply quoted Mariological homilies of Nicolas Cabasilas. Her position special “*border between the created and the uncreated*” make her the Mediatrix of all graces of God for both angels and humans. At the Annunciation there was’t a cleansing, but a ‘adding grace’. Now the Holy Spirit gave her the stillness in direct contemplation of God, which is for Cabasilas eschatological states.

As stated by Louis Bouyer and “*from the first moment of her existence, God’s grace has taken possession of our nature*”.⁹⁹ Therefore, there is into The Mother of God a process of growth in holiness from that of the Old Testament in that holiness of the Church (Pentecost) to eschatological kingdom of heaven which they entered by Dormition. So, Mary is “the first human hypostasis fully deified”.¹⁰⁰

Eva, although she hadn’t had the stain of an inherited sin, yet she had fell and had tarnished herself. Instead Mary, without having had the saving grace of redemption, had the maximum degree of grace (filling her with grace even before the Incarnation of the Word) and the general power for avoiding evil and for doing good, features that the righteous of Old Testament had them, too. For instance, Ephrem juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus’ veiling oh Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body (*Hom. on Nativity* 73). Sebastian Brock extends comparison between two forms of light with the internal light of Mary’s womb when bearing Jesus: ‘*brightness which Moses put on’ is coming from outside him, but to the river in which Jesus was baptized, He ‘put on Light from within*’.¹⁰¹ Mary’s womb weaves a garment of glory and

⁹⁸ Stăniloae, “The doctrine of the Virgin,” 589.

⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 3 (București: EIBMBOR, 1997), 214.

¹⁰⁰ Georges Florovsky, “The Ever-Virgin Mother of God,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1976) 171-188;

¹⁰¹ Sebastian Brock, *The Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syrian Churches* (Kottayam: St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1994) 29; S. Brock, “St Ephrem on Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: Hymni de Ecclesia 36,” *Eastern Churches Review* 7 (1975): 137-144, at 138. The doctrine of *Theosis* or divinization, as Ephrem understand it, is just a way of making explicit what it means to become ‘children of God’ (semitic *bar*, ‘son of’ means ‘*sharing in the attributes of*’). As Sebastian Brock upholds “*The concept of divinization in Ephrem is a natural outcome of the pattern of complementarity which he sees between the divine descend ant its purpose, namely the restoration of Adam and the human ascent*”; cf., Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Collegeville: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 145, 152.

reclathes sinful Eve who stripped off the garment of glory. In Mary, the light-bearing Christ is ‚woven’ as a garment. Christ’s light transforms her body in which He resided, as it ‚gleams from within’.¹⁰²

Summit of Old Testament holiness, Mary is fulness of grace and manifests in her person all the glory. This is why she is the eschatological icon of glory. Thereby, mariology is becoming the Orthodox shield of deification, as creational vocation of man.

4. TABORIC LIGHT and *theosis* through the uncreated divine energy. „He himself is deifying light” (deification as enhypostatic illumination)

Gregory calls the light seen on Mount Tabor ‘enhypostatic’, i.e. without any hypostasis of its own (*Tr.* III.1.28), for its hypostasis is Christ: „He himself is the deifying light” (*Tr.* III.1.16). Palamas is quoting from Damascene’s assertion that the Taboric light is not alien, but natural to the divinity: “*The splendour of divine grace is not something external, as in the case of the splendor possessed by Moses, but belongs to the very nature of the divine glory and splendor*” (*Hom. in Transfig.* 10, PG 96, 561D). But when he speaks on the vision of God face-to-face, he recalls the testimony of Maximus and comes to a proper definition of theosis: “*Deification is an enhypostatic¹⁰³ and direct illumination which has no beginning, but appears in those worthy as something exceeding their comprehension. It is indeed a mystical union with God, beyond intellect and reason, in the age when creatures will no longer know corruption. Thanks to this union, the saints, observing the light of the hidden and more-than-ineffable glory, ... the symbol of the authentic and real adoption, according to the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to the bestowal of which grace the saints become and will remain the sons of God*” (Maximus, *Ad Thal.* 61, PG XC, 636C; also *Scholion* 16, *ibid.* 644C).¹⁰⁴

Saint Gregory Palamas identifies light with God, as deification’s source, as the agent of human sanctification, and as deification itself [αὐτοθέωσις, *Triads* I.3.23). The light can be portrayed as Other and external to the human subject and as the transformative power working within. Gregory does not see these two facets of light as either mutually exclusive or inherently opposed. Therefore he quotes Denys: „*This light is a supraluminous and theurgic ray, also called the deifying gift and source of Divinity*” (*Triads* III. 1.29) and in he contends that the light

¹⁰² *Hymn on the Church* 36 (6), in Brock, *Bride of Light*, 29.

¹⁰³ In the sense that the divine life finds its personal locus in each of those being sanctified.

¹⁰⁴ *Tr.* III.1.28, Gendle ed., 83-84.

„deifies those who contemplate it” (*Triads* III. 3.9).¹⁰⁵ Gregory combines both tendencies in apparent harmony saying that „those who see the light consider it as invisible” (*Triads* I.3.24). Palamas resolves the tension between *see* and *invisible* by stressing that they know this light is God: „Since the light is a person, Williams adds, *seeing the light constitutes a species of knowing*”.¹⁰⁶

The knowledge constitutes one form of apprehension and vision is another: „*The logic of the connection between these two cognates and theosis lies in the relation they imply between knower and known, seer and seen. Because what is known and seen is no less than God, this contact is transformative.*”¹⁰⁷

The intellect is seen as a point of contact with the grace of incarnate God: „*They see the vesture of their deification, their intelligence being glorified and filled by the grace of the Word*” (Tr. I.3.5). Gregory Palamas maintaining that by deification „*a person finds himself above vision and knowledge [ὄρων καὶ ἐνεργῶν]; that means he sees and acts in a way that exceeds us and is already God by grace*” (Tr. II.3.52).

Vision is an appropriate way of understanding the transforming encounter with God. So, the illuminations is a vision because „*He sees God by God*” (Tr. II. 3.52). For describing this deifying vision Palamas, often uses *seeing* alongside *knowing*, in order to show that the organ of vision was neither the senses nor the intellect: „*their vision is not a sensation [αἴσθησις] since they do not receive it through the senses; nor is it an intellection [νόησις], since they do not find it through thought [λογισμῶν]*” (Tr. I.3.18).

Contemplation [θεωρία] provides a natural link between knowledge and vision, because it seems to partake of the quality of both: „*contemplation expresses an activity that is both a form of knowing and a form of seeing*”.¹⁰⁸ Contemplation is not simply abstraction or negation but a union and a divinization by the grace of God (Tr. I. 3.17): „*Those worthy of this most happy contemplation recognise that this deifying action is superior to any vision, not by way of negation, but by a vision in the Spirit*” (Tr. II.3.26). Contemplation thus functions not only as the means to theosis but as the end itself: „*By unifying perfection [Denys] meant the coming and indwelling of God in us, which are accomplished in union and which nourish the spiritual eye by contemplation*” (*Triads* II.3.74). Therefore, *theoria* is rooted both in history and eternity, like theosis, it is the inauguration of the next world.

¹⁰⁵ „This spiritual light is thus not only the object of vision, but is also the power by which we see” (*Triads* III.2.14). Cf. *Triads* III.3.5: „It is not possible to see the light without seeing in the light” (Psalm 36:9).

¹⁰⁶ A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 115.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 111.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 113.

The deifying light pertains to God's essence but is not itself the essence of God. The disciples "from being blind men, they began to see" and contemplate this light as: "inaccessible, immaterial, uncreated, deifying, eternal, radiance of the Divine Nature, glory of the divinity, beauty of the heavenly kingdom, [wich] is at once accessible to sense perception and yet transcends it."¹⁰⁹

Deification is a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (Tr. III. 1. 33). *Our mixed human nature, which was assumed by the Lord, has taken its seat on the right hand of the divine majesty in the heavens* (Heb. 8:1), *being full of glory not only (like Moses) in the face, but in the whole body*" (Triads I.3.29). For Gregory the greatest of Biblical images for both deification and light is the Transfiguration, which represents the christological dimension of divinization: „*Our nature has been stripped of this divine illumination and radiance as a result of the transgression... [On Tabor the Word] indicated what we once were and what we shall become through Him in the future age if we choose here below to live according to his ways as much as possible*" (Capita 66).¹¹⁰

Palamas also specifically identifies light with both the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity. He calls Christ the true light, the radiance of glory (Tr. III.1.15). With respect to the Spirit, he writes that such a divine and celestial life belongs to those who live in a manner pleasing to God „*participating in the life inseparable from the Spirit*" (Tr. III.1.9).

Thus, concludes Williams, Saint Gregory Palamas „*is associating light with what we would call the economic rather than the immanent Trinity. The conclusions one would draw from the texts regarding the divine status of light correlate with what he claims explicitly of the essence-energies distinction: the agent of divinization, that in God which we encounter and which transforms us, is the divine energy, not the divine essence*".¹¹¹ Glory operates as an alternate name for divine energy and signifies the communicability of divine life: „*God, while remaining entirely in himself, dwells in us by his superessential power, and communicates to us not his nature, but his proper glory and splendour*" (Tr. I.3.23). Palamas appears to equate grace and theosis. Thus, for him this divine energy not only deifies the saints but also dwells in them permanently: „*the spiritual grace that comes into the heart is a permanent energy produced by grace, tied to the soul and rooted in it*" (Triads II.2.9).

As a cognate for deification, Gregory uses adoption (υιοθεσία) which functions as a correlative to deification: „*You should not consider that God allows Himself to be seen in His superessential essence, but according to His*

¹⁰⁹ Tr. III.1.22, Gendle ed., 80.

¹¹⁰ Saint Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters – A Critical Edition, Translation and Study*, 66, ed. R.E. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 161.

¹¹¹ Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 118.

deifying gift and energy, the grace of adoption, the uncreated deification, the enhypostatic illumination” (Tr. III.1.29). He understands by adoption the ontological regeneration, and it is hypostatic: „*The saints clearly state that this adoption, actualised by faith, is enhypostatic*” (Tr. III.1.31).

In conclusion, Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic are examples from the Bible and the Fathers of men who were visibly transformed by divine light (Tr. II.3.9). God transcends the senses yet the knowledge of God is experiential.¹¹² The monks know this. They see the hypostatic light spiritually – in reality not in a symbolic way. The divine light is the „*ineffable glory seen by the saints, the enhypostatic, uncreated light, eternally*” (Tr. III. 1. 6). But the „*hermeneutic key*” is the transfiguration of Christ, for what Christ is by nature the Christian can become by grace. The saints henceforth live with the life of God (Tr. III.1.35).

Since the light of Tabor is identical with the eternal glory of Christ, it must be a natural symbol. The angels do not only *contemplate and participate in the glory of the Trinity*, he declares, *but also in the glorification of Jesus* through “*participation in the knowledge of His theurgic light*” (De cael. hier., 7.2, PG 3, 20BC).¹¹³

Although He Himself is deifying light, Palama rejects the identification of Hypostasis with energy. St. Gregory extended Christology in the area of Trinitarian theology, so Tabor light is the uncreated energy of Son, that “*innate motion*” or “*active and essential movement of nature*”. So, perichoresis has for Gregory a dynamic character, manifesting the mystery of the Trinity’s energy as consubstantiality and mutual indwelling.¹¹⁴

The aim of Torstein Tollefsen about activity (he prefers this term instead of the energy) and participation is to interpret the Palamite doctrine of the experience of light according to the principles of the ontology. So, he says that In the image Palamas gives of the Trinity he tries to secure a „*unified dynamic*”.¹¹⁵ The divine nature or essence eternally manifests within its eternal Triadic dynamics:

¹¹² Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 308.

¹¹³ Tr. III.1.16, Gendles ed., 77. This light is “theurgic” in the sense of “divinizing”.

¹¹⁴ Amphiloque Radovic, *Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité selon saint Grégoire de Palamas* (Paris: Cerf, 2012), 170. The term enhypostasized has several meanings for St. Gregory Palamas; Saint Gregory Palamas, *Dialogue Between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* (New York: Binghampton University, 1999) 45-93, here 38 and 72.

¹¹⁵ Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 185.

„God is dynamically Himself eternally, is the Form in forms as the primal Form and this has to do with participation. Palamas says that all things participate in God, and they are constituted by this participation in His activity”.¹¹⁶

5. SACRAMENTAL THEOSIS – clothed in Christ as anthropological content of deification. Baptism - „place” of glory and Eucharist - a „veil” concealing the divinity

Adam was to be deified, and through him, all of creation would experience theosis. For Norman Russell theosis is our „*restoration as persons to integrity and wholeness*” by participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit: „*We, thus, transcend our fallen humanity by becoming the body of Christ. It is through participating in Christ intellectually, ascetically and liturgically, in mind and body, that we receive the gift of theosis*”.¹¹⁷ Also, Eastern tradition proclaims deification, its central soteriological category, as a process, because this „*Participation is a way of speaking about how «in Him we live and move and have our being» (Acts 17:28)*”.¹¹⁸

Theosis is thoroughly grounded in the Incarnation by which Lord inaugurates a new human ontology. But „*deification must not remain a general category but must acquire a specific anthropological content*”¹¹⁹ understood again as Christification. Having an iconic ontology, man’s essence is found in the archetype. So, prior to the hypostatic union (even before the fall), man was „*prechristic*” and had need of salvation, since he was an „*imperfect and incomplete «child»*”. Therefore, „*salvation of man is something much wider than redemption; it coincides with deification*”.¹²⁰ The focus here is soteriological or „*economic*”¹²¹, as Kharlamov expresses it. For John Behr, too, theosis is equivalent to Christification, because Christ assimilates us to himself and „*we are brought into the identity of Christ, becoming his body – incarnating the Word – so that we can also call upon the one God as Abba,*

¹¹⁶ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 189.

¹¹⁷ Russell, *Fellow Workers*, 21, 120.

¹¹⁸ Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2007), 97.

¹¹⁹ Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives in the Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 40.

¹²⁰ Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 24, 33, 39. Redemption is received by baptism, where the process of Christification begins. Deification as process is a Eucharistic act where the union with Christ is complete and full (ad 121-127)

¹²¹ Vladimir Kharlamov, “Emergence of the Deification Theme in the Apostolic Fathers,” in *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology*, Volume One, eds. Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 51-66. In the period of the Apostolic Fathers deification is expressed more in terms of “*economy than of ontology*” (Kharlamov, “Emergence of the Deification,” 53).

Father".¹²² All believers can share in the deified creation corporeally through sharing in the body of Christ and this transformation take place through the Eucharist, because „*deified creation already exists wholly deified as the body of Christ*".¹²³

There is a movement from the biblical sharing in the divine attribute of glory to the human nature transformed in Christ. By clothing ourselves in Christ through the agency of the Spirit we acquire a new identity which enables us to live with the life of Christ. Donna R. Hawk-Reinhard argues that the “doctrine of *theosis* is the hermeneutical key that Cyril of Jerusalem employed in his teachings on baptism and the Eucharist”.¹²⁴ Our dynamic participation in the divine life is accomplished ontological within the sacraments. In Cyril’s later writings „*partaking of the divine nature*” replace „*deification*” (*theopoiēsis*).¹²⁵ Our participation in Christ through the Eucharist is both corporeal and spiritual. For St Symeon the Theologian, the same as for Palamas, this is expressed on the one hand through the vision of the divine light, and on the other by union with Christ through receiving him in the Eucharist. These are not two ways, two alternative approaches. As Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev observes, Symeon „*presupposes that the Holy Spirit should be manifested in the one who has partaken of the Eucharist... on mystical illumination by the divine light through Communion*”.¹²⁶

First of all, the affirmation made by saint Gregory Palamas starting with *Homily 53* of the real deification of the Virgin Mary before de embodiment of the Son of God, has produced difficulties regarding interpretation. So, for some of the occidental savants, the theology of the of the uncreated energies would

¹²² John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 177.

¹²³ Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor. Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 251.

¹²⁴ Donna R. Hawk-Reinhard, “Cyril of Jerusalem’s Sacramental Theosis,” *Studia Patristica* 66 (2013): 247-256 at 247-8. Cyril thought that a person is made holy by participation (μετοχή), asceticism (ἀσκησις), and prayer (εὐχή) (*Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.19). Through this scriptural reference of 2 *Peter* 1:4, Cyril taught that Christians receive a share in Christ’s body and blood, “become of one body and one blood with Christ, and thus have become Christ-bearers who share in the divine nature through the Eucharist” (*Mystag.* 4.2-3). For Cyril’s use of 2 *Peter* 1:4 in *Mystagogic Catechesis* 4 see: Donna R. Hawk-Reinhard, *From Christianoī to Christophōroi: The Role of the Eucharist in Christian Identity Formation according to Cyril of Jerusalem* (PhD Diss., Saint Louis University, 2011) and also: Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012) 139-158.

¹²⁵ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 237.

¹²⁶ Hilarion Alfeyev, *St Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 90-92.

push in second plan both Christology (H-G Beck),¹²⁷ or even the whole triadology (D. Wendebourg).¹²⁸ The Jesuit G. Podskalsky has tried to surpass the assertions of H.-G. Beck affirming that the centrality of the Incarnation, sacraments and grace, evident in homilies, is undermined in the polemic writings about energies, through a metaphysical emanation and mysticism climbing of Neoplatonic type.¹²⁹ The two tendencies being unintegrable in Podskalsky's conception. More recently, Christiaan Kappes points out that Palamas, in thomistic view, was catalogued as a „less subtle or feeble imitator of scotistic metaphysics” and „little more than an ill-conceived son of Scotus”.¹³⁰ Instead, for the Orthodox theologians (J. Meyendorff, G. Mantzaridis) in the center of the palamite theology stands Incarnation and its extension in the Church Sacraments, would have brought a christological corrective to the evagriano-dionisiene mysticism.

Indeed, as we shall see, in his *Homilies* St. Gregory Palamas has a sacramental vision of deification. Through the sacraments we will be „clothed” in Christ: „so that you will be not only in God's image, but eternally and heavenly kings and gods clothed in Me” (*Hom.* 56.11). As the light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe of the unfallen Adam has a equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification means to be „re clothed in cleanliness” and it is built on the idea of Adam and Eve being clothed first in light/glory and then skin/figleaves/shame. Therefore, „the concept of clothing in early Syrian writings is a representation of a state of being, namely *theosis*”.¹³¹ Accordingly, *theosis* as a divinizing function of the Incarnation is phrased here as a process of stripping off and re clothing, a symmetrical stripping of the glory of the Godhead to match that lost by Adam, and re clothing of Adam through Jesus being ‘clothed in a body’.¹³²

As we'll show in the following, this rich Syrian symbolism is used also by Saint Gregory Palamas in his mystical interpretation of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist as clothing in Christ. In Palama's view there is a complementarity

¹²⁷ Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (München: De Gruyter, 1959), 367.

¹²⁸ Dorothea Wendebourg, *Geist oder Energie. Zur Frage der innergöttlichen Verankerung des christlichen Lebens in der byzantinischen Theologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980) 187, 201, 214 and 222.

¹²⁹ Gerhard Podskalsky, „Gottesschau und Inkarnation. Zur Bedeutung der Heilsgeschichte bei Gregor Palamas,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 35 (1969): 5-44.

¹³⁰ Christiaan W. Kappes, „Palamas among the Scholastics,” *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 55/1-2 (2014): 175-220.

¹³¹ Hannah Hunt, *Clothed in the Body. Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era* (London: Asghate, 2012) 137

¹³² This is expressed in *Hymn 23 on the Nativity* (13): “All these changes did the Merciful One effect,/Stripping off His glory and putting on a body;/For he had devised a way to re clothe Adam/In that glory which Adam had stripped off”, in S. Brock, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), xxiv; Cf., Hunt, *Clothed in the Body*, 137-8.

between hesychasm and Eucharist. Because, in order to “*preserve the mystery undiminished*” we need Him “*not just to seeing Him, but also to unite and nourish with Him*” (Hom. 56.11).¹³³ Sacraments bring us adoption, God’s radiance, making us anointed (χρίσματος) of God. The Eucharistic bread is „*like a veil (gr. katapétasma) concealing divinity*” (Hom. 56.8) and through communion we will „*shape Him inside of our heart*” and we’ll become by “*clothing in imperial purple dress*” “*gods clothed in God*” (Ib.). So, in Eucharistic celebration *theoria / theoptia*, or the spiritual vision is united, therefore, with *theosis* or deification.

By appealing to the Holy Eucharist, Palamas demonstrates the falsity of Barlaam’s monastic living „*from the time he came to us, nobody saw him partaking of the Holy Eucharist.*”¹³⁴ The palamitic homiletic spirituality is a *hristocentric and liturgical spirituality* where, without making a so much use of being-energies distinction, it is shown to us „*an integrated hesychasm into the sacramental life of the Church*”.¹³⁵

Saint Gregory Palamas *distinguishes between a corporeal and a spiritual aspect to our dynamic participation in God. Through the Eucharist the Son dwells within us in a corporeal sense, while the Spirit renews us and transforms us spiritually.* The Logic of St. Gregory’s theology is as follows: *Christ comes to dwell in us through two means, we partake of him in two ways, both spiritually (through the Holy Spirit) and somatically (through the Eucharist).* Here is the results of our dual participation in Christ: ‘participation’ (μέθεξις) in the Spirit through Baptism and, at the same time, in the Spirit and in the flesh of Christ through the Eucharist, becoming ‘concorporeal’ (σύσσωμοι) with Christ, the incarnate Word. For Palamas is Christ integral (*totus*), Spirit and flesh, who is present and is received in the Eucharist, a clear influence Cyrillian. Ezra Gebremedhin points out that Cyril spoke about the mode of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist in termn of an distinction between ‘*soma*’ and ‘*pneuma*’ and that the faithful participate in and are vivified in two manners: *σωματικῶς* (the level of a physical participation *μέθεξις φυσική*) and *πνευματικῶς* (unity of the faithful in the Eucharist not only a Christological but also a Pneumatological dimension). *The somatic mode of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist represent a corollary of Cyril’s doctrine of the Incarnation.* He shows a special preference for the language of 2 Peter 1: 4 (‘*partakers of the divine nature*’, *θείας φύσεως κοινωνοί*), which he frequently ties to the notions of *sanctification and a dual ‘participation’ (μέθεξις) in the Spirit*

¹³³ Gregory Palamas, „Homily Fifty-Six: On the Holy and Dread Mysteries of Christ. Delivered four days before Christmas”, in Palamas, *The Homilies*, 2^{ed} ed. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Tabor Publishing, 2014), 460-467.

¹³⁴ *Triade* III, 1, 5, in Palamas, *Défense*, ed. J. Meyendorff, 566-7.

¹³⁵ Joost van Rossum, „L’Eucharistie chez saint Grégoire Palamas: l’homélie sur Les saints et redoutables mystères du Christ,” *Contacts* 202 (2003): 180-192

through baptism and in the flesh of Christ through the eucharist.¹³⁶ With his understanding of the trinitarian dimension and his integration of the Eucharist and the moral life into how human beings participate in the divine nature, Cyril “brings the doctrine of deification to full maturity”.¹³⁷

If we “dress” ourselves with the Holy Body and Blood “we will shine (*Shekinah*) like the sun”: “We dress the imperial Porfira or rather we dress the imperial body and blood - a! Wonder of wonders! - we transform ourselves for the divine adoption when the divine radiance/brightness of God will mysteriously come to us, this radiance/brightness, above shine and beyond nature, is making us anointed of God, giving us power and His promise that at His Second Coming we will shine like the sun” (*Homily 56, 13*).

Nellas affirms that it is insufficient to study the 14th century only through the prism of saint Palamas’ theology, without the study of saint Cabasilas theology in parallel, which binds the conflict for *deification* to the *sacramental life* of the Church, placing it on a biblical foundation, offering the logic category of deification a practical content through the „displacement of terminology from deification to christification”,¹³⁸ in an orthodox vision of a *theocentric humanism*. The pauline expression „life in Christ” is interpreted by Nicolae Cabasila as a true and real *deification*, which he explains as a *christification* [*christopoiēsē*].

Cabasilas as “ascetic layman”¹³⁹ and “humanist hesychast”¹⁴⁰, without speaking nowhere in his writings about Tabor light or about the uncreated energies, he was himself an “independent Palamite”, receiving selectively the nepolemic themes from Palamite homilies: “*Nicholas Cabasilas and Palama would have been much closer to each other, if polemical needs would not have pushed the latter to force certain features of his thinking into a direction in which Cabasila does not follow him.*”¹⁴¹.

¹³⁶ Stephen J. Davis, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

¹³⁷ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 191-192.

¹³⁸ Panagiōtēs Nellas, „Lytrōsē ē theōsē? To erōtēma tou Anselmou «Giati ho Theos egine anthrōpos» kai ho Nikolaos Kabasilas,” *Synaxē* 6 (1983): 17-36. Nicholas Cabasilas dedicated number on the occasion of his canonization, in romanian translation, by Ioan Ică sr. as: Panayotis Nellas, *Hristos, Dreptatea lui Dumnezeu și îndreptarea noastră - pentru o soteriologie ortodoxă* (Sibiu: Deisis, 2012), 253-290, here 260.

¹³⁹ R.-J. Loenertz, „Chronologie de Nicolas Cabasilas,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1955): 214-215. It is significant that Manuel Kalekas belonged also to a „brotherhood” of laics.

¹⁴⁰ The absence of any ecclesiastical or monastic title shows that Nicholas Cabasilas was neither priest, nor monk, but remained all his life a “layman hesychast”; cf. M.-H. Congourdeau in introductory study to the edition of Nicolas Cabasilas, *La vie en Christ, Sources Chrétiennes* 355 (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 22-25 and 44-47. See, also: Boris Bobrinskoy, „Nicholas Cabasilas and Hesychast Spirituality,” *Sobornost* 5/7 (1968): 483-510.

¹⁴¹ M.-H. Congourdeau, „Nicolas Cabasilas et le palamisme”, in *Gregorio Palama e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino*, ed. Antonio Rigo (Florence: Orientalia Venetiana 16, 2004), 191-210, here 201, n. 44.

In his descriptions of the inner presence of Christ in man, Cabasilas relies on the doctrine of deification. According to Pekka Metso's interpretation, Cabasilas would say that through *koinonia* (as christological perichoresis - mutual interchange of properties of the two natures) and *henosis* (as mystical union), Christ is more close to man than man is to himself: „*Cabasilas' understanding of henosis can be classified as christification: through Eucharistic communion man becomes like Christ, sharing his life and operation*”.¹⁴²

According to him, the *communicatio idiomatum* or the christological perichoresis also operates in the Holy Eucharist. The human and divine natures come together and are united in a similar manner as they did in the incarnation of the Logos: „What Christ has assumed from humanity He gives to the *communicant*: *His body and blood... of deified humanity of the incarnate God*”.¹⁴³ Therefore, the incarnational realism of the Eucharistic mystery is for Cabasilas his understanding of the proper nature of Eucharistic sacrifice.¹⁴⁴

To complete circularly the four dimensions of theosis, we have to analyze also the sacramental experience of God's glory as theophany. For Alexander Golitzin the mutual indwelling of Son in His Father, Their presence into the *interior of the believer, is nothing but Glory (dóxa, cf. John 17:5, 22-24)*.¹⁴⁵ Through Baptism, at least in potency, the believer becomes himself „the place” of Glory, being called to become a „Theophany”.¹⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

In the first part of this study we analyzed *kabod* theology and its relationship with the deification (glorification) in the uncreated light as a link between the two Jewish and Christian spirituality of Holy Scripture. I emphasized that, since the first human being was created in God's image, Adam must have been a reflection of the *Kavod* and the restamping of God's image on the soul, means restoring it to its original Form and Glory. Thereby, man become “glorified” or “angelic”¹⁴⁷ and clothed in shining white garments. These interpretations

¹⁴² Pekka Metso, *Divine Presence in the Eucharistic Theology of Nicholas Cabasilas*, (Dissertations in Education, Humanities, and Theology 2, University of Eastern Finland: Joensuu, 2010), 190-191.

¹⁴³ Metso, *Divine Presence*, 100.

¹⁴⁴ Myrrha Lot-Borodine, *Un maître de la spiritualité byzantine au XIVe siècle. Nicolas Cabasilas* (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1958), 111.

¹⁴⁵ Alexander Golitzin, *Mistagogia, experiența lui Dumnezeu în Ortodoxie. Studii de teologie mistică* (Sibiu: Deisis, 1998), 41-43.

¹⁴⁶ Golitzin, *Mistagogia*, 44-45.

¹⁴⁷ Kevin P. Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish. Literature and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 227-235.

assumes the reformation of the mystical praxis into the sacramental rituals of the early Christian church, presented as the vehicles through which one come into the very presence of God and is *reintegrated into the divine immediately and ontologically*.

Also, this theophanic Kabod was a participatory doxa, as revelation and salvation. Participation entails (and guarantees) both a „*a true relation and a real distinction*”¹⁴⁸ and helps us put together God’s transcendence and otherness with the intimate communion with Triune God. „*It is because God is truly transcendent that he can also be truly immanent, without any confusion*”.¹⁴⁹

Throughout our entire presentations we saw that the kernel of theosis is participation in the divine energies through communion with Christ in his Body which is the Church. The approaches are different but complementary. Thus, the spirituality of the Orthodox Church is both liturgical and monastic and takes full account of our corporeal nature as part of our identity.

The hermeneutic key is the transfiguration of Christ, but Palamas also affirms that the prophets and patriarchs were not without experience of this light. Theosis is experienced as participation in God as light, in this life by practicing the hesychast method of prayer. In the saints this communion is expressed in the way God’s glory is reflected in their faces, in anticipation of the age to come.

For Wesche „union with God is the goal of *theosis* and the content of salvation”.¹⁵⁰ *In this deified humanity of Christ’s, man is called to participate, and to share in its deification. This is the meaning of the sacramental life and the basis of Christian spirituality*”.¹⁵¹

As we have said, this mingling of human existence, renewed in baptism, with Christ’s deified and deifying body, provides the basis for Palamas’ teaching on the mystical vision of the uncreated light. The man regenerated in Christ through baptism receives the power to become a son of God and a co-inheritor with Christ (*Hom. 16 and 59, 2*). Through the Holy Eucharist we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit: „*He has bound us to Himself and united us, as the bridegroom unites the bride to himself, through the communion of His blood, becoming one flesh with us*” (*Homily 56, 7*). This sacramental union is a real union with His deifying grace or energy. The bread of the Eucharist is „*like a veil*

¹⁴⁸ Daniel Keating, *Deification and Grace. Introductions to Catholic Doctrine* (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2007), 97-98.

¹⁴⁹ Keating, *Deification and Grace*, 101-104.

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Paul Wesche, „Eastern Orthodox Spirituality: Union with God in *Theosis*,” *Theology Today* 56 (1999), 29-43, ad 29.

¹⁵¹ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 164.

*concealing the divinity” (Homily 56) „through participation in His holy body, becoming one body with us and making us the temple of the entire divinity”.*¹⁵²

R. Flogaus sees at Palamas the juxtaposition of two heterogeneous fundamentally contradictory soteriologies: one, a mystico-hesychast neoplatonic soteriology, based on contemplative deification, and the other, a Pauline-biblical soteriology, where deification is strictly the reverse of kenosis. Palama would propose a new conception of *theosis* identified but *theoria* (θεωρία) or to uncreated glory of God.¹⁵³

Without receiving the Palamite distinction between salvation and deification, Flogaus can not understand the fact that deification is creational vocation of human. So, the visual experience of the uncreated Glory of God’s unembodied Logos is possible also before the Incarnation and outside it.¹⁵⁴

Regarding the theophanies of the Old Testament, the illumination of Moses’ face, the vision of Stephen the first martyr, the light on the road to Damascus, and above all, the light of Christ’s transfiguration on Tabor – all these are *various forms of the revelation of God’s natural light* to men. God, invisible and nonparticipable in His essence, becomes *visible and participable by virtue of His energy*. The Byzantine theologians and Palamas synthesized these two traditions and linked the vision of God with man’s deification.

Yannis Spiteris, also, demonstrated that for Palamas Mary is the incarnation of his theology, „the argument/proof of his teaching about grace” and „*the full realization of his ascetic and theological premises*”.¹⁵⁵

So Gregory Palamas operates with a more subtle nuanced understanding of the concepts of salvation and deification, and he states the continuity of theophanies and the identity of revelation and of her deifying experience in the two Testaments. The same uncreated glory of God is being seen by the patriarchs, prophets, Mary, the apostles, saints in a synergistic process of ascetic-contemplative ascent of man and of energetical descent of God.

¹⁵² Tr. I.3.38, cf. Palamas, *Défense*, Meyendorff ed., 449.

¹⁵³ Reinhard Flogaus, *Theosis bei Palamas und Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1997), 228-271, 234, 282: „Die Kontinuität und Identität der Offenbarung und Vergöttlichung vor und nach der Inkarnation” (The continuity and Identity of revelation and deification before and after the Incarnation)

¹⁵⁴ Ioan I. Ică jr, *Maica Domnului în teologia secolului XX și în spiritualitatea isihastă a secolului XIV: Grigorie Palama, Nicolae Cabasila, Teofan al Niceei* (Sibiu: Deisis, 2008), 195.

¹⁵⁵ Spiteris, *Palamas: la grazia e l’esperienza*, 173-4.

Glorification (δεδοξασμένη) through <i>Kabod</i> and Deification (θέωσις) by <i>uncreated light</i> a continuum of Theophanies			
δεδοξασμένη glorification	θέωσις deification	γνώσις and ένωσις mystical union	νοητήν σιγήν uncreated energies
<i>Kabod</i>	<i>Doxa</i> Thaboric light (τό φώς)	enhypostatic illumination	χάρις (<i>charis</i>) „ful of grace”
<i>shem</i>	Name of Christ “Emmanuel – God with us” <i>psychosomatic method of prayer</i>	<i>Kardia</i> (υιοθεσία) adoption	Contemplation θεωρία Hesychastic prayer
<i>shekinah</i>	Uncreated light (τό φώς) „His face was shining like the sun, and his clothing became white as light” Matt. 17:2	όρασης (vision) Moses, Stephen, and Arsenius visibly transformed by divine light	somatic experience of glory holy relics
<i>merkabah</i> <i>hekhlat</i>	Eucharist veil (<i>gr. katapétasma</i>) concealing the divinity	Clothed in Christ sacramentally <i>The glory robe</i> „gods clothed in Me” (<i>Hom.</i> 56.11)	co-corporeal (σύσσωμοι), co-participating (συμμέτοχοι) and co-formed (συμμορφοι) with Christ
Theophanies (revelation)	Theology (Christology)	Anthropology (Christification)	Hesychastic Mariology (pneumatology)
Ex. 33:11, 20-23	Matt. 17:2 Heb. 10:20	2 Cor. 3:18	Lk. 1:28

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