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**STUDIA
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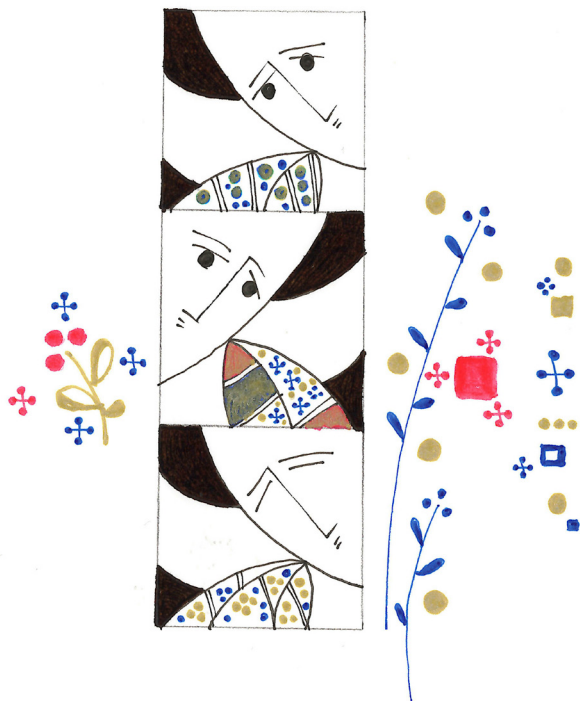
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**Hesychasm:
Theology and Praxis from Late Byzantium
to Modernity**

Edited by
Tikhon A. PINO and Mihail MITREA



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AnBoll</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CCSG</i>	Corpus christianorum, Series graeca
<i>CFHB</i>	Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae
<i>CPG</i>	<i>Clavis patrum graecorum</i> . Edited by Maurits Geerard et al. Turnhout, 1974–
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
<i>DOML</i>	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LSJ</i>	Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, <i>A Greek English Lexicon</i> . Oxford, 1925–1940. Revised Supplement, edited by Peter G. W. Glare and Alexandra Anne Thompson. Oxford, 1996
<i>MM</i>	Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, <i>Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi-sacra et profana</i> . Vienna: C. Gerold, 1860–1890
<i>OCA</i>	Orientalia christiana analecta
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
<i>OLA</i>	Orientalia lovaniensia analecta
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca</i> . Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris, 1857–1866
<i>PLP</i>	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> . Edited by Erich Trapp et al. Vienna, 1976–
<i>PmbZ</i>	<i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit</i> . Edited by Ralph-Johannes Lilie, Claudia Ludwig, Thomas Pratsch, and Beate Zielke. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013
<i>PS</i>	<i>Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα</i> . Vol. 1: <i>Λόγοι ἀποδεικτικοί, Ἀντεπιγραφαί, Ἐπιστολαὶ πρὸς Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκίνδυνον, Ὑπὲρ ἡσυχάζόντων</i> . Edited by Boris Bobrinsky, Panagiotis Papaevangelou, John Meyendorff,

ABBREVIATIONS

and Panagiotis Christou. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 1962. Vol. 2: *Πραγματεΐαι καὶ ἐπιστολαὶ γραφεΐσαι κατὰ τὰ ἔτη 1340–1346*. Edited by Panagiotis Christou, Georgios Mantzarides, Nikolaos Matsoukas, and Basil Pseftonkas. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 2010. Vol. 3: *Ἀντιρρητικοὶ πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον*. Edited by Leonidas Kontogiannis and Basil Phanourgakis. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 1970. Vol. 4: *Δογματικαὶ πραγματεΐαι καὶ ἐπιστολαὶ γραφεΐσαι κατὰ τὰ ἔτη 1348–1358*. Edited by Panagiotis Christou, Basil Phanourgakis, and Basil Pseftonkas. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 1988. Vol. 5: *Κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πεντήκοντα, Ἀσκητικὰ συγγράμματα, Εὐχαί*. Edited by Panagiotis Christou. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 1992. Vol. 6: *Ὀμιλῖαι*. Edited by Basil Pseftonkas. Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 2015.

<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
<i>RSBN</i>	<i>Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici</i>
<i>SC</i>	Sources Chrésiennes
<i>TM</i>	<i>Travaux et Mémoires</i>
<i>VV</i>	<i>Vizantiskij Vremennik</i>



Introduction

Tikhon A. PINO* and Mihail MITREA**

The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church dedicated the year 2022 to the importance of prayer in the life of Christians and to the commemoration of three renowned hesychast saints, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory Palamas, and St. Paisius Velichkovsky of Neamț. In this context, the present special issue, *Hesychasm: Theology and Praxis from Late Byzantium to Modernity*, gathers contributions on topics related to hesychast prayer and the Hesychast Controversy of the fourteenth-century. The papers here included cover a wide range of themes, from the thirteenth-century debates on the *Filioque* to the practice of watchfulness, attention, and the Jesus Prayer in modern society. The authors are leading specialists in the fields of theology, philosophy, and history, both ecclesiastics and laymen.

Although the study of hesychasm is not limited to the late Byzantine period, since the tradition of stillness and hesychastic prayer stretches from late antiquity through the Kollyvades until today, the articles included in this special issue have as their starting point the inheritance of St. Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1357) and the debates that centered on his theological contributions. In recent years, the history of the Hesychast Controversy has quietly begun to be rewritten. Through the publication of previously unedited texts and the study of hitherto neglected authors, some of whom lived long before or after Palamas himself, our understanding of Hesychast theology, in its many dimensions, continues to be enriched and expanded. Many of the wider topics relevant to the Palamite controversy and Hesychast theology are reflected in this volume:

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hagiography, liturgy, monasticism, Trinitarian theology, spirituality, patristic theology and pseudepigrapha, Church history, logic, iconoclasm, anthropology, and many more. Far from focusing narrowly on the person and writings of St. Gregory Palamas alone, the present volume therefore touches on the theology of such figures as Nikephoros Blemmydes, Eustratios of Nicaea, Gregory of Cyprus, Thomas Magistros, Philotheos Kokkinos, Nicholas and Neilos Kabasilas, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, Kallistos Angelikoudes, Makarios Makres, and others. The tradition of hesychast prayer and the voices who contributed to its exposition and elaboration across many fields stretch far and wide across the rich landscape of Orthodox theology, from the late Byzantine period until today.

The editors are grateful to their eminences, Metropolitan Andrei Andreicuț and Bishop Benedict Vesa, for their prayers and unremitting support. Moreover, the editors would like to thank the editor-in-chief and the executive editor of the *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa* for their invitation to act as guest editors for this special issue dedicated to hesychasm, and to our patient and proficient copy-editor, Cristina-Alina Vesa. The editors are especially grateful to the authors for their contributions, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions and feedback. Finally, a heartfelt thank you is due to Fr. Isaac of Lupșa Monastery, whose prayers and graceful sketches embellish and enrich the present issue with visual intermissions intended to prompt contemplation and prayer.

Historical Studies

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THE HESYCHAST MOVEMENT AND THE LITURGY

Job GETCHA, Metropolitan of Pisidia*

ABSTRACT. This article shows the influence of the Hesychast movement on the liturgy, which led to a major liturgical reform in the Byzantine world. The ideal of “praying without ceasing” as a fruit of baptism led the hesychasts to consider it as the aim of the life of all Christians, monks and lay people, and to consider the neo-Sabaite *Typikon* as the most adapted *ordo* to serve as a school of prayer and to foster vigil and fasting, regarded in the patristic tradition as the main weapons against sin and passions. Conscious that “life in Christ” was anchored in the sacramental life of the Church, the hesychasts encouraged frequent communion and regarded the sacraments not as acts of individual piety but rather underlined their ecclesial and eschatological dimensions.

Keywords: hesychasm, liturgy, reform, neo-Sabaite *Typikon*, prayer, sacraments, vigil, fasting, Communion, Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, Philotheos Kokkinos, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, Nicholas Kabasilas, Symeon of Thessaloniki

Alexey Pentkovskij once said that the influence of the Hesychast movement on the liturgy was the least studied aspect of hesychasm and pointed out that major liturgical reforms were undertaken under the influence of the hesychasts in the fourteenth century culminating in the formation of what is commonly called the “Byzantine rite.”¹ This is what I tried to illustrate in my

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¹ Alexey Pentkovskij, “Из истории литургических преобразований в Русской Церкви в третьей четверти XIV столетия,” *Символ* 29 (1993): 217. See also Miguel Arranz, “Les grandes étapes de la liturgie byzantine: Palestine – Byzance – Russie. Essai d’aperçu historique,” in *Liturgie de l’Église particulière et liturgie de l’Église universelle. Conférences Saint-Serge, XXII^e Semaine d’études liturgiques, Paris, 30 juin–3 juillet 1975* (Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae, Subsidia 7) (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1976), 67–70.

doctoral dissertation devoted to the liturgical reform of Metropolitan of Kiev Cyprian Tsamblak (ca. 1336–1406), spiritual son of the great hesychast and Ecumenical Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (ca. 1300–1379).²

A myth has formed in studies of the Hesychast movement that these monks only practiced the Jesus prayer in solitude. Nevertheless, a careful study of the documents proves the contrary. Take as an example a text by the initiator of this movement, Gregory of Sinai (ca. 1255–1346), whose *Life* was written by his disciple Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople between 1350 and 1363, where the program of the day of a hermit is described:

He who practises hesychasm must acquire the following five virtues, as a foundation on which to build: silence, self-control, vigilance, humility and patience. Then there are three practices blessed by God: psalmody, prayer and reading – and handiwork for those weak in body. These virtues which we have listed not only embrace all the rest but also consolidate each other. From early morning the hesychast must devote himself to the remembrance of God through prayer and stillness of heart, praying diligently in the first hour, reading in the second, chanting psalms in the third, praying in the fourth, reading in the fifth, chanting psalms in the sixth, praying in the seventh, reading in the eighth, chanting psalms in the ninth, eating in the tenth, sleeping in the eleventh, if need be, and reciting vespers in the twelfth hour. Thus fruitfully spending the course of the day he gains God's blessings. [...] For the night vigil there are three programs: for beginners, for those midway on the path, and for the perfect. The first program is as follows: to sleep half the night and to keep vigil for the other half, either from evening till midnight or from midnight till dawn. The second is to keep vigil after nightfall for one or two hours, then to sleep for four hours, then to rise for matins and to chant psalms and pray for six hours until daybreak, then to chant the first hour, and after that to sit down and practice stillness, in the way already described. Then one can either follow the program of spiritual work given for the daylight hours, or else continue in unbroken prayer, which

² Job Getcha, *La réforme liturgique du métropolitain Cyprien de Kiev* (Collection « Patrimoines – Orthodoxie ») (Paris: Cerf, 2010), translated by Nikodimos Barousis in Modern Greek, *Το λειτουργικόν έργον του Μητροπολίτου Κιέβου Κυπριανού και η εισαγωγή του Σαββαΐτικου τυπικού εις την Λατρείαν* (Ανάλεκτα Βλατάδων 69) (Thessaloniki: Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 2016); see also idem, “La théologie liturgique du mouvement hésychaste,” *Supplément au SOP* 286 (2004): doc. 286.B [= *La Pensée Orthodoxe* 7 (2009): 39–52; in Russian, *Khristianskaia mysʹ* 3 (2006): 18–27], and “Le Psautier de Cyprien: un témoin de l’évolution de la liturgie byzantine en Russie,” *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* III.4 (2007): 33–47.

gives a greater inner stability. The third program is to stand and keep vigil uninterruptedly throughout the night.³

As it appears clearly in this text, the hesychasts distinguished continual prayer, that is, the recitation of the prayer of Jesus, from psalmody (chanting psalms), that is, the recitation of the services of the hours of the day and of the night contained in the *Horologion* (*Book of Hours*). As evidenced by this text, the hermit did psalmody at the first, third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth hour of the day, which corresponds to the offices of Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, and Vespers. The text also evokes psalmody in the middle of the night, which corresponds to the *Mesonyktikon* (Midnight office), and the office of Matins. As the Metropolitan of Diokleia Kallistos Ware once noticed, the hermit was not exempt from reciting the divine office in his cell.⁴ Thus, John Meyendorff was wrong to think that Gregory of Sinai would have belonged to an individualist tendency of the Hesychast movement denying liturgical prayer.⁵

In a letter addressed to hermit monks, the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos recommended them as well to spend their time in prayer, psalmody, and reading the Holy Scriptures, mentioning explicitly the divine offices in the church (έν τῷ ναῷ ἀκολουθίης), as well as the recitation of the Psalter and the psalmody of the Third, Sixth, and the *Typika* of the Compline in the cell (έν τῷ κελλίῳ). Kokkinos refers himself among others to the rule of the angel given to Pachomius.⁶

³ Gregory of Sinai, *Chapters in Acrostic* (Κεφάλαια δι' ἀκροστιχίδος) 99 and 101, PG 150, 1272C–1273A; English translation in *The Philokalia. The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. Gerald E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 233–234, and Evgenia Kadloubovsky and Gerald E. H. Palmer, *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 57–58.

⁴ Kallistos Ware, “Separated from All and United to All: The Hermit Life in the Christian East,” in *Solitude and Communion. Papers on Hermit Life Given at St. David's, Wales in the Autumn of 1975*, ed. Arthur M. Allchin (Oxford: Fairacres, 1977), 43.

⁵ Jean Meyendorff, *Saint Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe*, 2nd edn (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 51.

⁶ A critical edition of this text (Πρός τινά τῶν σπουδαίων ἀδελφῶν αἰτήσαντα πῶς δεῖ διάγειν έν τῷ κελλίῳ) is available in Georgi R. Parpulov, *Toward A History of Byzantine Psalters* (Plovdiv, 2014), 303–308 (Appendix E5). The text was translated into Italian and Spanish by Antonio Rigo and Amador Vega respectively, “Ad un monaco zelante,” in *L'amore della quiete (ho tes hesychias eros): l'esicasmò bizantino tra il XIII e il XV secolo*, ed. Rigo (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 1993), 175–180 = “A un monje celante que le ha pedido cómo hay que comportarse en la celda,” in *Silencio y quietud. Místicos bizantinos entre los siglos XIII y XV*, eds. Rigo and Vega (Madrid: Siruela, 2007), 159–163.

A somewhat later text, the *Spiritual Century* of Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos (late fourteenth century), which was included in the *Philokalia* of Nicodemus the Hagiorite, gives a similar testimony. Kallistos II Xanthopoulos, who was Ecumenical Patriarch in 1397 for only three months, was, together with his brother Ignatios, spiritual father of a renowned monastery in Constantinople attended by Nicholas Kabasilas and Symeon of Thessaloniki. They also insist on the recitation in the cell of the Midnight office, the Hexapsalm, Psalm 50, the canon, the hymnography and doxology of Matins, the first hour and the other offices of the hours, in addition to the prayer of Jesus.⁷ For instance, they write to hesychasts: "Upon awakening, first give praise to God and, having asked His intercession, begin your most important work, that is, to pray in the heart, purely and without distraction. Pray thus for about an hour. [...] Then sing the midnight service."⁸

I shall add a third example, namely the passage of a letter from Patriarch Euthymius of Tarnovo (1327–1402) to a monk living on the Holy Mountain named Cyprian, who is generally identified with Cyprian Tsamblak, where the patriarch instructs the monk as follows: "Never neglect the chanting of Matins and of the hours, of Vespers as well as Compline, and with these, the Midnight office, for they are powerful weapons of the soul against enemies."⁹

All these examples testify to the fact that the hesychast monks in no way neglected the liturgical offices, which explains why they were at the origin of a real liturgical reform in the Byzantine world during the fourteenth century. Let us now try to define its major principles.

The Universality of Prayer

For the great hesychast doctor Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1357), the command of the Apostle Paul to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17) must be applied to all Christians without any exception. Therefore, the unceasing prayer is a necessity for both monks and people living in the world. We find this idea in a passage from the *Life* of Saint Gregory Palamas, written by the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, where he tells a debate between the saint and an old monk named Job:

⁷ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century* 25–27 and 37, ed. in Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν, vol. 4 (Athens: Αστήρ, 1991), 224–226, 236–237, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 195–198 and 209–211.

⁸ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century* 26, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 197.

⁹ See the appendix "Евфимия патриарха Трновского послание к Киприану мниху, живущему в Святей горе Афонсцей" in Vladimir Kachanovskiy, "К вопросу о литературной деятельности болгарского патриарха Евфимия," *Христианское Чтение* 2 (1882): 246.

This ascetic was once sitting with the great man ... and listening attentively to what he was saying, because he had heard him say among other things that every person called by Christ, of whatever station in life, ought to practice unceasing prayer in accordance with the Apostle's exhortation, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17), which is addressed to the Church as a whole, and also with the prophet David, who even though he was a king said: "I keep the Lord always before me" (Ps 15:8). The great Gregory, too, doubtless follows them when he says: "It is more important to remember God than to breathe," himself addressing the faithful as a whole in the same way. "It is necessary," he concluded, "that we too, persuaded by the examples I have given, should teach these things in the same way not only to those who have left the world and embraced the monastic life, but also to men, women and children, to the educated and the uneducated, to everyone without distinction, and make every effort to introduce them to it." When the old man heard the wise Gregory say these things ... [h]e tried to argue against such manifest and incontrovertible arguments, maintaining that this was only for monastics who had withdrawn from the world, not a general teaching for the many living a secular life. The great man added to his arguments many other similar examples but was utterly unable to persuade the elder, so he put a stop to the discussion as he was anxious to avoid loquaciousness and contention. [...] God immediately resolved their dispute from above. Using an angel as a minister, he taught the ignorant monk in a compassionate way what he had not learned, at the same time honouring Gregory supernaturally, one might say, for what he had said. "With regard to what was being discussed a short while ago, O elder, do not hold any other opinion whatsoever than that which the holy Gregory expressed."¹⁰

From this principle that prayer is a universal Christian virtue, and that all, monks and lay people, must devote themselves to continual prayer, derives the other principle that the liturgical offices of monks and lay people must be regulated by one and the same *ordo*, one and the same *typikon*. And in the eyes of the hesychasts of the fourteenth century, this *typikon* was the neo-Sabaite *Typikon* in use at the time on the Holy Mountain, which they conceived as endowed with patristic authority, as asserted at the turn of the fifteenth century by Symeon of Thessaloniki:

¹⁰ Philotheos Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἀγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης* 29, ed. Demetrios Tsamis, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα. Α΄. Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἄγιοι* (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1985), 457–458; English trans. Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas. The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam. Documents Relating to Gregory Palamas* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 81–82.

This ordinance (διάταξις) is very necessary and patristic. It is indeed our divine Father Sabbas who recorded it, after having received it from Saints Euthymius and Theoktistos, as they had received it from their predecessors and from Chariton the Confessor. This regulation (διατύπωσις) of Saint Sabas which, as we learned, had disappeared after the ruin of the place by the barbarians, our Father among the saints, Sophronios, patriarch of the Holy City, put all his care into restoring; and again, after him, our divine Father and theologian John of Damascus renewed it and transmitted it in writing.¹¹

For the hesychasts, sacred Tradition was extremely important, since this is what connects the believer to the mystery of salvation. As Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos write:

From the very beginning, from the first coming of Christ on earth up to our times, our glorious teachers who followed Him, shining like lamps in the world with the radiance of their life-bearing words and wonderful deeds, have transmitted to one another right up till to-day this good seed, this sacred drink, this holy germ, this inviolate token, this grace and power from above, this precious pearl, this Divine inheritance of the fathers, this treasure buried in the field, this betrothal of the Spirit, this kingly symbol, this running water of life, this Divine fire, this precious salt, this gift, this seal, this light, and so on. This inheritance will continue to be so transmitted from generation to generation, even after our time up to the very second coming of Christ.¹²

The hesychasts wanted by their liturgical reform to restore and renew the Tradition which they considered to have been received from the Fathers. Thus, they envisaged reform not as an innovation but as an authentic restoration. The reform was mainly implemented by the hesychast Patriarch of Constantinople Philotheos Kokkinos and aimed to unify the liturgical rites of the whole Church on the basis of the neo-sabaite *Typikon* which the hesychasts had practiced on Mount Athos. Thus, “the sung office” (ἁσματικὴ ἀκολουθία), the old cathedral rite of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, already considered too complicated at the time of the Latin occupation, practiced in cathedral and parish churches, as well as the Stoudite monastic rule which ordered the liturgical celebrations of the monasteries, were replaced by a synthetic liturgical tradition elaborated on the basis of the neo-Sabaite monastic tradition reworked in the eleventh century, which had been introduced to Mount Athos as early as the thirteenth century.

¹¹ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De sacra precatone* 302, PG 155, 556CD.

¹² Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 97*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 268.

Philotheos Kokkinos' disciple, Cyprian Tsamblak, the Metropolitan of Kiev, who implanted this liturgical reform in his metropolis in the fourteenth century, constantly justifies the changes introduced into the worship by a reference to the Fathers, and for this he uses each time the classic expression: "we have received from our Fathers." For example, in order to abolish the ancient Constantinopolitan custom of the daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified during the weekdays of Great Lent and its reduction to only two celebrations per week, on Wednesday and Friday, Cyprian resorts to the argument from patristic authority in order to impose a Palestinian usage, as testified by the neo-Sabaite *Typikon*:

We have not received [from our Fathers] to celebrate the Presanctified before Wednesday. [...] Let it be known that in this first week of fasting, we have been given permission to celebrate the Presanctified only twice, on Wednesday and Friday. [...] We received this from the Lavra of our venerable Father Sabbas and from the coenobium of our God-bearing Father Euthymius.¹³

Similarly, Cyprian bases himself on the authority of the tradition received from the Desert Fathers and from the Apostles to justify the suppression of the celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified on Great Friday, as was prescribed by the ancient Constantinopolitan usage: "We have received from Palestine not to celebrate the Presanctified on the holy day of the Crucifixion, nor the [Eucharistic] liturgy, nor to set the table, nor to eat. [...] We have received from the Holy Apostles not to eat anything on Great Friday."¹⁴

Thus, the revival of the Sabaite tradition on Athos goes hand in hand with the Hesychast revival of the fourteenth century. It was followed by a diffusion by the hesychasts of the "neo-Sabaite" *Typikon* everywhere in the Empire and in the "Byzantine Commonwealth," thus synthesizing Hagiopolite, Palestinian, and Constantinopolitan traditions. The hesychasts considered the neo-Sabaite *Typikon* as a model for the rule of prayer of the Church because of its great ascetic rigor, its fidelity to the ancient monastic and patristic tradition, and also because it remained accessible to the specific needs of their particularly troubled times. This liturgical reform carried out by the hesychasts is at the origin of a liturgical synthesis which goes hand in hand with the great dogmatic synthesis carried out at the same time by the great hesychast master, Gregory Palamas.

¹³ *Psalter of Cyprian*, ff. 272^r, 274^r; cf. Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, 443–444.

¹⁴ *Psalter of Cyprian*, f. 281^v; cf. Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, 446–447.

Night Vigil

As the rule of Gregory of Sinai attests, the hesychasts cherished prayer during the night. Indeed, as seen above, according to St. Gregory, the perfect monk does not sleep at all but would “stand and keep vigil uninterruptedly throughout the night.”¹⁵ This is not an innovation of the hesychasts. Indeed, night prayer has always been recommended in the monastic tradition. The monks considered the night as a good time for prayer, where man can speak alone with God. For example, the *History of the Monks of Egypt* recounts that Antony woke up his disciple Paul the Simple in the middle of the night to spend the rest of the night in prayer, until the ninth hour of the day.¹⁶ John Cassian also attests to the ancient practice in Egyptian monasticism of praying at night to which he attaches the rule of the twelve psalms revealed by an angel to Pachomius.¹⁷

The attachment of the hesychasts to prayer during the night explains why the dissemination of the purely monastic office of *agrypnia* (all-night vigil) to the entire Church was one of the fundamental points of the Hesychast liturgical reform. This office had developed at St. Sabbas in Palestine for practical reasons, namely the impossibility of the hermit monks to go back and forth from the monastery church to their cell in the desert during the night. For this reason, the Sabaitic anchorites held an all-night vigil on the eve of Sundays and feasts and would spend the entire night in prayer in the main church of the monastery. During the liturgical reform of the hesychasts, this service was diffused in cenobitic monasteries and in secular churches as well for reasons of liturgical theology, namely the importance given to night prayer. This served to make this nocturnal community service into a school of prayer for all Christians. Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos testify to the existence of this office on the eve of Sundays and of feast days in their *Spiritual Century*. They exhort the hesychasts:

it is always useful to force yourself to keep night vigil, it is better for you always to keep vigil on Sundays, in spite of the additional vigils which may occur during the week [...]. You will soon see for yourself the great profit this brings you, for in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Then shall thy light break forth like the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily” (Is 58:8). St. Isaac says: “The work of fasting and vigil is the beginning of every endeavour directed against sin and lust, especially in

¹⁵ Gregory of Sinai, *Chapters* 101, trans. in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 234, and *Writings from the Philokalia*, 58.

¹⁶ *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 24, ed. André-Jean Festugière (Subsidia Hagiographica 34) (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961), 131–133.

¹⁷ John Cassian, *Institutes* II, 4, ed. Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien, Institutions cénobitiques* (SC 109) (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 64.

the case of a man who fights against the sin which is within. This practice shows hatred of sin and lust in the doer of this invisible warfare. Almost all passionate impulses decrease through fasting. The next thing which specially helps in spiritual doing is night vigil. He who keeps these two as his companions through life is a friend of chastity.”¹⁸

This service of Sabaite origin spread starting from the fourteenth century thanks to the efforts the hesychast Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, who occupied the patriarchal throne twice (1353–1354/5, 1364–1376) and who had been abbot of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos (ca. 1342–ca. 1345) where he composed two important liturgical documents: the *Διάταξις τῆς ἱεροδιακονίας* (*Diataxis* of Sacred Service) ordering the Divine Offices and particularly of the all-night vigil (*agrypnia*) according to the neo-Sabaite *Typikon*, and the *Διάταξις τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας* (*Diataxis* of the Divine Liturgy) giving detailed rubrics for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus, Philotheos’ *Diataxis* of Sacred Service represents one of the final stages of the development of the monastic vigil service, which was thus codified and introduced in all churches for the eve of Sundays and major feasts. It pushed even the urban monks to return to the sources of a more austere monasticism of the desert and to introduce it in the secular churches in place of the ancient “sung office.”¹⁹

Philotheos’ *Διάταξις τῆς ἱεροδιακονίας* describes in detail the all-night vigil: how the priest and the deacon who serve must bow in front of the icons, what liturgical vestments they must wear, how they must cense the whole church before the beginning of the office, what the singers should sing, how the canonarch should act, when the doors of the sanctuary should be opened and closed. *Inter alia*, it prescribes that the prayers of the Constantinopolitan *Euchologion* which were read throughout Vespers and Matins of the “sung office” must from now on be read one after the other during Psalm 103 of Vespers and during the Hexapsalm of Matins. It prescribes how the little entrance of Vespers, with the censer preceded by two luminaries, must take place, how the *litē* (λίτή) must take place in the narthex and how the blessing of the loaves is to be done in the middle of the church, followed by the selected patristic reading. It then unfolds the order of Matins with the *polyeleos* and the reading of the Gospel. And it describes how the anointing takes place after the end of the Matins on feast days.²⁰

¹⁸ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 33*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 206.

¹⁹ Cf. Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite. A Short History* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 82; Arranz, “Les prières presbytérales des matines byzantines,” *OCP* 38 (1972): 85.

²⁰ Jacques Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive rituale graecorum complectens ritus et ordines divinae liturgiae* (Paris, 1647), 1–8.

The *Psalter of Cyprian* prescribes the office of all-night vigil on the eve of Sundays and of major feasts as well as of other feasts according to the discretion of the superior, in accordance with the spirit of the neo-Sabaite *Typika*. It explicitly mentions that it is to be served a dozen times during the year.²¹

The Importance of Fasting

As already seen, following Isaac the Syrian, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos considered vigil and fasting as the two privileged weapons against sin.²² The hesychasts thus inherited the ascetic tradition of fasting which was a biblical, apostolic, and patristic practice. Indeed, fasting is present in both the Old and New Testaments. Christ himself began his earthly ministry by retiring in order to fast for forty days in the desert.²³ Since the apostolic era, Wednesdays and Fridays have been fasting days, as attested by the *Didache*²⁴ and taken up by the *Apostolic Constitutions*.²⁵ This document recalls also the practice of fasting for forty days before the baptism administered during the Easter Vigil, modeled on the forty days of fasting of Christ in the desert, and lies at the origin of the fast of forty days before Pascha,²⁶ added to the fast of Holy Week.²⁷ Since the ancient Church, there was also a fast of one week, following the octave of Pentecost, which marked, after the abolition of fasting throughout the fifty days of the Paschal period, the resumption of ordinary time,²⁸ and which was eventually extended until the feast of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29), known in the Byzantine tradition as the Apostles' Fast. Around the year 700, a third period of fasting appeared in Byzantine monastic circles, namely the forty days of fasting prior to the Nativity of Christ, by analogy with the forty days of Lent preceding Pascha.²⁹

²¹ *Psalter of Cyprian*, ff. 195v, 221r, 223r, 232r, 240v, 246r, 267r, 288v, 289v; cf. J. Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, 214.

²² See *supra* n. 18.

²³ Mt 4:1-2.

²⁴ *La Doctrine des douze apôtres (Didachè)* 8, 1, eds. Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier (SC 248) (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 173.

²⁵ *Les Constitutions apostoliques* VII, 23, ed. Marcel Metzger (SC 336) (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 50.

²⁶ *Les Constitutions apostoliques* VII, 22, ed. Metzger, 48; *Les Constitutions apostoliques* V, 13, ed. Metzger (SC 329) (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 246.

²⁷ *Les Constitutions apostoliques* V, 18, ed. Metzger (SC 329), 268.

²⁸ *Les Constitutions apostoliques* V, 20, 14, ed. Metzger (SC 329), 382.

²⁹ Venance Grumel, "Le jeûne de l'Assomption dans l'Église grecque," *Échos d'Orient* 32 (1933): 162-194; Ivan Mansvetov, *О постах Православной Восточной Церкви* (Moscow: M. G. Volchaninov, 1886).

As we can see, in the Byzantine tradition, fasting was not an individual act of piety, but a communal and liturgical practice, since fasting was prescribed for the entire ecclesial community on specific days and in preparation for major liturgical feasts. In their *Spiritual Century*, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos exhort hesychasts to fast in a rather strict form three times a week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday:

On the second, fourth, and sixth day of the week observe the 'niners,' that is always take food only once a day (at the ninth hour of the day). Eat about six ounces of bread, of dry food not to satiation, and drink three or four cups of water following the 69th rule of the Apostles which says: "If a bishop, or a priest, or a deacon, a reader or a singer does not fast during the Holy forty days before Easter, or on Wednesday or Friday, let him be cast out, unless he does this through bodily illness. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated." Fast on Mondays was established later by the holy fathers.³⁰

Concerning the other periods of fasting, they write:

I think it is superfluous to talk in detail about the diet and mode of life during holy Lents, for as you are ordained to behave during 'niners,' so must you behave during the holy Lents, except Saturdays and Sundays. But, if you can, be even more strict, more sober during them, especially during the great forty days Lent which is as it were the tithe paid to God for the whole year, which brings to conquerors in Christ rewards for their efforts on the bright day of Divine Resurrection.³¹

It is interesting to note that the neo-Sabaite *Typikon* promoted by the hesychasts was more rigorous in the practice of fasting than the Stoudite *Typikon*. Take for example the observance of Great Saturday. While the *Typikon* of Alexis the Stoudite (1034) provided for breaking the fast after the evening liturgy of St. Basil by eating fish, cheese, and eggs, a practice also attested by the *Hypotyposis* attributed to Theodore the Stoudite (ninth century),³² the Sabaite tradition was more rigorous, since it provided that, at the end of this liturgy, bread and wine be blessed and a piece of bread, figs or dates be distributed in the church, with a cup of wine, as the only refreshment of the day.³³

³⁰ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 31*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 204–205.

³¹ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 35*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 208.

³² Pentkovskij, *Типикон патриарха Алексия Студита в Византии и на Руси* (Moscow: Moscow Patriarchate, 2001), 377; Theodore the Stoudite, *Hypotyposis*, PG 99, 1716.

³³ Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, 285.

This bears witness to the attention and seriousness given to the practice of fasting by the hesychasts. In the fourteenth century, the liturgical reform of the hesychasts disseminated throughout the Orthodox world the Constantinopolitan practice of fasting from the first of August until the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15), thus creating a fourth period of annual fasting which was added to the other periods of fasting known hitherto.³⁴ To protect the population against epidemics, it had become customary in Constantinople to take out on the first of August the relic of the Holy Cross kept in the imperial palace and to carry it in procession to the various churches of the city, thus traversing all the districts of the imperial capital in order to purify the air and protect the inhabitants from epidemics. These processions, district by district, took place until August 14, the eve of the Dormition, when the venerable Cross was brought back to the imperial palace.³⁵ The fast which accompanied this procession of the Cross later became known as the Dormition Fast, since it preceded the feast.

The Importance of the Holy Sacraments

Another misinterpretation of the Hesychast movement sometimes considers the hesychasts of the fourteenth century as new Messalians who claimed that salvation can be obtained by the sole practice of individual prayer. As we know, in the second half of the fourth century, the Messalians denied that the sacraments (including baptism) gave grace, declaring that the only spiritual power was constant prayer that led to acquisition of the Holy Spirit. This was certainly not the case with the hesychast monks. For their leader, Gregory of Sinai, “prayer is the manifestation of Baptism” (βαπτίσματος φανέρωσις).³⁶ Thus, prayer is a product or development of the sacrament of baptism. As Kallistos Ware once commented:

Such is Gregory’s basic orientation. Prayer is God within us – God who dwells in our hearts through Baptism; to pray is to pass from the stage of baptismal grace present in our hearts secretly and unconsciously, to the point of full perception and conscious awareness when we feel the activity of grace directly and immediately.³⁷

³⁴ Getcha, *La réforme liturgique*, 223–229.

³⁵ Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, II, 8, PG 112, 1005–1009.

³⁶ Gregory of Sinai, *Chapters* 113, trans. in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 237, and *Writings from the Philokalia*, 62.

³⁷ Ware, “The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai,” *Eastern Churches Review* 4 (1972): 9.

Gregory Palamas, the great doctor of Hesychasm, insists on the fact that the sacraments of the Church and continuous prayer are the two means by which man achieves his union with God. About the sacraments, he writes:

To this end, [God] established holy baptism and gave us saving laws. He preached repentance and shared His own body and blood with us. For it is not only human nature in general, but each believer as a person who receives baptism, governs his life by the holy commandments and becomes a partaker of the Bread that makes divine and of the Cup. By these means Christ justified each one of us personally and restored us to obedience to the heavenly Father.³⁸

It is remarkable that the starting point of the *Spiritual Century* of Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos is a reflection on the divine grace that is granted to man in the sacrament of baptism through the economy of Christ. Hence their exhortation to hesychasts and believers to keep active this grace received from God:

Have you realised the power of this sacrament? Have you understood the travail of our complete spiritual regeneration after we leave the holy font, its fruits, its fullness and the honours of victory? Do you see how much it lies in our power to increase or to diminish this supernatural grace, that is, to show it forth or to obscure it? What obscures it is the storm of worldly cares, and the ensuing darkness of passions which attack us like a whirlwind, or a wild torrent and, flooding our soul, give it neither rest nor possibility to look at the truly good and blessed things for which it was created. Instead, it is mauled and tortured by the waves and smoke of sensory lusts, it is plunged into darkness and dissoluteness. Conversely, grace is manifested by that which is reflected from the Divine commandments, in the souls of those who walk not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; for it is said: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). Grace leads such souls towards salvation and raises them, as by a ladder, to the very summit of perfection, to its very highest degree-love, which is God.³⁹

According to Kallistos and Ignatios, the believer's response to the divine grace received in the sacrament of baptism must be the fulfillment of the divine commandments, the practice of the virtues, the practice of the Jesus Prayer, the

³⁸ Palamas, *Homily 5*, 3, ed. Basil Pseftonkas, in *PS*, vol. 6, 83; English trans. Christopher Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The Homilies* (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), 35.

³⁹ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 5*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 167–168.

practice of fasting, the psalmody of the divine offices. Prayer is inseparable from the grace received through the sacraments. On the contrary, it keeps it alive. As a conclusion to their *Spiritual Century*, taken up in the *Philokalia*, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos emphasized the benefits of frequent communion:

The greatest help and assistance in purification of the soul, illumination of the mind, sanctification of the body and a Divine transformation of the two, as well as in repulsing passions and demons and, above all, in transubstantial union with God, in joining and merging with Him, is frequent communion in the holy, pure, immortal and life-giving Mysteries—the precious body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, Our God and Saviour—approached with a heart and disposition as pure as is possible for man.⁴⁰

As a result, they encouraged the hesychasts to communicate frequently on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the tradition received from the Fathers, affirming among other things:

St. Basil the Great writes equally in his letter to the noble Cesarea: “It is good and most useful to have communion every day and to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, for Christ Himself says clearly: ‘Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life’ (Jn 6:54). For who can doubt that to participate constantly in life, means to have the most abundant life. We take communion four times every week: On Sunday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, as well as on other days if commemoration of some saint falls on them.” I believe that this saint celebrated liturgy on these days, because, being burdened with many cares, he could not do so every day. And St. Apollos said: “Monks should, if they can, have communion of the Holy Mysteries every day, since he who withdraws from the Holy Mysteries withdraws from God, and he who constantly receives communion, always receives the Saviour into himself. For the Saviour Himself says: ‘He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him’ (Jn 6:56). Thus this practice is most useful for monks, for by this means they are constantly commemorating the passion of Christ for our salvation. Moreover they must each day be ready and so prepare themselves as always to be worthy to partake of the Holy Mysteries and receive remission of sins.” This order of life was always observed in the brotherhood of St. Apollos.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 91*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 259.

⁴¹ Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Century 92*, trans. in *Writings from the Philokalia*, 263–264.

Both disciples of the hesychasts Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, Nicholas Kabasilas and Symeon of Thessaloniki also attached great importance to frequent communion. Kabasilas considered that it is through Eucharistic communion that believers obtain the remission of the sins they confess: "Besides, there is also among the holy mysteries that which, when men repent of their sins and confess them to the priest, delivers them from every penalty of God the Judge. Yet even of this mystery they are not able to obtain the effect unless they feast at the sacred banquet."⁴² In his *Explanation of the Divine Liturgy*, he affirms that "the Holy Spirit gives remission of their sins to those who partake of these sacred gifts."⁴³ At the end of his treatise on *Life in Christ*, he stresses the importance for Christians of tending to a continual communion:

Now the true Bread who "strengthens the heart of man" (Ps 103:15) and came down from heaven bringing us life (cf. Jn 6:32-33) will suffice for all things. He will intensify our eagerness and take away the inborn sluggishness of the soul. Him we must seek in every way in order that we may feed on Him and ward off hunger by constantly attending this banquet. Nor should we unnecessarily abstain from the holy table and thus greatly weaken our souls on the pretext that we are not worthy of the Mysteries. Rather, we must resort to the priests [for confession] on account of our sins so that we may drink of the cleansing Blood.⁴⁴

Similarly, Symeon of Thessaloniki affirmed, like his masters, that all, clerics and lay people, should tend towards frequent communion:

We, bishops and priests, let us always be participants of the awesome mysteries, celebrating with attention, with a contrite heart and confession; as to others, let them receive communion frequently with repentance, a contrite heart, and preparation of soul; let none of those who fear God and love the Lord refrain from receiving communion during Great Lent. And let those who have enough strength and attention approach communion with Christ more often, and even, if they can, every Sunday, and more particularly the elderly and infirm: for it is in this communion which is our life and our strength.⁴⁵

⁴² Nicholas Kabasilas, *La Vie en Christ* IV, 22, ed. Marie-Hélène Congourdeau (SC 355) (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 284–285; English trans. Carmino J. de Catanzaro, *The Life in Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 121.

⁴³ Kabasilas, *Explication de la divine liturgie* XXXIV, 4, eds. Séverien Salaville, René Bornert, Jean Gouillard, and Pierre Périchon (SC 4bis) (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 215.

⁴⁴ Kabasilas, *La Vie en Christ* VI, 102, ed. Congourdeau (SC 361) (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 128–129, trans. de Catanzaro, 193.

⁴⁵ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De ordine sepulturæ* 360, PG 155, 672C.

Symeon rejected the idea of those who, basing themselves on the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 11:27-30, renounced Eucharistic communion, considering that to communicate unworthily could result in their condemnation and lead to their death. On the contrary, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki clearly affirmed that frequent communion is not only the source of sanctification and purification from sins but also the source of life, of strength, and the means of acquiring eternal life: "And do not be afraid to commune of Life, as some men fear without reason who say 'in order not to die.' You will die more quickly if you do not receive the dread mysteries, because they are for your life, strength, power, and a viaticum for eternal life."⁴⁶ For this reason, relying on patristic tradition, Symeon encouraged priests to celebrate the Divine Liturgy every day so that Christians could communicate frequently: "St. Chrysostom, who wrote in agreement with [the Holy] Father Basil what relates to the Divine Mystagogy, praises those who receive communion daily with piety and dignity," specifying in passing "in Catholic [i.e., secular] churches and everywhere it is imparted to those who are full of good will to accomplish that which pertains to Mystagogy every day."⁴⁷

Among the questions raised in the letter mentioned above from Patriarch Euthymius to the monk Cyprian, which we usually date between 1371 and 1373, we find the question of Eucharistic communion by anchorites in the absence of a priest.⁴⁸ This is characteristic of the spirituality and theology of hesychast circles which led an eremitical or *skētē* life, and where frequent communion, even in the absence of a priest, was considered a very important practice. Euthymius affirms that the monk in good health must go to the *katholikon* of the monastery to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive communion there: "Therefore it is not suitable for someone to neglect the holy *synaxis* while being healthy and strong in spirit, nor even the priest of God; he ought to go there with humility and to delight in the dread and immortal mysteries of God." No doubt Euthymius was aware that Eucharistic communion was not an act of individual piety, but an ecclesial event, that of the Eucharistic assembly. However, he concedes that monks who live far from a monastery and who are not subject to penance can administer the Eucharist to themselves in their cell: "Those who are not subject to penance and who have the blessing of their spiritual father and dwell in

⁴⁶ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De ordine sepulturæ* 360, PG 155, 672C-D.

⁴⁷ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De sacerdotio*, PG 155, 973A-B.

⁴⁸ Cf. Getcha, "Recevoir la communion en cellule. Un témoignage du 14^e siècle," in *Rites de Communion. Conférences Saint-Serge. LV^e Semaine d'Études Liturgiques, Paris, 23-26 juin 2008*, eds. André Lossky and Manlio Sodi (Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica 59) (Vatican: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2010), 267-274.

remote desert places have the power to administer communion to themselves whenever they wish.”⁴⁹

The question of whether hermits could commune in a cell is not new. The *Life* of St. Luke of Steiris recounts that the saint who lived in the tenth century had asked this question to the Metropolitan of Corinth, who replied that there must be a priest who shall distribute communion from presanctified gifts.⁵⁰ Symeon, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, received the same question at the turn of the fifteenth century, to which he replied: “The bishop grants, as we know, to some of the monks who live in the deserts and who have no priests, to keep the presanctified gifts in a box and to receive communion there in case of need with great piety, not as priests do, but in the following way [...],”⁵¹ and he then prescribes the proper order of receiving the Eucharist.

All these testimonies attest that Eucharistic Communion was by no means neglected in hermit circles and that the hesychasts, on the contrary, encouraged frequent Communion. If this was so, it is because the hesychasts were sensitive to the ecclesial dimension of the performance of the sacraments. Thus, Kabasilas considers that the Eucharist signifies the Church: “the holy mysteries signify the Church because it is ‘the body of Christ’ and [the faithful] are ‘members of Christ, each for his part.’”⁵² Moreover, for Symeon of Thessaloniki, the celebration of the holy mysteries in the earthly Church reflects the celestial liturgy:

One also is the work, the *hierurgy* of the Master, as well as the communion and the observation. And it is accomplished above as below. The difference is that there, [it is accomplished] without veils and without any symbol, whereas here [it is accomplished] through symbols (διὰ συμβόλων) because we are clothed with a corruptible flesh.⁵³

For the same reason, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki insisted on the ecclesial character of the celebration of baptism. He observes that baptism was formerly celebrated by the bishop in his cathedral during the Paschal vigil or on days of great feasts in the presence of the fullness of the ecclesial community:

⁴⁹ Kachanovskiy, “К вопросу,” 240 and 244.

⁵⁰ Cf. Alexandr I. Almazov, *Тайная исповедь в Православной Восточной Церкви*, vol. 2 (Odessa: Typ. Odessa military district, 1894), 117.

⁵¹ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *Responsiones ad Gabrielem Pentapolitanum* 41, PG 155, 889D.

⁵² Kabasilas, *Explication de la divine liturgie* XXXVII, 6, eds. Salaville, Bornert, Gouillard, and Périchon, 229.

⁵³ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De sacro templo* 131, PG 155, 340AB.

Since the very divine baptism thus appears to be the greatest work, the Church long ago celebrated the baptism of those who joined her through the bishops in the cathedral churches on feast days, when it is sung at the Divine Liturgy: "All of you who have been baptized into Christ," and more specifically on Great Saturday before the Divine Liturgy, when many readings from the divine prophets are being read.⁵⁴

Symeon thus protested against making baptism a private and non-ecclesial event, insisting that it "is essential that all the faithful be present at this time as much as possible."⁵⁵ Thus, the hesychasts were the precursors of the theologians of the twentieth century who underlined the ecclesial dimension of the Liturgy thanks to a Eucharistic ecclesiology and who suggested the reintegration of the sacraments within the framework of the liturgical assembly of the Eucharistic celebration.

Conclusion

Unlike several studies on Hesychasm which have focused on the individual practice of the Jesus Prayer by hesychast monks, forgetting that they also participated in the Liturgy of the Church, our examination of the sources shows that the influence of the hesychasts on the liturgy in Byzantium was decisive for the further development of the Byzantine liturgical tradition. The spiritual renewal led by the hesychasts of the fourteenth century went hand in hand with a real liturgical reform.

For the hesychasts, the practice of continual prayer was supported by the celebration of liturgical offices. For them, the neo-Sabaite *Typikon* they had practiced on Mount Athos seemed the most suitable for everyone, monks and lay people, especially since in their eyes it was endowed with patristic authority. The celebration of the nocturnal vigils prescribed by this *Typikon* as well as the rigor of its fasting rules corresponded perfectly to the teaching of the hesychasts, who considered nocturnal vigil and fasting as adequate weapons against sin. Moreover, the hesychasts were aware that prayer was a fruit of baptism and that it allowed baptismal grace to be kept alive. For this reason, they did not only focus on prayer, but also insisted on the importance of the sacraments in the Christian life, which they considered as a "life in Christ," nourished by frequent Eucharistic communion, which they did not envisage as individual piety but whose ecclesial dimension they kept in mind, since the Church was perceived by them as the figure, the *typos*, of the heavenly Kingdom.

⁵⁴ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De sacramentis* 62, PG 155, 221C.

⁵⁵ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De sacramentis* 62, PG 155, 221B.

Considering monastic life as a paradigm for Christian life, the hesychasts emphasized the unity of monks and laity as well as of the earthly Church with the heavenly Church, in the one mystery of Christ. It is for this reason that they opted for the standardization of the liturgical life of the Church on the basis of the monastic neo-Sabaite *Typikon*, which in their eyes was best suited to ensure a spiritual renewal throughout the Byzantine world and its periphery.

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THE LITERARY LEGACY OF KALLISTOS ANGELIKOUEDES: AN ATTEMPT AT SYSTEMATIZATION

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ABSTRACT. This article explores the little studied and partially unpublished literary corpus of Kallistos Angelikouides, one of the most fascinating late Byzantine hesychast authors. It addresses some of the problems associated with the manuscript tradition of his writings and offers a new approach to the systematization of his oeuvre. Despite the uncertainty regarding the identification of the two groups of texts that make up the “books” of Angelikouides’ literary corpus, that is, the *Hesychastic Education* and the *Hesychastic Consolation*, this article advances an argument with regard to the possible composition of these works.

Keywords: Kallistos Angelikouides, *Discourses*, *Chapters*, Byzantine hesychasm, Mount Athos, Philokalia, manuscript tradition, genres of Byzantine theological literature, ascetic miscellanea

This article investigates the composition of Kallistos Angelikouides’ corpus of works on the basis of newly obtained data on the manuscript tradition.¹ Kallistos Angelikouides is a fascinating Byzantine hesychast theologian whose

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¹ Andrei Vinogradov, “Does the Writing Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις of Kallistos Angelikouides Exist? Preliminary Notes on the Manuscript Tradition,” *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 43–44 (2012): 367–380 (in Russian); Oleg Rodionov, “Notes on the Manuscript Tradition of Kallistos Angelikouides’ *Chapters*,” *Kapterevskie Chteniya* 15 (2017): 77–86 (in Russian); idem, “Kallistos Angelikouides,” in *Pravoslavnaya Enciklopediya*, vol. 29 (Moscow: Pravoslavnaya Enciklopediya, 2012), 546–549 (in Russian).

works have only been discovered in their fullness in recent decades.² Little is known about him, but enough to state that between the 1370s and 1380s he ran a monastery in the town of Melenikon in Macedonia (present-day Melnik in Bulgaria). The *Acts* of Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (March–May 1371) do not mention any other persons or the name of Kallistos' monastery.³ Yet, a separate collection of Kallistos' *kephalaia* ("Chapters") seems to have been circulated during his lifetime under the name of Kallistos Kataphygiotes (e.g., in the important late fourteenth-century manuscript *Vatopedi* 610). This may indicate the name of his monastery, Kataphyge (there were several such monasteries in Byzantium), or, rather, Kataphygion. The archives of *Vatopedi*, soon to be published, confirm that Kallistos' monastery at Melenikon was called Kataphygion.⁴ The heyday of his activity seems to have been between the 1360s and 1380s. All these facts allow us to identify the Kallistos Angelikoudes from Melenikon, mentioned in the *Acts* of Kokkinos, with the hesychast author Kallistos Angelikoudes Melenikeotes.⁵ Unfortunately, his works do not offer any information that would allow one to reconstruct his biography.

A substantial part of Angelikoudes' works has not been published.⁶ Since Symeon Koutsas published the critical edition of the four *Discourses* included in

² On Angelikoudes' life, see Antonio Rigo, "Callisto Angelicude Catafugiota Meleniceota e l'Esicasmismo bizantino del XIV secolo: una nota prosopografica," in *Nil Sorskij e l'Esicasmismo. Atti del II Convegno internazionale di spiritualità russa*, ed. Adalberto Mainardi (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 1995), 251–268; Symeon Koutsas, *Kallistos Angelikoudès. Quatre traités hésychastes inédits. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (Athens, 1998), 19–29 [first published in *Θεολογία* 67.1 (1996): 109–156; 67.2 (1996): 316–360; 67.3 (1996): 518–529]; see also Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 545–554.

³ *MM*, vol. 1, 552, 569–572 (nos. 298 and 312); Jean Darrouzès, *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1: *Les Actes des Patriarches*, fasc. 5: *Les Regestes de 1310 à 1376* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1977), 512–513, 522–524 (nos. 2609, 2621). On their content, see Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 546.

⁴ I am grateful to hieromonk Adrian of *Vatopedi*, the manager of the monastery's publishing house, for sharing this information with me.

⁵ Rigo, "Callisto Angelicude," 259–263. The *Protheoria* ("Introduction") to Angelikoudes' collection of 30 *Logoi*, also known as the *Hesychastic Consolation*, bears the superscription Προθεωρία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Καλλίστου, τὸ βιβλίον Μελενικεώτου ("Protheoria of our father Kallistos, the book of Melenikeotes") in *Vaticanus gr.* 736, f. 1r.

⁶ Until the 1970s, only the publications included in the Greek *Φιλοκαλία* and their reprints were known. In the first edition, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν* (Venice, 1782), only two works by Kallistos were published, namely *On the Practice of Hesychasm* (p. 1103–1107) and the collection of chapters *On Divine Union* (p. 1113–1159). In addition to these, the second edition, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν*, vol. 2 (Athens, 1893), 412–455, published the 115 *Chapters* not included in the Venetian edition *On Divine Union*. In the later edition, Angelikoudes' works are included in the volumes 4 and 5, *Τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου καὶ ἀοιδίμου Καλλίστου Πατριάρχου τὰ ἐλλείποντα κεφάλαια. Ὅτι ὁ εἰρημένος Παράδεισος εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, in *Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν*, vol. 4 (Athens: Ἀστήρ, 1991), 299–367; *Τοῦ κυρίου Καλλίστου τοῦ Τηλικούδη*

the *Hesychastic Consolation* (Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις) (hereafter *HC*),⁷ only three *Logoi* have been critically edited, namely those not included in the *HC*.⁸

In Angelikoudes' literary corpus as a whole, one can distinguish several collections often considered as separate works. The first and most important of these is the collection of 30 *Discourses* that has come down to us in *Vaticanus gr.* 736 (hereafter **V**), hitherto identified with the *HC*. In 2012, Andrei Vinogradov published a noteworthy article on this collection, which answered a series of questions regarding the manuscript tradition of the *HC*.⁹ Vinogradov convincingly showed that the precise limits of this collection are rather uncertain, and "the order of the *Discourses* is difficult to explain by any internal reasons." Thus, there is no reason to believe that the *HC* mentioned in the *Protheoria* (**V**, f. 4) should be identified precisely with this collection of 30 *Logoi*.¹⁰

A special place in the corpus of Angelikoudes' works belongs to an extensive collection of *Chapters*. They have come down to us both in the manuscripts *Barberinus gr.* 420 (hereafter **B**) and *Barberinus gr.* 592 (hereafter **C**), which once constituted a single unit,¹¹ and in the form of separate collections, published for the first time as part of the famous Greek patristic anthology, the *Philokalia*, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹² The collections published as part of the *Philokalia* contain about 65% of Angelikoudes' *Chapters* that have come

Περὶ ἡσυχαστικῆς τριβῆς, in *Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 4, 368–372; *Ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Καλλίστου Καταφυγιώτου Συλλογιστικῶν καὶ ὑψηλοτάτων κεφαλαίων τὰ σωζόμενα. Περὶ θείας ἐνώσεως καὶ βίου θεωρητικοῦ*, in *Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 5 (Athens: Ἀστήρ, 1992), 4–59; see Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 547–548. In 1970, Stylianos G. Papadopoulos published the critical edition of Angelikoudes' polemical treatise *Against Thomas Aquinas*, *Καλλίστου Ἀγγελικουδῆ Κατὰ Θωμᾶ Ἀκινάτου. Εἰσαγωγή, κείμενον, κριτικὸν ὑπόμνημα καὶ πίνακες* (Athens: Γρηγόρη, 1970).

⁷ Koutsas, *Kallistos Angelikoudes*, 108–252.

⁸ Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes, *Oration* 18 [That Consists] of 41 Chapters," *Bogoslovskie trudy* 46 (2015): 275–293 (in Russian); idem, "A *Discourse* by Kallistos Angelikoudes Not Included in the So-called 'Hesychastic Consolation:' The *Editio Princeps* of *Logos* 13 Based on the Codex *Barberini gr.* 420," *Kapterevskie Chteniya* 19 (2021): 28–44 (in Russian); idem, "A Note on Kallistos Angelikoudes' Works Not Included in the So-called 'Hesychastic Consolation:' *Logos* 16 and Its Church Slavonic Translation," *Kapterevskie Chteniya* 18 (2020): 102–128 (in Russian).

⁹ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 367–380. Rigo, Vinogradov, and Rodionov are currently preparing a complete critical edition of this collection, based on all extant manuscripts.

¹⁰ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 372, 379; see also Rodionov, "Notes," 78, 80–81.

¹¹ See their detailed description by Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 373–376; see also Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 546.

¹² Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 547, and "The *Chapters* of Kallistos Angelikoudes: The Relationship of the Separate Series and Their Main Theological Themes," in *Byzantine Theology and Its Philosophical Background*, ed. Rigo (Byzantios. Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 4) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 141–159.

down to us.¹³ It would be expected that their manuscript tradition and content would have been studied somewhat better than in the case of the *HC*. All these *Chapters* were translated into Old Church Slavonic by St. Paisius Velichkovsky already in the eighteenth century and circulated among Slavic monks.¹⁴ In the nineteenth century, one of the collections was translated into Russian and reprinted more than once in a revised form.¹⁵ The only attempts to analyze the content of the *Chapters* known at that time, and to comment on the most difficult passages, were the introductory articles and notes in the edition of the Romanian translation of the *Philokalia* prepared by the outstanding theologian Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae.¹⁶ The manuscript tradition of the *Chapters*, on the other hand, has been studied only in recent years.¹⁷

An extensive collection of the *Chapters* transmitted in **B** and **C** is often correlated with another of Angelikoudes' works, mentioned alongside the *HC* in the *Protheoria* of **V**, namely the *Hesychastic Education* (or *Initiation*) (Ἡσυχαστική ἀγωγή) (hereafter *HE*), since in **B**, Chapter 12 is prefaced by the following inscription in the upper margin of f. 32r: Ἐντεῦθεν ἡσυχαστικῆς ἀγωγῆς βιβλίον πρῶτον ("Here begins the first book of the *Hesychastic Education*").¹⁸ In the *Protheoria* of **V**, Angelikoudes writes that in a certain book he speaks "about the glory of God" and "truly blessed is he who ... first reads what [is written] about the glory of God, and then the present [work]." The ending of the *Protheoria* is: "The one is called *Hesychastic Education* and the other *Hesychastic Consolation* [...]"¹⁹

Is it possible to consider the collection that originally consisted of at least 222 *Chapters*,²⁰ and which is preserved in **B** and **C**, as the *HE*? Thematically, this collection is no less diverse than the *HC* and can in no way be reduced to the description of the contemplation of the "glory of God." Either Angelikoudes did not follow exactly the plan outlined in the *Protheoria*, or, as in the case of the *HC*, we are dealing with a collection whose boundaries are rather fluid, if not

¹³ I do not include the *Chapters* which form part of discrete *Logoi*, such as *Logoi* 24 and 25 from **V**, and *Logos* 18 from **B**. On these, see Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes, *Oration* 18," 276–277.

¹⁴ Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 548.

¹⁵ *Byzantine Hesychastic Texts*, ed. Alexey G. Dunaev (Moscow: Moscow Patriarchate Publishing House, 2012), 307–400 (in Russian).

¹⁶ *Filocalia sau culegere din scrierile Sfinților Părinți care arată cum se poate omul curăți, lumina și desăvârși*, trans. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. 8 (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1979), 233–373, 395–527.

¹⁷ See Rodionov, "The *Chapters* of Kallistos Angelikoudes," 141–147, "Kallistos Angelikoudes," 546–549, and "Notes," 77–86; Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 368, 373–375, addresses it indirectly.

¹⁸ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 372, n. 36; Rodionov, "Notes," 80–81.

¹⁹ **V**, f. 4v.

²⁰ Rodionov, "Notes," 82–85.

“blurred,” with content that is not limited to a single topic. Therefore, such a collection can hardly be perceived as a separate work to be identified with the *HE*. Nevertheless, the *Discourses* contained in **B** and **C** amongst the *Chapters* mentioned above do largely correspond thematically to the definition given to the *HE* by the aforementioned *Protheoria*.

However, the *HE* is also not the 115 *Chapters* preserved in *Iviron* 506 (hereafter **I**),²¹ since this collection has come down to us in its entirety, and *Chapter* 12 from **B** is missing there. Another collection, which consists of 92 *Chapters*, was until recently thought to be preserved only in eighteenth-century manuscripts.²² One of these, the *Karakallou* 72 (hereafter **K**),²³ constituted the basis for the publication of the 92 *Chapters* under a new title in the *Φιλοκαλία* in 1782.²⁴ However, scholars have recently discovered another important manuscript transmitting Angelikouides’ works, namely *Vatopedi gr.* 610 (hereafter **Va**). This codex was not completely unknown. A brief description of it features in the well-known catalogue compiled by Sophronios Eustratiades and Arkadios of Vatopedi.²⁵ The description lists almost all the authors in the collection, including Kallistos Kataphygiotes. His *Chapters* constitute, in fact, the second half of **Va** (ff. 164^r–275^v). Moreover, judging by the numbering of the quires (the first of which begins on f. 164^r), they were originally placed either at the beginning of **Va** or of another manuscript, which was later combined with what now constitutes the first part of **Va**.²⁶ The problem, however, is that Kallistos Kataphygiotes’ name was omitted from the *index of names* of the aforementioned catalogue. Due

²¹ Rodionov, “Kallistos Angelikouides,” 546–547.

²² Rodionov, “Kallistos Angelikouides,” 547, and “Notes,” 80–81.

²³ Spyridon P. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 137; see also Stefan Royé, “The Γενικός Ἀλφαριθμητικός Κατάλογος: The Handwritten Catalogue of the Collection of Byzantine Manuscripts of Hiera Mone Karakallou (Mount Athos),” *Sacris Erudiri* 49 (2010): 506 (according to the internal catalogue of the monastery, the shelf mark is 189).

²⁴ See Symeon A. Paschalidis, “Autour de l’histoire d’une collection ascétique: la *Philocalie*, les circonstances de son édition et sa tradition manuscrite,” in *Da Teognosto alla Filocalia. XIII–XVIII sec. Testi e autori*, ed. Rigo (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2016), 215–217.

²⁵ Sophronios Eustratiades and Arkadios of Vatopedi, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in the Library of the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mt. Athos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 120: Θεολογικὸν ἀπηρτισμένον ἐκ τῶν συγγραμμάτων τῶν πατέρων Διονυσίου τοῦ Ἀρεοπαγίτου, Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, Γρηγορίου τοῦ Νύσσης, Μαξίμου, Νικήτα Στηθάτου, Βαρσνονουφίου, Συμεὼν τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου, Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Καλλίστου Καταφυγιώτου.

²⁶ I intend to dedicate a separate study to **Va**. The first part of the manuscript consists of patristic excerpts, a sort of *florilegium* Angelikouides probably used when compiling his writings; in any case, thematically, as well as judging by the selection of authors, it is likely a *florilegium*. Cf. Rodionov, “A Note,” 102–128, and “Codex *Vatopedinus gr.* 610 and Its Place in the Manuscript Tradition of Kallistos Angelikouides’ Works,” *Istoriya* 12.5 (103) (2021) (in Russian).

to this omission, **Va** did not figure in the scholarship on the manuscript tradition of Angelikoudes' writings.²⁷ However, while working on the publication and translation of various patristic works, the monks of the Vatopedi monastery identified Angelikoudes' works in **Va** and kindly informed me about this. I therefore owe a special debt of gratitude to hieromonk Adrian of Vatopedi, the manager of the monastery's publishing house and an ardent admirer and connoisseur of Angelikoudes' heritage.

The catalogue correctly mentions that **Va** does not have a beginning or an end ("ἀκέφ[αλον,] κολ[οβόν]").²⁸ Kallistos Kataphygiotes' 92 *Chapters* in **Va** are identical with those transmitted in **K** and transcribed by the monk Konstantios (who assisted St. Macarius of Corinth and St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite in preparing the edition of the *Φιλοκαλία*)²⁹ on the island of Hydra in 1776,³⁰ most likely from **Va** or a copy not extant today.³¹ In **Va**, however, the *Chapters* are not numbered. Nevertheless, their order and composition do not differ from those in **K**. The comparison of these two codices and the fact that both end with *Chapter* 92 and in the same place clearly indicate that **K** is a copy of **Va**.

Eustratiades and Arkadios date **Va** to the fifteenth century. However, the manuscript was undoubtedly copied by the same scribe who transcribed another important codex gathering Angelikoudes' works, namely *Lond. Arundel. 520* (hereafter **L**),³² which Vinogradov dated to the end of the fourteenth century.³³ Thus, **Va** is likely to have been copied in the same period, earlier than previously thought. Consequently, there is valuable evidence that this collection of *Chapters* (let them be conditionally called "of Kataphygiotes") was copied in the last decades of the fourteenth century. This may indicate the author's design not only of the collection of the aforementioned 115 *Chapters*, but also of the one that now consists of 92 (initially most likely 100) *Chapters*.³⁴

This text as in **Va** has one more feature: *Chapter* 90 (60 according to **B**³⁵) has an amendment (f. 268) made obviously by the same hand as in **B** (f. 191).

²⁷ Evidently, **Va** was unknown to Paschalidis, "Autour de l'histoire," 201–222; in any case, he did not mention it among the codices used in the preparation of the first edition of the Greek *Philokalia*.

²⁸ Eustratiades and Arkadios, *Catalogue*, 120.

²⁹ On him, see Paschalidis, "Autour de l'histoire," 212–215.

³⁰ Paschalidis, "Autour de l'histoire," 216 (see also plate III.3).

³¹ Rodionov, "Codex *Vatopedinus* gr. 610" and "A Note," 105–107.

³² Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις," 372–373.

³³ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις," 372.

³⁴ See Joel Kalvesmaki, "Evagrius in the Byzantine Genre of *Chapters*," in *Evagrius and His Legacy*, eds. Kalvesmaki and Robin Darling Young (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 257–287, here at 282 (see also Table 10.1).

³⁵ Rodionov, "Notes," 83.

Traces of such editing are also found in another place of **Va** (f. 266), but the possible protograph has no corrections in the corresponding place (**B**, f. 171). This suggests that a gap carelessly committed by the scribe was emended in **Va**. Perhaps this means that **Va** was reviewed after having been written by Angelikouides himself, with **B** serving as a protograph for this manuscript. It should be also noted that if in **I** the scribe reproduces almost exactly the author's punctuation (assuming that **B** and **C** are Angelikouides' autographs³⁶), in **Va** the punctuation is often different, frequently conveying the meaning less accurately than the autograph manuscripts.³⁷

In **Va**, these *Chapters* have a title (f. 164^r) that seems to indicate a kind of 'selection': "Καλλίστου τοῦ Καταφυγιώτου" ("Of Kallistos Kataphygiotes"). Extracts from holy fathers are indicated in the same way in the first part of the codex. In **K** (p. 273), this indication of the 'selectivity' of the material presented becomes even clearer: "Ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Καλλίστου τοῦ Καταφυγιώτου" ("From [the chapters] of Kallistos Kataphygiotes"). This title would also be retained by the Slavic manuscript tradition.³⁸ Thus, the question whether the *HE* ever existed remains open. Perhaps it refers to some third, special collection of *Chapters* that has not been preserved, or which remains unknown to us. It is also possible that it comprises those *Discourses* not included in **V**,³⁹ or else constitutes its second part (*Logoi* 16–29), together with at least some of the chapters contained in **B** and **C**.

Some of Angelikouides' *Chapters* are also found in other manuscripts, sometimes in a special version. For instance, in **L** (late fourteenth century), ff. 205–206, we find *Chapter* 206 of **B**. But in the London manuscript, it is given in a version which can (compared to that in **B**) be considered abbreviated. However, Vinogradov's assessment of **L**⁴⁰ also makes it possible to suggest the opposite,

³⁶ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 374; Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikouides," 546.

³⁷ On Byzantine punctuation and other features which were, as a rule, carefully transmitted by copyists, see Jacques Noret's articles, "L'accentuation byzantine: en quoi et pourquoi elle diffère de l'accentuation « savante » actuelle, parfois absurde," in *The Language of Byzantine Learned Literature*, ed. Martin Hinterberger (Byzantios. Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 9) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 96–146, "Quand donc rendrons-nous à quantité d'indéfinis prétendument enclitiques l'accent qui leur revient?," *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 191–195, "Notes de ponctuation et d'accentuation byzantines," *Byzantion* 65 (1995): 69–88, and "Les règles byzantines de la division en syllabes," *Byzantion* 77 (2007): 345–348; cf. Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikouides, *Oration* 18," 277–278.

³⁸ Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikouides," 548.

³⁹ Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikouides," 546, and "Kallistos Angelikouides, *Oration* 18," 276.

⁴⁰ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 378: "The London manuscript is independent of the Vatican copy. Therefore, it is most likely that it was copied from ... the now not extant draft volume no. 1. The order of *Logoi*, which differs here from the Vatican manuscript, should be considered rather original."

namely that Kallistos produced an extended version of this *Chapter* after the protograph of the London manuscript was copied.⁴¹ On f. 207 of **L**, I identified a fragment of *Chapter* 171 from **B**, and on ff. 210^r–210^v a fragment of *Chapter* 187 of **B**. In **V**, which contains mainly the *Discourses* of the *HC*, one can find (ff. 398^r–398^v, in smaller handwriting in order to fit) *Chapters* 147, 148, and 131 (without its end) from **B**.⁴²

C, which has a particularly complex composition, gathering artificially connected disparate folia of **B**, also transmits *Chapters* 19–21 (ff. 21^v–24^v), while *Chapter* 18 begins in **B** on f. 155^v, which displays on its bottom margin the inscription missing from the next folium. This folium, however, is part of **C** (f. 32).⁴³ The texts on ff. 27–35 (as far as one can read them) perhaps represent fragments of some *Discourse* that were not included in the *HC*.⁴⁴ It is not superfluous to note that ff. 33^r–34^v of **C** contain a fragment of *Logos* 16: [...] ἐν ὑπερώῳ τοὺς τοῦ Κυρίου ἀποκεκλεῖσθαι – ἀπὸ καρδίας καὶ γρηγορεῖν καὶ τοῦγε [...] (**V**, ff. 216^r–217^v).⁴⁵

Altogether, 209 *Chapters*⁴⁶ have been preserved in Kallistos Angelikoudes' autograph manuscripts, **B** and **C**.⁴⁷ Of these, 89 coincide with the "Kataphygiotes" (**Va** and **K**), and 92 with those in **I**. But it should be borne in mind that part of the collection of 115 *Chapters* is made up of those included in the collection of 92 *Chapters*. In the autograph manuscripts, 71 *Chapters* have no analogues in other collections. And this is a very significant volume, making up approximately 34% of the entire corpus. Meanwhile, in the collection of 115 *Chapters*, 22 are not included in the main body of 209 *Chapters* (although they may have been originally included and lost along with the currently missing parts of the manuscript). In the collection of 92 *Chapters*, one (the sixth) has no analogue in the other two, and two (the second and the seventy-sixth) are borrowed from other works of Angelikoudes, namely *Logos* 24 (*Ch.* 79) from among those included in the *HC* (**V**, f. 366^v; cf. **B**, f. 205b^v) and *Logos* 16 from **B** (ff. 294^r–297^v).⁴⁸

⁴¹ Rodionov, "Notes," 81.

⁴² Rodionov, "Notes," 81. It should be noted that Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 372, mistakenly calls them "*Logos* without number and name (conditionally — *Logos* 27a)."

⁴³ Rodionov, "Notes," 82.

⁴⁴ Rodionov, "Notes," 82.

⁴⁵ Koutsas, *Callistos Angelikoudès*, 122–128.

⁴⁶ See the *Chapters* correlation table in Rodionov, "Notes," 82–86. This table leaves out **Va**; however, it should be remembered that in this codex the chapters are not numbered. Yet in its composition, it exactly corresponds to **K**, so the column of the table indicating the chapters of this codex also fully reflects the composition of **Va**.

⁴⁷ Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις," 374.

⁴⁸ Rodionov, "Notes," 86.

All of the above makes us take a somewhat different look at the corpus of Kallistos Angelikouides' works, as it appears to us after studying all the extant manuscripts, copied both during the author's lifetime (in the 1360s–1380s) and later (fifteenth–eighteenth centuries). If we do not consider the *HC* and the *HE* as independent works with a clear framework, it becomes possible to apply other systematization criteria. In this regard, the simplest solution to the problem of describing the corpus of Angelikouides' works is the subdivision of his texts according to their genre.⁴⁹

What genres are represented in the literary heritage of Angelikouides? As shown above, a significant part of his works are the *Discourses* (Λόγοι) and *Chapters* (Κεφάλαια). However, in this case the *Discourses* can hardly be attributed to the ancient genre of "orations." As Koutsas rightly pointed out, "[l]e style, l'expression, l'argumentation des opuscles laissent penser qu'il s'agit plutôt de textes appartenant à l'expression écrite et non pas à l'expression orale."⁵⁰ In addition, Angelikouides himself, beyond doubt, did not see an impenetrable boundary between the two genres (those of *Discourses* and *Chapters*), since in his literary inheritance one can find many cases where individual chapters subsequently turn into discourses (e.g., the first of the 115 *Chapters* transmitted in **I** becomes *Logos* 29 in **V**),⁵¹ while discourses, in turn, become chapters (e.g., *Logos* 16 from **B** becomes *Chapter* 76 of the 92 *Chapters* "of Kataphygiotes").⁵²

The *Discourses*, both conventionally combined under the name of *HC* (**V**) and preserved in other manuscripts, are very diverse in scope and content (which is why we refuse to systematize thematically). However, there is something still more important, namely that among the texts designated in the manuscript tradition as *Discourses* (Λόγοι) there are 'representatives' of other genres, e.g., *Chapters* and hymns. Therefore, when systematizing the corpus, it is wiser not to automatically include any work called by the author or scribe a *Logos* in the appropriate section, but to look at the actual genre of each text.

An extensive collection of *Chapters* that has been preserved as part of **B** and **C** (original numbering, as already mentioned, at least 222), includes both very lengthy texts reminiscent of separate multi-page treatises and very short *Chapters* often no more than two or three lines long. The chapters which constitute three of the so-called '*Discourses*' (on which, see above) are, as a rule, comparatively

⁴⁹ Partly realized in Rodionov, "Kallistos Angelikouides," 546–549, but this attempt at systematization can in no way be considered satisfactory.

⁵⁰ Koutsas, *Callistos Angelicoudès*, 71.

⁵¹ The opposite is also possible, however; cf. Vinogradov, "Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις," 379. One way or another, Vinogradov agrees that the basis of *Logos* 29 and *Chapter* 1 of the 115 *Chapters* was the text from **B**, where it appears to be of no particular status.

⁵² Rodionov, "Notes," 86, and "Kallistos Angelikouides, *Oration* 18," 276.

short and resemble the best examples of the genre composed by Evagrius of Pontus and Maximus the Confessor.⁵³

Prayers and hymns occupy a special place in the inheritance of Kallistos Angelikoudes, too. Some of them have also come down to us also under the name of ‘*Discourses*’ included in the *HC*, while others are contained in **L** under the headings corresponding to that genre. Finally, one of the *Logoi*, namely the thirtieth in **V** (ff. 447^r–449^v) can be attributed to the epistolary genre. This is a letter to an unknown person on a private occasion. Another epistle has been preserved as part of **B**.

Meanwhile, the *Discourses*, *Chapters*, and hymns can, together, form quite harmonious and discrete collections. A striking example (and currently the only one) of such a harmonious arrangement of texts constituting, if not a complete work, a collection united by a cross-cutting theme, is **L**, no doubt deserving publication in full, in accordance with the author’s composition.⁵⁴

In light of the above, then, Angelikoudes’ full corpus can currently be presented as follows:

1. The *Discourses*

1.1. The *Discourses* combined under the title *HC*

This is the collection of *Discourses* that has come down to us in **V**. Since not all the texts included in this collection correspond in terms of genre to the definition of a “Discourse” (Λόγος), only *Logoi* 1–8, 12–23, and 26–29 can be included in this section.⁵⁵

1.2. The *Discourses* from other manuscripts

This section includes those *Discourses* that are not found in **V** but probably formed part of its protograph (of which **B** and **C** are a part), along with the texts that are in **V**,⁵⁶ and were once independently numbered. Nowadays, only *Logoi* 5, 13, 15, and 16 are known in full.⁵⁷ *Logos* 18, being a collection of *Chapters*, cannot be included in this section. In addition, **L** contains another *Discourse* erroneously classified by Koutsas as part of the *Logos* identical to the

⁵³ Cf. Kalvesmaki, “Evagrius,” 264–265.

⁵⁴ Cf. Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 372–373, 378.

⁵⁵ On the headings, see Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 369–372; on the contents, see Koutsas, *Kallistos Angelicoudès*, 82–101.

⁵⁶ Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 377–378.

⁵⁷ Rodionov, “Kallistos Angelikoudes, *Oration* 18,” 276; cf. Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 373.

thirteenth of **V**, but rightly assessed by Vinogradov to be a separate text: “*Logos* 13 is expanded here with a small addition (ff. 117^v–121^v).”⁵⁸ We are inclined to consider this “small addition” as a special *Discourse*, without a heading, like many other texts of **V**.

2. The Chapters

2.1. 222 *Chapters* often identified with *HE*. As mentioned above, it is the most extensive collection of Angelikoudes’ *Chapters*,⁵⁹ preserved in **B** and **C** (only a part of the 222 *Chapters* survives; see above), that are sometimes identified with the *HE*.

2.2. 115 *Chapters*

These are preserved as part of **I**. Their composition and relationship with other collections has been described above. They are often referred to as *Paradise* or *Chapters on Paradise*⁶⁰ in connection with their naming in the Slavic tradition and the theme of the first *Chapter* (which is identical with *Discourse* 29 in **V**; see above).

2.3. The *Chapters* “of Kataphygiotes” or *On the Divine Union*

The *Chapters* that have come down to us in **Va** (and its copy, **K**). They may have originally formed a *century*.⁶¹ The title *On the Divine Union and on Contemplative Life* was given by the compilers of the Greek *Philokalia*, St. Macarius of Corinth and St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite.⁶² For their correlation with other collections of chapters, see above.

2.4. Chapters disguised as *Discourses*

In the same section should be included, by virtue of genre correspondence, *Logoi* 24 and 25 from **V**, since they are composed of small *Chapters* and constitute, respectively, 100 chapters and 22 chapters; also *Logos* 18 from **B**, which is likewise a collection of brief chapters, 41 in total. These *Chapters*, rather skillfully written, are reminiscent in terms of language and style of many of the best examples of the genre, and in the “century” (*Logos* 24) there is no trace of “inflating”

⁵⁸ Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις,” 373.

⁵⁹ Rodionov, “Notes,” 80–81.

⁶⁰ Cf. Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστικὴ παράκλησις,” 368.

⁶¹ See Kalvesmaki, “Evagrius,” 282 (Table 10.1).

⁶² Rodionov, “Kallistos Angelikoudes,” 547–548.

the size of the last chapter,⁶³ a characteristic feature of the fourteenth century. However, *Chapter 88* is quite lengthy; Angelikoudes may have tried to solve the same problem (i.e., distribution of “material” into *Chapters* within a *century*) in a somewhat different way.

3. Hymns and Prayers

3.1. Hymns

L contains several hymns, the most extensive of which is *The Hymn to the Father and the Spirit on the Communion of the Most Pure Flesh and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (ff. 196–205).⁶⁴

3.2. Prayers

Angelikoudes was also the author of several prayers. All of them are “hidden” under the name of *Logoi* in **V**. These are the *Logoi* 9–11, all of which are titled *Ἐντευξις* (“supplication”).⁶⁵

4. Against Thomas Aquinas

This work stands somewhat apart in Angelikoudes’ legacy. This polemical treatise has come down to us in a single manuscript, *Iviron* 337, ff. 1^r–187^v, which Vinogradov dates to the 1360s.⁶⁶ Opinions on the treatise are currently varied and sometimes contradicting, from enthusiastic⁶⁷ to extremely critical.⁶⁸

5. Epistles

This category of texts includes, above all else, the *Letter* to Makarios (**B**, ff. 353^r–355^v),⁶⁹ possibly identical to Makarios Kataphygiotes, the author of

⁶³ See Kalvesmaki, “Evagrius,” 265.

⁶⁴ See the headings and the *incipit*, Koutsas, *Callistos Angelicoudès*, 78–79.

⁶⁵ See the complete headings and their translation in Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 370.

⁶⁶ Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 377–378; for the critical edition, see Papadopoulos, *Καλλίστου Ἀγγελικούδη Κατὰ Θωμᾶ Ἀκινάτου*.

⁶⁷ Papadopoulos, *Συνάντησις ὀρθοδόξου καὶ σχολαστικῆς θεολογίας (ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ Καλλίστου Ἀγγελικούδη καὶ Θωμᾶ Ἀκινάτου)* (Thessaloniki: Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 1970).

⁶⁸ Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 112–114.

⁶⁹ Vinogradov, “Ἡσυχαστική παράκλησις,” 373; Rodionov, “Kallistos Angelikoudes,” 549.

the *Canon of Compunction to the Lord Jesus Christ*.⁷⁰ Another letter is *Logos 30* from **V**, ff. 447^r–449^v, *To a Certain God-loving Monk about the Sudden Death of Komnenoutzikos* (Πρός τινα θεοφιλή μοναχὸν περὶ τοῦ ἐξαίφνης θανάτου τοῦ Κομνηνούτζικου).⁷¹

Despite the doubts expressed above about the validity of the identification of the “books” of Kallistos Angelikouides’ writings, the *HE* and the *HC*, the study of the content of Angelikouides’ extant *Discourses* allows us to venture an opinion about the possible composition of these works. *Logoi* 16 to 29 from **V** are, or were, contained (as far as we can tell from the preserved fragments) in **B** and **C**, autographs which once constituted a single codex. It is possible that the texts that made up **L** reflect an earlier edition of the *HC*, and the first part of **V** (the *Protheoria* and *Logoi* 1–15) is a later, longer edition of the same work. The *HE* most likely consisted of *Chapters* (at least separate ones) and *Discourses* corresponding to *Logoi* 16–29 of **V**; the second part of **V**, tentatively corresponding to the *HE*, was composed of *Discourses* alone. The *HE* was contained in its entirety in **B** and **C** but is currently preserved only in fragments (albeit significant ones). With this understanding of the distribution of material in Angelikouides’ two “books,” the description of their subject matter in the *Protheoria* ceases to be perceived as almost a “literary fiction” and becomes something concrete. However, this issue requires further study. Therefore, this article constitutes only a preliminary investigation. Continuing to work on the critical edition of Kallistos Angelikouides’ *Discourses* and *Chapters*, one will undoubtedly be able to clarify many details that remain unclear. Nevertheless, I hope that this review, and especially the systematization proposed here, of the texts that make up the corpus of Angelikouides’ works, will be of use for researchers of the rich heritage of this Byzantine hesychast and all those interested in the history of Byzantine ascetic literature.

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⁷¹ Koutsas, *Kallistos Angelikoudès*, 76.

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DIAGRAM REASONING AND PARAconsistent THINKING: HIEROMONK HIEROTHEOS, HIS ANCESTRY, AND LEGACY

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ABSTRACT. The article is dedicated to the use of logical diagrams in Byzantine Trinitarian theology. Logical diagrams are a kind of logical computation that is often considered to originate with Euler and Leibniz, but they were, in fact, used by Byzantine theologians since at least the ninth century. Nevertheless, logical diagrams were never so widely accepted as they began to be from the late thirteenth century to the early fifteenth century. The diagrams seem to have been introduced into Trinitarian theology by Eustratius of Nicaea (an authoritative philosopher who did not fare as well as a theologian) in his anti-Latin polemics dating to *ca.* 1112. From there, the use of diagrams was reclaimed in about the 1140s by the Latinophrone Nicetas “of Maroneia” and rejected in 1256 by the anti-Latin theologian Emperor Theodore II Laskaris. Nevertheless, beginning in the 1270s, their popularity and variability exploded. Eventually, triadological diagrams were “canonized” as the legacy of St. Hierotheos of Athens, the teacher of Dionysius the Areopagite, by Joseph Bryennios in the early fifteenth century. Even the “internal” opponent of Palamite theology, Theophanes of Nicaea, resorted to diagrams in defending his own triadology. The figure who rendered diagrams critical for the “Hesychast” theologians was, in the 1270s, hieromonk Hierotheos. He was able to express with diagrams the inconsistency of the mainstream Byzantine understanding of the Trinity. Nevertheless, his own name would come, in the fourteenth century, under a kind of *damnatio memoriae*, so that his main ideas circulated rather under the name of Hierotheos of Athens. This article argues that hieromonk Hierotheos passed from the Church of Patriarch Joseph to the Church of Patriarch Arsenius

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(or the Arsenites). Some of the highly authoritative teachers of the Palamites were in disagreement with the Great Church on the Arsenite issue, refusing to accept the act of 1410, where the Great Church had declared the Arsenites to be on the right side of the conflict. This fact could have affected the memory of hieromonk Hierotheos in the milieu where his works were most in demand.

Keywords: Byzantine theology, Trinitarian theology, triadology, Eustratius of Nicaea, Nicetas “of Maroneia,” Nicephorus Blemmydes, Theodore II Laskaris, hieromonk Hierotheos, Theophanes of Nicaea, Joseph Bryennios, Arsenites, Arsenite movement, logical diagrams, *Filioque*

1. Introduction

It is now known that what we call Palamite theology was not uniform. Not all those who belonged to the “Palamite” camp in the controversies of the fourteenth century shared the same theology. It was John Meyendorff who was the first to notice this fact in relation to Theophanes of Nicaea (1315/20–1380/1).¹ And although Meyendorff’s particular observation was not quite correct,² his intuition has proven to be basically true.³

¹ *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Patristica Sorbonensia 3) (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 261, n. 21.

² In 1991, Meyendorff said to me, in a personal conversation, that this judgment of Theophanes was too hasty; cf. my commentary on the corrected and augmented Russian translation of his 1959 monograph, *Жизнь и труды святителя Григория Паламы. Введение в изучение*, 2nd edn. corrected and supplemented, trans. Georgy Nachinkin, Igor Medvedev, and Basil Lourié (Subsidia byzantinorossica 2) (St. Petersburg: Византинороссика, 1997), 426–427 (endnote iii). *Pace* Meyendorff, the very notion of symbol applied to the Eucharist by Theophanes, who there follows Dionysius the Areopagite, did not contradict Byzantine Eucharistic realism; see esp. Ioannis D. Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea: His Life and Works* (Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 20) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 110–112 (at 110: “Meyendorff’s conclusion that Theophanes was a Palamite only in name seems to be justified, at least to a certain extent, but not because of his theory of the Eucharist”); Andrew Louth, “The Eucharist and Hesychasm, with Special Reference to Theophanes III, Metropolitan of Nicaea,” in *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy. Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation*, eds. István Perczel, Réka Forrai, György Geréby (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 199–205; and Smilen Markov, “The Symbol as a Meeting Point of Energies and Categories – The Symbolical Status of the Eucharistic Gifts according to Theophanes of Nicaea,” *Philosophia. E-Journal for Philosophy & Culture* 1 (2012): 124–138.

³ See esp. Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea*, *passim*, and idem, *Θεοφάνους Νικαίας Απόδειξις ὅτι ἐδύνατο ἐξ αἰδίου γεγενῆσθαι τὰ ὄντα καὶ ἀνατροπὴ ταύτης*. *Editio princeps, εισαγωγή, κείμενο, μεταφράση, ευρετήρια* (Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi. Philosophi byzantini 10) (Athens: Ακαδημία Αθηνών, 2000), 71*–87*.

One line of demarcation running through the Palamite camp concerned the approach to logic. From a logical point of view (to use Quine's famous phrase), the adherents of Gregory Palamas (1296–1357) were divided on the question of logical consistency, that is, of the acceptability of contradictions within theology. Some authors, including Palamas himself, followed Dionysius the Areopagite literally, emphasizing contradictions in their theological statements. Eventually, in the fifteenth century, this approach would prevail.⁴ Nevertheless, at a longer distance, beginning *ca.* 1600, the situation would change, revalorizing authors initially rejected by the Hesychast mainstream.⁵ For some nominally Palamite authors had pursued the alternative ideal of achieving logical consistency. In the fourteenth century, the first among them was Theophanes of Nicaea; in the thirteenth century, his predecessor was Nicephorus Blemmydes. Indeed, in the fourteenth century, starting with Theophanes of Nicaea, this line of thought came into resonance with Latin Scholasticism, especially with the Greek translations of Thomas Aquinas;⁶ but its veritable founder was Eustratius of Nicaea (middle of the eleventh century—shortly after 1117), who himself influenced Latin scholastics through his commentaries on Aristotle.⁷

Two features of the relevant discussions of the long fourteenth century (which I would count from about the 1270s to about the 1420s) are peculiar: one is the wide use of logical computations with graphical diagrams, and the second is the increasing authority of two new authors, Pseudo-Maximus the Confessor and Pseudo-Hierotheos of Athens. I call the latter “Pseudo-” in relation to the Hierotheos quoted by Dionysius the Areopagite, because normally we use “Pseudo-” to designate the author of a work ascribed to another author known by his genuine works; the historical Hierotheos of Athens, if he existed, did not leave any written works. “Our” Hierotheos of Athens is the author of a work ascribed to the “divine Hierotheos” of Dionysius.

⁴ Cf., for the details, my previous studies, esp. “Nicephorus Blemmydes on the Holy Trinity and the Paraconsistent Notion of Numbers: A Logical Analysis of a Byzantine Approach to the *Filioque*,” *Studia Humana* 5 (2016): 40–54, and “A Logical Scheme and Paraconsistent Topological Separation in Byzantium: Inter-Trinitarian Relations according to Hieromonk Hierotheos and Joseph Bryennios,” in *Relations. Ontology and Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Daniele Bertini and Damiano Migliorini (Milan: Mimesis International, 2018), 283–299, and “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity’? An Eastern Patristic Approach to the ‘Quasi-Ordinals,’” *Journal of Applied Logic* 6 (2019): 1093–1107.

⁵ E.g., those who had opposed Gregory of Cyprus in the thirteenth century.

⁶ Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea*, 92: “In my view, however, the first Orthodox theologian to be heavily influenced by Aquinas, almost a century before Scholarios, was Theophanes of Nicaea.”

⁷ For argumentation, see Lourié, “Eustratius of Nicaea, a Theologian: About the Recent Publications of Alexei Barmin,” *Scrinium* 16 (2020): 344–358, with further bibliography.

The present study is dedicated to the theological problems discussed during the long fourteenth century, with a recourse to logical diagrams and to Pseudo-Maximus and Pseudo-Hierotheos, who eventually became the main authorities sanctioning this method.

2. Logical Diagrams

There is a need to provide a short introduction to the very notion of a logical diagram. The graphic illustrations that accompany logical discourses can belong to one of two types, though the boundary between the two is somewhat fuzzy. The first type of diagram encompasses various kinds of relations between terms; examples are squares of oppositions, tree diagrams (e.g., the Porphyrian tree) or triangles and other figures illustrating relations between the terms of a syllogism. Such diagrams were quite common throughout the Middle Ages (theological manuscripts not being an exception) and go back to Greek antiquity. However, logical diagrams in a narrow sense belong to the second type. They are graphic expressions of logical statements, not of relations between terms but of logical propositions.⁸

A proposition is a statement that has a truth value. In the most “classical” and simple Boolean algebra, there are only two truth values, “true” and “false;” there are other logical algebras that allow for other truth values. Regardless of the logical algebra in question, only those statements that can have a truth value are considered to be propositions. Logical diagrams are therefore visual tools for logical computation. They facilitate our ability to determine whether our reasoning is or is not in accordance with a given logic (not necessarily classical) represented by the logical diagram. In this way, logical diagrams of the second type “carry out logical reasoning independently.”⁹

⁸ The standard and useful, albeit not exhaustive modern definition of such diagrams is provided by Martin Gardner, *Logic Machines and Diagrams* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 28: “A logic diagram is a two-dimensional geometric figure with spatial relations that are isomorphic with the structure of a logical statement.” He remarks that “[l]ogical diagrams stand in the same relation to logical algebras as the graphs of curves stand in relation to their algebraic formulas; they are simply other ways of symbolizing the same basic structure.” A logical statement expressed with logical symbols is an alternative to the corresponding logical diagram in the same sense as a parabola relates to its mathematical formula. The main deficiency of this Gardner’s definition is a rigid equivalency between the visual and symbolic expressions of logical statements. In the general case, they are not equivalent, since the rules of graphical inference may work where a symbolic formulation of the inference is unknown or impossible; see esp. the seminal study in the field, Sun-Joo Shin, *The Logical Status of Diagrams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁹ Amirouche Moktefi and Shin, “A History of Logic Diagrams,” in *Handbook of the History of Logic*, vol. 11: *Logic: A History of Its Central Concepts*, eds. Dov M. Gabbay, Francis J. Pelletier, and John Woods (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2012), 611–682, at 611, cf. 613.

The logical diagram, like symbolic logical expression, presumes a logical syntax and a logical semantics. The syntax presumes a definition of well-formed diagrams (in fact, it has been left implicit in all pre-twentieth-century authors) and a set of transformation (i.e., inference) rules that must be valid (each rule must lead to only logical consequences, in accordance with the chosen logic), and must be complete (allowing it to exhaust all logical consequences); and the semantics, in turn, singles out the objects under consideration. In the diagrams, the transformation rules are expressed using drawings.

In manuscripts, logical diagrams are normally drawn, but there are times when they are simply described in words (in such cases, in the absence of the author's autograph, we do not know (1) whether a drawing was initially presented but then subsequently dropped out by a scribe or (2) the author himself considered the drawing unnecessary).¹⁰ However, the absence of a drawing does not matter, providing that the verbal depiction of the diagram is sufficiently complete.

In the modern history of logic, the inventor of the logical diagram is considered to be Leonard Euler in 1763, who had Leibniz as his predecessor (and, to a lesser extent, some other seventeenth-century logicians).¹¹ Nevertheless, Byzantium knew a history of logical diagrams of its own. This history is still to be written. However, I am very fortunate to say that, quite recently, two scholars, Linda Safran¹² and Justin Willson,¹³ independently and from different viewpoints (though both of them are art historians) produced pioneering studies in Byzantine

¹⁰ Of all the authors whose works will come under consideration below, there is only one, Eustratius of Nicaea, whose original text does not contain drawings. However, this text is available in a unique manuscript, copied *ca.* 250 years later than the original. In other cases, the scribes of certain manuscripts and/or modern editors omitted the drawings that, fortunately, are preserved in other manuscripts.

¹¹ In addition to the previously mentioned studies by Gardner, Moktefi, and Shin, see esp. Gailand W. MacQueen, "The Logic Diagram" (MA thesis, McMaster University, 1967; this unpublished MA thesis remains an important and widely cited study); Jens Lemanski, "Means or End? On the Valuation of Logic Diagrams," *Logic-Philosophical Studies. Yearbook of the St. Petersburg Logical Association* 14 (2016): 98–121; Moktefi and Lemanski, "On the Origin of Venn Diagrams," *Axiomathes* 32 (2022): 887–900.

¹² Linda Safran, "Diagramming Byzantine Orthodoxy," in *The Diagram as Paradigm: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, eds. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, David J. Roxburgh, and Linda Safran (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2022), 489–518; cf. eadem, "Byzantine Diagrams," in *The Diagram as Paradigm*, 13–32; eadem, "Beyond Books: The Diagrammatic Mode in Byzantium," in *Illuminations. Studies Presented to Lioba Theis*, eds. Galina Fingarova, Fani Gargova, and Margaret Mullet (Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2022), 93–104.

¹³ Justin Willson, "On the Aesthetic of Diagrams in Byzantine Art," *Speculum* 98.3 (2023): forthcoming. I am especially grateful to the author for having provided me with the still unpublished text of this article.

diagrams of different kinds, not only logical diagrams *sensu stricto*. It is difficult to express my gratitude to them.

The earliest case of the use of a logical diagram *sensu stricto* in Byzantine theology took place, to my knowledge, in a short Christological treatise by Patriarch Photius.¹⁴ Photius' diagram expressed a set of propositions related to the incarnation of the Logos. As far as I am aware, nobody after him used logical diagrams for Christology. In triadology, on the contrary, diagrams became more and more popular beginning with Eustratius of Nicaea. The Latinophrone but nominally Orthodox theologian Nicetas "of Maroneia" (so named as nephew of a bishop of Maroneia), the metropolitan of Thessaloniki, though he is now often mentioned as a pioneer in the use of diagrams in theology,¹⁵ was in fact following Eustratius in this matter as in several others.¹⁶

3. Prehistory: From Eustratius of Nicaea to Nicetas "of Maroneia"

Before approaching the explosive rise in the popularity of triadological diagrams in the 1270s, we must consider the contribution of earlier authors, especially four: Eustratius of Nicaea, Nicetas "of Maroneia," Nicephorus Blemmydes, and the emperor Theodore II Laskaris.

3.1. Eustratius of Nicaea's Numerology as Symbolic Logic

Eustratius wrote a number of works on the Trinity, all of them against the Latin *Filioque*.¹⁷ However, his own triadological doctrine was rejected as less than

¹⁴ Photius, *Amphilochia*, 72, ed. Leendert G. Westerink, *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, Epistulae et Amphilochia*, vol. 5 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1986), 103. I am grateful to the late Dmitry Afinogenov who pointed this out to me. For a discussion of this diagram (from the viewpoint of an art historian) and a photo of its drawing in a tenth-century manuscript, see Safran, "Diagramming," 496–497. There is no room to do so here, but this treatise by Photius should be studied as an attempt to deal with the paraconsistent logic implied in Byzantine anti-Iconoclast Christology; cf. Lourié, "Theodore the Studite's Christology against Its Logical Background," *Studia Humana* 8 (2019): 99–113.

¹⁵ Since Bernhard Schultze, *Maksim Grek als Theologe* (OCA 167) (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1963), 180–181. Maksim the Greek's (1470–1556) disgust toward any kind of diagrams in theology is discussed by Willson, "Aesthetic."

¹⁶ Cf. Lourié, "Eustratius of Nicaea;" Alexei Barmin, "Une source méconnue des *Dialogues* de Nicéas de Maronée," *REB* 58 (2000): 231–243. Willson, "Aesthetic" (written mostly in 2018–2019, long before its publication), was the first who noticed the dependence of Nicetas' diagram on Eustratius of Nicaea.

¹⁷ Cf. Eustratius of Nicaea, *Опровержительные слова (Λόγοι ἀντιρρητικοί)*, ed. and trans. Barmin (Moscow: Издательство Московской Патриархии Русской Православной Церкви, 2016), with the full bibliography of the theological works of Eustratius. Cf. Barmin, "The Refutation

orthodox by the consensus of Byzantine theologians.¹⁸ At that time, in 1112–1113, the most strict theological language within Byzantium was “numerological” (in modern terms, we can define this as a kind of symbolic logic). Eustratius made use of it in his most profound treatise on the topic, *Λόγος περὶ τοῦ παναγίου Πνεύματος* (*Sermon on the All-Holy Spirit*), written in 1112 or 1113 on the occasion of the visit to Constantinople of Pietro Grossolano (†1117, bishop of Milan deposed in 1112) and delivered before Alexios I Komnenos and his son and co-emperor John II Komnenos.¹⁹ The intended audience of this sermon was the Orthodox people represented in the persons of their emperors. Unlike a polemical treatise, this genre required a more in-depth approach.

Eustratius applied to the Trinity the theory of Pseudo-Iamblichus, wherein not only the one (monad) but also the two (dyad) were exempt from the number series, thus constituting its external beginning. Therefore, Eustratius argued, the Holy Trinity must have a structure of “one with two,” thus being exempt from the created entities corresponding to numbers. The *Filioque* would obviously break this structure, because it would be incompatible with preserving a dyad in the position following the monad.

Eustratius’ Byzantine opponents, starting with Nicholas Mouzalon²⁰ and continuing with the greatest Byzantine theologian of the period, Nicholas of Methone (ca. 1100s–1160/6) in his refutation of Proclus (1150s), rejected the very idea that, in the Holy Trinity, there exists any dyad:

Nowhere is a dyad applicable to the unique divinity.

Οὐδαμοῦ δυὰς τῇ μιᾷ θεότητι παραζεύγνυται.²¹

of Petrus Grossolanus: The *Λόγοι ἀντιρρήτικοί* by Eustratius of Nicaea,” in *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, eds. Alessandra Bucossi and Anna Calia (OLA 286. Bibliothèque de Byzantion 22) (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 199–215.

¹⁸ For details, see Lourié, “Eustratius of Nicaea.” Below I summarise Eustratius’ attitude and its criticisms from this article.

¹⁹ First published, together with a Russian translation, in Barmin, *Полемика и схизма. История греко-латинских споров IX–XII веков* [*Polemics and Schism: History of the Greek-Latin Discussions in the 9th–12th Centuries*] (Moscow: Институт философии, теологии и истории св. Фомы, 2006), 518/519–564/565 (text/translation). I follow Barmin in defining the *Sitz im Leben* of the sermon, *Полемика*, 334.

²⁰ Nicholas Mouzalon had, at the time, abdicated as archbishop of Cyprus and would later serve (in 1147) as Patriarch of Constantinople. He wrote during the same years as Eustratius.

²¹ Nicholas Mouzalon, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, 47, ed. Theodoros N. Zisis, “Ο πατριάρχης Νικόλαος Δ’ Μουζάλων,” *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 23 (1978): 233–330, at 325. For a larger context of this and the following citations, see Lourié, “Eustratius of Nicaea.”

Therefore, the Trinity/triad we are worshipping is not a multiplicity either, as it would be in the case if it were only a triad. But this triad is both triad and monad. Thus, neither is the dyad before it, nor is the monad before the dyad that is within it. But the paternal monad and the dyad that is from it show themselves simultaneously, and the whole is simultaneously monad and triad and not only monad but also triad, and not (only) triad but also monad.

Οὐκουν οὐδ' ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν σεβομένη τριάς πληθος· ἦν γὰρ ἂν μόνον τριάς, ἡ δέ ἐστι ἡ αὐτὴ καὶ μονάς· διὸ οὐδὲ δυὰς πρὸ ταύτης, οὔτε μὴν ἡ μονάς πρὸ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ δυάδος ἀλλ' ἅμα τῇ πατρικῇ μονάδι καὶ ἡ ἐξ αὐτῆς δυὰς συνεκφαίνεται, καὶ ἅμα τὸ ὅλον μονάς ἐστι καὶ τριάς καὶ οὔτε μονάς μόνον, ὅτι καὶ τριάς, οὔτε τριάς, ὅτι καὶ μονάς.²²

These theologians had certainly not read the treatment of the same subject in Evagrius (345–399), whose Greek original was long lost. Yet they repeated its main idea: the Holy Trinity is such a singular kind of triad that it is not preceded by a dyad and is not followed by a tetrad.²³ These theologians thus excluded the Trinity from a dyad as an ordered pair. Thus, even if the Son and the Spirit could be considered as a pair of “caused” hypostases (αἰτιατά), this pair (dyad) remains unordered, without pretending to mark one hypostasis as the first and the other as the second in the pair.

In modern terms, this means that the “one” and “three” implied in the Byzantine understanding of the Holy Trinity are not natural numbers at all but, instead, inconsistent concepts (i.e., concepts implying contradiction).²⁴ The very notion of natural number implies ordered pairs, which are necessary for constructing the series of natural numbers.

Such a correspondance between theologians separated by the span of 800 years—a correspondance that reaches even to the wording—is revealing

²² Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology*, ed. Athanasios D. Angelou (Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Philosophi Byzantini 1) (Athens: Academy of Sciences; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 135.

²³ Evagrius Ponticus, *Capita gnostica*, VI, 10-13, ed. Antoine Guillaumont, *Les six centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique. Édition critique de la version syriaque commune et édition d'une nouvelle version syriaque, intégrale, avec une double traduction française* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985; first published in 1958), 221, 223 (recension S₂, the genuine one; cf. rec. S₁ at 220, 222).

²⁴ For technical details, see Lourié, “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity?’” I deal in that article, among other things, with the famous dictum of Gregory of Nazianzus concerning the movement of the monad through the dyad up to the monad, which will become extremely popular in the discussions of the *Filioque*. For our present context, it is sufficient to take into account that, in Gregory, this dyad is a combination (unordered pair) and never a permutation (ordered pair, wherein is defined which element is the first and which is the second).

both with respect to theology and with respect to logic. In theology, it demonstrates the invariant intuition implied by different triadological theories of different epochs. In logic, it demonstrates the expressive power of symbolic logic (in its ancient “numerological” form) in explaining and channeling the core of theological ideas.

The resemblance between monads, dyads, and other numbers of antique and mediaeval philosophy, on the one hand, and quantified variables, on the other hand, is striking; and this is why, without pretending to be absolutely correct, I would call the respective method of logical thinking ‘symbolic logic.’²⁵ This notion will be useful for discerning between this symbolical method, on the one hand, and the parallel method of logical diagrams, on the other, which will be in the focus of our investigation.

3.2. Eustratius of Nicaea’s Logical Diagrams

We turn once again to Eustratius because of his secondary and additional line of argumentation in the same treatise, *Λόγος περὶ τοῦ παναγίου Πνεύματος*, where he has recourse to diagrams.²⁶ There are no pictures in the only preserved manuscript of the treatise (*Mosquensis gr.* 239, 14th c.), but Eustratius’ diagrams are simple and perfectly understandable from their verbal descriptions. Nevertheless, in order to make my account of Eustratius more readily intelligible, I will supply the relevant images drawn by me.

As we now know, a large part of Eustratius’ argumentation was subsequently deployed against the Greek position on the *Filioque* by Nicetas “of Maroneia.”²⁷ The diagrams featured in these portions as well. Eustratius proposed for the Trinity a triangular diagram (σχῆμα τριγωνικόν, Barmin, 556, 559; Figure 1). This diagram differs from a quite common symbolization of the Trinity with an arbitrary tripartite object in that it represents the rules of inference in reasoning on the mutual relations between the hypostases (as understood, of course, by Eustratius). The Father is the top apex, with the Son and the Spirit as the two bottom apexes. Here it is important that the bottom vertex is absent.

²⁵ To justify this, I quote the definition given by one of the fathers of modern symbolic logic, Clarence Irving Lewis (1883–1964), *A Survey of Symbolic Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918), 1, which I consider to be applicable in this case: “We are concerned only with that logic which uses symbols in certain specific ways—those ways which are exhibited generally in mathematical procedures. In particular, logic to be called ‘symbolic’ must make use of symbols for the logical *relations*, and must so connect various relations that they admit of ‘transformations’ and ‘operations’, according to principles which are capable of exact statement.”

²⁶ Chapters 25–27, ed. Barmin, *Πολεμικα*, 554/555–562/563; hereafter referred to by page and line numbers within the text.

²⁷ See Barmin, “Une source méconnue;” cf. Lourié, “Eustratius of Nicaea.”

According to Eustratius, this diagram expresses that the Father is the unique αἷτιον (the cause) and the two other hypostases are the two αἷτιατά (caused ones). One can immediately see how absurd the diagram would be in reverse (Figure 2), corresponding to the case wherein both Father and Son are causes of the Spirit; it would contradict the very notion of causality: “those that are divided from each other are never, together, the causes of the same thing” (οὐδὲ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἅμα τὰ ἀντιδιαίρουμένα αἷτια, Barmin, 556, 565). Let us recall that, with Eustratius, we are still in an early period when the *Filioque* did not necessarily imply *tanquam ex uno principio* (as will be officially proclaimed by the Council of Lyon in 1274); therefore, Eustratius has to deal with two variants of the *Filioque* including that of the “two principles” (first witnessed by the *Libri Carolini*).



Figure 1. The “triangular diagram” by Eustratius



Figure 2. The diagram showing absurdity of proceeding of the Holy Spirit from two different causes



Figure 3. The diagram showing the procession of the Holy Spirit *tanquam ex uno principio* (arrows added by the author)

The second and the main variant of the *Filioque* was, for Eustratius, *tanquam ex uno principio* (ἀπὸ μιᾶς ... ἀρχῆς, Barmin, 558, 579). The corresponding diagram resulted in a straight line (κατὰ μίαν εὐθεΐαν, Barmin, 558, 595) (Figure 3).²⁸ Such a linear diagram of the Trinity will become very popular in the Latin west from about the same period (twelfth century). It will be adopted by the Byzantine Latinophrones and will be often discussed by later Byzantine anti-Latin polemicists.²⁹

Eustratius then proceeds to explain why the bottom vertex in his own diagram (Figure 1) is absent. He acknowledges that, in this respect, the expressional power of his diagram is limited. It does not make explicit the temporal bestowing of the Spirit through the Son—that the Spirit is “bestowed through the Son from the Father to the faithful” (δι’ Υἱοῦ τοῖς πιστοῖς ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς χορηγούμενον, Barmin, 560, 608). If the triangle were “closed” (Figure 4), the Trinity would be separated from the creation: “If you close the triangle in this way, you separate the Trinity and divide it from the others, which are the things produced and creatures” (Εἰ μὲν οὖν οὕτω περικλείσεις τὸ τρίγωνον, ἀφορίσεις τε τὴν τριάδα καὶ διαιρήσεις ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἃ ἐστὶ ποιήματά τε καὶ κτίσματα, Barmin, 560, 610–613). This is why you have to grasp “the completed scheme” (τὸ σχῆμα ἀπαρτιζόμενον) in an indirect way (κατ’ ἐγκαρσίαν) (Barmin, 560, 610). For Eustratius, it was important to preserve the status of his diagram as expressing the relations *in divinis*; the created world is to be put outside the drawing.

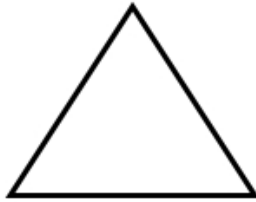


Figure 4. The “closed” triangle diagram

This argument, referring to the difference between the Creator and the creation, provided an occasion to reject the claim that the Son is a cause of the Spirit by using a combination of symbolic and diagrammatic reasoning:

²⁸ Cf.: in making the Son the cause of the Spirit as well, “you made everything as if in longitude” (ἐν ὥσπερ ἐν μήκῳ τὸ ἅπαν πεποίηκας) (Barmin, 558, 602).

²⁹ See, with reproductions of the diagrams, Willson, “Aesthetic,” and Safran, “Diagramming.” I will skip further discussion of the linear “Latin” diagram, though it is present in the majority of the Byzantine theologians discussed below.

If you call the Son a cause of the Spirit, you make the whole (triangle) (a) straight (line) and annul the space [between the vertices] and, therefore, you put the Trinity in the same rank as created things, countable together with them, even if you believe that they are different, the one being prior and the others being posterior. Because it (the Trinity) ought to be exempted as something different, being the creator of things that exist, not a thing among things that exist, but rather not-existing, as being above existence and something that is not ranked among existing things.

Εἰ δὲ τὸν Υἱὸν φῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος αἴτιον, ἀπηύθυνας τὸ πᾶν καὶ τὸ χωρίον ἀνεῖλες· καὶ ὁμοταγῇ τοῖς ποιήμασι τὴν Τριάδα πεποίηκας· συναριθμουμένην αὐτοῖς· κἂν διαφέρειν δόξῃ κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον· ὡς δεῖν ἕτερόν τι ἐξηρῆσθαι καὶ αὐτῆς, ὃ ποιητικὸν ὑπάρχον τῶν ὄντων, μηδὲν ἔσται τῶν ὄντων· ἀλλὰ μὴ ὄν, ὡς ὑπέρόν· καὶ τοῖς οὖσι μὴ συνταττόμενον (Barmin, 560, 614–619).³⁰

Here, Eustratius refers once again to the straight-line diagram (Figure 3) but adds that, without a separate region for the beginning of the series of numerals (which must encompass, in accordance with Pseudo-Iamblichus, the monad and the dyad), it turns out to be merely a graphical representation of the series of natural numbers (in modern terms, of quantified variables representing created things).

Finally, Eustratius approaches an objection formulated in such a manner that one can ask whether it was not previously put forward by some one of the Latins with whom Eustratius' "triangular diagram" would have been discussed:

But it is neither necessary nor reasonable to say that the triangle ought to be completed and, therefore, the Spirit is and from the Son too, in the way that, when introducing the proceeding³¹ of the Spirit from the Son as if the base (of the triangle), the space (within the triangle) would be drawn up as completed.

Ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἀναγκαῖον οὐδ' εὐλογον τὸ λεγόμενον, ὡς ἐπειδὴ δέον ἐστὶν ἀπηρτίσθαι τὸ τρίγωνον, εἶναι διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα· ἵνα τῇ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ προόδῳ τοῦ Πνεύματος ὡς περ βάσις ὑπαγομένη, ἀπηρτισμένον τὸ χωρίον συστήσαιο. (Barmin, 560, 620–624).

³⁰ For ἀλλὰ μὴ ὄν, ὡς ὑπέρόν, cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis Nominibus*, I, 1, ed. Beate R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Divinis Nominibus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 109.16: "[God] is the cause of being for all, and he is himself non-existent (μὴ ὄν) as being beyond every essence" (αἴτιον μὲν τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσιν, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ ὄν ὡς πάσης οὐσίας ἐπέκεινα); cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis Nominibus*, I, 5, ed. Suchla, 117.4.

³¹ Throughout this article, "proceeding" translates the term *πρόοδος*, which is applicable to both the Son and the Spirit, and I reserve the term "procession" for the term *ἐκπόρευσις*, which is applied to the Spirit exclusively.

This passage is both witness to an earlier discussion of the diagram with the Latins and, from a historical perspective, a hint for Nicetas “of Maroneias” in how to deploy Eustratius’ argumentation in favor of the *Filioque*.

Eustratius answered with two objections, of which the second is a repetition of his previous argument wherein respective change in the diagram would result in a confusion between the Creator and creatures. The first of the two arguments is, however, new:

Thus, firstly, it (the triangle) will not in this way be made to stand better, namely when the proceeding (of the two hypostases) will be made straight and advances as if perpendicular, but rather the space (within it) will be removed. The oblique motion is, however, unacceptable for the proceeding of that which is primarily and properly Simplicity, because even those things that are simple among bodies never move in an oblique manner in their own natural motion, but (they move in an oblique manner) only under some force. As to circular motion, it is called complex by some, but even if it is simple, the movement of these (things that are simple among bodies) is not oblique along a straight line but rather along a circumference.

Πρῶτον μὲν γάρ, οὐ στήσεται μᾶλλον οὕτως· ἀλλ’ ἀναιρεθήσεται τὸ χωρίον· τῆς προόδου ἀπηυθυσμένης καὶ προβαινούσης ὥσπερ κατὰ κάθετον. Οὐ γὰρ ἐγκάρσιως ἐνδέχεται τὴν πρόοδον γίνεσθαι τῆς πρώτης καὶ κυρίως ἀπλότητος· ὅπου γε μὴ δὲ τῶν σωμάτων τὰ ἐν τούτοις ἀπλᾶ φέρεται ποτε κατ’ ἐγκάρσιον τὴν ἑαυτῶν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν φοράν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἄρα βίᾳ τινί. Τὸ δὲ κύκλῳ φερόμενον, σύνθετόν τινες ἔφασαν. Εἰ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἀπλοῦν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τούτων κίνησις καθ’ εὐθείαν ἐγκάρσιον· ἀλλὰ δὴ κατὰ περιφέρειαν (Barmin, 560, 624–631).

This analogy, borrowed from mechanics, is indeed unusual but not as far-fetched as the modern reader might imagine. Ancient and medieval authors did not discuss purely imaginary logic (in modern terms, logic without any existential import). Therefore, ancient and medieval logic related to mechanics just as modern mathematics relates to mathematical logic. Following his brilliant predecessor in his commentaries on Aristotle, John Philoponos (ca. 490–ca. 575), Eustratius believed that logic is the same everywhere, in the created world as in the Trinity, so that what differs is only its semantics. In this conviction, Eustratius remained alone in his epoch, for even the Byzantine Latinophrones did not follow him. The majority view was that the Holy Trinity is either beyond logic or has a logic of its own. In either case, the result is the same: the rules of inference applied to the ‘proceedings’ within the Trinity were formulated *ad hoc*, that is, without *binding* parallels in the created world.

Let us return, then, to the logical argument of Eustratius. His thought is quite clear. The ‘proceedings’ within the Holy Trinity, which are a kind (or kinds) of motion (not only in the eyes of Eustratius but according to common Byzantine understanding), must be simple. There is only one kind of motion that is absolutely simple, that which is rectilinear. The oblique motion implied in the procession of the Holy Spirit through two vertices of the triangle does not meet this requirement: indeed, oblique motion is a superposition of motions that are rectilinear. After establishing this, Eustratius reaches the most interesting point. In anticipating a different triadological diagram, one which is circular, he states that circular motion is likely (according to “some”) not simple and is, therefore, unacceptable for the divine proceedings. With this step, Eustratius is on shaky ground, for circular motion was considered simple by Aristotle in his authentic and highly authoritative works, the *Physics* and *On the Heaven*, even though, in some pseudo-Aristotelean works, circular motion was considered to be composed of two rectilinear movements.³² Therefore, Eustratius takes a step backwards and acknowledges that circular motion is perhaps simple, nevertheless. However, the oblique straight line, i.e., a broken line, which must represent, in the triangle of Eustratius, the trajectory of the Spirit if his procession goes through the Son, is not along the circumference, either. With this mention of the circumference, Eustratius paved the way for future diagrams that will combine circles and triangles.

3.3. Nicetas “of Maroneia:” Τάξις (Order) and the Theological Analysis Situs

There were perhaps only two persons to whom Byzantine theology was indebted for making logical diagrams so popular, the Latinophrone Nicetas “of Maroneia” and the anti-Latin polemicist hieromonk Hierotheos. The work of the latter, however, would have been impossible without the former.

Nicetas “of Maroneia” was the archbishop of Thessaloniki already in 1132/3 and died no later than the middle of the 1150s. He wrote six dialogues on the procession of the Holy Spirit between “a Latin” and “a Greek,” where “the Latin” manages to convince “the Greek” of the procession from the Son *tanquam ex uno principio*. After the death of the author, this work became extremely famous among both Latinophrone and the anti-Latin Byzantines. However, we

³² Jean De Groot, *Aristotle’s Empiricism: Experience and Mechanics in the Fourth Century BC* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2014), 44–45. For the general attitude of Eustratius toward Aristotle, cf. Antony C. Lloyd, “The Aristotelianism of Eustratios of Nicaea,” in *Aristoteles – Werk und Wirkung*, vol. 2: *Kommentierung, Überlieferung, Nachleben*, ed. Jürgen Wiesner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 341–351.

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know almost nothing about the circumstances when it was written.³³ In its recent critical edition, the drawing of Nicetas' triadological diagram (Figure 5a), which is preserved in two manuscripts (Figures 5b, 5c), is omitted, though it was included in the previous edition by Nicola Festa.³⁴

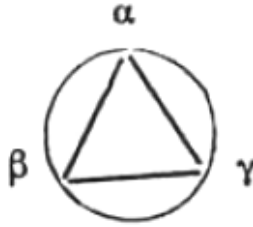


Figure 5a. The triadological diagram by Nicetas "of Maroneia." The drawing from the *Vaticanus gr.* 1115 as restored by Nicola Festa (*Bessarione* 16 (1912): 271)

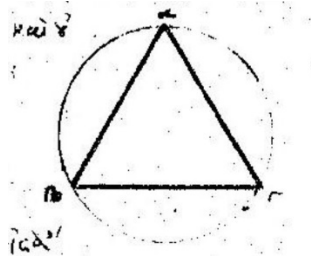


Figure 5b. The triadological diagram by Nicetas "of Maroneia" in the *Vaticanus gr.* 1115, f. 20^r (second half of the 14th c.)



Figure 5c. The triadological diagram by Nicetas "of Maroneia" in the *Laur. Plut.* 31.37, f. 49^r (first half of 14th c.)

³³ For a recent discussion of the chronology of the life and works of Nicetas, see Alessandra Bucossi's introduction to *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi sex de processione Spiritus Sancti*, eds. Bucossi and Luigi D'Amelia (CCSG 92) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), xxiii–xxxvi.

³⁴ Nicola Festa, "Niceta di Maronea e i suoi dialoghi sulla processione delle Spirito Santo," *Bessarione* 16 (1912): 80–107, 126–132, 266–286, here at 271; 17 (1913): 104–113, 295–315; 18 (1914): 55–75, 243–259; 19 (1915): 239–246. Cf. *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi* II, 21, eds. Bucossi and D'Amelia, 94.

In Nicetas' triadological diagram, it is striking that he develops an idea discussed but rejected by Eustratius of Nicaea: the procession of the Spirit through the Son via circular motion. This is why a circle appears, in his diagram, together with the triangle. The three apexes of the triangle are placed on the circumference of a circle (this composition is, however, distorted in one of the later manuscripts, Figure 5c; it is important to notice that, in the manuscript tradition, the diagrams, just like texts, were not exempt from unhelpful editing, deliberate or not). It is worth noting that the triangle became equilateral, whereas, in Eustratius, it was sufficient for it to be isosceles.

I would suppose that Nicetas made this radical choice to opt for central symmetry within a circular diagram instead of the axial symmetry of Eustratius' isosceles triangle, for "geometrical" reasons, namely, the same reasons mentioned by Eustratius: the motion of the Spirit must be simple but cannot be rectilinear; therefore, it must be circumferential. This is a kind of logical reasoning—logical computation—in terms of topology, that is, in a manner that is able to be expressed with diagrams. The entire *Dialogue II* of Nicetas is dedicated to this geometrical ("topological") logical reasoning. He discusses, in spatial terms, various concepts in their mutual relations within a mental space. This is the same mode of thinking that resulted in Leibniz's and Euler's *analysis situs*, that is, topology and graph theory.³⁵ It is often (but not always) equivalent to, and always different from, its alternative, namely the purely "algebraic" mode of thinking used in symbolic logic. In *Dialogue II*, Nicetas discusses the matters for which he has had no "algebraic" (symbolic) logical language. It is in this situation that the problem of τάξις (order) between the divine hypostases appears, in Byzantine theology, for the first time and immediately advanced to the front line of the polemic. Indeed, it is always the order—instead of the quantities which are to be dealt with by algebra—that the *analysis situs* is interested in.

The perfect central symmetry of Nicetas' diagram not only resolved some problems but also created new ones. Such a diagram would permit the *Filioque* (in the sense of *tanquam ex uno principio*) but it would also permit all other similar combinations, such as a *Spirituque* (the begetting of the Son through

³⁵ See Vincenzo De Risi, *Geometry and Monadology. Leibniz's "Analysis Situs" and Philosophy of Space* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2007); cf. also Peter Gärdenfors, *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). For an example of earlier topological reasoning in Byzantine theology, see Lourié, "Leontius of Byzantium and His 'Theory of Graphs' against John Philoponus," in *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. Mikonja Knežević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2015), 143–170.

the Spirit)³⁶ and even the proceeding of the Father from the other two hypostases (an absurd idea that, to my knowledge, has never been put forth in the history of Christianity). Nicetas acknowledges that his diagram has limitations: “However, taking from the diagram/paradigm what is useful, leave the rest” (Σὺ γοῦν ἐκ τοῦ παραδείγματος λαβὼν ὅσον χρήσιμον, ἀπόλιπε τὸ λοιπόν).³⁷

To get rid of the problems resulting from the overwhelming symmetry, Nicetas had recourse to the notion of order (τάξις) between the hypostases. This term occurred in ancient Fathers, but, beginning with Nicetas in the middle of the twelfth century, it becomes crucial to answer a more specific question: whether this order takes place both in the temporal manifestations of God as well as *in divinis* or in the temporal manifestations only. Of course, Nicetas opted for the first alternative, as all later Latinophrones will do, whereas anti-Latin authors will become divided on this matter, a division that will create a major threat to sustainability of the Byzantine anti-Latin position(s) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Gregory Palamas and Joseph Bryennios will limit this hypostatic order to the temporal manifestations, whereas Theophanes of Nicaea will continue Nicetas’ line of thinking.

In commenting on his diagram, Nicetas says that each of the three hypostases is “the middle/midpoint” (ἡ μεσότης, τὸ μέσον) between the two remaining ones, which are thus the *extrema* (αἱ ἀκρότητες, τὰ ἄκρα) in respect to the middle. In this way, the Trinity is perfectly symmetrical. Nevertheless, there is a τάξις (order) *in divinis* that singles out the unique sequence of the hypostases that correspond to the triune reality: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. *Therefore*—this logical conjunction is implied but, oddly enough, never made explicit—it is uniquely the procession of the Spirit through the Son that takes place in reality, whereas all other combinations do not. I would emphasize that the need to introduce such a notion of order is, in Nicetas, quite understandable, but he himself never discusses the necessity to block the possibility of a *Spirituque* and other unacceptable ‘proceedings.’ It thus remains unclear in what sense he considered each hypostasis to be both the midpoint and an extremum, because his description of the diagram does not allow one to think that he described a purely intellectual game without any connection to the divine reality.³⁸

Nevertheless, even before he resorts to the diagram, Nicetas states that it is order (τάξις) that makes something either *extremum* or the middle: “And it is not that which is so from us or by our affirmation or negation (something)

³⁶ On this idea in the modern and mediaeval theology, see Lourié, “Blemmydes.” The perfectly mirror symmetric in respect to the *Filioque* is the Ethiopic 17th-19th-century doctrine called *Qəbat* (“Unction:” the Son is born through the unction of the Spirit).

³⁷ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21.94-95, eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 95.

³⁸ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21, eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 94-95.

which is the midpoint or the *extremum*; it is that which is midpoint or *extremum* of itself and according to its own order” (οὐδ’ ὅτι ὅπερ ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν θέσεως, ἡγουν ἀναιρέσεως, ἔχει τὸ μέσον ἢ ἄκρον εἶναι, τοῦτο καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν, ἡγουν κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ὕπαρξιν, «μέσον» ἢ «ἄκρον» ἐστίν).³⁹ In the light of this statement, we have to conclude that the *Filioque* is true, because only the Son is the middle “by himself” and according to Holy Trinity’s own order. However, the question remains: why this is not said explicitly? And in what sense is Nicetas’ diagram, which allows other midpoints and *extrema*, true?

I think that the text of *Dialogue II*, which comes down to us in relatively late manuscripts (the earliest is dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, that is, after the theological collisions of the late thirteenth century), is a later edited version. A hallmark of such editing is recognizable in the distinction of the midpoints and the *extrema* “in the proper sense of the word” (κυρίως) and not (οὐ κυρίως).⁴⁰ In my opinion, in his original text, Nicetas argued that the Father and the Spirit, while also being “the middle,” are not the middle “in the proper sense of the word,” though, in some way, they are. This conclusion is corroborated by an earlier, indeed the first, mention of the same distinction: “The midpoint is sometimes so called in the proper sense and sometimes not in the proper sense; and the *extrema* as well” (Λέγεται δὲ τὸ μέσον καὶ ποτὲ μὲν κυρίως, ποτὲ δὲ οὐ κυρίως· καὶ τὰ ἄκρα ὡσαύτως). What may be the midpoint for one thing can turn out to be an *extremum* in respect of something else; something is right from one point of view but left from another.⁴¹ This reasoning tends to the conclusion that only order (τάξις) is able to put an end to such relativism, though this conclusion is never made explicit. In the present text of Nicetas, the notion of things that are midpoints and *extrema* “not in the proper sense” is never applied to the Holy Trinity and is, therefore, completely useless for the author. Such a superfluous detail could be best explained as evidence of a not very careful editing.

Finally, the explanation provided only within the description of the diagram for what “not in the proper sense” means is absurd. The text begins with the definition of *extrema* and middle in the proper sense (a part of the text that I believe is genuine):

³⁹ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21.7-11, eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 91.

⁴⁰ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21.83-84, eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 94: Καὶ ἔστιν ἡ μεσότης αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἀκρότης κυρίως καὶ οὐ κυρίως.

⁴¹ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 19.397-406 (quoted lines 397-398), eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 87.

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When the distance or the movement from each (of the *extrema*) to another through the midpoint is greater than the distance between it and the midpoint, such extrema must be comprised to be so in the proper sense, because the distance between the extrema is greater than that to the midpoint.

Καθὸ μὲν γὰρ ἡ ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἐκάστου διὰ μέσου τοῦ μέσου ἐνὸς πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν εἴτε διάστασας εἴτε κίνησις πλείστη ἐστίν, κυρίως ἀκρότητες ἂν νοηθεῖεν· τοῖς γὰρ ἄκροις πλεῖδόν ἐστίν ἡ ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διάστασις ἢ πρὸς τὸ μέσον.⁴²

So far, so good. But the text continues:

But when, in moving from the midpoint to each of the *extrema*, the nearer they (the moving objects or points) are to the *extrema*, the closer they become to each other [S omits 'closer to each other;' A omits 'to each other'], they are not *extrema* in the proper sense, because, when (some objects) progress from the midpoint to the *extrema*, the further they go forward, the more distant they become from each other.

Καθὸ δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου πρὸς ἐκάτερον τῶν ἄκρων κινούμενα, ὅσον πλησιάζει τοῖς ἄκροις, τοσοῦτον ἀλλήλων ἐγγύτερα [S omits ἀλλήλων ἐγγύτερα, A omits ἀλλήλων] γίνεται, οὐ κυρίως ἀκρότητες· τὰ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου πρὸς ἄκρα προβαίνοντα, καθόσον πρόεισιν, κατὰ τοσοῦτον καὶ ἀλλήλων διέστηκεν.⁴³

The text claims that two objects (points) which move from the same starting position in different directions could become progressively closer to each another. Unless we suppose that Nicetas described an “impossible world” (the kind of possible worlds where the laws of its own logic are broken), we have to recognize that the text is distorted. The scribes of A (14th/15th c.) and S (second half of the 14th–early 15th c.) might have had similar feelings.

I conclude that the original thought by Nicetas was the following. The circular symmetry in the Trinity is real, but it presents each of the hypostases as the middle and as an *extremum* not always in the proper sense. Properly speaking, it is only the order (τάξις) that produces the midpoint and the *extrema sensu proprio*. In the case of the Holy Trinity, this is the order “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The original text of Nicetas must have contained an explanation of the meaning of the midpoint and the *extrema* “not in the proper sense” in the Holy Trinity, but it is precisely this explanation that the editor aimed to erase. And while he left traces behind, he succeeded in doing so.

⁴² Nicetas Thessalonicensis. *Dialogi*, II, 21.84–88, eds. Bucossi and D'Amelia, 94.

⁴³ Nicetas Thessalonicensis. *Dialogi*, II, 21.88–93, eds. Bucossi and D'Amelia, 94.

It is most natural to think that this later editor belonged to the camp of Latinophrones, because, for any in the anti-Latin camp, the *Dialogues* were *a priori* unacceptable from their main idea, even if interesting in other respects. Therefore, the anti-Latins would have been more tolerant of the text as it stood. In sharp contrast with the further success of the notions of *order* and *middle*, which were introduced into the triadological discussions by Nicetas, his notion of middle (and *extrema*) “not in the proper sense” was not accepted by anybody.

4. The Hidden Crossroad: (In)consistency

Both Eustratius of Nicaea and Nicetas “of Maroneia” agreed that the closed triangle and the circle would mean the *Filioque*. Why? — Because both of them understood, in the Holy Trinity, such notions as φύσις, ἐνέργεια, ὑπόστασις, and other notions closely related to them, in a consistent way, that is, as exempt from any contradictions. If such is the case, there is only one category whose number in the Trinity is three and not one, the hypostases, or, more precisely, the hypostatic *idiomata*, rather than the hypostases themselves. At least, this is the conclusion that follows from the standard definition of hypostasis as ‘οὐσία (essence) with the hypostatic *idiomata*’—the properties that distinguish a given hypostasis. In the Trinity, such *idiomata* are “unbegotten,” “begotten,” and “processed:” only one *idioma* for each hypostasis. The essence is unitary and therefore not eligible to be represented by three points; the same is true about the energy, power, or glory that is common to the three hypostases. Therefore, Nicetas formulated the following reasoning about the order:

But if (the order is) neither according to the nature nor according to the (hypostatic) characteristics, there is no order at all, or, if there is (an order), it is according to something else. However, if it is according to something else, what is this if not the nature and the hypostatic characteristics? **Because there is nothing besides these.** And if the order is not in them, there is no order at all.

Ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φύσιν, οὔτε κατὰ τὰς ιδιότητας, οὐδὲ τάξις ὅλως ἔσται· ἢ εἰ ἔσται, κατὰ τι ἕτερον. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔσται κατ’ ἄλλο τι, τί τοῦτο παρὰ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὰς ὑποστατικὰς ιδιότητας; **Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἕτερον παρὰ ταῦτα.** Καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐν τούτοις ἡ τάξις, οὐδὲ τάξις ὅλως.⁴⁴

I place in bold the cornerstone of this reasoning, where the patristic notion of hypostasis is lost. Instead, Nicetas acknowledges only the common essence (nature) and the three hypostatic characteristics.

⁴⁴ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21.149-154, eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 97.

As one would expect, Nicetas treats the proceedings of hypostases as the proceedings of their hypostatic characteristics. The Arians and other heretics were not right when they introduced an order within the divine nature. However, the order takes place not within the nature but between the hypostases, which means that it takes place between the hypostatic characteristics, “according to the hypostases, that is, the hypostatic characteristics” (κατὰ τὰς ὑποστάσεις, ἥτοι τὰς ὑποστατικὰς ιδιότητας).⁴⁵ Here we see that, speaking about the procession of the Holy Spirit through the Son, Nicetas means the procession of the *idioma* of the Spirit through the *idioma* of the Son. For him, this means the same thing.

This theology prepared the way for the Byzantine Latinophrones to adopt the Latin Scholastic doctrine of hypostases as *relationes* within the Trinity. But in order to understand the properly Byzantine Orthodox theological thought, it is more important to notice that, with Nicetas, Byzantine theologians return to the discussions of the sixth century, when Chalcedonians were forced to adopt a response to the inter-“Monophysite” polemics about the so-called “Tritheism” of John Philoponus. This discussion demonstrated that the problem has no consistent resolution, though it has an inconsistent one.

Using the above-mentioned understanding of the notion of hypostasis, Philoponus argued that the three divine hypostases are divided in the same way as three men. This view was rejected by the majority of his co-religionists (Severan “Monophysites”) but provoked, in 586, one of the greatest schisms between the “Monophysites” themselves. The Severan Patriarch of Alexandria Damian put forward a doctrine mirroring that of Philoponus: in the Holy Trinity, the hypostatic characteristic are the hypostases themselves. It is worth noting that Damian was, in some way, albeit without the *Filioque*, a predecessor of Nicetas “of Maroneia” and Latin Scholasticism.

Damian’s main opponent, the Severan Patriarch of Antioch Peter of Callinicum was only able to demonstrate, in voluminous treatises, how far his opponent deviated from the patristic path. Peter, however, was unable to propose any positive doctrine answering both Philoponus and Damian.⁴⁶ The Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria Eulogius (580–607) commented on the affair and explained why none out of the three protagonists was right, not even Peter of Callinicum. Eulogius’ work is preserved only as an abstract made by Photius in

⁴⁵ *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, II, 21.154–161 (quoted lines 160–161), eds. Bucossi and D’Amelia, 97.

⁴⁶ For an introduction to this discussion, see *Peter of Callinicum. Anti-Tritheist Dossier*, eds. Rifaat Y. Ebied, Albert van Roey, and Lionel R. Wickham (OLA 10) (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistik, 1981). I tried to provide an exhaustive bibliography in Lourié, “Damian of Alexandria,” in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 2, ed. Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 77–78.

his *Myriobiblion*, codex 230. Eulogius' main point against the three disputants is the following: all of them take literally St. Basil the Great's definition of hypostasis as "the conjunction of the essence and the characteristic/*idioma*" (συμπλοκή ούσίας καὶ ιδιώματος). Taken literally, such a definition would obviously introduce complexity into the Trinity (ὁ περιφανῶς συνεισάγειν οἶδε τὴν σύνθεσιν). However, Basil used it as an auxiliary for our mind to grasp what is impossible to grasp: "This is why he [St. Basil] made a reservation that it is impossible to grasp the proper notion of Father or Son without having articulated one's mind with an addition of the proper characteristics/*idiomata*" (Διὸ καὶ ἐπήγαγεν ὡς ἀμήχανον ἰδιάζουσαν ἔννοιαν Πατρὸς λαβεῖν ἢ Υἱοῦ, μὴ τῇ τῶν ιδιωμάτων προσθήκῃ τῆς διανοίας διαρθρουμένης);⁴⁷ the choice of the verb διαρθρώ "divide by joints, articulate; describe distinctly" points to complexity.

The core of this explanation consists in the statement that the notion of hypostasis is not simple (it is indeed complex), but its complexity must remain within our mind and be used as a directional sign to something beyond it. In other words, Eulogius stated that the very notion of hypostasis *in divinis* is inconsistent and, therefore, is to be defined through a contradiction: we define a complex notion but, at the same time, deny that we mean anything complex, though without forgetting the complexity of our notion.⁴⁸

Let us notice that Damian's triadology is also inconsistent, albeit in a way that is dual (in the logical sense⁴⁹) to the logic implied by Eulogius and the mainstream Byzantine tradition. The latter is paraconsistent (breaking the principle of non-contradiction, that is, identifying those logical objects that continue to be non-identical), whereas the former is paracomplete (breaking the principle of the excluded middle, which is equivalent to the statement that a given logical object is not identical to itself).⁵⁰ The three hypostases of the divinity in the Byzantine tradition are identical to one other without being identical, whereas the three hypostases of the divinity for Damian are different and numerable without being distinguishable, like dollars in a bank account (to

⁴⁷ Photius, *Bibliothèque*, vol. 5: 'Codices' 230–241, ed. and trans. René Henry (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967), 44, 46.

⁴⁸ For the logic implied by Eulogius, cf. Lourie, "Theodore."

⁴⁹ More precisely, in the sense of Boolean algebra, where the truth values "true" and "false" and the connectives "and" (conjunction) and "or" (exclusive disjunction) are *dual* to each other. If we simultaneously replace, in a true formula, each value and connective with their duals, we obtain another, but similarly true formula; therefore, a formula and its dual formula are equivalent: if one of them is true, then, another is also true too.

⁵⁰ For a philosophical introduction to inconsistent logic in general, see Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. in 2006). For a more technical introduction, see Walter Carnielli and Marcelo Esteban Coniglio, *Paraconsistent Logic: Consistency, Contradiction and Negation* (New York: Springer, 2016).

use an example of Erwin Schrödinger from his 1953 popular lecture, where he thus explained in what manner quantum objects such as electrons are different from each other). I have dealt with these logical matters elsewhere⁵¹ and will return to them at the end of this article.

In order to think in the same vein as Eulogius, there is no need to read his texts, because he articulated a fundamental intuition of Byzantine theology. Therefore, those who in the late thirteenth century were able to think like Eulogius would have obtained arguments for rejecting Nicetas “of Maroneia”’s phrase “there is nothing besides these.” Beside the common essence, energy, etc., and beside the hypostatic idioms, there are, in the Trinity, the three hypostases themselves—in the sense that the notion of hypostasis is not reducible to a conjunction of the essence with an idiom.

Without Nicetas’ original limitation of applying his diagram to the hypostatic idioms, his triadological *analysis situs* became appealing for anti-Latin polemicists. Let us recall that, in the epoch of Eustratius of Nicaea and beyond, theologians such as Nicholas Mouzalon and Nicholas of Methone expressed the inconsistency of the Trinity using “numerology” (or, as I would prefer to say, symbolic logic). This was enough to block both the *Filioque* and Eustratius’ triadological model but not enough to explain a positive meaning of “through the Son” (other than the temporal bestowing). After Nicetas “of Maroneia,” the way for such an explanation was opened.

Here I omit the circumstances of the Synod of Blachernae of 1285 that proclaimed the “Greek” alternative to the *Filioque* in rather vague terms such as “eternal appearance” (ἀΐδιος ἔκφανσις) of the Spirit through the Son by their common energy.⁵² Instead, I will focus on the most “precise” theological thinkers of the epoch. Since the rediscovery (after Eustratius of Nicaea) of the theological *analysis situs* by Nicetas “of Maroneia,” it is no wonder that these theologians will explore the expressive power of logical diagrams.

⁵¹ Lourié, “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity’?” However, in discussing paracomplete logic in this aforementioned article, I make no reference to the Damianite conception of the Trinity.

⁵² For an outline of both the historical events and the theology, see Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)*, revised edn (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), and Jean-Claude Larchet (ed.), *La vie et l’œuvre théologique de Georges/Grégoire II de Chypre (1241–1290) patriarche de Constantinople* (Paris: Cerf, 2012). The latter contains, among other things, the first complete, although still not critical, edition of Gregory of Cyprus’ work against Bekkos, by Théophile Kislas. The history surrounding the theology of Gregory of Cyprus, its admission by some and rejection by others, is still understudied and little understood, which, in turn, makes it difficult to understand the theology of the early fourteenth century leading up to Gregory Palamas. For an outline of thirteenth-century theology, both Latinophrone and anti-Latin, cf. Georgios P. Theodoroudis, *Η εκπόρευσις του Αγίου Πνεύματος κατά τους συγγραφείς του ΙΓ’ αιώνας* (Thessaloniki: Κυρομάνος, 1990).

5. Hesitations: Nicephorus Blemmydes and Emperor Theodore Laskaris

Nicephorus Blemmydes and his disciple who became his opponent, Emperor Theodore II Laskaris, were two Byzantine theologians who faced but did not resolve the problem of inconsistency in triadology. Nevertheless, they both contributed to its further discussion in different theological camps.

5.1. Nicephorus Blemmydes: Inability to Protect the Trinity from an Ordered Pair

Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197–*ca.* 1269) was the most authoritative theologian of his time.⁵³ Almost all other thirteenth-century remarkable theologians were his disciples or heavily influenced by him, either directly (as in the case of Theodore Laskaris) or indirectly (as in the case of Gregory of Cyprus, who was a disciple of Blemmydes' disciple, George Akropolites; or hieromonk Hierotheos, who always referred to Blemmydes' works as if they conformed to his own thought; or even John Bekkos, who read his works in prison and became convinced of the *Filioque*). Nevertheless, as has become clear in the light of recent research, no Byzantine theologians, either Latinophrone or anti-Latin, followed his theological thought as it was. I must confess that my previous evaluations of Blemmydes' theology were, in this respect, inadequate, and now I consider Larchet's criticism in my address justified.⁵⁴ Blemmydes inspired many but convinced nobody. Probably, it is Larchet who put forward (elaborating on an idea by Aristeides Papadakis) the most balanced interpretation of his theology as "fondamentalement inachevée" and, therefore, ready for being "précisée, complétée et prolongée," as John Bekkos and Gregory of Cyprus did, each of them in his own direction.⁵⁵

Blemmydes was the first to acknowledge some meaning of "through the Son" *in divinis*, and even coined the formula later adopted (without changing its key words) though reinterpreted by Gregory of Cyprus and his Synod of 1285: "As the energy of the Son and God's Logos, the Holy Spirit eternally shines forth from him, which is the same as saying 'through him,' from the Father, whereas,

⁵³ For a general introduction to Blemmydes' life and activity, cf. *Nicephori Blemmydae Autobiographia, sive, Curriculum vitae; necnon, Epistula universalior*, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz (CCSG 13) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984).

⁵⁴ Cf. Larchet (ed.), *La vie*, 95–112, esp. 99, 111, with further bibliography.

⁵⁵ Larchet (ed.), *La vie*, 110. For Bekkos' dependency on Blemmydes and Nicetas "of Maroneia" (but not on Latin theologians), see esp. Alexandra Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel. Patriarch Johannes XI. Bekkos als Verteidiger der Kirchenunion von Lyon (1274)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).

as Gift, he is sent and bestowed by nature” (Ὡς μὲν οὖν ἐνέργεια τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ Λόγου, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἀϊδίως ἐκλάμπει παρ’ αὐτοῦ, ταυτὸν δ’ εἰπεῖν δι’ αὐτοῦ, παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς· ὡς δὲ δωρεὰ καὶ ἀποστέλλεται καὶ δίδοται φυσικῶς).⁵⁶

Blemmydes tries not to acknowledge the order in the Trinity in the sense that the Spirit is posterior to the Son. Apparently, he unequivocally follows the mainstream Byzantine tradition insisting that they both share the same place in order:

The Spirit has in respect to the Son the same order and nature as the Son has in respect to the Father; the same shall have been also the order and the nature that has the Son in respect to the Spirit as the Spirit has in respect to the Father.

Τοιαύτην τάξιν καὶ φύσιν ἔχει τὸ Πνεῦμα πρὸς τὸν Υἱόν, οἷαν ὁ Υἱὸς ἔχει πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα· τοιαύτην ἂν ἔχοι καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς πρὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ τάξιν καὶ φύσιν, οἷαν αὐτὸ πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα.⁵⁷

Then, in the same treatise, he proceeds to the conclusion formulated in strictly symmetrical terms: a “division” (διαίρεσις) will be introduced into the Trinity if the Logos and the Spirit are not from the Father “through each other” (διὰ θατέρου θάτερον).⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he evidently felt insecure with such statements. Thus, he makes the awkward claim that, “we therefore know the sending of the Spirit to be the mean between the natural and the hypostatic idioms” (ἐγνώμεν ἰδοὺ τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἀποστολὴν μέσσην φυσικῆς τε καὶ ὑποστατικῆς ιδιότητος).⁵⁹ Michel Stavrou is perhaps right to consider this as a mistake further on abandoned by the author.⁶⁰ But what does the author propose instead?

Until recently, all our answers were conjectural, because all previously known texts by Blemmydes were open to different interpretations. My own

⁵⁶ Blemmydes, *Letter to Jacob of Bulgaria* [dated 1256], 6.47-50, ed. and trans. Michel Stavrou, *Nicéphore Blemmydès. Œuvres théologiques*, vol. 2 (SC 558) (Paris: Cerf, 2013), 92, 94 (for the date, see 56–62).

⁵⁷ Blemmydes, *Letter to Theodore II Laskaris* [dated 1255], 4.29-32, ed. and trans. Stavrou, *Nicéphore Blemmydès. Œuvres théologiques*, vol. 1 (SC 517) (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 314 (for the date, see 282–288).

⁵⁸ Blemmydes, *Letter to Theodore II Laskaris*, 10.4-5, ed. Stavrou, vol. 1, 346.

⁵⁹ Blemmydes, *Letter to Theodore II Laskaris*, 8.23-24, ed. Stavrou, vol. 1, 334. Blemmydes here avoids acknowledging the sending of the Spirit as the second hypostatic idiom of the Son and instead invented “a mean” between the two actual kinds of idioms in order to connect the temporal sending and the Triune nature.

⁶⁰ See Stavrou’s commentary in *Nicéphore Blemmydès. Œuvres théologiques*, vol. 1, 357 (note complémentaire 8).

interpretation was in the line of Gregory of Cyprus and especially of hieromonk Hierotheos and Gregory Palamas.⁶¹ However, Michel Stavrou has found, in a unique fourteenth-century manuscript, a work of Blemmydes that (if the manuscript attribution is correct) disambiguates the corpus of Blemmydes' texts. This is a series of syllogisms (without a proper title) proving the truth of "though the Son" for the Spirit. Number four is the following: "If the Holy Spirit is not through the Son, then the Son will be through the Spirit; but this is not so; therefore, the opposite (must be true)" (Εἰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἔσται διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος ὁ Υἱός· ἀλλὰ μὲν τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστι, τὸ ἕτερον ἄρα).⁶² If the attribution to Blemmydes is correct, and, especially, if Stavrou is correct in dating this work to the time after the *Letter to Jacob of Bulgaria* (1256),⁶³ we have to conclude that Blemmydes eventually succumbed to the pressure of the requirement of logical consistency, *de facto* recognizing the order wherein the Spirit is posterior to the Son.

The order wherein one out of the two, either the Son or the Spirit, is posterior to another implies a dyad within the triad, which was incompatible with mainstream Byzantine triadology, from the Cappadocian Fathers up to Nicholas of Methone. Blemmydes certainly tried to discuss the mutual relations between the Son and the Spirit *in divinis* without compromising this principle, but he failed to produce any coherent doctrine. The reason why he failed is obvious: one cannot discuss the mutual relations between the two without the possibility of considering them as an ordered pair (dyad) or, at the very least, as an orderable pair (where—at least, theoretically—if this one element is the Son, then, the another element of it must be the Spirit). If we have, however, a pair that is not only unordered but even not orderable, it means that each of its two elements is simultaneously the first and the second. This would be not a consistent way of thinking. It was, indeed, implied in the previous Byzantine triadological tradition, but, in order for it to be made explicit, we have to wait for hieromonk Hierotheos. Something had to be sacrificed, either the consistent logic or logically inconsistent theological tradition. Blemmydes was too attached to the former.

5.2. Theodore Laskaris: A Cautious Theologian

Theodore II Laskaris (1222–1258, r. 1254–1258) was heavily dependent on Nicephorus Blemmydes, but this dependence was ambivalent and sometimes in

⁶¹ Especially in Lourié, "Blemmydes."

⁶² Blemmydes, *Œuvres théologiques*, vol. 2, 224.

⁶³ Blemmydes, *Œuvres théologiques*, vol. 2, 217.

an opposition to his teacher.⁶⁴ Laskaris was closely acquainted with Blemmydes' approach to "through the Son." In 1255, he became the addressee of the first major theological treatise, quoted above, where Blemmydes developed these ideas. However, he followed Blemmydes only in acknowledging that a specific interrelation between the Son and the Spirit *in divinis* does exist.

Theodore's theological work is mostly collected by himself in the eight-book *Christian Doctrine* published not long ago by Christos Krikonis (the *editio princeps* in 1987)⁶⁵ and, to my knowledge, has still never been investigated in depth. The only place where Theodore discusses a triadological diagram seems to me distorted. This is the first of his two *Orations against the Latins* (included in *Christian Doctrine* as book VI) dated to the autumn of 1256.⁶⁶

The diagram (Figures 6a, 6b)⁶⁷ illustrates the part of the text that begins as follows: "The three are either a (geometrical) figure or not (representable as) a figure. If they are a figure, then it is a six-partite trifold" (Τὰ τρία ἢ σχῆμα ἢ ἀσχημάτιστον. Εἰ μὲν οὖν σχῆμα, ἑξαμερὲς τρίπλοκον).⁶⁸ The sentence "Εἰ μὲν οὖν σχῆμα, ἑξαμερὲς τρίπλοκον" ("If they are a figure, then it is a six-partite trifold") is never commented upon later or elsewhere in Theodore's works. The diagram itself is hardly "six-partite." We know six-partite diagrams from a later period, beginning in the late thirteenth century (Figure 9). Finally, as we will see below, in this sermon, Theodore argued *against* the possibility of using diagrams (figures) in theology. Given the scant manuscript tradition of the treatise,⁶⁹ I would conclude that the difficult sentence is a later interpolation that might have occurred rather naturally in the late thirteenth-century. Indeed, the witness of the *Vaticanus gr.* 1113 is not so distant from the lifetime of the author and, therefore, is highly valuable. But it belongs to a quite different

⁶⁴ For their mutual relations, which became quite difficult, see esp. Maria Aleksandrovna Andreeva, *Полемика Θεοδόρου II. Λασκάριος καὶ Νικηφόρος Βλεμμυδῆς* [Polemics of Theodore II Laskaris with Nicephoros Blemmydes], *Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk. Třída filosoficko-historicko-filologická* (1929): 1–36 (Prague: Královská česká společnost nauk, 1930). However, Andreeva did not go deeper into theological matters.

⁶⁵ Christos Th. Krikonis, *Θεοδώρου Β' Λασκάρεως Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, 3rd edn (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1990). The text of this third edition is identical to that of the second edition (1987–1988).

⁶⁶ Date according to Dimiter Angelov, *The Byzantine Hellene: The Life of Emperor Theodore Laskaris and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 342.

⁶⁷ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, ed. Krikonis, 129. Here and below the drawings from a manuscript are added by the author.

⁶⁸ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 15.148–150, ed. Krikonis, 129.

⁶⁹ It is preserved in three manuscripts, but one of them (*Vaticanus gr.* 1942, 17th c.) is a copy of another (*Vaticanus gr.* 1113, second half of 13th c.) having no independent value. The third manuscript is Oxford, Bodleian, *Barrochianus* 97 (15th c.).

epoch in respect to triadological diagrams. Theodore lived before the revolution in this field made by hieromonk Hierotheos, but his earliest manuscript is either posterior to or contemporaneous with it.

After having put aside the difficult sentence, we can proceed with a smooth text. Even before turning to the diagram, Theodore denies any value of logical reasoning in theology (arguing, in this way, for the necessity of taking at face value Gospel sayings about the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father):

The type (character) of logical argumentation is syllogistic: the syllogistic standard, demonstrating the conclusion through the middle (terms). Without an intermediary, the purpose of the syllogistic argumentation would be indemonstrable. The theological (type of argumentation) demonstrates the truth without an intermediary and simultaneously. The (argumentation) without an intermediary does not imply (logical) necessity, but what is introduced using (logical) necessity, is not theologically demonstrative.

Ὁ τῆς λογικῆς πραγματείας χαρακτήρ συλλογιστικός, ὁ συλλογιστικὸς κανὼν, διὰ μέσων δείκνυσιν τὸ συμπέρασμα, ἢ τῆς συλλογιστικῆς πραγματείας περάτωσις ἀμέσως οὐκ ἂν ποτε δείκνυσιν. Ὁ θεολογικὸς ἀμέσως καὶ ἅμα δείκνυσιν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Ὁ ἀμέσως δεικνύων οὐ βίαν φέρει· ὁ δὲ μετὰ βίας ἀγόμενος, οὐ θεολογικὸς ἀποδεικτικῶς.⁷⁰

Turning to the diagram, Theodore previously discussed whether the Trinity is not representable as a figure (ἀσχημάτιστον, lit., “without a shape, shapeless”) but, nevertheless, representable with a line (γραμμικός). There are two possibilities here: this line would be either infinite, without beginning, or issuing from a monad (ἢ ἀναρχον, ἢ ἐκ μονάδος). If the former, then there would be no Trinity at all. If the latter (“from the monad having no beginning,” ἐξ ἀνάρχου μονάδος), the two other monads must proceed from it directly and as “the equipoised monads, not the one from another, but both from the one” (αἱ ἰσόρροποι μονάδες, οὐ διὰ τῆς ἐτέρας ἐτέρα, ἀλλ’ ἐκ μιᾶς ἀμφοτέραι), because, otherwise, they would be never equal in glory (τιμῇ), and their “essential interpenetration” that is “from,” “in,” and “through” the unique beginning (ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς αἱ ἀμφοτέραι, ἐξ ἧς καὶ ἐν ᾗ καὶ δι’ ἧς τὴν οὐσιώδη περιχώρησιν ἔχουσι) would be broken. He therefore concludes that any linear (shapeless) diagram is unsuitable for the Trinity.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 11.11-16, ed. Krikonis, 127. For the late Byzantine meaning of βία, see Emmanuel Kryaras, *Λέξικο της μεσαιωνικῆς ἐλληνικῆς δημώδους γραμματείας, 1100–1669*, vol. 4 (Thessaloniki: Κέντρο Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσας, 1975), 105–106.

⁷¹ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 15.151-166, ed. Krikonis, 129.

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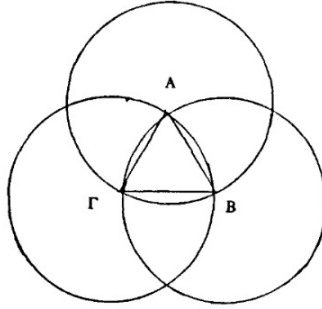


Figure 6a. The triadological diagram by Theodore II Laskaris restored by Christos Krikonis (*Θεοδώρου Β' Λασκάρεως Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, 129)

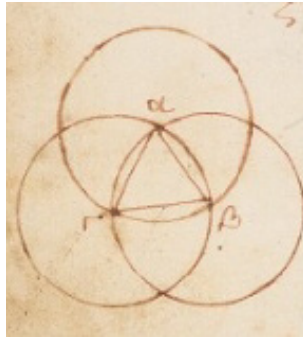


Figure 6b. The triadological diagram by Theodore II Laskaris in the *Barroccianus* 97, f. 63^v (15th c.)

Theodore then proceeds to a discussion of the “closed” triangle that we know from Nicetas “of Maroneia” (here never mentioned by name). Theodore refers to “the (figure formed with) the one-dimensional line (lit., a line ‘having no breadth’) α, β, γ ” (ἀπλατὲς γραμμικὸν α, β, γ) on the diagram, that is, to the “closed” triangle without its interior part. As a scheme of the inter-Trinitarian proceedings, this diagram is also unacceptable, because the longer trajectory would render the respective monad exhausted (ἐξίτηλον) in power, which would mean the two monads are not ἰσοδύναμα (“equal in power”).⁷² This argument is, more or less, in the same line as Eustratius of Nicaea’s argument against the “closed” triangle. What is unlike Eustratius is the conclusion that follows immediately after this: “Therefore, God is neither a figure nor an unreasonable linear setting” (Οὐ τοίνυν σχῆμα Θεός, οὐ γραμμική τε θέσις παράλογος).⁷³ Theodore repeats this

⁷² Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 16.167-170, ed. Krikonis, 129.

⁷³ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 16.170-171, ed. Krikonis, 129.

denial of the applicability of σχῆμα and σχηματισμός later in the same treatise,⁷⁴ even exclaiming in the concluding passage: “How could I, while making my reason stretch forth toward that blessed nature, configure the entirely ineffable essence in the terms and figures of those who have expressed their opinions?” (Πῶς ἂν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ μακαρίᾳ φύσει πείσω τείνεσθαί μου τὸν λογισμὸν καὶ τὴν ἄρρητον πάντῃ οὐσίαν λέξεσι καὶ σχηματισμοῖς σχηματίσω γνωμοδοτῶν;).⁷⁵ I think Theodore called here γνωμοδοῦναι “those who have expressed their opinions” the theologians having no divine inspiration.

In this oration, Theodore says nothing about the entire diagram with its three circles. Is it, nevertheless, applicable to the Trinity? The answer is to be found in his earlier treatise, “That the One is Three” (ὅτι τὸ ἓν ἔστι τρία), composed without a direct polemical purpose and included in *Christian Doctrine* as book III. Its precise date is unknown; it is likely earlier than book VI quoted above, but it was written, as stated in its title, when Theodore was already emperor.⁷⁶

Theodore proves that “the one is three” illustrating his words with a diagram (Figures 7a, 7b),⁷⁷ though without involving this diagram directly in his reasoning. The three identical circles with their centers in the three apexes of an equilateral triangle do not refer to the divine hypostases but refer to certain notions. Theodore argues that in τί—“this” or “this something,” the main Aristotelean term for either an individual, a particular, or both⁷⁸—is implied ἓν (“one”), whereas in ἔστι (“is”) and in ζῶν (“living [being]”) is implied “this.” Therefore, the term “this” is prior in respect to “is” and “living (being)” (and this conclusion is in no way illustrated by the diagram), but “one” is present (implied) in all three of the other terms. It is only the latter conclusion that is illustrated by the diagram.

⁷⁴ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 26.257, 258, VI, 37.371, ed. Krikonis, 132, 136.

⁷⁵ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, VI, 37.366–368, ed. Krikonis, 136.

⁷⁶ Theodore II Laskaris, *Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, III, title, lines 1–3, ed. Krikonis, 95.

⁷⁷ This diagram is repeated three times throughout the text for convenience of the reader, saving him from having to turn the pages back. The words within the circles in the *Barrochianus* are sometimes varying, which is not noticed in the apparatus by Krikonis (the reading ζῶν “animal” instead of ζῶν “living being” in Figure 7b is not noticed either).

⁷⁸ Cf. Gabriele Galluzzo, *The Medieval Reception of Book Zeta of Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, vol. 1: *Aristotle’s Ontology and the Middle Ages: The Tradition of Met., Book Zeta*, vol. 2: *Pauli Veneti Expositio in duodecim libros Metaphisice Aristotelis, ‘Liber VII’* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), vol. 1, 128–129. The understanding of the Aristotelean τί by Theodore is a topic worth of a separate study, which is beyond my present interests.

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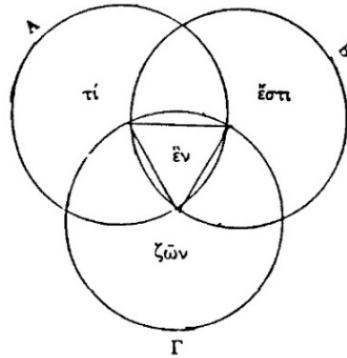


Figure 7a. The logical diagram by Theodore II Laskaris restored by Christos Krikonis (*Θεοδώρου Β' Λασκάρεως Περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι*, 97, 98); the diagram is repeated three times

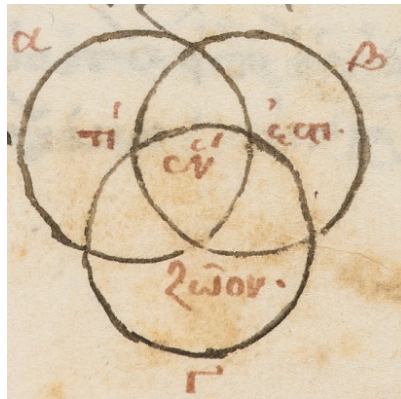


Figure 7b. The logical diagram by Theodore II Laskaris in the *Barrochianus gr.* 97, f. 17^r (15th c.)

This diagram is interesting to us for two reasons. The first is that Theodore, while rejecting logical diagrams as a visual mode of reasoning in theology, uses them in logic. The second is that, despite being used as a simple illustration, this diagram contains something more than Theodore extracted from it, being a quite recognizable variant of the Venn diagram⁷⁹ for the conjunction of three conjuncts (Figure 8).

⁷⁹ John Venn (1834–1923) first introduced his diagrams in a journal article in 1880 that was republished as chapter 5 of *Symbolic Logic* (London: Macmillan, 1881), 100–125.

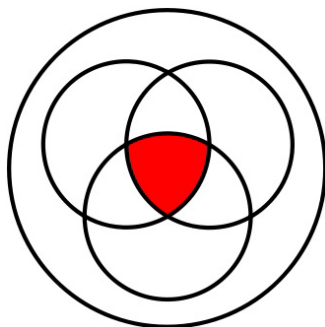


Figure 8. Venn diagram for conjunction of three conjuncts

We must leave to other scholars the interesting study of logical diagrams in the works of Theodore Laskaris (something he uses in his secular works, as well, in this way following Blemmydes). What we can take away from the above is that Laskaris knew only the “Latinophrone” usage of diagrams in Trinitarian theology. Despite his own good (or, at least, certainly not bad) acquaintance with the diagrams in logic, Theodore failed to propose an adequate diagram for the Byzantine understanding of the Trinity. To my mind, the reason for this is similar to that which caused the failure of Nicephorus Blemmydes’ project: there was no visual language for inconsistency. It will be invented, together with a new symbolic language, by hieromonk Hierotheos.

6. Hieromonk Hierotheos: Preliminaries

Before approaching Hierotheos’ theology, I will start with some observations about his life and works.⁸⁰ But even before this, I would like to recall that, in the person of Hierotheos, we meet a late Byzantine peer of Dionysius the Areopagite: an extremely authoritative figure, albeit not under his own name but under the name of the alleged teacher of the Areopagite, St. Hierotheos, the bishop of Athens.

⁸⁰ For a general discussion of Hierotheos’ biography and works, see two seminal studies that superseded earlier publications: Gabriel Patacsi, “Le hiéromoine Hiérothée, théologien du Saint-Esprit,” *Κληρονομία* 13 (1981): 299–330, and Nicholas Ch. Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος (ΙΓ΄ αἰ.) καὶ τὸ ἀνέκδοτο συγγραφικὸ ἔργο του. Κριτική ἔκδοση*, 3rd edn (Athens: Κυριακίδη, 2009). In this latter monograph, first published in 2003, Ioannidis provided the *editio princeps* of all texts preserved under the name of hieromonk Hierotheos, omitting the greatest diagram (Figure 9). The editor perhaps considered that it had been attributed to the bishop of Athens even in the manuscripts, where the name of ‘Hierotheos’ was stated by itself. Hierotheos’ texts will be quoted from this edition using page and line numbers only; the lines are numbered throughout the given work, not by page.

It is under this name that Hierotheos' main theological texts and diagrams are presented in manuscripts (his primary theological treatises, written in his own name, being either lost or preserved in unique or very rare manuscripts). What would become crucial for his theological legacy is that his writings were also quoted as belonging to the ancient Hierotheos by Joseph Bryennios (ca. 1350–1431/8), whose disciples were Mark Eugenikos⁸¹ (1394/5–1446)⁸² and, albeit mostly in absentia, Gennadios Scholarios (ca. 1400–ca. 1472).⁸³ Blemmydes completed the “canonization” of Hierotheos' theology as highly authoritative and purely patristic.

In what follows, I will pass over a discussion of the contribution of Joseph Bryennios in the definitive acknowledgement of Hierotheos' theology by the Byzantine tradition.⁸⁴ But I will nonetheless refer to the works of Bryennios as a medium of transmission for the writings of Hierotheos.

⁸¹ To understand the reception of this Hierotheos–Bryennios line in Mark of Ephesus, see esp. his discussion of the “order” in the Trinity with John of Montenero at the Council of Florence: Joseph Gill, *Quae supersunt auctorum graecorum Concilii Florentini*, II: *Res Florentiae gestae* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1953), 340–346. This discussion is, most often, represented by the modern historians as purely source-critical, thus ignoring the core of the problem discussed, namely, the (non)existence of a natural order between the hypostases; cf., e.g., Nicholas Conostas, “Mark Eugenikos,” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (*XIII^e–XIX^e s.*), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 411–475, at 418; nevertheless, Conostas provides a good introduction to this aspect of Mark's triadological thinking (448–449), although he does not pay due attention to its role as a core element of the whole structure of Byzantine triadology. For Mark Eugenikos as a Palamite theologian, see also Lourié, “L'attitude de S. Marc d'Éphèse aux débats sur la procession du Saint-Esprit à Florence. Ses fondements dans la théologie post-palamite,” *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 21 (1989): 317–333.

⁸² The dates according to Evelina Mineva, *To υμνογραφικό έργο του Μάρκου Ευγενικού* (Athens: Κανάκη, 2004), 38.

⁸³ Cf. Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'Empire Byzantin* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 2008). Scholarios was fortunate to have some time to learn from Bryennios personally, and, after Bryennios' death, according to Scholarios' own testimony, he continued to learn from his writings; cf. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios*, 15 and 297.

⁸⁴ For the theology of Bryennios and his appropriation of Hierotheos' works, see esp. Patacsi, “Joseph Bryennios et les discussions sur un concile d'union (1414–1431),” *Κληρονομία* 5 (1973): 73–96, where he recognised Hierotheos' diagrams and their explanations in the works of Bryennios; Ioannidis, *Ο Ιωσήφ Βρυέννιος. Βίος – Έργο – Διδασκαλία* (Athens, 1985); Lourié, “A Logical Scheme,” Michael Platis, *An Annotated Critical Edition of Joseph Bryennios' Third Dialogue on the Procession of the Holy Spirit with a Brief Theological and Historical Commentary* (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2020).

6.1. *Hierotheos' Diagram and Its Nine-circle Distortion*

Hierotheos' biography is recoverable almost exclusively from his own works, three in particular: the *Sermon against the Calumniators* (thereafter *SC*), the *Sermon Addressing Michael VIII* (thereafter *SM*), and the *Sermon against the Latins* (thereafter *SL*). Among the most established facts of Hierotheos' life, we may consider those on which the Hierotheos' two primary biographers, Gabriel Patacsi and Nicholas Ioannidis, agree. These I will discuss without specific references to the biographers. Nevertheless, even in such facts, the degree of conjecture is sometimes rather high.

The earliest among the three major works published by Ioannidis, *SC*, is already an apology for the use of diagrams and for Hierotheos' triadological teaching. Hierotheos here insists that his theology has never deviated from patristic tradition but merely provides additional explanations for the claims misunderstood by some of his co-religionists. This work is dated by the author himself to 1277. From its very purpose, the apology implies that there were other works that preceded it.

Among the earlier works, there was certainly a large diagram of the Holy Trinity containing six circles and six "syllogisms" (Figure 9), because *SC* defends a certain diagram that, judging from its description, was very similar or identical to this, and especially because there was a separate work entitled *Διαγράμμα Ἱεροθέου*. Ioannidis treats it as an attachment to Hierotheos' *Ἀπόδειξις* ("Proof") and not as a separate work,⁸⁵ though he did not include it in his edition. Indeed, the *Ἀπόδειξις* is a relatively short explanation of this diagram, different, however, from the diagram's "key" (the series of six "syllogisms" placed near the diagram).⁸⁶ In the two extant manuscripts of the *Ἀπόδειξις*, it is preceded by the diagram and its "key."⁸⁷

Most likely, Ioannidis is correct in identifying the work referred to by Leo Allatius as *Διάγραμμα περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος* ("Diagram Describing the Procession of the Holy Spirit")⁸⁸ as this diagram joined with its *Ἀπόδειξις*. Allatius described it as *exigua, & confusa sine ordine moles: consumpsi tamen horam in eo evolvendo*⁸⁹ ("small, and a heap without order; I nevertheless

⁸⁵ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱεροθέος*, 45.

⁸⁶ See a photo of the relevant spread of *Marcianus gr. Z. 83*, ff. 211^v–212^r in Safran, "Diagramming," 509 (Fig. 17.16), and Willson, "Aesthetic," Figs. 12 and 13.

⁸⁷ Safran, "Diagramming," 507, notices that in the second manuscript of the *Ἀπόδειξις* (out of two), namely the *Barberinus gr. 291* (15th c.), the text is preceded by "a near blank folio (118^v)" having only a label *Ἱεροθέου διάγραμμα*.

⁸⁸ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱεροθέος*, 45, n. 91.

⁸⁹ Leo Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis perpetua consensione, libri tres* (Cologne: Apud Jodocum Kalcovium, 1648), col. 871.

spent an hour in unravelling it"). Allatius would have rather read a treatise of several pages than a one- or two-page diagram with its "key."

Ioannidis thinks that the *Ἀπόδειξις* was written in the final years of the author (which, according to Ioannidis, are 1281–1282), but, as he himself acknowledges, the text has no chronological marks. Ioannidis' only grounding is stylistic, specifically the work's developed theological explanations.⁹⁰ I would not provide any dating on such ground. Nevertheless, there are reasons to consider the diagram (with its "key") as a separate work written perhaps earlier than its "Proof."

It is without the "Proof" that the diagram was attributed to Hierotheos of Athens in the late (18th c.) manuscript Athos, *Laura I* 54, f. 175r (a single page): Τὸ περὶ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος θεώρημα τοῦ ἁγίου Ἱεροθέου ἐπισκόπου Ἀθηνῶν⁹¹ ("The Commentary on the Holy Trinity by St. Hierotheos, bishop of Athens"). A separate manuscript tradition would corroborate the conclusion that the diagram with its "key" appeared as a self-standing work. However, I am not in a position to make a decisive conclusion.

The two earliest drawings of the diagram in question are those by Makarios Chrysokephalos (ca. 1300–1382) (then a young man, Michael, but later the Palamite metropolitan of Philadelphia)⁹² in a 1327 manuscript; and by Joseph Bryennios in an autograph manuscript of his unpublished anti-Latin work, the *Antirrhetical Sermon against Ten Chapters* written ca. 1406.⁹³ Nevertheless, it is striking that the "key" and the *Ἀπόδειξις* contain six "syllogisms" explaining only six circles in the diagram, whereas the drawings of both Chrysokephalos and Bryennios (which are identical) contain nine circles—three for each of the hypostases—though this composition deforms the round shape of the whole diagram into "a flattened diamond" (as Willson describes it). In fact, it is easy to notice that both the "key" and the *Ἀπόδειξις* correspond to the six-circle diagram that is preserved in another of Hierotheos' work attributed to Hierotheos of

⁹⁰ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 45.

⁹¹ Spyridon Lavriotis and Sophronios Eustratiades, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in the Library of the Laura on Mount Athos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 187. This is pointed out by Patacsi, "Le hiéromoine Hiérothée," 327, n. 113.

⁹² See *supra*, n. 86, for the manuscript and two publications of the photos of the relevant pages. Cf. Gaetano Passarelli, *Macario Crisocefalo (1300–1382). L'omelia sulla festa dell'Ortodossia e la basilica di S. Giovanni di Filadelfia* (OCA 210) (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1980).

⁹³ Manuscript Sofia, Centre "Ivan Dujčev," *D. gr.* 268, f. 155r; photo of this page in Willson, "Aesthetic," Fig. 14. On the manuscript and this work of Bryennios (reproduced by the author within two later works which have been published), see Hélène Bazini, "Une première édition des oeuvres de Joseph Bryennios: les *Traitées adressés aux Crétois*," *REB* 62 (2004): 83–132, esp. 91–93 and 102–104.

Athens (Figure 9). The nine-circle diagram is a distortion of Hierotheos' original six-circle diagram, even though it is dated to a relatively early period (*terminus ante quem* 1327). Apparently, this distortion has no logical explanation.

6.2. Chronology of Hierotheos' Life

The latest dates of Hierotheos' life are to be extracted from *SL*, which is a work composed as detailed minutes of a discussion between Hierotheos and his two Latinophrone opponents (which, judging from its contents, must have taken place under the Union of Lyon and before the excommunication of Michael VIII by the Pope in 1281) followed by an account of their attempt to kill him at the hands of a pirate. However, there is no obvious way to do this. At opposite extremes are the attitudes of Patacsi, on the one hand, who takes *SL* at face value, and, on the other hand, of the anonymous scribe of the *Laur. Plut.* VII 19 (14th c.),⁹⁴ who states, in a *scholion* preceding the text, that the whole story is written as a pious fiction (προσωποποιία γέγραπται). Ioannidis considers the latter approach exaggerated: at the very least, the persons mentioned must, according to him, be historical.⁹⁵

SL mentions, in a way that could be useful for its dating, four patriarchs that were opposed to Emperor Michael VIII. The Patriarch of Constantinople Arsenius (†1273) is said to have reposed, whereas the Patriarch of Alexandria Nicholas II (†1276) is said to be alive, though exiled for his support of Arsenius.⁹⁶ For Ioannidis, these two dates limit the chronological interval for dating *SL* (though of course it must be posterior to the Union of Lyon proclaimed in 1274).⁹⁷ This conclusion of Ioannidis is corroborated by data that he did not take into account. In *SL*, Hierotheos proceeds to mention the patriarchs of the two remaining sees, Antioch and Jerusalem, who were opposed to Michael VIII, though without calling them by names; the scribe, however, has added their names in the margin. These are Euthymius I of Antioch (†1273) and Gregory I of Jerusalem, though the correct dates of the patriarchate of the latter were unknown to Ioannidis. Ioannidis knew only an erroneous date for the death of Patriarch Gregory (1298) but concluded, on the basis of *SL*, that his patriarchate must have begun before 1276.⁹⁸ Ioannidis is correct in his guess: the patriarchate of Gregory

⁹⁴ *SL* is also preserved in a manuscript of the 17th c.

⁹⁵ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 38.

⁹⁶ Their successors are also mentioned as having had surrendered their thrones to Michael VIII (evidently, in the affair of Arsenius) but, nevertheless, having rejected the Union of Lyon; the gloss adds their names, Joseph of Constantinople (1266–1283) and Athanasius II of Alexandria (1276–1316); Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 215.

⁹⁷ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 39.

⁹⁸ For the text of Hierotheos, the glosses, and commentary, see Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 215.

began before 1275 and continued until his death, which occurred sometime after August 1281 but certainly before April 1291.⁹⁹ Ioannidis is thus certainly correct in placing the dialogue between Hierotheos and his two adversaries in the historical context of about 1276. Does this mean that *SL* itself is to be dated to this interval? If it is a fictional account, even if based on memories of true facts, this is not necessarily the case. There is another difficulty in the text that would be hardly compatible with such dating.

Hierotheos recalled a failed attempt at reunion with the “Italians” that was made 132 years earlier by the people and the emperors (notice the plural!): “Ἐτεσι τοῦτο πρὸς τοῖς δυσὶν ἑκατὸν καὶ τριάκοντα πράττοντες λαῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων προσκυνοῦντων τὸ πρᾶγμα¹⁰⁰ (“When, 132 years ago, the people and the emperors were respectfully working on the issue”). Counting back from 1275/6, we reach 1143/4 as the date of the event. This date could approximately correspond to the activity of Nicetas “of Maroneia,” the exact circumstances of which remain unknown. However, there certainly did not occur anything especially splendid and official in this time. What is more important, there were, at this time, no “emperors” (in the plural) in Byzantium but only a single emperor. John II Komnenos had appointed his younger son Manuel as his successor (thus putting aside his elder brother Isaac) immediately before his death (April 8, 1143), without a period when Manuel would have been a co-emperor. Under John II, the period of two co-emperors lasted from 1119 to 1142, up to the untimely death of the emperor’s eldest son Alexios the Younger (1106–1142).

I cannot exclude with a certitude that Hierotheos is not referring to an event unknown to us that took place around 1142, or shortly earlier, perhaps with the participation of Nicetas “of Maroneia.” However, without overestimating our present knowledge of the epoch, I consider this highly unlikely. Instead, I would look to the next period of two co-emperors that began in 1171, when Manuel crowned his one-year-old son, the future Alexios II Komnenos (1169–1183, *r.* 1180–1183), and when there took place, in 1172, a series of important discussions between the emperor and two cardinals whose minutes are preserved in the *Sacred Arsenal* by Andronikos Kamateros.¹⁰¹ This supposition is corroborated by a known chronological error by Bessarion of Nicaea, who dates

⁹⁹ Venance Grumel, “La chronologie des patriarches grecs de Jérusalem au XIII^e siècle,” *REB* 20 (1962): 197–201, at 199–200. In the reference to the publication of his main source, Grumel confused the title of the multi-volume publication by Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, writing *Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς βιβλιοθήκης* (197, n. 1) instead of *Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας*.

¹⁰⁰ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 214; *SL*, lines 1498–1499; cf. the discussion of this locus by Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 39–40, who was unable to identify the event.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Andronikos Kamateros, *Sacrum Armamentarium. Pars prima*, ed. Bucossi (CCSG 75) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), xxiv–xxvi.

the arrival of Hugo Eterianus in Constantinople to 1141–1143, whereas the correct date is no earlier than 1166.¹⁰² In the case of *SL*, a similar shift of roughly 30 years could have occurred. However, it is possible to explain this in two different ways: either Hierotheos committed an error similar to that of Bessarion (in which case the correct number of years would be about 102 instead of 132) or he was correct, and, therefore, the events of 1172 took place about 132 years earlier than Hierotheos wrote *SL*. In the former case, the date of *SL* remains about 1276. In the latter, the date of *SL* must be postponed to *ca.* 1304.¹⁰³

6.3. Hierotheos' Church(es): Transition to the Arsenites

It is a received opinion that Hierotheos never joined either the Uniates or the Arsenites. I think that the former is certain, whereas the latter is not. Hierotheos' address to Michael VIII (*SM*) that is dated, most likely, to the period after the excommunication of Michael by the Pope (1281–1282) evidently aimed at persuading the emperor to restore the Orthodox Church as the state church. However, those modern biographers who do not believe the calumnies about Hierotheos' apostasy to the Union are simply unable to explain why, when addressing the emperor who was excommunicated by both the Latin and Greek sides, Hierotheos calls himself a schismatic who is out the communion with his mother Church.¹⁰⁴ I think, in the historical context, that only one explanation is both possible and evident: Hierotheos had already left the part of the Greek church to which he formerly belonged—then divided between the followers of the late Patriarch Arsenius and the followers of Patriarch Joseph—and planned to join the opposite party with the hope of inspiring the emperor, by his personal example, to do the same.

¹⁰² Cf. Bucossi's introduction to *Nicetas Thessalonicensis. Dialogi*, xxvi; cf. Jean Darrouzès, "Les documents byzantins du XII^e siècle sur la primauté romaine," *REB* 23 (1965): 42–88.

¹⁰³ It is interesting to ask further whether such synchronism with the representative Constantinopolitan Synod of 1304 is accidental, when the emperor Andronikos II made the last of his failed attempts to heal the schism with the Arsenites. His next attempt, in 1310, was successful; the Arsenites forced the state Church to capitulate (almost) unconditionally. For a general review of the sources and events, see Paris Gounaridis, *Τὸ κίνημα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν (1261–1310). Ἱδεολογικὲς διαμάχες τὴν ἐποχὴν τῶν πρώτων Παλαιολόγων* (Athens: Δόμος, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ *SM*; Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 133–134, esp. 133.19–26: Τοίνυν κἀγώ, <...> τὰ τῶν σχισμάτων καὶ μερισμῶν, εἴπερ καὶ σχίζων καὶ μερίζων εἰμί, κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἀποσκευασάμενος ἀρρεπῶς ἐκ ψυχῆς <...>, τῇ μητρὶ μου πάλιν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ προσέρχομαι, εἴπερ ἐξ αὐτῆς ὅλως καὶ ἀπεσχοίνισμαι, καὶ ἐνοῦμαι ταύτῃ τῷ Πνεύματι <...> ("Thus, I too <...>, having indiscriminately rejected from my soul, to the best of my ability, what (belongs) to schisms and divisions, even though I am (myself) making schisms and divisions <...>, make approach again to my mother the Church, even though I entirely fenced off from it, and unify myself with her by the Spirit <...>"). The choice of words is appropriate for the repentance of a schismatic but not of a heretic.

There is clear testimony that Hierotheos was then passing from one of the two Greek Orthodox Churches to the other, but in which direction? The balance of likelihoods leans toward the Arsenites as his destination. There are, at least, four arguments for this.

1. The anti-unionist emperor's relatives, especially his sister Maria-Martha Palaeologina (1214/6–after 1267), and her sons who belonged to the highest level of aristocracy, were Arsenites. Therefore, the Arsenites would have been closer to the emperor in a very “familiar” sense of the word. It would have been reasonable to take this into account for the hypothetical situation of the emperor's return to Orthodoxy.

2. Hierotheos' references to Nicephorus Blemmydes as the only mentioned authority from the recent past and a saint¹⁰⁵ (I elaborate on this point below, in this section).

3. In *SL*, Patriarch Arsenius (“the great Arsenius”) is explicitly called “confessor,” “the advocate of the truth (ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας συνήγορος),” and “martyr.”¹⁰⁶ Such epithets go beyond mere sympathy.

4. The strange post-mortem destiny of the works of Hierotheos that can best be explained by a *damnatio memoriae* that only partially succeeded. Such a *damnatio* would have been rather natural in the fourteenth-century Hesychast milieu which was heavily influenced by such staunch anti-Arsenites as the Patriarch of Constantinople Athanasius I (1230–1310, patriarch in 1289–1293, 1303–1309)¹⁰⁷ and Theoleptos of Philadelphia (1250–1325).¹⁰⁸ This impression is corroborated by the manuscript tradition. The fourteenth-century scribe of *Laur. Plut.* VII 19 containing *SM* was an Arsenite. More correctly, he simply was not an anti-Arsenite, because the veneration of Patriarch Arsenius as a saint was, already in 1410, introduced to the Great Church in a quite literal sense, when his

¹⁰⁵ The quotations from Blemmydes are introduced as those of τις σοφός τε καὶ ἅγιος τὴν νικηφόρον κλῆσιν αὐχῶν “a certain man wise and saint boasting of the appellation of one bringing victory” and ὁ αὐτὸς σοφός τε καὶ ἅγιος “the same wise and holy man;” *SM*, lines 210–211 and 227; Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 139–140.

¹⁰⁶ *SL*, lines 1510–1513; Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 214–215.

¹⁰⁷ See John L. Boojamra, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Study for the Patriarchate of Athanasios of Constantinople* (Ἀνάλεκτα Βλατάδων 35) (Thessaloniki: Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 1982).

¹⁰⁸ See Alexander Przhegorlinsky, *Византийская Церковь на рубеже XIII–XIV вв. Деятельность и наследие св. Феолупта, митрополита Филадельфийского* [The Byzantine Church at the Turn of the 13th–14th Centuries. The Activities and Heritage of St. Theoleptos, Metropolitan of Philadelphia] (St. Petersburg: Алетея, 2011).

relics were deposited in Hagia Sophia; from 1410, it was the irreconcilable anti-Arsenites who became dissidents.¹⁰⁹ An anti-Arsenite bias in the Hesychast milieu would serve as an explanation for the rarity of manuscripts in which Hierotheos' works are preserved under his own name.

Now, a note on Hierotheos' references to Blemmydes (all of them in *SM*) is in order. We will see that, in their theology, there was a gap between Blemmydes and Hierotheos, though, of course, the very attempt to take "through the Son" in an eternal sense must have been close to the heart of Hierotheos. Hierotheos' address to the emperor, however, was a work in which one had to limit oneself to established authorities. Therefore, it is symptomatic that, as the only contemporary authority, Hierotheos chose Blemmydes. Blemmydes was certainly not a partisan of Patriarch Joseph.

If we are to believe Pachymeres (1242–*ca.* 1310), Blemmydes considered himself to be in communion with both sides. Pachymeres described Patriarch Joseph's visit to Blemmydes in 1268 (or 1267), when Joseph undertook a tour in which he sought to draw to himself the sympathizers of Arsenius. Blemmydes said to Joseph that, for him, Joseph and Arsenius were the same (lit., "one") (ἐν ἐλογίζετο καὶ Ἀρσένιον εἶναι καὶ Ἰωσήφ), because—Pachymeres provides an interpretation of his own—Blemmydes attained so high a spiritual state that he never looked at the mere facts (οὐ γυμνοῖς αὐτοῖς προσέχων τοῖς γιγνομένοις) of earthly events but was interested only in the immovable divine eternity. Therefore, he was not interested "to judge which was the injured part and which was the intruder" (ὥς τὸν μὲν κρίνειν ἀδικηθέντα, τὸν δ' ἐπιβήτορα).¹¹⁰ Pachymeres thus says that Blemmydes did not consider the case as a situation of vagueness, where both sides could be right (or both wrong), but, instead, Blemmydes allegedly considered the topic itself as unworthy of attention. Even if Pachymeres' interpretation of Blemmydes' attitude is adequate (which we cannot verify), it could hardly have been understood by the majority of the people, monastics, and clergy, including, most likely, both Hierotheos and Michael VIII. In their eyes, the lack of support for Joseph must have looked like support for Arsenius.

¹⁰⁹ He comments on the name of Arsenius in a gloss (to line 1503): ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας οὗτος ὁμολογητὴς μέγας Ἀρσένιος ("this great Arsenius was a confessor of the truth") and on the name of Patriarch Nicholas of Alexandria with another gloss (to line 1510): ὁ σύναθλος οὗτος Ἀρσένιος τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου μεγάλου Νικολάου ("this Arsenius is a comrade-in-arms of the most reverend great Nicholas"); Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 214.

¹¹⁰ George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι*, V, 2, ed. Albert Failler, *George Pachymères. Relations historiques*, vol. 2: *Livres IV–VI* (CFHB 24.2) (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984), 439.

To sum up, I think that, in 1281–1282, Hierotheos left the Church of Patriarch Joseph to join the Church of Patriarch Arsenius,¹¹¹ and this fact severely affected the manuscript tradition of his works in the fourteenth century.

7. Hierotheos' Symbolic Logic vs. Logical Diagrams

According to a helpful phrase by Gabriel Patacsi, Hierotheos espoused a Photianist (i.e., a traditional Byzantine) theology “avec une clarté choquante.”¹¹² Such a degree of clarity was reached thanks to his diagrams. Nevertheless, Hierotheos also elaborated a symbolic language strictly equivalent to his diagrams. He called his symbolic expressions “syllogisms” and attached them to his diagrams as “keys” (written near the diagrams and/or within them) and explained them in plain words in his works, especially in the *Ἀπόδειξις*, but also, most probably, in even more detail in the works used by Joseph Bryennios as the writings of Hierotheos of Athens. I have discussed these “syllogisms” elsewhere.¹¹³ There is no need now to repeat all these details, sometime very technical. Instead, we should outline the main idea implied in Hierotheos' logical symbolism, namely, how it represents a logic now called paraconsistent.

Paraconsistent logic is a logic that allows subcontrary contradictions. Subcontrary contradictions are contradictions of the form “*A* and *B* are both identical to *X*, whereas *A* is not identical to *B*,” or, in an equivalent form, “*A* is simultaneously identical and not identical to *B*.” Paracomplete logic that is dual to paraconsistent logic allows contrary contradictions. It implies inconsistency of the form “*A* is not identical to *A*” (something is not identical to itself). We have mentioned above, and will return to it below, the triadology that is dual to what we are dealing with now, namely that of the Damianites, where the three Persons of the Trinity are absolutely indistinguishable while still countable. For the sake of completeness, let us mention non-alethic logic, which is the conjunction of paracomplete logic and paraconsistent logic. This allows for contradictory contradictions, such as those of the form “*A* is identical to *non-A*” (that is, to the whole universe of logical objects except *A*).

¹¹¹ If *SL* is, nevertheless, to be dated to *ca.* 1276, we either have to take this date as the *terminus ante quem* for Hierotheos' transition to the Arsenites (in this case, the wording of *SM* wherein Hierotheos speaks about himself in the present tense is to be understood as *praesens historicus*) or we must suppose that Hierotheos was already convinced of the Arsenite cause but had still not managed to join them.

¹¹² Patacsi, “Le hiéromoine Hiérothée,” 305.

¹¹³ Lourié, “A Logical Scheme.”

In paraconsistent logic, all three hypostases are simultaneously different (and distinguishable!) but also identical. Insofar as they are different, they allow ordering, wherein one is marked as the first, another as the second, and the remaining one as the third. Insofar as they are identical, they allow all six variants of ordering simultaneously, wherein ordered pairs (called ‘permutations’ in combinatorics¹¹⁴) are selected from a set of three elements. There are six permutations for every two from three, and this is why the number of Hierotheos’ “syllogisms” is six. The general idea of Hierotheos’ system of six “syllogisms” is, therefore, a specific understanding of the order (τάξις) of the three hypostases in their *perichoresis* (interpenetration): there is no order in the sense of classical logic. Nevertheless, one can say that there is an order in another sense (the paraconsistent sense), wherein all variants of ordered pairs (permutations) are realized simultaneously. Thus, each of the three hypostases is the first, the second, and the third. In this way, of course, the “three” in the word “Trinity” is not a natural number.¹¹⁵

Hierotheos explains his six “syllogisms” as three pairs, wherein one pair “gives the principality/first place” (τὸ πρωτεῖον) to the Father, another to the Son, and another to the Spirit.

Therefore, not only in the Scriptures are the three Persons of the divinity found to be called, each of them, the first, the second, and the third [*Hierotheos often provided a number of biblical examples*], but also in the syllogisms the same subcounting is used without differentiation. It is a distortion and absolutely incorrect to limit the first order exclusively to the Father, the second and middle one to the Son, and the third and final one to the Spirit. This is an impious invention of heretics.

Εἰ τοίνυν τὰ τρία πρόσωπα τῆς θεότητος οὐ μόνον ἐν Γραφαῖς τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ πρῶτα καὶ δευτέρα καὶ τρίτα εὐρίσκονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν συλλογισμοῖς ἀδιάφορον τὴν τοιαύτην ὑπαρίθμῃσιν χρώμενα, παρέλκον ἐστὶ καὶ παντελῶς ἀκατάλληλον τὸ ἀφορίζειν τῷ Πατρὶ μὲν τὴν πρώτην τάξιν ἰδίως, τὴν δὲ δευτέραν καὶ μέσιν τῷ Υἱῷ, τὴν δὲ τρίτην καὶ τελευταίαν τῷ Πνεύματι. Αἰρετικῶν τοῦτο δυσσεβὲς τὸ ἐφεύρημα.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ An ordered selection is called permutation, whereas an unordered selection, combination. The number of combinations from three per two is three.

¹¹⁵ For details, see Lourie, “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity’?” There, I called this kind of numbers quasi-ordinal, because the dual kind of numbers (based on paracomplete logic) has been recently coined “quasi-cardinal.” The latter were introduced for new formalisms of Quantum Mechanics. However, I think that “three” in the Damianite Trinity, whose “diagram” we will see in Ethiopic icons, is also a quasi-cardinal number.

¹¹⁶ *SL*, lines 813-846, quoted 838-845; Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 191-192 (quoted 192).

We can compare Gregory Palamas (who wrote *ca.* 1335 without reference to Hierotheos): “Because we do not adore the God Father as first, the Son as second, and the Spirit as third, imposing the order from necessity on what is higher than order, as it is also higher than all other things” (οὐδὲ γὰρ πρῶτον μὲν Θεὸν τὸν Πατέρα σέβομεν, δεύτερον δὲ τὸν Υἱόν, τρίτον δὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὑπὸ τάξιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἄγοντες τὰ ὑπεράνω τάξεως, ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων).¹¹⁷ However, the paraconsistent order described analytically as a set of three elements containing six simultaneous permutations from three for every two is not visualizable. Hierotheos, however, does find a visualizable equivalent—of course, one that is still not completely visualizable but much more visual.

The paraconsistent pair of the identical but not-identical logical objects *A* and *B* could be considered as either a pair of non-identical objects that are identical or as a unique object identical to itself (this is, without the paracomplete breaking of self-identity) but also identical to another. The second approach will show a paraconsistent object *A* as, e.g., a pair formed with non-identical (but identical) objects *A* and *B*.¹¹⁸ Thus, Hierotheos uses two different names for each hypostasis (something he takes from Gregory of Nazianzus): the Father is also Προβολεύς (lit., Projector, or, as Linda Safran translates, Emanator), the Son is also Logos, and the Spirit is also Πρόβλημα (Projection, or, in Linda Safran’s translation, Emanation). This *system* of double names (not the names themselves) for each of the three hypostases was an invention by Hierotheos.¹¹⁹ Such pairs could be depicted, whereas the identity of their two elements remains indescribable. Hierotheos’ “syllogisms” serve as an expression of the same approach in the language of symbolic logic.

8. Hierotheos’ Logical Diagrams

The majority of the diagrams that occur in the manuscripts of the works of Hierotheos and Joseph Bryennios are published and studied by Linda Safran (who edited as well most of the texts within diagrams); some valuable additions (including diagrams in an autograph manuscript of Bryennios) are contained in

¹¹⁷ Gregory Palamas, *Λόγος ἀποδεικτικός* I, 32, *PS*, vol. 1, 61.5-9.

¹¹⁸ Logically speaking, this is an example of the inapplicability of Zermelo’s axiom of extensionality. It is this axiom that forbids, in the natural row of numbers, the appearance of more than a unique number one, two, three, etc. In the Byzantine Trinity, we have three—different but equal—numbers one, two, and three, because each hypostasis can acquire the respective ordinal numbers. For details, see Lourié, “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity?’”

¹¹⁹ As was already noticed by Safran, “Diagramming,” 504.

the study of Justin Willson.¹²⁰ Therefore, I will limit myself to some additions to their and my own previous studies.

8.1. Hierotheos' "Hexagonal Circle"

The greatest of Hierotheos' diagrams was called, by a late Greek hymnographer (Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain?) a "hexagonal circle,"¹²¹ using a phrase known previously from astronomical usage.¹²² Above (section 6.1) we have discussed its distortion into the nine-circle diagram. However, where it preserves its circular symmetry, it could also be depicted without distortions as well. Therefore, I believe that its best preserved variant is that of the eighteenth-century etching attached to Eugenios Boulgaris' edition of Joseph Bryennios¹²³ (Figure 9).

The beautiful miniature of the seventeenth-century manuscript published by Safran¹²⁴ is distorted by the addition of the seventh large circle in the center. The nine-circle diagram also has this additional circle in the center but adds two more on two sides and thus breaks the central symmetry. In this way, the central circle was the first step toward the nine-circle diagram that appeared before 1327. Therefore, despite the relatively late date of the manuscript from which the diagram is published by Safran, its shape is datable to the early fourteenth century at the latest. However, this was a distortion of the original diagram by

¹²⁰ Safran, "Diagramming," Willson, "Aesthetic."

¹²¹ In one of the additional *stichēra* at the Praises of Matins on October 4, the commemoration day of Hierotheos of Athens, *Ποίημα Νικοδήμου* ("the work of Nikodemos"): <...> τὸν Υἱὸν ἐνθεν δὴ, τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ Λόγον, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα δὲ καὶ πρόβλημα, τ' αὐτὸ ἀπέδειξας, κύκλῳ ἐξαγώνῳ πανάριστ'· Πατέρα δὲ ὡς αἴτιον, διαγράφων τούτων ὀρθότατα <...> "<...> from there (*sc.*, θεωρία, the vision of God) you have demonstrated the Son as himself and as the Logos, and the Spirit as also the Projection, using the hexagonal circle—O most excellent of men—but the Father as the cause, drawing ("diagramming") them in the most upright manner <...>." This cycle of *stichēra* by Nikodemos is, in some rare editions, included in Greek *Menaia* after the standard text of the service. It is quoted here by Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 96, from the *Menaia* edited by Andreas Koromelas, a famous Greek publisher, in Constantinople in 1843.

¹²² Cf. an ancient gloss to the astronomical poem of Aratus, where ἐν κύκλῳ ἐξαγώνῳ means "in a circle with six radiuses:" *Scholia in Aratum vetera*, ed. Jean Martin (Berlin: Teubner, 1974), 309.8-9.

¹²³ Joseph Bryennios, *Τὰ εὐρεθέντα*, ed. Eugenios Voulgaris, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Βρεϊτκόπφ, 1768), σχῆμα (chart) Γ' (on a glued-in sheet out of pagination). For a detailed discussion of this diagram, see Lourié, "A Logical Scheme." Bryennios discussed this diagram as a work of Hierotheos of Athens in his theological testament, *The Hortatory Sermon on the Unity of the Churches* (Λόγος συμβουλευτικός περὶ τῆς ἐνώσεως τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν) (1422), ed. Voulgaris, vol. 1, 469–500, esp. 487–500.

¹²⁴ Safran, "Diagramming," 515, Fig. 17.22, from British Library, MS 19550, f. 310^v.

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Hierotheos. In the same manuscript, the three-circle diagram of Pseudo-Maximus (see below, section 8.3) is also distorted into the four-circle diagram.¹²⁵

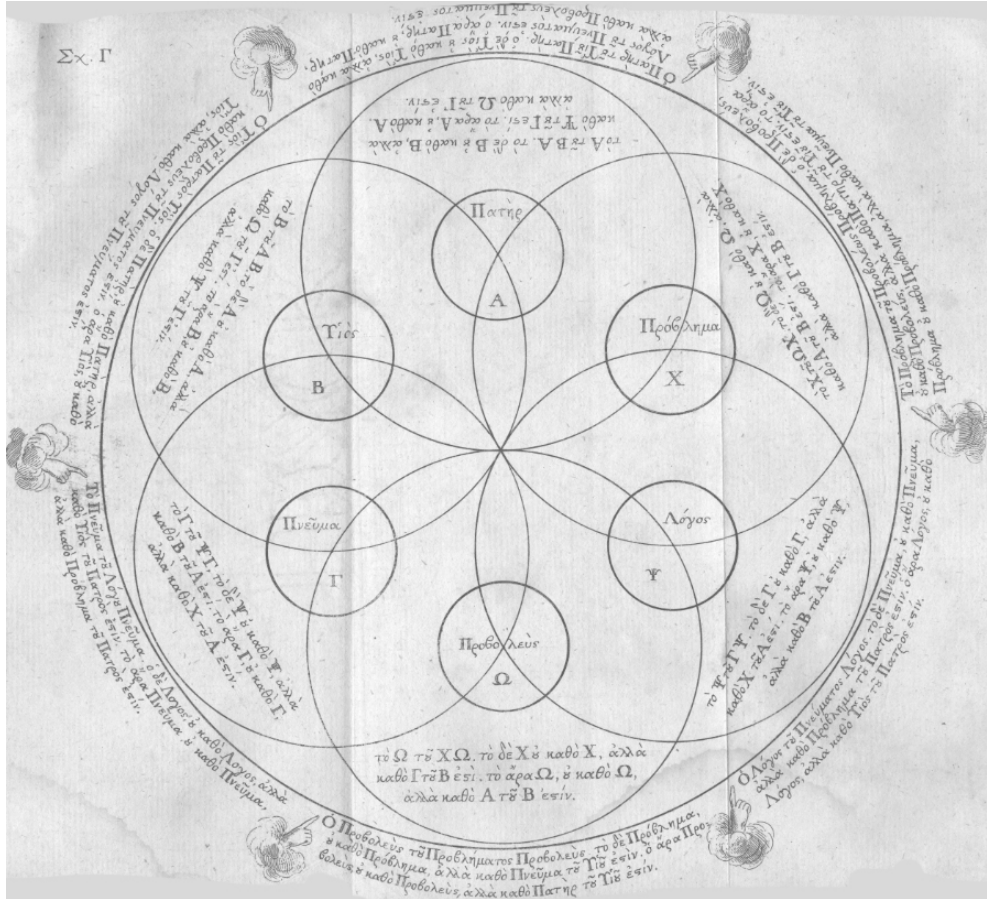


Figure 9. The “hexagonal circle” of Hierotheos. An 18th-century etching based on the best preserved drawing in a manuscript

From a logical point of view, of specific interest are the six large circles, where the members of each pair of circles representing the same hypostasis are tangential to one other and never overlap. I have noticed elsewhere that this is a kind of Venn diagram for paraconsistent conjunction; it implies that the

¹²⁵ See photo in Safran, “Diagramming,” 514, Fig. 17.21, from British Library, MS 19550, f. 15v. Safran, “Diagramming,” 513, noted: “I have no explanation for the fourth interior circle, which is devoid of text.”

two conjuncts have a boundary that belongs to each of them (in the topology representing Boolean algebra, the boundary can belong only to one of the two).¹²⁶

8.2. Hierotheos' Diagram of Movement and Its Inspirer Pseudo-Athanasius

Hierotheos proposed several diagrams with three circles. Without representing each hypostasis as a (paraconsistent) pair, they are less expressive in one respect, but they are more expressive in another. They highlight the 'proceedings' of the hypostases as inter-Trinitarian movement(s). The two names of each hypostasis are both presented within one circle, but they are written in opposite directions. Other inscriptions within the diagram are also written in opposite directions, and, in this way, the idea of movement is represented. This movement is, of course, paraconsistent as well: it moves in the two opposite directions simultaneously, thus being an equivalent of paraconsistent ordered pairs (where the two variants of order are realized simultaneously).

Below are a "minimalist" (Figure 10a) and an elaborated variant (Figure 11a) of three-circle diagram of Hierotheos, both together with their analysis by Safran (Figures 10b, 11b).¹²⁷ The "minimalist" variant is from Hierotheos' *SC*; the elaborated one, from *SL*.

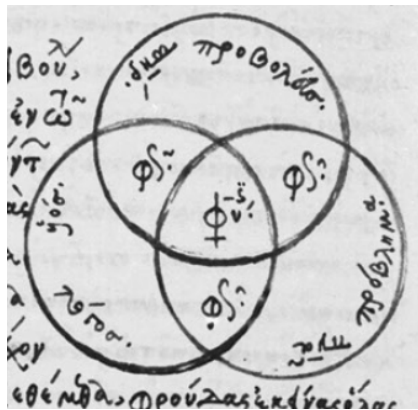


Figure 10a. A diagram by Hierotheos (*SC*) from the *Marcianus gr. Z 153*, f. 208^v (14th c.)

¹²⁶ Lourié, "A Logical Scheme."

¹²⁷ Safran, "Diagramming," 502 (Fig. 17.9), 504 (Fig. 17.10), 508 (Figs. 17.14 and 17.15). I am grateful to Linda Safran and the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection for their permission to reproduce the figures from this article.

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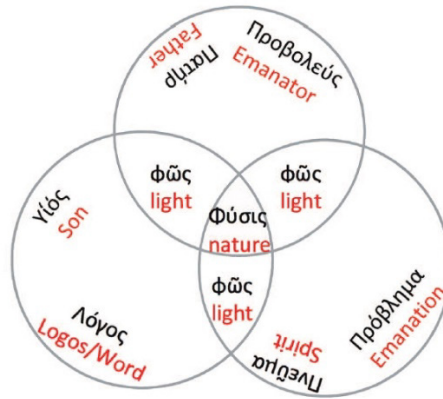


Figure 10b. Linda Safran's analysis of the diagram reproduced in Figure 10a



Figure 11a. A diagram by Hierotheos (SL) from the *Laur. Plut.* 7.19, f. 60^r (14th c.)

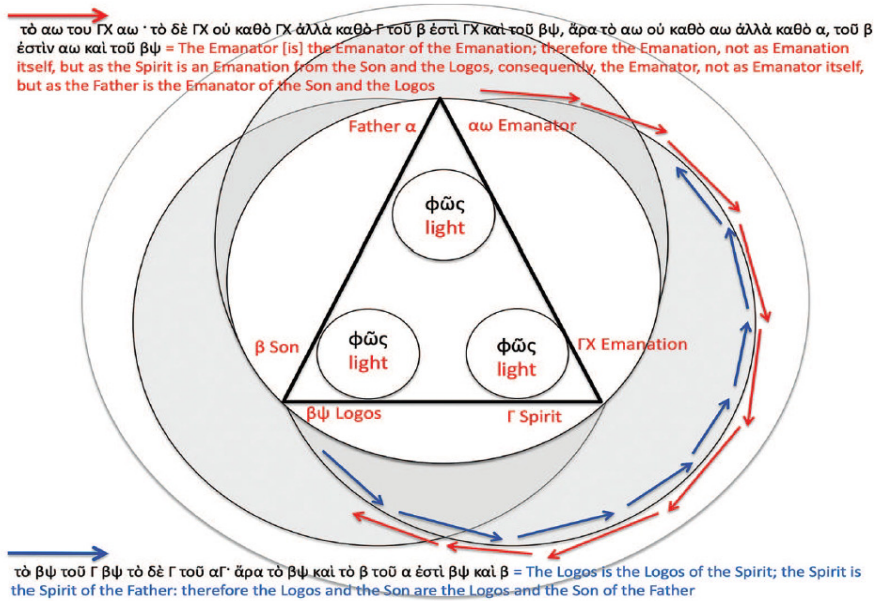


Fig. 11b. Linda Safran's analysis of the diagram reproduced in Figure 11a, with the principal texts

The idea of such movement, as Hierotheos explains at length in *SC*,¹²⁸ goes back to the scene of the hospitality of Abraham (one has to think, as Willson pointed out, especially of the respective icons)¹²⁹ and its exegesis attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria (*CPG* 2240). From the fact that the Son sits at the right hand of the Father (thus according to the Scriptures and iconography), Pseudo-Athanasius goes further, asserting that, therefore, the Spirit sits at the left hand of the Father but at the right hand of the Son, thus closing the circle.¹³⁰

One must notice that Pseudo-Athanasius' scheme is not quite symmetric and, therefore, not quite to the taste of Hierotheos, although Hierotheos made this scheme movable, and in the two opposite directions simultaneously. It seems that Hierotheos tolerated this Pseudo-Athanasian asymmetry as one of the imperfections of the diagrams. He compensated for it with the words and other diagrams. At any rate, such asymmetry is in agreement with the order of the temporal revelation of the Trinity, as is natural for the scene of the hospitality

¹²⁸ Ioannidis, *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος*, 114–118.

¹²⁹ Willson, "Aesthetic."

¹³⁰ Pseudo-Athanasius, *De communi essentia*, 9 (chapter's title: *Περὶ τοῦ καθῆσθαι τὸ Πνεῦμα* = "On the Seating of the Spirit"), PG 28, 44B–45B.

of Abraham, wherein the Trinity revealed itself to a human being. Thus, the applicability of the respective diagram to the inter-Trinitarian relations must be limited accordingly.

By the time of Hierotheos, this Pseudo-Athanasian text was received as the genuine Athanasius the Great. As Sever Voicu established recently, the part of the Pseudo-Athanasian compilation *CPG* 2240 that contains the respective chapter was already present by 1172, when it was quoted by Andronikos Kamateros in his *Sacred Arsenal*.¹³¹ However, the source of the chapter we are interested in remains unknown.¹³² I suppose, because of a kind of confusion between the temporal revelation of the Trinity and the relations *in divinis* implied in this text, that its author was closer to Nicetas “of Maroneia” than to Nicholas of Methone. Nevertheless, for Hierotheos, this was a piece of patristic exegesis that could have no other meaning than the orthodox interpretation.

8.3. Pseudo-Maximus' *Theōrēma* (CPG 7707.26)

The three-circle diagrams by Hierotheos are very similar to another three-circle diagram attributed to Maximus the Confessor. It occurs both separately and as a quote in the works of Joseph Bryennios. I think that the question whether Hierotheos knew this Pseudo-Maximian text must be posed, but, thus far, it cannot be answered.

Justin Willson has already noticed the coincidence between, on the one hand, the diagram and text published by Sergey Epifanovich from the unique manuscript *Parisinus gr.* 887 (copied in 1539/40 on Mount Athos by Constantine Palaeocappa) (Figure 12),¹³³ and, on the other hand, two quotations of both the diagram and its accompanying text in Joseph Bryennios—in his unpublished *Against Ten Chapters* (preserved in an autograph; see Figure 13) and the published *Sermon II, On the Holy Trinity*.¹³⁴ Both the separate text and the quotations in Bryennios preserve the title *Theōrēma* (θεώρημα).

¹³¹ Sever J. Voicu, "Il florilegio *De communi essentia* (CPG 2240), Severiano di Gabala e altri Padri," *Sacris Erudiri* 55 (2016): 129–155, esp. 51; cf. Andronikos Kamateros, *Sacrum Armamentarium. Pars prima*, ed. Bucossi, 142.

¹³² Voicu, "Il florilegio," 134.

¹³³ Sergey Epifanovich, *Матеріалы къ изученію жизни и твореній преп. Максима Исповѣдника* [*Materials for a Study of the Life and the Works of St Maximus the Confessor*] (Kiev: Типографія Университета Св. Владимира, 1917), 78–80, with a photo of the manuscript page between 78 and 79.

¹³⁴ Willson, “Aesthetic.” For Blemmydes’ *Against Ten Chapters*, see above. For the published text, see Joseph Bryennios, *Tὰ ἐνρθεύοντα*, ed. Voulgaris, vol. 1, 24 and σχῆμα (chart) Α’ (on a glued-in sheet out of pagination). I am very grateful to Justin Willson for his permission to use materials from his article before its publication.

Willson published a commentary on the diagram that is present only in *Against Ten Chapters* and recognizes in it a genuine text of Maximus (occupying about a half of this short commentary). Willson supposed that Palaeocappa, who was the most renowned forger of Greek manuscripts, produced his text using one of the text(s) by Bryennios. This is possible but not necessarily the case. In any event, we are still left with an open question about Bryennios' source.



Figure 12. Pseudo-Maximus the Confessor, *Theōrēma* (CPG 7707.26). *Parisinus gr. 887*, f. 1^r (copied in 1539/40 by Constantine Palaeocappa), as published in Willson, “Aesthetics”

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Figure 13. Joseph Bryennios, *Against Ten Chapters*, the page of an autograph manuscript containing the diagram of Pseudo-Maximus. Sofia, Centre "Ivan Dujčev," D. gr. 262, f. 174^v, as published in Willson, "Aesthetic"

Below I quote the published text by Bryennios.¹³⁵ Its Proclean overtones are already commented on by Willson, who noticed that the metaphor of the knowledge of God as a dance is Proclean: the lower entities who are unable to know and to grasp the One but also unable to not strive for it, “are all dancing/leading a round dance around it” (περὶ αὐτὸ πάντα χορεύει).¹³⁶ This is interesting, because, in our Pseudo-Maximian text, these Proclean motives are united with those of Pseudo-Athanasius in his exegesis of the hospitality of Abraham (that the Son sits at the right hand of the Father, and the Spirit at the left hand):

Ὁ μὲν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ μέγιστος Μάξιμος τὸν λόγον ἡμῖν συνίστησιν οὕτω λέγων ἐν τινι θεωρήματι, ἐκ τριῶν κύκλων ἴσων ἀλλήλοις, καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀπτομένων ἐπίσης συνισταμένων· ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς, ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος, ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγου, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ καὶ πρόβλημα· ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, τοῦ καὶ προβλήματος, ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ· καὶ ἀντιστρόφως· ἐξ εὐωνύμων τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ καὶ πρόβλημα· ἐξ ἀριστερῶν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, τοῦ καὶ προβλήματος, ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος· ἐξ ἀριστερῶν τοῦ Υἱοῦ¹³⁷ καὶ Λόγου, ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ. Καὶ πάλιν ὁ αὐτός· ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γὰρ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τῷ νῶ διερχόμενος, ἵσταμαι ἐπὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος καταντῶ ἐπὶ τὸν Υἱόν· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Πατέρα διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα διὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος διὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐπὶ τὸν Υἱόν· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Πατέρα. ὁρᾷς χορεῖαν ξένην ἣν οὐδέποτε εἶδες; Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὁ μέγιστος Μάξιμος.

Indeed, Maximus, who is most great in confession, confirmed our reasoning, saying the following in a certain interpretation [or commentary: θεωρήμα], (where he represented the Trinity as) three circles put together, equal to each other and equally overlapping one another: *On the right hand of God the Father is the Son and Logos; on the right hand of the Son and Logos is the Holy Spirit, the Projection; on the right hand of the Holy Spirit, the Projection is God the Father. And vice versa: on the left hand of God the Father is the Holy Spirit, the Projection; on the left hand of the Holy Spirit, the Projection, is the Son and Logos; on the left hand of the Son and Logos is God the Father.* And again the same [Maximus] says: *Because traversing by the intellect from the Father through the Son I come to the Spirit; and from the Father through the Spirit I arrive at the Son; and from the Son to the Father through the Spirit; and from the Son to the Spirit through the Father; and from the Spirit through the Son to the Father. Do you see the strange round dance that you have never seen before?* And thus said the most great Maximus.

¹³⁵ Joseph Bryennios, *Τὰ εὐρεθέντα*, ed. Voulgaris, vol. 1, 24.

¹³⁶ Willson, “Aesthetic.” Cf. Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, I, 22, ed. and trans. Henri-Dominique Saffrey and Leendert G. Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne. Livre I* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), 102 (quoted line 19).

¹³⁷ In the edition, Θεοῦ; I have corrected according to the meaning which seems to be here evident.

We have concluded above, judging only from his triadology, that Pseudo-Athanasius was an author not too distant from Nicetas “of Maroneia.” It is possible that he, like this Pseudo-Maximus, was not too distant from the eleventh- and twelfth-century authors heavily influenced by Proclus. We do not know, let us repeat, whether Hierotheos himself used the Pseudo-Maximian *Theōrēma*, but it was nonetheless used together with his own works by later readers and writers, especially Joseph Bryennios.

Is it possible that the name of Maximus appeared here as a result of further confusion between the two Hierotheoi—somewhere “in the margins” (not necessarily in the literal sense) of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*—perhaps because of Maximus’ reputation as the author of all the *scholia* to the *Corpus*. However, there are no such *scholia* among those hitherto known. We may note that, in the Slavonic translation of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* produced by elder Isaia on Athos in 1371, there is a long *scholion* to the *Divine Names* (chapter 2) that is absent in Greek.¹³⁸ It deals with the different degrees of participation in God and contains several diagrams that could be classified as ‘logical’ *sensu stricto* (Figure 14).¹³⁹



Figure 14. Diagrams illustrating participation in God. A *scholion* to Dionysius Areopagites, *Divine Names* (chapter 2), preserved in the Slavonic translation but lost in Greek. *Mosquensis, Bibliothecae synodalis* 986, f. 179r (16th c.)

¹³⁸ Cf. *Corpus Dionysiacum* IV/1: Ioannis Scythopolitani Prologus et Scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae Librum De Divinis Nominibus cum Additamentis Interpretum Aliorum, ed. Suchla (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

¹³⁹ Cf. the manuscript from the Russian National Library (St. Petersburg), *Gilferding* 46 (perhaps an autograph of the translator), f. 91v, but especially the 16th-century manuscript from State Historical Museum (GIM, Moscow), Synodal collection, *Mosquensis, Bibliothecae synodalis* 986 (the October volume of the *Great Menologion* by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow compiled in 1530–1541 with the *Corpus Areopagiticum* placed on the third of October), f. 179r. These diagrams are reproduced in the printed volume *Великія мінеи четиі. Октябрь. Дни 1–3* [The Great Menologion. October, Days 1–3], ed. Spiridon N. Palauzov (St. Petersburg: Типография Императорской Академии наук, 1870), cols. 417–418.

This *scholion* to chapter 2 of the *Divine Names* is closely connected to the parts of the chapter that Dionysius attributes to his teacher Hierotheos. Leaving aside the meaning of these diagrams, which are not related to Trinitarian theology, it would be not illegitimate to suppose that, in some Greek fourteenth-century codices, the words that Dionysius attributed to Hierotheos might have been accompanied by a *scholion* taken from the work wrongly attributed to Hierotheos but written by our hieromonk Hierotheos. In this case, given that the commentaries in general were attributed to Maximus the Confessor, this particular *scholion* might also have been attributed to Maximus. Therefore, without attempting to resolve the riddle, I would not exclude any kind of relationship between hieromonk Hierotheos and Pseudo-Maximus. Hierotheos may never have known it, but he may also have been its author, or at least a person that deliberately contributed to its popularity. Be that as it may, the basic ideas of both Pseudo-Maximus and Pseudo-Athanasius are closer to each other than to Hierotheos.

9. A Clandestine Opponent: Theophanes of Nicaea

The entirety of the collection of anti-Latin treatises by Theophanes of Nicaea has not been published. In one of these treatises, the author makes use of diagrams. The pioneering study of the respective part of Theophanes' anti-Latin work appeared already in 1986,¹⁴⁰ although its author, Charalambos Sotiropoulos, still did not know the manuscripts where the diagrams are presented as drawings and not only as verbal descriptions (though the descriptions are clear enough). In his article, Sotiropoulos published several crucial passages. However, Justin Willson and David Jenkins have now prepared the *editio princeps* of the main part of book III *Against the Latins* by Theophanes, taking into account the manuscripts that preserve the diagrams.¹⁴¹ In the best and the earliest of these manuscripts (*Mosquensis*, *Bibliothecae synodalis* 461, late 14th/early 15th c.), the diagrams are preserved in excellent quality (the respective part of the manuscript was written by a scribe that has not touched other parts); in another manuscript (*Vaticanus gr.* 2242, ca. 1443), the diagrams are present but made by a scribe who was not sufficiently skilled.

¹⁴⁰ Charalambos Sotiropoulos, "Τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κύκλου καὶ ἡ τάξις ἐν τῇ Ἀγίᾳ Τριάδι κατὰ τὸν Θεοφάνη Νικαίας. Ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει τοῦ ἀνεκδότου ἔργου του, *Κατὰ Λατίνων, λόγοι τρεῖς*," *Επιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν* 27 (1986): 507–541.

¹⁴¹ Willson and David Jenkins, "Theophanes of Nicaea and the Diagram That Draws and Erases Itself," forthcoming. The authors shared with me this unpublished work and permitted its use in the present article. I am extremely grateful to them.

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Even without studying the diagrams, Ioannis Polemis had already characterized Theophanes of Nicaea's triadology as "a criticism of the Palamites," including Gregory Palamas and Nilus Kabasilas.¹⁴² The problem of the order *in divinis* was of course in the firing line. With the diagrams, everything becomes immediately clear (Figures 15a, 15b).

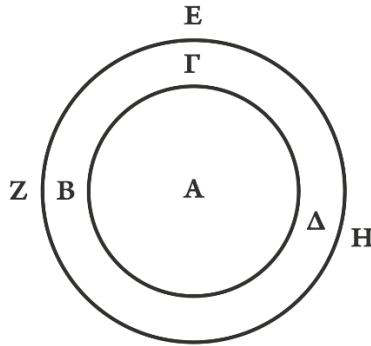


Fig. 15a. The triadological diagram by Theophanes of Nicaea as restored by Justin Willson and David Jenkins



Fig. 15b. The triadological diagram by Theophanes of Nicaea. *Mosquensis, Bibliothecae synodalis* 461, f. 247^v (late 14th/early 15th c.) as published in Justin Willson and David Jenkins, "Theophanes of Nicaea"

¹⁴² Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea*, 149–160 (I quote the title of the respective paragraph). Moreover, among Theophanes' sources, Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea*, 153–154, noticed Nicephorus Blemmydes.

Theophanes refers to his diagram in the following way. Point A is the Father, the circumference BΓΔ is the Son, and the circumference EZH is the Spirit. It is obvious that we are in the presence of a two-dimensional modification of the “Latin” linear diagram. No wonder that Theophanes was interested in Nicephorus Blemmydes as his predecessor, since the latter also refused to approve the *Filioque* but shared with the Latins the basic understanding of the Trinity as having a consistent order.

In the event that there is no priority between the Son and the Spirit—the hypothetical situation that Theophanes called ἀταξία (“disorder”)—the Trinity would be reduced to a dyad: “However, when no one is third, God will not be a Trinity but a dyad, because only the first and the second in order will be seen among the divine Persons according to the immovable personal idiom of each one” (Τρίτου δὲ μηδενὸς ὄντος, οὐκ ἔσται Τριάς ὁ Θεὸς ἀλλὰ δυάς, διὰ τὸ πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον μόνον ἐν τοῖς θείοις προσώποις ὁρᾶσθαι τῇ τάξει κατὰ τὴν ἀκίνητον ἐκάστου προσωπικὴν ιδιότητα).¹⁴³ Here as elsewhere the logical consistency would become an insurmountable barrier between Theophanes and the mainstream of Hesychast theology.

10. Iconographic Epilogue

Justin Willson has studied Byzantine diagrams in their interconnection with iconographic canons of the Trinity. He has shown that the so-called “Paternity” icon of the Trinity (popular since the sixteenth century but highly controversial among the Orthodox) follows the pattern of the “Latin” linear diagram, whereas the Trinity patterned after the scene of the hospitality of Abraham (such as the Trinity icon ascribed to Andrei Rublev), follows that of one of Hierotheos’ diagrams (Figure 16).

The Ethiopic iconographic canon of the Trinity is dual (in the logical sense) to this iconography of the hospitality of Abraham. As an example, I provide a modern wall painting that, nevertheless, follows an ancient canon (Figure 17).¹⁴⁴ There are thousands of such icons, frescoes, manuscript illuminations, and other art objects with similar images in Ethiopia. The Trinity is represented with elders and not with young men due to the Oriental ideal of beauty (wherein old age is beautiful but young is not). The other differences, however, are of dogmatic order.

¹⁴³ Sotiropoulos, “Τὸ σχῆμα,” 532–533; not in the fragment published by Willson and Jenkins.

¹⁴⁴ For this photo, I am grateful to Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, who always provides me with her help.

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The three Persons are absolutely identical. Accordingly, the inscription must be only one and common to the three, “The Holy Trinity,” and never with the specific names for each person (in the current usage, there are of course exceptions and confusions, but the principle is still followed). The three are countable but indiscernible—similarly to quantum objects or dollars in a bank account. This model is paracomplete and, thus, dual to the paraconsistent Byzantine model. The consistent model is represented in the “Latin” linear diagrams, and the corresponding iconography of “Paternity,” as well as in the two-dimensional diagram by Theophanes of Nicaea.

The Ethiopian iconographic canon seems to me inspired by the triadology of Damian of Alexandria, where the unity of the Trinity was defended in the most radical way, though not in a Sabellian manner: the idioms serve only to preserve the hypostases as countable. Unlike a truly Sabellian Trinitarian theology (or any kind of modalism), which was consistent, this Damianite triadology is inconsistent. Unlike the mainstream Byzantine Christology, which is inconsistent but paraconsistent, this Trinitarian theology is inconsistent but paracomplete.



Figure 16. The Trinity icon against a diagram by Hierotheos (cf. Figure 11a).
Designed by Sam Richter. Published in Willson, “Aesthetic”



Figure 17. The Holy Trinity. Wall-painting, 20th c., Church of Ura Qirqos, Təgray, Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of Michael Gervers

11. Conclusions

In the history of Byzantine theology, conflicts between logically consistent and inconsistent conceptions were ongoing and permanent. The late Byzantine period was not an exception. It was marked by the appearance of methods of logical computation that possess much ‘higher resolution.’ I have called them, in a modern manner, symbolic logic and logical diagrams. In both methods, symbolic and diagrammatic, the elusive figure of the thirteenth-century theologian hieromonk Hierotheos turns out to be central. I have analyzed Hierotheos’ symbolic logic elsewhere,¹⁴⁵ and, in the present study, I have focused on his logical diagrams.

The earliest history of logical diagrams in Byzantine theology remains mostly unknown, but their flourishing in the late Byzantine period begins in the early eleventh century with Eustratius of Nicaea. Yet Eustratius, despite being a highly authoritative philosopher, became isolated as a theologian. In the middle of the twelfth century, Eustratius’ approach was brought back to life by Nicetas “of Maroneia,” a Latinophrone theologian who never joined the Latin Church. It was he that brought the diagrammatic method into public view. The emperor Theodore II Laskaris polemicized against him. Then, no later than 1276 but,

¹⁴⁵ Lourié, “A Logical Scheme” and “What Means ‘Tri-’ in ‘Trinity?’”

most likely earlier, hieromonk Hierotheos turned the weapon of diagrams in the opposite direction, using it to argue against the Union of Lyon and the Latinophrones.

Theologically, Hierotheos followed the path paved before him by many Fathers, the most recent being the greatest Byzantine theologian of the twelfth century, Nicholas of Methone. Nevertheless, using logical diagrams (and his own symbolic logical computation which was clearly inspired by the same diagrams) he reached his “clarté choquante” (Patacsi) of theological discourse. What was it that was especially *choquant* in his theology? Obviously, its inconsistency and, to put it more exactly, its paraconsistency. Before Hierotheos, a great philosophical and theological thinker who failed to acknowledge inconsistency in theology was Nicephorus Blemmydes. After Hierotheos, it was Theophanes of Nicaea.

However, the mainstream of Byzantine theology, by the 1330s at the latest (the date of Gregory Palamas’ anti-Latin works), followed Hierotheos.¹⁴⁶ His theology would eventually be “canonized” in the early fifteenth century by the main theological authority of the epoch, Joseph Bryennios. However, in the fourteenth century, paraconsistent logic came, in some way, to stand for Hierotheos himself. As a theologian who was not forgotten after his death, he continued to live as two theologically identical but mentally incompatible figures, hieromonk Hierotheos and the holy bishop of Athens, Hierotheos, the teacher of Dionysius the Areopagite. Eventually, the latter almost completely replaced the former. Hierotheos, whose theology was “canonized” by Bryennios, was to become this new St. Hierotheos of Athens. The most original theological thinker thus acquired the most unfamiliar biography or rather a set of two mutually incompatible biographies.

There must have been a serious reason for such an unusual splitting of the biography. It could hardly have been anything other than a kind of *damnatio memoriae* in that very same milieu wherein Hierotheos’ works were most needed, that is, among the Hesychast theologians. I have tried to substantiate the conclusion that, in 1281–1282 (most likely) or perhaps several years earlier, Hierotheos left the Church of Patriarch Joseph and joined the Arsenites. Despite the recognition, by the Great Church in 1410, of the Arsenites as the right side of the conflict and Patriarch Arsenius as a saint, the Byzantine Hesychast milieu was saturated with hostility toward the Arsenites, and this must have affected the manuscript transmission of Hierotheos’ works.

¹⁴⁶ The confused situation between the Synod of Blachernae in 1285 and the early fourteenth century is still not studied properly. For the time being, I consider it obscure.

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I MONACI ATHONITI E L'ISLAM NEL SEC. XIV: LE FONTI AGIOGRAFICHE

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ABSTRACT. The article aims to approach the theme of the progress of the Turkish brigades into the Byzantine territories, in particular the Mount Athos, during the fourteenth century. It provides a new perspective for this topic. Indeed, it focuses on the hagiographical sources and how they describe the reaction of the Athonite monks in front of this phenomenon. The sources have been set according to a thematic order: 1) cases of escape from the Holy Mountain after the Turkish raids; 2) reports of or from captivity; 3) the consequences of the Turkish progress into the Asiatic and Western provinces of the Byzantine Empire; 4) the psychological impact on the monastic communities of Athos, and finally 5) the relationship between Athonite monks and Islamic communities in the Holy Land as favorite pilgrimage destination. The perception of the violence of the Turkish troops forces the Athonite communities to a general reconsideration of lifestyle and of ascetical practices. Moreover, it indirectly causes the propagation of the hesychast lifestyle out of the borders of the Holy Mountain during the late Byzantine period. Out of fear for the Islamic enemies the hagiographers take the opportunity to praise the ethical qualities of their monastic champions. On the other hand, in these sources they do not deal with Islamic morals; the violence of the enemies is the unique theme they consider as a priori distinguished feature of Muhammed's followers.

Keywords: Mount Athos, Byzantine monasticism, hesychasm, fourteenth century, Byzantine hagiography, Turkish conquest, Christian-Muslim relations, Kallistos I, Gregory Palamas, Philotheos Kokkinos

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Il presente contributo riprende con opportuno aggiornamento l'organizzazione ed i contenuti di una porzione del capitolo I della nostra tesi di dottorato dedicata a *Le élites byzantine di fronte alla minaccia turca nel XIV secolo: l'Athos, Gregorio Palamas, Giovanni VI Cantacuzeno e il patriarca Callisto I*, discussa presso l'Università degli Studi di Padova nel gennaio 2015.

La ricerca di un'immagine vivida dell'Islam nelle fonti bizantine risalenti al sec. XIV deve necessariamente passare attraverso la lettura dei testi agiografici prodotti nel corso del secolo.¹ L'importanza di questo genere di fonti risiede in tre fattori, spesso concatenati: da un lato si osserva una produzione che definiremmo di "attualità" perché minimo è il lasso temporale che separa l'elogio del santo dalla sua esperienza terrena; in secondo luogo – e ciò va sottolineato con forza – i protagonisti di questa nuova stagione agiografica sono per la maggior parte figure di primissimo piano nella vita monastica, religiosa e persino politica della Bisanzio paleologa; in ultimo va ricordato che gli autori di queste vite sono anch'essi personalità di primissimo rilievo, se pensiamo alla produzione del patriarca Filoteo Kokkinos, che redasse le vite di Gregorio Palamas,² di Saba Tziskos³ e del patriarca Isidoro Boucheir,⁴ o a quella di Callisto I, che compose quella relativa a Gregorio Sinaita, altro campione dell'esicasmo bizantino. La lettura comparata e integrata di questi scritti ha quindi il merito di introdurci nella vita pulsante delle comunità monastiche dell'Athos e non solo, in quegli anni attraversate a vario livello dal grande fermento della rinascita esicasta.

Di certo all'atto della compulsazione di questo genere di fonti non si può dimenticare la distorsione sempre in agguato, che è determinata dall'intento encomiastico che muove l'agiografo. Nonostante ciò va tuttavia riconosciuto e indagato il valore documentario di alcuni passaggi per mezzo dell'accertamento che possiamo compiere sulla base del confronto con le fonti storiche coeve. In ultimo, a riprova della centralità di questo tipo di fonti, evidenziamo che l'analisi dei testi ci fornisce un quadro geografico allargato delle relazioni tra mondo bizantino e Islam, che riguarda infatti non solo i territori sotto il diretto controllo imperiale ma anche quelle aree che rappresentano tappa obbligata o meta sognata del *tour monastico*, *in primis* la Terra Santa.

Per una lettura più fruttuosa di queste fonti abbiamo optato per una presentazione che raccogliesse entro temi definiti i passaggi agiografici che relazionano incontri tra monaci bizantini e soggetti musulmani, così da verificare e illustrare al contempo le sfaccettature che tale relazione assunse nel corso del sec. XIV.

¹ Studio di riferimento rimane Stephanos Efthymiadis, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1: *Periods and Places*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012, 2014).

² Demetrios Tsamis (ed.), *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*. Α'. *Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἄγιοι* (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρεῦνων, 1985), 427–591; *BHG* 718.

³ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 161–325; *BHG* 1606; Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμικῆς σταχυολογίας* (St. Petersburg: Kirabaum, 1898), vol. 5, 190–359. Riassunto in *Léontios de Néapolis. Vie de Siméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, édition commentée par André-Jean Festugière (Paris: Geuthner, 1974), 223–249.

⁴ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 329–423; *BHG* 962.

1. Scorrerie turche sull'Athos e fughe dalla Santa Montagna

La consultazione delle *Vitae* dei monaci esicasti athoniti illumina la nostra conoscenza su episodi od eventi che sono taciuti o solo corsivamente trattati dalle fonti storiche. Nulla sapremmo difatti delle massicce razzie che l'Athos subì nel 1326.⁵ Di certo quest'episodio rappresentò un'occasione di inasprimento della violenza e della penetrazione con le quali navigli di pirati turchi si abbattono sui territori bizantini rispetto al recente passato.⁶ Testimone diretto fu Gregorio Sinaita⁷ (?–1337), come ci viene raccontato nella *Vita* dal suo agiografo, il futuro patriarca Callisto:

Ἐξαίφνης τὸ ἄθεον καὶ βαρβαρικὸν ἔθνος τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν κατεξαναστὰν κατατρέχει μὲν καὶ λήζεται τὰ περὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος, δίκην δ' ὄρμαθοῦ ἀπορρήτοις κρίμασι τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἀσκουμένους μοναχοὺς πάντας συσχὼν καὶ συνδήσαν, ὡς ἐξ ἀνυπονοῆ τοῦ λόχου ἀνδραποδίζει. Ταῦτ' οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος καὶ ὅτι πλεῖστα πέπονθε παρὰ τῶν τοιούτων βαρβάρων, καὶ ὅτιπερ ἡ ἀσχολία καὶ τύρβη τὸν νοῦν διαμερίζουσα καὶ τὸ γαληνὸν αὐτοῦ συνθολοῦσα τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργείας καὶ ἔξωθεν ἐξίστα, περιπολεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ πάλιν αὐτὴν ἐκείνην τὴν τοῦ Σιναίου ὄρους σεπτὴν καὶ ἁγίαν κορυφήν. Οὐκοῦν τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην καταλαμβάνει ἔχων μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοὺς προειρημένους μαθητὰς κάμει δὴ σὺν ἐκείνοις. Δύο δὲ παραδραμόντων μηνῶν ὕστερον διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν τὸ προσήκον τῇ ἡσυχίᾳ κατάντημα, πάντας λαθὼν παρέλαβε μόνον ἐμὲ σὺν ἐτέρῳ τινι μοναχῷ· ὅθεν καὶ εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντες καὶ ἐπιφόρῳ πνεύματι διαπλεύσαντες κατήραμεν εἰς νῆσον τὴν Χίον, ἐκεῖ δὲ φθάσαντες περιτυγχάνομεν ἀνδρὶ τινι μοναχῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐπανερχομένῳ, ὃ δ' οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἐμποδὼν ἡμῖν ἐγένετο τῆς εἰς αὐτὴν φερούσης ὁδοῦ. Τῆς Χίου τοιγαροῦν ἀπάραντες κατήχθημεν εἰς τὴν Μυτιλήνην κἀν τῷ ὄρει τοῦ Λιβάνου μικρὸν τε προσδιατρίψαντες καὶ μηδ' ἐκεῖσε κατάντημα ἡσυχίας δυνηθέντες εὐρεῖν, κατελάβομεν τὴν εὐδαίμονα ταύτην Κωνσταντινούπολιν.⁸

⁵ Antonio Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (XIII^e–XIX^e s.), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello, Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 52–53.

⁶ Peter Charanis, "Piracy in the Aegean during the Reign of Michael Palaeologus," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 10 (1950): 127–136; Ioannis K. Vasdravellis, "Η πειρατεία εἰς τὰ παράλια τῆς Μακεδονίας κατὰ τὴν Τουρκοκρατίαν," *Μακεδονικά* 5 (1961–1963): 319–362.

⁷ Notizia in PLP 4601. Sulla vita del Sinaita si veda la sintesi più aggiornata in Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," 35–83. Per la diffusione degli insegnamenti di Gregorio Sinaita in ambito balcanico si veda Angeliki Delikari, *Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Σιναΐτης. Η δράση και η συνβολή του στη διάδοση του ησυχασμοῦ στα Βαλκάνια* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2004).

⁸ Ivan V. Pomyalovsky, "Житие иже во святых отца нашего Григория Синаита," *Записки Историко-филологического факультета Императорскаго С.-петербургскаго университета* (1894): 33–34, § 15, ll. 18–5 = Hans-Veit Beyer (ed.), *Κаллист Ι, πατριάρχ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Житие и деятельность иже во святых отца нашего Григория Синаита* (Ekaterinburg: Уральский университет, 2006), 188–190, § 22.

In questo passaggio il santo appare preoccupato per i continui attacchi che impediscono le condizioni per una vita nella *hesychia* e lascia la propria *skiti* di Magoula presso il monastero di Philotheu⁹ con l'intenzione di ritornare a Santa Caterina sul Sinai, trasferendosi momentaneamente a Tessalonica. Da qui egli passa a Chio, pronto ad imbarcarsi per la Palestina. L'incontro con un monaco di ritorno da Gerusalemme tuttavia lo distoglie dal progetto, perché la via per l'Oriente è bloccata probabilmente dalla flotta dell'emiro di Aydin.¹⁰ Il Sinaita è così costretto a puntare verso Costantinopoli, da dove, sulla base del prosieguo della narrazione, sappiamo che passerà a Sozopoli. Il brano si presta a tre considerazioni che, come vedremo, ricorrono in passi analoghi, e dimostra il consolidarsi di una condizione di incertezza che coinvolse un'intera generazione di monaci. Per Callisto, autore della *Vita*, la scorreria pirata del 1326 è occasione utile a sottolineare innanzitutto l'inciviltà di un popolo senza Dio, colpevole di un'aggressione che costrinse Gregorio ad abbandonare la vita di solitudine e l'*hesychia* che aveva raggiunto sul Monte Santo. Nell'intenzione dell'agiografo appare allora chiara la volontà di raffigurare l'invasore musulmano come un perturbatore della pace alla quale è tutto teso il Sinaita, senza dilungarsi sugli effetti devastanti che le razzie precedenti e la scorreria presente procurarono alle comunità conventuali. Il passo è testimonianza evidente della penetrazione che tale *raid* raggiunse, contribuendo, come vedremo confermato tra breve, alla scomparsa delle piccole *skitai*, rifugio e cuore dell'esperienza esicasta. In ultimo il passaggio evidenzia che la conseguenza della scorreria del 1326 segnò una fuga dall'Athos in direzione della Terra Santa, meta simbolica per tanti monaci del periodo, nonostante anch'essa fosse sottoposta al controllo musulmano.

Identica decisione infatti è presa da un ancora giovane Gregorio Palamas, all'epoca ritiratosi a Glossia¹¹ sotto la guida di Gregorio Drimys,¹² come raccontato nell'encomio del patriarca Filoteo Kokkinos:¹³

Ἀλλ' οὐ καὶ διὰ τέλους τῆς ἐνταῦθα καλλίστης διατριβῆς τε καὶ ἡσυχίας ἀπολαύειν ἔσχον κατὰ σκοπόν. Δυσὸν ἐνιαυτῶν καὶ γὰρ μετὰ τὴν ἐπιδημίαν Γρηγορίου παραρρυσθέντων, τοῦ ληστικοῦ τῶν κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένων Ἀχαιμενιδῶν συνεχῶς ἐπιτιθεμένων τῷ ὄρει καὶ τοὺς ἔξω

⁹ Pomyalovsky, "Житие," 10, § 7, l. 19 = Beyer, *Житие*, 130, § 11: κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς τοῦ Φιλοθέου σεβασμίας μονῆς. Sulla storia di Magoula si veda Rigo, *Monaci esicasti e monaci bogomili. Le accuse di messalianismo e bogomilismo rivolte agli esicasti ed il problema dei rapporti tra esicasmo e bogomilismo* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1989), 258-259, n. 2.

¹⁰ Paul Lemerle, *L'Émirat d'Aydin, Byzance et l'Occident. Recherches sur « La Geste d'Umur Pacha »* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), 54-62.

¹¹ Sulla storia del sito si veda Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 236 e soprattutto 264, n. 39.

¹² Notizia in *PLP* 5828.

¹³ Notizia in *PLP* 11917.

τειχῶν μάλιστα τῶν μοναχῶν ἡσυχάζοντας ἐλαυνόντων καὶ θορυβοῦντων καὶ καθ' ἐκάστην σχεδόν, νῦν μὲν ταῖς αἰφνιδίαις ἐφόδοις καὶ καταδρομαῖς καὶ ἀναίρεσσι καὶ αἰχμαλωσίαις, νῦν δὲ καὶ μοναῖς ταῖς ὑποψίαις καὶ τῷ δέει ταραττόντων καὶ τὴν φίλην ἡσυχίαν διακοπτόντων, ἀναγκάζονται καὶ ἄκοντες μεταβῆναι, θείῳ κὰν τούτῳ πειθόμενοι δῆπουθεν νόμῳ φεύγειν κελεύοντι διωκομένους, καὶ μὴ ὁμόσε χωρεῖν τοῖς ἐλαύνουσι. Τὴν γοῦν ἡμετέραν καταλαβόντες Θεσσαλονίκην σύν γε τοῖς φίλοις καὶ ὁμοτρόποις, δυοκαίδεκα δ' οἱ πάντες ἅμα τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἦσαν, βουλευόμενοι μετ' ἀλλήλων εἰς ταῦτ' ἐσυνιόντες καὶ Θεσσαλονίκην μετὰ τοῦ Ἄθω καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐνταῦθα καταλιπόντες εὐθὺ χωρεῖν Ἱεροσολύμων, κάκει προσκυνήσαντες τὸ λοιπὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ διαγίγιν.¹⁴

A capo di una piccola comunità di dodici compagni, Palamas fugge verso Tessalonica allo scopo di proseguire per Gerusalemme. Trova in un primo tempo riparo nella *skiti* del Prodromos¹⁵ presso Berrhoia, all'epoca tappa obbligata per molti esuli athoniti.¹⁶ Anche in questo caso l'obiettivo dell'agiografo mira a ritrarre l'atmosfera d'incertezza e sgomento che impediscono la pratica dell'*hesychia*. A differenza della fonte precedente l'agiografo attribuisce la responsabilità della scelta di Palamas alla frequenza degli attacchi pirata. L'episodio del 1326 qui pare l'ultimo di una serie di episodi che hanno minato la condizione di pace che contraddistingue la Santa Montagna. Si ha la sensazione che l'Athos rappresenti per le bande turche un obiettivo sicuro di bottino. Quindi anche per Palamas rimane ferma l'intenzione di dirigersi verso Gerusalemme: così come per il Sinaita anche per Gregorio questo progetto non troverà realizzazione a causa del blocco navale praticato dalle flottiglie pirata.

La situazione di grande preoccupazione per gli anacoreti ci è confermata ancora da Kokkinos nella *Vita* di Isidoro Boucheir,¹⁷ il quale in quegli anni viveva presso il Sinaita.¹⁸ Anche qui si ribadisce che non sembrano più essere garantite

¹⁴ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 451–452, § 24, ll. 1–16 (= PG 151, 569D–570A).

¹⁵ Vassiliki Kravari, *Villes et villages de Macédoine occidentale* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1989), 86–87.

¹⁶ È il caso, come vedremo, del monaco Hilarion e dopo qualche anno anche di Atanasio Meteorita, per il quale si veda Demetrios Z. Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος ὁ Μετεωρίτης* (Meteora: "Ἐκδοσὴ Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Μεγάλου Μετεώρου Μεταμορφώσεως, 1990), 137.

¹⁷ Per la ricostruzione della vita del patriarca una buona sintesi bibliografica si trova in Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 238–248; si veda anche Rigo, *1347. Isidoro patriarca di Costantinopoli e il breve sogno dell'inizio di una nuova epoca* (Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 31) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2020). Fonti principali per la vita di Isidoro Boucheir sono la *Vita* composta da Filoteo Kokkinos (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 329–423; BHG 962) e il cosiddetto *Testamento* (MM, vol. 1, 287–294; Jean Darrouzès, *Les registes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, fasc. 5: *Les registes de 1310 à 1376* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1977), no. 2309).

¹⁸ Sul discepolato di Isidoro presso il Sinaita si veda Pomyalovsky, "Житие," 7, § 5, ll. 8–12 = Beyer, *Житие*, 118, § 7.

le condizioni per una serena pratica della vita eremitica, ma si prospetta una scelta alternativa: parecchi sono costretti o preferiscono ritirarsi all'interno dei grandi monasteri. È questa ad esempio la via percorsa da Germano Maroules a Lavra.¹⁹

Τὰ δὲ καὶ εἰς ἔργον ἐξέβη μετὰ μικρόν, κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνου περὶ αὐτοῦ πρόρρησιν. Τοῦ γὰρ κακίστου καὶ μυσαροῦ γείτονος ἔθνους τούτου τοῦ Οὐννικοῦ – Ἀχαιμενίδας αὐτοὺς φασὶ τινες ἔκ τινος τῶν ἀρχαίων προγόνων – συνήθως ἐπιτιθεμένων αὐτοῖς, ἐπεὶ τοὺς ἔξω τειχῶν ἐπ' ἐρημίας ἀναχωροῦντας οὐκ ἦν ἡρεμεῖν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν εἴσω τῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει φρουρίων ἐκείνων καὶ μὴ βουλόμενοι δῆπουθεν πρὸς ἀνάγκης εἶχον ἑαυτοὺς εἰσώθειν, οἱ δ' εἰς ἐτέρας πόλεις μεταβαίνειν καὶ χώρας, ὅσοις ἐκεῖνο μὴ ῥάδιον ἦν, τότε δὴ καὶ οὗτοι συνελαθέντες ὑπὸ ταυτησὶ τῆς ἀνάγκης εἰς Θεσσαλονίκην αὐτοῖς σὺν ἐτέροις γέ τισιν ὑποστρέφουσιν. Ἰσίδωρος τοίνυν ὁ μέγας ἐκεῖ παρὰ τῷ φροντιστηρίῳ καὶ τῇ προτέρᾳ καλύβῃ γενόμενος, ἀναχωρῶν ὡσαύτως καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἦν καὶ τῶν συνήθων τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀγώνων ἐχόμενος. Ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦν ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον κεῖσθαι τὸν λύχνον οὐδ' ὑποκρύπτεσθαι τῇ γωνίᾳ τε καὶ τῇ κλίνῃ.²⁰

Il passo si presta a due osservazioni che completano quanto discusso in precedenza. Qui il nemico musulmano è denominato secondo la dicitura – rara negli autori bizantini, infamante e appena attenuata dalla nota storico-eziologica – di *unno*, allo scopo di sottolineare la violenza e l'efferatezza del suo agire (Τοῦ γὰρ κακίστου καὶ μυσαροῦ γείτονος ἔθνους τούτου τοῦ Οὐννικοῦ). Ben più rilevante ci pare la menzione delle contromisure adottate dai monaci: la frequenza e soprattutto la penetrazione all'interno del territorio athonita costringono gli anacoreti a ritirarsi o nei centri monastici muniti di fortificazione od a emigrare nelle vicine città (Berrhoia, Tessalonica), per salvare la vita.²¹ Vediamo qui riproposta la medesima soluzione adottata quasi un ventennio prima quando la Compagnia Catalana mise a ferro e a fuoco il Monte Santo, come descritto nella *Vita* di Saba Tziskos. In quell'occasione fu lo stesso imperatore

¹⁹ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 142–143, § 35, ll. 57–60; *BHG* 2164: Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὕστερον, ὀπηνίκα δηλαδὴ καὶ τὰς ἔξω διατριβὰς ὁ μέγας ἀπολιπὼν, ὡς πολὺ τὸ ταραχώδες καὶ συγκεχυμένον ἤδη προσκτησαμένας ταῖς τοῦ Οὐννικοῦ τούτου ἔθνους συνεχέσιν ἐφόδοις, τῆς Λαύρας ἐντὸς ἦν καθ' ἑαυτὸν διατρίβων.

²⁰ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 354, § 23, ll. 1–14.

²¹ La tappa a Tessalonica rappresenta il primo rifugio per i fuggiaschi dell'Áthos come si può desumere da un passo della *Vita* di Isidoro Boucheir nel quale si ricorda la sua frequentazione del monastero tessalonicense guidato da Gerasimo dove era forte la presenza di un circolo esicasta, tanto che Filoteo Kokkinos opportunamente chiosa: "benchè nel mondo [*scil.* Isidoro], dedito alle discipline profane e residente nella casa paterna, era tra i monaci e gli anacoreti." Si veda Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 350, § 18, ll. 16–18.

Andronico II ad ordinare la dispersione delle comunità anacoretiche e il loro trasferimento entro le mura dei monasteri per salvaguardare l'incolumità dei monaci.²²

Ben più indicativa ci pare la conseguenza che tale incursione produsse nella *Vita* di Isidoro Boucheir. Egli fu difatti costretto a tornare a Tessalonica:

Ἀλλ' Ἀχαιμενίδαι καὶ αὖθις, τὸ σύνηθες ἐκεῖ τοῖς ἁγίοις κακὸν καὶ τὴν φίλην ἀνακόπτον ἡσυχίαν τε καὶ τὴν ἀναχώρησιν καὶ Ἰσίδωρος εἰς Θεσσαλονίκην ὁ θεῖος διὰ τοῦτ' αὐτὸ πάλιν οὐχ ἑκὼν ἀπιὼν καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς φροντιστήριον, τὴν ἀρετὴν τε καθ' ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἔθος καθ' ἑκάστην φιλοπονῶν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὰ πρὸς Θεόν, καθὰ δὴ καὶ πρότερον ἔφην, γινόμενος.²³

A differenza dei casi precedenti Isidoro in città fonda una nuova comunità, o meglio inaugura una nuova stagione per il monastero²⁴ fondato dal suo maestro Gerasimo,²⁵ il primo discepolo del Sinaita²⁶ (ὁ πρῶτος τῶν ἐκείνου μαθητῶν). Il futuro patriarca, che già prima della partenza per l'Athos guidava questa comunità, fu certo spinto a riavviare il cenacolo, come ci conferma l'agiografo, per il consiglio offertogli da Gregorio,²⁷ ma fu costretto a tornare sui suoi passi innanzitutto dalla situazione contingente. A Tessalonica Isidoro, forte dell'esperienza di *pneumatikos* accumulata negli anni precedenti,²⁸ organizza una comunità aperta non solo a monaci – vi approderà Gregorio Palamas²⁹ – ma anche a uomini e donne delle

²² Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 184, § 13, ll. 32-40; Franz Dölger, Peter Wirth (eds.), *Regesten die Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453* (München: Beck, 1925-1965), no. 2301.

²³ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 359, § 25, ll. 28-33.

²⁴ Del monastero del quale non conosciamo né nome né precisa localizzazione si veda Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 348, 350, 352, §§ 17, 18, 21; 354-357, § 23. Per la ricostruzione della vita del cenobio si consulti Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," 64-65.

²⁵ Notizia in *PLP* 3756.

²⁶ Demetrios Gonis, "Γεράσιμος ὁ Σιναΐτης, ὁ ἐξ Εὐρίπου, ἱεραπόστολος τῆς Ἑλλάδος κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους τῆς Φραγκοκρατίας," *Θεολογία* 53 (1982): 1119-1142; Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 240-241.

²⁷ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 353, § 22, ll. 33-37: Οὐκ ἐν ἐρήμοις οὐδ' ἐν ὄρεσι τοῦτοις ἐβουλόμην ἔγωγε τέως, ὧ βέλτιστε, διατρίβειν σε – διατί γάρ; – ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ μᾶλλον καὶ τοῖς ἐκεῖ ζῶσι, μονάζουσι καὶ κοινωνικοῖς, ἵν' ἐκείνοις ὁμοῦ πᾶσι τύπος εἴης τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀγαθῆς πολιτείας καὶ παντοδαπῆς ἀρετῆς, καὶ σιωπῶν δηλαδὴ καὶ φθεγγόμενος.

²⁸ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 345, § 12, ll. 48-53: ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν καὶ πλούτῳ κομώντων οἱ καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου δαψιλῶς μετέχοντες βουλῆς καὶ τῆς γλώττης τὴν θεῖαν ἀλλοίωσιν ἡλλοιοῦντο, πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἑαυτοὺς ἐξ ἐκείνου τυπούντες καὶ θεῶ καὶ τοῖς ἐκείνου νόμοις ζῶντες τὸ πλεῖστον, εἴπερ ἐκεῖνος αὐτὸς τῶν εἰρημένων ἀξιόπιστος μάρτυς περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ταῦτα λέγων καὶ γράφων.

²⁹ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 485, § 53; *PG* 151, 592-593. Palamas è accolto nel 1338 a seguito della sua seconda partenza dall'Athos per replicare alle accuse di Barlaam il Calabro. Si veda anche Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 236.

famiglie più influenti, il cui modello sarà replicato dal 1341 anche a Costantinopoli.³⁰ Da questo episodio è possibile quindi proporre una prima considerazione intorno alle conseguenze prodotte dalle incursioni turche: se esse ci appaiono alla lettura delle fonti destabilizzanti per la vita monastica in particolare dell'Athos, d'altro canto determinarono indirettamente le condizioni per la creazione di nuovi esperimenti di vita comunitaria che produssero la diffusione dell'insegnamento esicasta anche negli ambienti secolari.

Si riferisce invece a un periodo successivo l'episodio che vede protagonista Atanasio delle Meteore.³¹ È ben probabile che esso faccia riferimento agli anni compresi tra il 1335 e il 1340, quando l'Athos fu oggetto di una nuova massiccia pressione da parte di pirati turchi.³² Il giovane Atanasio-Andronico, che, come il Sinaita, ancora fanciullo era stato fatto prigioniero per mano dei Catalani che avevano occupato Nea Patra,³³ sua città natale, dopo un primo breve soggiorno all'Athos, interrotto a causa della sua giovane età,³⁴ e un periodo a Costantinopoli dove ebbe modo di frequentare il circolo esicasta costituito da Gregorio Sinaita, Daniele l'Esicasta,³⁵ Isidoro e Gregorio Akindynos,³⁶ si era recato una seconda volta sulla Santa Montagna presso la skiti di Magoula sotto la guida dello ieromonaco Callisto.³⁷ Da qui era stato indirizzato all'eremo di Melaia, diretto dallo ieromonaco Gregorio Politis e da Mosè, e qui era stato tonsurato all'età di 30 anni. Poco dopo aveva ricevuto quindi il grande abito e il nome di Atanasio.³⁸ Poiché subito dopo

³⁰ Merita ricordare difatti che Isidoro fu promotore di un altro circolo (σχολή, φρατρία ιερά) nella capitale (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 366, § 31, l. 26), quando nel settembre 1341 fu nominato ὑποψήφιος di Monembasia, partecipando così alle sedute sinodali (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 364, § 30). La *Vita* si dilunga poi nella presentazione di due membri della comunità entrambi laici: un certo Nicola (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 377–381, §§ 40–42), anch'egli monembasiota, che in seguito parteggiò per Cantacuzeno, e un'anonima madre di famiglia che scelse la vita monastica (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 373–374, §§ 37–39).

³¹ Per la *Vita* di Atanasio si veda Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 129–156. Notizia in *PLP* 359.

³² *Ioannis Cantacuzeni Historia*, ed. Ludwig Schopen (Bonn: Weber, 1828–1832), vol. 1, 427, I, II, 21; 455, II, 25; 470–471, II, 28; vol. 2, 65–66, III, 9.

³³ Torneremo a breve su questo passo, Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 133, § 6. Su Nea Patra (Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 132, § 5), odierna Ὑπάτη alle falde del monte Molybion si veda *TIB* 1, 221.

³⁴ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 133–134, § 8: διὰ τὸ ἀκμὴν νεαρὸν καὶ ἀγένειον.

³⁵ Notizia in *PLP* 5094.

³⁶ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 134, § 9. Il passo dell'anonima *Vita* di Atanasio ci testimonia l'altro esperimento di *cenacolo* esicasta, questa volta a Costantinopoli, che tuttavia non può essere identificato con quello di Isidoro per ragioni cronologiche. Difatti possiamo datare, a partire dalla cronologia della vita di Gregorio il Sinaita, la sosta di Atanasio nella capitale all'autunno-inverno o del 1326 o del 1327. Per Gregorio Akindynos notizia in *PLP* 495.

³⁷ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 134, § 10.

³⁸ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 134–135, §§ 10–11: [...] ἐκεῖθεν ἀποδιδράσκει καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος πάλιν καταλαμβάνει. Καὶ γενόμενος ἐν τῇ σκῆτι τῇ λεγομένῃ Μαγουλᾷ, μανθάνει παρὰ τινος Καλλίστου ιερομονάχου, ὡς ὅτι ἐν τόπῳ καλουμένῳ Μηλαίᾳ κάθηνται τινες δύο

questo passaggio l'anonimo agiografo colloca il racconto dell'assalto turco al ritiro athonita, dobbiamo concludere che, poiché il monaco nacque intorno al 1303–1305, l'episodio sia da fissare intorno al 1335–1340. A sostegno di questa datazione giunge un passo della *Vita* di Isidoro nel quale si ricorda il secondo soggiorno del futuro patriarca sull'Athos al monastero di Esphigmenou, dove per mano dello stesso Palamas, all'epoca igumeno del convento, egli è consacrato diacono intorno al 1335. Di lì a poco, a seguito di un'incursione turca, Isidoro fu costretto nuovamente a riparare verso Tessalonica dove nel suo monastero accolse intorno al 1338 lo stesso Palamas.³⁹ Per ultimo, *terminus ante quem* è poi il gennaio 1341, data alla quale risale l'atto di Xenophon,⁴⁰ vescovo di Stagoi, nel quale si fa menzione dell'insediamento dove si era ritirato Gregorio, il padre spirituale di Atanasio. Ma torniamo alle vicende del nostro monaco:

Οἱ οὖν Ἀγαρηνοί, Τοῦρκοι συνήθως καλούμενοι, οὐκ ἔληγον διὰ θαλάττης τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος πάντοτε αἰχμαλωτίζοντες. Ἐν μᾶ ὡν, ἐν τῇ κέλλῃ αὐτῶν εἰσπηδήσαντες, τῶν ἄλλων διαφυγόντων, τὸν γηραιὸν Μωϋσῆν χειρωσάμενοι δεδεμένον ἔφερον. Ἀγόμενος δὲ πλησίον ναοῦ τινος τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου, τὸ ὄμμα ὁ Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὸν ναὸν ἄρας ἔφη· “Ἀρκεῖ ἡμῖν, ἅγιε Νικόλαε, ὁ μέχρι τῶν ἐνταῦθα σκυλμός.” καὶ εὐθὺς ὁ κατέχων αὐτὸν Ἰσμαηλίτης, ἔασας τὸν γέροντα, ἐστράφη ἐν τῇ κέλλῃ, εὐρὼν δὲ τὸν κλεινὸν Γρηγόριον, ἔφη πρὸς αὐτόν· “Εἰ καὶ ἐποίησέ μου πρόνοιαν ὁ Θεὸς ἄρτι διὰ πρεσβειῶν τοῦ μεγάλου Νικολάου, ἀλλ’ οὖν ἐγὼ οὐκέτι πειράσω ἔτι ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ τὸ θεῖον, ἀλλ’ ἐν μοναστηρίῳ ἀπελθὼν τὸν ἐπίλοιπόν μοι ἐπιβιῶ χρόνον· σὺ δέ, εἰ βούλοιο, πρόσμεινον ἐνταῦθα· εἰ δ’ οὖν, μετανάστευε ὅποι καὶ βούλοιο.”

Διαζευχθείσης οὖν τῆς θαυμαστῆς ἐκείνης ξυνωρίδος, ὁ μὲν Μωϋσῆς ἕνα λαβὼν τῶν φοιτητῶν, Στέφανον καλούμενον, ἐν τῇ τῶν Ἰβηρῶν ἀπῆλθε μονῇ, ἐν ἣ καὶ ἐτελειώθη· ὁ δὲ γε θεῖος Γρηγόριος, τὸν Ἀθανάσιον λαβὼν καὶ τὸν Γαβριήλ, τὰ ἐσπέρια δεῖν ἔγνω καταλαβεῖν. Διελθὼν γοῦν τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην καὶ τὴν Βέρροϊαν, πλεῖστοι τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἐβούλοντο ὑποδέξασθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀναπαῦσαι, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐπένευσεν ὁ γέρων· ἑώρα γάρ τὸν Ἀθανάσιον ἀηδῶς ἔχοντα τὰς ἐν τῇ πόλει διατριβὰς ὡς ἡσυχίας ἐρώντα.⁴¹

μοναχοί, Γρηγόριος ἱερομόναχος καὶ Μωϋσῆς καλούμενοι, εἰς ἄκρον ἀρετῆς ἐληλακότες. Ἀπελθὼν τοίνυν πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ δεηθεὶς τοῦ δέξασθαι αὐτόν, οὐκ ἐπένευσεν· εἶτα, ἰδόντες τὸ πρόθυμον αὐτοῦ καὶ δυσωπητικόν, εἰσδέχονται αὐτόν. Καὶ ἀποθρίξας τοῦτον ὁ ἱερὸς Γρηγόριος Ἀντώνιον μετωνόμασεν, ἔτος που τριακοστὸν ἄγοντα τῆς ἡλικίας· εἶτα μετ’ οὐ πολὺ ἐνδύει αὐτόν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον σχῆμα καὶ Ἀθανάσιον τὸν ὄντως ἀθάνατον ἐπωνόμασε.

³⁹ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 357–359, § 24.

⁴⁰ Nikos A. Veas, “Σερβικά καὶ βυζαντινὰ γράμματα Μετεώρου,” *Βυζαντις* 2 (1911): 96–97 (n. 23).

⁴¹ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 136–137, §§ 14–15.

Troviamo qui conferma di quanto affermato finora, ma non possiamo tacere i motivi di novità proposti dalla testimonianza. Innanzitutto l'agiografo, di certo contemporaneo del santo,⁴² precisa con maggiore chiarezza rispetto a Kokkinos la provenienza dei razziatori musulmani: essi sono Turchi, come di solito si dice, autori delle frequenti scorrerie che seminano terrore e prigionieri sull'Athos. Un secondo aspetto interessante riposa sulla località vittima dell'assalto. Al fine di esaltare le qualità ascetiche del suo campione, l'agiografo aveva nei paragrafi precedenti offerto una descrizione dettagliata dell'eremo di Melaia:

έν γάρ τῷ ἀκροτάτῳ καὶ ἀπαρακλήτῳ ὄρει, τῷ πρόποδι τοῦ Ἱθωνος, τὴν οἴκησιν ἔχοντες, Μηλαία μὲν ὁ τόπος ἐκαλεῖτο, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖ φυτὸν μηλαίας ἀναθᾶλαι διὰ τὸ ψυχρὸν τοῦ τόπου, ἀλλὰ πίτυες ὑψήκομοι καὶ κέδροι δασύτατοι. [...] Διὰ γοῦν τὸ ἀνεστηκὸς τοῦ ὄρους καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν τοῦ τόπου χιῶν εἰώθει ἐκεῖσε πίπτειν πολλή· εἰ οὖν καθ' ὁδοῦ τούτῳ συνέβη κωλυθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ χειμῶνος καὶ διὰ τὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ μῆκος μὴ καταλαβεῖν τὴν κέλλαν, τρώγῃ τινὶ πέτρας ἢ ἐλάτου ρίζα προσερείσας, παρέμενεν ἄχρις ὅτου καιρὸς ἐπιστῇ.⁴³

Impressiona quindi la capacità dei pirati turchi, insoddisfatti dei bottini ormai magri raccolti sulla costa, di assaltare piccole comunità insediatesi nei luoghi più impervi e irraggiungibili della penisola athonita. Un motivo sicuramente nuovo risulta invece il riferimento all'intercessione richiesta da Mosè a san Nicola. L'intervento numinoso, sul quale avremo modo di tornare, rappresenta un *topos* dell'aneddotica agiografica contro gli Infedeli. La rassegnazione del monaco è difatti immediatamente ricompensata dall'improvvisa paresi dell'aggressore. Il brano prosegue con la presa di coscienza da parte di Mosè dell'impossibilità di condurre ancora una vita nell'*hesychia*. Anche in questo caso la scelta pare obbligata: il monaco terrorizzato si rifugia con il discepolo Stefano tra le mura del monastero di Iviron, mentre Gregorio prende, insieme ad Atanasio e Gabriele, la strada di Tessalonica e Berrhoia. Eppure la nuova condizione di esule esicasta non soddisfa il giovane Atanasio. Ecco quindi l'inserimento di un passaggio essenziale per la nostra ricerca: Atanasio, come qualche anno prima Gregorio Sinaita,⁴⁴ giunto a Servia in Macedonia, grazie

⁴² Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 27–36.

⁴³ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 135–136, §§ 11–12.

⁴⁴ Come abbiamo già osservato il Sinaita, dopo il soggiorno all'Athos, prese la via di Sozopoli, forse per il monastero dei santi Kyrikos e Iulitta e dei santi Apostoli, su indicazione di Atanasio Paleologo (*PLP* 21417), proprietario del primo e fondatore del secondo. Sulla questione si veda Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," 54–55.

all'incontro con Giacomo,⁴⁵ discepolo del Sinaita e divenuto vescovo della città, è convinto a trasferirsi a Stagoi,⁴⁶ nel distretto di Ioannina e Vlachia, dove fonderà il monastero della Trasfigurazione alle Meteore.⁴⁷ Il caso di Atanasio testimonia in questo modo quanto l'attività di colonizzazione ed espansione monastica che i territori bizantini e slavi vivono nel corso del sec. XIV sia strettamente legata alla pressione e ai disagi che le scorrerie turche imposero alla popolazione dell'Athos: se da un lato nella seconda metà del secolo assistiamo a una vera e propria slavizzazione della Santa Montagna, utile a rinsanguare il calo demografico prodotto dalle numerose e inevitabili fughe, dall'altro tali fughe rappresentano la causa prima dell'espansione del movimento esicasta e generalmente monastico bizantino oltre i confini consueti delle sacre montagne.

Il caso di Atanasio e di Isidoro ci traghetta verso una nuova stagione drammatica per la Santa Montagna ossia il periodo successivo alla disfatta della Maritza (26 settembre 1371), con la sconfitta del despota Giovanni Uglieša e la perdita di ogni speranza bizantina di fronteggiare l'avanzata turca in Macedonia. Anche qui le fonti agiografiche corrono a restituirci l'immagine viva degli effetti che questo evento produsse nella vita quotidiana delle comunità monastiche. La *Vita* di Romylos di Vidin⁴⁸ si dilunga al proposito:

Ὡς δὲ μετ' ὀλίγον τινὰ καιρὸν καὶ ἡ ἀναίρεσις τοῦ χριστιανικωτάτου ἐκείνου ἐγένετο Οὐγκλεση, καὶ συγχύσεως καὶ δέους ἅπαντες οἱ μοναχοὶ ἐπληρώθησαν οἱ ἐν τῷ Ἀγίῳ Ὄρει καὶ μάλιστα οἱ μονάζοντες καὶ ἐν ἐρήμοις τόποις καθήμενοι, διὸ καὶ οἱ πλείους τῶν ἀναχωρητῶν τηνικαῦτα τοῦ ὄρους ἐξέφυγον· ὁμοίως καὶ οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος ὑπ' ἐκείνων παρακινήθεις καταλιμπάνει τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος καὶ πρὸς ἕτερον τόπον ἀπέρχεται, ἀγνώριστον τάχα καὶ ἄδοξον, ὡς ἡγάπα καὶ ἤθελεν ὁ φιλέρημος, Αὐλῶνα τὸν τόπον ἐγχωρίως καλούμενον. Ἀλλὰ διήμαρτε τοῦ οἰκείου σκοποῦ κάνταῦθα ὁ δίκαιος· ὅσον γὰρ ἐκεῖνος τὸ τῆς ἐνθέου πολιτείας φῶς ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης κρύπτειν ἠβούλετο, τοσοῦτον ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν εἰς τοῦμφανὲς πᾶσιν ἐτίθει. "Λαμψάτω γάρ," φησὶν, "τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν οἱ

⁴⁵ Notizia in *PLP* 7858 insufficiente e fuorviante. Per Giacomo di Servia si veda Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," 67. È ben probabile che Atanasio sia giunto insieme a Gregorio nella regione di Stagoi quando questa era sotto il controllo del governatore Michele Monomachos (*PLP* 19306 e Franjo Barišić, "Михаило Мономах, епарх и велики коностава," *Зборник Радова Византолошког Института* 11 (1968): 215–234).

⁴⁶ *TIB* 1, 262–263.

⁴⁷ Sophianos, *Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος*, 137, § 16.

⁴⁸ Per il periodo athonita si consulti Rigo, "Ancora sulle *Vitae* di Romylos di Vidin (*BHG* 2383 e 2384)," *Medioevo greco* 0 (2000): 183–184; Cyril Pavlikianov, "The Athonite Period in the Life of Saint Romylos of Vidin," *Συμμείκτα* 15 (2002): 247–255. Definitivo è Rigo, Marco Scarpa (eds.), *La vita di Romylos di Vidin* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2022), 19–29.

ἄνθρωποι τὰ καλὰ ὑμῶν ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσι τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς” (Mt 5:16). Καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν τότε καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μοναχικοῦ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ κοσμικοῦ τάγματος πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐρχομένους πολλοὺς τῶν ἐκείνου λόγων ἡδέως ἀκούειν ἐπιθυμοῦντας· ἦσαν γὰρ “ὥσεί πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα” (Mt 9:36), οἱ πλείους δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ὡμοὶ πάντη καὶ ἀπαίδευτοι καὶ καθόλου θηριώδεις εἰς ληστείαν καὶ φόνους συνειθικότες, ἄλλοι εἰς τὴν ὀρθόδοξον καὶ ὑγιᾶ πίστιν σφάλλοντες καὶ εἰς ἕτερα πάθη κεκρατημένοι, καὶ οἱ τοπάρχαι τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου ἀδικίας πολλὰς ποιοῦντες καὶ φονεύοντες ἀθώους ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ψυχὰς τῷ διαβόλῳ παραδίδόντες, οἱ δὲ μοναχοὶ εἰς πλάνας καὶ μνησικακίας καὶ ἕτερα μυρία πάθη κεκρατημένοι, ἱερεῖς δὲ ἀναξίως ἱεουργοῦντες· καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν μυριοπαθεῖς πάντες οἱ ἐκεῖσε ἐκ μακρᾶς τιнос συνηθείας· οὓς πάντας τῷ σύριγγι τοῦ κεχαριτωμένου λόγου αὐτοῦ εἰς ἐνότητα τῆς ἀληθοῦς πίστεως καὶ ὑγιοῦς ἀναστροφῆς τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποίμνης συνεκάλεσεν, ὥστε λέγειν αὐτοὺς πάντας· “Δόξα σοι, ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐξαποστείλας σου τὸν φωστῆρα τοῦτον ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς, ὅστις ἐκ σκότους εἰς φῶς ἡμᾶς συνήγαγε.” Ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ τοπάρχαι μεγάλως ὑπερετίμων αὐτὸν καὶ ἰσαπόστολον ἐκάλουν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οἶμαι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖσε ἀπήγαγεν ἵνα πολλὰς ψυχὰς διορθώσῃ.

Οὕτως οὖν ἔχων ἐκεῖσε ὁ ἅγιος οὗτος, ἐπῆλθεν αὐθις αὐτῷ λογισμὸς ἀναχωρῆσαι τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου· ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἠθέλησε τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λογισμῷ στοιχῆσαι εἰ μὴ ἕτερον γέροντα συμβουλευσῆται, ἵνα μαθεῖν δυνηθῇ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ θέλημα· καὶ μαθὼν εἶναι ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἕνα τῶν ἀγιорεϊτικῶν γερόντων εἰς ὄντινα εἶχε πληροφορίαν καὶ ἀγάπην πνευματικὴν, στέλλει πρὸς αὐτὸν ἕνα τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ γράψας ἐπιστολὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν διαλαμβάνουσας οὕτως· “Ἐπειδὴ, πάτερ ἅγιε, ὁ λογισμὸς οὐκ ἔῃ με ἐνταῦθα εἶναι, ἀλλ’ εἴτε εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος αὐθις ἐπαναστρέψαι εἴτε ἀλλαχοῦ, ποῦ οὖν κελεύεις ἐκ τῶν δύο τούτων ἀπελθεῖν; Δήλωσόν μοι, παρακαλῶ, ὅτι μετὰ πίστεως ἐρωτῶ.” Δεξάμενος οὖν ὁ γέρων τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καὶ ἀναγνοὺς ἐδήλωσεν αὐτῷ οὕτως· “Ἐπειδὴ μετὰ πίστεως ἠρώτησας, τοῦτό μοι φαίνεται κρεῖττον ἵνα ἀπέλθῃς εἰς ἕτερον τόπον ἔνθα ἂν ὁ θεὸς ὁδηγήσῃ σε καὶ μὴ εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος.”

Λαβὼν τοίνυν τὴν συμβουλὴν ἐκείνου ἀναχωρεῖ τοῦ Αὐλῶνος καὶ εἰς τὴν Σερβίαν ἀπέρχεται μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς τόπον οὕτω καλούμενον Ῥαβενίτζα, ἔνθα καὶ μονὴ ἐστὶ τῆς ὑπεραγίας δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου· ἥσπερ καὶ πλησίον τὴν κατοίκησιν ἐποιήσατο.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Rigo, Scarpa, *Vita di Romylos*, 128–132 (= François Halkin, “Un ermite des Balkans au XIV^e siècle. La vie grecque inédite de St. Romylos,” *Byzantion* 31 (1961): 142–144, §§ 22–24). Il medesimo episodio mostra significative varianti nella versione slava della *Vita* (Paul Devos, “La version slave de la vie de S. Romylos,” *Byzantion* 31 (1961): 149–187, ma ormai Rigo, Scarpa, *Vita di Romylos*, 181–182, e per la discussione del passaggio slavo rispetto all’originale greco si vedano 33–36).

L'agiografo Gregorio⁵⁰ delinea un caso paradigmatico e assolutamente realistico, simile al meno conosciuto esempio del monaco serbo Siluan.⁵¹ Romylos, giungendo da Paroria, si ritira prima a Melana intorno al 1355 e quindi a Kaké Plax⁵² sulle falde settentrionali dell'Athos, ma da qui è costretto alla fuga a causa delle incursioni turche. La ricerca di un luogo sicuro per una serena pratica dell'*hesychia* ha però un esito apparentemente imprevisto. Egli non fonda, come Atanasio, un nuovo monastero, ma si dirige a Valona, nella convinzione di trovare riparo presso la famiglia Asen che controllava (almeno fino al 1372) la regione e della quale aveva goduto favori durante il suo soggiorno a Paroria. Come Atanasio, anche Romylos dunque sceglie la direttrice verso Occidente nella speranza di allontanarsi così dal pericolo turco. Per comprendere il passo è opportuno ricordare che la *Vita* di Romylos ci è giunta anche in una versione slava che proprio in questo punto differisce dall'originale greco. Nella versione greca si racconta che Romylos finì intrappolato nello stato di disordine e violenze dovuto alla recente affermazione del dominio della famiglia Balšić, la quale, pur continuando a risiedere a Scutari, esercitava il controllo sulla città di Valona attraverso un governatore e uomini di fiducia. Al contempo Romylos fu testimone della desolazione morale della popolazione locale relativamente cristianizzata. Diverso è il quadro tratteggiato nella versione slava lì dove è eliminato ogni riferimento critico alla famiglia dominante e anzi si ricordano i numerosi monaci che, in fuga dall'Athos *per timore degli stranieri*, raggiunsero Romylos, ai quali si aggiungono degli *insigni secolari*, che offrivano ogni genere di dono in cambio della benedizione del sant'uomo. Se diversa nelle due versioni è la descrizione della situazione politica e religiosa della regione, identico è l'esito del periodo epirota di Romylos. Nella versione greca il santo, sempre in cerca di *hesychia*, immagina di tornare sui suoi passi, ma la risposta di un vegliardo athonita, riparato a Costantinopoli e interpellato dallo stesso Romylos, lo distoglie dai suoi progetti. Nella versione slava, è invece un sogno rivelatore a indicare al santo di abbandonare la città adriatica. Circa il mancato ritorno all'Athos di Romylos condividiamo la recente ricostruzione di Antonio Rigo.⁵³ Il vegliardo consultato per lettera da Romylos – da identificare con uno dei membri (forse Isaija di Serre) dell'ambasceria serba giunta a Costantinopoli (1374) per discutere la soluzione dello scisma di Peć – non distolse il santo monaco a causa della frequenza delle incursioni turche sull'Athos, che le fonti storiche ci dicono

⁵⁰ Notizia in *PLP* 4603.

⁵¹ Rigo, Scarpa, *Vita di Romylos*, 23 con bibliografia.

⁵² Sui siti si veda Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 263 (Melana) e 166, n. 43 (monastero του Πλάκας).

⁵³ Rigo, Scarpa, *Vita di Romylos*, 36–44.

essersi ridotte all'indomani della disfatta della Maritza. La ragione va addebitata alle vivaci tensioni che animavano il confronto tra greci e serbi sulla Santa Montagna, una volta tramontato il controllo serbo sull'Athos. Unica soluzione rimane per Romylos continuare la sua peregrinazione verso Ravanitza, nuova fondazione monastica sostenuta dal principe Lazzaro.

L'esempio di Romylos chiarisce la nostra conoscenza sugli esiti problematici prodotti dalla pressione turca sulla Santa Montagna. Gli athoniti si rivolgono necessariamente verso Ovest e in prima battuta cercano riparo nelle città bizantine prossime al Monte Santo (Tessalonica e Berrhoia) dove possono contare su ambienti atti ad accoglierle o comunità già avviate. Nelle intenzioni dei monaci in fuga tali destinazioni rappresentano spesso solo una tappa in vista di un ulteriore trasferimento verso la Terra Santa, che difficilmente si concretizza. Questa è la situazione che contraddistingue la generazione che subì le scorrerie turche tra gli anni '20 e '30 del sec. XIV. Il caso di Atanasio, che si colloca all'inizio degli anni '40, segna un progresso perché la fuoriuscita dall'Athos raggiunge aree occidentali più interne, poste al confine delle regioni sotto il controllo di case regnanti slave. La peregrinazione di Romylos segnala invece un'ulteriore fase. Dopo l'abbondante quarto di secolo di dominazione serba sull'Athos, all'indomani della disfatta della Maritza egli punta direttamente verso territori sotto il diretto controllo slavo (e serbo in particolare), forte dei legami e dei favori dei quali aveva in precedenza goduto. La corte serba e i potentati locali appaiono ben disposti nei confronti di questa emigrazione poiché dalla presenza di questi "campioni" dell'esicismo ottengono lustro e legittimazione. Di ciò la doppia redazione, greca e slava, del passaggio sulla sosta a Valona di Romylos ci pare documento evidente. In ultimo quindi un'osservazione: a nostro avviso non è corretto ritenere che la propagazione dell'Esicismo bizantino nei territori slavi sia da attribuire a generici monaci athoniti. Con ciò intendiamo sostenere che la diffusione delle pratiche esicaste in area balcanica si dispiegò su base etnico-linguistica. Escludendo il caso di Gregorio Sinaita a Paroria, in sé eccezionale per caratura del personaggio e anteriorità cronologica, per il resto – e il caso di Romylos e Siluan ne sono prova esplicita – i protagonisti della propagazione esicasta furono monaci che vantavano nascita e abilità nelle lingue slave. Fu dunque l'Athos stesso nel corso del terzo quarto del sec. XIV il laboratorio di incontri e scambi, avvenuti per mezzo di forme di discepolato o convivenza presso i cenobi, che produssero una "cultura esicasta" la quale a seguito delle incursioni turche fu propagata da monaci slavi nelle regioni slave.

Se torniamo alle conseguenze della disfatta della Maritza, un episodio della *Vita*⁵⁴ di Nifone,⁵⁵ discepolo di Massimo Kausokalybita, ce ne relaziona con vivacità la situazione:

Μετὰ τὸ ἀναίρεθῆναι τὸν δεσπότην Οὐγκλεσιν ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν, θρασυνθέντες οἱ τοιαῦτοι Ἰσμηλίται συνῆξαν στόλον μέγαν πλοίων καὶ ἦλθον κατὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους καὶ κατὰ πάντων τῶν χριστιανῶν μετὰ τῶν ὀπλῶν τῶν Σερβῶν, βαστάζοντες καὶ τειχομαχικὰ ἐργαλεῖα διὰ τὰ κάστρη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους. Ὡς γοῦν ἦλθον, ἰδόντες αὐτοὺς ἅπαντες ἐτρόμαξαν, τοσοῦτον ὅτι καὶ ὁ μέγας πριμικήριος οὐκ ἐτόλμησε καταπροσωπῆσαι αὐτούς. Καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου μὴ ἔχοντες ἄλλο τι δρᾶσαι, ἔπεσον εἰς ἱκεσίαν πρὸς τὸν οἰκτίρμονα Θεὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν πάναγνον αὐτοῦ μητέρα τὴν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους καὶ πάντων τῶν χριστιανῶν μεσίτριαν καὶ τροφὸν καὶ βοήθειαν· καὶ οὐκ ἀπέτυχον. Ἀπέστειλεν οὖν καὶ ὁ τότε προϊστάμενος τῆς ἱερᾶς Λαύρας πρὸς τὸν ὁσίον, διαγγέλλων αὐτῷ τὴν βίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνάγκην ἣτις ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν ἀπροσδοκῆτων, ἐκλιπαρῶν αὐτὸν τοῦ ποιῆσαι εὐχὴν πρὸς τὸν Κύριον “ὅπως ῥυσθῶμεν ἐκ τοῦ παρόντος κινδύνου.” Καὶ ἀπεκριθὲν ὁ μέγας· “Ὁ Κύριος ῥύσεται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἀοράτων Ἰσμηλιτῶν· περὶ δὲ τῶν ὀρωμένων, ἐλπίζω εἰς τὸν Κύριον καὶ Θεόν μου Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν· καὶ διὰ πρεσβείων τῆς παναγίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πανοσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀθανασίου, οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς βλάψωσιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον καταλυθήσονται καὶ εἰς ἀφανισμόν γενήσονται.” Ὁ καὶ γέγονε· εὐθὺς καὶ ἀπροσδοκῆτως ἦλθον τρία μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά πλοῖα τῶν Βενετῶν ὠπλισμένα εἰς τὴν Λαύραν· καὶ μαθόντες περὶ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν τὴν ἔφοδον, συνήχθησαν μετὰ τοῦ πριμικηρίου καὶ συνέβαλον πόλεμον καὶ κατὰ κράτος κατέλυσαν αὐτοὺς κατὰ τὴν πρόρρησιν τοῦ ἁγίου· καὶ λαβόντες αὐτῶν πάντα τὰ πλοῖα μετὰ τῶν ὀπλῶν καὶ πάντων ὧν ἐκέκηντο, ἠφάνισαν αὐτοὺς παντελῶς. Εὐεργέτησαν δὲ καὶ τὴν σεβασμίαν Λαύραν πλοῖον ἓν καὶ ἕτερα ἐκ τῶν σκευῶν αὐτῶν ἀναγκαῖα, εὐχαριστοῦντες τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν καὶ τὴν πάναγνον αὐτοῦ μητέρα καὶ θεοτόκον καὶ τὸν ὁσίον καὶ θεοφόρον πατέρα ἡμῶν Ἀθανάσιον.⁵⁶

L'agiografo⁵⁷ testimonia l'assalto turco che dopo la Maritza sconvolse l'Athos, ormai privo di difese. Gli Infedeli appaiono al largo delle coste e, muniti di macchine da guerra (τειχομαχικὰ ἐργαλεῖα), tentano il saccheggio dei *castella* aghioriti. Non si tratta ovviamente di semplici pirati, poiché l'operazione navale ha

⁵⁴ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon ermite au Mont Athos (XIV^e s.),” *AnBoll* 58 (1940): 5–27; BHG 1371.

⁵⁵ Notizia in PLP 20687.

⁵⁶ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 24–25, § 18. La notizia è confermata in Georg M. Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum sive Acta et diplomata res Venetas Graecas atque Levantiis illustrantia*, vol. 2: (1351–1454) (Venezia, 1899), 165.

⁵⁷ Un'ipotesi formulata dallo stesso editore attribuisce la *Vita* all'innografo Geremia ὁ Πατήτας (PLP 22054), autore del canone e forse dell'acolutia al santo. Si veda Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 5 e n. 4.

tutte le caratteristiche di un tentativo di conquista, che, come apprendiamo poco dopo, si deve essere concentrato sul braccio di mare antistante il monastero della Lavra. L'autore, allo scopo di enfatizzare la capacità divinatorie del santo, tratteggia lo sgomento e la paura che attanaglia i monaci. Lo stesso *primikerios*, con tutta probabilità Giovanni, futuro fondatore di Panteleimon, non sa come fronteggiare l'invasore. Solo l'intercessione di Cristo, della Madonna e di sant'Atanasio, protettore della Santa Montagna, ferma l'avanzata. Questa volta l'intervento divino si avvale di un sostegno esterno: sono sufficienti tre navi veneziane a guidare la riscossa bizantina. Il cenno è assai interessante poiché testimonia come le coste della Macedonia fossero pattugliate dalla Serenissima, pronta non solo a difendere le rotte della zona, ma soprattutto a requisire beni e navi ai nuovi avversari: certo un'imbarcazione fu donata a Lavra, ma i marinai turchi e il carico, chiaramente l'armamento, sono incamerati dai Veneziani. La presenza veneziana nell'area non deve sorprendere: la Serenissima condusse infatti nel corso degli anni '60 del sec. XIV una politica di avvicinamento all'emirato di Monteshe in opposizione alla crescente minaccia ottomana⁵⁸ e, grazie alle concessioni bizantine, pose le proprie basi nell'Egeo settentrionale (Tenedo), controllando così la zona dei Dardanelli, anche per richiesta del papa Gregorio XI.⁵⁹

2. Casi di prigionia o rapimenti

Diretta conseguenza delle incursioni pirata furono ovviamente i numerosi esempi di monaci che non riuscirono a scampare alla prigionia. Il caso più interessante per la dovizia di particolari, per contenuti e perché descrive con l'occhio del testimone oculare la condizione delle comunità cristiane d'Asia assoggettate al nemico ottomano è sicuramente quello del *dossier* dalla prigionia di Gregorio Palamas.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade. Venetian Crete and the Emirates of the Monteshe and Aydin (1300–1415)* (Venezia: Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini, 1983), 71–75.

⁵⁹ Freddy Thiriet, "Venice et l'occupation de Ténédos su XIV siècle," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 65 (1953): 219–245, in part. 225–227; Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Un acte concernant la surveillance des Dardanelles," *Institute Française de Damas – Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 24 (1977): 17–24. Sulle pressioni esercitate da Papato per un controllo diretto dell'area infestata dai Turchi si veda anche Anthony Luttrell, "Gregory XI and the Turks: 1370–1378," *OCP* 46.2 (1980): 391–417. Più ampiamente la reazione occidentale alla diffusione della pirateria turca nell'Egeo è analizzata in Luttrell, "Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion before 1389," in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389). Halcyon Days in Crete I. A Symposium held in Rethymnon, 11–13 January 1991*, ed. Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1993), 119–134.

⁶⁰ Anne Philippides-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas ches les Turcs: dossier et commentaire," *TM* 7 (1979): 109–221.

Al proposito anche le fonti agiografiche ci restituiscono squarci, talvolta appena abbozzati, dei patimenti che i monaci, in particolare athoniti, dovettero subire. Come abbiamo già avuto modo di accennare Gregorio Sinaita in gioventù fu prigioniero dei Turchi, come ci ricorda Callisto:

Ὅτε βασιλεὺς ἐκεῖνος ὁ μέγας Παλαιολόγος κύρις Ἀνδρόνικος τὰ σκήπτρα τῆς βασιλείας ἦν διευθύνων, συνέβη κρίμασι θειοτέροις διὰ πλῆθος πάντως ἀμαρτιῶν τὸ τῶν ἀθέων Ἀγαρηνῶν γένος ἐπαναστῆναι. Ὁ δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν καταδραμὸν καὶ βαρύτατον διωγμὸν τῇ βαρβαρικῇ ἐκστρατεῖα κινήσαν, πάντα τὰ ἐκεῖ, φεῦ, ἐληΐσατο, ἀνδραποδισάμενον πάντας σχεδὸν τοὺς ἐκεῖσε χριστιανοὺς καὶ κακῶς διαθέμενον. Τῆς γοῦν βαρβαρικῆς ταύτης καταδρομῆς δορυάλωτοι καὶ αἰχμάλωτοι γεγονότες ὃ τε θεῖος οὗτος Γρηγόριος καὶ οἱ πατέρες, πρὸς δὲ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί, ἀπῆλθον μακρὰν που περὶ τὴν Λαοδικεῖαν. Ἐκεῖ οὖν εὐδοκία Θεοῦ τοῦ πάντα ποιοῦντος καὶ μετασκευάζοντος εἰς τὸ βέλτιον, τῶν βαρβάρων οὕτω μικρὸν ὑπενδόντων αὐτοῖς, εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν Λαοδικέων εἰσῆλθοσαν ἐκκλησίαν· ἔνθα δὲ καὶ τελουμένης τῆς συνήθους πρὸς Θεὸν ψαλμωδίας τε καὶ δοξολογίας, ἐπεὶ τούτους εἶδον οἱ ἐκεῖ εὐρισκόμενοι εὐσεβεῖς καὶ ὀρθόδοξοι εὐρύθμως ἄγαν τὸν ὕμνον ᾄδοντας, ἅτε δὴ τὴν μελωδίαν ἐξησκημένους καὶ μεθ' ἡδονῆς ὁμοῦ καὶ ἐκπλήξεως τοῦ μέλους ἀποθαυμάσαντες, μηδενὸς φεισάμενοι μὴ πράγματος μηδὲ λόγου, προθύμως τούτους ἐλυτρώσαντο τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας, Θεοῦ τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον ἔνεκα τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀξίως τούτους ἀμειψαμένου. Ἐπειτα ὁ θεσπέσιος τὴν Κύπρον καταλαμβάνει [...].⁶¹

L'agiografo fornisce le coordinate geografiche e cronologiche dell'episodio. Il giovane Gregorio, nato nel villaggio di Koukoulos, nei dintorni di Clazomene⁶² fu catturato durante una scorreria pirata. Il tragico evento deve essere collocato tra il 1285 e il 1295 durante il regno di Andronico II Paleologo. La dismissione della flotta imperiale da parte dell'imperatore⁶³ permise difatti il verificarsi di simili episodi, a stento contenuti da spedizioni come quella del 1295–1296 condotta da Alessio Philanthropenos,⁶⁴ che misero in ginocchio la regione che un decennio dopo fu attraversata dalle truppe della Compagnia Catalana.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Pomyalovsky, "Житие," 3–4, § 4 = Beyer, *Жумуе*, 112, § 4.

⁶² Pomyalovsky, "Житие," 3, § 3, ll. 16–17 = Beyer, *Жумуе*, 110, § 3: καὶ πατρίδα εἶχε τὴν ἐγχωρίως Κούκουλον ἐπικεκλημένην, ἣτις περὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐγγὺς ἐπὶ τῶν Κλαζομενῶν.

⁶³ Seguiamo qui la ricostruzione dettagliata offerta in Rigo, "Gregorio Sinaita," 39–40. Per la politica navale di Andronico II si veda Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII^e–XV^e s.* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 375–378.

⁶⁴ Notizia in *PLP* 29752.

⁶⁵ Lemerle, *L'Émirat d'Aydin*, 15–17. Al proposito citiamo il caso di Atanasio Meteorita che, ancora bambino, fu catturato dai Catalani nella sua città natale, Nea Patra. Si veda Sophianos,

L'attendibilità della testimonianza inoltre ci è confermata dall'*Encomio di Michele il Giovane* (BHG 2273), opera di Teodoro Metochites⁶⁶ nel quale si ricorda un assalto nel medesimo periodo.⁶⁷ Il patriarca Callisto inquadra l'episodio secondo una prospettiva apocalittica e al contempo provvidenziale per il suo eroe: il *raid* turco risponde difatti all'economia divina nonostante i suoi effetti siano devastanti per la popolazione d'Asia. La prigionia a Laodicea (Lattakia) consente a Gregorio non solo il salvataggio suo e dei suoi cari per opera della comunità cristiana locale, meravigliata dalla sua abilità nel canto liturgico, ma soprattutto gli fornisce l'occasione, una volta liberato, di partire per Cipro e quindi per il Sinai, luogo della sua formazione spirituale. In ciò il testo è paradigmatico: come ci confermerà lo stesso Palamas mezzo secolo dopo, la conquista turca non equivale alla cancellazione automatica delle comunità cristiane d'Asia, che anzi si mostrano pronte nell'accogliere e nel riscattare i malcapitati correligionari. Inoltre Callisto testimonia l'esistenza a Laodicea⁶⁸ di un fiorente mercato degli schiavi probabilmente gestito delle autorità di Aydin.

Caso simile si legge nella *Vita* di Dionigi l'Athonita⁶⁹ a proposito del fratello Teodosio, igumeno del monastero di Philotheu:⁷⁰

Ἄρτι τοῦ καλοῦ Θεοδοσίου ἐν τῇ προρρηθείσῃ σεβασμῖα τοῦ Φιλοθέου
μονὴν τὴν ἡγουμενίαν καλῶς διέποντος, ὡς φθάσαντες εἴπομεν, ὁ τῆς
λαμπρᾶς καὶ ἐξάρχου τῶν ἑορτῶν πανηγύρεως, λέγω δὲ τοῦ θείου
Εὐαγγελισμοῦ τῆς παναχράντου ἀγίας Θεοτόκου, καιρὸς ἐφεστῆκει. Ἦν

Ὁ ὁσιος Ἀθανάσιος, 133, § 7: Τοῦ ἄστεως δὲ ἀλόντος ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰταλῶν, ὅμηρα ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὁ παῖς λαμβάνεται. Ἰδὼν δὲ τοῦτον ὁ Φράγγων ἐξάρχων ἀστεῖον τῇ ὄψει, ἐβουλήθη οἴκαδε ὡς τι λάφυρον παραπέμψαι· ὅπερ διαγνοὺς ὁ παῖς, φυγῇ τὴν σωτηρίαν ἐχρήσατο. Διασωθεὶς τοῖνυν πρὸς τὸν αὐτοῦ θεῖον, πόρρω που καὶ αὐτὸν ἐξόριστον ὄντα, ἀπέπλευσαν ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ· ἀρθρίτιδι δὲ νόσῳ κατασχεθεὶς ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐν τῇ τοῦ Ἀκαπνίου λεγομένη μονῇ, τῶν τῇδε μετέστη.

⁶⁶ Notizia in *PLP* 17982.

⁶⁷ Rigo, "Un'ambasciata serba e una bizantina presso i Mamelucchi e il martirio di Michele il Giovane ad Alessandria (1315–1320)," *Miscellanea Marciana* 12 (1997): 196.

⁶⁸ *TIB* 7, 323–326.

⁶⁹ Sulla *Vita* di Dionisio Athonita si veda Basil Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους. Βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Διονυσίου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου," *Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου* 21 (1956): 43–79; BHG 559a. Vi sono altre due versioni in demotico dello stesso testo, Agapios Landos, *Νέος Παράδεισος* (Venezia, 1872), 423–429, e inedita in *Dionysiou* 661 (datato al 1754) (si veda Euthymios Dionysiatis, "Συμπληρωματικὸς κατάλογος ἑλληνικῶν χειρογράφων ἱερᾶς μονῆς Διονυσίου Ἀγίου Ὁρους," *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 27 (1957): 248–249); un commentario alla *Vita* si trova in Odysseus Lampsidis, "Βιογραφικὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν Διονυσίου, ἱδρυτοῦ τῆς ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὁρει μονῆς, καὶ Θεοδοσίου μητροπολίτου Τραπεζοῦντος," *Ἀρχεῖον ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ καὶ κανονικοῦ δικαίου* 18 (1963): 101–124; infine una rivalutazione generale delle fonti in Rigo, "La *Vita* di Dionisio fondatore del monastero athonita di Dionysiou (BHG 559a) e alcuni testi connessi," *Bollettino della Badia di Grottaferrata* 54 (2000): 275–299. Per Dionisio notizia in *PLP* 5448.

⁷⁰ Notizia in *PLP* 7166.

δὲ αὕτη ἡ πανσέβαστος ἑορτὴ πολυτελῶς τε καὶ φιλοτίμως ἄνωθεν ἐν αὐτῇ τελουμένη τῇ ἀγίᾳ μονῇ. Εὐαγγελισμὸς γὰρ ἐκεῖσε ἱερὸς ὠνόμαστο οἶκος. Ταύτην οὖν φιλοτίμως τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐκτελέσαι βουλόμενος Θεοδόσιος, τὴν τῶν ἰχθύων ἄγραν δι' ἑαυτοῦ ποιήσασθαι ἔγνω, ἵνα πλείονα περὶ τούτου τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν πρὸς θεοῦ σχοίῃ. Διὸ καὶ τινες τῶν τῆς μονῆς τοῦ ἔργου εἰδήμονας συμπαραλαβὼν ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν κάτεισι κάκεϊ ἀλιευόντων αὐτῶν νυκτός, ὧς τῆς συμφορᾶς, ναῦς ἐπιστάσα βαρβαρική καὶ αἴφνης τούτοις ἐπισπεσοῦσα ἅπαντας ἄρδην ἀφῆρπασε καὶ τὸν Ἄθω καταλιποῦσα πρὸς ἔω ἀπέτρεχε· κατὰ δὲ τὴν τῆς Προύσης ἐπαρχίαν οἱ ἐν τῇ νηὶ δυσσεβεῖς Ἀγαρηνοὶ γενόμενοι πωλοῦσι τούτους ἀργυρίου. Τινὲς γὰρ τῶν φιλοχρίστων τὴν τιμὴν αὐτῶν καταβαλλόμενοι ἐξωνοῦντο αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀπέλυον ἀπελθεῖν ὅπῃ ἂν βούλοιντο. Καὶ οἱ μὲν τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ἀπαλλαγέντες εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐθις μονὴν ἐπανῆλθον. Ὁ δὲ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δόσεως τε καὶ χάριτος τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν πλουτῶν, θειοτέρᾳ, ὥς οἶμαι, νεύσει τῇ Κωνσταντίνου πάλιν ἐπιδημεῖ καὶ αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας κακώσεων μετρίως ἐπανακτώμενος ἐπὶ πολλὰς αὐτόθι διέτριβε τὰς ἡμέρας.⁷¹

La testimonianza riferisce un nuovo caso di prigionia, avvenuto tra il 1345 e il 1348⁷² nei giorni precedenti la festa dell'Annunciazione (25 marzo). Teodosio fu trasferito a Bursa e questo dettaglio lascia così intendere che i pirati fossero o Turchi ottomani o saccheggiatori al soldo di Alessio di Belikome, attivo proprio in quegli anni, ma soprattutto prova l'esistenza anche in questo caso di un mercato di schiavi ben avviato.⁷³ Come nel caso del Sinaita, anche Teodosio fu riscattato da Cristiani e poté riparare a Costantinopoli, dove trascorse la sua convalescenza e in seguito fu nominato igumeno del monastero di San Giorgio dei Mangani e nel 1368-1369 nominato per la metropoli di Trebisonda.⁷⁴

Ben più interessante è un altro passo della medesima *Vita* che vede protagonista lo stesso Dionigi di ritorno dal suo primo viaggio a Trebisonda:

⁷¹ Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 39, ll. 481-502.

⁷² Sulla datazione della *Vita* di Dionigi si veda Nicolas Oikonomides, *Actes de Dionysiou* (Archives de l'Athos 4) (Paris: Lethielleux 1968), 3-4, n. 5.

⁷³ Sull'importante mercato di Bursa tra il sec. XIV e il sec. XVI si vedano Halil Inalcik, "Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant," *Journal of Economic and Social History* 3.2 (1960): 131-147; Halil Sahillioglu, "Slaves in the Social and Economic Life of Bursa in the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries," *Turcica* 17 (1985): 43-112; Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1: 1300-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 218-255; Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37-58.

⁷⁴ Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 39, ll. 504-505; § 41, ll. 530-533: [...] αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ θέλοντα χειροτονεῖ Τραπεζοῦντος.

Καλῶς δὲ τὸν Εὐξείνιον καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ διαπλεύσας εἰς Ἑλλήσποντον καταίρει, ἔνθα καὶ ναυσὶ βαρβαρικαῖς περιπίπτει. Οἱ δὲ ναυτικοὶ μετὰ τῶν συνόντων τῷ πατρὶ ἀδελφῶν μήκοθεν τὰς ναῦς θεασάμενοι καὶ τῆς γῆς ἐγγὺς ὄντες, εἰς φυγὴν πρὸς τὴν χέρσον ἐτρέποντο. Τότε δὲ ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ γνήσιος θεράπων ἀδίστακτον εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχων τὴν πίστιν, ἔλεγε πρὸς αὐτοὺς “μὴ τέκνα καὶ ἀδελφοί, μηδὲ ὅλως τούτους πτοεῖσθε, μικρὸν δὲ ἀναμείνατε καὶ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ ὄψεσθε δύναμιν. Πᾶσαν γὰρ τὴν ἡμῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν δεῦτε ἀνατείνωμεν ἐλπίδα καὶ αὐτὸς ἡμᾶς τῶν τοιούτων ἐξελεῖται βαρβάρων, τῶν θεοστυγῶν καὶ ἀθέων.” Ταῦτα τοῦ ὁσίου τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ παραινοῦντος, οἱ βάρβαροι ἐγγὺς τῆς νεῶς γενόμενοι βέλεσιν αὐτοὺς ἤρξαντο βάλλειν. Ὁ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ δοῦλος ὄμματα καὶ χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνασχών, σὺν δάκρυσιν ἠύχετο, “Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ” λέγων “ὁ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι ὡς Θεὸς αἰεὶ δοξαζόμενος, ἐπάκουσόν μου νυνὶ τοῦ ἀχρείου δούλου σου καὶ τῆς ἐφεστῶσης αἰχμαλωσίας ἡμᾶς ἐξελοῦ, πρεσβείαις τῆς παναχράντου μητρός σου καὶ τοῦ Θείου σου Βαπτιστοῦ καὶ Προδρόμου, ἵνα μὴ καθ’ ἡμῶν οὗτοι καυχῆσιντο λέγοντες, ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς αὐτῶν, ἐφ’ ὃν ἠλπίζον;” οὕτω δὲ αὐτῷ τὰ τῆς εὐχῆς πέρας εἶχε καί, ὥς τῆς πολλῆς πρὸς Θεὸν παρηρσίας, εὐθύς τούτοις ὁ μέγας ἐμφανίζεται Πρόδρομος ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ ῥάβδον ἐπιφερόμενος καὶ τοὺς μὲν περὶ τὸν ἅγιον ἐνισχύων καὶ θαρσυνοῦν, τοῖς δὲ ἀσεβέσιν φόβον καὶ φρίκην ἐμποῶν καὶ ὅλεθρον τούτοις ἐξαισίως ἐπαπειλῶν. Καὶ αὐτίκα αἱ μὲν τῶν ἀθέων ἐκείνων χεῖρες ναρκῶσαι καὶ περειμέναι γεγόνασιν. Ὅθεν αὐτοὺς μηκέτι κακῶσαι ἰσχύοντες, πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς θόρυβον ἐποιοῦντο. Οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅσιον τὸ παράδοξον ἰδόντες τοῦ θαύματος μεγίστην θεῶν τὴν εὐχαριστίαν ἀνέπεμπον “δόξα σοι” λέγοντες “Χριστέ βασιλεῦ, τῷ ῥυσαμένῳ ἡμᾶς τῆς δεινῆς τῶν ἀθέων τούτων αἰχμαλωσίας. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν δὲ καὶ τῷ Θεῷ Βαπτιστῇ τῷ ἐμφανισθέντι καὶ ἡμᾶς μὲν ἐνισχύσαντι, τοὺς δὲ ἐναντίους ἡμῶν καταισχύναντι. Νῦν γὰρ προσφόρως ἡμῖν πάρεστι λέγειν. Τόξον δυνατῶν ἡσθένισε καὶ ἀσθενοῦντες περιεζώσαντο δύναμιν. Αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ συνεποδίσθησαν καὶ ἔπεσον, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀνέστημεν καὶ ἠνорθώθημεν.” Οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἐκεῖθεν ἀβλαβεῖς διασωθέντες εἰς τὸν Ἀθῶν καταίρουσι καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς μετὰ τῶν συνοδευόντων ἀδελφῶν ἐπανελθόντος ἐπὶ τὸ φρούριον καὶ τοὺς αὐτόθι ἅπαντας ἀδελφοὺς ὑγιεῖς κατεληφότος πολλή τις ἦν αὐτοῖς εὐφροσύνη καὶ ἀγαλλίασις.⁷⁵

Dionigi aveva nei mesi precedenti inaugurato una fase di ampliamento e fortificazione del suo monastero.⁷⁶ Intenzionato a far visita al fratello metropolita, insediato il 13 agosto 1370, l'athonita parte per il suo primo viaggio alla volta di Trebisonda nel 1374 con un piccolo gruppo di monaci in cerca di finanziatori,

⁷⁵ Laourdas, “Μετροφάνους,” §§ 47–50, ll. 628–663.

⁷⁶ Laourdas, “Μετροφάνους,” § 43, ll. 540–541.

sicuro dell'intercessione di Teodosio presso Alessio III Comneno,⁷⁷ signore di Trebisonda. L'incontro si conclude con una cospicua donazione del sovrano come registrato nel *crisobollo* del settembre 1374, conservato negli archivi del monastero.⁷⁸ È dopo quel settembre che si colloca il nostro episodio, che ben si inquadra in quella situazione di confusione successiva alla disfatta della Maritza. Geografia e modalità del tentato arrembaggio (Ellesponto, via di fuga per la nave del santo verso la costa, pioggia di frecce)⁷⁹ ricordano direttamente quanto raccontato da Palamas in occasione del suo rapimento, ma in questo caso l'esito è ben diverso. Qui l'agiografo Metrofane inserisce la topica della salvezza: la triade Dio, Madre di Dio e santo proteggono i monaci, come nel caso di Nifone,⁸⁰ e gli ateï sono puniti con l'inaridimento delle mani, come ci lascia presumere il parallelo presente nella *Vita* di Atanasio Meteorita. Non deve nemmeno sorprendere l'invocazione a Giovanni Prodromo se ricordiamo la devozione per il santo che Dionigi mostrò tanto da dedicargli il suo monastero.⁸¹ L'aspetto nuovo della testimonianza sta nel tono messianico e trionfante della lunga coda del racconto: è scomparso ogni timore apocalittico nei confronti degli Infedeli e l'umiltà cristiana vince l'arroganza degli ateï e l'umiltà trionfa, in contrasto con il periodo di grande incertezza nel quale l'episodio è inquadrato. Ciò si spiega immaginando che l'autore scriva a distanza di tempo dall'accadimento dei fatti e rifletta così una situazione ben diversa da quella della seconda metà del sec. XIV.⁸²

Il fondatore del monastero di Dionysiou in un'altra occasione entrò in diretto contatto con l'invasore turco:

Ἐτι γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποδημοῦντος, ὡς εἴρηται, οὐκ ὀλίγων σμῆνος Ἀγαρηνῶν, θαλασσίων δηλαδὴ πειρατῶν, ναυσιποροῦν προσβάλλει τῇ μονῇ, οἱ μηχαναῖς παντοίαις χρησάμενοι καὶ ἐντὸς εἰσπηδήσαντες, πορθοῦσι ταύτην καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὡς αἰχμαλώτους δῆσαντες καὶ ὅσα τῶν χρησίμων ἦν αὐτόθι λαβόντες, ἐκέϊθεν ὥχοντο. Ὁ δὲ θεὸς ποιμὴν εἰς τὴν μονὴν ὡς ἐλέχθη ἐπανελθὼν καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἁγίαν μάνδραν

⁷⁷ Notizia in PLP 12083.

⁷⁸ Oikonomides, *Actes de Dionysiou*, no. 4, 50–61; Laourdas, “Μετροφάνους,” §§ 46–47 e 74–76 (sinossi tra testo del *crisobollo* e testo agiografico).

⁷⁹ Philippides-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas,” 138–141, §§ 5–6.

⁸⁰ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 24–25, § 18.

⁸¹ Oikonomides, *Actes de Dionysiou*, 21–22; si ricordi inoltre il fatto non casuale per il quale il *codex unicus* (*Athos, Dionysiou* 641) che tramanda la *Vita* contiene, insieme all'*Athos, Dionysiou* 753, una serie di testi dedicati proprio alla memoria del Precursore. Per una rassegna dei titoli contenuti si veda Rigo, “La Vita di Dionisio,” 279–280.

⁸² Laourdas, “Μετροφάνους,” 72–73; per un esame approfondito dell'identità di Metrofane (= Metrofane di Haghia Anna) e i limiti cronologici entro i quali l'agiografia fu compilata si veda Rigo, “La Vita di Dionisio,” 276–289.

τῶν λογικῶν θρεμμάτων ἔρημον εὐρών, πικρὸν ἀνελάβετο θρῆνον, τὴν τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀδελφῶν ὀλοφυρόμενος στέρησιν καὶ τοὺς εἰκῇ καταβαλλόμενος ἰδρῶτας.⁸³

Τοῦτον γὰρ καὶ οὗτος ὡς αὐτοῦ μαθητῆς μιμησάμενος ἀπῆλθεν εἰς Ἀσίαν τῆς ἕως τῶν λογικῶν θρεμμάτων Χριστοῦ τὴν ἀγέλην ἐπιζητῶν καὶ εὐρών πολλαχόσε διεσπαρμένην αὐτὴν καὶ ἀργυρίου συχνοῦ ταύτην ἐξωνησάμενος καὶ ἐλευθερώσας μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τε λαβὼν, εἰς τὴν μάνδραν μετὰ πλείστης ὅτι χαρᾶς ἐπανερχεται.⁸⁴

Τῶν γὰρ παρὰ βασιλέως χρημάτων ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν ἐλλιπῶς ἐχόντων ἀναλωθέντων, πολλή τις ἦν ἔνδεια τῇ μονῇ.⁸⁵

Anche in questo caso è possibile una datazione precisa di quanto raccontato. Dionigi partì intorno al 1377-1378 per Trebisonda allo scopo di ottenere la seconda *tranche* di donazioni, poiché aveva ultimato gran parte dei lavori di ampliamento per il suo monastero.⁸⁶ È quindi possibile collegare il precipitoso ritorno dell'igumeno a causa dell'incursione turca con la notizia di un *raid* che colpì l'Athos nel luglio del 1378. Esso è infatti menzionato nel terzo testamento di Caritone di Kutlumus, nel quale quest'ultimo si lamenta anche in questo caso del rapimento dei suoi confratelli.⁸⁷ Come Caritone, anche Dionigi è costretto a partire verso l'Asia (εἰς Ἀσίαν τῆς ἕως) per riscattare i suoi monaci che sembrano dispersi tra varie località, probabilmente lungo la costa egea, se intendiamo la denominazione geografica di Metrofane corrispondente agli usi del tardo periodo bizantino.⁸⁸ Un ulteriore confronto con l'igumeno di Kutlumus riguarda lo stato di indebitamento e indigenza che il carico dei riscatti genera per le casse del giovane monastero: come Dionigi spende quanto raccolto durante la sua missione per la liberazione dei fratelli ossia, stando all'atto del settembre 1374, altri 50 *somia* che Alessio III Comneno aveva promesso al

⁸³ Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 51, ll. 700-708.

⁸⁴ Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 52, ll. 724-728.

⁸⁵ Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 53, ll. 733-735.

⁸⁶ Nella *Vita* si ricorda che eresse una capella in onore di Giovanni Prodromo, la cinta muraria, nuove celle, una *trapeza* e un acquedotto; Laourdas, "Μετροφάνους," § 50, ll. 680-683.

⁸⁷ Lemerle, *Actes de Kutlumus* (Archives de l'Athos 2) (Paris: Lethielleux, 1988), no. 36, ll. 59-63.

⁸⁸ Concordiamo con l'ipotesi di Oikonomides (*Actes de Dionysiou*, 12, n. 43) secondo il quale si potrebbe trattare di pirati di Aydin se si segue l'indicazione del testo la cui dicitura di solito è riferita ai turchi della regione rivierasca. Sulla questione si veda Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1307)," *TM* 1 (1965): 15.

termine dei lavori di ampliamento del monastero,⁸⁹ così Caritone nel suo testamento dispone di vendere addirittura i suoi paramenti pur di salvare dalla prigionia i propri monaci.

Dionigi e Caritone, due figure di igumeni assai vicine per le scelte relative alla gestione dei rispettivi monasteri, ben disponibile al sostegno di sovrani lontani e periferici dell'orbita bizantina, ci guidano nella comprensione delle difficoltà economiche che il problema dei rapimenti produsse nelle comunità athonite sia per lo sforzo volto al rafforzamento delle difese dei cenobi sia per le ingenti somme versate a titolo di riscatto per i confratelli. Dalla lettura di queste fonti l'ultimo quarto del sec. XIV si delinea per le comunità athonite come una fase di crisi e incertezza finanziaria, alleviata solo dal sostegno che proviene dai nascenti principati.

3. Le conseguenze dell'avanzata turca nei territori bizantini nelle fonti agiografiche

Le testimonianze agiografiche offrono anche la possibilità di rintracciare notizie sulle condizioni dei territori bizantini soggetti all'avanzata turca. I frequenti spostamenti, gli irrinunciabili pellegrinaggi e le contingenze del periodo difatti spingono i monaci a visitare luoghi entro e fuori i confini dell'impero, come nel caso del giovane Saba Tziskos.

Data la scarsa attenzione che gli studiosi moderni gli hanno riservato,⁹⁰ riteniamo opportuno soffermarci sulla ricostruzione della vita di questo personaggio che influenzò direttamente gli ambienti monastici. Egli fu maestro del futuro patriarca Filoteo Kokkinos,⁹¹ autore della sua agiografia. Tra i due soggiorni all'Athos nel monastero di Vatopedi (1301-1307 e 1328) compì un lungo pellegrinaggio in Terra Santa e il Sinai. Altro episodio importante riguarda l'età

⁸⁹ Oikonomides, *Actes de Dionysiou*, no. 4, 48-50: διδόναι τούτω ἡ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΜΟΥ σώμια ἑκατόν, ἐξ ὧν κατεβάλετο ἀρτίως ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὰ πενήκοντα, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ἴν' ἀποδῶ τούτω ἐπὶ χρόνοις τρισίν, ἥγουν ἕτερα σώμια πενήκοντα, αὐτὸς δ' ἴν' ἀνακτίζῃ καὶ πληροῖ τὴν μονὴν ὁλοκλήρως. Inoltre Alessio promette la donazione annuale per il monastero di 1000 *aspri*, definiti *commemata*, a titolo di vitalizio (ll. 51-55).

⁹⁰ Riproponiamo qui la scarsa bibliografia su Saba Tziskos, che si limita all'edizione della *Vita* (Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 161-325; BHG 1606; Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμικῆς*, 190-359) e ad osservazioni di ordine generale (Festugière, "Étude sur la *Vie* de s. Sabas le Jeune qui simulat la folie," in *Vie de Siméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris: Geuthner, 1974), 223-249; Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 205-207). Si veda Mihail Mitrea, "A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and His *Vitae* of Contemporary Saints" (tesi di dottorato, The University of Edinburgh, 2018).

⁹¹ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 209-210, 269, 272-273.

matura del monaco: nella primavera del 1342 insieme a Callisto guida a Costantinopoli la delegazione voluta da Cantacuzeno per negoziare la pace con Anna di Savoia⁹² e, visti i risultati infruttuosi, chiede di tornare all'Athos, ma è rinchiuso nel monastero di Chora (estate 1342).⁹³ Ciò che tuttavia ci interessa maggiormente in questa sede sono gli anni della giovinezza del santo dei quali tentiamo una ricostruzione. Nato a Tessalonica, presumibilmente intorno al 1283, dunque coetaneo del Sinaita, Stefano – questo è il nome al secolo di Saba – apparteneva a una nobile famiglia. Durante l'infanzia, date le sue qualità fisiche e intellettuali, fu instradato dal padre alla carriera militare⁹⁴ in contrasto con i suoi desideri tanto che realizzò una fuga all'Athos.⁹⁵ Qui ancora giovane (μικρὸν τι τὸν ἔφηβον ὑπερβάς)⁹⁶ fu accolto in una comunità nei pressi di Karyes,⁹⁷ dove venne tonsurato con ogni probabilità intorno ai 18 anni (ca. 1301), prendendo il nome di Saba. A questo punto la *Vita* di Filoteo ci fornisce l'unico indizio cronologico sicuro: ci informa che, all'ottavo anno di permanenza sull'Athos ("Ἔτος μὲν οὖν ἑβδομὸν που, φασίν, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θαυμασίᾳ ὑποταγῇ)⁹⁸ durante il regno di Andronico II Paleologo (Ἐῖχε μὲν τὰ σκῆπτρα τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ πάνυ τῶν Παλαιολόγων ὁ δεύτερος δηλαδή),⁹⁹ i Catalani rompono l'alleanza con i Bizantini e si danno al saccheggio.¹⁰⁰ Al loro seguito hanno le truppe turche. A questo punto Filoteo si sofferma a descrivere la brutalità degli antichi e nuovi nemici di Bisanzio: "Μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ τοὺς πάλαι καὶ νῦν κοινοὺς ὀλετῆρας τῆς οἴκουμένης, Ἀχαιμενίδας φημί, προσλαβόμενοι τοὺς κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένους."¹⁰¹

Tra il 1307 e il 1308 Catalani e Turchi razziano la Tracia e quindi la Macedonia, partendo dalle loro basi navali dislocate sulla penisola di Kassandra.¹⁰²

⁹² Notizia in *PLP* 21347.

⁹³ Sulla questione si veda Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*, 165.

⁹⁴ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 170, § 5, ll. 49-65.

⁹⁵ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 170-171, § 6, ll. 7-13.

⁹⁶ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 173, § 7, l. 39.

⁹⁷ Va così inteso il cenno al κοινὸν ἀρχεῖον.

⁹⁸ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 182, § 13, l. 1.

⁹⁹ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 183, § 13, ll. 12-13.

¹⁰⁰ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 183-184, § 13, ll. 14-16.

¹⁰¹ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 184, § 13, ll. 22-24.

¹⁰² Sulla presenza devastante della Compagnia Catalana nelle regioni bizantine si vedano Charalambos Bakirtzis, "Les Catalans en Thrace," in *EYΨYXIA: Mélanges offert à Hélène Ahrweiler*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), vol. 1, 63-73; Luttrell, "John Cantacuzenus and the Catalans at Constantinople," in *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades, 1291-1440* (London: Variorum, 1982), no. IX, 265-277; Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "Les Catalans et les villages de la Chalcidique," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 244-263; Zachariadou, "The Catalans of Athens and the Beginning of the Turkish Expansion in the Aegean Area," *Studi Medievali* 21 (1980): 821-838; David Jacoby, "Catalans, Turcs et Vénétiens en Roumanie (1305-1332)," *Studi Medievali* 15 (1974): 217-261.

L'Athos diviene così facile terra di saccheggio tanto che l'imperatore Andronico II invia sul Monte il celebre γράμμα nel quale avverte soprattutto gli anacoreti di rifugiarsi entro le mura nei monasteri o prendere la via delle vicine città.¹⁰³ Tale missiva va datata tra il giugno 1306 e il luglio 1307 e costituisce il terminus ante quem per la partenza del padre spirituale di Saba che, con un piccolo gruppo di confratelli, riparò a Tessalonica dove alloggiò nel monastero della Theotokos,¹⁰⁴ da identificare con il monastero detto Kûr 'Ισαάκ o della Theotokos Peribleptos.¹⁰⁵

A questo periodo va dunque riferito il seguente passo:

Ὁ δὲ ταχὺς τῶν καλῶς αὐτοῦ δεομένων ἐπίκουρος καὶ ποιῶν τὸ τῶν φοβουμένων αὐτὸν θέλημα, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν ἀπορρήτοις ἦδει τῆς ἐκείνου καρδίας καὶ ὅποι τελευτήσῃ τὰ κατ' αὐτόν, εἴ γε τῆς ἐκ πάντων ἐλευθερίας λαβέσθαι μόνον ἐκείνῳ προσγένετο, δίδωσι τὴν τῶν ἀπορουμένων αὐτίκα λύσιν ῥᾶστα καὶ ὁμαλῶς καὶ σὺν οὐδενὶ τῷ κωλύοντι. Φημὶ καὶ γὰρ ἀθρόον ἐπείσελθοῦσα τοὺς κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένους Ἀχαιμενίδας ἤδη προσελαύνειν διήγγειλε. Μακεδονίαν γὰρ ἀπνευστὶ καταδραμόντες καὶ "λείαν Μυσῶν," ὃ δὴ λέγεται, τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ποιησάμενοι, καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην ἤδη δηοῦντες ἦσαν καὶ χαλεπῶς τοὺς μὲν ἀναίρουντες, τοὺς δ' ἐξανδραποδίζοντες· ἡ δὲ φήμη, καίτοι πικρῶς οὕτω καὶ ἀπευκτῶς πρὸς ἅπαντας ἔχουσα, πρὸς γε τὸν καλὸν Σάβαν εὐμενὲς ἔβλεπε τρόπον ἕτερον, τῆς ἀπορίας αὐτίκα καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν αὐτὸν λύσασα· τῆς γὰρ φερούσης εἰς Θεσσαλονίκην, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πάσης κλεισθείσης σχεδὸν διεξόδου, καὶ οὗτος τῆς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπιτεθείσης ἀνάγκης κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀνάγκην εὐθὺς ἐλύετο καὶ παντὸς ἦν ἐλεύθερος τοῦ προσισταμένου, δοξάζων τὸν διὰ τῶν δηλητηρίων πανσόφως, ὥς ἂν τις εἴποι, τὰ σωτήρια κατασκευάζοντα φάρμακα.¹⁰⁶

Qui Filoteo, dimenticando le responsabilità dirette della Compagnia Catalana, pur riconoscendo il provvidenziale intervento divino, attribuisce ogni colpa del disastro che si sta consumando in Macedonia e nei dintorni di

¹⁰³ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 184, § 13, ll. 32-40: Καὶ γράμματα τῆς αὐτοῦ χειρὸς αὐτίκα πρὸς ἐκείνους ἐφοίτα, τοὺς μὲν καθ' ἡσυχίας ἔρωτα πανταχῇ τοῦ ὅρους διεσπαρμένους μοναδικούς τε καὶ σύνδυο, καὶ αὐτὰ δέ φημι τὰ τῶν φροντιστηρίων ἀτείχιστα [...] μεταβαίνειν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐγγυτέρω πόλεις τοὺς βουλομένους, ἀποκρύπτοντας ἑαυτοὺς [...]. A complemento si veda Dölger, Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 2300.

¹⁰⁴ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 185, § 14, ll. 1-4: Τότε δὴ καὶ ὁ θαυμαστοῦ Σάβα μυσταγωγὸς εἷς ἦν τῶν τὴν φυγὴν ἐλομένων, καὶ τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην ἅμα τισὶ τῶν συνασκητῶν καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὴν μετοικίαν ἀπολεξάμενος, παρὰ τι τῶν αὐτόθι σεμνείων, ὀνόματι τῆς Μητρὸς τοῦ Κυρίου τετιμημένῳ, σὺν ἐκείνοις κατὰγεται.

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantines* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1975), 285, n. 24 e soprattutto 386-388.

¹⁰⁶ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 187, § 14, ll. 56-70.

Tessalonica soltanto ai Turchi. Il nemico musulmano si abbandona non solo alla razzia, ma infierisce sulla popolazione locale con brutalità, con massacri e riduzione in schiavitù. Altro aspetto notevole risiede nel blocco posto alla città di Tessalonica. Non si tratta di una contraffazione tendenziosa dell'agiografo. Il confronto con le fonti storiche, innanzitutto Pachymeres, ci fornisce utili chiarimenti. Il litorale tracico è completamente nelle mani dei Catalani tanto che essi possono trasferirvi impunemente le proprie truppe e quelle turche, prendendo il monte Ganos¹⁰⁷ (τοὺς κατὰ Θράκην αἰγιαλοὺς κατέχοντι [...] παραυτίκα μοῖρά τις, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν Περσῶν, εἰς τὰ τοῦ Γάνου στενὰ εἰσβάλλοντες).¹⁰⁸ Ma seguiamo seguendo la traccia segnata da Pachymeres, per osservare come le parole dell'agiografo corrispondano pienamente agli eventi di questo periodo: in breve l'avanzata raggiunge Eudimoplatanos¹⁰⁹ con la sua scia di saccheggi e massacri (ληϊσάμενοι καὶ πολλοὺς φονεύσαντες)¹¹⁰ e Bizyes¹¹¹ dove tutti gli abitanti e i beni sono catturati e confiscati (ἐξ αἰχμαλώτων ἀμνητῆρας ἐπιστήσαντες, μυρίον διεφόρου πλοῦτον, ἀμάξαις καὶ ζώοις διακονούμενοι).¹¹² Di fronte al disastro generale il patriarca Atanasio celebra riti penitenziali per i mali commessi dal popolo cristiano che stanno causando tale rovina, organizzando processioni due o tre volte la settimana e inasprisce le pene per i peccatori.¹¹³ Intanto i Turchi occupano il fortino di sant'Elia.¹¹⁴ Il teatro della presa di Rhaidestos¹¹⁵ prova poi l'efficienza della macchina bellica nemica: catapulte che di notte scagliano macigni da 50 libbre che massacrano gli assediati (μηχάνημα ἐπιστήσαντες πετροβόλον).¹¹⁶ Solo l'intervento del vescovo di Panion evita la carneficina dei prigionieri.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁷ TIB 12, 374–376; sugli insediamenti sul monte Ganos e i suoi monasteri si consulti Andreas Külzer, "Das Ganos-Gebirge in Ostthrakien (İsıklar Dağı)," in *Heilige Berge und Wüsten. Byzanz und sein Umfeld. Referate auf dem 21. Internationalen Kongress für Byzantinistik London 21.–26. August 2006*, ed. Peter Soustal (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 41–52; Rigo, "Il monte Ganos e i suoi monasteri," *OCP* 61 (1995): 235–248.

¹⁰⁸ Georges Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, ed. Albert Failler (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984–1999), vol. 4, 668–669, XIII, 21, 7 e n. 67.

¹⁰⁹ TIB 12, 356–357.

¹¹⁰ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 669, XIII, 21, 11.

¹¹¹ TIB 12, 288–294.

¹¹² Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 669, XIII, 21, 16–18.

¹¹³ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 674–675, XIII, 23, 29–31; Vitalien Laurent, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, fasc. 5: *Les regestes de 1208 à 1309* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1971), no. 1668.

¹¹⁴ TIB 6, 189; 12, 347. Per il passo si veda Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 682, XIII, 26, 14.

¹¹⁵ TIB 12, 607–613.

¹¹⁶ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 682–683, XIII, 26, 27.

¹¹⁷ Sulla complessa trattativa e sul ruolo del vescovo si veda Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 684–685, XIII, 26, 20–31.

Si continua con Brysis,¹¹⁸ quindi Ainos e Megarision¹¹⁹ per giungere infine a Cassandra.¹²⁰ L'interruzione improvvisa dell'opera di Pachymeres ci costringe a seguire il resoconto dell'*Historia Byzantina* di Niceforo Gregoras, trovando ancora puntuale riscontro a quanto narrato da Filoteo. Per Turchi e Catalani la presa di Tessalonica rappresenta a questo punto la possibilità di controllare stabilmente l'intera Macedonia.¹²¹ Andronico II, a quanto riferisce lo storico, tenta un'estrema difesa della regione: con l'intenzione di intrappolare o almeno ostacolare il continuo flusso tra Macedonia e Tracia, fa erigere una linea difensiva presso Christoupolis tra il mare e l'entroterra.¹²² Gli invasori allora mettono sotto assedio la stessa Tessalonica, occupando e depredando i suoi sobborghi.¹²³ Qui è anzi la *Vita* di Saba a permetterci una più precisa identificazione dei reali responsabili, attribuendo la scorreria ai Turchi al seguito dei Catalani. La costruzione del muro di Christoupolis infine spinge l'esercito mercenario, affamato e allo sbando, a dirigersi verso la Tessaglia e il Peloponneso.¹²⁴

Sempre la *Vita* di Saba ci permette anche di osservare le conseguenze dell'occupazione turca sul suolo asiatico:

Καὶ τῷ κελεύοντι πειθόμενος αὐτίκα – οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅστις ἐκεῖνος ἦν ἡμφισβῆται – τῷ πελάγει τῆς ἐκείνου χρηστότητος καὶ τοῖς ἀφάτοις οἰκτιρμοῖς μάλα θαυρήσας, τοῦ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐπιβαίνει πελάγους, καὶ Λῆμνον μὲν τὴν γείτονα παραλλάττει πρῶτον, ἔπειτα Λέσβον ὁρᾷ καὶ μετ' ἐκείνην τὴν Χίον· ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐπὶ νοῦν εἶχεν – εἶλκε γὰρ αὐτὸν ὁ περὶ τὸν ἐπιστήθιον περιφανὴς πόθος – ἐπιβαίνει τῆς ἐπιφανοῦς πᾶλαι δι' ἐκεῖνον Ἐφέσου, μικρὸν ἐν αὐτῇ προσδιατρίψας, ὥσπερ δὴ κὰν ταῖς ἄλλαις μετὰ τῆς προσηκούσης φιλησύχου φιλοσοφίας καὶ τὰ λείψανα μόνα τῆς παλαιᾶς κατιδὼν εὐδαιμονίας, ὅσα τε περὶ τὸν ἱερὸν ἐκεῖνον νεῶν φημι τοῦ ἡγαπημένου καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἔνδον καὶ πέραν θαύματος ὁμοῦ καὶ πένθους ἀφορμὴν μόνην τοῖς ὁρῶσι καταλειφθέντα.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 692–693, XIII, 28; sulla località TIB 6, 220.

¹¹⁹ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 700–701, XIII, 34, 9-10; per le località si vedano rispettivamente TIB 6, 170–173 e TIB 12, 504 e 505.

¹²⁰ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 710–711, XIII, 38.

¹²¹ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, eds. Ludwig Schopen, Immanuel Bekker, vols. 1–3 (Bonn: Weber, 1829–1855), vol. 1, 245–246, VII, 6: ἐπεχείρουν τὰς ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ πόλεις, ἐν αἷς τὸ τῶν ἐλπίδων κεφάλαιον ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη ἐτύγχανε. Ὡνιοτο γάρ, ὡς εἰ ταύτης γένοιτο πρότερον ἐγκρατεῖς [...] μηδὲν εἶναι ἐξῆς τὸ κωλύον πάσης ἐκεῖθεν ὡς ὁρμητηρίου τῆς ἄλλης Μακεδονίας δέσποτας γενέσθαι.

¹²² *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, vol. 1, 246, VII, 6.

¹²³ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, vol. 1, 246, VII, 6: Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἥρος ἤδη ἐνστάτος ἄραντες οἱ πολέμιοι ἐκ τῆς Κασσανδρείας, οἱ μὲν ἀγχιστὰ που τῶν τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης προαστείων ἠϋλίσσαντο.

¹²⁴ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, vol. 1, 247, VII, 6.

¹²⁵ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά έργα*, 189, § 16, ll. 23-34.

Il monaco, rimasto presso una *skiti* sotto le dipendenze di Vatopedi e vista preclusa ogni possibilità di congiungersi con il suo padre spirituale a Tessalonica, decide di partire alla volta della Terra Santa.¹²⁶ Qui ha inizio il viaggio, sulle cui orme passeranno molti altri monaci athoniti e che lo porta prima a Lemnos, quindi a Lesbos ed infine a Chio.¹²⁷ Il passaggio sulla terraferma lo conduce a Efeso, dove soggiorna per breve tempo, probabilmente per uno scalo alla volta di Cipro, tappa obbligata per quanti si dirigono a Gerusalemme. A questo punto lo sguardo di Saba si apre allo spettacolo desolato di una città da poco passata in mano turca. Ancora Pachymeres ci racconta la presa di Efeso. La città fu conquistata il 24 ottobre 1304 o 1305 dalle truppe dell'emiro Sasan.¹²⁸ Per evitare il massacro dei cittadini, il Turco decise di depredare la chiesa di Giovanni Evangelista dei suoi arredi. Indirettamente nelle parole dello storico abbiamo conferma del fatto che Saba visitò proprio questa basilica,¹²⁹ dove era conservata nel reliquiario del santo un'ampolla contenente una manna miracolosa, oggetto di venerazione per i pellegrini.¹³⁰ Identico è difatti il modo di definire la basilica, luogo di pellegrinaggio: Καὶ ἡ Ἐφησος, σκευὴ μὲν ἐκεῖνα τὰ τῷ ναῷ ἀφιέρωμα τοῦ ἡγαπημένου τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ Παρθένου χρημάτων τε ἄπιστον πλῆθος διεφορεῖτο.¹³¹ Il controllo della città da parte di Sasan fu tuttavia effimero, poiché già nel 1307–1308 essa passò nelle mani di Mehmed Aydinoglu,¹³² signore di Birgi. Saba è dunque testimone della confusione che regna in città in quegli anni così turbolenti come si può osservare dal tono addolorato usato dal suo agiografo. Eppure il fatto che il monaco abbia visitato con una certa libertà non solo la chiesa di Giovanni Evangelista, ma anche i sobborghi dell'antica

¹²⁶ Conferma della presenza nei pressi di Vatopedi si legge in Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 188, § 16, ll. 5-7: πατρικαῖς πειθόμενος ἐντολαῖς αὐτοῦ που παρὰ τῇ μεγάλῃ τοῦ Βατοπεδίου καταλιμπάνει Λαύρα. Precisiamo infine che la scelta di partire è dovuta a un ordine divino: Εἰ τὸν πολῦτιμον ἐκεῖνον ἐμπορεύσασθαι μαργαρίτην ἐθέλοις, εἰς τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλθεῖν σε κελεύω. Si veda Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 188–189, § 16, ll. 20–22.

¹²⁷ Rispettivamente in *TIB* 10, 205–209 (Lemnos); 209–213 (Lesbos); 143–150 (Chios).

¹²⁸ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 646–649, XIII, 13. Sull'oscillazione della datazione si veda anche 647, n. 91 con la relativa bibliografia. Per Sasan notizia in *PLP* 24948.

¹²⁹ Studi complessivi sulla città e i suoi edifici religiosi in Clive Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine, and Turkish City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Andreas Thiel, *Die Johanneskirche in Ephesos* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005).

¹³⁰ Su Efeso, meta di pellegrinaggio e sul miracolo della manna, si veda Andreas Pülz, "Ephesos als christliches Pilgerzentrum," *Mitteilungen zur christlichen Archäologie* 16 (2010): 71–102; Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 129–151, in part. 140–141; Maggie Duncan-Flowers, "A Pilgrim's Ampulla from the Shrine of St. John the Evangelist at Ephesus," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 125–139.

¹³¹ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 648–649, XIII, 13, 3–5.

¹³² Notizia in *PLP* 462.

città, ci lascia pensare che l'intera regione fosse ancora aperta ad accogliere pellegrini cristiani nonostante la recentissima conquista, diversamente da quanto succede in altre zone. Al 1306 risale il caso in questo senso significativo del monaco Hilarion,¹³³ come narrato da Pachymeres.¹³⁴ Egli proveniva dal monastero urbano della Peribleptos e si era trasferito a Elegmoi.¹³⁵ Nella zona dell'Olimpo di Bitinia i Turchi ottomani premevano su Prusa-Bursa¹³⁶ ed allora il monaco si arma e organizza la difesa, contravvenendo alle norme del diritto canonico che vietano per i consacrati possesso e uso di armi. La reazione dell'igumeno, che informa il patriarca Atanasio, porta all'interdizione di Hilarion,¹³⁷ ma l'imperatore lascia correre. L'Asia appare così un'area di profondi e repentini cambiamenti che vedono la presenza monastica capace di adattarsi alle condizioni mutevoli delle regioni in questione: la libertà e lo sguardo sconsolato di Saba dinanzi alla decadenza nella zona di Efeso si affiancano alla virile e impetuosa reazione del monaco Hilarion.

4. Le paure e l'impatto psicologico delle incursioni sulla popolazione athonita

Più volte nei paragrafi precedenti abbiamo posto in rilievo quanto le fughe dall'Athos nel corso del sec. XIV siano dipese dal clima di angoscia vissuta dalle comunità in particolar modo anacoretiche, esposte alle azioni della pirateria turca. In questa prospettiva le fonti agiografiche, quando non offrono informazioni di sicura accertabilità sul piano storico, ci permettono di dipingere altri aspetti della vita quotidiana sul Monte Santo ossia risultano rilevanti per comprendere quale fosse la condizione in cui vivevano gli anacoreti soggetti alle incursioni degli Infedeli. A questo scopo proponiamo alcuni episodi tratti dalle *Vitae* di Massimo Kausolkalyba e Nifone, particolarmente utili per il nostro percorso.

L'episodio del monaco Arsenio, tratto dalle *Vitae* di Massimo,¹³⁸ ci introduce al tema. Pur non consentendo una datazione certa, il fatto che sia collocato in

¹³³ Notizia in *PLP* 8177.

¹³⁴ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 656–657, XIII, 17.

¹³⁵ Janin, *Les églises*, 218–222 (Peribleptos), 142–148, in part. 147 (Elegmoi).

¹³⁶ Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, vol. 4, 656–657, XIII, 17, 25–28: καὶ Προῦσα, τὰ δυνατὰ πρὸς ἐκείνους διδοῦσα τέλος, ὀνόματι σκιὰν εἰρήνης οὐκ εἰρήνην παρὰ τῶν Περσῶν ἀντελάμβανεν.

¹³⁷ Laurent, *Les regestes*, no. 1646. Sulla decisa conferma alla proibizione dell'uso delle armi per i monaci si veda la lettera di Atanasio (Laurent, *Les regestes*, no. 1761).

¹³⁸ La *Vita* del santo athonita è riportata in quattro versioni. Le due più antiche sono considerate di riferimento: *Vita* di Nifone (*BHG* 1236z) e *Vita* di Teofane, metropolita di Peritheorion (*BHG* 1237). Per le restanti si tratta di rifacimenti successivi: la *Vita* (*BHG* 1237f) di Macario Makres (*PLP* 16379), edita in Asterios Argyriou (ed.), *Μακαρίου τοῦ Μακρῆ συγγράμματα* (Thessaloniki:

entrambe le versioni dopo l'incontro tra Massimo e il patriarca Callisto I, al quale il santo preannuncia la morte a Serre (20 giugno 1364),¹³⁹ lascia supporre che gli eventi siano da collocare oltre la metà del sec. XIV.

Καὶ πάλιν ἄλλοτε ἦλθεν Ἀρσένιός τις μοναχὸς πρὸς αὐτόν· καὶ εἶδεν αὐτόν, ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς ἐξερχομένη ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνέβαινεν ἕως τὴν κορυφὴν τῆς καλύβης αὐτοῦ, ὡς νομίζειν ὅτι ἐπυρπολήθη ἡ καλύβη· καὶ ἐξέστη ἐπὶ τούτου. Γενομένης δὲ ἀλλοιώσεως τοῦ πυρὸς ἐκείνου, ἠρώτησεν αὐτόν· “Τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο, πάτερ;” Ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· “Οὐκ οἶδα τί λέγεις.” Καὶ πάλιν ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀρσένιος εἶπε· “Φόβον ἤκουσα ἀπὸ τῶν Ἰσσημιτῶν καὶ ἐλθὼν ἀνήγγειλα τῷ γέροντι, καὶ λέγω αὐτῷ· ‘Ποίησον εὐχὴν περὶ τούτου.’ Καὶ λέγει μοι· ‘Ὑπαγε ἐν εἰρήνῃ.’ Ἐγὼ δὲ ὡς πονηρὸς ἔδειξα ὅτι ὑπάγω. Καὶ ἱσταμένου μου κρυφίως, ὁρῶ αὐτὸν ἱστάμενον καὶ τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐκτείναντα εἰς ὕψος ἐπὶ πολλὴν ὥραν. Καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη κύκλῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὑψώθη τοῦ πυρὸς ἡ φλόξ ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἕως τῶν κλάδων τῶν δένδρων, ὡς νομίζειν με κατακαίεσθαι τοὺς κλάδους· καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἔφυγον εἰς τὸ κελλίον μου ἐξιστάμενος καὶ θαυμάζων. Καὶ τῷ πρῶτῳ ἦλθον καὶ ἠρώτησα αὐτόν· ‘Τί ποιεῖς, πάτερ;’ Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· “Ὡς με εἴρηκας, διὰ τοὺς Ἰσσημιτίτας ἐφοβήθην πολλὰ τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ.”¹⁴⁰

Kaì ἄλλος ἐλθὼν μοναχός, Ἀρσένιος ὀνόματι, πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον, πῦρ ἐδόκει ὁρᾶν τὴν κέλλαν αὐτοῦ καταλαμβοῦσαν καὶ μὴ φλέγουσαν. Ὁμοίως καὶ τὰ πέριξ τῶν ἁλσεων φλόγα ὠρᾶτο δροσίζουσα, τὸ καινότατον. Καὶ πάλιν ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀρσένιος ἐλθὼν καὶ μηνύσας αὐτὸν τὴν ἔφοδον τῶν Ἰσσημιτῶν, καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ὁ ἅγιος ἐκτείνας πρὸς οὐρανόν, πῦρ πάλιν ἐδόκει ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐξερχόμενον καὶ ἀνιπτάμενον καὶ

Κέντρο Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1996), 141–165, e quella (BHG 1237c) dello ieromonaco lavriota Ioannikios Kochilas conservata nei codici *Athos, Vatopedi* 470 (402) e *Athos, Xenophon* 25 (727) del sec. XVIII. Per questi ultimi manoscritti si vedano rispettivamente Sophronios Eustratiades, Arcadios Vatopedinos, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts of Vatopedi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 94 e Spyridon P. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 63. Sulla figura di Massimo studi più completi e aggiornati rimangono Kallistos Ware, “St. Maximos of Kapsokalyvia and the Fourteenth-century Athonite Monasticism,” in *ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ. Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for Her 80th Birthday* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1988), 409–430; Rigo, “Massimo il Kausokalyba e la rinascita eremitica sul Monte Athos nel XIV secolo,” in *Atanasio e il monachesimo al Monte Athos, Atti del XII Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa – sezione bizantina, Bose, 12–14 settembre 2004*, eds. Sabino Chialà, Lisa Cremaschi (Mignano: Monastero di Bose, 2005), 181–216, in part. per la bibliografia sul personaggio la n. 2.

¹³⁹ Sulla data si consulti Rigo, “La missione di Teofane di Nicea a Serre presso Giovanni Uglješa,” in *Ἠρώρα. Studi in onore di mgr Paul Canart per il LXX compleanno*, eds. Lidia Perria, Santo Lucà = *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 51 (1997): 118–120.

¹⁴⁰ Halkin, “Deux vies de s. Maxime le Kausokalybe, ermite au Mont Athos (XIV^e s.),” *AnBoll* 54 (1936): 48–49, § 8.

κυκλοῦντα τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δροσίζοντα· ὃ καὶ ἰδὼν σύντρομος καὶ
ἔμφοβος γέγονεν ὁ Ἀρσένιος καὶ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐκήρυξεν τὸ θεώρημα διὰ
θαύματος.¹⁴¹

Come è evidente, l'episodio del monaco Arsenio¹⁴² denota alcune differenze strutturali nelle due redazioni. Mentre Nifone presenta il monaco come testimone diretto dell'evento prodigioso che racconta in prima persona, Teofane¹⁴³ si limita a un breve resoconto dal tono più impersonale. Entrambi i racconti distinguono due momenti. Nel primo caso Arsenio rimane attonito di fronte allo spettacolo di una fiamma che divora la *kalyba* di Massimo. Di ciò il lettore non dovrebbe essere sorpreso data la fama che circolava sul conto del santo, noto appunto come *Kausokalyba* ossia distruttore delle capanne nelle quali conduceva la sua vita eremitica. Subito dopo i due agiografi pongono all'attenzione un secondo episodio che, a nostro giudizio, è chiave interpretativa per il precedente: Arsenio nuovamente torna a far visita al sant'uomo e gli confida la sua paura per una prossima incursione degli Infedeli e – almeno in Nifone – chiede una preghiera per la sua incolumità a Massimo che con tono sbrigativo lo congeda tanto da suscitare nel discepolo la caparbieta risentita di vedere in che modo il santo sarà fedele alla sua richiesta. Qui il prodigio. Massimo, assunta la posizione dell'orante, è investito da una lingua di fuoco che scaturisce da una nube per Nifone, dalla bocca dello stesso santo per Teofane, e che alta raggiunge le fronde degli alberi. La fuga di Arsenio rinvia ogni spiegazione all'alba del giorno successivo quando Massimo con tono serafico ammette di aver provato sul proprio corpo gli effetti del terrore verso gli Ismaeliti. Nell'episodio si intrecciano quindi vari temi cari al genere agiografico: la perplessità e il dubbio del discepolo nei confronti della sua guida spirituale e soprattutto la prova dell'intensità della preghiera del campione della fede. Il fuoco nei due episodi è la manifestazione della forza con la quale Massimo entra in dialogo con il Divino e come, facendosi carico dei patimenti e delle angosce del discepolo, si faccia portavoce presso Dio. In funzione dell'intento encomiastico che soggiace alla pericope, Arsenio riunisce in sé l'immagine del testimone oculare di un evento miracoloso, del discepolo scettico e del cristiano che mostra una fede debole per l'opera salvatrice di Dio. Massimo al contrario è dipinto come il campione della preghiera che allevia le preoccupazioni poiché condivide con il suo corpo le angosce che tormentano i suoi confratelli terrorizzati dalle incessanti scorrerie pirata.

¹⁴¹ Halkin, "Deux vies," 94–95, § 23.

¹⁴² Notizia in *PLP* 1413.

¹⁴³ Su Teofane, metropolita di Peritheorion, oltre alla notizia in *PLP* 7616, bibliografia aggiornata sul suo ruolo di agiografo, recensione dei manoscritti e differenze rispetto alla versione di Nifone in Rigo, "Massimo il Kausokalyba," 183–193.

Il caso di Atanasio Krokas,¹⁴⁴ registrato in forma telegrafica, appartiene in entrambe le versioni alla sezione dedicata ai *mirabilia* del santo.

Καὶ ἄλλον Ἀθανάσιον τὸν Κροκάν, εἶπεν αὐτῷ· “Ὡ παῖτερ Ἀθανάσιε, ὑπὸ Ἰσμαηλιτῶν μέλλεις τελειωθῆναι.” Καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως.¹⁴⁵

Καὶ ἄλλον Ἀθανάσιον τὸν Κροκάν, τὸ τέλος αὐτῷ προεἶπεν, ὅτι· “Παρὰ τῶν Ἰσμαηλιτῶν μέλλεις τελειωθῆναι.” Καὶ γέγονεν οὕτως.¹⁴⁶

Qui sono esaltate le facoltà prooratiche di Massimo, capace di predire l'imminente morte del monaco. La denominazione di πατήρ, assegnata ad Atanasio, indirettamente giunge a sostegno del nostro discorso. Nonostante Atanasio sia ormai in età avanzata, la premonizione di Massimo lo consegna a una morte violenta per mano turca. Ciò indica quanto la percezione del rischio per un'aggressione o un rapimento fossero argomenti quotidiani nelle comunità athonite alla metà del sec. XIV.

Tre passaggi della *Vita* di Nifone¹⁴⁷ forniscono ulteriori esempi per la nostra ricerca:

Γαβριὴλ οὗτος τὸ ὄνομα· οὗ τὸν πατέρα Δοσίθεον ἡ τοῦ σχήματος αὐτοῦ ἀξία προσηγόρευσε. Χρείας κατεπειγούσης ἀξιοῖ συγχωρηθῆναι παρὰ τοῦ γέροντος τὸν Γαβριὴλ καὶ ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὴν τοῦ Βατοπαιδίου μονήν. Ὁ δὲ νεῦει μὲν πρὸς τὴν αἴτησιν· ἀποστέλλει δ' αὐτὸν ὠρισμένην ἐνστήσας ἡμέραν, καθ' ἣν θέλοντος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπαναστραφήσεται. Τῆς οὖν ὠρισμένης παρελθούσης καὶ Ἀχαμενιδῶν τὰ ἐκεῖσε μέρη ληιζομένων, ἐδόκει τῷ τοῦ Γαβριὴλ πατρὶ ὡς ἀνδράποδον ὁ υἱὸς ἐρχόμενος ἐγεγόνει· καὶ πανταχόθεν εἰς ἀπορίαν ὑπὸ τῆς ἀφορήτου λύπης ἐνέπιπτεν. Ἡ δὲ θαυμαστὴ καὶ συμπαθὴς ἐκεῖνη ψυχὴ· “Μὴ κλαῖε, γέρον,” διεμνήσαστο· “ἐλεύθερον γὰρ φημι εἶναι τὸν ἀδελφόν, ἐπεὶ ἀπέσταλται παρ' ἐμοῦ.” Καὶ μήπω τοῦ ἡλίου ἀπολελοιπότος τὴν γῆν, ἀκίνδυνος ἐπανῆλθεν ὁ ἀδελφός, πείραν μὴδὲ τοῦ τυχόντος δεινοῦ ἐσχηκώς.¹⁴⁸

Διὰ τина χρεῖαν ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν ὅσιον ὁ τοῦ Γαβριὴλ πατήρ ὁ προρρηθεὶς Δοσίθεος λέγων· “Συγχώρησόν μοι, πάτερ, ἵνα ἀποστεῖλω τὸν Γαβριὴλ εἰς τὴν μονὴν τῶν Ἰβήρων.” Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ μέγας λέγει· “Γίνωσκε ὅτι,

¹⁴⁴ Notizia in *PLP* 13818.

¹⁴⁵ Halkin, “Deux vies,” 51–52, § 12.

¹⁴⁶ Halkin, “Deux vies,” 91–93, § 20.

¹⁴⁷ Notizia su Nifone in *PLP* 20687. Sull'eventuale paternità di Nifone di un'omelia per la Madre di Dio si veda Ermanno Toniolo, “Alcune omelie mariane dei sec. X–XIV: Pietro d'Argo, Niceta Paflagone, Michele Psellos e Ninfo Ieromonaco,” *Marianum* 33 (1971): 340 e 396–406. Su Geremia Patetas, autore della *Vita* del santo si veda *PLP* 22054.

¹⁴⁸ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 18–19, § 7.

ἐὰν ἀπέλθῃ, κινδυνεῦσαι ἔχει ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν.” Ὁ δὲ Δοσίθεος ἐπέκειτο λέγων· “Ἀφοβία ἐστὶ, πάτερ, ὅτι ἐὰν παραγένηται ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ ἕως τοῦ Μολφινου, καὶ αὐριον ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τῶν Ἰβήρων, ἐλπίζω, οὐ μὴ συναντήσῃ κακόν.” Ὁ δὲ ἅγιός φησι πρὸς αὐτόν· “Εἰ κινδυνεύσει ὁ υἱός σου, ἀνάιτιος ὑπάρχω ἐγώ· καὶ ποιήσον ὡς βούλει.” Ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Δοσίθεος ἐσιώπησεν, οὐδὲν πλεὺν εἰπών. Καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἐσπέρα ἐλθὼν τις ἀνήγγειλε τῷ ὁσίῳ ὅτι ἐφάνη πλοῖον καὶ ἡχημαλῶτευσεν τρεῖς ἀνθρώπους ἀπεδόθεν τοῦ Μολφινου,¹⁴⁹ καθὼς ὁ μέγας ἦν προειπὼν ὅτι· “Ἀπεδόθεν τοῦ Μολφινου ἔχει κινδυνεῦσαι.”¹⁵⁰

Il caso di Dositeo e Gabriele¹⁵¹ merita alcune osservazioni preliminari in ordine all'identità dei personaggi citati, al periodo presunto entro il quale si svolge e alle località sull'Athos che fanno da teatro alla pericope. Dositeo e Gabriele sono rispettivamente padre e fratello del monaco Marco,¹⁵² come si deduce dalla lettura della sezione precedente¹⁵³ nella quale l'agiografo pone in rilievo le qualità di *pneumatikos* di Nifone che accoglie l'uomo, sposato e a sua volta padre, proveniente dall'Illiria¹⁵⁴ e affascinato dal clima di santità che in quest'epoca si vive sulla Santa Montagna. Ben più difficoltoso è indicare una datazione plausibile. Osserviamo innanzitutto che il § 7 è collocato prima del racconto dell'ultima visita compiuta da Nifone al suo maestro Massimo il Kausokalyba, nell'immanenza della morte di quest'ultimo. La data presunta del trapasso di Massimo va fissata all'inizio del 1365 (31 gennaio).¹⁵⁵ Un secondo dato deve poi essere portato alla luce. L'agiografo Geremia Patetas poco dopo ricorda che il nostro Gabriele fu guarito dalla peste che dopo molti anni tornò

¹⁴⁹ Interessante testimonianza sull'antico monastero benedettino, abbandonato prima del 1287. Sulla storia del monastero e bibliografia buona sintesi in Vera von Falkenhausen, “Il monastero degli Amalfitani sul Monte Athos,” in *Atanasio e il monachesimo al Monte Athos*, 101–118, in part. 116–118.

¹⁵⁰ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 26, § 19.

¹⁵¹ Rispettivamente notizia in *PLP* 5646 e 3420.

¹⁵² Notizia in *PLP* 17066.

¹⁵³ Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 16–18, § 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ricordiamo che anche Nifone ha i suoi natali nell'Epiro settentrionale (§ 1, 12: Οὗτος ὁ ὁσιος πατήρ ἡμῶν ὑπῆρχεν ἀπὸ τὸ δεσποτᾶτον τὸ διακείμενον μέσον Ἀχαΐας καὶ Ἰλλυρικοῦ, ἐκ κώμης καλουμένης Λουκόβης, παντοίοις κομώσης καρποῖς). Per quanto riguarda il monaco Marco si legge al § 5, 16: “Ἐνθα τις Μάρκος ἐξ Ἰλλυρίων προσελθὼν καὶ πολλὰ δεηθεὶς τῆς ἀγίας ψυχῆς ἐκείνης ὡς ἂν ἡσυχίας ὁρους ὑπ' ἐκείνῳ διδαχθῇ καὶ ὑποταγῇ, δέχεται [...]. Conferma nel medesimo paragrafo qualche linea dopo (17): “Ἐτυχε δὲ ὦν ἐκεῖνος εἰς Ἰλλυρίου, γυναικὶ συνοικῶν καὶ παῖδας γνησίους τρέφων.

¹⁵⁵ Sull'argomento rigettiamo la datazione alta (1375) proposta dal *PLP*, preferendole l'analisi più attenta presentata in Rigo, “Massimo il Kausokalyba,” 190–191, a partire dalle osservazioni in Halkin, “Deux vies,” 106, n. 2.

a colpire l'Athos.¹⁵⁶ Sempre Patetas aveva già menzionato¹⁵⁷ che Lavra subì la diffusione del contagio che Marie-Hélène Congourdeau data intorno al 1350–1351.¹⁵⁸ Nonostante l'indicazione sia vaga, dobbiamo immaginare che tra i due casi di focolaio sia trascorso un decennio e più e una notizia da una cronaca breve giunge a nostro sostegno, menzionando intorno al 1364–1365 lo scoppio dell'epidemia a Tessalonica¹⁵⁹ – dunque nei pressi dell'Athos – che causò la morte di Giorgio Synadenos Astras.¹⁶⁰ Un terzo indizio restringe la nostra cronologia e si desume ancora da un passo della *Vita* di Nifone¹⁶¹ nel quale si ricorda che Giacomo,¹⁶² vescovo di Hierissos, acconsentì alla consacrazione della chiesetta del Cristo Salvatore tra il 1355 e il 1360, affidata dall'igumeno di Lavra a Nifone perché ne gestisse il servizio liturgico per gli anacoreti. Il concorso di questi fattori spinge a datare il nostro primo episodio agli anni compresi tra il 1360 e il 1365.

Più agevole risulta la soluzione del problema relativo all'identificazione dei luoghi. I fratelli Marco e Gabriele raggiunsero Nifone quando questi, trasferitosi dalla *kalyba* lasciatagli in eredità da Massimo, vive in una grotta di fronte all'isolotto di san Cristoforo ossia nei pressi dell'odierna *skiti* di Kausokalyba in Karoulia, sulla falesia del versante meridionale dell'Athos.¹⁶³ Sembra così plausibile che Nifone stabilisce una data al ritorno di Gabriele a motivo del lungo tratto di strada che separa questa zona del Monte Santo dal monastero di Vatopedi.

Il primo brano (§ 7) pone l'accento sullo stato di inquietudine che regna in questi anni sull'Athos e anticipa quanto si leggerà nel brano che ha come protagonista Ioannikios. Il semplice ritardo di Gabriele getta nell'angoscia Dositeo, convinto che il figlio sia stato vittima di un rapimento. Pare dunque che in questi anni non si possano immaginare cause alternative di pericolo. Il secondo brano ricalca la stessa situazione, ma l'atteggiamento di Nifone e la destinazione

¹⁵⁶ Halkin, "La Vie de Saint Niphon," 19, § 9: Ἐτῶν οὖν παρελθόντων πολλῶν καὶ πάλιν ἐνέσκηψε λοιμός.

¹⁵⁷ Halkin, "La Vie de Saint Niphon," 14–15, § 3: Κατ' ἐκεῖνο τοίνυν καιροῦ λοιμικὴ τις νόσος ἐνέσκηψε τῇ ἱερᾷ Λαύρᾳ καὶ τῇ τοῦ θανάτου ὀξεῖα ῥομφαία τοὺς πάντας σχεδὸν συνδιέφθειρεν, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς συναπολέσθαι καὶ ὀλίγους καταλειφθῆναι τινας.

¹⁵⁸ Congourdeau, "Pour une étude de la peste noire à Byzance," in *EYΨΥΧΙΑ: Mélanges offert à Hélène Ahrweiler*, vol. 1, 153.

¹⁵⁹ Su questo secondo caso, con riferimenti alle fonti, ancora Congourdeau, "Pour une étude," 154.

¹⁶⁰ Notizia in *PLP* 1598.

¹⁶¹ Halkin, "La Vie de Saint Niphon," 15–16, § 3.

¹⁶² Su Giacomo di Hierissos si veda Denise Papachryssanthou, "Un évêché byzantin: Hiérissos en Chalcidique," *TM* 8 (1981): 392–393. Notizia in *PLP* 92063.

¹⁶³ Halkin, "La Vie de Saint Niphon," 16, § 5: Ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ὁ μακάριος Νίφων ἀναχωρήσας πρὸς τι σπήλαιον ἄντικρυς τοῦ ἐπ' ὀνόματι ἁγίου Χριστοφόρου εἰσέδω γνῶμη τοῦ μακαρίου Μαξίμου.

del viaggio di Gabriele (in questo caso il monastero di Iviron) sono differenti. Inoltre il silenzio dell'agiografo sull'esito del rapimento ci spinge a credere che si tratti di una variazione sul tema precedente, soprattutto se consideriamo la collocazione del passaggio nell'ambito della *Vita*. I paragrafi finali (§§ 18–20) sono difatti interamente dedicati alle conseguenze delle incursioni turche (§ 18: assalto di navi pirata dopo la Maritza; § 20: presunto rapimento del *pneumatikos* Ioannikios). Se dunque il passo perde ogni rilevanza sul piano storico, di certo rafforza il suo valore esemplificativo sul clima di apprensione e incertezza che regnava sul Monte Santo. Il silenzio di Dositeo, carico di preoccupazione di fronte alla sollevazione da ogni responsabilità di Nifone per il viaggio del figlio, chiarisce icasticamente questa condizione psicologica.

La *Vita* di Nifone restituisce un terzo episodio che interessa la nostra ricerca, relativo al presunto rapimento del *pneumatikos* Ioannikios di Lavra:¹⁶⁴

Μοναχός τις ἐλθὼν ἀνήγγειλε τῷ ἀγίῳ ὅτι· “Ἡχμαλώτευσαν οἱ Ἰσμαηλῖται τὸν πνευματικὸν κύρ Ἰωαννίκιον μετὰ καὶ ἐτέρων μοναχῶν καὶ τοῦ πλοίου, ἀπερχομένων ἐκ τῆς Λαύρας εἰς τὴν σκῆτην.¹⁶⁵ Καὶ νῦν συνάσσουν ἀργύρια ἵνα αὐτοὺς ἐξαγοράσωσι· καὶ δέδωκα κάγω δι’ αὐτοὺς ἓνα χρυσόν.” Καὶ ἀπεκρίθη ὁ γέρων· “Εἰ τῶν πτωχῶν εἶχες δῶση, κρεῖσσον ὑπῆρχεν, ὅτι καὶ ὁ πνευματικὸς καὶ οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ καλῶς ἔχουσι, καὶ

¹⁶⁴ Notizia in PLP 8855.

¹⁶⁵ La *lectio* merita una breve noticella. L'editore preferisce – a ragione a nostro parere dato lo svolgimento della vicenda – la forma σκῆτην alle lezioni εἰς Σκίρρον (*Athos, Kausokalyvi* 12) o εἰς τὴν Σκῆρον (*Athos, Dionysiou* 132 (3666)). Come già notava Halkin, è tuttavia attestata la presenza sull'isola di Schiro (Sporadi settentrionali) di un *metochion* di Lavra (si veda Gerasimos Smyrnakis, *Ἅγιον Ὄρος* (Athens: Ἀνέστη Κωνσταντινίδου, 1903), 395; Lemerle, André Guillou, Papachryssanthou, Nicolas Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 4: *Études historiques. Actes Serbes. Complements et index* (Archives de l'Athos 11) (Paris: Lethielleux, 1982), 149) che possedeva due monasteri: almeno fino al 1259 (*crisobollo* di Michele VIII in Lemerle, Guillou, Papachryssanthou, Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 2: *De 1204 à 1328* (Archives de l'Athos 8) (Paris: Lethielleux, 1977), no. 71) quello del Cristo Salvatore (Lemerle, Guillou, Papachryssanthou, Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 1: *Des origines à 1204* (Archives de l'Athos 5) (Paris: Lethielleux, 1970), nos. 16 e 20) e fino al sec. XV quello di san Giorgio, detto Epano o Epanotou, donato dal patriarca Atanasio I (Lemerle, Guillou, Papachryssanthou, Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 2, nos. 82, 89 e 118). Va ricordato che quest'ultimo monastero possedeva una nave mercantile che i monaci affidavano agli Ospitalieri di Rodi (Lemerle, Guillou, Svoronos, Papachryssanthou, *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 3: *De 1329 à 1500* (Archives de l'Athos 10) (Paris: Lethielleux, 1979), App. XVII). Questa intraprendenza commerciale – non un'eccezione –, attestata per l'aprile 1415, ben si accorderebbe al nostro passo, poiché testimonia la vivacità dei contatti via mare gestiti dal *metochion* lavriota o comunque è plausibile per *Athos, Dionysiou* 132 (3666) del sec. XVII. Recensioni sui codici si trovano ovviamente in Halkin, “La Vie de Saint Niphon,” 10–11. Più aggiornata e precisa l'analisi sul codice di Dionysiou in Rigo, “Massimo il Kausokalyba,” 185; idem, “La Vita di Dionisio,” 291; idem, “Ancora sulle Vitae di Romylos,” 181, n. 6.

οὐδὲν συνήντησεν αὐτοὺς κακόν· μάλιστα ἐν ἀνέσει μεγάλη διάγουσι καὶ παράκλησιν μεγάλην ἔχουσι σήμερον. Εἶθε εἶχαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοιαύτης παρακλήσεως.” Ἐσημειώσατο γοῦν ὁ μοναχὸς τὴν ἡμέραν· καὶ ἐλθόντος τοῦ πνευματικοῦ, ἠρώτησεν αὐτόν. Καὶ εἶπεν ὅτι· “Τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην ἔτυχεν ἡμᾶς ἄγρα ἰχθύων μεγάλων, καὶ οὐ μετρίως ἐπαρεκλήθημεν, ἐσθιόντες καὶ πίνοντες εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ, καθὼς φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος.” Ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ ἀδελφὸς καὶ θαυμάσας τοῦ ἁγίου τὸ χάρισμα, ἐδόξασε μεγάλως τὸν δοξάζοντα τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ θεράποντας.¹⁶⁶

Qui, come nell'episodio di Massimo, sono esaltate le qualità di preveggenza del santo, ma ciò che colpisce è la facilità con la quale circolano per l'Athos, soprattutto tra i romitaggi, notizie sui rapimenti a danno dei monaci. L'anonimo monaco giunge ad informare dell'aggressione subita da Ioannikios, convinto che sia già stato richiesto un riscatto. La frequenza di simili eventi doveva essere tale da generare una vera sindrome persecutoria: ogni allontanamento, seppur temporaneo, dai cenobi era occasione di pericolo, in particolare nel periodo successivo alla rotta della Maritza, nel quale dobbiamo collocare questo episodio.

5. Oltre i confini di Bisanzio: il contatto con l'Islam di Terra Santa

Le fonti agiografiche ci suggeriscono ancora un'altra area di analisi sui contatti tra mondo monastico bizantino e Islam, trasferendo il punto focale al di là dei confini dell'impero. Nella *Vita* di Saba Tziskos si legge difatti un'intera sezione dedicata al lungo soggiorno del monaco in Terra Santa.¹⁶⁷ Qui Filoteo Kokkinos si sofferma in più riprese a tratteggiare episodi che hanno come oggetto gli incontri e le reazioni che il santo destò tra i Musulmani. Il loro esame ci pare assai importante per osservare quanto diversa sia l'immagine dell'Islam arabo rispetto alle tinte fosche e preoccupate con le quali è rappresentato quello dalla pressante minaccia turca.

Abbiamo già seguito Saba dopo la partenza dall'Athos del 1308 a causa delle razzie turche e le varie tappe del viaggio che lo portarono sino ad Efeso. Di qui egli, dopo un soggiorno a Cipro, per il quale è impossibile definire la durata, passò in Terra Santa dove visse per 12 anni in continua peregrinazione.¹⁶⁸ Il viaggio in Palestina è di certo un luogo ricorrente della letteratura agiografica bizantina poiché segna un passaggio, quasi obbligato, nell'itinerario di formazione

¹⁶⁶ Halkin, "La Vie de Saint Niphon," 26-27, § 20.

¹⁶⁷ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 216-261, §§ 30-52.

¹⁶⁸ Per la ricostruzione attendibile di questo periodo della vita di Saba rimandiamo a Festugière, *Léontios de Néapolis*, 233-235.

in particolare dei monaci sin dal primo periodo bizantino. Ne sono prova gli esempi di Teodoro di Sykeon (†613) che vi compì ben tre viaggi,¹⁶⁹ di Gregorio di Akritas, partito nel 780 per un pellegrinaggio che si protrarrà per 12 anni,¹⁷⁰ di Paolo, maestro di Pietro d'Atroa (†837),¹⁷¹ o ancora di Hilarion d'Iberia.¹⁷² Nel corso di questi pellegrinaggi spesso le fonti agiografiche registrano le violenze e le sopraffazioni patite ad opera della popolazione musulmana come nel caso di Elia di Sicilia che subì la cattura¹⁷³ o Lazzaro Galesiota, il quale abbandonò il monastero di san Saba proprio a motivo dei continui attacchi di predoni arabi.¹⁷⁴ In taluni casi si giunge addirittura al martirio del quale sono testimonianza le vite di Bakchos il giovane,¹⁷⁵ che, fattosi monaco a Gerusalemme verso la fine del sec. VIII, spinse all'apostasia i suoi familiari così da meritare la morte; altro esempio è rappresentato da Dounale-Stefano¹⁷⁶ il quale, tonsurato da papa Agapito II (946–955), ricevette il grande abito a Gerusalemme, ma, una volta catturato in Egitto, lì subì il martirio. Non va infine dimenticato il martirologio dei 60 martiri, che in pellegrinaggio nella città santa furono torturati e crocifissi nel 724–725 per aver rifiutato la conversione all'Islam.¹⁷⁷

Questa lunga rassegna mostra – e non ci sarebbe motivo di dubitarlo – da un lato quanto i Luoghi Santi abbiano sempre rappresentato una meta privilegiata

¹⁶⁹ Festugière (ed.), *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1970), § 23, l. 20; § 50, l. 44; § 62, l. 52; BHG 1748.

¹⁷⁰ Hippolyte Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1902), 372–373; BHG 2266.

¹⁷¹ Laurent, *La vie merveilleuse de saint Pierre d'Atroa* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1956), § 87; BHG 2364. Egli, come il nostro Saba, fece tappa a Efeso (§ 8, l. 87).

¹⁷² Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "La pérégrination du moine géorgien Hilarion au IX^e siècle," *Bedi Kartlisa* 39 (1981): 101–138; in particolare sul viaggio § 7, 123 e Elisabeth Malamut, *Sur la route des saints byzantins* (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 51–53.

¹⁷³ Giuseppe Rossi Taibbi (ed.), *Vita di sant'Elia il Giovane* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1964), § 18, 26–28; BHG 580.

¹⁷⁴ Richard P. H. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint. Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), §§ 16–17; BHG 979. Per la ricostruzione del viaggio di Lazzaro si veda anche Malamut, *Sur la route*, 40–44.

¹⁷⁵ Photis A. Demetrakopoulos, "Ἅγιος Βάκχος ὁ Νέος," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ ἐπετηρίδα τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, Τμῆμα φιλοσοφίας* 26 (1979): 331–363; BHG 209–209b.

¹⁷⁶ Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, 317–322, in part. 319–320; BHG 2110.

¹⁷⁷ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Мученичество шестидесяти новых святых мучеников, пострадавших во Святом Граде Христа Бога нашего под владычеством арабов, написанное на сирийском языке и переведенное на греческий в VIII веке," *Православный Палестинский сборник* 12.1 (1892): 1–23; idem, "Συλλογὴ Παλαιστίνης καὶ Συριακῆς ἀγιολογίας," *Православный Палестинский сборник* 19.3 (1907): 136–163; Delehaye, "Passio sanctorum sexaginta martyrorum," *AnBoll* 23 (1904): 289–307; BHG 1217–1218.

per il monachesimo bizantino¹⁷⁸ e dall'altro attesta il giudizio fortemente negativo intorno alla presenza musulmana in queste regioni, carica d'astio nei confronti dei pellegrini cristiani.¹⁷⁹ Il caso di Saba si colloca sotto certi aspetti in continuità con questa tradizione e prova quanto la Terra Santa si configuri ancora come l'ambiente fertile per la formazione ascetica di molti santi tra il sec. XIII e il sec. XIV. Sappiamo difatti che raggiunsero il Sinai e i Luoghi Santi anche Melezio Galesiota¹⁸⁰ e, come abbiamo già accennato, Gregorio Sinaita che qui, come secoli prima Teodoro di Sykeon, ottenne la tonsura e compì i primi passi nella vita monastica e nel rispetto della disciplina ascetica. Altri protagonisti del monachesimo esicasta desiderarono poi compiere il loro pellegrinaggio come Gregorio Palamas che tuttavia fu costretto, come abbiamo visto, a fermarsi a Tessalonica.

Il lungo racconto contenuto nella *Vita* di Saba denota un'attenzione particolare al contatto con la popolazione araba che è assente nell'agiografia del Sinaita.¹⁸¹ La *Vita* di Gregorio difatti esclude ogni contatto con la popolazione locale, concentrandosi sul resoconto del tirocinio monastico, quasi questi anni di formazione appartengano a una fase atemporale dell'esistenza del santo.¹⁸² Un'ulteriore differenza con la tradizione precedente – come vedremo – consiste poi nella fama raccolta presso gli Infedeli che garantisce a Saba un'accoglienza e una libertà di espressione difficilmente riscontrabile altrove.

¹⁷⁸ Sui rapporti tra comunità monastiche e Arabi in Terra Santa si veda Lorenzo Perrone, "Monasticism in the Holy Land: From the Beginnings to the Crusaders," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 45 (1995): 31–63, in part. 53–61 per i secoli VII–IX.

¹⁷⁹ Per completezza citiamo qui il caso eccentrico di Leonzio che giunse in Palestina tra il 1177 e il 1178 per insediarsi in qualità di patriarca. In realtà egli non ebbe contatti con Musulmani, data la temporanea occupazione crociata di Gerusalemme, se si esclude il colloquio con l'emiro di Damasco Salah al-Din Yusuf, durante il viaggio di ritorno. Si veda Richard B. Rose, "The *Vita* of Saint Leontios and Its Account on His Visit to Palestine during the Crusades Period," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 35 (1985): 238–257. Per la *Vita* di Leonzio si veda Dimitris Tsougarakis, *The Life of Leontios Patriarch of Jerusalem. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), in part. 127–139, §§ 80–88; BHG 985.

¹⁸⁰ Il soggiorno di Melezio in Oriente (Gerusalemme, Sinai, Alessandria, Siria) è precedente al suo ingresso al monastero di san Lazzaro sul Galesion (ca. 1260). Per la vita di Melezio attribuita a Macario Crisocefalo si veda Spyridon Lavriotis, "Βίος καὶ πολιτεία καὶ μερική θανμάτων διήγησις τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μελετίου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ," *Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς* 5 (1921): 582–586 e 609–624 e in *Ἀγιορειτικὸν Περιοδικὸν ὁ Ἄθως* 2.8–9 (1928): 9–11. Per Melezio notizia in PLP 17753.

¹⁸¹ Nonostante l'obiettivo riassuntivo e consultivo rimandiamo a un breve studio sul soggiorno di Saba in Terra Santa, Congourdeau, "La terre sainte au XIV^e siècle: la *Vie de Sabas* de Vatopédi par Philothée Kokkinos," in *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'Antiquité et le Moyen Âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval*, eds. Béatrice Caseau, Jean-Claude Cheynet, Vincent Déroche (Paris: Collège de France, CNRS, 2006), 121–133, in part. sull'incontro con la popolazione musulmana 129–132.

¹⁸² Pomyalovsky, "Житие," 5–7, §§ 4–5 = Beyer, *Житие*, 114–118, §§ 6–7.

Il primo episodio coglie Saba nel corso del suo viaggio da Gerusalemme alla volta del Sinai. Qui egli si accompagna con un cammelliere al quale dà prova dell'umiltà cristiana:

Ἀλλ' ὁ Σάβας εὐθὺς ἀποβαίνει τοῦ κτήνους, μικρὸν δηλαδὴ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ προελθὼν, καὶ οὕτω πεζοπορῶν ὅλην τὴν ὁδὸν ἐξανύει δι' ὅλον ἡμερῶν εἴκοσι, τὸν εἰς ὑπηρεσίαν ἑαυτὸν ἀποδόμενον Ἰσμαηλίτην ἐκείνον – ὃ ψυχῆς φιλανθρώπου – πείσας αὐτὸς μᾶλλον διὰ πάσης ἐκείνης τῆς μακρᾶς ὁδοπορίας τῇ καμῆλῳ ἐπικαθέζεσθαι. “Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔφερον,” φησὶν, “ὅλως ἑμαυτὸν μὲν ἐπαναπαύεσθαι τῇ τοῦ κτήνους ὑπηρεσίᾳ, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκείνην οὕτω κακοπαθοῦσαν ὁρᾶν τῇ μακροτάτῃ πεζοπορίᾳ· ἐδόκει μοι καὶ γὰρ ἄντικρυς τοῦτο τῶν πλεονεξιῶν ἡ μεγίστη.” Οὐ μὲν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐφοδίων ὡσαύτως ἐκείνῳ παραχωρήσας σας, ταῖς παρευρισκομέναις καθ' ὁδὸν αὐτὸς ἐχρήτο βοτάναις μετ' ὀλίγου τινὸς ὕδατος· ταύτῃ γὰρ αὐτὸς τῇ τραπέζῃ καὶ μόνη δεῖν ἔγνω κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν πᾶσαν μέχρι δὴ καὶ αὐτοῦ φημι τοῦ Σιναίου θαυμαστῶς χρήσασθαι. [...] ὁ δὲ βάρβαρος ἐκείνος πολὺς ἦν τοῦ μεγάλου δεόμενος τοῦ τε κτήνους ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς τοῦτ' αὐτὸ δεδομένου, καὶ αὐτῷ δὲ τούτῳ σὺν γε τῷ κτήνῃ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς πρὸς χρεῖαν κατ' ἐξουσίαν οἷα δὴ καὶ δεσπότης τούτων κεχρησθαι· ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ πολλὰ λέγων ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ταῖς ἡμέραις οὐδ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ πείθειν εἶχε, θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐκ πολλοῦ τοῦ περιόντος ἐκκληττόμενος ἔλεγε καὶ οὐκ ἄνθρωπον, μᾶλλον δ' οὐχ ἔλεγε μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐδείκνυ, πρὸς τοῖς ποσὶ κυλιόμενος καὶ τὰ ἴχνη τούτου καταφιλῶν μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ τοῦ θαύματος· ἦν γὰρ εἰ καὶ τὸ γένος, ὡς εἴκοι, Βάρβαρος, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀκριβῶς βάρβαρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ γνώμης εὐ ἔχων καὶ συνέσεως οὐ πάμπαν ἀμέτοχος, ψυχῆς τε δυναμένης καλοῦ σπέρματος δεξασθαι. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ πλείστην ὡς ἐν βραχεὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἐκαρποῦτο καὶ τὴν ὠφέλειαν, τό τε πρὸς τοὺς πνευματικοὺς πόνους καρτερικὸν ἐκείνου καταπληττόμενος καὶ τὸ καινὸν τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ ἡμερότητος· ὅπερ καὶ μόνῃς τῆς θέας εὐθὺς ἐχειροῦτο τὸν ἐντυχάνοντα, κἂν αὐτόλιθός τις ἦν καὶ τὴν γνώμην θηριώδης τε καὶ ἀνήμερος, ὡς μηδὲ τὸ τῶν Σειρήνων εἶναι τι πρὸς τοῦτο, εἴ γε καὶ μῦθος οὐκ ἦν τὸ περὶ ἐκείνων ἀδόμενον. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν ἀνύσαντες ἦσαν ἤδη καὶ τοῦ κατὰ σκοπὸν οὐκ ἐξέπιπτον, ὁ μὲν Ἰσμαηλίτης ὑπέστρεφεν αὐθις ἡδονῇ τε καὶ λύπῃ σύμμικτος, τὸ μὲν ὅτι τοιούτων αὐτόπτης γενέσθαι παρ' ἐλπίδα πᾶσαν ἤξιωτο, μεῖζον εὐρηκῶς κατὰ πολὺ τοῦ ἔργου τὸ πάρεργον· λύπη γε μὴν οὗτοι μετρία κάτοχος ἦν καὶ δριμύειαι ταῖς τοῦ χωρισμοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁδύναις ἐβάλλετο, καὶ πᾶσι δηλὸς ἦν οὐκ ἀνεκτῶς τὴν ἐκείνου φέρων διάστασιν.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 218–219, § 31. Si veda anche Mitrea, “Remarks on the Literary Representations of the “Other” in Late Byzantine Hagiography,” in *Byzantine Heritages in South-Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, eds. Andrei Timotin, Srđan Pirivatrić, Oana Iacubovski (Études byzantines et post-byzantines, nouvelle série IV) (Heidelberg: Herlo Verlag, 2022), 410–413.

Questo primo passaggio è spunto per numerose considerazioni. Saba nel deserto al di là del fiume Giordano compie il suo viaggio in direzione del monastero di san Saba assistito da un cammelliere musulmano. L'uomo è definito da Filoteo genericamente come Ἰσμαηλίτης ο βάρβαρος, ossia come non-greco e non-cristiano e con ogni probabilità si tratta di una guida beduina. La sua fede islamica rivela caratteri fortemente influenzati da credenze popolari ed eterodosse: egli infatti dinnanzi al comportamento ascetico di Saba crede di aver incontrato una divinità anziché un semplice uomo, quasi considerasse il nostro monaco al pari di un *djinn* ossia uno spirito benigno. Ciò risponde alla convinzione dello stesso Filoteo che riteneva l'Islam un monoteismo imperfetto, una forma di poliarchia e politeismo a misura di fedeli, adoratori delle idee e delle creature, come si evince da un passo dell'*Elogio a Palamas*.¹⁸⁴

Tale convinzione da parte del cammelliere è avvalorata dal rifiuto di ogni sostentamento e servizio per Saba per tutta la durata del viaggio. Anche in questo caso si tratta di un dettaglio che ricorre in altre agiografie (*Vita di Ioannikios e Lazzaro Galesiota*)¹⁸⁵ e risponde al dettato evangelico. Il monaco difatti segue per il suo viaggio iniziatico quanto Cristo aveva ordinato ai suoi discepoli impartendo la missione di apostolato: "Non prendete nulla per il viaggio, né bastone, né sacca, né pane, né denaro, e non portatevi due tuniche" (Lk 9:3, Mt 10:9 e Mk 6:8). La seconda parte della pericope è interamente dedicata a fini encomiastici: lo stupore del cammelliere enfatizza la venerazione dovuta da tutti i credenti di fronte all'*exemplum* di umiltà rappresentata da Saba. Qui Filoteo aggiunge un aspetto non certo secondario: l'effetto della ταπείνωσις conquista il cuore indurito¹⁸⁶ del barbaro musulmano a dimostrazione della forza della grazia anche sugli Infedeli, quando essi mostrano disponibilità al bene: "Egli possedeva ragione, buon senso e un'anima capace di accogliere il buon grano." La mancata conversione del cammelliere non deve poi essere giudicata

¹⁸⁴ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 551, § 102: καὶ ὅτι μοναρχίας καὶ μιᾶς τριςποστάτου καὶ παντοδυνάμου θεότητος ἐν ἅπασι καὶ πρὸς πάντας πανταχοῦ κῆρυξ ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πολυαρχίας τε καὶ πολυθεΐας κατὰ τοὺς πολυθέους ἐκείνους ὄντως καὶ λατρευτὰς τῶν ἰδεῶν τε καὶ τῶν κτισμάτων.

¹⁸⁵ Per Ioannikios (†846) si ricorda la volontaria rinuncia alle provviste durante il suo viaggio verso Efeso; si veda *Vita di Ioannikios*, § 11, in Delehay, *Synaxarium*, 383 (composta da Saba), *BHG* 935; *Vita di Ioannikios*, § 42, in Delehay, *Synaxarium*, 408 (composta da Pietro), *BHG* 936. Nella *Vita di Lazzaro Galesiota* si menziona l'episodio in cui il santo, in fuga da predoni arabi, raggiunge Tiberiade, dove, rifocillato dagli abitanti, riprende il cammino con il suo compagno Paolo, ma i cammellieri lo derubano delle provviste: *Vita di Lazzaro*, § 14, l. 13 (viaggio senza provviste), 23, l. 516 (tappa a Tiberiade e furto).

¹⁸⁶ Anche questo dettaglio non è certo casuale. Il beduino rivela l'attitudine ad aprire la coscienza alla purezza dell'esempio di Saba, involontariamente abbracciando la disponibilità propria del cristiano al messaggio e all'insegnamento divino come detto in Mt 13:13-15.

come una parziale sconfitta del monaco poiché in realtà crea le premesse di un processo che si concluderà – come vedremo – nel trionfale ingresso di Saba in Gerusalemme al termine del lungo periodo di ascesi condotto nel deserto.

Proprio in questo deserto oltre il Giordano ha luogo l'episodio più negativo tra quelli riferiti nella *Vita*, quando Saba è aggredito da due predoni arabi che lo derubano e lo percuotono.

Ἀραβας αὐτῷ τοίνυν ἀνὰ τὴν ἔρημον, οὕτως ὡς εἶχε σχήματος ἀλωμένῳ, δύο τινὰς ἐπανάστησιν· οἱ καὶ περιτυχόντες αὐτῷ καὶ καινὴν πάντη καὶ ἄτοπον αὐτοῦ κατειπόντες πρόφασιν, ὡς εἴη χρημάτων δηλαδὴ φύλαξ πάλαι τεθησαυρισμένων αὐτόθι χριστιανοῖς, οἱ καὶ τῆς γῆς φασὶ ταύτης δεσπόζοντες ἐτύγχανον πρότερον, καὶ δεῖ τούτων αὐτοῖς ἐκστῆναι τὸν τόπον καθυποδείξαντα (τοῦ πονηροῦ δ' ἀτεχνῶς ὑποθήκη τοῦτο, τοῦ τὸν πόλεμον συσκευάζοντος) τοσαύταις αὐτὸν σιγῶντα ταῖς πληγαῖς κατακόπτουσι καὶ οὕτω βαρυτάταις (ἀνῆπτε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὁ Σατὰν τὸν βαρβαρικὸν θυμόν, τῆς Χαλδαϊκῆς ἐκείνης καμίνου πολλαπλασίονα), ὡς καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐκείνους, τὸ ζῆν ἐκείνῳ καθάπαξ ἀπαγορεύσαντας, ὡς νεκρὸν αὐτοῦ που κατὰ βόθρου τινὸς ἀπολιπεῖν αὐτίκα βουλεύεσθαι· ἔπειτα δέισαντες, μήπου τοῦ πτώματος ἀνασφήλας (ὑπῆν γὰρ αὐτῷ ζωτικὴ τις ἔτι μικρὰ δύναμις) καὶ τῷ σατράπῃ τοῦ ἔθνους δηλὸς γενόμενος κινδύνου πρόξενος αὐτοῖς γένοιτο (φίλα γὰρ εἶναι πρὸς γε τὸ ἡμέτερον γένος διὰ πολλὰς τινὰς τὰς αἰτίας, τοῖς ἀρχηγοῖς ἐκείνων ἄνωθεν ὥσπερ νενόμιστο), τοῦτο τὰ πονηροῦ δέισαντες ὄργανα κακῶ τὸ κακὸν ἐπεχειροῦν ἰᾶσθαι κάκιστά τε καὶ ἀτοπώτατα· ἀποκτεῖναι γὰρ ἐπ' οὐδεμιᾷ τὸ παράπαν προφάσει ψηφίζονται τὸν ἀνεύθυνον, ὡς ἂν τοῦ προορηθέντος ἐκεῖνοι δέους σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀπαλλάξειαν. Κἂν εἰς ἔργον ἐξέβῃ τὸ κάκιστον βούλευμα, μὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ κεκωλυκὸτος εὐθύς, τοῦ δι' ἐκείνου τὴν σωτηρίαν πόρωθεν ἡμῖν φιланθρωπότατα καταρτίζοντος.

Ὡς γὰρ τῶν δημίων ἐκείνων ἄτερος ἡρκῶς ἦν ἄνω τὸ ξίφος, ὥστ' ἂν ἀφελέσθαι τὸν ψυχορραγοῦντα τῆς κεφαλῆς – ὡ δίκης ἐξαισίων ἔργων Θεοῦ – ξηρά τε καὶ ἄπρακτος εὐθύς ἦν ἡ χεὶρ, αὐτῷ ξίφει κατὰ μέσον ἡωρημένη τὸν ἀέρα καὶ δίκας εἰσπραττομένη τοῦ παραλόγου τολμήματος. Τοῦτο τὸν μὲν ἕτερον δέους ἐμπλήσαν “ὄλω ποδὶ” φεύγειν ἔπειθε, τούτῳ δὲ καὶ μόνῳ τὴν σωτηρίαν πιστεύσαντα· τὸν δέ γε πληγέντα νοῦς εἰσῆλθεν εὐθύς, πολὺν τε τὸν μετὰμελον εἶχε καὶ θερμὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπέσταζε δάκρυα, τὴν ἀθρόαν συμφορὰν ἐκείνην ἀποδυρόμενος. Τί οὖν ἢ φιланθρωποτάτη ψυχὴ καὶ τῷ ὄντι χριστομίμητος τὴν συμπάθειαν; Ἐπεὶ τοῦ γενομένου συνῆκε, κατοικτεῖρει τῆς συμφορᾶς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ δῆμιον, καὶ πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀπιδῶν, μικρόν τε τὰς χεῖρας πρὸς Θεὸν ἀνατείνας οἶον, οὐ γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἐκτείνειν εἶχε ταῖς πληγαῖς ἐκείναις κατειργασμένας, ἐνεργόν, ὡς τὸ πρότερον, αὐθις τῷ πεπληγόντι τὸ μέρος ἀποκαθίστησι. Καὶ ὁ μὲν ὀξυτέραν τοῦ πάθους εὐρηκῶς παρ' ἐλπίδα τὴν θεραπείαν ἀπιὼν εὐθύς ᾤχετο, τῷ κειμένῳ δ' αὐθις ἐπιστὰς ὁ γλυκὺς

ἐκεῖνος ἐπίκουρος, ὁ λαμπρὸς ἄγγελός φημι τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τῆς τούτου
δεξιᾶς λαβόμενος ἱλαρῶς ἀνίστησί τε καὶ τῆς συνήθους ἐμπίλῃσι χάριτος
καὶ πάντα παρῆν εὐθύς ὁμοῦ τὰ χρηστά, σώματος ῥῶσις, εὐφροσύνη
ψυχῆς, φωτισμὸς ἀμφοτέρων καὶ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον εὐδρομία κοινή.¹⁸⁷

Il passo descrive con realismo i pericoli nei quali incorrono gli anacoreti nel deserto palestinese. Saba è vittima di due predoni che Filoteo identifica come arabi. La loro brutalità ha però poco a che vedere con l'appartenenza religiosa poiché, come l'agiografo ribadisce in tre riprese, il loro comportamento è dovuto più all'intervento fuorviante del Maligno che all'animosità interreligiosa. Colpisce la motivazione vacua che li spinge all'aggressione: ai loro occhi Saba è sicuramente un eremita custode di antichi tesori cristiani nascosti in quel luogo. Nelle parole dei predoni c'è tuttavia l'eco di argomentazioni in uso all'epoca – e non solo – nella controversistica islamo-cristiana sul possesso della Palestina tanto che due furfanti adducono come ulteriore pretesto per farsi consegnare il bottino la certezza di essere padroni di quella terra da un tempo più antico. Segue quindi l'impietosa descrizione della violenza con la quale essi si abbattono sull'inermi vittima che, novello Cristo, in silenzio accetta il supplizio del martirio. L'agiografo a questo punto inserisce un dettaglio per noi assai significativo. Dinanzi alla gravità del loro gesto i predoni sospettano che, se la notizia di ciò giungesse alle orecchie del loro "satrapo," correrebbero gravi pericoli poiché *"a questo genere di faccende prestavano attenzione i loro arconti in difesa del nostro popolo per molti motivi come da tempo era uso."* Dissentiamo dalla lettura del passo proposta dalla Congourdeau.¹⁸⁸ Difficilmente Filoteo qui allude ad accordi intercorsi tra i capi tribù beduini e autorità bizantine precedenti l'invasione araba. Molto più probabilmente l'agiografo descrive – non sappiamo con quale grado di competenza – la situazione politica del tempo: con il termine *σάτραπος* indica presumibilmente un capo tribù al di sopra del quale si trovano i governatori locali (*ἀρχηγοί*), diretti responsabili dei rapporti amichevoli (*φίλα*) con i Cristiani. La bontà di questa lettura è confermata da alcuni passaggi dei trattati che sul finire del sec. XIII i sultani mamelucchi, signori d'Egitto, Siria e Palestina, strinsero con i loro pari grado Cristiani. Abbiamo notizia difatti di un accordo tra il sultano al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn e l'imperatore Michele VIII datato al 1281 nel quale, tra le altre cose, sono regolati i passaggi nel territorio mamelucco di mercanti cristiani e dove si fa riferimento al trattamento mite da

¹⁸⁷ Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 235–236, § 40.

¹⁸⁸ Congourdeau, "La terre sainte," 131: "Il est cependant difficile de dire si Philothée glisse ici une allusion aux antiques alliances entre les empereurs byzantins et les tribus arabes fédérées avant l'émergence de l'islam."

adottare nei confronti degli schiavi cristiani.¹⁸⁹ Ancor più significativo, anche se non riferito ai rapporti intercorsi con l'autorità bizantina, è il trattato del 1290 stipulato sempre da Qalāwūn con Alfonso III d'Aragona nel quale si definiscono le condizioni di garanzia per i pellegrinaggi cristiani in Terra Santa:

Provided also that if anyone arrives from the territory of the king of Aragon or the territory of his brothers and their Frankish allies, seeking to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, having a letter of the king of Aragon with his seal to the governor of our lord the Sultan in Jerusalem, it shall be permitted to him to make the pilgrimage of right, so that he may accomplish his pilgrimage, and return home safe and secure in respect of himself and his chattels, whether [the pilgrim be] a man or a woman.¹⁹⁰

Questi testi certificano quanto durante la fine del sec. XIII e l'inizio del sec. XIV il sultanato mamelucco fosse sensibile all'accoglienza dei pellegrini e ne tutelasse l'incolumità come è indirettamente esplicitato nel passo nella nostra *Vita*.

Il resto del passo è infine dedicato all'elogio della carità del monaco. Saba è difatti protetto da Dio che inaridisce la mano del beduino e mette in fuga il compagno atterrito. Amorevolezza e compassione sono i temi cardine di questa sezione dove l'evento miracoloso è seguito dall'assistenza che il santo malconcio presta al suo aguzzino. L'invito evangelico all'amorevolezza nei confronti dei nemici (Lk 6:27-38) diviene così comandamento da applicare nei confronti dell'Infedele, anche in previsione di un'eventuale conversione (πρὸς τὸ μέλλον εὐδρομία κοινή).

Gli effetti del comportamento di Saba suscitano il rispetto e l'ammirazione tra gli Ismaeliti, come Filoteo riassume nel passo che segue:

Οὐδὲ τὸ τῶν Ἰσμηλιτῶν ἔθνος ἔξω τοῦ κατ' αὐτὸν ἦσαν λόγου καὶ θαύματος· ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτοις, καίτοι γε τοιούτοις οὔσι, πολὺς ὁ περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς λόγος ἦν καὶ σὺν αἰδοῖ τινι τούτῳ προσεῖχον καὶ τοῖς ὑπὲρ ἐκείνου λεγομένοις μεθ' ἡδονῆς προσετίθεντο. Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἐκείνοις ἦν, ἡσυχία δηλαδὴ καὶ ταῖς ὑπερφυέσι θεωρίαις πρὸς Θεὸν καθ' ἐκάστην ἀνατεινόμενος καὶ ἀκορέστως τοῦ κάλλους ἐκείνου κατατρυφῶν.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Peter M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260–1290). Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christians Rulers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 118–128, in part. 123–124, §§ 6–7 e 124, § 8 ("If there should be in his Majesty's territory Christian slaves, being Greeks or of other Christian nations and adhering to the religion of the Christians, and should a group of them be emancipated, let it be freely and legally permitted by his Majesty to those holding certificates of emancipation to travel by sea to Our territory").

¹⁹⁰ Citiamo la traduzione inglese del testo che si legge ancora in Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 129–140, in part. 137, § 18.

¹⁹¹ Tsamis, *Αγιολογικά ἔργα*, 237, § 41, ll. 31–39.

Qui l'agiografo riconosce anche agli Infedeli la capacità di riconoscere le straordinarie qualità del suo campione, come era stato nel caso del cammelliere. Saba diviene così un riferimento per la popolazione locale non cristiana che appare affascinata dal suo esempio. È poi indicativo che Filoteo accenni alla convivenza pacifica della quale gode il monaco presso i Musulmani, come testimonianza ulteriore dei rapporti corretti tra i due gruppi religiosi. Tale fama è infine coronata dall'episodio dell'ingresso di Saba in Gerusalemme al termine del suo lungo tirocinio ascetico per i monasteri e i deserti della Palestina:

Ὁ μὲν οὖν τοῖς συνεκπεμφθεῖσι τούτοις ἡγεμόσι τῆς ὁδοῦ χρώμενος εὐθὺ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων ἐχώρει· τῆς δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ φήμης ὥσπερ ὁσμῆς τινος μύρου πανταχόσε διαδοθείσης – ἦν γὰρ τοῖς μὲν καὶ ἀπὸ πείρας αὐτῆς, τοῖς δ' ἀπὸ μόνης τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐπίσημος ὁ γενναῖος – παμπληθεὶ πρὸς ἐκείνους συνέρρεον, “Σάβας ὁ μέγας ἐπανήκει τῆς μακρᾶς ἀποδημίας ἐκείνης” πρὸς ἀλλήλους μεθ' ἡδονῆς λέγοντες· κάντεῦθεν πλήρης ἦν ὁδὸς καὶ πλατεῖα πᾶσα τῶν προσυπαντῶντων, τῶν προπεμπόντων, τῶν παρεπομένων, πάντων τοῖς ἐκείνου ποσὶ προσπιπτόντων, χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καταφιλοῦντων μεθ' ὅσης τῆς αἰδοῦς καὶ τοῦ θαύματος, οὐ τῶν τῆς ἡμετέρας αὐλῆς φημι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν ἔθνους μοίρας τινὸς οὐκ ὀλίγης, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πάντων, ἐπειδὴ καὶ πάντες τῆς ἀρετῆς αὐτοῦ φημι καὶ τῆς φήμης περιφανῶς ἤττηντο, καθὰ καὶ φθάσας ὁ λόγος δεδήλωκεν. Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τοῦ ἔθνους ἀρχηγὸν αὐτόθι τότε παρόντα τοῖς ἄλλοις παραπλησίως ἢ περὶ τούτου φήμη κατέσχε, καὶ μηδὲν ὅλως μελήσας εἰς ὧψιν τῷ μεγάλῳ καὶ οὗτος ἔρχεται καὶ πολλὴν αὐτῷ τὴν ἱκετείαν προσάγει λόγου τινὸς καὶ ὁμιλίας τῆς καλῆς ἐκείνου γλώττης ἀκοῦσαι, χρημάτων ἀφθονίαν εἰς ἀμοιβὴν προτιθεὶς φιλοτίμως καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ὑπακοήν, ἐφ' οἷς ἂν ὁ μέγας ἐξαιτεῖν δηλαδὴ βουληθεῖν· ὁ δὲ “Ὁ αὐτός εἰμι” λέγειν “ὥσανεὶ πανταχοῦ πρὸς πάντας” ἐδόκει “καὶ οὐκ ἡλλοίωμαι.” Ὅθεν καὶ μᾶλλον ἔτι τὸ σταθερὸν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τὸ τοῦ φρονήματος οἷον ἀδούλωτον ὁ βάρβαρος ἐκτόπως θαυμάσας, τὸν μὲν μετὰ μεῖζονός τινος τῆς αἰδοῦς αὐτῆς ἀφῆκε, τὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας δόξης πολλοῦ τινος ἀξιῶν ἐξ ἐκείνου, τοῖς δὲ νομοθέταις τε καὶ προστάταις τῆς ἰδίας θρησκείας πολλήν τινα τὴν μέμψιν ἐπῆγε καὶ μικροῦ τινος ἐτίθει λόγου τὰ κατ' ἐκείνους.¹⁹²

Per chiarezza osserviamo che il passo è suddiviso in due sezioni: 1) la scena dell'ingresso nella città santa e 2) l'incontro e il breve colloquio con il governatore. È evidente per la prima parte come l'agiografo segua la traccia neotestamentaria dell'ingresso di Cristo in Gerusalemme.¹⁹³ Saba procede scortato tra due ali di folla, accolto come un prodigioso visitatore dopo che sono circolate notizie sul suo conto che con toni poetici per due volte sono paragonate

¹⁹² Tsamis, *Αγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, 257–258, § 50, ll. 24–49.

¹⁹³ Mt 21:1–11, 15–17; Mk 11:1–10; Lk 19:29–39; Jn 12:12–16.

dall'agiografo alla fragranza di un profumo. La folla dei Cristiani aumenta e si accalca per vedere e riconoscere il santo. Qui Filoteo annota poi che tale moltitudine è costituita anche da Infedeli *vinti dalla sua virtù*. Questo dettaglio è assai importante per la nostra analisi. L'interesse dei Musulmani di Gerusalemme di fronte alla fama e alla virtù di Saba testimonia la fluidità di notizie che travalicano la comunità cristiana palestinese e certifica un'osmosi tra i due gruppi religiosi, di certo enfatizzata dall'intento encomiastico dell'agiografo. Ne deriva comunque l'immagine di un'integrazione culturale non riscontrabile per altre regioni come ad esempio nel caso di Palamas che da prigioniero nel suo lungo viaggio per le città della Bitinia non raccolse, nonostante la sua fama, favore e riconoscimento tra la popolazione musulmana. Il caso di Saba rappresenta quindi un'eccezione così come eccezionale ci pare la situazione di convivenza tra Arabi e Cristiani nella Palestina del sec. XIV. Le ragioni non vanno addebitate soltanto alla straordinaria figura e all'operato del santo, ma a un'apertura e disponibilità della popolazione locale dinnanzi a casi di pellegrini cristiani che frequentavano costantemente i Luoghi santi.

Come per la prima sezione anche la seconda parte del passo risente di un legame ipostestuale con il Nuovo Testamento. Il governatore di Gerusalemme (ἀρχηγός)¹⁹⁴ che tenta di vedere e conoscere Saba rimanda alla scena del vangelo di Luca nella quale Erode cerca di vedere con i suoi occhi Gesù, di cui conosce i miracoli (Lk 9:7-9). L'interesse del Mamelucco è tuttavia privo di doppi fini e trappole rispetto a Erode, poiché egli sembra voler esaminare in prima persona la figura di questo monaco in grado di creare tanto scompiglio in città. Emerge quindi la preoccupazione del governatore che intende sincerarsi di fronte a potenziali tensioni nella comunità da lui gestita di certo in rapporto alle disposizioni che prevedevano l'accoglienza e la tutela nei confronti dei Cristiani come accennato in precedenza dallo stesso Filoteo. Dalle parole dell'agiografo otteniamo uno spaccato della Gerusalemme mamelucca che in questi decenni vive un periodo di decadenza sia demografica sia economica.¹⁹⁵ Sul piano amministrativo la città santa cade sotto la giurisdizione della provincia di Siria dopo la sottrazione ai Crociati della Galilea con la presa della roccaforte di Safed nel 1266 da parte del generale Baybar.¹⁹⁶ In questi anni (1312-1340) la Siria è

¹⁹⁴ L'utilizzo del termine in questo contesto, con chiaro riferimento a una carica amministrativa mamelucca, rafforza la nostra ipotesi intorno alla distinzione σάτραπος / ἀρχηγοί citata nel passo riguardante l'aggressione dei due predoni beduini.

¹⁹⁵ Sintesi in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 332-333, s.v. al-Ḳuds.

¹⁹⁶ Sull'attività militare di Baybar si veda Joseph Drory, "Founding a New *Mamlaka*: Some Remarks Concerning Safed and the Organization of the Region in the Mamluk Period," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, eds. Michael Winter, Amalia Levanoni (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 163-187, in part. 163-165.

controllata da Ḥusāmī al-Nāṣirī Sayf al-Dīn, meglio noto come Tankiz;¹⁹⁷ in ragione di ciò il centro di potere è rappresentato da Damasco mentre Gerusalemme è relegata a un ruolo secondario e periferico nonostante la sua rilevanza religiosa e simbolica. Partendo da questi dati è per noi possibile identificare – fugando i dubbi della Congourdeau¹⁹⁸ – il governatore con il quale Saba ebbe il suo breve incontro nella persona di ‘Alam al-Dīn Sanjar bin ‘Abdallah al Jawulī che, al servizio di Tankiz, resse la città tra il 1311 e il 1320, dando vita a una breve rinascita dell’attività edilizia della quale è traccia la costruzione della moschea che porta il suo nome.¹⁹⁹

Dal dialogo invece possiamo desumere ben poco: il governatore offre a Saba una ricompensa, ma rimane stupefatto dinanzi alla modestia del Cristiano del quale esalta l’esempio di fronte alla popolazione e redarguisce gli *ulema* manchevoli a suo dire di tale qualità. A nostro giudizio Filoteo tradisce, ritraendo questa situazione, la storicità dell’episodio. Non va difatti dimenticato che Filoteo è autore anche dell’*Elogio a Palamas*, nel quale, narrando la prigionia del metropolita, cita *verbatim* il testo delle *Lettere* che Gregorio inviò alla sua comunità a Tessalonica. In più occasioni e in particolare al termine dell’accesa discussione con i Chioni Palamas è elogiato dalle autorità musulmane per la compostezza e il tenore dei suoi interventi. Filoteo sembra avere ben chiaro questo esempio e pare replicarlo nel caso di Saba, testimoniando l’orgoglio bizantino a confronto con il barbaro infedele.

Alcune conclusioni

Questo lungo percorso ci conduce a una valutazione sintetica data la mole e la molteplicità dei casi presi in considerazione. I numerosi episodi di scorrerie praticate da flottiglie turche hanno influito pesantemente sulla vita dei

¹⁹⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 185–186, s.v. Tankiz.

¹⁹⁸ Congourdeau, “La terre sainte,” 132: “Quant à l’identité de cet ἀρχηγὸν τοῦ ἔθνους, elle reste obscure. S’agit-il d’un de ces chefs de tribus arabes dont Philothée nous déjà exposé les sentiments pro-byzantins, et qui « se trouve là » à ce moment (αὐτόθι τότε παρόντα)? Ou doit-on voir en lui un représentant du pouvoir mamlouk, par exemple l’émir de Jérusalem?”

¹⁹⁹ Sull’identità e l’operato di Sanjar al Jawulī si vedano Ulrich Haarmann, “Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-century Egypt and Syria,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33.1 (1988): 96–98; Hatim Mahamid, “The Construction of Islamic-educational Institutions on Mamluk Gaza,” *Nebula* 4.4 (2007): 36–37; Jonathan P. Berkey, “Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1: *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 394. Per i monumenti della Gerusalemme mamelucca buona sintesi in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 5, 342–343, s.v. al-Ḳuds.

centri monastici e le comunità atthonite nel corso del sec. XIV. La percezione della brutalità e della violenza perpetrate hanno imposto un generale ripensamento delle forme di vita e di pratica ascetica sul Monte Santo. In forma indiretta tale situazione di incertezza è stata infatti il motore per la propagazione dei modelli dell'Esicasmismo tardo bizantino e – aggiungiamo – dei temi della controversia palamitica che ad esso inizialmente è collegata.

Nell'ambito della letteratura agiografica il timore per gli invasori ha rappresentato inoltre l'occasione narrativa per elogiare le qualità dei singoli campioni del monachesimo tardo-bizantino. Va però rilevato con chiarezza che mai in questo genere di testi si aprono riflessioni di maggior respiro ed ampiezza sui principi religiosi e sui valori etici che muovono l'azione degli avversari. In altre parole l'Islam degli aggressori turchi è appiattito su una dimensione di violenza, che aprioristicamente è riconosciuta come tratto distintivo dei seguaci di Maometto.

In conclusione nelle testimonianze agiografiche qui raccolte – e dati i canoni propri del genere non dovremmo attenderci nulla d'altro – l'Islam e le sue pratiche assumono il ruolo di precondizione storica ed umana, al pari di altri eventi o interventi del Maligno, per l'elevazione delle qualità dei santi protagonisti e dei loro percorsi di vita. Bisogna rivolgersi al genere del martirologio per osservare casi e situazioni nelle quali direttamente si affronti il tema del confronto interreligioso.²⁰⁰

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²⁰⁰ Sul tema si vedano Marco Fanelli, "Neomartiri di età paleologa e temi controversistici contro l'Islam," in *Dialoghi con Bisanzio. Spazi di discussione, percorsi di ricerca. Atti dell'VIII Congresso dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Ravenna, 22–25 settembre 2015)*, vol. 1, eds. Salvatore Cosentino, Margherita E. Pomero, Giorgio Vespignani (Spoleto: Istituto di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2019), 439–457; idem, "La memoria e l'immagine dei neomartiri di età paleologa," in *Les nouveaux martyrs à Byzance*, vol. 2: *Études sur les nouveaux martyrs*, eds. André Binggeli, Sophie Métivier (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2021), 363–398; Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes. Moving Frontiers, Shifting Identities in the Land of Rome (13th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

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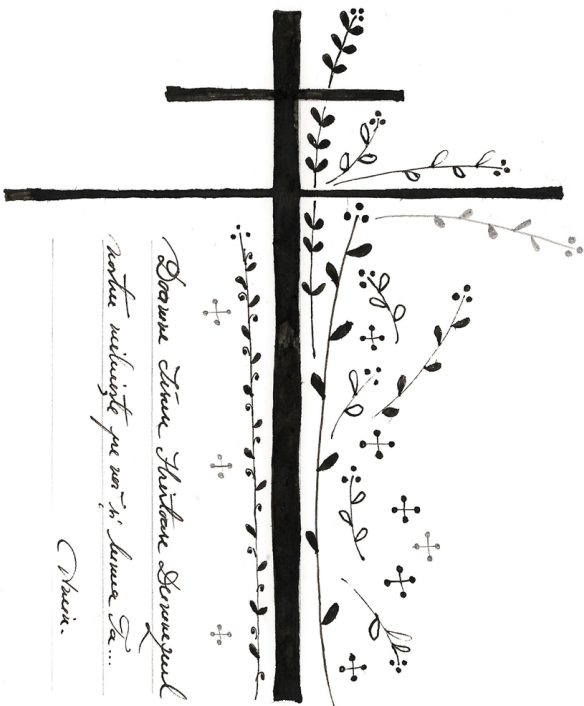
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Chaque chose finit son temps
votre vieillesse par son jour, comme ça...

Chacun.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ICONOCLAST ISSUE IN THE HESYCHAST CONTROVERSY

Lev LUKHOVITSKIY*

ABSTRACT. Mid-fourteenth-century Byzantine sources bear witness to an increased interest in Iconoclasm among the theologians involved in the Hesychast Controversy. The writings of the defenders of icon veneration were mined for authoritative quotations and the history of Iconoclasm became a repository of historical role models. This article is comprised of two sections. The first part expands a catalogue of texts of the epoch which make explicit reference to precedents in the Iconoclast period. The second part assesses, first, the polemical advantages and disadvantages of the accusation of iconoclasm in mid-fourteenth-century Byzantium by revisiting the afterlife of this label after the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Secondly, it traces the dynamics of how Iconoclasm was remembered in the Hesychast debate, distinguishing between the mythologizing and the philological levels of remembrance. The conclusion draws a connection between Nikephoros Gregoras' approaches to theological polemics and to hagiography. The initial success and eventual fading-away of the iconoclastic motif in Hesychast polemics is explained by the uniqueness of Gregoras' literary method and his personal circumstances.

Keywords: Nikephoros Gregoras, John Kyparissiotis, Theodore Graptos, Byzantine literature, cultural memory, Palaeologan period, Iconoclasm, Hesychasm

The objective of the present article is twofold. The first part (which is technical in nature) constitutes an addendum to a 2013 publication: it provides a list of texts pertaining to the Hesychast Controversy that contain explicit mentions of Iconoclasm (or quotations from anti-iconoclast sources) but which,

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for a variety of reasons, previously escaped my notice. The second part, which is more speculative in nature, ponders the relative importance of theology, politics, and literary aesthetics as factors that propelled the Iconoclast issue to the top of the agenda during the Hesychast Controversy. I argue that, despite undeniable polemical advantages surrounding the accusation of Iconoclasm, explained by its usage during the Komnenian and early Palaeologan epochs, it is ultimately Nikephoros Gregoras' personal circumstances and literary principles that should be held responsible for the revitalization of the Iconoclast issue in mid-fourteenth-century Byzantium.

1.

The preliminary catalogue of fourteenth-century authors interested in Iconoclasm, which I published in 2013, included Joseph Kalothetes, Gregory Palamas, Philotheos Kokkinos, John VI Kantakouzenos, Nikephoros Gregoras, Isaac Argyros, Theodore Dexios, and Manuel Kalekas (John Kyparissiotis was barely mentioned).¹ These are, by any count, the most distinguished theologians of the epoch, but the list is far from being exhaustive. It should be expanded to include:

1. The compilers of the *Synodal Tomos* of 1351, Philotheos Kokkinos and Neilos Kabasilas, who mention Theodore Graptos by name, the confessor of second Iconoclasm.²

2. Kallistos I, Patriarch of Constantinople (1350–1353, 1355–1363/4). Of interest are the *Homily against the False Prophets and False Teachers* (1355–1357), in which the anti-Palamites are compared to the arch-iconoclast Eusebius of Caesarea,³ and the *Homilies against Nikephoros Gregoras* (1357–1359): *Homily 2* (which makes reference to Eusebius' *Letter to Constantia*), *Homily 7* (a refutation

¹ Lev Lukhovitskij, "Historical Memory of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the 14th Century: The Case of Nikephoros Gregoras and Philotheos Kokkinos," in *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*, eds. Sergei Mariev and Wiebke-Marie Stock (Byzantinisches Archiv 25) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 210–213, 231–233.

² *Concilium Constantinopolitanum 1351*, ed. Frederick Lauritzen, in *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches: From Constantinople 861 to Moscow 2000*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta 4.1) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 189.418–419. On Theodore Graptos, see *PmbZ* 7526.

³ Kallistos I, *Homilia adversus pseudoprophetas et pseudomagistros*, ed. Constantine Paidas, *Ψευδοπροφήτες, μάγοι και αίρετικοί στο Βυζάντιο κατά τον 14^ο αιώνα: Ἐπὶ ἀνέκδοτες ὁμιλίαι τοῦ Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Καλλίστου Α΄* (Κείμενα Βυζαντινῆς Λογοτεχνίας 6) (Athens: Κανάκη, 2011), 70–126, here at 122: αὐτὸς ὁ τῶν εἰκονομάχων προστάτης Εὐσέβιος. On Kallistos I, see *PLP* 10478.

of Gregoras' reading of Eusebius), and *Homily* 9. The title of the *Homily* 9 promises to prove that Gregoras "inflicts on the Church the disgrace of Iconoclasm."⁴

3. George of Pelagonia, in a short treatise *Against Palamas*, composed after Palamas' demise, presumably in 1360 (wherein the *Antirrhetici* of Nikephoros of Constantinople are quoted and attributed to Graptos).⁵

4. John Kyparissiotēs:

a. *Decades (Elementary Exposition of Theological Sayings)* (wherein multiple quotations from Nikephoros of Constantinople are attributed to Theodore Graptos).⁶

b. Polemical treatises. After the demise of his teacher Nikephoros Gregoras, Kyparissiotēs, as a new intellectual leader of the anti-Palamites, authored a series of polemical treatises known as the *Transgressions of the Palamites* or *Against the Heresy of Palamas*. Book 5, which is primarily directed against Neilos Kabasilas, was composed when Neilos was still alive (i.e., before 1363).⁷ Books 1–4 can be tentatively dated to the early 1360s (before the second election of Kokkinos as patriarch of Constantinople in October 1364). Books 1–4 were, in turn, refuted one by one by John VI Kantakouzenos in 1365–1367, but this voluminous treatise remains unedited (*Laur. Plut.* 8.8).⁸ Material for our analysis can be found in all parts of Kyparissiotēs' oeuvre. Book 1 opens with an excursus on the

⁴ Kallistos I, *Homiliae adversus Gregoram*, ed. Paidas, *Οἱ κατὰ Γρηγορά Ὁμιλίες τοῦ Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Καλλίστου Α΄* (Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία καὶ Θεολογία 1) (Athens: Γρηγόρη, 2013), 89–299, esp. *Hom.* 2, 17, *Hom.* 7, 3–4, and *Hom.* 9 (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ προστρίβει τὸ τῆς εἰκονομαχίας αἷσχος). The dating of the *Homilies* depends on the date of the *Second Antirrhetics* by Gregoras (PLP 4443), which is uncertain; see Lukhovitskij, "Historical Memory," 212, n. 49. Assuredly, they were composed before Gregoras' death, which is usually placed in 1361; see Demetrios B. Gonis, *Τὸ συγγραφικὸν ἔργον τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Καλλίστου Α΄* (Athens: Ἀλτιντζή, 1980), 162–199.

⁵ George of Pelagonia, *Adversus Palamam*, ed. Ioannis D. Polemis, *Theologica varia inedita saeculi XIV* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 3–51, esp. 43 (chapter 32). The quotation comes from Nikephoros I, *Antirrhetici tres adversus Constantinum Copronymum*, PG 100, 304c-d (I 41). On George of Pelagonia, see PLP 4117.

⁶ John Kyparissiotēs, *Expositio materiaria*, ed. Basil L. Dentakis, *Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κυπαρισσιώτου Τῶν Θεολογικῶν Ῥήσεων Στοιχειώδης Ἑκθεσις: Editio princeps* (Athens, 1982), 279 (VI 4), 287–289 (VI 5), 601–605 (X 4). The fragments quoted and discussed go back to Nikephoros I, *Contra Eusebium*, ed. Jean-Baptiste-François Pitra, *Spicilegium solesmense complectens sanctorum patrum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum anecdota hactenus opera*, vol. 1 (Paris: F. Didot, 1852), 408.1–27, 417.34–418.15, 420.10–28, and Nikephoros I, *Antirrhetici*, 325b (I 48), 304c-d (I 41), 325b (I 48). On John Kyparissiotēs, see PLP 13900.

⁷ On this book, see Anna Gioffreda, "Giovanni Ciparissiota e il 'Contra Nilum Cabasilam.' L'autore e il suo testo," *Medioevo greco* 17 (2017): 87–106.

⁸ Antonio Rigo, "Il Prooemium contra Barlaamum et Acindynum di Giovanni Cantacuzeno e le sue fonti," *REB* 74 (2016): 6–13, and Gregorios Mpagkabos, "Ἰωάννης ΣΤ΄ Καντακουζηνός. Το θεολογικὸ τοῦ ἔργο" (PhD diss., University of Thessaloniki, 2008), 58–62.

history of heresies, in which Iconoclasm occupies an important place.⁹ Books 2 and 5 contain quotations from Nikephoros, some of which are ascribed to Theodore Graptos¹⁰ and some of which are transmitted anonymously.¹¹ In Book 3, Kyparissiotēs presents his reader with a peculiar logical twist by claiming that the Iconoclasts and the Palamites are very much alike precisely because they say diametrically opposing things about Christ's Transfiguration (ἐκ διαμέτρου τὸ κακὸν καθέστηκεν).¹² Book 4 remains unedited.

5. Prochoros Kydonēs, who quotes Nikephoros of Constantinople as Theodore Graptos in a short treatise *On the Light of Tabor* (after 1365).¹³

6. Arsenios of Tyre, who quotes Nikephoros of Constantinople's (i.e., Theodore Graptos') famous defense of the simplicity of God, which was known to almost every participant of the controversy, in a *Tomos* against the decisions of the 1351 Council (1367, according to Ioannis Polemis).¹⁴

7. An anonymous author of a lengthy treatise against Kantakouzenos preserved in *Vaticanus gr.* 1096, ff. 65^r–148^r, who quotes many fragments from Nikephoros of Constantinople (Theodore Graptos), some of which remain unknown to his contemporaries.¹⁵ On internal grounds, the text can be dated to 1381–1383,

⁹ Kyparissiotēs, *Palamiticarum transgressionum liber primus*, PG 152, 663–738, esp. 672–673 (chapter 1.1). This edition, which reproduces an earlier one by François Combefis, includes only the first and the fourth chapters of Book 1. Chapters two and three are unedited.

¹⁰ Kyparissiotēs, *Contra tomum palamiticum*, ed. Constantine E. Liakouras, “Ιωάννου τοῦ Κυπαρασιώτου κατὰ τῶν τοῦ Παλαμικοῦ Τόμου διακρίσεων καὶ ἐνώσεων ἐν τῷ Θεῷ: *Editio princeps*” (PhD diss., University of Athens, 1991), 216, 310, 461–464, 467; quotations go back to Nikephoros I, *Apologeticus Maior*, PG 100, 797a (chapter 77) and *Antirrhetici*, 304c–d (I 41), 325b (I 48).

¹¹ Kyparissiotēs, *Orationes antirrheticae quinque contra Nilum Cabasilam*, ed. Stavros Th. Marangoudakis, “Ιωάννου τοῦ Κυπαρασιώτου κατὰ Νεῖλου Καβάσιλα λόγοι πέντε ἀντιρρητικοί: *Editio princeps*” (PhD diss., University of Athens, 1984), 168–169 (chapter IV.3). Once again, the quotation comes from Nikephoros I, *Antirrhetici*, 304c–d (I 41).

¹² Kyparissiotēs, *Contra Palamitas liber tritus*, ed. Soteroula N. Pyrrillou, “Ο λόγιος Ιωάννης Κυπαρασιώτης καὶ τὸ Τρίτο Βιβλίο τῆς πραγματείας του Κατὰ τῆς τῶν Παλαμιτῶν Αἰρέσεως (Κριτική ἐκδοση — Μετάφραση — Σχολιασμός)” (PhD diss., University of Athens, 2014), 262–263, 322–324, 333–335.

¹³ Prochoros Kydonēs, *De lumine Thaborico*, ed. Polemis, *Theologica varia inedita*, 327–359, here chapter 27 quotes Nikephoros I, *Antirrhetici*, 297 (I 29). On Prochoros Kydonēs, see PLP 13883.

¹⁴ Polemis, “Arsenius of Tyrus and His Tome against Palamites,” *JÖB* 43 (1993): 268, 271; quotation from Nikephoros I, *Antirrhetici*, 304d (I 41). On Arsenios, see PLP 1407.

¹⁵ Anonymus, *Adversus Cantacuzenum*, ed. Polemis, in *Theologica varia inedita*, 55–323, esp. chapters 10–11, 24, 72, 86, 90–91, 118, 151, 194, 240, and 295. For instance, a fragment in chapter 11.3–8 (= Nikephoros I, *Contra Eusebium*, 407.1–8) (Τί δήποτε καὶ ἀόρατον ... μικρολογούμενος) cannot be found in any other fourteenth-century writer.

but its authorship is contested. According to Polemis, it was composed by Kyparissiotēs. The other possible author is Argyros.¹⁶

By the late 1350s, Theodore Graptos was so famous that his name would easily come up in theological discussions not directly related to the Hesychast Controversy. Neilos Kabasilas mentions and quotes Graptos in the *Orations on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*. The selection of fragments reflects Neilos' interests. He pays no attention to Graptos' (Nikephoros of Constantinople's) Christology, focusing instead on Trinitarian theology and extensively quoting the *Confession of Faith* preserved in Nikephoros of Constantinople's *Apologeticus Maior*.¹⁷

Even the list above is far from being exhaustive. For one, it does not include multiple *florilegia*, as, for instance, an anti-Palamite collection in *Vaticanus gr.* 604, ff. 17^r–38^v, which contains a series of quotations from Graptos (Nikephoros of Constantinople). The manuscript can be dated to 1368/9; some parts of it were copied by Prochoros Kydonēs and Manuel Kalekas.¹⁸ A complete critical edition of Kyparissiotēs' treatises and their refutations by Kantakouzenos will probably also yield new matches, but the general impression will not be much different. It was virtually impossible to spend a day in mid-fourteenth-century Constantinople without hearing the word "iconoclasm."

2.

Iconoclasm established itself as a universal point of reference: both the Palamites and their adversaries claimed to be the heirs of the defenders of icon veneration and castigated their opponents as "the new iconoclasts."¹⁹ This

¹⁶ Giovanni Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV* (Studi e testi 56) (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1931), 239–241; Gioffreda and Michele Trizio, "Nicholas of Methone, Procopius of Gaza and Proclus of Lycia," in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 2: *Translations and Acculturations*, ed. Dragoş Calma (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 124–128; Gioffreda, *Tra i libri di Isacco Argiro* (Transmissions 4) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 98–118, 126. Rigo, "De l'apologie à l'évocation de l'expérience mystique: Évagre le Pontique, Isaac le Syrien et Diadoque de Photice dans les œuvres de Grégoire Palamas (et dans le controverse palamite)," in *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissenformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, eds. Andreas Speer and Philipp Steinkrüger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 98, also ascribes the text to Argyros but moves its date to the late 1360s/early 1370s.

¹⁷ Neilos Kabasilas, *Orationes de Spiritu Sancto*, ed. Théophile Kislas, *Nil Cabasilas. Sur le Saint-Esprit* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 174–416, here *Or.* 2, 64 and *Or.* 5, 24–26 quotes Nikephoros I, *Apologeticus Maior*, 580c–1a (18). On Neilos, see PLP 10102.

¹⁸ Alexis Chrysostalis, *Recherches sur la tradition manuscrite du Contra Eusebium de Nicéphore de Constantinople* (Paris: CNRS, 2012), 74–75; Daniele Bianconi, "La controversia palamitica: Figure, libri, testi e mani," *Segno e testo* 6 (2008): 352–353; Gioffreda, "Giovanni Ciparissiota," 89, n. 10.

¹⁹ The best introduction to the issue is Jeffrey Featherstone, "An Iconoclastic Episode in the Hesychast Controversy," *JÖB* 33 (1983): 179–198.

theological ping-pong calls for an explanation. Why not choose any other “heresy,” for instance, Arianism or Nestorianism?

To understand the exceptional status of Iconoclasm among other heterodox teachings in Byzantine collective memory and polemical culture we must briefly revisit its history after 843. The struggle between the two orthodoxies, one of which is commonly known as “iconoclasm” and the other as “the party of the iconophiles or iconodules” (although, the latter terms were not in use in Byzantium),²⁰ ended with the so-called Triumph of Orthodoxy, which defined “orthodoxy” through icon veneration. But this was not the end of it, because the specific tool devised to promote and impose the equation between orthodoxy and the icons, the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, had the potential of creating new iconoclasts. Each new set of anathemas appended to the *Synodikon* tacitly equated new heretics with the iconoclasts—the heretics par excellence. As an arch-heresy and a measure of all heresies, Iconoclasm did not have to evince a theological affinity with the teachings of, say, John Italos or Neilos of Calabria. Year after year, on every first Sunday of the Lent, they were remembered as new iconoclasts not because they were accused of questioning icon veneration, but by virtue of the mere arrangement of chapters in the *Synodikon*.²¹

The distance between actual icons and the charge of iconoclasm grew further during the early years of the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). As I argue elsewhere, the opponents of the emperor, disconcerted by the confiscation of church property carried out under the pretext of accumulating resources for military campaigns against the Normans and the Pechenegs, were reluctant to accuse Alexios of “iconoclasm,” although many icons could have been destroyed. Alexios, by contrast, did not have such scruples and threatened to direct the accusation of Iconoclasm against Leo of Chalcedon, the leader of the opposition. The specific term used to warn Leo against further escalation was *χριστιανοκατήγορος* (“the accuser of Christians”), a derogatory label invented by the iconophiles in 787 and since then regularly used as a circumlocution for the iconoclasts.²² In Alexios’ logic, Leo could be justly called “an accuser of Christians”

²⁰ Lukhovitskiy, “Speaking as an Iconoclast: Another’s Voice in 9th-century Hagiography,” *TM* 24.2 (2020): 359–362.

²¹ In fact, Italos’ devotion to icons was questioned during the trial; Jean Gouillard, “Le procès officiel de Jean l’Italien: Les actes et leurs sous-entendus,” *TM* 9 (1985): 153.114–155.340, 157.385–390, 155.375–377. However, the relevant sections of the *Synodikon* are silent on this matter; see Gouillard, “Le *Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie*: édition et commentaire,” *TM* 2 (1967): 57–61.

²² It is consistently used in this sense in the most important sections of the *Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council: Concilium universale Nicaenum Secundum: Concilii actiones VI—VII; Tarasii et synodi epistulae; Epiphanií sermo laudatorius; canones; Tarasii epistulae post synodum scriptae; appendix graeca*, ed. Erich Lamberz (Berlin: de Gruyter 2016), 600.32, 602.9, 666.24,

(i.e., an iconoclast) precisely because he defended the icons and quoted Theodore the Stoudite and Nikephoros of Constantinople.²³

The early Palaeologan period witnessed the next stage in the separation between the icons and the accusation of iconoclasm. The opponents of the Union of Lyons (1274) Theodora Rhaoulaina, John Staurakios, and Manuel Holobolos turned to the iconoclastic controversy in search for convincing—and yet safe—historical parallels that would give them an opportunity to criticize Michael VIII Palaeologos. By means of the Aesopian language of hagiography, they wrote a history of Iconoclasm that can be read as a statement on the burning issues of late thirteenth-century politics.²⁴ Thus, whereas the Komnenian period created the triumphalist imperial version of anti-iconoclastic rhetoric, the controversies of the early Palaeologan epoch brought to life its underground oppositionist twin. By the fourteenth century, the history of Iconoclasm could be mined for suitable precedents by both the ecclesiastical establishment and the opposition.

All of the above explains the polemical convenience of the “iconoclast” label. Put simplistically, they were the universally-accepted bad guys, and no one really cared what gave them this name in the first place. But I believe there is more to it than that. If we trace the dynamics of the recollection of Iconoclasm during the Hesychast Controversy, we will see that at least two stages are discernible. During the first phase (ca. 1347–1360), the accusation of Iconoclasm and the anti-iconoclastic precedent were wholly the domain of the anti-Palamites, whereas their opponents did not take the trouble to read and interpret the sources of the iconoclastic epoch themselves. Only during the second phase (after ca. 1360) did the Palamites lay claim to the legacy of the defenders of icon veneration.

The theologian who retrieved Iconoclasm from oblivion was Nikephoros Gregoras. Fascinated by parallels between his epoch and the iconoclastic period,

854.23. *TLG* lists 37 occurrences of the stem *χριστιανοκατηγορ-* in the synodal proceedings. Notably, when Patriarch Nikephoros I continued (in 815–820) the heresiological catalogue of John of Damascus with the 102nd heresy of Iconoclasm, he chose this term to denote the iconoclasts; see Nikephoros I, *Antirrhетиci*, 538c–33a (III 84). No later than in the early tenth century an abridged version of this chapter was appended in the manuscript tradition to the original text of John of Damascus; see Bonifatius Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 4: *Liber de haeresibus. Opera polemica* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), 4–5.

²³ Lukhovitskiy, “Споры о святых иконах при Алексее I Комнине: Полемиические стратегии и выбор источников,” *VV* 73 [98] (2014): 88–107; idem, *Слова и образы: Иконоборчество глазами византийцев VIII–XV вв.* (St. Petersburg: Dmitriy Bulanin, 2023), 117–131.

²⁴ For a recent discussion, see Eleonora Kountoura Galaki, “Rewriting on Martyrs of Iconoclasm during the Palaiologan Period,” in *Les Nouveaux Martyrs à Byzance*, vol. 1: *Vie et Passion de Bacchos le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre*; vol. 2: *Études sur les nouveaux martyrs*, eds. André Binggeli, Stephanos Efthymiadis, and Sophie Métivier (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2021), vol. 2, 285–304; Lukhovitskiy, *Слова и образы*, 139–179.

he rewrote its history, making its central episode an anachronistic confrontation between Eusebius of Caesarea, Emperor Theophilos (r. 829–842), and Theodore Graptos, who were treated as historical reflections of Palamas, Kantakouzenos, and Gregoras himself. The degree of self-identification with the figures of the past was high: intending to present himself as a defender of Theodore Graptos' posthumous memory, and as his rightful heir, Gregoras took the liberty of creating pastiches of fragments that did not initially belong together in Nikephoros of Constantinople and violated historical accuracy by treating Eusebius and Graptos as contemporaries.²⁵

Mythologizing memory was possible only if Gregoras' opponents did not have the means to reverse the accusation. The discovery of Nikephoros of Constantinople's legacy by Philotheos Kokkinos initiated a transition to the next—philological—phase of remembering the Iconoclast controversy. Kokkinos accused Gregoras of tampering with textual evidence and distorting the thought of Graptos (Nikephoros of Constantinople) in order to suit his agenda.²⁶ Once again, the roles were reversed: now, the initiative was on the side of the Hesychasts, and the anti-Palamites had to react. Their only retreat was philology. After 1360, it became standard practice to provide an *incipit* for the treatises of Graptos (Nikephoros of Constantinople), so that the reader would have no doubt as to whether the polemicist took a quotation from an anthology or read the relevant text in full. This is true for Kyparissiotēs and the Vatican Anonymous, who both use the expression οὗ ἡ ἀρχή (“which begins as follows”).²⁷ The latter stressed that he carried out a special study to make sure that his adversaries' claims did not find support in the genuine writings of Graptos (Nikephoros of Constantinople):

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔτι τοῦτο οὐκ ὀκνήσω μετ' ἀληθείας εἰπεῖν, ὅτι τὰς ἱερὰς τῶν ἁγίων μετερχόμενος βίβλους τοῦ εἰρημένου ζητήματος ἔνεκεν, ὥσπερ ἔφην, καὶ μηδεμιᾶ ἐντυχῶν ἁγίου ῥήσει τὴν τοιαύτην αὐτῶν συνιστώσῃ κακοδοξίαν, συμφερομένους μᾶλλον εὖρον αὐτοὺς τοῖς εἰκονομάχοις.²⁸

But I will not shy away from saying with all confidence that perusing the books of the saints regarding this problem, as I have already said, I did not encounter any statement by this saint that would give support to their [i.e., the Palamites'] wicked teaching; quite the contrary, I discovered that they [i.e., the Palamites] were in agreement with the iconoclasts.

²⁵ Lukhovitskij, “Historical Memory,” 220–225.

²⁶ Lukhovitskij, “Historical Memory,” 215–216.

²⁷ Kyparissiotēs, *Contra Palamitas liber tritus*, 322; Anonymus, *Adversus Cantacuzenum*, 24.2–4.

²⁸ Anonymus, *Adversus Cantacuzenum*, 10.18–23.

However, the pursuit of philological precision did not guarantee accuracy in historical matters. Kabasilas took care to provide the incipit of Graptos' (Nikephoros of Constantinople's) treatise before quoting it,²⁹ but was sure that Graptos (born in 775) defended icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787: "He fought for piety at this Council, too, and was adorned with the marks of martyrdom."³⁰ To complicate the matter even further, Kabasilas did have some evidence for the "great" Nikephoros too.³¹ He regarded him as a Graptos' contemporary (έν τοῖς χρόνοις ἐκείνοις) (whatever this might stand for) who died in exile for the cause of icon veneration (φεύγων τήν ἑαυτοῦ, ἐπανῆκεν ἡμῖν νεκρὸς ἀριστεύς, μαρτυρίου στέφανον περιφέρων). A brief text on the Holy Trinity that he allegedly "sent to his followers from exile" (τοῖς οἰκείοις διαπέμπων ἐκ τῆς ὑπερορίας) (commencing with Πίστιν τοίνυν τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀσπαζόμενοι) does not match anything in Nikephoros' extant writings but rather coincides verbatim with a lemma from the *Suda* (Π 1650).³²

The three and a half decades that separate the *First Antirrhetics* of Gregoras and the Vatican Anonymous turned the memory of Theodore Graptos from a rare piece of knowledge and the exclusive property of the Chora monastery into a commonplace. Before the mid-fourteenth century, Theophanes Graptos, a metropolitan bishop of Nicaea (843–845) and a prolific hymnographer, was much better known than his brother.³³ As late as 1356, Gregoras had to introduce Theodore Graptos both to his opponents and to his followers.³⁴ Conversely, for Kyparissiotēs and the Vatican Anonymous, he is a familiar friend: they know how to play with his sobriquet (he is "beyond any description" – ἀπαράγραπτος³⁵) and never forget to clarify which of the two Graptoi, Theodore or Theophanes, they have in mind. For Gregoras, a simple designation Γραπτός was sufficient. His disciple Kyparissiotēs prefers ὁ τῶν Γραπτῶν Θεόδωρος.³⁶

²⁹ Neilos Kabasilas, *Orationes de Spiritu Sancto* 5, 25.3–4 = Nikephoros I, *Apologeticus Maior*, 533b (1): ἡ δὲ τοῦ λόγου ἀρχὴ "Καιρὸν εἶναι τῷ παντὶ πράγματι, τὸ σολομώντειον ἡμᾶς ἐκεῖνο καὶ σοφὸν ἐμπεδοῖ λόγιον."

³⁰ Neilos Kabasilas, *Orationes de Spiritu Sancto* 5, 24.2–3: προστάτης δὲ καὶ οὗτος τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας ταύτης συνόδου καὶ μαρτυρικοῖς φιλοτιμούμενος στίγμασι.

³¹ Neilos Kabasilas, *Orationes de Spiritu Sancto* 5, 28.1–8: [...] μέγαν οἱ κατὰ Χριστὸν ἁγῶνες ἐκάλουν.

³² *Suidae lexicon*, vol. 4: Π–Ψ, ed. Ada Adler (Munich; Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 1935), 135–136. This text, entitled *On Faith* (Περὶ πίστεως), is transmitted uniquely in manuscript A (*Parisinus gr.* 2526, 12th c.).

³³ On Theophanes Graptos, see *PmbZ* 8093.

³⁴ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, vol. 3, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1855), 381.19–382.4.

³⁵ Anonymus, *Adversus Cantacuzenum*, 194.2 and 240.1.

³⁶ Kyparissiotēs, *Expositio materiaria*, 135 (III 7), 279 (VI 4), 287 (VI 6), 601 (X 4).

However, philological and historical accuracy does not amount to personal affection for the subject matter. Kyparissiotēs does not inherit Gregoras' defiant disregard for the actual history of Iconoclasm and obsession with historical parallels. For him the iconoclastic precedent is no more important than an Arian or a Monothelite precedent. It is no longer the mother of all heresies, but yet another misfortune that afflicted the Orthodox Church in the past and was eventually overcome. He suggests that the anti-Palamites put up with the fact that they have lost the first battle. They must lay low and bide their time because, as history teaches us, occasionally Divine Providence lets "the wolves enter the stables for some time and tear up the livestock" (πρὸς καιρὸν ἐπιχωριάσαι τῇ μάνδρᾳ τοὺς λύκους καὶ τὸ ποῖμνιον διασπάσαι), but later on they inevitably "get caught in their own nets" (τοῖς οἰκείοις συμποδισθέντες ἄμμασι):

Καὶ χρόνον μὲν συχνὸν πολλὰκις ἐπεντροφῆσαι ταῖς ἑαυτῶν ἀσεβείαις εἰάθησαν. Τοιοῦτον γὰρ εἰδωλολατρεία, ἐπὶ τριακοσίους καὶ πρὸς μετὰ τὸ κήρυγμα παρρησιασαμένη τοὺς χρόνους· τοιοῦτον Ἄρειος φλυαρία, καὶ ἡ τῶν Μονοθελητῶν ἀδολεσχία, καὶ ὁ τῶν Εἰκονομάχων ὄμιλος. Ὑπὲρ γὰρ πεντήκοντα καὶ ἑβδομήκοντα τούτων ἕκαστον ἐπολίτευσεν ἔτη καὶ κετέδραμε τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν· αἰφνίδιον δ' ὁμως ἦκεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ δίκη, καὶ νῦν οὐδ' εἰσὶν ὅπου γνωρίζονται.³⁷

Often, were they allowed to revel in their impiety for a long time. This is true for idolatry, which did not fear anything for more than three hundred years after the preaching [of the Gospel]; for the Arian foolery; the Monothelite idle talk; and the crowd of Iconoclasts. Each of these [heresies] prevailed and devastated the Church of Christ for more than fifty or seventy years. But suddenly a punishment came upon them, so that now there is not even a trace of them.

For Gregoras, Iconoclasm constitutes an essential part of present-day actuality; in Kyparissiotēs, it loses its exceptional status and becomes no more than a random example from the past. Iconoclasm is relocated from the present to the past, and the emotional component necessary for self-identification is suppressed.

Yet if something feels off about the iconoclastic episode of the Hesychast Controversy, it was not the decision of several mid-fourteenth-century theologians to use the iconoclastic precedent to argue for their cause, but the complete silence on this issue on the part of the next generation of polemicists. In 1368, Prochoros Kydonēs was condemned. Kyparissiotēs was forced to leave Constantinople for Cyprus and subsequently for Rome. The ecclesiastical and political situation (at

³⁷ Kyparissiotēs, *Palamiticarum transgressionum liber primus*, 672–673. The reading ἄμμασι (instead of ἄρμασιν in the edition) is restored from the *Laur. Plut.* 8.8, f. 13^r.

least in the eyes of the anti-Palamite party) had to feel somewhat like the situation of roughly a hundred years before, when the anti-Unionists used the iconoclastic controversy as a foil for the conflict of their own epoch. Common logic dictates that the anti-Palamite opposition would turn to the iconoclastic precedent and draw parallels between the Councils of 1351 and 1368 and the Church councils convened by the iconoclasts. This polemical trope must have been even more attractive because, as we have seen, the texts composed during the iconoclastic crisis were right before their eyes. But this was not the case. The person of Graptos (Nikephoros of Constantinople) lost its appeal as an archetype and his writings were treated as a mere repository of lifeless χρήσεις.

The dynamics outlined above (from mythologizing remembrance to philological accuracy and from emotional self-identification to distancing neutrality) can be explained only if we go back to Gregoras. All evidence suggests that his case is unique—it was he who introduced Graptos and created an internally consistent and psychologically convincing system of parallels between the epochs, while all other theologians merely followed in his steps. Gregoras radically changed the intellectual atmosphere of the epoch, whereas the writings of his contemporaries witness to the subsiding waves of the after-shock.

Gregoras' success in refashioning Hesychasm as a new Iconoclasm rests on two factors: mere chance and literary aesthetics. We should bear in mind that Gregoras' emotional connection with the champions of icon veneration is much older than the Hesychast debate. His first creative engagement with the epoch is dated to the mid-1320s, when he was assigned by the brethren of the Chora monastery to compose a *Life* of its glorious ninth-century abbot, Michael the Synkellos, who was also a close associate of the brothers Graptoi (*BHG* 1297).³⁸ In fact, Gregoras' main source, an anonymous late ninth-century *Life* of Michael (*BHG* 1296), was more a joint *Life* of Michael, Theodore, and Theophanes than the conventional *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία* of a single saint. The writer had to carefully disentangle the plotlines of the protagonists so that the monastery could finally possess a proper *Life* of Michael and Michael alone. Importantly, Gregoras' methods of rewriting included deep psychological introspection that allowed for self-identification between the reader and the heroes of the distant past.³⁹ Thus, in a way, whereas in composing the *Life of Michael* Gregoras was

³⁸ For this date, see Lukhovitskiy, "Nikephoros Gregoras' *Vita* of St. Michael the Synkellos: Rewriting Techniques and Reconstruction of the Iconoclast Past in a 14th Cent. Hagiographical *Metaphrasis*," *JÖB* 64 (2014): 194–195.

³⁹ This is also true for other hagiographical writings of Gregoras; see Lukhovitskiy, "Emotions, Miracles, and the Mechanics of Psychology in Nikephoros Gregoras' *Lives* of Empress Theophano and Patriarch Anthony II Kauleas," in *Metaphrasis in Byzantine Literature*, eds. Anne P. Alwis, Martin Hinterberger, and Elisabeth Schiffer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 155–174.

reincarnated in Michael; in a dispute with the Palamites he could not but be reincarnated in Theodore Graptos, whose personality inspired him back in the 1320s, but whose exploits could not have been fully praised in the *Life of Michael*.

Let us perform a thought experiment. What would have happened to the Hesychast polemic had Gregoras failed to accomplish his task (e.g., if he had not found an appropriate source-text for a new *Life of Michael*)? Would we still have the same number of quotations from iconophile theologians in the mid-fourteenth-century debates had the brethren of Chora commissioned Gregoras with the task of praising another saint whose memory was important to the monastery but whose deeds had nothing to do with the Iconoclastic controversy? In my view, the answer must be in the negative. I would go as far as to argue that had Gregoras made up his mind to compose an encomium for, say, the martyr Babylas of Nicomedia, whose relics were preserved in the Chora monastery, twenty years later the supporters of Palamas would have become not “new iconoclasts,” but “new pagans” and heirs of Maximian, the persecutor of Babylas.

Much ink has been spilled to investigate hagiography as a vehicle for theological polemics. I am convinced that in the case discussed above we observe movement in the opposite direction, where an important chapter in the history of ecclesiastical polemics is a mere derivative of the psychologizing method in hagiography.

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THEOLOGY AND RHETORIC: NICHOLAS KABASILAS BETWEEN THOMAS MAGISTROS AND MAKARIOS MAKRES

Ioannis POLEMIS*

ABSTRACT. This article contributes to the ongoing discussion about the relationship between Nicholas Kabasilas and Palamite theology by examining Nicholas Kabasilas' understanding of the life in Christ as expressed in his hagiography. In particular, it uncovers a new source for Kabasilas' intellectualist approach to spirituality in his *encomium* on St. Demetrios Myroblytes (*BHG* 543), namely the *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus by Thomas Magistros. Kabasilas' hagiographical encomia would later influence the writings of Makarios Makres, a fifteenth-century Palamite author with somewhat different theological commitments.

Keywords: Nicholas Kabasilas, St. Demetrios Myroblytes, Thomas Magistros, Makarios Makres, hagiography, *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus, hesychasm

This article presents a new source for Nicholas Kabasilas' theory on life in Christ, revealed in his treatise of the same name, and briefly investigates the subsequent reception of his hagiographical as well as other writings on the basis of a comparison with the works of Makarios Makres.

The Hagiographical Works of Nicholas Kabasilas: An Application of His Theories on Life in Christ

The hagiographical works of Nicholas Kabasilas offer a clear example of the way he understood the life in Christ in practice. They are practical exercises, as it were, demonstrating to every Christian how a man can attain identification

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with Christ in this life through the example of various saints (the Three Hierarchs, St. Nicholas of Myra, St. Theodora of Thessaloniki, St. Andrew of Jerusalem, and St. Demetrios Myroblytes). A brief examination of the extensive *encomium* of St. Demetrios, which illustrates this fact, is in order.

Nicholas Kabasilas' *encomium* for St. Demetrios (*BHG* 543) is one of the most classicizing pieces of this late Byzantine intellectual. Constructed according to the rules of Byzantine rhetoric, this hagiographical work is based on previous *vitae* of St. Demetrios. After explaining the difficulties encountered by any orator wishing to praise the saint, Kabasilas proceeds to a rather lengthy praise of the saint's city, Thessaloniki, which also happens to be the author's hometown. Afterwards, Kabasilas enters the main part of his text, the *encomium* of the saint's virtues and achievements: the saint's only concern from his tender age had been to become the best of all; he studied Greek literature in order to have the possibility to understand divine wisdom and achieved happiness through baptism. After the death of his parents, he distributed all his belongings to those in need and became filled with divine love, which is the foremost of all the graces of the Holy Spirit. Through his thoughts he became able to enjoy a constant communion with Christ, cleaning his soul and becoming God-like. He was constantly praying to God, his only desire being the love of the Savior as a reward for his struggles. He was most humble, brave, and prudent, and did not refrain from teaching his contemporaries and trying to lead them to God. He pointed out to them that knowing God is the only true happiness, and this is based on the acceptance of the true doctrines of the Church. He urged them to put their concern about God before anything else, pointing out that love for God not only makes men truly happy but is something proper to human beings, since everything by its nature loves God. Being aware of the dangers threatening the faithful, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his life for the sake of eternity with Christ. Kabasilas narrates Demetrios' dialogue with the emperor Maximian (r. 286–305), who urged him to return to the faith and the gods of his forefathers. Demetrios replies that the cult of the traditional gods is immoral, pointing out that worshipping Christ, the only true God, safeguards his true happiness. After briefly referring to Nestor, Demetrios' companion, Kabasilas describes the saint's martyrdom. The author mentions the myrrh emanating from the saint's grave, and after insisting on Demetrios' superiority to almost all the other saints both of the Old (Job, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) and the New Testament (John the Baptist), he comes to the conclusion of his *encomium*.

While characteristic of Byzantine literature in general, this piece of rhetoric also exhibits some elements which point to Kabasilas' own particularities. He insists on St. Demetrios' struggle for the attainment of human perfection. The way of the saint is a constant struggle to become virtuous. The term "real

happiness” (εὐδαιμονία) is prominent in this text in a way reminiscent of Plato’s dialogues. Quoting the teaching of the saint to his fellow-citizens, Kabasilas begins with a traditional definition of philosophy:

The first thing of which he tried to persuade both Greeks and barbarians was that their main concern should be the knowledge of what God really is. Since knowing beings as beings is real happiness for prudent men, what may we say about the knowledge of God? Since God is the first being, we must make investigation concerning Him first of all. Afterwards, we must consider as the true faith the doctrine that Christ is the true God.¹

Kabasilas stresses that true happiness consists in baptism, which unites man with God.² One notices the apodictic manner in which Kabasilas proceeds to his exposition of St. Demetrios’ catechesis. This is far from unusual in Byzantine theology, and the passage would likely not be worthy of further discussion if it did not present certain striking similarities with Kabasilas’ primary and most notable work, namely his extensive treatise *On Life in Christ*.³

The last two books (VI and VII) of this treatise give the impression of a late antique philosophical diatribe dealing with the perennial problems of man discussed in the philosophical schools of the time. It is noteworthy that book VI begins with the question of how one may preserve and profit from the gifts he has obtained through his communion with the three great mysteries of the

¹ *Oratio* 5, 373-379: Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐκείνο πάντας ἔπειθε καὶ Ἑλλήνας καὶ βαρβάρους κοινῇ, πρῶτον τῶν ἄλλων προσήκον εἶναι οἶσθαι λόγον ποιεῖσθαι, τοῦ τίνα δεῖ νομίζειν εἶναι Θεόν· ὡς μόνην οὕσαν ταύτην ἀνθρώποις οὖσιν εὐδαιμονίαν. Εἰ γὰρ τὸ, ἢ ὄντα ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα εἰδέναι, τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐδαιμονία, τί ποτ’ αὐτὴν ἐροῦμεν τὴν ἐπιστήμην τοῦ Θεοῦ; Καὶ ἅμα πρώτου τοῦ παντὸς ὄντος, καὶ τοὺς ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ λόγους, πρώτους ποιεῖσθαι προσήκειν τῶν ἄλλων παντὸς ὅτου οὖν· ἔπειτα, ταύτην μόνην περὶ τὸ θεῖον ὑγιᾶ δόξαν εἶναι, τὸ, Χριστὸν νομίζειν εἶναι Θεόν. I quote the texts in question as edited by Christina Hadjiafxenti, *Die Heiligenenkomien des Nikolaos Kabasilas. Einleitung und kritische Edition* (Byzantinisches Archiv 40) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021). The first number refers to the number of Kabasilas’ composition, while the second to the lines of the text.

² *Oratio* 5, 161-164: τὴν δὲ θεῖαν ἀκτῖνα τῇ ψυχῇ δεξάμενος, τῷ πάντων μὲν τῶν κακῶν ἐλευθέρους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποιοῦντι, Θεῷ δὲ συνιστάντι θεῷ λουτρῷ καὶ τὴν θαυμαστὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐδαιμονίαν ἀπολαβὼν, ἀγωγόν τε πρὸς Θεὸν αὐτὴν εἶχε, καὶ συναγωνιστὴν εἶχε. See a passage from Kabasilas’ *On Life in Christ* II, 101, 1-4: Τοῦτο τοῦ βαπτίσματος τὸ ἔργον, ἁμαρτιῶν ἀπολύσαι, ἀνθρώπῳ Θεὸν καταλλάξαι, Θεῷ τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἰσποῖησαι, ὀφθαλμὸν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀνοῖξαι, τῆς θείας ἀκτίνος γεῦσαι. The verb συνίστημι is frequently employed with reference to the life in Christ in this treatise, see, e.g., III, 1, 1.

³ I refer to the edition of Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, *Nicolas Cabasilas. La vie en Christ. Livres I–IV. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et annotation* (SC 355) (Paris: Cerf, 1989) and *Nicolas Cabasilas. La vie en Christ. Livres V–VII. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et annotation* (SC 361) (Paris: Cerf, 1990).

Church discussed in books II–V. Kabasilas speaks here about “true happiness” once more. His answer is that this can be achieved only through virtue and fixing one’s thoughts on God. No mention of Gregory Palamas’ views about hesychastic prayer and the experience of the divine, or the uncreated, light of the divinity is to be found in this work.⁴

Nicholas Kabasilas has another way of seeing perfection: he believes that true happiness consists in communion with Christ, which is possible even in this life. That communion is made possible through the three main mysteries of the Church (baptism, chrismation, and holy communion), but man must try hard in order to retain and profit from this communion. This can be achieved only through virtue and the fixing of one’s mind in the direction of God.

St. Demetrios Myroblytes is a clear example of the life in Christ as understood by Kabasilas. His thoughts are constantly turned towards Christ and this is his real delight. “He considered his communication with Christ through his thoughts as the culmination of happiness” (5, 211–212).⁵ Demetrios prays to God (5, 247–249),⁶ but it seems that this is prayer according to Kabasilas, who in his *On Life in Christ* prefers a simple communication with God, condemning those who insist on finding a proper place and suggesting particular ways of addressing God.⁷ The same applies to the other saints praised by Kabasilas.

Thomas Magistros’ *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus: A Source of Nicholas Kabasilas’ Hagiographical Works

To begin, I have been able to observe that in composing his hagiographical works, Kabasilas drew heavily upon the *Oration (Logos)* on St. Gregory of Nazianzus written by Thomas Magistros, a scholar of the previous generation and a fellow Thessalonian. I offer a list of the correspondences between Kabasilas’ hagiographical works and Magistros’ *Oration*:⁸

⁴ On Kabasilas’ relations with Palamas there is a vast bibliography, see, e.g., Milan Đorđević, *Nikolas Kabasilas. Ein Weg zu einer Synthese der Traditionen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 129–163, and Congourdeau, “Nicolas Calasilas et le Palamisme,” in *Gregorio Palamas e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino*, ed. Antonio Rigo (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), 191–210. Both these scholars tend to consider Kabasilas as amicably disposed towards Palamism.

⁵ τὸ δὲ τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἐκείνῳ συνεῖναι, πάσης ἡστινοσοῦν ἡδονῆς ἡγεῖσθαι κεφάλαιον.

⁶ τὴν δὲ πρὸς Θεὸν εὐχὴν ἔχειν μόνην τοῦτο περαίνειν, μὴδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλως ἐνεῖναι σύμμαχον εὐληφέναι Θεόν, τοσοῦτου τινὸς ἄγειν ὥστε προσευχὴν, ὥστε καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Παύλου νόμους, οὐκ ἦν ὅτε μὴ συνεμίγνυ Θεῷ.

⁷ VI, 98, 1–7. In my view, this is a condemnation of the hesychastic practices suggested by Nikephoros the Hesychast, Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, and other ascetic authors of the fourteenth century.

⁸ The references are to *PG* 145, 216–352.

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Kabasilas, <i>encomia</i> of saints	Magistros, <i>Oration</i>
Καὶ οὕτω δήπου τὸ παραπάντων ἡμῖν ὀφείλεται θαῦμα (1, 12-13)	ὁ πᾶσιν ὁμοῦ καὶ ποιηταῖς καὶ λογοποιοῖς ὀφείλεται θαῦμα (248B)
Καὶ τὰς ἀγαθὰς πράξεις ὡς εἰκὸς προστιθέναι καὶ τὸ κατ' ἀρετὴν πολιτεύειν (1, 60-61)	Στήλας ἐμψύχους οὐκ ἀκριβοῦς μόνον θεογνωσίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ βιοῦν εὖ μάλα καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν πολιτεύειν (228B)
Οὕτω παντοδαποὺς τινὰς τοὺς τῶν μεγάλων λόγους ἢ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἀπέδειξε χάρις (1, 113-114) ὧ παντοδαπῶν ἀγαθῶν τεχνῖται (1, 123)	ἧ παντοδαπῶν λόγων τεχνῖτα (348D)
ὧ θεοῦ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους μεγίστη καὶ κοινωφελεστάτη φιλοτιμία (1, 158-159)	Τῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοῦ θεοῦ χαρίτων μεγίστην καὶ κοινωφελεστάτην φιλοτιμίαν (348B)
Πᾶσαν ἐπαίνων ὑπερβολὴν ὑπερβαίνει (2, 20- 21)	Πᾶσαν ἐπαίνων ὑπερβολὴν ὑπερβαίνει (337B)
Οὐ γὰρ εἰς κενὴν εἶδε δόξαν Ἀνδρέας κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, οὐδ' ἠσπάσατο πλοῦτον τὸν ἄπιστον καὶ δραπέτην, οὐδ' ἄλλων ἔσχε λόγον οὐδένα, τῶν ὅσα τοὺς προστετηκότας ἀπάγειν οἶδε θεοῦ (2, 50-52)	Οὐ κενῆς δόξης καὶ δυναστείας καὶ τύφου γενόμενος ἐραστής, οὐδ' ἀσπασάμενος πλοῦτον τὸν ἄπιστον καὶ δραπέτην, καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τῶν κακῶν, καὶ πάντα χαλέπτοντα κατὰ τινὰ ποιητὴν, οὐδ' ἄλλων γε οὐδενὸς οὐδ' ὄντινουν ποιησάμενος λόγον, ὅσα τοὺς προστετηκότας ἀπάγειν οἶδε θεοῦ (268D)
ὅσα τοὺς κατορθοῦντας κοινωνοὺς οἶδε παρασκευάζειν τῶν Ὀλύμπου πραγμάτων (2, 52-53)	Καὶ τῶν Ὀλύμπου πραγμάτων μὴ ὅτι κοινωνοὺς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὡς εἰπεῖν οἶδε ποιεῖν (256B)
ἄλλοις μελεδωνὸς σωτηρίας καταστῆναι δύνασθαι (2, 114)	Τοιοῦτος δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις μελεδωνὸς σωτηρίας κατέστη (280B)
Ταύτης δὲ εἰς δύο διαιρουμένης, εἷς τε θεὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπους (2, 127-128)	Ταύτης τοίνυν εἰς δύο διαιρουμένης, εἷς τε θεὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπους (276A)
ἀλλὰ κἂν τὰ πάντων δεινότατα ἀπειλῇται, κἂν ὁ Φαλάριδος ταῦρος (2, 207-208)	Κἂν ὁ Φαλάριδος ταῦρος, κἂν πάντα τὰ πάντων ἔσχατ' ἀπειλῇται (317A)
Κοινωφελὲς γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἐκεῖνος (3, 60)	ὡς κοινωφελὲς ἀγαθὸν εἰς ἀνθρώπους τελέσαι (344A)
ἐκεῖθεν τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας ἐξῆπτε πείσματα (4, 98-99)	Καὶ σοῦ μόνου μετὰ θεὸν τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας ἐξάπτοντι πείσματα (352C)
Καὶ τῶν ταύτης πρὸς ἀνθρώπους χαρίτων μεγίστη καὶ κοινωφελεστάτη φιλοτιμία (4, 267-268)	Τῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοῦ θεοῦ χαρίτων μεγίστην καὶ κοινωφελεστάτην φιλοτιμίαν (349B)
ἐν βαθυτάτῳ καὶ μάλα πίονι γήρᾳ καταλύει τὸν βίον (4, 262)	ἐν βαθυτάτῳ καὶ μάλα πίονι γήρᾳ καταλύει τὸν βίον (344B)

Kabasilas, <i>encomia</i> of saints	Magistros, <i>Oration</i>
Σὺ μὲν ἦν ἔπνεις Τριάδα καὶ πρὸς ἦν ἐκ πλείονος ἔβλεπες, ταύτης νῦν ἀμέσως μετέχεις (4, 273-274)	Καὶ ἦν ἔπνεις Τριάδα πάσης ἀμέσως μετέχεις (345C)
Μηδενὸς ἥξιου τοῦ λόγου, φλήναφον ἀτεχνῶς νομίζουσα πάντα, καὶ τῶν φρένας ὀλίγων (5, 106-107)	Οὐδενὸς τινος ἥξιου τοῦ λόγου, φλήναφον ἀτεχνῶς ταῦτα νομίζων, καὶ ψυχῶν ἀγεννῶν δελεάσματα (256B)
Τὴν ψυχὴν ἔπειτα πειρᾶσθαι δεικνύναι μεστὴν ἀρετῶν (5, 109-110)	Τὴν ψυχὴν εἶχε μεστὴν ἀρετῶν (225B)
Καὶ δῆτα τὴν ψυχὴν καθαίρων τὲ καὶ λεπτύνων (5, 228-229)	Τὸν νοῦν καθαίρων τε καὶ λεπτύνων (232C)
Παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ κεφάλαιον ἦν (5, 314-315 and 5, 823)	Παντὸς μὲν ἀγαθοῦ κεφάλαιον τὸ σεσῶσθαι (284A)
Εἰ γὰρ τὸ, ᾧ ὄντα ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα εἰδέναι, τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐδαιμονία, τί ποτ' αὐτὴν ἐροῦμεν τὴν ἐπιστήμην τοῦ Θεοῦ; (5, 375-377)	Τὸ γὰρ ᾧ ὄντα ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα εἰδέναι, καὶ θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἐπιστήμονας εἶναι, καὶ πολιτεύειν ἐν οὐρανῷ δυνάσθαι μακαρίας φύσεως ἴδιον ὄν, ἐξ ἧρ' ἀρετῆς καὶ λόγων ἔστιν ἡμῖν. (232C)
Τίς τοίνυν διὰ πάντων ἦλασε τουτωνὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν...; (5, 884)	ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἤκουσι καλοκάγαθίας καὶ τοῦ διὰ πάντων ἐλάσαι (340D)
Τῶν δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ συγγεγονότων τοὺς κορυφαίους Πέτρον ἴσμεν καὶ Παῦλον, καὶ τὸν υἱὸν τῆς βροντῆς. Παῦλος μὲν οὖν, θαυμαστὸν εἶχε περὶ τὸν δεσπότην τὸ φίλτρον, καὶ τῆς ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίας, μανικός τις ἦν ἐραστής, ἀλλ' εἰς πολεμίους τὸ πρόσθεν τῷ Χριστῷ τάττων, ἔπειτα δι' ἐμφανείας φρικώδους τῶν ἐταίρων αὐτῷ κατέστη ... Ἐτι δὲ Πέτρος μὲν ὠμίλησε γάμῳ, ὁ δὲ παρθενίας ἦν ἀθλητής. Ἰωάννην δὲ τῷ πάνυ, μὴδὲμίαν ὑπερβολὴν, οὐ παρθενίας, οὐ θεολογίας, οὐ φιλοθεΐας ἀφείξ, ὁ δ' ἔπειτ' ἄλλον τρόπον παρελεύνει, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ποθομένου πληγεὶς καὶ ἀποθανών. (5, 972-998)	Πέτρου δὲ πέρι καὶ Παύλου καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς βροντῆς, τοσοῦτον ἂν εἴποιμι, ὅτι τούτους ἐπαινεῖν θέλων, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἤκουσι καλοκάγαθίας καὶ τοῦ διὰ πάντων ἐλάσαι. Ἀλλὰ καὶ Γρηγόριος ἡ μεγάλη τῆς φύσεως ἔνδειξις, καὶ ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τελευταία φορὰ, οὐχ ὅπως μετὰ τούτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτους δίκαιος ἂν εἴη τετάχθαι. Πέτρου γὰρ τὸν ζῆλον, καὶ Παύλου τὸν τόνον, καὶ τὴν Ἰωάννου θεολογίαν, καὶ ἃ πόλλ' ἕτερα τούτοις προσῆν, οὕτως εἰς ἄκρον κατωρθώκως, ὡς μὴδὲν ἔνδειν τουτωνὶ περὶ ταῦτα. ὁ δ' ἔστιν οἷς αὐτοὺς καὶ παρήλασε, Πέτρον μὲν, οἷς οὐχ ὠμίλησε γάμῳ. ἀλλὰ παρθενίᾳ συνέζη, Παῦλον δὲ τῷ τὴν εὐσεβείαν ἐκ προγόνων ἀκριβῶς μεμνησθαι, καὶ μὴ τὴν μὲν ἀρχὴν εἰς διώκτας τελεῖν, ἔπειτα δι' ἐμφανείας φρικώδους τῷ Θεῷ προσελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζεβεδαίου, τῷ μὴ διὰ βραχέων μὴδ' ἀπλῶς οὕτως, ἀλλὰ δαψιλέστερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον, καὶ οἷον ἀγωνιστικώτερον καὶ πρὸς ἀμιλλαν ἡφθαι θεολογίας (340D-341A)

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ὦ φύσεως ἔνδειξις καὶ φιλοτιμία τοῦ γένους (5, 1034-1035) ἡ μεγάλη τῆς φύσεως ἔνδειξις, καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τελευταία φορὰ (6, 34-35)	Γρηγόριος ἡ μεγάλη τῆς φύσεως ἔνδειξις, καὶ ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τελευταία φορὰ (340D)
Καὶ ψυχὴ τις ἦν τῷ Δημητρίῳ Χριστὸς, οὐκ ἀφισταμένη καὶ πάλιν ἐπανιοῦσα, κατὰ τὴν ἐν μύθῳ δηπουθεν Ἑρμοτίμου, τοῦ Κλαζομενίου ψυχὴν, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ συνοῦσα (6, 110-112)	Καὶ ὅπερ περὶ Ἑρμοτίμου τοῦ Κλαζομενίου δέ που φασίν, ὡς ἄρα ἀπολιμπάνουσα αὐτὸν ἡ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐπανήκει ζωοῦσα καὶ μένος ἐμπνέουσα, τοῦτο κἀνταῦθα πῶς ὁρᾷν ἔστιν, οὐ μᾶλλον ἀπῆσαν ἀλλήλων, ἢ ἀλλήλοις συνῆσαν (264D)
Ποίαν τινὰ τὴν δοξαν ἐκτέον καὶ τί σε δεῖ προσειπεῖν; (6, 153-154)	Ποίαν τινὰ περὶ σοῦ δόξαν ἐκτέον καὶ τί σε δεῖ προσειπεῖν; (241D)
Καὶ συμπάσης ἀρετῆς πρυτανεῖον, καὶ Θεοῦ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους φιλοτιμία, καὶ πάντα ταυτὶ τὰ κάλλιστα προσειρησθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ υἱὸς ὑψίστου, καὶ Τριάδος ἐστία (6, 171-173)	Ἵν' παντὸς ἡδίστου μηδ' ὄντινοῦν τοπαράπαν ποιησάμενος λόγον, πλὴν ὅσον εἰς ἀρετὴν φέρει καὶ Θεοῦ ξυναυλίαν! Ἵν' Τριάδος ἐστία καὶ πρυτανεῖον θεολογίας καὶ δογμάτων ἀκρίβεια! (348CD)

Can Thomas Magistros Be Considered a Source of Nicholas Kabasilas' Theology?

There can be no doubt that Nicholas Kabasilas employed Thomas Magistros' text while composing his rhetorical works. How can one explain Kabasilas' predilection for this obscure text of Thomas Magistros? Was Magistros perhaps his teacher in Thessaloniki? This possibility cannot be ruled out; both Magistros, who must have died around 1350,⁹ and Kabasilas, who was born around 1322,¹⁰ were prominent members of the intellectual elite of Thessaloniki. But what is more striking is that certain elements of Kabasilas' theory on the life in Christ, which formed the basis of his treatise *On Life in Christ*, appear already in Magistros' *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus. I give a summary account of these below:

⁹ Niels Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 369.

¹⁰ Congourdeau, *Nicolas Cabasilas. Ézéchiél, prophète de l' Incarnation. Introduction, traduction, note et guide thématique* (Paris: Cerf, 2021), 14.

A. Man becomes united with God through virtue: ὅτι τῶν μὲν εἰς ἀρετὴν φερόντων ἐνὸς οὐδενὸς τοπαράπαν ἀπέσχου, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντων τούτων ἀπλῶς οὕτως ἐπερίσχου, ὡς οὐδενὸς τινος τῶν ἄλλων οὐδεὶς, τεκμήριον ἐναργὲς ἡ θαυμαστί σοι πρὸς Θεὸν οἰκειότης, καὶ τὸ Θεὸν ἀμέλει γενέσθαι τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν κοινωνίᾳ (244A). In the beginning of book VI of *On Life in Christ*, Kabasilas points out that what safeguards the blessedness of those united with Christ through the mysteries is virtue and life according to reason (VI, 3, 1-2).

B. Both Magistros and Kabasilas seem to employ the image of philosophy descending from heaven to earth employed by Plato in the *Timaeus*: Οὐ γὰρ ὃν ἦδεσαν ἐδόκουν ὁρᾶν, ἀλλ' ὃν ἐώρων, οὐρανόθεν εἰς γῆν ἦκειν ἐδόκουν ἐπ' εὐδαιμονίᾳ τῇ σφῶν, καὶ διατοῦτο μεῖζον ἢ κατ' ἀνθρώπους τούτῳ προσεῖχον (256A). The relevant passage of Kabasilas is the following: ἀλλὰ καὶ οἷς τῷ βίῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐνομοθέτει, μόνος τὴν οὐράνιον τῇ γῇ προδείξας καὶ φυτεύσας φιλοσοφίαν (IV, 16, 7-8).

C. The Pauline view that the Christian lives in God in a hidden way:

Ἐπειτα μόνῃ τῇ κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργείᾳ συντεταχὼς ἑαυτόν, οὕτω σφοδρότερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ἀντέσχετο τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὡς ἐν τούτῳ κατὰ τὸν Παῦλον καὶ ζῆν καὶ κινεῖσθαι καὶ εἶναι, καὶ χαίρειν μὲν ἑαυτῷ καθάπαξ ἑᾶν, χαίρειν δὲ τῷ Χριστῷ μὴδὲν ἤττον ἢ ἀναπνεῖν. Κόσμῳ γὰρ καὶ τοῖς κόσμου πράγμασι παντάπασιν νεκρωθεὶς, ὡς μὴδ' ὅ,τι ποτ' οἶον ἐθέλειν μεμνησθαι, ὃ δὲ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ κεκρυμμένην ἔζη ζωὴν δι' αὐτοῦ τῶν αὐτοῦ καταπολαύων χαρίτων, καὶ τούτοις ἐντρυφῶν ὅσαι ὥραι, Θεὸν καθόσον ἐφικτὸν ὁρῶν τε καὶ φανταζόμενος, καὶ πᾶσαν δυσχέρειαν ἐντεῦθεν ἀποκρουόμενος (257B).

Magistros insists that man must act according to the heart of God, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ καρδίαν ὡς εἰπεῖν πολιτεύεσθαι (281B), and be totally dependent upon God, τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καθάπαξ ἐξῆφθαι καὶ τοῦτον ἐξ ὅλης δήπου ψυχῆς καὶ διανοίας φιλεῖν (281C). The relevant passages of Kabasilas are the following: καὶ ὁ τῆς καρδίας ἐπιεικῶς ἐστὶ καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς κινούμεθα καὶ ζῶμεν το γε εἰς αὐτὸν ἦκον, ὡς ἔχει ζωὴς ἐκεῖνος (IV, 37, 10-12); τὸν ἐν Χριστῷ ζῆν προηρημένον ἀκόλουθον μὲν τῆς καρδίας καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐκείνης ἐξῆφθαι (VI, 7, 1-2). It is noteworthy that a manuscript gives the title of Kabasilas' treatise as follows: Τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ λογιωτάτου κυροῦ Νικολάου Καβάσιλα περὶ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ κρυπτομένης ζωῆς.

D. Man attains his likeness to God through his thoughts (λογισμοί): πάλαι διὰ βίου καὶ θεωρίας εἰς ὕψος ἡρμένῳ καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ συνόντι τοῖς λογισμοῖς.

Here is a similar passage of Kabasilas: Χριστοῦ δὲ πέρι καὶ ὧν αὐτὸς φιλανθρώπως περὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ἐμηχανήσατο σωτηρίας, διεξιέναι τοῖς λογισμοῖς, αὐτὴν ἡμῖν ἄντικρυς ἔχει τὴν ζητουμένην ζωὴν καὶ διὰ πάντων ἀποδείκνυσσι μακαρίους (VI, 48, 2-5).

E. Both Magistros and Kabasilas insist that the Christian does not need miracles to prove his superiority; his only concern must be the attainment of virtue:

δι' ἣν οὐδὲ θαυμάτων αὐτουργὸς ἡξίωσεν ἐν τῷ παρόντι γενέσθαι, οὐδὲ τέρασι καὶ σημείοις ἐπικοσμήσαι τὸν βίον δυνάμενος, ὥς οὐκ οἶδ' εἴ τις, τοῦ δὲ μετρίου μόνου φροντίζων καὶ τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἀποσειόμενος δόξαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἄνω μακαριότητα μόνην ἐζήτει καὶ τὸ μετὰ Θεοῦ τετάχθαι καὶ τοῦτον ἀμέσως ὁρᾶν (278D–280A).

Kabasilas refers to the same subject:

Καὶ δὴ τὸν οὕτω ζήσαντα πρὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν στήσαντες, μανθάνωμεν αὐτοῦ τὴν εὐξίαν καὶ τὴν ὥραν, πανταχόθεν περισκοποῦντες, σκεψόμεθα δὲ τῶν μὲν ἄλλως αὐτὸν κοσμοούντων οὐδέν, οὐδ' εἰ θαύμασι λάμπει καὶ τοιαύτην εἴληφε χάριν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τοῦτον καθαρῶς καὶ τὸν οἶκοι κόσμον τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετὴν. Ἐκείνως μὲν γὰρ εἰκάσαι τις ἂν τὸν σπουδαῖον, καὶ τοῦτ' αὐτὸ μόνον ἀρετῆς ἂν εἴη τεκμήριον (VII, 2, 5-13).

Ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ θεωριῶν τινων ἀπολαύοι καὶ ἀποκαλύψεων τυγχάνει καὶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα οἶδεν, ἀπὸ τούτων αὐτὸν εἰσόμεθα καὶ θαυμάσομεν. Καὶ ταῦτα γὰρ ἐνίοτε ἀκολουθεῖ τοι ἐν Χριστῷ ζῶσι, οὐ συνίστησιν, οὐδ' ἐργάζεται τὴν ζωὴν, ὥστε μηδὲν πλέον εἰς ἀρετὴν εἶναι τῷ πρὸς ταῦτα μόνον ὁρῶντι (VII, 4, 10-15).

F. The virtuous man obtains some preliminary visions of the divine realities even in this life: καὶ ἥ διὰ πάντων οὗτος οἰκεῖος καὶ μέλων Θεῷ μεγίστας δεχόμενος τὰς ἐμφάσεις τῶν ἐσομένων ἐλλάμψεων (344C). Here is a relevant passage from Kabasilas: τοῖς δὲ μακαρίοις πολλὰ τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ἐμφάσεις (I, 3, 9-10).

One may conclude that Kabasilas was in a constant dialogue with Magistros' *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus throughout most of his life. His theology was contained in a primitive form within that text. Kabasilas employed Magistros' teachings both in his hagiographical works and in his main theological treatise (*On Life in Christ*), further developing and expanding upon them.

The Hagiographical Works of Nicholas Kabasilas and Makarios Makres

Nicholas Kabasilas' hagiographical works seem, in turn, to have been utilized quite extensively by Makarios Makres, an important theologian of the early fifteenth century. Here is an (indicative) list of parallel passages I have identified:

Kabasilas, <i>encomia</i> of saints	Makarios Makres, works ¹¹
ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ παῖδας εἶχε τὸ φρόνημα, οὐδ' εἰς παιδιὰς ἑώρα καὶ τὴν ἐκεῖθεν τέρψιν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐτιμᾶτο (4, 87-88)	Παῖς γὰρ ὧν ἤδη οὐ κατὰ παῖδας εἶχε τὸ φρόνημα εἶχεν, οὐδ' εἰς παιδιὰς καὶ κρότους καὶ ἄλματα καὶ τὴν παιδικὴν ἑώρα ῥαστώνην, οὐδὲ τὴν ἐκεῖθεν τέρψιν πολλοῦ τινος ἦγε (<i>Life of Maximos Kausokalybes</i> 79-81)
Οὕτω δ' ἀγαθοὺς ἀρετῆς τεχνίτας (5, 83)	τῆς κατὰ μοναχοὺς ἀρετῆς τεχνίτης (<i>Oration on Gabriel of Thessaloniki</i> 380)
Τῶν δ' ἐντεῦθεν Δημήτριον δεῖ καλεῖν ἡγεμόνα, καὶ παρείης γε ὧ φίλτατε τῆς ὑπὲρ σοῦ σπουδῆς κοινωνήσων (5, 128-129)	Τὴν σὴν καλῶ θείαν ψυχὴν, καὶ παρείης γε φίλτατε τῆς ἐπὶ σοὶ σπουδῆς κοινωνήσων μοι (<i>Oration on Gabriel of Thessaloniki</i> 37-38)
Κοινωνοὺς οἶδε παρασκευάζειν τῶν Ὀλύμπου πραγμάτων (2, 53-54)	Καὶ κοινωνοὺς ἐντεῦθεν καθίστων τῶν Ὀλύμπου πραγμάτων (<i>Oration on the fathers of the seven ecumenical councils</i> 448-449) κοινωνοὺς τῶν Ὀλύμπου καθιστᾶσα πραγμάτων (<i>Oration on Gabriel of Thessaloniki</i> 7-8)
ὧ φύσεως ἔνδειξις καὶ φιλοτιμία γένους (5, 1034-1035)	ὧ φύσεως ἔνδειξις καὶ φιλοτιμία γένους (<i>Oration on Gabriel of Thessaloniki</i> 667-668)
Οὕτω δὶα γυναικῶν (4, 76-77)	Οὕτως ὧ δὶα γυναικῶν (<i>Miracles of St. Euphemia</i> 80-81)
Θεοῦ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐκείνου φίλων ἔχεσθαι μὲν μόνην μάλιστα πασῶν εὐδαιμονίαν εἶναι (5, 206)	Μόνον ἥξει τίμιον τὴν ἀρετὴν χρῆμα, μόνην εὐδαιμονίαν ἐνόμιζε τῷ Θεῷ χρῆσθαι (<i>Oration on Gabriel of Thessaloniki</i> 247-248)

Makarios Makres seems to have absorbed some basic teachings of Kabasilas, at least as far as terminology is concerned. In his *Oration* on Gabriel of Thessaloniki, v. 478-480, he uses the term ἡ μακαρία συσταίη ζωὴ which reminds us of Kabasilas. Although he is very far from the theological depth of his older compatriot, it seems that Makres had been an avid reader of Kabasilas' writings.

¹¹ I refer to the edition of Asterios Argyriou, *Μακαρίου τοῦ Μακρῆ συγγράμματα* (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1996). The numbers refer to the lines of the texts.

Conclusion

Kabasilas had certainly benefited from Thomas Magistros' *Oration* on Gregory of Nazianzus, both in composing his hagiographical works, which are mainly rhetorical, and in expounding his most important theological insights in his main theological treatise *On Life in Christ*. This may be the reason for the absence from the latter treatise of any points of contact between Kabasilas and Palamas. Magistros' *Oration* is a rhetorical work devoid of any interest in hesychasm or mysticism of the Palamite type. Thus, Kabasilas seems to have followed in the steps of Magistros. The intellectualistic way of approaching man's communion with Christ is a characteristic shared by both Magistros and Kabasilas. Later on, the latter's hagiographical works were considerably exploited by the Palamite hieromonk Makarios Makres of Thessaloniki in the early fifteenth century, who did not hesitate to incorporate some elements of Kabasilas' theory on life in Christ into his own rhetorical works.

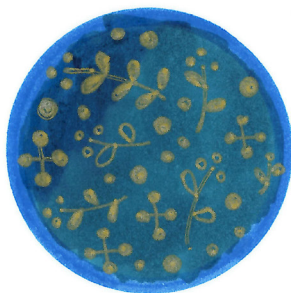
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DIE UNTERSCHIEDUNG ZWISCHEN DER GÖTTLICHEN ESSENZ UND DER NATÜRLICHEN ENERGIE GOTTES NACH PHILOTHEOS KOKKINOS IN SEINEN ZWEI REDEN ÜBER DAS TABORLICHT GEGEN AKINDYNOS

Georgi KAPRIEV*

ABSTRACT. This article explores the elaboration of the distinction between the divine essence and the essential energies of God in the two *Orations on the Light of Tabor* by Philotheos Kokkinos, directed against Gregory Akindynos and the Akindynists. Herein it is shown that Kokkinos follows a well thought out process of philosophizing when dealing with those dimensions of *oikonomia* (the activity of God in the world) that correspond directly to the realm of what is, par excellence, *theologia* (or God in himself). Within this framework, Kokkinos correctly formulates the main theses that provoked the opposition of the Akindynists to the distinction between the divine essence and the essential energies of God. These main points are elaborated through the coining of formulae (quite faithful to the authentic teaching of Gregory Palamas) that are occasionally more precise than the formulations of Palamas himself. Moreover, Kokkinos deals with the conceptual and practical dimensions of the distinction between the essence and the essential energies, without, however, exceeding the limits of the logic contemporary to him.

Keywords: God's essence, essential energy, difference between essence and energy, definition of the difference, systematic hesychasm, Philotheos Kokkinos, Gregorios Palamas, Georgios Scholarios

Philotheos Kokkinos (um 1300–1379), Patriarch von Konstantinopel 1353–1354 und 1364–1377, zählte zu den engsten Gefährten des Gregorios Palamas. Er agierte als Mitautor des Neilos Kabasilas bei der Erstellung des *Tomos*

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von 1351 und als selbständiger Autor des *Tomos* von 1368, d.h. der nahezu wichtigsten Akten, durch die die Lehre des Gregorios Palamas etabliert wurde. Viele klassische Formulierungen dieser Lehre sind ihm zu verdanken. Nämlich er hat darüber hinaus, durch den *Tomos* von 1368, Palamas heiliggesprochen. Kokkinos ist Autor von über 30 Texten, die der Erklärung der palamitischen Lehre gewidmet sind. Von seinen Zeitgenossen wurde er als ihr durchaus treu und sie korrekt und anschaulich darlegend geschätzt.¹ Nichtsdestotrotz zählte ihn John Demetracopoulos zu den kompromissvollen Palamiten, die die Grundidee ihres Lehrers preisgegeben haben, insoweit sie die Distinktion zwischen Essenz und Energie als eine Unterscheidung κατ' ἐπίνοιαν oder λόγῳ, also dem Gedanken nach oder durch die Vernunft, zu bezeichnen pflegten.² Meine Absicht in dieser Überlegung ist es, die Position des Kokkinos im Ganzen, wie auch unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des von John Demetracopoulos hervorgehobenen Sachverhalts in Betracht zu nehmen. Ich beschränke mich dabei nur auf seine am Anfang der 60-er Jahre des 14. Jahrhunderts verfassten zwei Reden über das Taborlicht gegen Akindynos, die in einer *editio princeps* von Petya Yaneva herausgegeben wurden.³

1. Die Vorgehensweise

Eine feste Voraussetzung für den Gedankengang des Kokkinos ist der Sachverhalt, dass das Göttliche nicht nur für die Menschen, sondern auch für die höchsten noetischen Naturen völlig unverständlich seiner Natur nach ist.⁴ Die Versuche, es durch die Forschungskräfte der Seele (διὰ τῶν ἐρευνητικῶς τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεως), durch Vernunftfhwägungen und Gedanken scheitern, weil es sich von jeglicher Annäherung hinaussteht.⁵ Mit dem über jeder Essenz

¹ Cf. Georgi Kapriev, "Philotheos Kokkinos," in *Byzanz. Judentum*, eds. Alexander Brungs, Georgi Kapriev, Vilem Mudroch (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie des Mittelalters 1) (Basel: Schwabe, 2019), 156–157.

² John A. Demetracopoulos, "Palamas Transformed. Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium," in *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. Martin Hinterberger, Chris Schabel (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 263–372.

³ *Περὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ θαβωρίῳ δεσποτικοῦ φωτὸς καὶ περὶ θείας ἐνεργείας πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἀπολογίτας* [Über das göttliche Licht auf dem Tabor sowie über die göttliche Energie] (= *Περὶ φωτὸς*), in *De Domini luce. За Таворската светлина* (*editio princeps*), ed. Petya Yaneva (Sofia: Istok-Zapad, 2011), 21–97; *Περὶ θεότητος καὶ θείου φωτὸς καὶ πνευματικῶν ὁράσεων καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς τῶν τελείων προσευχῆς πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀπολογίτας* [Über die Gottheit, das göttliche Licht, die geistliche Schau und über das heilige Gebet der Vollkommenen] (= *Περὶ θεότητος*), in *De Domini luce*, ed. Yaneva, 98–142.

⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτὸς*, ed. Yaneva, 48, 3–5.

⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 136, 1–4.

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und jedem Wissen Stehenden kommt, insoweit es möglich ist, derjenige in Berührung, der sich von allen sinnlichen und geistigen Anschauungen, und von den Forschungskräften der Seele in den Vernunftbetrachtungen und Gedanken befreit hat, wie es uns die Gott aussagenden Vorboten (οἱ θεηγόροι φθάσαντες) mehrfach gezeigt haben.⁶ Gerade sie, die Theologen, belehren die Kirche Gottes auf eine gottgebührende Weise über das göttliche Geheimnis, indem sie unserem Geist (νοῦς) nicht gestatten, bezüglich übermenschlicher Gegenstände durch menschliche Vernunftbetrachtungen (λογισμοί) Syllogismen zu schaffen (συλλογίζεσται).⁷ Der Geist der Wahrheit wird seine Nachfolger durch die Worte der Theologen, durch die der Geist gesprochen hat, zur ganzen Wahrheit der richtigen Dogmen führen.⁸

In keinem Fall fassen wir die göttliche Essenz selbst auf, sondern lediglich das um die Essenz herum Stehende (τὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).⁹ Der seiner Natur nach völlig Unteilhafte und Unbekannte wird durch seine natürlichen Energien teilhaftig und erkennbar.¹⁰ Während seine Essenz unerreichbar bleibt, lernen wir unseren Gott durch seine Energien kennen, die auf uns herabsteigen.¹¹ Diese überlegende Herrlichkeit Gottes, die Gnade des guten Geistes, die in die Herzen der Heiligen ausgegossen wird, verwirklicht das wahre Wissen oder Erkennen Gottes.¹² Die Herrlichkeit und die Kraft der göttlichen Natur, die die Vergöttlichung der Natur der Engel und der Menschen verwirklichen, zählen nicht zu der Schöpfung. Die an diesem Geheimnis Teilhabenden und die dasselbe Erfahrenen lehren uns über nach dem Wort des Herrn darüber. Sie können es eben deshalb tun, weil es sich um eine Ökonomie (οἰκονομία), um eine zwar wunderliche Ökonomie handelt.¹³

Gerade weil es um Ökonomie und nicht um Theologie schlechthin geht, ist die Erkenntnis über die *ad extra* wirkenden göttlichen Energien und das Erlangen solcher Erkenntnis nicht nur den die Gnade und die Vergöttlichung (χάρις καὶ θέωσις) Erworbenen zugänglich, sondern auch denen, die keine Erfahrung von diesem seligen Pathos (τοῦ μακαρίου πάθους ἀπείρατοι) haben, zu denen Kokkinos auch sich selbst zählt.¹⁴ Er reiht sich an der Seite derer ein, Er zählt auch zu denen, die um den Vorraum des Gottestempels kreisen. Sie sind

⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 136, 10-16.

⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 39, 20-23.

⁸ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 47, 25-48, 2.

⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 49, 20-21.

¹⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 54, 7-58, 1.

¹¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 50, 1-5.

¹² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 53, 21-24.

¹³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 35, 30-36, 3.

¹⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 120, 5.

imstande zu schauen, insofern es ihnen möglich ist, und werden von denen eingeweiht, die im Innenraum verweilen.¹⁵ Die die mystische Erfahrung nicht Habenden werden dabei ziemlich dunkelhaft und mäßig (λίαν ἀμυδρῶς καὶ μετρίως) eingeweiht, weil sie sich immer noch nicht vollständig von der inneren Verwirrung und dem Zwist befreit haben. Sie können die Bosheit der geistigen Gefangenschaft nicht völlig vermeiden, aber sie werden von dem alles könnenden Glauben unterstützt und von der Philanthropie des Mysteriums in Schutz genommen. Es ist schwer und gefährlich, in Hinsicht auf das geistige Sehen kurzsichtig zu sein, und das Wissen wegzustoßen, das unserer Kraft angemessen ist. Solches Benehmen zeigt ein Leiden am Unglauben auf, der die Mutter des Nichtwissens und die Verfechterin aller Übel ist.¹⁶ Wir werden ein Stück eine Weile mit Moses auf den heiligen Berg aufsteigen, erklärt Kokkinos, obwohl wir, noch nicht erkennend, das Ersehnte nicht verständlich sehen werden, aber wir werden zuerst mit dem Felsen bedeckt philosophieren wie diejenigen, die seinen Rücken, den Rücken Gottes, gesehen haben.¹⁷ Kokkinos ist sich durchaus bewusst, dass sein Verfahren ein Philosophisches ist, weil es im Fall der Erkenntnis der göttlichen Energien um ein Wissen über die göttliche Ökonomie geht, die durch die Vernunft und den Intellekt zu verstehen und zu deuten ist.

Er macht von dem Instrumentarium der Philosophie Gebrauch, beurteilt die – richtige oder verwirrte – Logik der Debatte und versucht, einen unwiderlegbaren Beweis (μαρτύριον ἀπαράγραπτον) zu prägen.¹⁸ Damit bemerkt er zugleich, dass es angesichts dieser Problematik nicht um ein beliebiges Philosophieren geht. Das Philosophieren und Reden über solche Gegenstände ist, Gregorios dem Theologen treu folgend, kein Werk zufälliger Figuren und nicht jedermanns Sache. Es ist auch nicht auf zufällige Personen gerichtet und nicht in allen möglichen Situationen durchzuführen. Es ist eine Sache geistlicher Menschen und auf geistliche Menschen gerichtet. Es ist für diejenigen, die das angebrachte Alter erreicht haben oder gerade erreichen, das eine Stabilität gewährt und in dem eine Annäherung an die Fülle des Geistes möglich wird.¹⁹ Als Muster wird der "Philosoph der Kirche" (τῆς ἐκκλησίας φιλόσοφος) Johannes Damaskenos empfohlen.²⁰

Das Vorbild sei das auf die beste Weise von den Theologen Philosophierte (τοῖς θεολόγοις φιλοσοφηθὲν ἄριστα). Es stütze sich auf keine Beispiele (παράδειγματα), weil diese nicht imstande seien, die übernatürliche Natur

¹⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 122, 13-15.

¹⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 122, 20-123, 2.

¹⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 142, 10-14.

¹⁸ Cf. Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 111, 13-14.

¹⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 115, 9-15.

²⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 31, 10.

abzubilden (ἐξεικονίσαι), und aus diesem Grund wende es nichts an, was das Denken (διάνοια) in der Schau des Vorgestellten (τὸ φανταζόμενον) in eine Abhängigkeit von den Beispielen führt.²¹ Gregorios Palamas und die richtig Denkenden (οἱ φρονοῦντες ὀρθῶς) folgen, das betont Kokkinos, der göttlichen Kraft und Vorsehung und den gottinspirierten Vätern.²²

Auch in diesem Punkt gerät er in einen stimmigen Zusammenklang mit Palamas, der eine Norm der Frömmigkeit (γνώμων τῆς εὐσεβείας) formuliert.²³ Sie soll die diskursive Theologie regeln, die Palamas traditionell auf die gleiche Ebene mit der Philosophie stellt. Diese Norm fordert ein striktes Festhalten an den christlichen Dogmen, indem sie einen Widerspruch im Dogmensystem definitiv ausschließt.²⁴ Sie verlangt eine kompromisslose Anwendung der Sätze der Logik.²⁵ Aufgrund dieser Norm wagt Palamas eine "Richtregel der Dogmen" (γνώμονά τινα δογμάτων) aufzustellen.²⁶ Palamas erklärt seine Gewissheit, durch diese Norm die Wahrheit aller Sätze zu prüfen, wie auch Zeugnis (τεκμήριον) und notwendigen Beweis (ἀπόδειξις) für die von ihm verkündete Wahrheit anführen zu können,²⁷ und imstande zu sein, nicht nur zu zeigen und auszulegen, sondern auch zu erforschen und zu beweisen.²⁸ Die durch diese Vorgehensweise produzierten Theologumena erlaubt er sich mit den dogmatisierten Sätzen gleichzusetzen. Im Bereich des theologischen Diskurses stattet Palamas den "frommen Intellekt" und die "fromme Vernunft" mit außergewöhnlich weitreichenden Vollmachten aus.²⁹

In diesem Horizont kündigt Kokkinos denen Kampf (μαχόμενον) an, die die Wahrheit kompromittieren und versuchen, jene, die für sie eintreten, abzulenken.³⁰ Er tadelt die "in Bezug auf das theologische Denken Lahmen," weil sie Mangel an Fleiß und beständigerem Bemühen demonstrierten. Weder hätten sie mit geistlicheren als sie mitphilosophiert noch hätten sie selbst philosophiert, um die Wahrheit zu entdecken (συμφιλοσοφεῖν τε καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας εὕρεσιν).³¹ Kokkinos' Anführer im philosophischen Bestreben ist

²¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 94, 10-17.

²² Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 99, 4-5.

²³ Gregorios Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 10; 13, *PS*, vol. 2, 233.23; 238.11-12.

²⁴ Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 13, *PS*, vol. 2, 238.11-17.

²⁵ Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 3; 22, *PS*, vol. 2, 223.13-15; 248.26-249.9.

²⁶ Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 3, *PS*, vol. 2, 223.2.

²⁷ Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 3, *PS*, vol. 2, 223.3-9.

²⁸ Palamas, *Θεοφάνης*, 13, *PS*, vol. 2, 236.23-26.

²⁹ Cf. Kapriev, "Die göttliche Gesetzgebung und die Norm der Erkenntnis gemäß Gregorios Palamas," in *Das Gesetz – The Law – La Loi*, eds. Andreas Speer, Guy Guldentops (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 38) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 431-436.

³⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 141, 3-6.

³¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 103, 10-14.

der mehrfach in den Traktaten erwähnte "Bruder, der Gottespriester Gregorios,"³² nämlich Palamas, "der Verteidiger der Orthodoxie aus unserem und Gottes Schoß, der über diese Dinge gut denkt und schreibt, ohne zu verdrillen."³³

2. Die Grundthesen

Kokkinos fixiert die Grundthesen bereits in seinem Vorwort: Das Taborlicht des Herrn ist natürliche und nichtgeschaffene Herrlichkeit Gottes und Göttlichkeit;³⁴ das heilige Licht offenbart sich (φαίνεσθαι) den Heiligen im Geist (ἐν πνεύματι).³⁵ Dazu kommt ein weiteres, besonders detailliert ausgearbeitetes Thema: "Der Gottespriester Gregorios verehrt nicht viele Göttlichkeiten."³⁶

"Weder kannte, noch rühmte der gottgeweihte Gregorios," erklärt Kokkinos, "zwei oder mehrere Gottheiten, wie ihr sagt, größere oder kleinere, die sich untereinander und gegenüber der einen Gottheit unterscheiden."³⁷ "Siehst Du," belehrt er weiter, nachdem er zwei Dionysios-Stellen zitiert hat, "dass die göttliche Energie 'Gottheit' zu nennen und dass zu behaupten, dass die göttliche Natur ihr nicht dem Geschaffenen und Nichtgeschaffenen gemäß überlegen ist, sondern insoweit der Nichtteilhafte und Relationslose (ἀμέτεκτος καὶ ἄσχετος) die Teilhaben und die Relationen übersteigt, nicht ein Wort von irgendjemandem, sondern die genuine Theologie und Lehre der Väter ist?"³⁸ Mit Emphase betont er, dass wir, also die Palamiten, die eine Gottheit des Vaters und des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes nicht nur in der Essenz verehren und anbeten, sondern auch in der Kraft und in der nichtgeschaffenen Energie und in allen Dingen, die wir beobachten und theologisch über die Essenz billigen. Wir sagen nicht, fügt er hinzu, dass es zwei Gottheiten gibt, noch, dass es eine übergeordnete und eine untergeordnete Gottheit (οὐ δύο θεότητας ... οὐδ' ὑπερκειμένην τε καὶ ὑφειμένην) gibt, sondern behaupten, dass eine Gottheit besteht, die aber nicht nur in der Essenz, sondern, und dabei beruft er sich auf den ersten Abschnitt von *Contra Eunomium* des Gregorios von Nyssa, auch in der "Vollkommenheit in Allem" (ἐν τῇ διὰ πάντων τελειότητι) betrachtet wird. Unter "Alles" pflegt Kokkinos in diesem Satz den freien Willen, die Weisheit, die Gutheit, die willentlich gottmachende kreative Kraft Gottes zu verstehen.³⁹

³² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 72, 7-8.

³³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 114, 10-12.

³⁴ Kokkinos, *Προθεωρία*, ed. Yaneva, 22, 22-24.

³⁵ Kokkinos, *Προθεωρία*, ed. Yaneva, 22, 33-34.

³⁶ Kokkinos, *Προθεωρία*, ed. Yaneva, 26, 29.

³⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 98, 16-19.

³⁸ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 101, 5-10.

³⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 27, 23-32.

DIE UNTERSCHIEDUNG ZWISCHEN DER GÖTTLICHEN ESSENZ
UND DER NATÜRLICHEN ENERGIE GOTTES

Diese umfassende Polemik kommt nicht von ungefähr. Im Jahre 1337 benutzt Gregorios Palamas in seinem vierten Brief an Akindynos den Ausdruck "übergeordnete und untergeordnete Gottheit" (ὑπερκειμένη καὶ ὑφειμένη θεότητα), den er den "heiligen Vätern" zuzuschreiben versucht.⁴⁰ Seine Gegner haben es nie versäumt, ihn wegen diesem Spruch für "Dyotheismus" und sogar "Polytheismus" zu tadeln. In den nächsten zwanzig Jahren wird sich Palamas mehrfach befleißigen, den metaphorischen und nicht wörtlichen Sinn dieses Ausspruches zu rechtfertigen. Die heutigen orthodoxen Theologen des Ostens fassen seine These folgenderweise zusammen: "Dem Wesen nach, das Palamas 'übergeordnete Gottheit' nennt, ist Gott transzendent, unsichtbar und unbekannt, seinen Energien nach jedoch, die Palamas 'untergeordnete Gottheit' nennt, ist Gott in der Welt, sichtbar und bekannt."⁴¹ Man muss feststellen, dass Kokkinos die Gefahr von dieser unglücklichen Formulierung einsah und sich bemühten, sie aufzuheben, wobei er aus der Perspektive der palamitischen Lehre treffendere Ausdrucksformen liefert.

In diesem Kontext besteht er darauf, dass die göttliche Energie Gottheit ist. In ihrer Äußerung *ad extra* wird sie Geist-πνεῦμα genannt. Kokkinos lässt sich von den Theologen, unter ihnen Johannes Chrysostomos, belehren, dass der Herr uns gelehrt habe, die geistlichen Energien "Geister" (πνεύματα) zu nennen.⁴² Christus hat den mit dem Geist Geeinten eine Energie gegeben und gesagt: "Empfangt den Heiligen Geist!" (λάβετε Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον, Joh. 20, 22), nachdem er mit der Gabe der Vergebung (ἀφέσις) auch die heiligende Anrede (ἁγιαστική προσηγορία) – den Personalnamen des Geistes – gegeben hat, wobei er nicht den Heiligen Geist selbst, sondern die geistliche Gabe der Vergebung gespendet hat.⁴³ Dieser heilige Geist wird von der Hypostase des Heiligen Geistes unterschieden. Kokkinos pflegt von der einen Gottheit und Kraft und einem Reich zu reden, die in den drei vollkommenen göttlichen Hypostasen dieselbe Essenz, Kraft, Herrschaft und Energie haben, die unteilbar in den drei Hypostasen sind. Die Unterscheidung durch die hypostatischen Eigenschaften führt nicht dazu, dass man etwas mehr oder weniger von der einen und in aller Hinsicht vollkommenen Gottheit verehrt.⁴⁴

Das Göttliche ist seiner Essenz nach unzugänglich. Es ist in der Schöpfung nicht mit seiner Essenz, sondern seiner Kraft und Energie nach präsent, durch die es wegen der Gutheit zugänglich wird. Es erfüllt alles, wobei es unendlich verbleibt,

⁴⁰ Palamas, *Ἐπιστολή Γ' πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον* 6, PS, vol. 1, 300.19-20.

⁴¹ Georgios Martzelos, "Der heilige Gregorios Palamas und die neuere deutschsprachige Theologie," *Hephaestus Research Repository* (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/11728/7654>.

⁴² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 96, 15-16.

⁴³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 96, 6-11.

⁴⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 88, 4-10.

weil es auf keine Weise und durch kein Prinzip begrenzt wird.⁴⁵ Keiner unter den Menschen, so beruft sich Kokkinos auf Athanasios von Alexandrien, kann die göttliche Essenz nackt (γυμνή) sehen. Die Apostel haben nicht die Essenz (οὐσία) Gottes, sondern seine Herrlichkeit (δόξα) gesehen.⁴⁶ Selbst dieses Geheimnis der Gottheit wird nicht durch leibliche Augen und auf natürliche Weise geschaut.⁴⁷ Die menschliche Kraft muss auf übernatürliche Weise herausgehoben werden, damit die geheime Vereinigung verwirklicht wird.⁴⁸

Die Vergöttlichung (θέωσις) kommt zu den Menschen in dieser Welt als unendlich spendende Gnade, die der göttlichen Menschenliebe folgt.⁴⁹ Die Gewürdigten werden Götter nicht der Natur nach, sondern der Gnade, also der Energie nach. Sie empfangen die wahre Unvergänglichkeit (ἀφθαρσία) vor der allgemeinen Auferstehung und Unvergänglichkeit. In diesem vorläufigen göttlichen Zustand werden die Kräfte, Hinausgänge (προόδοι) und essentiellen Züge geäußert, die der göttlichen Natur eigen sind.⁵⁰ Das Mysterium der Verklärung Christi auf Tabor ist nichts anderes als das Mysterium des zukünftigen Äons, die Herrlichkeit und die Kraft der göttlichen und unfassbaren Natur, mit denen er kommt, um jedem nach seinem Verdienst zu richten und ihn zu verurteilen. Demgemäß werden die Gerechten ihn auch leiblich sehen und sie werden an der unbeschreiblichen Freude teilhaben.⁵¹

Die Jünger Jesu haben auf Tabor, so überlegt Kokkinos, die Gottheit des Eingeborenen gesehen, die geheimnisvoll durch das innerhypostatische und ihm mitnatürliche Fleisch (διὰ τῆς ἐνυποστάτου καὶ συμφοῦς αὐτῷ σαρκός) leuchtet. Dann haben sowohl die Apostel als auch die Propheten erfahren, dass das Verherrlichende, das Moses persönlich verherrlicht hat, ihn von außen als Diener der göttlichen Geheimnisse der Gnade nach und zeitweilig (κατὰ χάριν καὶ πρὸς καιρόν) erleuchtet hat.⁵² In der Menschengeschichte vor Christus ist das Ausgießen des Geistes weder auf jedes Fleisch noch großzügig und reichlich gewesen.⁵³

Damit greift Kokkinos das altertümliche Thema der Vergöttlichung der alttestamentlichen Heiligen auf, das auch von Palamas in einem Zusammenklang mit Maximus Confessor ausgearbeitet ist. Die Vergöttlichung der Auserwählten

⁴⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 79, 1-7.

⁴⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 39, 6-8.

⁴⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 39, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 40, 17-18.

⁴⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 43, 20-22.

⁵⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 84, 4-12.

⁵¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 29, 29-30, 3.

⁵² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 44, 3-10.

⁵³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 116, 29-30.

DIE UNTERSCHIEDUNG ZWISCHEN DER GÖTTLICHEN ESSENZ
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Gottes vor der Inkarnation Christi, zeigt Palamas, ist auch eine direkte Wirkung der göttlichen Gnade, d.h. der natürlichen Energie Gottes, die von dem Wort Gottes und dem Heiligen Geist aus gerichtet wird. Der Unterschied liegt darin, dass diese Gnade den Patriarchen und den Propheten im Hinblick auf ihre besondere Mission erteilt wurde. Die Erteilung der Gnade hat einen "funktionellen" Charakter, der mit der konkreten Berufung in Zusammenhang steht. Für gewöhnlich geschieht die Beteiligung an der Gottheit durch eine partikuläre Theophanie. Moses stellt eine Ausnahme dar, weil (Ex. 33, 11) Gott mit ihm von Angesicht zu Angesicht (ένώπιος ένωπίω) gesprochen hat. Er wurde persönlich, so lautet die Deutung des Palamas, durch die Hypostase des Sohnes vergöttlicht. Gerade mit Aufmerksamkeit auf die Beziehung zwischen der historischen Erscheinung Christi und seiner metahistorischen Anwesenheit wird bemerkt, dass selbst Moses wegen seiner heilgeschichtlichen Mission die Vergöttlichung erhalten hat. Nach dem historischen Erlösungswerk Christi ist die vergöttlichende Gnade bereits allen Gliedern der Kirche, mit Rücksicht auf ihre persönliche Lebensweise, ihrem Glauben, ihrer Vollkommenheit, d.h. ihrer persönlichen Eigenart, zugänglich.⁵⁴ Nun ist, bemerkt Kokkinos, das Reich Gottes mitten unter uns (Luk. 17, 21). Wenn wir unsere Sinne schließen, uns selbst und Gott nahe werden, und, von dem äußeren Kreislauf der Welt befreit, in uns selbst hineinfahren, dann sehen wir das Reich Gottes deutlich in uns.⁵⁵ Das Licht, also die natürliche Energie Gottes, kommt nicht mehr von außen, sondern es leuchtet von innen heraus.

Die Vergöttlichung ergreift die psychosomatische Einheit, den ganzen Menschen vollständig. Der Leib (σώμα) ist in einer Gemeinschaft mit der Seele verbunden (συγκοινωνεῖ). In dieser Gemeinschaft verwandelt er sich zusammen mit der Seele in einen übernatürlichen Zustand. Er wird mit ihr zusammen durch seine analogische Teilhabe an der Vergöttlichung mitvergöttlicht.⁵⁶ Christus hat den ganzen ihm innerhypostatischen Menschen zu Gott gemacht, um den ganzen Menschen, d.h. den Geist, die Seele und den Leib, nicht das eine ja und das andere nicht, nicht teilweise, sondern den ganzen Menschen insgesamt (ἀλλ' όλον διόλου άνθρωπον) durch Gnade vergöttlicht.⁵⁷

Gott wird an jedem Einzelnen je nach seinem Maß und Rang (κατὰ τὸ μέτρον καὶ τὴν τάξιν ἐκάστου) teilhaftig. Er zeigt sich entsprechend (ἀναλόγως),

⁵⁴ Cf. Kapriev, "Die Begegnung Moses' mit Christus (Gregorios Palamas, *Triaden*, II, 3, 55)," in *Sophia. The Wisdom of God – Die Weisheit Gottes*, eds. Theresia Hainthaler, Franz Mali, Gregor Emmenegger, Manté Lenkaityté Ostermann (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2017), 387–394.

⁵⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 130, 18–23.

⁵⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 127, 24–128, 1.

⁵⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 128, 25–30.

wie er sich seinen Schülern gezeigt hat.⁵⁸ Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita folgend, versucht Kokkinos diesen Umstand durch zwei Gleichnisse deutlich zu machen: Wie das Siegel, das eines ist und vielen Abdrücken etwas des ursprünglichen Siegels übermittelt, ein und dasselbe bleibt, indem es aus seiner Energie und keineswegs aus seiner Essenz übermittelt, und denjenigen, die empfänglich sind, seine Materie zu empfangen, gut gedruckte und deutliche Abdrücke, und denjenigen, die nicht empfänglich sind, undeutliche und verschwommene gibt, oder wie eine Stimme, die, wenn sie von vielen Ohren geteilt wird, in sich selbst nicht geteilt und nicht von allen (Tieren und Menschen, jungen und alten, gesunden und behinderten, was die akustische Energie betrifft) gleichermaßen empfangen wird, so wirkt die göttliche Natur in allem und wird von allem geteilt, je nach der Veranlagung jeder der Schöpfungen, sie zu empfangen. Sie bleibt dabei völlig ungeteilt und rein in ihrer Essenz, und wird in der Weise geteilt, in der es geeignet ist, natürliche Energien zu teilen.⁵⁹ Diese und ähnliche Differenzierungen der Essenz und der Energien stellen bereits dringlich die Frage nach der Art und Weise, auf die Kokkinos die göttliche Essenz und die essenziellen Energien Gottes untereinander unterscheidet.

3. Die Bestimmung der Differenz zwischen Essenz und Energien

Die logisch korrekte Bestimmung der Differenz ist für Kokkinos keine einfach zu lösende Frage. Er macht darauf aufmerksam, dass wenn auch die Väter der göttlichen Natur den Namen der Essenz gegeben haben, sie sie mit demselben Namen benennen wie die Energie, weil sie keinen adäquaten Namen für die unerkennbare Natur finden können.⁶⁰ Gott ist einer in einer Gottheit⁶¹ und die gottinspirierten Väter legen die Benennung der Gottheit einmal auf die göttliche Natur und ein anderes Mal auf die Energie selbst.⁶² Kokkinos erklärt die Evidenz der Gleichwürdigkeit (ὁμοτιμία) der Energie Gottes und der göttlichen Einigung und Teilung (ἔνωσις καὶ διάκρισις).⁶³ Wenn auch die Macht (ἐξουσία) der Essenz von dem Glanz und der Kraft der göttlichen Natur unterschieden ist, sind der Glanz und die Kraft von der Natur nicht getrennt. Es ist unmöglich, dass man, sie voneinander trennend, das Übrigbleibende ohne das Andere aufzufassen vermag. Wenn man aber über die Kraft und den Glanz

⁵⁸ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 47, 9-12.

⁵⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 80, 22-81, 10.

⁶⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 81, 20-24.

⁶¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 112, 7-8.

⁶² Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 98, 23-24.

⁶³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 97, 3-4.

nachdenkt, fasst man sie als eine von ihnen untrennbare Natur auf, aus der jedes dieser Dinge ist.⁶⁴

Kokkinos hebt mehrmals hervor, dass die Problematik jeder Logik und Rede überlegen (ὕπερ λόγον) ist. Dem Logiker Kokkinos ist die Formulierung der Unterscheidung ein praktisch unlösbares Problem. Er stützt sich auf Gregorios den Theologen und Johannes Damaskenos, um sich zu vergewissern, dass eine Sache der Wollende und eine andere der Wille oder – was dasselbe ist – das Wirkende (ἐνεργῶν) und die Energie, der sich Bewegende und die Bewegung ist. Sie sind dabei aber auch nicht getrennt. Wie ist die Bewegung von dem sich Bewegenden zu trennen? Es ist außerdem zu bemerken, dass beide nichtgeschaffen sind. Zumindest mit dem Intellekt (μηδὲ νῶ) sind in dieser Situation, und darauf beharrt Kokkinos, die, die nicht zu teilen (τὰ μὴ χωριστά) sind, abgesondert (χωριστῶς) aufzufassen. Weil beide nichtgeschaffen sind, ist der eine Gott von den beiden nicht zusammengesetzt (σύνθετος). Es kann keine Teilung oder Zusammensetzung (μερισμὸς ἢ σύνθεσις) zwischen dem sich Bewegenden und der Bewegung sein, wobei es um eine gottgebührende Bewegung geht, gemäß der keine Addition oder Subtraktion erfolgt.⁶⁵

Der Mangel an einer strikten oder zumindest nach den Regeln der Logik gestalteten Formulierung der Unterscheidung ist nicht nur für Kokkinos kennzeichnend. Selbst Palamas hat darauf verzichtet, die Essenz-Energie-Unterscheidung technisch zu qualifizieren. Die göttliche Essenz und die göttliche Energie sind, so insistiert er, ungeteilt überall präsent. Sie sind den Theologen nach unteilbar geteilt (μερίζεται ἀμερίστως), während die göttliche Natur ganz und gar unteilbar verbleibt.⁶⁶ Er spricht von unteilbarer Teilung (ἀδιαίρετος διαίρεσις) und geteilter Einheit (διηρημένη ἕνωσις). Er erklärt, dass Gott, der keine Vermehrung und keine Zusammensetzung erfährt, sich ungeteilt teilt (ἀδιαίρετως διαίρεῖται) und sich teilhaftig einigt (συνάπτεται διηρεμένως).⁶⁷ Die Energien sind "Sachen," aber solche, die keine Essenzen sind: "πράγματά ἐστι κἂν οὐκ οὐσίαι."⁶⁸ Ähnliche Sätze ziehen sich durch das ganze Werk des Palamas. Er erklärt keine feste Bestimmung der Unterscheidungsart. Weder πραγματικῶς noch κατ' ἐπίνοιαν werden von ihm in einem begrifflichen Sinn gebraucht, wenn er die διάκρισις zwischen der göttlichen Essenz und Energie zu beschreiben versucht.

⁶⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 111, 26–112, 3.

⁶⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 112, 8–19.

⁶⁶ Palamas, *Κεφάλαια ἐκατὸν πενήκοντα φυσικά καὶ θεολογικά, ἠθικά τε καὶ πρακτικά καὶ καθαρτικά τῆς Βαρλααμίτιδος λύμης* 74, *PS*, vol. 5, 77.1–14.

⁶⁷ Palamas, *Κεφάλαια* 81, *PS*, vol. 5, 81.25–82.5.

⁶⁸ Palamas, *Κατὰ Γρηγοῦρᾶ συγγράμματα* II, 20, *PS* 4, 280.35.

Der Grund dafür ist, dass die “griechischen Väter” in einer Ablehnung von der hellenischen Logiklehren lediglich zwei Distinktionen kannten: eine διαφορά τῷ πράγματι und eine διαφορά κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν. Dieser Sachverhalt blieb bis zu der Zeit des Georgios Scholarios gültig. Er ließ sich von der Distinctio-Lehre des Duns Scotus beeinflussen, bestimmte die Energie als ein πρᾶγμα, aber nicht im strengen Sinne des Wortes, sondern als τὶ τοῦ πράγματός ἐστι κἂν τῷ πράγματι,⁶⁹ und definierte die Unterscheidung zwischen Essenz und essenzieller Energie als eine formelle – εἰδικὴ διαφορά. Seine Bestimmung korrespondiert mit der scotischen *distinctio formalis a parte rei*, die er höchstwahrscheinlich durch das Werk von Hervaeus Natalis kennengelernt hat.⁷⁰ Sie wurde 1445 zum ersten Mal schriftlich belegt. Kokkinos schrieb knapp 80 Jahre früher.

Immerhin versucht er, die Unterscheidung auf eine adäquate Weise zu beschreiben, ohne sie mit den ihm bekannten Distinktionen πραγματικῶς und κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν zu identifizieren. An zwei Stellen zitiert er ausführlich eine Überlegung des Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagita,⁷¹ um seine eigene Position zu bekräftigen. Wir behaupten, erklärt er, dass die Hinausgänge (προόδοι) der θεαρχία eine göttliche Teilung (διάκρισις θεία) sind. Einerseits teilt sich die Gottheit vereinigt (ἡνωμένως διακρίνεται) und sie vermehrt sich andererseits, ohne das Eine zu verlassen.⁷² Es ist das in der Teilung Geeinigte (τὸ ἐν τῇ διακρίσει ἡνωμένον) gemeint.⁷³ Durch diese Wendungen steht Kokkinos der Ausdruckweise des Palamas ganz nahe. Sich ihrer logischen Mangelhaftigkeit bewusst, solidarisiert er sich mit Gregorios dem Theologen, dass für uns die Frömmigkeit-ἐυσέβεια nicht in Worten (ἐν λέξεσιν) sondern in der Praxis (ἐν πράγμασι) besteht.⁷⁴

Aus dieser Perspektive betont er: Die menschliche Natur beteiligt sich in einer Gemeinschaft mit der göttlichen Natur.⁷⁵ In dieser κοινωνία nimmt der Mensch jedoch nicht die göttliche Natur selbst in sich ein.⁷⁶ Der Theologe, erinnert

⁶⁹ Georgios Scholarios, *Περὶ τοῦ πῶς διακρίνονται αἱ θεῖαι ἐνέργειαι πρὸς τε ἀλλήλας καὶ τὴν θείαν οὐσίαν* 6, in *Oeuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, vol. 3, eds. Louis Petit, Xénophon A. Sidéridès, Martin Jugie (Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1930), 238, 21–26; *Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὸ τοῦ διδασκάλου θωμᾶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀκίνου βιβλίον τὸ περὶ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας* 6, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6 (1933), 281, 6–8.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kapriev, “Die scotische Unterscheidung von Essenz und Energie bei Georgios Scholarios und die inneren Quellen der palamitischen Tradition,” in *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. A Tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, eds. Roberto Hofmeister Pich, Andreas Speer (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 129–154.

⁷¹ Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita, *Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων* 2, 11, in *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 135, 14–136, 6.

⁷² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 61, 4–15; *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 112, 27–113, 4.

⁷³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 113, 7.

⁷⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 114, 7–9.

⁷⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 82, 24–25.

⁷⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 82, 15–16.

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er, wobei er Palamas meint, lehrte deutlich über das Nichtteilhafte, Nichtrelative und Nichtnachahmbare (τὸ ἀμέθεκτον καὶ ἄσχετον καὶ ἀμίμητον) der göttlichen Natur und, entsprechend, über das Mitteilbare und das Gemeinschaftliche (μεθεκτὸν καὶ κοινωνικόν) der göttlichen Energien. Damit man sie nicht für die göttliche Natur hält, sagt er, dass sie *von* der Natur sind (ἐκ τῆς φύσεως αὐτὰς εἶναι), und nennt sie Hervorgänge und Providenzen, die sich reichlich und überreichlich vergießen. Die göttliche Natur besteht dabei über sie hinaus (ἐπέκεινα τούτων).⁷⁷ Wir brauchen nicht vor der Unterscheidung der Gottheit in der Teilung (ἐν τῇ διακρίσει διαφορὰ τῆς θεότητος) und vor der entsprechend vermuteten Überlegenheit (ὑπεροχή) Angst zu haben.⁷⁸

Die Energien unterschieden sich unbedingt, hebt Kokkinos hervor, von der Natur (ὁπωσδήποτε διαφερούσας τῆς φύσεως),⁷⁹ zudem sie auch nichtgeschaffen sind und wie die sie ausstrahlende Natur gleichwertig (ὁμοτίμως) verweilen.⁸⁰ Die Theologen der Kirche belehren die Kirche einstimmig (συμφώνως), dass die Energien der göttlichen Natur eigen (und nicht die Natur selbst) und etwas anderes als die Natur selbst sind, weil sie natürliche Kräfte und Hinausgänge (προόδοι) sind, die überreichlich quellen. Der seiner Natur nach Nichtteilhafte hat durch sie an seiner eigenen Schöpfung synergisch teil (ἀναλόγως μεθεκτός).⁸¹ Die gottgebührenden Energien und Kräfte sind der Essenz eigen und haben von ihr, als ihr unzertrennlicher und sie charakterisierender Teil ihr Sein.⁸² Nichtgeschaffen und anfangslos sind die Energien um die Natur herum – sie sind nicht die Natur (περὶ γὰρ τὴν φύσιν οὐ ταῦτα φύσις).⁸³ Die göttlichen Energien sind nicht die Essenz Gottes, sondern der Essenz und von der Essenz (τῆς οὐσίας καὶ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας), weil sie keine Natur, sondern Charakteristika der Natur (χαρακτηριστικὰ φύσεως) sind.⁸⁴ Gerade vor dieser Distinktion (διάκρισις) braucht man nach den Theologen keine Angst haben, indes das Nichtgeschaffene die gleiche Würde hat und die Einigung der auf gute Weise Unterschiedenen darstellt. Jede unfrome Unterschätzung oder Überschätzung ist dabei zu verwerfen.⁸⁵ Wir wurden durch die Ansiedlung (ἐνοίκησις) des allheiligen Geistes in uns Teilhabende (κοινωνοί) der göttlichen Natur, erklärt Kokkinos, nicht weil unsere Natur mit der göttlichen Natur in Gemeinschaft

⁷⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 103, 27-33.

⁷⁸ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 110, 30-32.

⁷⁹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 109, 16-17.

⁸⁰ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 109, 3-4.

⁸¹ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 108, 25-109, 1.

⁸² Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 79, 28-30.

⁸³ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 65, 22-26.

⁸⁴ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 71, 18-24.

⁸⁵ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 111, 7-11.

trat, sondern weil wir die ganze Gnade und Energie Gottes in unseren Herzen empfangen haben.⁸⁶

Das Zitierte reicht, um daraus zu schließen, dass Kokkinos eine eindeutige formelle und praktische Differenzierung zwischen Essenz und Energie vornimmt. Die bereits zitierte Äußerung, die an die Fähigkeit appelliert, das, was nicht zu teilen (τὰ μὴ χωριστά) ist, zumindest mit dem Intellekt (μηδὲ νῶ) abgesondert (χωριστῶς) aufzufassen,⁸⁷ erschöpft die Ansicht des Kokkinos offensichtlich nicht. Das „μηδὲ νῶ“ ist das Minimum, die elementare Grundlage der Denkprozedur, die die Erörterung der Problematik überhaupt möglich macht. Auch in diesem Punkt folgt er Palamas.

In einem ausführlichen Passus beruft sich Palamas zunächst auf die Inschrift auf der Tür der Platons Schule: „Kein der Geometrie Unkundiger möge hier eintreten.“ Völlig unkundig der Geometrie ist jeder, bemerkt er, der unfähig ist, über das Unteilbare als Teilbares (περὶ τῶν ἀχωρίστων ὡς κεχωρισμένων) zu denken und zu sprechen. Man muss zwischen Grenze und Begrenztem unterscheiden können, zu welchem Zweck der Nous die Unteilbaren teilt. Dieselbe Fähigkeit des Geistes (νοῦς) ermöglicht, den Leib von dem um ihn herum Stehenden abzusondern, wie auch über die Natur an sich zu sprechen, indem man sie intellektuell von dem ihr Zugehörigen trennt. Wie kann man über das Allgemeine als Allgemeines reden, fragt Palamas rhetorisch, wenn es in den Einzelnen existiert? Sie werden nur durch den Intellekt (νοῦς) und die Vernunft unterschieden. Der vernünftige Mensch muss über das Untrennbare als geteilt (περὶ τῶν ἀδιαίρετων ὡς διηρημένων) denken und sprechen können. Erst dann wird man fähig, der vielen Einheiten und Unterscheidungen, die die Theologen in Rücksicht auf Gott behaupten, kundig sein. Dieses minimale Basisvermögen macht es möglich, die unteilbare Teilung (ἀδιαίρετος διαίρεσις) und die geteilte Einheit (διηρημένη ἕνωσις) in Hinsicht auf Gott zu akzeptieren und zu verstehen. Darauf gegründet, erklärt Palamas die Hauptthesen seiner Lehre: Gott ist Eins, das seiner Essenz nach nicht einzusehen ist. Sie ist doch ihrer Energie gemäß aus ihren Geschöpfen zu verstehen. Gott ist seinem ewigen Willen, seiner ewigen Vorsehung, seiner unendlichen Kraft, Weisheit und Gutheit gemäß, die auf uns gewendet sind, zu verstehen. Das besagt aber nicht, dass man dadurch über mehrere Götter und mehrere unerschaffene Sachen sprechen kann, indem man Gott zu einem zusammengesetzten Wesen macht. Gott teilt sich jedoch ungeteilt (ἀδιαίρετως διαίρεται) und einigt sich teilhaftig (συνάπτεται διηρημένως), ohne eine Vermehrung und Zusammensetzung zu erfahren.⁸⁸ Es ist nicht schwer nachzuvollziehen, dass Kokkinos diesen Sätzen ganz und gar treu geblieben ist.

⁸⁶ Kokkinos, *Περὶ φωτός*, ed. Yaneva, 83, 16–84, 1.

⁸⁷ Kokkinos, *Περὶ θεότητος*, ed. Yaneva, 112, 14–15.

⁸⁸ Palamas, *Κεφάλαια* 81, *PS*, vol. 5.80.30–82.7.

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Vor diesem Horizont lohnt es sich, die Behauptungen von John Demetracopoulos Kokkinos betreffend zu prüfen.⁸⁹ Es ist zuzugeben, dass er insgesamt drei Stellen zitiert, von denen zwei – aus den Fünfzehn Kapiteln des Kokkinos gegen Barlaam und Akindynos und aus seinem polemischen Traktat gegen Gregoras – ein und dasselbe Thema behandeln. Es geht nämlich, wie Demetracopoulos selbst hervorhebt, strikt um die Betonung der Einheit der Gottheit. Genau wie in den hier besprochenen Traktaten, wird aus dieser Perspektive die Unterscheidung selbstverständlich lediglich als gedanklich fassbar präsentiert. Die Bemerkung von Demetracopoulos, dass diese Aussagen von Palamas kaum akzeptiert werden können, widerspricht der oben zitierten Palamas-Stelle. Die erstzitierte Äußerung des Kokkinos ist dem *Tomos* von 1351 entnommen, der von ihm und Neilos Kabasilas verfasst wurde. Es wird der Satz herangezogen, dass die Distinktion zwischen der Essenz Gottes und die Energien zu akzeptieren ist, wenn sie “nur durch die Vernunftverwähnung” (μόνῳ τῷ λογισμῷ) oder “nur durch den Intellekt” (μόνῳ τῷ νῷ) abgeleitet wird. Wie wir gezeigt haben, wird diese Auffassungsart sowohl von Kokkinos, als auch von Palamas als die grundlegende Möglichkeitsbedingung für die Konzipierung der Unterscheidung betrachtet. Wäre diese separierte Stellungnahme der letzte Schluss des *Tomos* von 1351, würde er nicht als Sieg, sondern als totale Niederlage der Palamiten gelten. Das war bekanntermaßen nicht der Fall.

4. Schluss

Zusammenfassend darf man schließen, dass Philotheos Kokkinos in seinen zwei Reden gegen Akindynos und die Akindynisten ein wohl durchgedachtes Verfahren des Philosophierens erstellt, das zu seinem Thema die Dimensionen der οἰκονομία hat, die in einer direkten Korrespondenz mit dem Bereich des schlechthin Theologischen stehen. In diesem Rahmen formuliert er die Hauptthesen korrekt, die den Widerstand der Opponenten im Hinblick auf die Unterscheidung zwischen göttlicher Essenz und essenzieller Energie Gottes hervorgerufen haben. Er leitet die Schwerpunkte ab, wobei er – der authentischen Lehre des Gregorios Palamas treu – Formulierungen prägt, die gelegentlich präziser als die Formeln des Palamas selbst sind. Auf dieselbe Herangehensweise geht er mit der konzeptuellen und praktischen Bestimmung der Unterscheidung zwischen der Essenz und den essentiellen Energien um, ohne freilich die Grenzen der ihm gegenwärtigen Logik zu überschreiten.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 282–285.

⁹⁰ Für die sprachliche Durchsicht des Textes bin ich Herrn Kristijan Taševski dankbar.

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GREGORY PALAMAS' READING OF A SEVENTH-CENTURY PSEUDO-ATHANASIAN HOMILY

Anthony LADAS*

ABSTRACT. During the Palamite controversy of the fourteenth century, the works of the great Fathers of the Church were scoured by both sides of the controversy, which sought to ground their teaching in recognized authorities. Of these works, one of the most frequently cited by Palamites was a pseudonymous *Homily on the Annunciation* attributed to Saint Athanasius the Great and generally held to have its origin in the seventh century. This article analyzes the *Homily's* range of use among the Palamite party before focusing on its most influential section, which discusses those things “perceived and named theologically around God” as contributing to “the totality and fullness of divinity.” It examines Gregory Palamas’ use of these terms in his own theological system and then considers how his system may serve to clarify a unique and theologically suspect etymological connection contained within the *Homily*, deriving οὐσία from ἰοία.

Keywords: late Byzantine theology, essence and energies, unity and multiplicity, cataphasis and apophasis, pseudo-Athanasian corpus, *Nachleben* of late antique and Byzantine writings

The *Homily on the Annunciation* (CPG 2268, inc. Τοὺς θεῖους ἱεροκήρυκας οὐ πρὸς τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς ἀκροάσεως δεῖ ἀποβλέπειν, hereafter *Homily*)¹ is a little-studied seventh-century Byzantine sermon, purportedly by Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, but now almost unanimously recognized as spurious.² Regardless

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¹ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem Deiparae*, PG 28, 917–940.

² For a discussion of these claims, see Martin Jugie, “Deux homélies patristiques pseudépigraphes: Saint Athanase sur l’Annonciation; Saint Modeste de Jérusalem sur la Dormition,” *Échos d’Orient* 39.199–200 (1941): 283–289; Roberto Caro, “La Homiletica Mariana Griega en el Siglo V. II: Homilias pseudo-epigraficas,” *Marian Library Studies* 4 (1972): 545–554.

of its authenticity, the work would not only find its way into late Byzantine *florilegia* (some of which are still extant)³ but would most notably become an important proof-text during the Palamite controversy as a genuine homily of Saint Athanasius the Great. Sections of the *Homily* were first used by Gregory Palamas across many works, but it can also be traced in the works of the emperor-turned-monk John (Joasaph) VI Kantakouzenos and Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (e.g., *Antirrhetics against Gregoras*). The *Homily's* standing would later be cemented forever thanks to its double citation by Kokkinos in the *Tomos* issued by the 1351 Council at the Blachernai palace, which sought to put the controversy to rest for good. Likely due to its profile being raised during this dispute, the *Homily* would go on to be used by various theological authors of the Palamite persuasion through the fall of Constantinople, including Neilos Kabasilas and Makarios Makres. It survives in liturgical use today as an appointed reading in the lectionary of Vatopedi Monastery to be read on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation.⁴

This article will first provide a survey of the range of use of the three most-utilized sections of the *Homily* in order to underline the importance of the work among Palamite authors. It will then focus on the first of these sections, an excerpt that lists the “things around God” that cannot be identified with his essence, examining the aspects of it that speak to points of conflict in the Palamite controversy. Next, the article will select instances where Palamas comments at length on the excerpt in question in order to analyze how he offers greater clarity and definition to the homilist’s teaching regarding “the fullness and totality of the divinity” seen in the names that are “perceived and named theologically” around the persons of the Holy Trinity. Finally, it will address

³ E.g., *Vaticanus gr.* 705, copied in the 1360s in Philotheos Kokkinos’ hesychast circles. On this *florilegium*, copied in other fourteenth-century manuscripts, see Basile Markesinis, “Un florilège composé pour la défense du Tome du Concile de 1351,” in *Philohistôr. Miscellanea in honorem Caroli Laga septuagenarii*, eds. Antoon Schoors and Peter Van Deun (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 469–493; Daniele Bianconi, “La controversia palamitica. Figure, libri, testi e mani,” *Segno e testo* 6 (2008): 337–376, at 366–370; Antonio Rigo, “Il Monte Athos e la controversia palamitica dal Concilio del 1351 al Tomo sinodale del 1368. I. Il Tomo sinodale del 1368,” in *Gregorio Palamas e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino*, ed. Rigo (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), 57; Mihail Mitrea, “Novel Insights on the Marginal Notes and Editorial Practice of Philotheos Kokkinos,” in *Le livre manuscrit grec: écritures, matériaux, histoire. Actes du IX^e Colloque international de Paléographie grecque*, eds. Marie Cronier and Brigitte Mondrain (*TM* 24.1) (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2020 [2021]), 317–353, at 326–327.

⁴ Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Συναξαριστής τῶν δώδεκα μηνῶν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ*, vol. 2 (Athens: Νικολαΐδου, 1868), 54, n. 3.

how what Palamas has to offer in these works helps clarify a linguistic ambiguity contained in the original *Homily* that is situated alongside this key excerpt but is omitted by Palamas.

Range of Palamite Usage of the *Homily*

While many sections of this *Homily* attributed to “the great Athanasius” would find their way into late Byzantine theological texts, there are primarily three that would be cited in the context of the Palamite controversy:

1. The first half of section III, which concerns the attributes “around the essence” and their relationship to the essence of God.⁵
2. A small section of section V, which addresses the “single essential activity of the Godhead.”⁶
3. The end of section IX, which again addresses theological attributes, that these are “around the essence,” and that they indicate both the human and divine natures in Christ.⁷

The table below serves to showcase the authors and works that utilize these respective sections of the *Homily*. As shown below, these sections were only rarely quoted in full. I have limited this table to those Palamites who were immediately involved in the controversy and have thus excluded the use of the *Homily* by (1) authors who predate the controversy, such as Niketas Seides, (2) anti-Palamites, such as Nikephoros Gregoras and John Kyparissiotēs, and (3) Palamites who postdate the controversy, such as Makarios Makres, Neilos Kabasilas, and others. For comprehensiveness, I have included two instances where Palamas cites the *Homily*’s prologue, although he uses it to support rhetorical, rather than theological, points.

⁵ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-D9. See my translation in the appendix.

⁶ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 924B6-8.

⁷ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 929D2-15.

	<i>Prologue</i>	Gregory Palamas	<i>Letter to Symeon the Nomophylax</i> 13 (PS, vol. 2, 407.31–408.8) <i>Letter to Dionysios the Monk</i> 6 (PS, vol. 2, 483.30–484.3)
Selection A	Section III	Gregory Palamas	<i>Letter III to Akindynos</i> 9 (PS, vol. 1, 302.10–14) <i>Letter to John Gabras</i> 6 (PS, vol. 2, 333.15–23) <i>Letter to Athanasios of Kyzikos</i> 5 (PS, vol. 2, 415.13–25) <i>Letter to Dionysios the Monk</i> 10, 11 (PS, vol. 2, 488.9–14) <i>Letter to Anna Palaiologina</i> 3 (PS, vol. 2, 546.16–20) <i>Theophanes</i> 9 (PS, vol. 2, 231.22–27) <i>That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead</i> 2 (PS, vol. 2, 263.15–264.7) <i>One Hundred and Fifty Chapters</i> 114 (Sinkewicz, 214.14–19) <i>Against Nikephoros Gregoras</i> 4.25, 4.65 (PS, vol. 4, 354.26–29, 376.13–18) <i>Antirrhetics against Akindynos</i> 2.21.100, 5.26.108 (PS, vol. 3, 157.9–13, 370.3–5)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Tomos of 1351</i> , 48 (Lauritzen, 214.1317–215.1330) <i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 5, 8, 11 (Kaimakis, 138.499–139.514, 306.1547–1551, 312.1750–313.1761, 439.1035–1039)
		John Kantakouzenos	<i>Refutations of Prochoros Kydones</i> 1.26, 1.37, 2.13 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 37.50–38.65, 53.22–27, 129.41–21) <i>Disputation with the Latin Patriarch Paul, Letter</i> 1.6 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 183.16–30)
Selection B	Section V	Gregory Palamas	<i>Theophanes</i> 30 (PS, vol. 2, 258.11–13) <i>Apodictic Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit</i> 2.69 (PS, vol. 1, 141.5–8) <i>Against Nikephoros Gregoras</i> 1.29 (PS, vol. 4, 253.4–6) <i>Antirrhetics against Akindynos</i> 2.19.92, 6.23.85 (PS, vol. 3, 150.18–22, 451.9–12)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Tomos of 1351</i> , 35 (Lauritzen, 203.907–911) <i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 8, 9 (Kaimakis, 264.172–175)
Selection C	Section IX	John Kantakouzenos	<i>Refutations of Prochoros Kydones</i> 1.26 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 38.66–70) <i>Disputation with the Latin Patriarch Paul, Letter</i> 1.6 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 183.31–35)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 6 (Kaimakis, 205.1216–206.1239)

Content of *Selection A*

Although each of these excerpts and their use by Palamites is interesting and worthy of study, this article will limit itself to *Selection A*, the most widely-cited of the various sections of the *Homily*, a translation of which I have included in the appendix. Examining this excerpt closely, it is no surprise that it was so widely used by Palamas and his theological inheritors, especially with a name of the caliber of Saint Athanasius appended to it. The standard excerpt begins with a Trinitarian confession bearing the marks of previous controversies, teaching “one God in three hypostases, having one essence, one power, and one activity (ἐνέργεια).”⁸ What attracted Palamas’ interest was the phrase that follows, “and we contemplate everything else around the essence (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν)”⁹ in theological writings and hymns,”¹⁰ which the homilist follows with a list of divine attributes. The list begins with a series of *alpha* privatives, such as “uncreated, incorporeal, timeless,” which Palamas in one location abbreviates as καὶ ὅσα ἀποφατικῶς ἐπὶ Θεοῦ λέγεται, and then advances to various titles given by Scripture to God, which Palamas correspondingly abbreviates as καὶ ὅσα καταφατικῶς ἐπὶ Θεοῦ λέγεται.¹¹ Although the homilist does not explicitly connect these lists of attributes to the apophatic and cataphatic dimensions of theology (in this case quite literally “what is said about God”), Palamas makes the implicit explicit.¹² For his part, the homilist treats the attributes all together as a list of “preeminent descriptions and causes of being” (κατὰ τε ὑπεροχὴν καὶ αἰτιολογίαν) which are not essence, but *around* the essence, and, when they are considered together, “the totality and fullness of divinity” (ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος).¹³ All of these may be said equally of any of the Three Persons of the Trinity, since they possess equality (ἰσία) of all qualities.¹⁴ This reference to ἰσία is frequently included in Palamite citations of the text to support the claim that these realities are common to the Trinity. At the same time, they tend to omit the author’s later, somewhat questionable, connection of ἰσία to οὐσία, to which I will return below.

⁸ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-4.

⁹ For a discussion of Palamas’ identification of the divine energies with “the things around God,” see Tikhon Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas* (London: Routledge, 2022), 63–66.

¹⁰ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B4-5.

¹¹ Palamas, *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead 2*, PS, vol. 2, 263.15–264.7.

¹² On the relationship between cataphasis, apophasis, and the divine energies in Palamas, see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 55–77.

¹³ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B8-9.

¹⁴ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920D4-6.

The usefulness of such a concise and theologically-rich excerpt for Palamas' project is manifest. In this one short passage we find a defense of at least four points critical to the Palamite cause:

1. A distinction between the essence and what is "around the essence."
2. An identification of these theological names (τὰ κατὰ θεολογίαν) that includes both apophatic and cataphatic terms, power, and energy, while leaving the door open for many others with the phrase καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα.
3. The acknowledgment of a common name, "divinity," which is not equated solely with the divine nature or essence.
4. The ascription of these attributes to the Three Persons of the Trinity equally.

Palamas' Use of *Selection A*

That Palamas found at least twelve occasions to use this excerpt is therefore not surprising. To get a sense of the variety of purposes that Palamas found for *Selection A*, I offer the following list, which is by no mean exhaustive:

1. To indicate that when Christ says, "all that the Father has is mine" (Jn 16:15), he is not referring to created things, but rather to all those things "around the essence," which, like the essence, are uncreated (*Letter to John Gabras*, *Letter to Dionysios the Monk*).¹⁵
2. To affirm that the Three Persons of the Trinity can be called "divine life," an activity which is uncreated and something other than essence (*150 Chapters*).¹⁶
3. To support arguments that the divine powers and activities are neither the nature nor the hypostasis, but are something distinct, uncreated, and common to the persons of the Holy Trinity (*Against Nikephoros Gregoras*; *Antirrhetics against Akindynos*).¹⁷

¹⁵ Palamas, *Letter to John Gabras* 6, *PS*, vol. 2, 333.5-23, and *Letter to Dionysios the Monk* 10, 11, *PS*, vol. 2, 487.10-489.13.

¹⁶ Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 114, ed. Robert Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 212-215.

¹⁷ Palamas, *Against Nikephoros Gregoras* 4.65, *PS*, vol. 4, 376.6-18, and *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 2.21.100, *PS*, vol. 3, 156.29-157.23.

4. To show, contrary to Barlaam, that “the essence, the willing faculty, the power, the activity, and suchlike are the single divinity of the Three Persons [...] not being one, indistinguishable from one another and only essence, but all observed in each of the Three Persons” (*Letter III to Akindynos*).¹⁸
5. To counter Akindynos' claim that the Son and Spirit are the only realities that can be called uncreated energies or powers of the Father (*Tomos of 1351*).¹⁹

Often, these citations are offered as a kind of bibliographic reference for Palamas' teaching in a recognized authority and are thus not further commented on. On several occasions, however, Palamas engages with the text at greater depth. One topic that occupies his attention across several works is the definition given by the homilist for the divine names: the names are (1) the “totality and fullness of divinity” (ἁθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος) and (2) “what is perceived and named theologically” (θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα) about the Three Persons of the Trinity. In the following, this article addresses Palamas' use of these two formulae and shows how his theology might be used to give clarity to a questionable concept introduced alongside them, namely the concept of *isía*.

That Which Is Perceived and Named around God as the “Fullness of the Godhead”

The purpose of *Selection A*, according to the homilist himself, is to “fill out” his teaching of the Trinity in its “totality and fullness,” advancing beyond the classical dogmatic definitions of essence and hypostasis which he had just expressed in the paragraph prior in order to address “everything else contemplated around the essence in theological writings and hymns.” To affirm that there exist realities besides the essence and hypostasis which may fill out this teaching he points to Colossians 2:9, “for in him the whole fullness of

¹⁸ Palamas, *Letter III to Akindynos* 8–9, *PS*, vol. 1, 301.22–303.6.

¹⁹ *Tomos of 1351*, 48, ed. Frederick Lauritzen in *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches. Decisions and Synodika. From Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta, IV/1) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 214.1301–215.1337. Although Philotheos Kokkinos was the author of the *Tomos*, it nevertheless bears the mark of Palamas' influence and demonstrates another utility this excerpt offered the Palamites.

divinity (πλήρωμα θεότητας) dwells bodily,” identifying this “fullness” with the qualities he lists. According to the homilist, it is to this fullness and these qualities that Christ refers when he says to the Father, “all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them” (Jn 17:10), showing by this verse that they are common to the Holy Trinity and not held by any particular member alone. It is here, however, that the homilist seems to take a questionable turn, calling the equal possession of all the qualities *ἰσία*, a term which he connects etymologically to essence (*οὐσία*), subsequently appearing to indicate that an essence is somehow the sum of a number of equal constituent attributes. Apart from this, few of the above ideas are entirely peculiar to our homilist, finding precedent in Dionysios the Areopagite and others. Nevertheless, the language used is unique, and it is this which Palamas uses and expounds upon, providing clarity through his own theological system.

As noted above, the language of the *Homily* fits quite readily into Palamas’ theology so that the two end up serving each other reciprocally: the *Homily* serves to vindicate Gregory’s teaching and Gregory’s teaching serves to clarify the *Homily*. In the introduction to his work *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead*,²⁰ Palamas reminds the reader that Barlaam and Akindynos have been synodically condemned because they taught two divinities: the uncreated divinity of the divine nature, on the one hand, and the created divinity, on the other, of the “radiance of the nature” (which the Lord revealed on Tabor) “and every divine power and activity and all of the things around the divine nature that are perceived and named theologically.” This final phrase, *θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα*, Palamas borrows from the *Homily*, which he then quotes at length and interprets as the basis of his treatise, notably omitting the homilist’s discussion of *ἰσία-οὐσία*. Gregory’s interpretation is essentially a paraphrase which organizes, clarifies, and enriches the text with further patristic citation. Rather than the divided divinity of Barlaam and Akindynos, Palamas honors a single uncreated divinity in its fullness, which includes essence, power, energy, and everything contemplated (*θεωρουμένων*) around the essence, described (*θεολογουμένων*) cataphatically and apophatically. These two participles, which he has formed on the basis of Pseudo-Athanasius’ *θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα*, serve to make apparent the relationship between what is perceived around God and the names given to what is perceived. The names have their origin in and point back to realities around God that have

²⁰ Palamas, *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead* 1–3, PS, vol. 2, 263.1–265.3.

been experienced by real people²¹ – the original impetus behind the Hesychast Controversy.²² At this point, Palamas offers a precise definition not found in Pseudo-Athanasius. Those things around the essence “naturally inhere in God without being essence.” While not necessarily a conceptual shift, it is at least a linguistic one from the language of “around” to “in,” which highlights another dimension of the relationship between these qualities and the divine essence. That is, they are natural, even somehow “in” the nature or essence, without being nature or essence. This also shows that the attributes of God are a part of God “as he is” (i.e., *ad intra*) and not only “as he relates to us” (i.e., *ad extra*). Palamas offers affirmative quotations from Saints Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus and then further clarifies, “Just as the hypostatic qualities (τὰ ὑποστατικά) are not hypostasis, but characteristics of hypostasis, so, too, are the natural qualities (τὰ φυσικά) not nature, but characteristics of nature.” Here, we may understand the terms “essence” and “nature” and “essential qualities” and “natural qualities” to be used interchangeably.²³ The names indicate the essence without being essence. They are essential without being essence, natural without being nature. This helps us clarify how the ambiguous interpretation of ἰσία might have been interpreted by Palamas.

The Essential Qualities Perceived as One

On its face, the union of the attributes, which Pseudo-Athanasius calls ἰσία, coming together to form an essence, οὐσία, is problematic for Palamas' theology. After all, a central tenant for Palamas is that every essence possesses attributes and activities that are distinct from it. To say that the essence is somehow composed of attributes or activities would be to seriously misrepresent their relationship, at once marring the essence's incomposite simplicity and suggesting that attributes form essences instead of proceeding from them. This is no doubt the reason why this section is almost always cut short in Palamite writings, ending before the homilist connects ἰσία to οὐσία. We may find in Palamas,

²¹ For an analysis of the Palamite view of the mechanics behind this perception, see Alexandros Chouliaras, *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas: The Image of God, the Spiritual Senses, and the Human Body* (Studia Traditionis Theologiae 38) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 129–197.

²² For a history of the controversy, see Norman Russell, “The Hesychast Controversy,” in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniosoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 494–508.

²³ On the usage and interchangeability of these terms, see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 66–67.

however, a lens of interpretation that safeguards an orthodox interpretation of this passage.

In his *Homily*, Pseudo-Athanasius rightly calls both essence and what is perceived and named around it *divinity*: “As we have been taught according to the rule of distribution, two or more concepts may receive a single designation. In this way, these names are [also] called both the totality and fullness of the divinity according to Scripture.”²⁴ Yet, from a Palamite perspective, the *Homily* risks subsuming the essential qualities of God into the essence when it asserts that “Essence is interpreted to mean that which is a constituent existence, the totality of its many constituent attributes possessing a single unity.”²⁵

At this point, the Pseudo-Athanasian text proves problematic, in that it appears to identify the συστατική περίληψις of the attributes as the very make-up of essence.²⁶ Palamas maintains their distinction while including them both under the umbrella term “divinity.” “Divinity,” and not “essence,” is the all-encompassing name for Palamas, naming both essence and what is around the essence. Consciously or not, then, Palamas corrects the interpretation of Pseudo-Athanasius in his *Theophanes*, citing the *Homily* thus:

And if the totality of all those things [around God] are called divinity, the divinity of the Three Persons is also one – the essence, in other words, and the things around the essence that are perceived and named theologically, as the great Athanasius says in his festal sermon on the divine Annunciation.²⁷

Here, Palamas chooses to juxtapose two concepts found in Pseudo-Athanasius, avoiding the problematic interpretation of the “totality” as the oneness of the divinity while affirming that divinity is both essence and what is perceived and named around it. For Palamite orthodoxy, the essential qualities inhere in the essence without somehow composing it, a fact that requires Palamas to clarify the *Homily* in a way that does not implicate Athanasius, pseudo- or otherwise, in heresy.

²⁴ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920C6-9.

²⁵ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 921A1-3.

²⁶ On the problem of energies as “constitutive differences,” see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 149–152.

²⁷ Palamas, *Theophanes* 9, PS, vol. 2, 231.22-27.

In his *Third Letter to Akindynos*, Palamas, again with the help of Pseudo-Athanasius, looks to convince Akindynos that Barlaam is wrong to collapse “the essence, the faculty of will, the power, the energy, and suchlike” into something “one and indistinguishable from one another and only essence.”²⁸ Rather, they are all divinity, distinct but perceived (θεωρούμενα) equally in the Three Persons of the Trinity. To deny that these are all the “one, simple, and only uncreated divinity,” acknowledging only the essence, is to “mutilate the divinity,” and to divide it into “created and uncreated parts.” This language of mutilation of the divinity complements Pseudo-Athanasius’ definition of the things around the essence as being the “totality and fullness” of the divinity, for if they are its totality and fullness, to either incorporate them into one indistinguishable reality or to cut them off by making them into created realities would be to diminish this fullness, denying those things in which the Trinity is glorified.

One could easily see how a Barlaamite of the sort Palamas condemns in his *Third Letter to Akindynos* might read his own interpretation into the homilist’s interpretation of ἰσία-οὐσία, i.e., collapsing all of the attributes into an indistinguishable essence. While Pseudo-Athanasius asserts that none of what is named around the essence can be called essence, and makes a point of distinguishing these realities from one another, he at the same time appears to indicate that, when considered altogether, these attributes also *form* the essence. Were a late Byzantine to ask for clarification regarding the words of Athanasius the Great, I would suggest that the etymological study of ἰσία-οὐσία would be salvageable from the perspective of Palamite orthodoxy if one interpreted it to mean (1) that the totality of the things around the essence *indicate* the essence rather than compose it, or (2) that the essence is the unitive and originating principle of the essential attributes, rather than the other way around. Palamas and his associates, however, are able to avoid the question entirely, and perhaps wisely, by simply excluding this element from the discussion.

Conclusion

Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Homily on the Annunciation* is an unusual and fascinating text that uses the established dogmatic orthodoxies of previous centuries as a springboard from which to explore all those other things perceived about and said of God in theological writing and hymnography. In the fourteenth

²⁸ Palamas, *Letter III to Akindynos* 9, *PS*, vol. 1, 302.10–303.6.

century, the nature of those “things around God” would become the focus of dogmatic controversy, making the *Homily* excellent source material for Palamas and his associates in their defense of the divine powers and activities. Palamas’ use of the *Homily* served to both establish his teaching in a recognized source while also clarifying the *Homily*’s contents through the application of his theological system. Key lexicological borrowings used by Palamas include two definitions of the divine attributes: (1) as the “totality and fullness of the divinity,” which is not limited to the essence and hypostases alone; and (2) as the things that are “perceived and named theologically” around God, grounding the theology in the lived experience of the Church. Finally, although he does not address the question directly, Palamas’ theology may be used as a corrective lens through which to interpret questionable aspects of the *Homily*, namely any suggestion that the divine attributes are somehow constitutive of the essence.

Appendix: Translation of the *Homily on the Annunciation*, section III²⁹

<p>[...] ἀλλ' ἓνα Θεὸν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσι θεολογοῦντες, μίαν ἔχοντα τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν θεωρεῖται θεολογούμενα καὶ ὑμνούμενα. Καὶ ἵνα τύπον δώμεν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ ἄθροισμα ἢ πλήρωμα, τὰ κατὰ θεολογίαν ἔχωμεν. Τί δὲ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἢ περὶ τί ταῦτα, καθεξῆς ἀκούσωμεν· ὅτι τὸ ἄκτιστον, τὸ ἀσώματον, τὸ ἄχρονον, τὸ ἀναρχον, τὸ αἰδίδιον, τὸ ἀτελεύτητον, τὸ ἄπειρον, τὸ αἰώνιον, τὸ ἄγνωστον, τὸ ἀνερμήνευτον, τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον, τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον, τὸ Θεὸν θεῶν λέγεσθαι αὐτόν, τὸ Κύριον κυρίων, τὸ Βασιλέα βασιλευόντων, τὸ παντοκράτορα, τὸ ποιητὴν, τὸ δημιουργόν, τὸ φῶς, τὸ ζῶν, τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀθάνατον, τὸ ἰσχυρόν, τὸ παντοδύναμον, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα κατὰ τὴν ὑπεροχὴν καὶ αἰτιολογίαν, οὐχ ἕκαστον οὐσία λέγεται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν· ὥς ἐκ δύο καὶ πλειόνων ἐπὶ ἓν ἔχοντα τὴν ἀναφορὰν κατὰ τὸ ἐπιμεριζόμενον ἐμάθομεν, ἃ καὶ ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος λέγεται κατὰ τὴν Γραφήν· οὐ κατὰ μίαν ὑπόστασιν μόνου ἀνάγοντα, ἀλλὰ καθ' ἑκάστην τῶν ἁγίων τριῶν ἐπίσης θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα. Διὸ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ μονογενὴς Θεὸς φησι· "Πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατήρ, ἐμά ἐστι·" καὶ πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα λέγων· "Τὰ ἐμά πάντα σὰ ἐστί, καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμά, καὶ δεδόξασμαι ἐν αὐτοῖς." Ἐν ἅπασιν γὰρ οἷς δοξάζεται ὁ Πατήρ θεολογούμενος, ἐν αὐτοῖς δοξάζεται καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον. Καὶ ἐντεῦθεν τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Πατήρ λέγεται, καὶ τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Υἱός, καὶ τέλειος Θεὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον. Ἐπεὶ περ μὴδὲν ἐλλείπει τοῦ περὶ τὴν θεότητα πληρώματος ἕκαστον· ἀλλ' ἰσίαν ἔχει πάντων τῶν ἰδιωμάτων, ὧν ἐπίσης καὶ τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος θεωρεῖται. Ἐκ παραγωγῆς γὰρ τοῦ Ἰσοῦ, ἰσία λέγεται θηλυκῇ ἐκφορᾷ ἢ τῆς ἰσότητος τῶν πολλῶν συστατικῇ περίληψις.</p>	<p>[...] but we theologize one God in three hypostases, having one essence, one power, and one activity, and we contemplate everything else around the essence in theological writings and hymns. In order to give form to this teaching in both its totality and fullness, we have certain theological names. And what these names are or what they are around we will hear in succession: uncreated, incorporeal, timeless, beginningless, everlasting, endless, boundless, eternal, unknowable, inexplicable, formless, incomprehensible, who is called God of gods, Lord of lords, Emperor of emperors, Almighty, Maker, Creator, Light, Life, Holy, Good, Immortal, Mighty, All-powerful, and every other preeminent description and cause of being, none of which is called essence, but are rather around the essence. As we have been taught according to the rule of distribution, two or more concepts may receive a single designation. In this way, these names are called both the totality and fullness of the divinity according to Scripture. These names do not pertain to one hypostasis only, but they are contemplated of and named theologically regarding each of the three. It is for this reason that the only-begotten God himself says, "All things that the Father has are mine" (Jn 16:15), and he addresses the Father, saying, "All things that are mine are yours, and all that are yours are mine, and I am glorified in them" (Jn 17:10). For in all of those names in which the Father is glorified in theology, in them, too, is the Son glorified, and the Holy Spirit. It thus follows that the Father is called perfect God, and the Son perfect God, and the Holy Spirit perfect God. For there is nothing lacking in the totality of what surrounds the godhead in any of them, but each possesses equality of all qualities, and the fullness of divinity is likewise contemplated in each of them. The constituent union of these many equally-held names is called 'equality,' which is derived from 'equal' in the feminine gender.</p>
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²⁹ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-D9.

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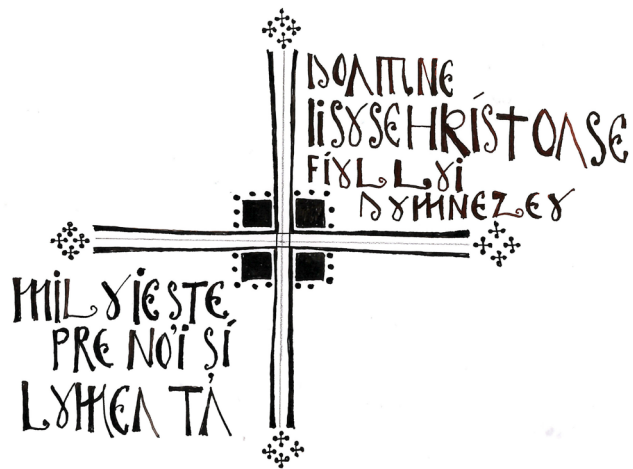
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THE RELATION OF GREGORY AKINDYNOS TO BARLAAM THE CALABRIAN

Andreas P. ZACHARIOU*

ABSTRACT. In the writings of the fourteenth-century Hesychasts, Gregory Akindynos is characterized as a Barlaamite because his theological perceptions are considered to be no different from those of Barlaam the Calabrian. However, Akindynos himself rejects the designation of Barlaamite by denying that he is in agreement with Barlaam and claiming injustice and slander from the Palamite party. In order to support his contention, he draws attention to his strong opposition to Barlaam when the latter turned against the monks and their way of life. Nevertheless, his own writings contradict his assertion, since they testify to the identification of his theology with that of Barlaam.

Keywords: Gregory Palamas, Gregory Akindynos, Barlaam the Calabrian, Barlaamite, hesychasm, hesychasts, Hesychast Controversy

Introduction

The second phase of the Hesychast Controversy, which is (roughly) defined by the Constantinopolitan synods of 1341 and 1347, is remarkably interesting.¹

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¹ On Hesychasm, see, e.g., Panagiotis Christou, "Περὶ τὰ αἷτια τῆς ἡσυχαστικῆς ἐρίδος," in *Θεολογικά μελετήματα*, vol. 3: *Νηπτικά καὶ ἡσυχαστικά* (Thessaloniki: Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 1977), 87–97; Venizelos Christoforides, *Οἱ ἡσυχαστικὲς ἐρίδες κατὰ τὸν 14' αἰῶνα*, 2nd edn (Thessaloniki: Παρατηρητής, 1993); Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas. The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam. Documents Relating to Gregory Palamas* (Translated Texts for Byzantinists 8) (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

During that period, the personality of Gregory Akindynos prevailed as the protagonist of the anti-Palamite party, the person who, according to Hesychast authors, succeeded Barlaam the Calabrian and continued his theological thought.²

The relationship between Akindynos and Barlaam dates to around 1332.³ After the rejection of his request by four Athonite monasteries (Lavra, Iviron, Philotheou, and Simonopetra) to remain as a monk on Mount Athos, Akindynos fled to Thessaloniki, where he met Barlaam the Calabrian.⁴ Their encounter is considered to be a turning point and a crucial factor in the final shaping of Akindynos' problematic theological perceptions. According to Patriarch Kallistos I of Constantinople, Akindynos embraced Barlaam's "impiety" (δυσσέβειαν) and incorporated it into his own already "erroneous perceptions" (κακοδοξίαν).⁵ This means that the interaction between Barlaam and Akindynos was so great that the latter was influenced by the former in such a way and to such an extent that he was now of one mind with him in terms of his theological perceptions.

Gregory Palamas also emphasizes the theological alignment of Barlaam and Akindynos.⁶ In several places in his writings, he refers to Akindynos

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- ² For Akindynos' biography, see Angela Constantinides Hero, *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (CFHB 21) (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1983), ix–xxxiii, 309–439. See also Andreas P. Zachariou, *Ἡ θεολογικὴ γνωσιολογία τοῦ Γρηγορίου Ἀκινδύνου. Προσέγγιση στὴ διαμόρφωση καὶ τὴν ἀπόπειρα πατερικῆς κατοχύρωσης τῶν θεολογικῶν του ἀντιλήψεων* (Athens: Γρηγόρη, 2018), 23–99. On Barlaam, see Giuseppe Schirò, *Ὁ Βαρλαάμ καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία εἰς τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην κατὰ τὸν δέκατον τέταρτον αἰῶνα* (Εταιρεία Μακεδονικῶν Σπουδῶν 32) (Thessaloniki: Ἰδρυμα Μελετῶν Χερσονήσου τοῦ Αἵμου, 1959); Robert Sinkewicz, "The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Early Writings of Barlaam the Calabrian," *Mediaeval Studies* 44 (1982): 181–242; Antonis Fyrgos, *Dalla controversia palamitica alla polemica esicastica (con un'edizione critica delle Epistole greche di Barlaam)* (Rome: Antonianum, 2005), 161–191.
- ³ See Constantinides Hero, *Letters*, x–xi; Juan Nadal Cañellas, "Gregorio Akindynos," in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (XIII^e–XIX^e s.), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 189–314, here at 195.
- ⁴ On the events which took place on Athos, see Zachariou, "Παρατηρήσεις περὶ τὴν ἀντίληψη τοῦ Γρηγορίου Ἀκινδύνου γιὰ τὸν μοναχισμό," in *Philosophos – Philotheos – Philoponos. Studies and Essays as Charisteria in Honor of Professor Bogoljub Šijaković on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Mikonja Knežević in collaboration with Rade Kisić and Dušan Krcunović (Belgrade; Podgorica: Gnomon Center for the Humanities / Matica srpska – Društvo članova u Crnoj Gori, 2021), 363–374.
- ⁵ See Kallistos I's hitherto unedited <Ὁμιλία> εἰς τὴν πρώτην Κυριακὴν τῶν νηστειῶν, *Patmiacus gr.* 366, f. 415r: Οὕτω δ' ἐκεῖθεν [i.e., Ἅγιον Ὅρος] ἀποπεμφθεὶς ὁ Ἀκίνδυνος, τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην καταλαμβάνει ἔνθα δὴ καὶ ἐντυχὼν τῷ ... Βαρλαάμ, οὐ μόνον τὴν ἥν εἶχεν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐμφωλεύουσαν κακοδοξίαν διέδειξεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν δυσσέβειαν ἐξερρόφησεν. I am currently preparing the critical edition of this homily, which will be published in 2023.
- ⁶ On Palamas, see, e.g., John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, English trans. George Lawrence, 2nd edn (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974); Georgios Mantzarides, *Παλαμικά*, 3rd edn (Thessaloniki: Πουρναρά, 1998). *Proceedings of International Scientific*

as Barlaam's "initiate and successor and follower" (μύστης καὶ διάδοχος καὶ ὁπαδός).⁷ In other words, Palamas considers him to be not only a disciple of Barlaam's theological thought, but also the person who actually replaces and succeeds him in his misconceptions, errors, and misbelief.⁸ He thus notes the theological agreement between them and openly characterizes Akindynos as a "Barlaamite" (βαρλααμίτην).⁹ This sobriquet, which was subsequently employed by other Hesychast authors, indicates and attests to only one thing, namely the origination of the anti-Palamite polemic in the person of Barlaam and its continuity and consistent theological expression via Akindynos.

Philotheos Kokkinos likewise characterizes Akindynos as a Barlaamite, since he continued Barlaam's divergent theology.¹⁰ Akindynos succeeded Barlaam and continued his heretical teaching, which constitutes a huge danger and a "corruption" (λύπη) of the Church, the same way that Eunomius acted as the successor of the heresy of Arius and Severus as the heir of the heresy of Eutyches and Dioscorus.¹¹ Joseph Kalothetos similarly argues that Akindynos' attempt to oppose and fight Palamas, who had detected Barlaam's deceit and refuted his heretical conceptions, led to a very specific result: the renewal and the revival of Barlaam's theological errors through Akindynos; and this is actually a proof that their perceptions are not essentially different.¹² Similarly, David Disypatos notes that Barlaam's theological position is the same as that of Akindynos, and thus their doctrinal teaching is identical.¹³ Furthermore, John VI Kantakouzenos

Conferences of Athens and Limassol, Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν, Athens, 13–15 November 1998 and Limassol, 5–7 November 1999 (Holy Mountain: Monastery of Vatopedi, 2000).

⁷ Palamas, *Antirrhetikos* 2, 3, 11, *PS*, vol. 3, 92.26–28; *Letter to Macarius* 2, 2 and 4, *PS*, vol. 2, 540.3–4, 541.26–27; *Refutation of Kalekas' Letter* 18, *PS*, vol. 2, 601.7–8.

⁸ Palamas, *Dialogue of Theophanes with Theotimos* 10, *PS*, vol. 2, 233.4–8; *Antirrhetikos* 2, 5, 13 and *Antirrhetikos* 4, 18, 48–49, *PS*, vol. 3, 94.13–14, 276.8–277.30.

⁹ Palamas, *Antirrhetikos* 4, 18, 47, *PS* 3, 275.11–16: [...] Ἄρα τι διενηνόχασιν ἀλλήλων; see, e.g., *Antirrhetikoi* 1, 7, 33; 5, 24, 94; and 6, 9, 23, *PS* 3, 63.33–64.1; 359.5–6; 401.23.

¹⁰ Kokkinos, *Κατὰ Γρηγοῦ 11*, in *Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου Δογματικά ἔργα. Μέρος Α'*, ed. Demetrios Kaimakis (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1983), 454.1517–1518.

¹¹ Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης* 42.32–35, in *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα. Α' Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἅγιοι*, ed. Demetrios Tsamis (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1985), 475.

¹² Kalothetos, *Λόγος* 1, 5–6, in *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου συγγράμματα*, ed. Tsamis (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1980), 85.136–86.165. See also Kallistos I, *Διδασκαλία δογματικὴ κατὰ τῶν Βαρλααμιτῶν* 1, ed. Constantine Paidas, "Editio Princeps of an Unedited Dogmatic Discourse against the Barlaamites by the Patriarch of Constantinople Kallistos I," *BZ* 105.1 (2012): 117–130, here at 123.3–4, 14–16.

¹³ Disypatos, *Ἱστορία διὰ βραχέων ὅπως τὴν ἀρχὴν συνέστη ἡ κατὰ τὸν Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκίνδυνον πονηρὰ αἵρεσις*, ed. Manuel Candal, "Origen ideológico del palamismo en un documento de David Disipato," *OCP* 15 (1949): 85–125, here at 124.138–140: "Ὅπερ ὁ Βαρλαάμ φρονεῖ ... καὶ ὁ

points out that Akindynos embraced Barlaam's teachings and, in this respect, there was never any theological divergence between them.¹⁴

Akindynos Rebukes Barlaam

While Palamas and the other Hesychasts consider the theological positions of Barlaam and Akindynos to be identical, Akindynos himself will deny this emphatically. He regards the accusation as slander and claims that this is due to his refusal to accept the Palamite theological position.¹⁵ As proof of his non-Barlaamite attitude he refers to his vigorous, written and verbal, opposition to Barlaam. He even considers and presents his opposition to Barlaam as more significant than the opposition of anyone else: "no one rebuked Barlaam, either verbally or in writing, more than we did."¹⁶ However, he hastens to clarify that his opposition to Barlaam does not imply agreement with the theological positions of Palamas. Despite the fact that Barlaam insisted on this, accusing him of "Palamism," Akindynos believes that both of them held incorrect positions,¹⁷ revealing their "boldness and audacity."¹⁸ He claims that his own theological views are the correct ones, occupying a place between the extreme and impious positions of Barlaam and Palamas.¹⁹ Therefore, addressing Palamas, he says: "that we are not Barlaamites is proved by the discourses we wrote against Barlaam ... That we are not Palamites either is shown by what you claim, calling us Barlaamites."²⁰

Ἀκίνδυνος. Μὴ γὰρ δέξεται τις ὅλως παρὰ τινος ὅτι ἔχει τινὰ παραλλαγὴν ἐν τοῖς δόγμασι πρὸς τὸν Βαρλαάμ ὁ Ἀκίνδυνος. Cf. Chrysostomos Savvatos, "Ἀρσενίου τοῦ Στουδίτου ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Γρηγόριο Παλαμᾶ," *Ἑλληνικά* 52.1 (2002): 69–77, here at 76.4–24.

¹⁴ Kantakouzenos, *Historiae* II.40, ed. Ludovic Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri IV*, vol. 1 (Bonn: E. Weber, 1828), 556.3–12: [...] καὶ οὐδὲν ἢ μικρὸν ἢ μεῖζον διεφέρετο.

¹⁵ Akindynos, *Antirrhetikos* IV, 15, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Gregorii Acindyni refutationes duae operis Gregorii Palamae, cui titulus Dialogus inter Orthodoxum et Barlaamitam* (CCSG 31) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 338.13–339.15.

¹⁶ Akindynos, *Ἐτέρα ἔκθεσις καὶ ἀνασκευὴ τῶν τοῦ Παλαμᾶ πονηροτάτων αἰρέσεων*, *Monacensis gr.* 223, f. 66v: τὸν Βαρλαάμ ... οὐδεὶς μᾶλλον ἡμῶν ἐπετίμησε καὶ οὕτως ἀπλῶς καὶ λόγοις συντεταγμένοις. Cf. *Report to Kalekas* 1 and 8, ed. Nadal Cañellas, "Gregorio Akindinos," 259.42–43, 262.182–183. See also Christou, "Εἰσαγωγικά," *PS*, vol. 2, 15–16.

¹⁷ Akindynos, *Antirrhetikos* II, 50, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 154.86–91.

¹⁸ Akindynos, *Antirrhetikos* I, 2, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 4.17–18.

¹⁹ Akindynos, *Antirrhetikos* I, 13, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 15.1–4: [...] μέσῃν οἰκοῦντας τῆς εὐσεβείας χώραν τὴν ἀνεπίληπτον.

²⁰ Akindynos, *Διάλεξις τοῦ κακοδόξου Παλαμᾶ μετὰ ὀρθοδόξου*, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 414.35–39: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐ Βαρλααμίται ἡμεῖς, δεικνύουσιν ἡμῶν οἱ κατ' ἐκείνου [i.e., Barlaam] λόγοι ... Ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲ τῆς παλαμναίας μοίρας, σὺ [i.e., Palamas] μαρτυρεῖς ἡμῖν, Βαρλααμίτας ἀποκαλῶν, ὥσπερ οὖν κάκεῖνος Παλαμίτας ἐκάλει.

The discourses to which Akindynos refers, as the written component of his opposition to Barlaam, correspond to the *Letters* he addressed to Barlaam at the height of the controversy with the Hesychasts.²¹ These *Letters* are invoked and presented by Akindynos as proof of his own position, namely that his own views are, on the one hand, not to be identified as Barlaamite, but are also, on the other hand, to be differentiated from the theological positions of Palamas.

In order to substantiate his assertion Akindynos contends that in his *Letters* he defended the hesychast monks and their way of life from the offensive accusations of Barlaam, which proves that he does not support Barlaam's positions and therefore is not a Barlaamite. He stresses that claims to the contrary, namely that he favours Barlaam, are simply calumny and come from "libelers and slanderers." Thus, he recommends to all who seek the truth in good faith to read his *Letters*, in order to understand his real intentions, which show that he is not biased either in favour of Barlaam or Palamas. Claiming to remain firmly in the tradition of the Fathers, i.e., to maintain "doctrinal accuracy," Akindynos rejects the theological views of both Barlaam and Palamas, refusing to admit any other, alternative theology, whether it comes from the former, the latter, or even from anyone else.²²

But, do the *Letters* actually vindicate Akindynos? Do they constitute texts which prove, or even suggest the truth of his claim concerning his position towards Barlaam and Palamas? In his *Letters*, Akindynos indeed opposes Barlaam's position and point of view, and praises the hesychast monks, characterizing them as "pious" and "God-loving men,"²³ as "holy"²⁴ and "consecrated to God" (Ναζιπαίου),²⁵ who strive and seek to acquire virtue with faith and simplicity and, especially, without idle curiosity (ἀπεριέργως).²⁶ He regards Barlaam's opposition to the hesychasts as thoughtless, unjust, unwise, slanderous, and prejudiced. He even describes it as an interference in a way of life the dimensions and parameters of which Barlaam was, in any case, completely ignorant.²⁷ Akindynos denounces Barlaam because, due to his excessive pride, he wanted to challenge the godly way of life

²¹ These are four *Letters*, nos. 7, 8, 9, and 10 in Constantinides Hero's edition, which date to just before the synod of June 1341. See Constantinides Hero, *Letters*, 20–54, 319–329.

²² His contention, which is provided as a "confession," was published by Leo Allatius, *De ecclesiae occidentalis atque orientalis perpetua consensione*, book II, ch. XVI, 3 (Cologne, 1648), col. 802, and reprinted in *PG* 150, 875–876.

²³ Akindynos, *Letter* 7, trans. Constantinides Hero, *Letters*, 24.79–80. Unless otherwise noted, the translations of the *Letters* belong to Constantinides Hero.

²⁴ Akindynos, *Letter* 8 (26.5).

²⁵ Akindynos, *Letters* 9 and 10; my translation; cf. Constantinides Hero, *Letters*, 30.19, 40.94.

²⁶ Akindynos, *Letter* 10 (44.149–150). See also *Report to Kalekas* 1, ed. Nadal Cañellas, "Gregorio Akindinos," 258.12–14; *Letter* 9 (30.31–32).

²⁷ Akindynos, *Letter* 9 (30.49–32.57); *Letter* 10 (40.74–94); cf. *Letter* 7 (26.126–128).

of the monks²⁸ and to teach about perfection “according to the manner of men” (ἀνθρωπίνως) in a way that it is contrary to monastic tradition, since he attempted to do so using sophisticated and elaborated rhetorical figures. Addressing Barlaam, Akindynos thus writes: “For where was prayer ever formed by means of syllogisms and continuous ‘therefores’?”²⁹

In fact, by responding to Barlaam’s attempt to approach and understand prayer and its experience logically, with syllogisms and arguments, Akindynos suggests to him that there is only one way to properly understand and comprehend whatever concerns monks. Firstly, one must refrain from meddling more than one ought with hesychasm and trying to understand it using philosophical notions. Then, one must follow “the road that leads to the facts,” that is, to choose to live according to “the life and philosophy” of the hesychasts. In this way, one will understand the value and importance of hesychasm through one’s own experience. That is why Akindynos points out to Barlaam that: “all those who engage in divine pursuits say that there is no sufficient demonstration for those who do not engage in them, just as there is no sweetness of honey for those who have not tasted it.”³⁰

Obviously what Akindynos points out in these four *Letters* concerning the monks and their prayer is correct, while his opposition to Barlaam seems to be in line with the tradition of the Church. Nevertheless, this particular opposition to Barlaam’s theology neither supports nor justifies his larger claim. This is, quite simply, because in his *Letters*, which he is so fond of invoking in order to prove that he is not a Barlaamite, an entirely different picture is formed, contrary to what Akindynos wishes to claim.

Barlaam’s and Akindynos’ Shared Theological Presuppositions

In *Letter 8* of Akindynos, which appears to be a response to a letter of Barlaam now lost, Akindynos openly professes ideas that are similar, and indeed almost identical, to those of Barlaam. *Letter 8* is preceded by *Letter 7*, where Akindynos had mocked Barlaam’s arrogance and his supercilious, abusive, and incessant polemics against the Hesychasts. Akindynos even warned him here that he would henceforward turn away from him, cease to support him, and no longer praise what he was doing because of his position.³¹ During the interval between these two *Letters*, as is clearly evident from *Letter 8*, Akindynos and

²⁸ Akindynos, *Letter 10* (44.178-179).

²⁹ Akindynos, *Letter 9* (30.28-38).

³⁰ Akindynos, *Letter 10* (40.78-46.190).

³¹ Akindynos, *Letter 7* (20.7-26.128).

Barlaam met and apparently discussed their differences. During that time, Barlaam sent a *Letter* to Akindynos, which unfortunately does not survive. Akindynos considered this *Letter* unnecessary, as he writes in *Letter* 8: "It seems to me that, as far as I am concerned, you did not need to write to me what you have written, for you told me these things recently by word of mouth, and I did not forget." The content of *Letter* 8, which captures the context of their discussion, concerns not only the Barlaamite position on hesychasm, but several other theological issues, as well. This is the reason for a statement of Akindynos reminding Barlaam that he did not oppose him on theological issues. He stresses, instead, that the difference between them concerns exclusively the way in which each of them understands and perceives hesychasm. Since Barlaam seemed to oppose and question the long-standing tradition that accompanied the hesychastic way of life, Akindynos opposed him: "You are precisely aware that I oppose you only because of your insulting treatment of the holy hesychasts from the beginning." However, as far as *theology* is concerned, there is no real difference between them: "I do not strongly oppose you on the questions of theology" (κάγώ σοι τὰ περὶ θεολογίας οὐ σφόδρα ἐναντιοῦμαι).³²

In the same *Letter*, Akindynos points out to Barlaam that the fact that he busies himself about Palamas' theology will not have a successful outcome. Palamas' status and the acceptance that he enjoyed in the Church was such that, despite Barlaam's attempt to prove him a heretic, no one would condemn him. With this suggestion, however, Akindynos does not defend Palamas. Akindynos does not agree theologically with Palamas and is definitely correct when he insists that Barlaam wrongly accuses him of Palamism. His concern was only to defend the hesychasts; and Palamas was also a hesychast, one who, according to Akindynos himself, was distinguished for his piety and godly life, which garnered for him a great reputation. It was precisely this reputation of Palamas that was meant to discourage Barlaam's accusations of heresy. Moreover, Palamas would possibly be further strengthened by the attack, while Barlaam would suffer a terrible defeat.

Interestingly, Akindynos notes that Barlaam's eagerness to prove that Palamas was a heretic does not follow the correct procedure. He writes that without a "synodal decision" (πρὸ γὰρ ψήφου συνοδικῆς) no one can be labelled a heretic, even if his views seem to be erroneous. Still, this reference to a synodical process (which is otherwise correct) does also not imply any kind of support or agreement with Palamas' theological perceptions. On the contrary, this is rather an indirect and subtle way of expressing, for Akindynos, his theological disagreement with Palamas. For whatever reasons (perhaps because Barlaam's

³² Akindynos, *Letter* 8 (26.2-6).

opposition at the time was to the Hesychasts), Akindynos felt that he should not state his disagreement explicitly. Perhaps this is why, in the end, he advises Barlaam both to stop meddling into Palamas' theological conceptions and to stop busying himself about the hesychastic modes of prayer, pointing out that Barlaam's actions, i.e., to accuse the hesychasts or try to prove that Palamas was heretic, are "inopportune" and futile.³³

In *Letter 9*, Akindynos becomes more revealing of his beliefs. He suggests to Barlaam that his polemic against the hesychast tradition was not just insolent and erroneous, but it actually resulted in Palamas gaining even higher esteem. It is thus asserted by Akindynos that Palamas, by defending the hesychasts, gained a kind of prominence within the Church in contrast to Barlaam. This means for Akindynos that the way Barlaam chose to act was clearly incorrect and misguided. Akindynos thinks that Barlaam should have left aside the accusations against the hesychasts and concentrated on Palamas' teachings which were doctrinally incorrect. He should not have turned against the monastic practices and Palamas at the same time. Having acted in such a way he lost his credibility among the ecclesiastical authorities of Constantinople, which means that the accusation against Palamas' doctrinal divergences would have little impact—it would be "enervated" (ἐκνευρισμένη), as he writes—and thus would not be effective.³⁴

Given the fact that Akindynos actually confesses that he is in agreement with Barlaam's theology, it is clear that his insistence on denying the accusation of being a Barlaamite is misleading. He neither supports nor defends Palamas against Barlaam's accusations. Instead, he clearly states his disagreement with Palamite theology.³⁵ And in this way, Akindynos' particular understanding of hesychasm, and especially of hesychast prayer, also comes to light. For while

³³ See Akindynos, *Letter 8* (26.4–28.24).

³⁴ Akindynos, *Letter 9* (32.67–75): εἰ μὲν τὰ πρὸς τὸ δόγμα ἐκείνου [i.e., Palamas] μόνον τὸ περὶ τοῦ ὑπὸ τὴν θείαν φύσιν ἀκτίστου καὶ ὑπερουσίου Θεοῦ καὶ ληπτοῦ σωματικοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ... δεῦρ' ἀγαγὼν ἐδείκνυς τοῖς κυρίοις τῶν ψήφων, τᾶλλα δὲ ὑπεξήρεις, μετριώτερον ἂν ἦσθα περὶ σαυτοῦ βεβουλευμένος, οἶμαι, καὶ συνετώτερον, ἢ, ὥς ἂν σὺ φαίης, οἰκονομικώτερον· νῦν δὲ πάντα ὁμοῦ δεδοκώς, τῇ τούτων ἀκαιρίᾳ ἐκνευρίζεις κάκεῖνα. χωρὶς δὲ τούτων, οὐχ ὁμοίως σοὶ τε προσέξουσιν ἢ ἐκκλησία κάκεῖνα.

³⁵ It is obvious that at no moment of the Hesychast Controversy was Akindynos ever on Palamas' side or neutral towards him, wherefore he later moved to the anti-Palamite party. Already from the outset, he had formed very specific views that were identical with those of Barlaam. Some scholars, however, claim the opposite. See the entry on "Ἀκίνδυνος Γρηγόριος," in *Tusculum-Lexikon griechischer und lateinischer Autoren des Altertums und des Mittelalters*, eds. Wolfgang Buchwald, Armin Hohlweg, and Otto Prinz (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1982); Fyrigos, "Gregorios Akindynos," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 4 (1995): 997. Charalambos Soteropoulos, "Οἱ καταδικασθέντες αἵρετικοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἱερῶν συνόδων πολέμοι τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ," in *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς στὴν Ἱστορία καὶ τὸ Παρόν*, 589.

his position is in one way consistent with Orthodox tradition, it espouses this fidelity only superficially and in the end it turns out to be very peculiar. Akindynos accepts the hesychast method of prayer as being traditional and strongly defends it. But he will deny its theological interpretation and foundations. In other words, the problem for Akindynos was not simply the issue of meddling in hesychastic practices, questioning the long tradition that accompanied it, denying the experience of the hesychasts, or attempting to conceive the topic of prayer philosophically. The specific issue for Akindynos was the theological interpretation of the hesychast experience in prayer.

Akindynos particularly respects the hesychasts because they are men of virtue, God-loving men who own no property, are not meddlesome, and know of nothing “but Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). But above all he admires them because they are “unpretentiously pious” (ἀτέχνως εὐσεβεῖς) and “simple Christians” (ἀπλῶς Χριστιανοί), who pray and strive for perfection with simplicity.³⁶ Thus, they follow without meddlesomeness the traditional “holy rules” of prayer: “[the hesychasts] pursue divine matters without learning and with simplicity, that is to say, both with faith and also in accordance with the sacred rules of prayer.”³⁷ I consider this remark by Akindynos as indicative of his theological perception. For Akindynos, though hesychasm constitutes an exceptional way of life, it is nevertheless seen and understood within a very particular framework. He who pursue and practices hesychasm should not view it philosophically or try to interpret it theologically. In other words, he limits hesychasm to *askēsis* and the practice of the virtues; and he actually rejects its philosophical and logical examination as much as its theological comprehension. On the basis of this very conception he opposes Barlaam, who questioned the traditional practice of hesychasm and subjected prayer and its experience to the philosophical proof. However, he also opposes Palamas, who, going beyond the limits within which Akindynos himself included hesychasm, interprets the hesychast experience theologically, which in its expression presupposes the fact of participation in the uncreated divine energies.³⁸

As mentioned above, Akindynos considers certain ideas of Barlaam and Palamas as not being in line with the truth of the Church. Nevertheless, he comprehends their “divergent” positions quite differently. That is, he understands

³⁶ Akindynos, *Letter 7* (24.79-84).

³⁷ Akindynos, *Letter 9* (30.31-32): ἀμαθῶς καὶ ἀτέχνως μετιοῦσι τὰ θεῖα, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ πιστῶς τε καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς ἐπομένως τῆς προσευχῆς κανόσι.

³⁸ Akindynos, *Letter 8* (28.15-16), where he notes Palamas' piety and God-loving life, while in *Letter 9* (32.67-73) and *Letter 10* (46.195-198) he accuses Palamas' theology of being totally erroneous.

and categorizes what he considers to be the errors of Barlaam and Palamas quite differently. Those of the former are incomparably less problematic than those of the latter. They are “newfangled talk” (καινοφωνίες), but not particularly serious problems, which is why he regards them as mere “misdemeanours.” He considers the Palamite view, however, “much worse” and describes it as “corruption of the truth” (λύπη τῆς ἀληθείας), identifying it with a doctrinal deviation whereby polytheism is clearly professed and divine simplicity is destroyed.³⁹ Even when he adds to the list of Barlaam’s misdemeanours the latter’s conversion to Catholicism, which Akindynos understands to be a serious fault, he still considers Barlaam’s errors to be negligible in comparison with the “particularly impious” Palamite theology.⁴⁰

³⁹ Akindynos, *Antirrhētikos* II, 51, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 155.14-17, and *Διᾱλέξις τοῦ κακοδόξου Παλαμᾶ μετὰ ὀρθοδόξου*, ed. Nadal Cañellas, *Refutationes*, 428.508-514.

⁴⁰ Akindynos, *Ἐτέρα ἔκθεσις καὶ ἀνασκευὴ τῶν τοῦ Παλαμᾶ πονηροτάτων αἰρέσεων*, *Monacensis gr.* 223, f. 66^v. Cf. *Letter* 46 (198.92-97). For details on Akindynos’ divergent theological perceptions and on how he perceived and misinterpreted Palamas’ theology, see Zachariou, *Ἡ θεολογικὴ γνωσιολογία*, 103-339; idem, “Οἱ θεοφάνειες στὴ γνωσιολογία τοῦ Γρηγορίου Ἀκινδύνου. Αὐγουστίνεια ἐπίδραση;,” *Θεολογία* 87.3 (2016): 59-90; idem, “Gregory Akindynos’ Theological Perceptions,” in *Akindynos in Context*, eds. Renate Burri and Katharina Heyden (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming). It should be noted however that Akindynos’ positions have been considered as aligned with the tradition of the Church by Nadal Cañellas, who presented himself as his supporter and an advocate of his theology since 1974. Disregarding (or failing to understand) the erroneous way in which Akindynos used and interpreted the teachings of the Fathers, Nadal Cañellas made special efforts to present him as a competent theologian grounded in the patristic tradition. See Nadal Cañellas’ publications, e.g., “La critique par Akindynos de l’herméneutique patristique de Palamas,” *Istina* 3 (1974): 297-328; “La rédaction première de la Troisième lettre de Palamas à Akindynos,” *OCP* 40 (1974): 233-285; “Gregorio Akindynos, ¿Eslavo o Bizantino?,” *RBN* 27 (1990-1991): 259-265; “Denys l’Aréopagite dans les traités de Grégoire Akindynos,” in *Denys l’Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident (Actes du colloque international, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1994)*, ed. Ysabel de Andia (Paris: Institut d’études augustiniennes, 1997), 535-564; “Gregorio Akindynos,” 228-250; *La résistance d’Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006); “Le rôle de Grégoire Akindynos dans la controverse hésychaste du XIV^{ème} siècle à Byzance,” in *Eastern Crossroads. Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 31-58. Similar views, concerning Akindynos’ theology, have been expressed by some other scholars as well. See, for example, Lowell Clucas, “The Hesychast Controversy in Byzantium in the Fourteenth Century: A Consideration of the Basic Evidence” (PhD diss., University of California, 1975); Augustine Casiday, “Church Fathers and the Shaping of Orthodox Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, eds. Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 167-187, at 183.

Conclusion

Gregory Akindynos' conceptions are obvious; his objection to Barlaam does not actually mean a disagreement with him. It is rather a peculiar way of understanding theological parameters. Therefore the claim that he is not a Barlaamite is proved to be inaccurate. The source texts, that is, his own writings, especially his *Letters*, which he extensively cites to prove that his views are to be differentiated from Barlaamite conceptions, clearly indicate that his opposition to Barlaam was exclusively focused on the issue of the hesychastic life and not on theological matters. Akindynos' theological perceptions, notably those concerning the simplicity of God, which in his case meant the philosophical identity of the divine essence with its energies, were from the outset consistent with those of Barlaam. Before the synod of June 134, Akindynos did not express these ideas openly and publicly but kept them veiled, confining them to the Barlaamite circle. He would state them clearly, however, when the opportunity arose, during his later, fierce conflict with Palamas. Thus, the term "Barlaamite" for Akindynos is fully understandable. The Palamite party applied it to Akindynos, considering clearly and justly his theological conceptions as entirely aligned with those of Barlaam.

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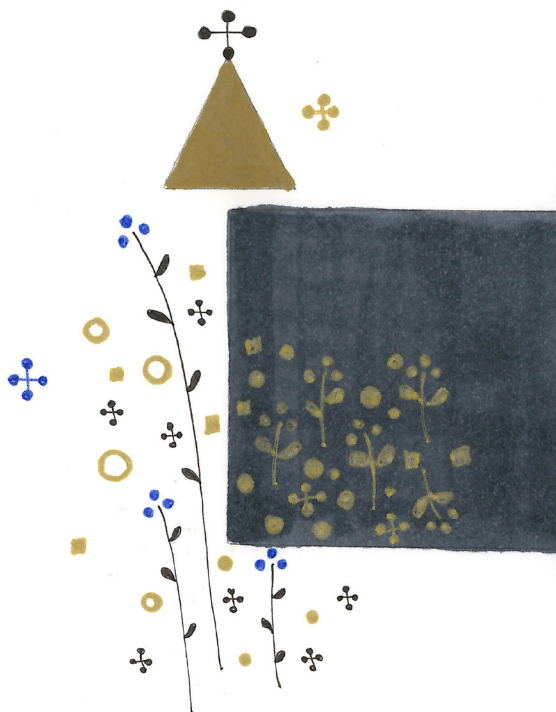
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THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN BODY IN HESYCHAST THEOLOGY: SOME REMARKS

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ABSTRACT. In our current world, the human body has a most central place. On the one hand, we are called to respect and take care of our body. On the other hand, we often face cases of a strong disregard for the body or even attempts to damage or destroy it. What can Christian theology offer to the relevant debates? This article takes Hesychast theology, and in particular the writings of Gregory Palamas, as a case study, and tries to show that this teaching provides many opportunities to articulate and explain our enormous respect for the body. The following topics are analyzed: a) the spiritual dispositions imprinted (ἐνσημαινόμεναι) on the body; b) the participation of the body in *theōsis*, now and in the age to come; c) the transformation of the body; and d) the role of the human heart.

Keywords: hesychast theology, Gregory Palamas, human body, soul, *theōsis*, communion with God, anthropology, intellectual perception (αἴσθησις νοερά), spiritual dispositions imprinted on the body, human heart

Introduction

In the age of post-modernity and post-secularization in which we live, the human body has a prominent place. We receive instructions daily to take care of our health, diet, and exercise, issues which take on a primarily bodily interpretation. People pursue bodily pleasures—which today's society has elevated to the highest goal of life—to the point of diminishing the spiritual dimension of life. On the other hand, even today there are phenomena of neglect

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or even abuse of the body, either our own bodies or those of others (e.g., self-harm or suicide, the ingestion of drugs or other addictive substances, sexual or non-sexual abuse). What is more, public opinion is often shaken about issues concerning the body. For example, in June 2022, the American public was divided over the Supreme Court's rejection of the famous *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision, which held that the United States Constitution granted the right to abortion.

A stormy debate ensued, not only on social media, but also through intense rallies, speeches, and demonstrations. Pro-abortion advocates argued that "women have the right to treat their bodies as they wish" and that "no one can impose anything on them in relation to their bodies." On the other hand, those who could not accept abortion stressed that the embryo is a human being from the very beginning of its conception and has, in addition to a soul, a body of its own. Therefore, no one has the right to exterminate them.

The debate is still ongoing. And this is only one of the many burning issues that concern us today and that are directly related to the body. But the key question for us is what Christian theology can offer, as far as the human body is concerned. In this direction, many important insights can be drawn from the way in which St. Gregory Palamas—one of the most prominent representatives of Hesychast theology—views the body. Some of his relevant views, the most pivotal ones, will be discussed in this paper. At first sight this attempt may seem idealistic or paradoxical, since we often have in mind that hesychasm and *askēsis* mean rejection or at least degradation of the body. But the reality is different, and I hope that this will become clear from what follows.¹

1. The Spiritual Dispositions Imprinted (ἐνσημαινόμεναι) on the Body

A most central topic in the anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas is his notion of intellectual perception (αἴσθησις νοερά), which refers to the human person's communion with God and combines in itself both the spiritual and the bodily.²

¹ The subsequent analysis is an adapted and enriched version of Chouliaras, *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas: The Image of God, the Spiritual Senses, and the Human Body* (Studia Traditionis Theologiae 38) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 183–193.

² For an examination of this notion and the relevant bibliography, see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 145–164. Cf. Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,20.24–27, 430 (153.7–11): Τῇ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρων συζυγίᾳ πείθει τὸν ἀκούοντα μηδέτερον νομίσαι ταύτην, μήτ' αἴσθησιν, μήτε νόησιν· οὔτε γὰρ ἡ νόησις αἴσθησις ποτε, οὔθ' ἡ αἴσθησις νόησις· οὐκοῦν ἡ νοερά αἴσθησις ἄλλο παρ' ἐκάτερον αὐτῶν ("By joining these two words, he urges his hearer to consider it neither as a sensation nor as an intellection, for neither is the activity of the intelligence a sensation nor that of the senses an intellection. The intellectual perception is thus different from both"). For Palamas' *Triads* (Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων), I refer to Panagiotis Christou's edition in *PS*, vol. 1, and,

In other words, although this communion (or “spiritual perceiving/sensing”) is beyond natural sense-perception (αἴσθησις), it touches both the soul and the body.³ Thus, a central belief of Palamas is that “the human body, too, itself participates in the grace⁴ that operates through the intellect.”⁵ To support his position, he presents a very crucial argument in the *Hagiorctic Tomos*.⁶ He maintains that the spiritual dispositions (πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις) which come from the charisms of the Spirit “in the souls of those who are making progress in God show their effects [or: are imprinted, ἐνσημαινομένας] on the body as the result of the charisms of the Spirit.” Moreover, Palamas knows that the anti-hesychasts did not accept this reality, and for him this denial leads to heresy.⁷

For this reason, Palamas provides a justification and an answer to objections about the ἐνσημαινομένας τῷ σώματι πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις in different places throughout his literary corpus. For instance, in *Triads* 1,3,33, Palamas argues that the effects of the spiritual realities are manifested not only in the soul but also in the body. In particular, he stresses the fact that “the purifying mourning,” which is lived through God’s grace, is not manifested only in the human soul, but through the soul it is also transmitted to the body and the

in parentheses, to John Meyendorff’s *Grégoire Palamas. Défense des saints hésychastes*, 2nd edn (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1973; first published in 1959). For the English translation I use (often with modifications) Nicholas Gendle, *Gregory Palamas. The Triads* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983).

- ³ However, the body has to be transformed so that it may participate in the spiritual realities. I discuss this issue below, in section 5.
- ⁴ On divine grace and the essence-energies distinction, see Tikhon Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas* (London: Routledge, 2022).
- ⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.7-8, 442 (179.1-2): καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ὅτι καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεταλαμβάνει πῶς τῆς κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργουμένης χάριτος. “Intellect” translates the Greek word νοῦς.
- ⁶ Palamas, *Hagiorctic Tomos* (or *Tomos of the Holy Mountain*) [Ἀγιορειτικός τόμος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων διὰ τοὺς ἐξ ἰδίας ἀπειρίας καὶ τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀπειθείας ἀθετοῦντας τὰς τοῦ Πνεύματος μυστικὰς ἐνεργείας κρεῖττον ἢ λόγος ἐν τοῖς κατὰ πνεῦμα ζῶσιν ἐνεργουμένας καὶ δι’ ἔργων θεωρουμένας, ἀλλ’ οὐ διὰ λόγων ἀποδεικνυμένας], ed. Basil Pseftonkas, in *PS*, vol. 2, 567–578. Unfortunately, I did not have access to the most recent edition of the *Tomos* published by Antonio Rigo, *Gregorio Palamas, Tomo aghioritico. La storia, il testo e la dottrina* (Bibliothèque de Byzantion 26) (Leuven: Peeters, 2021). For a concise presentation and analysis of this text, see Christou, *PS*, vol. 2, 551–553, and Hierotheos Vlachos, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς ὡς ἀγιορείτης*, 3rd edn (Levadia: Ἱερά Μονὴ Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου (Πελαγίας), 2007), 305–326. In this last book, one may see the tight connection of Palamas with the spirituality of Mount Athos throughout his whole life.
- ⁷ Palamas, *Hagiorctic Tomos* 6.1-3, *PS*, vol. 2, 575: Ὅστις τὰς ἐνσημαινομένας τῷ σώματι πνευματικὰς διαθέσεις ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῶν κατὰ Θεὸν προκοπόντων χαρισμάτων τοῦ Πνεύματος οὐ παραδέχεται. English trans. Robert Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (XIII^e–XIX^e s.), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 186–187 (modified).

bodily sensations.⁸ And a clear proof for this “are the tears full of pain of those who mourn for their sins.”⁹ Palamas wants to argue that repentance and mourning for one’s sins is not something that takes part only in the human soul or spirit. It may begin there, but is also transmitted to the body, and thus also lived by the body and the bodily sensations. Therefore, Palamas wonders: “why shouldn’t we also accept with reverence the proofs [or: signs] of spiritual pleasure, for these signs are [also] manifested (ἐνσημαινόμενα) in (and through) the bodily sensations?”¹⁰ He refers here to Christ’s words, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:4). Christ blesses those who mourn, because they will receive joy (χαρά), “the fruit of the Spirit.” But in this consolation (παράκλησις), the body takes part too, in many ways. These ways are known to them who have “experienced these realities” (οἱ ἐν πείρᾳ γεγονότες). Moreover, they are also revealed (and made known) to those persons who meet them, through various external signs, such as “their gentle (soft) ethos, sweet tear[s], grace-filled meetings of those who come to them.”¹¹ Taking the above into consideration, Robert Sinkewicz—whose contributions to the study and reception of Palamas in modern scholarship are significant—rightly argued that “Gregory’s concern is to show the progression of grace from internal activity to exterior manifestation.”¹²

⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33, 443.28–444.1 (181.24–27): Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ κατὰ Θεὸν καθάρσιον πένθος οὐκ ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μόνον τελεῖται τῶν ἀγωνιζομένων, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ ταύτης καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν κατὰ σῶμα διαβαίνει αἴσθησιν.

⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.1–3, 444 (181.27–28): καὶ δεῖγμα τούτου ἐναργὲς τὸ κατῶδυνον τοῖς ἐφ’ ἁμαρτήμασι πενθοῦσι δάκρυον.

¹⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.3–5, 444 (181.28–30): διατί μὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς κατὰ Πνεῦμα θείας ἡδονῆς τεκμήρια, ταῖς χωρούσαις τοῦ σώματος αἰσθήσεσιν ἐνσημαινόμενα, εὐλαβῶς παραδεξαίμεθα;

¹¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.5–12, 444 (181.30–183.6): Τί δὲ καὶ ὁ Κύριος, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο “μακαρίζει τοὺς πενθοῦντας,” ἐπειδὴ “παρακληθήσονται,” τουτέστι τὴν χαράν, τὸν καρπὸν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔξουσιν τοῦ Πνεύματος; Ἀλλὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ταύτης καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεταλαγχάνει πολυτρόπως. Ὡν τοὺς μὲν ἴσασιν οἱ ἐν πείρᾳ γεγονότες, οἱ δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἔξωθεν ὁρῶσι δῆλοι τὸ προσηνὲς ἦθος, τὸ γλυκὺ δάκρυον, ἡ χαρίτων γέμουσα τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἐντευξὶς κατὰ τὸν ἐν Ἀσμασιν εἰπόντα, “κηρία μέλιτος ἀπὸ στόματός σου στάζουσι, νύμφη.” Here, Palamas refers to the *Song of Songs* (4:11) (with some alteration): “Your lips distil honey, my bride.” Palamas speaks about the spiritual pleasure that is transmitted also to the body in other parts of his texts, as well; cf., e.g., *Triads* 2,2,10.

¹² Sinkewicz, “The Concept of Spiritual Perception in Gregory Palamas’ *First Triad in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*,” *Christianskij Vostok* 1 (1999): 385. However, there are certain problems with Sinkewicz’s approach to the participation of the body in divine grace according to Palamas; see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 194–197.

2. When the Body Participates in *Theōsis*: Now and in the Eschaton

Along these same lines, Palamas makes an important remark: it is not only the soul that takes part in the “pledge of the goods to come in the future,” but also the body, which walks together (συνδιανύον) with the soul along the road of the Gospel, which leads to the blessings of eternity.¹³ This is a crucial point in Palamas’ teaching. During their efforts here on earth to attain union with God, human beings have a foretaste of some of the beauties that they will experience in their life in Paradise. But this effort for union with God is not made only by the soul. The human person is not only “spirit,” but also “body,” and this body participates in our spiritual struggle. This is shown through the special word that Palamas chooses to use: τὸ συνδιανύον. Here, one traces the complementarity and cooperation that exists between soul and body. In Palamas’ mind there is no room for hostility between body and soul. It could even be maintained that the human body “has the right and privilege” to also foretaste in this life some of the blessings of the age to come.¹⁴

But Palamas goes even further: if one rejects this fact, “then one is also rejecting the participation of the body in the future age.”¹⁵ His argument is simple: if we believe that the body is really going to participate then in those mysterious blessings, it follows therefore that it will also take part (καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ) in the divine grace which is given to the intellect in this life.¹⁶ Some important points should be highlighted here. First, the human body, according to Palamas, participates in the goods of the age to come; it takes part in eternal communion with God. Consequently, it must participate in union with God during this earthly life as well. It is not possible for theology to reject either of these two facts; if this happens, one produces a problematic theology. Second,

¹³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.13-15, 444 (183.6-8): Λαμβάνει γὰρ οὐχ ἡ ψυχὴ μόνον τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὸ συνδιανύον τὸν πρὸς ταῦτα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου δρόμον. For some other references to the Church Fathers (Basil the Great, Athanasios of Alexandria, John Climacus, and Isaac) supporting the fact that the body participates in the sweetness that the soul receives from prayer, see *Triads* 1,3,1, 410.18–411.8 (109.16-28).

¹⁴ For a relevant article, see Demetrios Harper, “Becoming Homotheos: St. Gregory Palamas’ Eschatology of Body,” in *Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Constantinos Athanasopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 235–247.

¹⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.15-16, 444 (183.8-10): ὁ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο λέγων, καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι μετὰ σώματος ἀπαναίνεται διαγωγὴν.

¹⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,33.16-19, 444 (183.10-13): Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα συμμεθέξει τότε τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἐκείνων ἀγαθῶν, καὶ νῦν δήπου συμμεθέξει καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ τῆς ἐνδιδομένης πρὸς Θεοῦ χάριτος τῷ νῷ.

Palamas uses the phrase “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ.” What exactly does this mean? One would suggest the following: the “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ” refers to the *synergy* of human beings with God, to the extent that they cooperate with God, that is, according to the measure that each of us allows God to act in our life. This is of course closely related with *askēsis*. Therefore, “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ” may also mean “as much as humans have progressed in their spiritual life.” However, there may be also another, very interesting, dimension. The human body, in its present state, has some restrictions in perceiving God. For this reason, it will be transformed at the general resurrection, so as to have full communion with God. Most probably “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ” here refers to this deficient reality of the current world, of fallen human nature. This seems to be the reason why Meyendorff translated this phrase as “conformément à sa nature” (“in accordance with/compatibly with its nature”).¹⁷

The same parallelism, namely between the participation of the body in the ‘ineffable goods’ now and at that time is also found in the *Hagiorctic Tomos*, utilizing even certain identical expressions. However, the phrase “καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ” is replaced by the word τὸ ἐγγωροῦν. This most probably means “according to the body’s potentiality, or to the extent that the body is capable of participating in God (συμμετέχειν Θεῷ).” The text reads as following: “the body [...] will doubtless participate even now as far as possible (κατὰ τὸ ἐγγωροῦν) in the grace communicated mystically and ineffably by God to the purified intellect, and it will experience the divine realities in a manner appropriate to it.”¹⁸ Behind the phrase “τὰ θεῖα πείσεται” is hidden the figure of (Pseudo-)Dionysios the Areopagite,¹⁹ to whom is attributed the famous dictum “οὐ μόνον μαθῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παθῶν τὰ θεῖα.”²⁰ It should be noted that this is a phrase that Palamas uses frequently.²¹ In connection with this, Palamas refers to a noteworthy passage from Diadochos of Photiki:

¹⁷ Meyendorff, *Défense*, 182. Christou seems to give a similar rendering in his modern Greek translation, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Ἀπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, vol. 2 (Thessaloniki: Πατερικαὶ ἐκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς», 1982), 221.

¹⁸ Palamas, *Hagiorctic Tomos* 6.9-14, *PS*, vol. 2, 575: Εἰ γὰρ συμμεθέξει τότε τῇ ψυχῇ τὸ σῶμα τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἀγαθῶν, καὶ νῦν δὴπου συμμεθέξει κατὰ τὸ ἐγγωροῦν τῆς χορηγουμένης μυστικῶς καὶ ἀπορρήτως ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτος τῷ κεκαθαμένῳ νῷ καὶ αὐτὸ τὰ θεῖα πείσεται καταλλήλως ἑαυτῷ, μετασκευασθέντος καὶ ἀγιασθέντος. English trans. Sinkewicz, “Palamas,” 187.

¹⁹ Concerning the presence of (Pseudo-)Dionysios in Palamas’ *Triads*, see Alexander R. Titus, “The Reception of the *Dionysian Corpus* in the *Triads* of St. Gregory Palamas” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2022).

²⁰ De Divinis Nominibus 2, 9, ed. Beate R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Divinis Nominibus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 134.1-2.

²¹ See, e.g., Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,34, 445.21-27 (185.17-24).

In those who have detached themselves from the goods of this life for the sake of the good things to come, the intellect, because of its freedom from worldly care, acts with vigor and perceives (ἐπαισθάνεται) the ineffable divine goodness and, according to the measure of its advancement, it also communicates to the body its own goodness. Such joy that then arises in the soul and in the body is an infallible reminder of the incorruptible life.²²

The important point here is that the intellect, “according to its own progress,” transmits also to the body this goodness that it perceives.²³ This is a clear indication of how communion with God is also transmitted to the body. In other words, the body has a crucial role in the operation of the spiritual senses of the human being.²⁴ Noteworthy is the usage of Diadochos’ “ἐπαισθάνεται.” This likely influenced Palamas in his own usage of “αἴσθησις νοερά.” Besides this, Diadochos also uses the phrase “αἴσθησις τοῦ πνεύματος.”²⁵ Consequently, for the above reasons, Sinkewicz seems to be correct when he maintains that, for Palamas, in this present life “the body and its natural senses have no direct perception of God. The body’s perception of the divine is mediated through the soul or the intellect.”²⁶

²² See Palamas, *Hagiorctic Tomos* 6, *PS*, vol. 2, 575.19-25: ὁ νοῦς εὐρώστως διὰ τὴν ἀμεριμνίαν κινούμενος τῆς θείας ἀρρήτου χρηστότητος αὐτὸς ἐπαισθάνεται καὶ τῷ σώματι, κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ προκοπῆς, τῆς οἰκείας χρηστότητος μεταδίδωσιν· ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη ἐγγινομένη χαρὰ τότε τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ σώματι, ὑπόμνησίς ἐστιν ἀπλανῆς τῆς ἀφθάρτου βιότητος. English trans. Sinkewicz, “Palamas,” 187 (slightly modified). The passage that Palamas provides is slightly different from what the critical edition offers; see Diadochos, *Capita gnostica (Capita centum de perfectione spirituali)* 25, ed. Édouard Des Places, *Diadoque de Photice. Oeuvres Spirituelles. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SC 5 bis) (Paris: Cerf, 1955), 97; however, the meaning is not altered. Diadochos argues something similar also in his *Capita* 79, ed. Des Places, 137.

²³ Palamas, *Hagiorctic Tomos* 6.21-23, *PS*, vol. 2, 575.

²⁴ The theology of the spiritual senses, which is found in the writings of many of the Fathers, is an attempt to explain how humans are able to perceive and sense God and in what ways this is achieved. Recently there has been renewed interest in the study of this theology. For related approaches (old and contemporary) and indicative bibliography, see Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Frederick D. Aquino and Gavrilyuk (eds.), *Perceiving Things Divine: Towards a Constructive Account of Spiritual Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*.

²⁵ Diadochos, *Capita* 15, ed. Des Places, 92.

²⁶ Sinkewicz, “Spiritual Perception,” 386 (slightly modified; Sinkewicz writes “mind” instead of “intellect”). For the transformation of the body in the age to come, so that it may partake in the vision of the divine light, see below, section 5.

3. A Case Study: Moses, St. Stephen, and St. Mary of Egypt

Up to now it was maintained that the body participates in the spiritual realities. To support his relevant arguments, Palamas brings three testimonies to bear on the issue: the figures of Moses, St. Stephen, and St. Mary of Egypt. First, as is well known, when Moses returns from his encounter with God on Mount Sinai, his face shines to such a great extent that those who are looking at him with their physical eyes are not able to bear “the abundance of this light.”²⁷ Palamas states that this light occurred because “the inner brilliancy of the intellect was outpoured also to the body.”²⁸ Secondly, “in a similar way did the physical face of St. Stephen appear like the face of an angel.”²⁹ Palamas clarifies this further: from within, St. Stephen’s intellect acquired an angelic aspect, for it was united to the divine light “in a mysterious participation,” “either directly or by consent (εἴτε κατ’ ἐπιβολὴν εἴτε κατὰ παραδοχήν).” And this union took place in a way “similar and proper to the angelic life (ἀγγελομιμήτως τε καὶ ἀγγελοπρεπῶς).”³⁰ Thirdly, Palamas refers to the life of St. Mary of Egypt (ca. IV/V c. ?).³¹ In her *Life* it is mentioned that,³² during her prayer, she “was elevated above the ground, sensibly and as really being moved.” According to Palamas, this happened for the following reason: “because of the fact that her intellect was elevated, her body was also elevated, and having abandoned the earth, it was seen as if it were airborne.”³³ All these three examples show that, for Palamas, the human body is very much influenced by the progress and movement of the intellect, and, moreover, it participates in divine grace. But now, let us turn to an interesting Christological argument regarding the human body.

²⁷ Cf. Ex 34:29-35.

²⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.12-15, 442 (179.7-10): Οὕτω Μωσέως ἔλαμψε τὸ πρόσωπον, τῆς ἐντὸς λαμπρότητος τοῦ νοῦ κάπνι τὸ σῶμα περιεχυμένης, καὶ τοσοῦτον ἔλαμπεν ὡς μηδὲ τοὺς αἰσθητῶς προσβλέποντας αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς αὐγῆς ἐκείνης ἀτενίζειν ἔχειν.

²⁹ Cf. Acts 6:15.

³⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.15-20, 442 (179.11-15): Οὕτως ὥφθη τὸ αἰσθητὸν πρόσωπον Στεφάνου ὥσει πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου· καὶ γὰρ ἔνδοθεν αὐτῷ ὁ νοῦς ἀγγελομιμήτως τε καὶ ἀγγελοπρεπῶς, εἴτε κατ’ ἐπιβολὴν εἴτε κατὰ παραδοχὴν ἐνούμενος τῷ ὑπερανωκισμένῳ τοῦ παντὸς φωτὶ κατὰ μέθεξιν ἀπόρρητον, ἀγγελοειδὴς ἐγίνετο.

³¹ For the *Life* of St. Mary, see Maria Kouli, “Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” in *Holy Women of Byzantium. Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 65–93.

³² Cf. Kouli, “Life of St. Mary,” 79, where the testimony of Abbas Zosimas is presented: “He swore <to us>, calling upon God as the witness of his words, that when he saw that she was prolonging her prayers, he raised his head up a bit from the ground and saw her elevated about one cubit above the earth, hanging in the air and praying in this way.”

³³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,31.20-23, 442 (179.15-19): Οὕτως ἡ Αἰγυπτία, μᾶλλον δ’ οὐρανία, Μαρία μετέωρος γέγονε καὶ τὸ σῶμα εὐχομένη τοπικῶς καὶ αἰσθητῶς, καὶ γάρ, ὑψουμένου τοῦ νοῦ, συνανυψώθη καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπαναστὰν ὥφθη ἐναέριον.

4. Christology and the Body: The Gethsemane Prayer

In his effort to stress the great affinity and connection between the human soul and heart, Palamas writes the following: when “the soul is warmed by and rather put into motion [or: excited] from the irresistible love of the only Desirable, the heart, too, is put into motion [or: excited].” Then, the heart experiences certain “spiritual leaps,” which “prove the communion of grace,” namely the fact that the grace of God is communicated from the soul to the heart. Palamas argues that this is something like a preparation—or, rather, anticipation—of the soul for the second coming of Christ, in the eschaton: He “who will come on the clouds in His Body, as promised.”³⁴ Of note is that Palamas relates the participation of the human body—here, the human heart—in the spiritual senses with Christ’s second coming in his body—and therefore also with Christ’s now being in His body, in the heavens. Thus, in the mind of Palamas the human body is somehow related to the body of Christ.

In a similar way, when the human person prays intensely, and “when the intelligible fire appears, and the intelligible flame is ignited, and, through spiritual contemplation, the intellect elevates the love [for God] in a flame reaching high into the air,” then “also the body is made light and warm.” In this case, those who see this person believe “that he has come out of the fire of a sensible furnace.”³⁵ For this last point, Palamas explicitly refers to John Climacus.³⁶ Worth noting is that Palamas uses some important keywords which clearly place the whole discussion in the context of his doctrine concerning the spiritual senses: a) ἀναφανέντος, b) ἀναφθείσης, c) καὶ τὸ σῶμα κουφίζεται τε καὶ διαθερμαίνεται, and d) τοῖς ὁρῶσιν.

Next, Palamas presents a very important argument: he gives a clearly Christological dimension to his theology of intellectual perception. In particular, he refers to Jesus’ prayer to the Father in Gethsemane.³⁷ As mentioned in Luke 22:44,

³⁴ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.24-28, 442 (179.20-25): Οὕτω τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνθουσιώσης καὶ οἶονεὶ συγκινουμένης τῷ ἀσχετῷ ἔρωτι τοῦ μόνου ἐφετοῦ, καὶ ἡ καρδία συγκινεῖται, σκιρτήμασι πνευματικοῖς τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς χάριτος ἐνδεικνυμένη καὶ ὥσπερ ἐνθὺνδε ὀρμωμένη πρὸς τὴν μετὰ σώματος ἐν νεφέλαις κατὰ τὸ ἐπηγγελμένον τοῦ Κυρίου ὑπαντήν. Cf. Mt 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27; 1 Thes 4:17.

³⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32, 442.28–443.6 (179.25–31): Οὕτως ἐν τῇ συντόνῳ προσευχῇ, τοῦ νοητοῦ πυρὸς ἀναφανέντος καὶ τῆς νοητῆς λαμπάδος ἀναφθείσης καὶ εἰς μετέωρον φλόγα διὰ πνευματικῆς θεωρίας τοῦ νοῦ τὸν πόθον ἀνεγείραντος, καὶ τὸ σῶμα παραδόξως κουφίζεται τε καὶ διαθερμαίνεται, ὡς ἀπὸ πυρὸς αἰσθητῆς καμίνου τοῖς ὁρῶσιν ἐξιέναι δοκεῖν, κατὰ τὸν συγγραφέα τῆς πνευματικῆς ἀναβάσεως.

³⁶ Cf. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 28, PG 88, 1137C.

³⁷ The interpretation of the Gethsemane prayer caused many doctrinal disputes during the Monothelite controversy. For a pertinent analysis of how this prayer was approached both

“In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” Palamas believes that Christ’s sweat is a clear sign of the warmth that one feels only when one is intensely praying; and this warmth is sensibly perceived in one’s body.³⁸ Palamas refers to the opponents of the hesychasts:

What will they now respond to this, those who argue that the warmth produced from prayer is demonic? Or rather, will they teach that one ought not to pray vehemently or intensively, so that the body—according to the soul’s combat—not receive the warmth which for them is forbidden?

For this reason, he claims that the anti-hesychasts teach a totally wrong method of praying, one that does not transform man or render him “close or similar to God (θεομίμητον).”³⁹

Here, the acquisition of a spiritual gift, warmth, is clearly given an ascetical dimension. This is why Palamas adds something important. First, he reminds the reader that human beings, in the fall, violated God’s commandment and deserted Him in the pursuit of pleasure (ἡδονήν). He then argues that when we “expel pleasure through the pain of askēsis that we voluntarily” choose to follow, “then we taste divine pleasure—which is free from pain—through intellectual perception (νοερᾷ αἰσθήσει).” Furthermore, this pleasure “transforms the body also to render it compatible with divine and impassible love.”⁴⁰ But a very crucial question arises here: what exactly is this “transformation of the body”?

prior as well as during the Monothelite controversy, see Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140–147.

³⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.6-8, 443 (179.31–181.2): Ἐμὲ δὲ καὶ ὁ κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν ἰδρῶς Χριστοῦ τὴν ἐγγινομένην αἰσθητὴν τῷ σώματι διδάσκει θέρμην ἐκ μόνης τῆς ἐκτενοῦς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν δεήσεως. Here, Palamas seems to be influenced by Diadochos: see, e.g., his *Capita* 25 and 79, ed. Des Places, 97, 137, where Diadochos speaks about the transmission of grace from the intellect to the body.

³⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.9-15, 443 (181.2-10): Τί δὴ πρὸς ταύτην φήσουσιν οἱ δαιμονιώδη τὴν ἐκ προσευχῆς ἀποφαινόμενοι θέρμην; Ἡ καὶ τοῦτο διδάξουσιν μὴ ἐναγωνίως, μὴδ’ ἐκτενώς προσεύχεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ, κατὰ λόγον τοῦ κατὰ ψυχὴν ἀγῶνος, καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὴν ἀπηγορευμένην αὐτοῖς ἐπιδέξῃται θέρμην; Ἄλλ’ οὗτοι μὲν ἔστωσαν διδάσκαλοι τῆς μὴ πρὸς Θεὸν ἢ τὸ θεομίμητον φερούσης, μὴδὲ μετασκευαζούσης πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον τὸν ἄνθρωπον εὐχῆς.

⁴⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,32.15-20, 443 (181.10-15): Ἡμεῖς δ’ ἴσμεν ὡς καὶ τὴν ἡδονήν, πρὸς ἣν φεῦ ἡτόμολῃσαμεν τῆς ἐντολῆς ἀφηνιάσαντες, διὰ τῆς ἐκουσίου κατὰ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν ὁδύνης ἀπωθοῦμενοι, κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν αἰσθήσει νοερᾷ γευόμεθα τῆς θείας καὶ ἀμιγοῦς ὁδύνης ἡδονῆς, ἥς θαυμασίως καὶ τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὸν ἀπαθῆ καὶ θεῖον ἔρωτα μετασκευασαμένης.

5. The Transformation of the Body

A very important notion in Palamas' theology is the so-called "transformation" of the body, so that it may participate in spiritual realities. In his *Triads* 1,3,36, Palamas offers many useful insights on this transformation. Initially, he wonders: "How can bodily sensation [i.e., the faculty of sense perception] become aware of this light which is not properly sensible?"⁴¹ He answers that this may be attained through the power of the Holy Spirit. Besides, it is through this power that the Apostles saw the light on Tabor. This light "was shining not only from the flesh that carried in itself the Son, but also from the cloud which carried in itself the Father."⁴² Palamas wants to stress here that the glory of Christ shone both from His body and His divinity. Palamas quotes the words of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 15:44): "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body."⁴³ This passage points out the difference that will occur between this life and life in the eschaton, as far as the human body is concerned. At present, the body is physical (ψυχικόν), but at that time it will be spiritual (πνευματικόν). Palamas connects this to the transformation of the body. And he adds that in Paradise human beings will be able to see the divine light because their body "will be spiritual, and it will see spiritually."⁴⁴ In other words, through its transformation, the body will be able to sense the spiritual realities spiritually, in a spiritual manner.

But here a question arises: is it easy for humans to understand in this life their capacity for union with God? Palamas would have a negative answer to this matter. He believes that our bodily situation renders it difficult to realize the existence of the νοερά αἴσθησις. To prove this, he draws an analogy with something similar: he argues that it is difficult for us to even realize that we have an intellectual soul, because the power of the 'flesh' is so strong in humans.⁴⁵ On the

⁴¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.9-10, 447 (189.10-11): Ἀλλὰ πῶς αἴσθησις σωματικὴ φωτὸς ἀντιλήψεται μὴ κυρίως αἰσθητοῦ.

⁴² Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.10-14, 447 (189.11-15): οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἑαυτῇ φερούσης τὸν Υἱὸν σαρκὸς μόνον ἀπαστράπτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἑαυτῇ φερούσης τὸν Πατέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ νεφέλης.

⁴³ σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. ἔστι σῶμα ψυχικόν, καὶ ἔστι σῶμα πνευματικόν.

⁴⁴ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.14-18, 447 (189.15-19): πνευματικὸν δ' ὃν καὶ πνευματικῶς ὁρῶν τῆς θείας εἰκότως ἀντιλήψεται αὐγῆς.

⁴⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.18-22, 447 (189.20-25): Καὶ ὥσπερ νῦν ἔργον ἐστὶν ἰδεῖν ὡς ἔχομεν νοεράν ψυχὴν, καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὑφεστάναι δυναμένην διὰ τὴν παχεῖαν ταύτην σάρκα καὶ θνητὴν καὶ ἀντίτυπον ἐπηλυγάζουσιν καὶ κατασπῶσιν, σωματοειδὴ τε καὶ φανταστικὴν μάλιστα καθιστῶσιν τὴν ψυχὴν, διὸ καὶ τὴν κατὰ νοῦν νοεράν ἀγνοοῦμεν αἴσθησιν. It seems to me that Meyendorff gives an incorrect translation of the phrase "Καὶ ὥσπερ – νοεράν ψυχὴν."

other hand, in Paradise, it is the body that “will be hidden, as it were, because humans will acquire [or: will be conformed to] the angelic dignity.”⁴⁶

Furthermore, Palamas continues, the body “will become [very] thin, to such an extent that it will no longer appear material at all.” In such a state, the body “will not obscure the intellectual activities.” This will happen due to a total “victory of the intellect.” “For this reason,” Palamas concludes, “humans will delight in the divine light also with their bodily sensations.”⁴⁷ In other words, the body will be, as it were, absorbed by the intellect. It will become spiritual, and thus, at that time, we will see the divine light through our body too. Palamas refers here explicitly to a passage from St. Maximos the Confessor, which seems to play an important role in Palamas’ own theology of the human body. In particular, in his *Theological Chapters*, Maximos argues that, in the divine Kingdom, in Paradise, the soul will become

God by participation in divine grace, ceasing from all activity of intellect and sense, and at the same time suspending all the natural operations of the body. For the body is deified along with the soul through its own corresponding participation in the process of deification. Thus, God alone is made manifest through the soul and the body, since their natural properties have been overcome by the superabundance of His glory.⁴⁸

In particular, he translates it as following: “Aujourd’hui nous pouvons réellement voir que nous avons une âme intellectuelle qui possède une existence propre dans [...]” In other words, he regards that the phrase “ἔργον ἐστίν” should be translated as “we can indeed [or: really] (see).” However, according to *LSJ*, s.v. ἔργον, the phrase “ἔργον ἐστίν” followed by an infinitive (as here: ἰδεῖν) has the meaning of “it is hard work, difficult to do.” For this reason, Christou seems to give the correct rendering in his modern Greek translation, *Ἄπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, vol. 2, 227: “And as now it is *difficult* for us to see that we have a rational soul [...]” (my emphasis).

⁴⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.22-25, 447 (189.25-28): ὡσανεὶ τὸ σῶμα κρυβήσεται εἰς ἀγγέλων κατὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ μεταποιηθεῖσιν ἀξίαν. Cf. Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:36.

⁴⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,36.25-28, 447 (189.28-31): διαλεπτυνθήσεται γάρ, ὡς μηδ’ ὕλην ὅλως εἶναι δοκεῖν, μηδ’ ἐπιπροσθεῖν ταῖς νοεραῖς ἐνεργείαις, ἐκνικήσαντος τοῦ νοῦ. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ σωματικαῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἀπολαύσονται τοῦ θεϊκοῦ φωτός.

⁴⁸ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 88, PG 90, 1168A; English trans. from *The Philokalia. The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. Gerald E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), vol. 2, 160. Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.2-8, 448 (191.2-9), gives the passage in this form: ἡ ψυχὴ [...] γίνεται Θεὸς τῇ μεθέξει τῆς θεϊκῆς χάριτος, πασῶν τῶν κατὰ νοῦν τε καὶ αἰσθησιν αὐτῇ τε παυσαμένη καὶ τὰς τοῦ σώματος συναποπαύσασα φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας, συνθεωθέντος αὐτῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογοῦσαν αὐτῷ μέθεξιν τῆς θεώσεως, ὥστε μόνον τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τε τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος τότε φαῖνεσθαι, νικηθέντων αὐτῶν, τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῆς δόξης τῶν φυσικῶν γνωρισμάτων.

Based on this passage, Palamas makes the following significant comments: First, “God is invisible to creatures, but is not invisible in Himself.”⁴⁹ In Paradise, however, the human person will see God, though in fact God will be “the One who sees (ὁ Θεὸς ὁ βλέπων ἔσται).” Furthermore, this will take place not only through our human soul, but also through our body. “For this reason, we shall see the divine and inaccessible light, in a most clear way, also through our bodily organs.”⁵⁰

Palamas argues that in the eschaton human beings will be totally united with God and thus be able to see Him. Moreover, in this vision of God the whole human person will participate, both soul and body. This will be done through what St. Maximos described in the aforementioned passage, namely a cessation of “all activity of intellect and sense, and at the same time suspending all the natural operations of the body.”⁵¹ This entails an “overcoming of the natural properties [or: activities].” Then, the divinization of the body occurs (συνθεωθέντος αὐτῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογοῦσαν αὐτῷ μέθεξιν τῆς θεώσεως). Undoubtedly, these points show how great a value Palamas attributes to the human body.⁵²

Furthermore, Palamas points out two significant passages from St. Makarios which are relevant to our topic.⁵³ According to Palamas, the first says: “The deiform image of the Spirit, which is now imprinted on us (νῦν ἔνδον ὥσπερ ἐντυπωθείσα), will make (ἀπεργάσεται) then [in Paradise] also the body—which is external (ἔξω) [in relation to the soul]—deiform (θεοειδές) and celestial.”⁵⁴ And the second: “God, reconciled with human beings, restores (ἀποκαθίστησι) the soul which has truly believed—although it is still in the body (ἐν σαρκὶ οὖσαν ἔτι)—to the

⁴⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.8-10, 448 (191.9-11): Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν [...] τοῖς κτιστοῖς ἀόρατος ὁ Θεός, ἐαυτῷ δὲ οὐκ ἀόρατος.

⁵⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.10-13, 448 (191.11-14): τότε δὲ οὐ μόνον διὰ τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τοῦ σώματος, ὡ τοῦ θαύματος, ὁ Θεὸς ὁ βλέπων ἔσται, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ διὰ σωματικῶν ὀργάνων τότε τὸ θεϊκὸν καὶ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς τηλαυγῶς ὀψόμεθα.

⁵¹ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 88, PG 90, 1168A (cf. Palamas, 1,3,37): πασῶν τῶν κατὰ νοῦν τε καὶ αἰσθησιν αὐτῇ τε παυσαμένη καὶ τὰς τοῦ σώματος συναποπαύσασα φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας.

⁵² Concerning Palamas’ approach to the “cessation of all intellectual activity,” see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 175–179. On St. Maximos’ stance on the human body, see Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor. Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵³ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,43, 454.26–455.5 (205.15-22): “ἡ θεοειδὴς τοῦ Πνεύματος εἰκὼν νῦν ἔνδον ὥσπερ ἐντυπωθεῖσα, καὶ τὸ σῶμα θεοειδὲς ἔξω τότε καὶ οὐράνιον ἀπεργάσεται.” Καὶ πάλιν “τῇ ἀνθρωπότητι καταλλαγείς ὁ Θεός, ἀποκαθίστησι τὴν πιστεύσασαν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ψυχὴν, ἐν σαρκὶ οὖσαν ἔτι, εἰς τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων φῶτων ἀπόλαυσιν καὶ τὰ νοερά αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια τῷ θεῷ πάλιν φωτὶ τῆς χάριτος ὁμματοῖ, ὥστερον δὲ καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι περιβαλεῖ τῇ δόξῃ.” Palamas mentions both of these passages in a different form than what appears in the critical edition available today. However, he does not seem to alter their meaning.

⁵⁴ Cf. Makarios, *Sermones*, 58, 3,2.12-16, ed. Heinz Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), vol. 2, 185.

pleasure of the celestial lights, and gives sight again to its intellectual senses (καὶ τὰ νοερὰ αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια [...] ὁμματοῦ) through the divine light of grace; after that [i.e., in the Resurrection] He will enclose with glory even the body itself.”⁵⁵ It is worth noting that, in this context, Palamas seizes the opportunity to argue that “the spiritual person consists of three elements: the grace of the heavenly Spirit, a rational soul, and an earthly body.”⁵⁶ In addition, as already mentioned, he again describes the vision of Tabor as a ‘preamble and pledge of the age to come.’⁵⁷

6. The Heart

Finally, there remains one last issue to be examined: what is the role of the human heart in the spiritual life? As is well known, Palamas was opposed to those who believed that “knowledge of beings and ascent to God may be attained through profane wisdom.”⁵⁸ For him, these two are attained only through the grace of God. He refers for this again to an important text of St. Maximos: “When God comes to dwell in such a heart, He honors it by engraving His own letters on it through the Holy Spirit, just as He did on the Mosaic tablets” (cf. Ex 31:18).⁵⁹ Then, Palamas refers to the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:3: “And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human [or: fleshly] hearts.”⁶⁰ Citing this passage, Palamas wonders: “Where are those who regard the inner heart as insusceptible of God?”⁶¹ In other words, the heart is where the grace of God is received. To support his position, Palamas refers to a key text of St. Makarios:

⁵⁵ Cf. Makarios, *Sermones*, 58, 3,3, ed. Berthold, vol. 2, 185.20–186.6: καὶ τὰ νοερὰ αὐτῆς αἰσθητήρια πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησι [...] καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἀποκατασταθήσεται τὸ σῶμα εἰς τὴν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄφθαρτον δόξαν.

⁵⁶ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,43.24–26, 454 (205.12–14): Ἄλλως τε καὶ ὁ πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τριῶν ὑφέστηκε, χάριτος Πνεύματος ἐπουρανίου, ψυχῆς λογικῆς καὶ γήινου σώματος. Christou (*PS*, vol. 1, 454, n. 4) notes that this tripartite division of man goes back to the Apologists (mainly Tatian) and Irenaeus.

⁵⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,37.13–15, 448 (191.14–17).

⁵⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.9–10, 452 (199.21–23): Ποῦ εἰσιν οἱ διὰ τῆς ἔξω καὶ μωρανθείσης σοφίας τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν ἄνοδον δογματίζοντες;

⁵⁹ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 80, PG 90, 1161D–1164A: ἐν ᾧ γενόμενος ὁ Θεός, ἀξιοῖ τὰ ἴδια γράμματα διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐγχαράττειν, καθάπερ τισὶ πλαξὶ Μωσαϊκαῖς. English trans. from *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, 158. Palamas writes ἐγχαράττεσθαι instead of ἐγχαράττειν. See Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.10–13, 452 (199.23–25).

⁶⁰ οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶ λιθίναις, ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξὶ καρδίαις σαρκίναίς. Palamas writes καρδίας instead of καρδίαις.

⁶¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.13–16, 452 (199.25–29): Ποῦ εἰσιν οἱ τὴν ἐντὸς καρδίαν ἀνεπίδεκτον Θεοῦ λογιζόμενοι [...].

the heart directs and governs all the other organs of the body. And when grace pastures the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there, in the heart, the intellect (νοῦς) abides as well as all the thoughts of the soul and all its hopes. This is how grace penetrates throughout all parts of the body.⁶²

Palamas also presents for this purpose another important text from St. Maximos, which perhaps influenced his own use of the word ἐνσημαινομένος:⁶³ “A pure heart is one which offers the intellect (νοῦν) to God free of all images and form, and ready to be imprinted only with His own archetypes, by which God Himself is made manifest.”⁶⁴ Based on this, Palamas argues that knowledge which comes by means of divine illumination is superior to profane knowledge: “How can the intellect, which is free of all images, and which is imprinted with God’s archetypes, not be superior to the knowledge which is derived from beings?”⁶⁵ Perhaps Palamas has here in mind the theology of the *logoi*.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Palamas argues that “imprinting the intellect with the divine and secret signs of the Holy Spirit” is far superior to “the ascent of the reasoning (διανοίας) towards God through negation.”⁶⁷ Palamas emphasizes the superiority of *theoptia* over *theologia*, because the former is attained through the light of God:

⁶² Makarios, *Ὁμιλίες πνευματικάι*, 15, 20.283-287, eds. Hermann Dörries, Erich Klostermann, and Matthias Kroeger, *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 139: ἡ γὰρ καρδία ἡγεμονεύει καὶ βασιλεύει ὅλου τοῦ σωματικοῦ ὄργάνου, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κατάσχη τὰς νομὰς τῆς καρδίας ἡ χάρις, βασιλεύει ὅλων τῶν μελῶν καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν· ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ νοῦς καὶ ὅλοι οἱ λογισμοὶ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἡ προσδοκία αὐτῆς, διὸ καὶ διέρχεται εἰς ὅλα τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος. English trans. George A. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius. The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 116. Instead of the last phrase (ἡ προσδοκία – τοῦ σώματος), Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.16-21, 452 (199.29–201.3), writes ἐκεῖ τοίνυν δεῖ σκοπεῖν, εἰ ἐνέγραψεν ἡ χάρις τοὺς τοῦ Πνεύματος νόμους.

⁶³ For this word (ἐνσημαινομένος), see above, section 1.

⁶⁴ Maximos the Confessor, *Capita theologica* 2, 82, PG 90, 1164A: Καρδία ἐστὶ καθαρά, ἡ παντάπασιν ἀνείδεον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἀμόρφωτον παραστήσασα τὴν μνήμην· καὶ μόνοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἔτοιμον ἐνσημανθῆναι τύποις, δι’ ὧν ἐμφανῆς πέφυκε γίνεσθαι. English trans. from *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, 158 (slightly modified). Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.21-25, 452 (201.3-8), gives the passage in a slightly different form: Καρδία καθαρὰ ἐστὶν ἡ παντάπασιν ἀνείδεον παραστήσασα τὸν νοῦν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ μόνοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἔτοιμον ἐνσημαίνεσθαι τύποις, δι’ ὧν ἐμφανῆς πέφυκε γίνεσθαι. As Meyendorff, *Défense*, 200, n. 3, and Christou (PS, vol. 1, 452, n. 6) point out, Maximos takes this text directly from Mark the Ascetic, *Capita de temperantia*, 24, PG 65, 1064B.

⁶⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,41.4-5, 453 (201.14-16): Πῶς γὰρ ὁ ἀνείδεος νοῦς, ὁ καὶ τοῖς θείοις ἐνσημαινόμενος τύποις, οὐχ ὑπεράνω τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων γνώσεως;

⁶⁶ For a discussion of this issue, see chapter 2.1 in Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*.

⁶⁷ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.6-8, 453 (201.17-19): Ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς δι’ ἀποφάσεων πρὸς Θεὸν ἀνόδου τῆς διανοίας τὸ θείους καὶ ἀπορρήτοις τὸν νοῦν ἐνσημαίνεσθαι τοῦ Πνεύματος τύποις κατὰ πολὺ διενήνοχε.

“talking about God and meeting God are not the same thing.”⁶⁸ Palamas is clear that *theōsis* is something impossible if seen only in the context of common human measures: “To possess God in one’s self, and be purely related to God, and be commingled with the pure and unadulterated light, as far as it is attainable for human nature, belongs to the sphere of the impossible.”⁶⁹

However, in order for *theōsis* to be achieved, it is essential that the human person: a) be purified through virtue, b) “go out of himself or, better, beyond himself,” c) “abandon sensation, as well as every sensible thing,” and d) “be elevated above thoughts and intellection and knowledge derived from these.”⁷⁰ Then “we are totally given over to the immaterial and intellectual activity of prayer and receive the ignorance which surpasses all knowledge, and are filled in it [i.e., ignorance] with the superior splendor of the Spirit.” In this state, “we will be invisibly seeing the prizes of the nature of the immortal world” of Paradise.⁷¹ The goal of spiritual contemplation is “the mysterious communion and inexpressible vision (ὄρασις) of the Mystery, the mystical and ineffable contemplation and taste (γεῦσις) of the eternal light.”⁷² Of note here is the usage of such strong words as ὄρασις and γεῦσις, which show the importance that Palamas places on the activation of our spiritual senses, so that one may see and taste God.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that Hesychast theology, as expressed during the Hesychast Controversy, does not disregard or undervalue the human body. On the contrary, as demonstrated from the relevant teaching of St. Gregory Palamas, hesychasm entirely respects and even exalts the human body.⁷³ A basic explanation

⁶⁸ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.8-12, 453 (201.19-23): περὶ Θεοῦ γὰρ τι λέγειν καὶ Θεῷ συντυγχάνειν οὐχὶ ταῦτόν.

⁶⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.20-22, 453 (203.2-4): Θεὸν δ’ ἐν ἑαυτῷ κτήσασθαι καὶ Θεῷ καθαρῶς συγγενέσθαι καὶ τῷ ἀκραίφνεστάτῳ φωτὶ κραθῆναι, καθ’ ὅσον ἐφικτὸν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει, τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἐστίν.

⁷⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.23-26, 453 (203.4-8): εἰ μὴ πρὸς τῇ δι’ ἀρετῆς καθάρσει καὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἔξω, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπέρανω, γενοίμεθα, καταλιπόντες μὲν πᾶν ὃ τι τῶν αἰσθητῶν μετὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ὑπεραρθέντες λογισμῶν καὶ διανοιῶν καὶ τῆς διὰ τούτων γνώσεως.

⁷¹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.26-30, 453 (203.8-12): ὅλοι δὲ γενόμενοι τῆς αὔλου καὶ νοερᾶς κατὰ τὴν προσευχὴν ἐνεργείας, καὶ τυχόντες τῆς ὑπὲρ τὴν γνῶσιν ἀγνοίας, καὶ πλησθέντες ἐν αὐτῇ τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος ὑπερφαοῦς ἀγλαΐας, ὡς ἀθανάτου κόσμου γέρα φύσεως ἀοράτως καθορᾶν.

⁷² Palamas, *Triads* 1,3,42.9-11, 454 (203.23-25): ἡ κρυφία τοῦ κρυφίου μετουσία καὶ ὄρασις ἀνέκφραστος, ἡ μυστικὴ καὶ ἀπόρρητος τοῦ αἰωνίου φωτὸς θεωρία τε καὶ γεῦσις.

⁷³ There is also another very important dimension of Palamas’ ‘theology of the body’: he regards human beings as greater than the angels, as regards the image of God, due to the body. But space does not allow me to offer a detailed examination of his relevant approach here. For an

for this is that Palamas saw the need to defend the body against certain negative attitudes towards it in his epoch. In particular, his opponents were attacking the claim of the hesychast monks that the human body participated in prayer and in divine communion, and that the Trinity was revealed to human beings through the uncreated divine light (*theophanies*). For instance, Barlaam could not accept the participation of the body in prayer.⁷⁴ But these approaches, in turn, entailed the danger of undervaluing the body. Thus, for Palamas it is a point of fact that the human body has a central role in prayer and in the theophanies. When the body is seen through the prism of God's will, then it is our friend, and not our enemy. As he writes in a very important passage, remembering the words of the Apostle Paul:

Brother, do you not hear the words of the Apostle, "Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within us" (1 Cor 6:19), and again, "We are the house of God" (Heb 3:6), as God Himself confirms when He says, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God" (Lv 26:12; 2 Cor 6:16)? So, what sane person would grow indignant at the thought that his intellect dwells in that whose nature it is to become the dwelling place of God [i.e., the body]? How can it be that God at the beginning caused the intellect to inhabit the body? Did even He do so wrongly? Rather, brother, such views befit the *heretics*, who declare that the body is *evil* and *created by the devil*. As for us, we regard it as evil for the intellect to be [or: be caught up] in *material thoughts* [or: to dwell on *fleshly thoughts*], but not for it to be in the body, since the body is *not evil* [*in itself*].⁷⁵

analysis, see Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 87–114. Cf. Palamas, *Capita 150*, 62.1–12, ed. Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 154–156 (slightly modified) (= *PS*, vol. 5, 70.29–71.9): Οὐ κατὰ τοῦτο μόνον μᾶλλον τῶν ἀγγέλων ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατ' εἰκόνα πεποιήται Θεοῦ, ὅτι συνεκτικὴν τε καὶ ζωοποιὸν ἔχει δύναμιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἀρχεῖν. ἔστι γὰρ ἐν τῇ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ψυχῆς φύσει, τὸ μὲν ἡγεμονικόν τε καὶ ἀρχικόν, τὸ δὲ φύσει δουλεῦδόν τε καὶ ὑπήκοον [...] ὁ μὲντοι Θεὸς διὰ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀρχικόν καὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπάσης παρέσχε τὴν κυριότητα. ἀγγελοι δὲ συνεζευγμένον σῶμα οὐκ ἔχουσιν, ὥς καὶ ὑπεζευγμένον ἔχειν τῷ νῷ ("Not in this respect alone has man been created in the image of God more so than the angels, namely, in that he possesses within himself both a sustaining and life-giving power, but also as regards dominion. Contained in the nature of our soul there is on the one hand a faculty of governance and dominion and on the other hand one of natural servitude and obedience [...] because of the faculty of dominion within us God gave us lordship over all the earth. But angels do not have a body joined to them so that it is subject to the intellect").

⁷⁴ Cf. Chouliaras, *The Anthropology*, 112–114, 133–136.

⁷⁵ Palamas, *Triads* 1,2,1.1–12, 393 (75.8–20), trans. Gendle, 41, and in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 332 (modified; my emphasis): Ἀδελφέ, οὐκ ἀκούεις τοῦ Ἀποστόλου λέγοντος ὅτι "τὰ σώματα ἡμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐστίν," καὶ πάλιν ὅτι "οἶκος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν," ὥς καὶ ὁ Θεὸς λέγει ὅτι "ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν Θεός;" "Ὁ τοίνυν

What now remains to contemporary theology is to bring all this richness and beauty concerning the body into dialogue with current events and the issues of today. For instance, what could all this mean to the ears of a modern person regarding matters such as the debate concerning *Roe v. Wade*, or other current important topics, as mentioned in the beginning of this article? Can the Hesychast theology of the human body have something fresh and interesting to offer in all this, and how exactly would this be achieved? I hope that my contribution provides some useful elements in this direction.

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- _____. *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*. Edited and translated by Robert Sinkewicz. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988.
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οἰκητήριον πέφυκε γίνεσθαι Θεοῦ, πῶς ἂν ἀναξιοπαθῆσαι τις νοῦν ἔχων ἐνοικίσαι τὸν οἰκεῖον νοῦν αὐτῷ; Πῶς δὲ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐνῶκισε τῷ σώματι τὸν νοῦν; Ἄρα καὶ αὐτὸς κακῶς ἐποίησε; Τοὺς τοιοῦτους λόγους, ἀδελφέ, τοῖς αἵρετικοῖς ἀρμόσει λέγειν, οἱ πονηρὸν καὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ πλάσμα τὸ σῶμα λέγουσιν. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς φρονήμασιν εἶναι τὸν νοῦν οἴομεθα κακόν, ἐν τῷ σώματι δὲ οὐχὶ κακόν, ἐπεὶ μὴδὲ τὸ σῶμα πονηρὸν.

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ΔΟΛΜΝΕ ΙΙΣΣΕ ΗΡΙΣΤΟΛΣΕ
ΦΙΛΛΥΙΝΗΜΕΖΕΥ
ΗΙΛΥΙΕΣΤΕΡΕΝΟΙΣΙ
ΛΥΜΕΑΤΛ

ASPECTS OF MONASTIC FORMATION, PROBATION, AND EDUCATION IN ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

Ralph GREIS*

ABSTRACT. The theology of Saint Gregory Palamas is of crucial importance for monastic spirituality. In his writings as well as in his *Vita*, composed by Philotheos Kokkinos, there are several instances which deal with aspects of a novitiate, that is, the process of becoming a monk. These elements will be examined in the context of Byzantine monastic rules (*typika*) and the earlier monastic tradition, both in East and West. In the sixth century, St. Benedict of Nursia adopted these early Eastern traditions for Western monasticism. Therefore, they constitute a strong common ground until today. This article attempts to show some traits of St. Gregory Palamas' own monastic "career," what he himself considered important, and what could be considered important for today.

Keywords: St. Gregory Palamas, St. Benedict of Nursia, monasticism, monastic spirituality, novitiate

Introduction

As a Benedictine monk, I much depend on the Byzantine theological, liturgical, and monastic tradition. And ever since I first came across St. Gregory Palamas as a student, I freely admit that, without his theology, I cannot reflect on my own faith, as a monk, theologian, and musician. Beyond my personal interest, however, I consider the common basis and heritage of monasticism, East and West—their shared ideas and ambitions—to be a great opportunity to enrich both traditions, and perhaps to bridge some gaps.

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In 1924, Pope Pius XI assigned the Benedictines with the task of translating, explaining, and promoting Byzantine theology to the West, in order to contribute to an aspired reunion of the Churches.¹ As one direct result, the Benedictine Abbey of Chevetogne in Belgium was founded by Fr. Lambert Beaudouin (1873–1960), where two branches of the monastic community follow either the Byzantine or the Latin rite. According to the Pope's request, their common work is published in various forms to this day, not least in their journal, *Irénikon*.² More Benedictine monasteries have responded to this call, including my own, in Gerleve. Perhaps this article can be a small contribution towards the same call.

The Eastern sources of Western monasticism are well known. The *Rule* of St. Benedict of Nursia, dating back to the sixth century, quotes quite a number of Greek Fathers³ and further recommends, explicitly, reading the rules of St. Basil of Caesarea and the writings of St. John Cassian.⁴ In the other direction, St. Benedict has also shown some influence in the Byzantine East.⁵ In the tenth century, merchants from Amalfi founded the monastery *Santa Maria degli Amalfitani*

¹ Pope Pius XI, Letter *Equidem Verba* (March 21, 1924) to the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation, in *Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti* 28–34/1920–1926 (Subiaco: Typis Proto-Coenobii, 1934), 76–78. The full title of the letter reads: “Epistola ad Reverendissimum D. Fidelem de Stotzingen, Abbatem Primate O.S.B. de praeparandis monachis pro futuro opere unionis Russiae cum Ecclesia Catholica.” The Benedictines nevertheless focused on the whole of the Byzantine tradition. However, with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), most of the work was abandoned.

² The Bavarian Abbey of Niederaltaich is following a comparable way with two branches in one community. Not far from Rome, the monks of the Abbey of Grottaferrata, a Byzantine foundation from 1004, follow the Byzantine rite and a *typikon* in the Stoudite tradition, with close connections with the Benedictines. Another example are the Benedictine sisters of the *Monastère de l'Emmanuel* in Bethlehem, following the Byzantine rite under the jurisdiction of the Greek Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem.

³ The extent of quotations from Greek and Latin Fathers as well as their names easily become clear from the critical apparatus and the indexes of the various editions, e.g., Rudolf Hanslik (ed.), *Benedicti Regula* (CSEL 75), 2nd edn (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1977), 186–191; Timothy Fry (ed.), *RB 1980. The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 594–600; Michaela Puzicha (ed.), *Quellen und Texte zur Benediktusregel* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2007).

⁴ *Rule of St. Benedict* 73.5, ed. Hanslik, 180; *RB 1980*, 296–197.

⁵ Olivier Delouis, “Saint Benoît de Nursie à Byzance,” in *Interactions, emprunts, confrontations chez les religieux (Antiquité tardive – fin du XIX^e siècle)*, eds. Sylvain Excoffon, Daniel-Odon Hurel, and Annick Peters-Custot (Saint Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint Étienne, 2015), 73–92; Julien Leroy, “Saint Benoît dans le monde byzantin,” in *San Benedetto e l'Oriente cristiano. Atti del Simposio tenuto nell'abbazia della Novalesa (19–23 Maggio 1980)*, ed. Francesco Pio Tamburrino (Novalesa: Abbazia di Novalesa, 1981), 169–182, repr. in Leroy, *Études sur le monachisme byzantin. Textes rassemblés et présentés par Olivier Delouis* (Bégrolles en Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 2007), 435–451; Photios Ioannidis, “Η παρουσία του Οσίου Βενεδίκτου στο χώρο της Ανατολής,” *Επιστημονική Έπετηρίδα Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Άριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 2 (1991–1992): 227–268.

on Mount Athos, which existed until the beginning of the thirteenth century.⁶ There are even a few obvious quotations from the *Rule of St. Benedict* in the *hypotyposis* of St. Athanasius the Athonite,⁷ which suggests that he probably had a Greek translation of the *Rule* as one of his sources at hand.

While such a contemporaneous Greek translation of the *Regula Benedicti* seems not to have survived, this is not the case with the *Vita* of St. Benedict, written by Pope Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) in the second book of his hagiographical *Dialogues*.⁸ The Greek translation, by one of Gregory's later successors, Pope Zachary (679–752),⁹ enjoyed a wide dissemination in the East. In his *Triads*, St. Gregory Palamas refers to a vision of St. Benedict who, it is said in this text, saw "the whole world as gathered into one beam of the sun," in order to defend the hesychastic vision of the Tabor light.¹⁰

As the novice master of our community, one of the topics I teach the postulants and novices is the history of monasticism and monastic spirituality. Within a Benedictine horizon, this monastic history cannot be told from a "Western" perspective alone, nor can it be limited to those Greek and Eastern Fathers who served as sources for St. Benedict. The later patristic and Byzantine monastic sources are indispensable for a proper understanding of history (and real history is never past but present) as well as for an existential development of one's own spiritual life. The spirituality of Hesychasm is of a considerable interest for Western monasticism, too, and so are the life and writings of St. Gregory Palamas. Although the *Rule of St. Benedict* is written for cenobites, it considers anchoritism as an original and legitimate, even advanced, form of

⁶ Delouis, "Saint Benoît," 79; Vera von Falkenhausen, "Il monastero degli Amalfitani sul Monte Athos," in *Atanasio e il monachesimo al Monte Athos. Atti del XII Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa sezione bizantina*, eds. Sabino Chiala and Lisa Cremaschi (Bose: Ed. Qiqajon, 2005), 101–118; Agostino Pertusi, "Monasteri e monaci italiani all'Athos nell'alto Medioevo," in *Le millénaire du mont Athos 963–1963. Études et mélanges*, vol. 1 (Chevetogne: Éditions de Chevetogne, 1963), 217–251; Philibert Schmitz, *Geschichte des Benediktinerordens*, vol. 1 (Einsiedeln; Zürich: Benziger, 1947), 237.

⁷ Delouis, "Saint Benoît," 77–81; Hans-Georg Beck, "Die Benediktinerregel auf dem Athos," *BZ* 44 (1951): 21–24; Giuseppe Mercati, "Escerto greco della Regola di S. Benedetto in un codice del Monte Athos," *Benedictina. Fascicoli trimestrali di studi Benedettini* 1 (1947): 191–196.

⁸ *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, vol. 2: (*Livres I–III*), ed. and trans. Adalbert de Vogüé and Paul Antin (SC 260) (Paris: Cerf, 1979). Gregory earned the name Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Διάλογος in the East because of these *Dialogues*. He is also venerated as the traditional author of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

⁹ Gianpaolo Rigotti (ed.), *Gregorio Magno. Vita di San Benedetto. Versione greca di papa Zaccaria* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2001).

¹⁰ Gregory the Great, *Vita Benedicti* 35.2–3, ed. de Vogüé, Antin, 236–239; idem, *Vita di San Benedetto*, ed. Rigotti, 102–105. See Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* I,3,22, ed. Jean Meyendorff, *Défense des saints hésychastes* (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1959), 157.

monastic life.¹¹ With St. John Cassian in the background, the eremitical tradition remains, even if it is not put into practice very often, a part of the Benedictine spiritual heritage.

The significance of Gregory Palamas for Byzantine monastic spirituality in general is obvious. Another question is whether he has anything to say about becoming a monk, how candidates should be examined, who takes the responsibility for postulants and novices,¹² what they should learn, how they should be tested in everyday life, in order to find out for themselves and for the community if they are on the right path to follow their vocation. Of course, Palamas has not left us a cohesive *ratio formationis* in the modern sense, but in a number of his writings one finds information on what he considers important in this regard. If such elements are placed and analyzed in their proper historical context, they may not only contribute to our historical understanding, but could also be of some help for today.

Fr. Daniel Oltean has recently published a comprehensive study on becoming a monk in Byzantium between the seventh and the fifteenth century,¹³ providing and analyzing a vast number of sources. An older work of reference has been written by the Benedictine Placide de Meester who collected, systematized, and commented on canonical sources "*De monachico statu*,"¹⁴ including a section *de ingressu in monachicum statum* with chapters *de statu probationis* and *de professione vitae monachalis*.¹⁵ For the Latin tradition, one can refer to the various commentaries on the *Rule of St. Benedict*¹⁶ and look for its chapter 58 on "The procedure for receiving brothers." Numerous monographs and articles deal with certain aspects or take a look at different periods of monastic history.¹⁷ However,

¹¹ *Rule of St. Benedict* 1.3-5; RB 1980, 168-169.

¹² The terms "novice" and "novitiate" we probably owe to St. Benedict (*Rule* 58.20-21; cf. 58.5); cf. Alvaro Huerga, "Noviciat," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 11 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1982): 483-495, here at 484.

¹³ Daniel Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance. Coutumes sociales, règles monastiques et rituels liturgiques* (OLA 291) (Leuven: Peeters, 2020); for the temporal and geographical framework of his study, see *ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Placide de Meester, *De monachico statu iuxta disciplinam byzantinam. Statuta selectis fontibus et commentariis instructa* (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1942). See further Michael Wawryk, *Initiatio Monastica in Liturgia Byzantina. Officiorum schematis monastici magni et parvi necnon rasophoratus exordia et evolutio* (OCA 180) (Rome: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1968).

¹⁵ de Meester, *De monachico statu*, 349-366, 366-393.

¹⁶ E.g., RB 1980, 437-466, on "monastic formation and profession;" Puzicha, *Kommentar zur Benediktusregel*, 2nd edn (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2015), 609-638.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Mirko Breitenstein, *Das Noviziat im hohen Mittelalter. Zur Organisation des Eintritts bei den Cluniazensern, Cisterziensern und Franziskanern* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2008); Hubertus Lutterbach, *Monachus factus est. Die Mönchwerdung im frühen Mittelalter. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frömmigkeits- und Liturgiegeschichte* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995).

a comprehensive and comparative study on the novitiate in East and West remains to be written. Given its limits, this article will neither examine the whole oeuvre of Palamas in chronological order, nor will it search for evidence by following a pre-established list of topics. Instead, it will take a closer look at some specific questions as they take a characteristic shape in Palamas' works. This cannot be more than a first attempt which could perhaps encourage further studies.

The *Vita* of St. Gregory Palamas by Philotheos Kokkinos

Before turning to Gregory Palamas' writings, let us look at what Philotheos Kokkinos wrote about him and his monastic career.¹⁸ Of course, Philotheos is more a hagiographer than a biographer in the modern sense. As a personal friend of Palamas and himself a hesychast monk, he had detailed knowledge as well as empathy for his subject. He wrote Palamas' *Vita* in the early 1360s, in preparation for his canonization in 1368. Yet however hagiographical it may be, one does not need to mistrust the biographical information presented in the *Vita*, since Philotheos provides some valuable insights both in what he says and what he does not say.¹⁹

When Palamas finally followed his vocation to monastic life and set off from his home in Constantinople to Mount Athos, accompanied by his two brothers, he was around twenty years of age.²⁰ Robert Sinkewicz dated this moment two years earlier, *ca.* 1314, when Gregory was eighteen,²¹ while most recently Norman Russell argues for as much as five years later, in 1319.²² In any

¹⁸ Philotheos Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης* (hereafter *v.G.Pal.*), ed. Demetrios Tsamis, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα. Α΄. Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἅγιοι* (Thessaloniki: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἑρευνῶν, 1985), 427–591; English trans. Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas. The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam. Documents Relating to Gregory Palamas* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 52–210.

¹⁹ On Kokkinos as a monastic hagiographer and his various personal relationships to his “heroes,” including Palamas, see Mihail Mitrea, “A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and His *Vitae* of Contemporary Saints” (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2018). The importance of hagiographic literature as a source of information, especially in the field of monastic studies, is also apparent from Oltean’s monograph, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, which evaluates no less than 193 *vitae* of saints; cf. *ibid.*, 364–374.

²⁰ Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Patristica Sorbonensia 3) (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 50.

²¹ Robert Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2: (XIII^e–XIX^e s.), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 131–188, here at 131.

²² Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 40.

case, Palamas entered monastic life as an adult, after having lived in the “world.” I will come back to Palamas’ spiritual and educational dimensions of childhood and youth below.

Starting the journey of *ca.* 600 km in autumn, the Palamas brothers decided after a bit more than half the distance to spend the winter in one of the monasteries on Mount Papikion, close to present-day Mosynopolis.²³ None of its monasteries has survived, and no documents associated with the place have been preserved either.²⁴ However, the Monastery of St. George on Papikion is mentioned as a dependency, in the *Typikon* of Gregory Pakourianos, of the Monastery of the Mother of God *Petrizonitissa* in Bačkovó (Bulgaria), dating from 1083.²⁵ It is not clear if Palamas and his brothers found shelter in exactly this monastery.

Philotheos writes that the Palamas brothers took part in the “philosophical life” of the monks on Mount Papikion, that is, in a monastic sense, in their life of asceticism and prayer as the true Christian philosophy. There is no mention, however, of him, as a guest and newcomer being introduced into monastic life by some monk of the community. Rather, it was the other way round, that is, Palamas himself impressed them such that he seemed “to be a truly great and wonderful man in speech and manner, in the way he looked and walked, in his sense of recollected attentiveness, in a word in everything by which a man of God is naturally portrayed and described.”²⁶ This is hagiographical language, but the possibly true content points back to what Palamas had already learned before; moreover, the hagiographer does not say that Palamas would have prompted a spiritual father to tell him that he could not teach him anything anymore.

If the monastery in question could indeed have been St. George, as a dependency of Bačkovó, the question remains whether the aforementioned *Typikon* of Pakourianos was also valid for the monastery on Papikion, some 150 km south, on the other side of the Rhodope mountains—and what would the monks there have done with Pakourianos’ regulation, according to which no Greeks should be accepted as monks or priests?²⁷ The same *Typikon* orders the education of the “lads” (μειράκια) to take place in the monastery of St. Nicholas,

²³ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 14, ed. Tsamis, 41, trans. Russell, 65.

²⁴ Michel Kaplan, “Monasteries. Institutionalisation and Organisation of Space in the Byzantine World until the End of the Twelfth Century,” in *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institution in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, eds. John Hudson and Ana Rodríguez (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 321–350, here at 348.

²⁵ *Typikon of Pakourianos* 2 and 33E, ed. Paul Gautier, “Le Typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos,” *REB* 42 (1984): 5–145, here at 37 and 129; English trans. Robert Jordan in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments* (hereafter *BMFD*), eds. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 524 and 556.

²⁶ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 14, trans. Russell, 65.

²⁷ *Typikon of Pakourianos* 24, ed. Gautier, 105, trans. Jordan, 547.

close to St. George.²⁸ As they are also called “παῖδιά” in the same chapter, these “striplings” are minors, not adults. The *Typikon* instructs that an old priest of the community shall take responsibility for them and instruct them in the Holy Scriptures.²⁹ This, too, did not apply to Palamas, and so his novitiate proper only starts with his arrival on Mount Athos in the following Spring.

According to Philotheos, upon his arrival at Vatopedi, Palamas took the hesychast monk named Nikodemos as a spiritual father.³⁰ When Palamas “went where he was dwelling in *hesychia*,” this implies that Nikodemos was not living in the monastery, but in a hermitage.³¹ Palamas was tonsured by Nikodemos, and he placed himself under his direction in obedience, immediately (εὐθύς), connected with an agreement (συνθήκη).³² The twofold use of the word “obedience” (ὑποταγή) in this context could at the very least allude to the “ἔνδυμα τῆς ὑποταγῆς” as the novice’s habit, which is given together with the tonsure, and a profession (which—notably the “συνθήκη” mentioned above—must not be confused with those vows which later constitute a lifetime commitment).³³ If, however, one considers Palamas’ *Letter* to Paul Asen on the issue of the “Great Schema” (see below), there is also the possibility that at this point he was simply vested with the regular habit. Neither option can be ruled out completely.

The subsequent visionary experience of Palamas is introduced by Philotheos as follows: “He had already completed his second year, eagerly practicing fasting (νηστεία), keeping vigil (ἀγρυπνία), watchfulness (νήψις) and unceasing prayer (ἀδιάλειπτος προσευχή) to God, day and night.”³⁴ The ascetical exercises show the content of formation under the focus of the “eager practice” (ἐπείγω) of the beginner. The “second year” points to the customary three years of novitiate, as decreed by Emperor Justinian in his *Novellae*.³⁵ However, Oltean has shown that while a number of monasteries followed this *triennium*, in reality many did not.³⁶

²⁸ The localization of St. Nicholas “πλησίον τοῦ κάστρου” obviously means “close to the fort [of Mosynopolis].”

²⁹ *Typikon of Pakourianos* 31, ed. Gautier, 115–117, trans. Jordan, 550–551. On schools for children inside monasteries, with the focus both on receiving the children as prospective novices or, independently from this, with the freedom of future choice (or even to receive them already as novices), see Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 91–138.

³⁰ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 17, ed. Tsamis, 46, trans. Russell, 70–71.

³¹ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 71: “In the vicinity.” Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 51: “habitent les environs de Vatopédi.”

³² Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 17–18, ed. Tsamis, 46–47, trans. Russell, 71.

³³ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, esp. 241–245, shows in detail the various and often differing customs, at which moment tonsure, vesting, and vows are taking place.

³⁴ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 18, ed. Tsamis, 47, trans. Russell, 71.

³⁵ Justinian, *Novellae* 5.2 and 123.35; Rudolf Schöll and Wilhelm Kroll (eds.), *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 4th edn, vol. 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1912), 29, 618.

³⁶ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 51–52, 254–256.

It is worthwhile to compare Philotheos' account of Palamas with older monastic sources and with the rules and *typika* of the Athonite monasteries, which, during the time of Palamas and Philotheos, were already in effect for about 350 years. As monks at the Great Lavra, both will have known them for sure, and whether, and how, they were or were not followed. For instance, the initial *Rule* of Athanasios for the Lavra mentions only two or three weeks that the candidate has to stay in the hospice for probation.³⁷ Monastic legislation on this initial aspect of probation begins as early as with Pachomius:

If anyone who comes to the door of the monastery with the purpose of quitting the world and to be considered among the brothers, he will not have the freedom to enter. They will start by informing the father of the monastery. The candidate will stay some days in the exterior, at the door. They will teach him the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms that he is able to learn. He will send carefully the proofs to show that his will motivates him [to join]. This is to make sure that they have not committed a crime, and, troubled by fear, fled without delay to the monastery; or that he is a slave of someone. This will allow us to discern if he will be able to quit his relatives and to despise material wealth.³⁸

Much harsher sounding is what John Cassian brings from the Egyptian desert to the West:

Whoever seeks to be received into the discipline of the coenobium is never admitted until, by lying outside for ten days or more, he has given an indication of his perseverance and desire, as well as of his humility and patience. And when he has embraced the knees of all the brothers passing by and has been purposely rebuked and disdained by everyone, as if he wished to enter the monastery not out of devotion but out of necessity, and has been visited with numerous insults and reproaches and has given proof of his constancy, and by putting up with taunts has shown what he will be in time of trial, and when the ardor of his intention has been proven and he has thus been received, he is asked with the utmost earnestness if, from his former possessions, the contamination of even a single copper coin clings to him.³⁹

³⁷ English trans. George Dennis in *BMFD*, 225; cf. Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 52–53, 241.

³⁸ Pachomius, *Praecepta* 49; Amand Boon (ed.), *Pachomiana Latina* (Leuven: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, 1932), 25–26.

³⁹ John Cassian, *Institutions* IV, 3.1, ed. Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien, Institutions cénobitiques* (SC 109) (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 124–125; *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: The Newman Press, 2000), 79–80; cf. Puzicha, *Quellen*, 484.

This is a bit more lenient in the *Rule of St. Benedict*:

Do not grant newcomers (*noviter veniens*) to the monastic life an easy entry, but, as the Apostle says, "Test the spirits to see if they are from God" (1 Jn 4:1). Therefore, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door, and if at the end of four or five days he has shown himself patient and bearing his harsh treatment and difficulty of entry, and has persisted in his request, then he should be allowed to enter and stay in the guest quarters for a few days. After that, he should live in the novitiate (*cella noviciorum*), where the novices study, eat and sleep.⁴⁰

Later Byzantine documents connect this first probation with an interrogation of the candidate. For instance, in the eleventh-century *Rule of Christodoulos* for the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos we read:

Whenever a layman arrives asking to be admitted [...], first he must be carefully interrogated by the superior, and closely examined concerning his circumstances, lest he be come to the monastery not simply out of the love of God and desire to save his soul, but constrained by earthly contingencies, creditors, perhaps, or extreme poverty and disinclination to work, or numerous children, so that he is come to the monastery as to a refuge that will furnish escape and dispense from effort.⁴¹

If this admission to the novitiate is connected with a liturgical rite, there have been different customs concerning whether and in which garments the postulant should be vested, or if he is to be tonsured now or later.⁴² The *Life* of Palamas does not rule out that this took place with him, but neither does not mention it. There is also no trace of a *scrutinium*, a formal interrogation. Perhaps the way that the *Typikon* of Evergetis prescribes for candidates to be treated differently according to their origin was applied to Palamas:

If they are distinguished people (περιφανείς) or come from people known to you for a long time and have a close knowledge of our way of life (δίαιτα), they should be tonsured within the customary period of time, if perhaps they themselves ask for this and are accepted. But if they are common and unknown (τῶν τυχόντων καὶ ἄγνωστοι), after an interval of seven days after their arrival here they should assume the [novice's] rags (τὰ ῥάκη) and put on the monastic headdress (περικεφαλαία).⁴³

⁴⁰ *Rule of St. Benedict* 58.1-5, ed. Hanslik, 146-147, trans. RB 1980, 266-267.

⁴¹ English trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter in *BMFD*, 592.

⁴² Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 241-245.

⁴³ *Typikon of Evergetis* 37, ed. Paul Gautier, "Le Typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis," *REB* 40 (1982): 5-101, here at 78-81; English trans. Robert Jordan in *BMFD*, 494-495.

According to Robert Jordan, “this was an enormously influential chapter.” He also lists a number of later *typika* that copied it in whole or in part.⁴⁴ Palamas in fact was from a distinguished family and, without doubt, familiar with the monastic way of life. This could perhaps explain his immediate admission to the novitiate.

For the novitiate proper, the *Typikon* of Emperor John Tzimiskes (an intervention into an internal conflict at the Great Lavra around 970/1) prescribes one year of novitiate, which has to be spent within the monastic enclosure, not in a hermitage:

All who come to you and promise to receive the monastic tonsure ought to be received by each one of the superiors. By no means should they be permitted outside the spiritual enclosure. They should not be tonsured right away, but should observe the ecclesiastical canon by devoting one year to being trained in monastic life. They should give evidence that their resolve is firm and unshakable. When they show that such is the case, then, the superior may judge that they be clothed in the monastic habit.⁴⁵

Here are tonsure and vesting signs not for the *beginning* of the novitiate, but for its *completion*.

Philotheos calls the elder Nikodemos a “teacher and father” (καθηγητῆς καὶ πατήρ) of Palamas.⁴⁶ These spiritual fathers seem to have been appointed sometimes by the abbots, but in most cases chosen by the novices themselves, respectively with the consent of the abbot.⁴⁷ John Cassian reports for Egypt in the fourth century that the novices were confided in groups of ten to a responsible monk assigned by the abbot.⁴⁸ St. Benedict in the West apparently took it from Cassian when he determined that in his monasteries one novice master was to be appointed per community.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Jordan in *BMFD*, 505, n. 37.

⁴⁵ *Typikon of Emperor John Tzimiskes* 3, ed. Philipp Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster* (Leipzig: J. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1894), 143; trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 236.

⁴⁶ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 20, ed. Tsamis, 48, trans. Russell, 73.

⁴⁷ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 235, 253, 256. In some instances, the word “ἡγούμενος” denotes not only the superior of the monastery, but apparently in some cases also the spiritual father, in the literal sense of a guide, as a “ἡγούμενος πνευματικός.” The discontent novices mentioned in the *Typikon* of Tzimiskes will therefore not always have moved to another monastery, but changed their spiritual director; see the *Typikon of Emperor John Tzimiskes*, ed. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 144 (ll. 20-21), trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 236.

⁴⁸ John Cassian, *Institutions* IV, 7, ed. Guy, 130–131, trans. Ramsey, *The Institutes*, 81–82; Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 260, with more examples from the early Egyptian tradition.

⁴⁹ *Rule of St. Benedict* 58.6, ed. Hanslik, 147, trans. *RB* 1980, 267.

While Palamas' training and practice in the ascetical and spiritual life are presented by Philotheos in customary terms, the place of his novitiate obviously was not a monastic enclosure, but, from the start, a hermitage. Anchorites were at the very origins of monastic life itself. The cenobitic foundations and rules of St. Pachomius, however, are a reaction to the difficulties and incapacities of many early hermits. Knowing the Pachomian coenobitism at first hand, St. Basil remains altogether skeptical of the anchoritic life as a whole.⁵⁰ John Cassian then reports how the Egyptian anchorites of his time,

dwelling first for a long time in cenobia, having been carefully and thoroughly instructed in the rule of patience and discretion, having mastered the virtues of both humility and poverty and having totally destroyed every vice, penetrate the deep recesses of the desert in order to engage in the terrible combat with demons.⁵¹

Again, Benedict of Nursia adopts this for his own *Rule* in the Latin West. The true anchorites

have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.⁵²

Such a preparation of future anchorites in the cenobitic life is documented for the older Palestinian monasteries.⁵³ The *Typikon* of St. Athanasios for the Great Lavra, written some ten years after the earlier *Rule*, lists a number of preconditions which a prospective hermit has to learn beforehand and which are to be checked carefully by the superior:

If anyone with the support and cooperation of God should ever desire to exchange the bother of obedience for the solitude and individual residence in a *kellion*, let him inform the superior of his wish. Let him, in turn, carefully examine the man's condition. If indeed he does possess the strength and diligence required of those who reside in the *kellia*, if he

⁵⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 7, PG 31, 927–934.

⁵¹ John Cassian, *Institutions* V, 36.1, ed. Guy, 246–247, trans. Ramsey, *The Institutes*, 137–138; cf. Puzicha, *Quellen*, 35.

⁵² *Rule of St. Benedict* 1.3–5, ed. Hanslik, 18–19, trans. RB 1980, 168–169.

⁵³ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 255–256.

has been previously exercised (ἤδη προγυμνασθεὶς) in obedience, if he has learned (μαθὼν) to stay in a cell with concentration and strict guard over his mind, if he has learned to pray and keep vigil, to control himself, to exercise abstinence, to meditate, to devote himself (μελετᾶν) to the study of the Scriptures with humility, and attach some importance to working with his hands, then let him be permitted to do this.⁵⁴

The relation of later hesychast monks to a basic cenobitic formation, as well as the attitude of the responsible superiors, would be worth a study of its own.⁵⁵ When Philotheos, himself a hesychast monk, recounts that Palamas is apparently bypassing such a cenobitic novitiate, this is obviously understood neither as a mistake nor as problematic. When Palamas' spiritual father Nikodemos died in the third year of his "novitiate," he left their common hermitage not for Vatopedi, but for the Great Lavra. There he was "deemed worthy of hospitality and reception" (καὶ ξενίας ἐκεῖ καὶ ὑποδοχῆς [...] ἀξίωθεις) by the monks.⁵⁶ In the beginning, this may have implied also terminologically the status of a guest,⁵⁷ but the Great Lavra was to become the home monastery of Palamas. In fact, Philotheos reports that the superior made Gregory participate in the regular service in the refectory (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς κοινῆς τῶν ἀδελφῶν τραπέζης) and in the liturgical service of the cantors (τοῖς ψάλλουσιν ἐν τῷ ναῷ συνίστασθαι καὶ συνάδειν). The examples of the common liturgy and serving in practical duties, read together with the information that Palamas stayed for another three years in the Great Lavra, sharing the common life of the brethren (μένει παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ συνδιατρίβει τρεῖς ὅλους ἐνιαυτούς),⁵⁸ altogether sound like a kind of belated novitiate and probation in such aspects of monastic life as Palamas probably had not yet experience in his hermitage.

⁵⁴ *Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, ed. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 116; English trans. Dennis in *BMDF*, 261.

⁵⁵ Nikodemos, the first spiritual father of Palamas, was originally a monk from Mount Auxentios, where the young Gregory could have passed a visit himself. The *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios* near Chalcedon, dating to 1261–1280/1, exhorts: "Without trial let no one be tonsured [...] Those who come from the lay state to the monastic manner of life [...] ought not to be received straightaway and without strict probation [...] Care must therefore be had in putting the [novice's] rags on anyone before getting to know what he is like by time and experience. Have him brought in with the brothers and let him remain, wearing his customary garments for a period of at least six months." English trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 1228. However, we have no information what of his own earlier experiences Nikodemos might have implemented on Mount Athos.

⁵⁶ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 20, ed. Tsamis, 48, trans. Russell, 73.

⁵⁷ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 73, translates "There he was welcomed as a guest by the fathers."

⁵⁸ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 20, ed. Tsamis, 48, trans. Russell, 73.

The probation of a novice in manual labor and in the daily duties of the monastic community is an integral part of many Byzantine *typika*. In general, “all the brothers must work,”⁵⁹ and the *Typikon* of the Black Mountain orders a rotation of work assignments, with references to Pachomius, Basil, and Cassian.⁶⁰ Here, there is no mention of novices, while the *Typikon* for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios prescribes that “the one who has been chosen [that is: admitted to the novitiate] must be exercised in every service in the community, no matter what sort of secular dignity or position he held.”⁶¹ The *Typikon* of Evergetis (and other *typika* adopting this passage) decides that the novices “should be appointed to tasks according to their abilities (ταῖς κατὰ δύναμιν διακονίαις) and observed to see if they carry out these with perseverance and humility (μεθ’ ὑπομονῆς [...] καὶ ταπεινώσεως).”⁶² From what Philotheos writes, we may assume that during his first three years in the cenobium of the Great Lavra Palamas joined such a cycle of duties, no matter what his “canonical status” might have been at that time. However, Philotheos does not tell us anything about a formal or even liturgical act of integration into the community, or, after the interrupted “novitiate” with Nikodemos, about some kind of profession or further vesting. Also, when after completing the three years of common life Palamas again sets out for a solitary life at the *skete* of Glossia, there is no mention of the superior examining his aptitude. Rather, his extraordinary capacities are described by the hagiographer as openly visible to everyone.

In summary, Palamas’ *Vita* by Philotheos Kokkinos does not explain to us how a regular novitiate on Mount Athos in his time would have looked like. Analyzing nearly 200 Byzantine saints’ lives, Oltean states that “le noviciat est parfois attesté dans l’hagiographie,” that is, not in every instance. For some authors, as Oltean notes, omitting the novitiate would have been a means of underlining the ascetic qualities of the future saint (this corresponds to Philotheos’ endeavor to write the *Life* of his friend as a part of the canonization process), while on the other hand the novitiate would have been better presented for those coming from a humble social background,⁶³ which was obviously not the case with Palamas. Therefore, Philotheos’ information has to be set carefully against the background of earlier and contemporaneous documents.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, if

⁵⁹ *Typikon of the Black Mountain* 82, trans. Robert Allison in *BMFD*, 408–409.

⁶⁰ *Typikon of the Black Mountain* 78, trans. Allison, 407 (cf. *ibid.*, 423, n. 78).

⁶¹ *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios* 12, trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 1228.

⁶² *Typikon of Evergetis* 37, ed. Gautier, 78–81, trans. Jordan in *BMFD*, 494; word-for-word also in *Kosmosoteira* 51, *Mamas* 22, and in other *typika*.

⁶³ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 259.

⁶⁴ A comparison with the other *vitae* composed by Philotheos for contemporaneous figures shows similar elements. For instance, Sabas the Younger and Isidore Boucheir both stem from a noble background, but Sabas especially receives a harsh treatment from his spiritual father;

Palamas is commencing his monastic life proper not in a coenobium, but with a spiritual father in his hermitage, this may shed some light on the actual practice during the monastic, and specifically hesychastic, renewal of the fourteenth century.

Finally, a look at the monastic formation of Gregory Palamas has to take into account the education and experiences of his childhood and adolescence. The atmosphere at home was one of intellectual learning combined with a profound piety. His father was the διδάσκαλος of the emperor's grandson, the future Emperor Andronikos III, while the whole family kept a frequent, even daily (according to Philotheos), contact with monks and spiritual fathers. From the very beginning of their lives their souls "should be directly moulded and broadened by holy discourses and teachings" (τῆς εἰς τὸν βίον εἰσόδου τοῖς ἱεροῖς λόγοις καὶ ταῖς διδασκαλίαις εὐθὺς τυπῶνται καὶ πλάττωνται τὰς ψυχάς).⁶⁵

Preparing for service at the emperor's court, the young Gregory studied literature, grammar, and rhetoric, the so-called "outer learning" (θύραθεν παιδεία),⁶⁶ physics and logic, "in a word, all Aristotelian studies" (ἀπλῶς πᾶσι τοῖς Ἀριστοτελικοῖς). His learning earned him the admiration of the Grand Logothete at that time, Theodore Metochites.⁶⁷ Of course, the hagiographer wants to emphasize his intellectual prowess in view of the future theological and philosophical debates, but we do not have to doubt that this education in fact took place. However, as secular studies did not satisfy him, the young Palamas sought the company of monks, especially those coming from Athos, and "placed himself under them" (καὶ μονασταῖς μᾶλλον καὶ πατρᾷσι σπουδαίοις καὶ διδασκάλοις τῆς ἀρετῆς ἑαυτὸν ὑπετίθει).⁶⁸ Finally, Philotheos calls Theoleptos of Philadelphia a "πατὴρ καὶ μυσταγωγός" for Palamas. Theoleptos was a monk on Mount Auxentios (similar to Nikodemos, Palamas' spiritual father) before his appointment as metropolitan. Palamas himself mentions Theoleptos among his teachers,⁶⁹ and if Russell's calculation is correct that Palamas set out for Athos only in the autumn of 1319, this would be chronologically possible (against Sinkewicz).⁷⁰

cf. Mitrea, "A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer," 184–199. However, here too, Philotheos does not provide a distinctive structure of the novitiate or a relation to one of *typika*. On the other hand, a prolonged novitiate as requested by the candidate himself is a hagiographic commonplace to emphasize one's humility and obedience; cf. Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 259.

⁶⁵ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 7, ed. Tsamis, 33–34, trans. Russell, 58.

⁶⁶ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 10, ed. Tsamis, 36, trans. Russell, 60.

⁶⁷ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 11, ed. Tsamis, 37–38, trans. Russell, 61–62.

⁶⁸ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 11, ed. Tsamis, 38, trans. Russell, 62.

⁶⁹ Palamas, *Triads* 1,2,12, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 98–99.

⁷⁰ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 63, n. 119; cf. Sinkewicz, *Gregory Palamas*, 132.

In short, when Palamas arrived on Athos, he disposed of a profound secular, theological, and spiritual learning and was in no need of any kind of basic education in this regard. A modern novice master, too, has to consider carefully what his candidates might already bring with them and what they still need. However, no academic diploma and no personal references can dispense one from an existential probation if a novice is on the right way and in the right place to follow his vocation, and if he fits into the life of the community. According to the *Vita* by Philotheos, with the arrival of Palamas on Athos these aspects seem not to have been in question any longer. On the other hand, monastic formation and probation are a life-long process. For Palamas, as for most novices then and now, the real challenges still lay ahead. Thus the novitiate is not the time to overcome all problems, but to learn how to deal with them when they do arise.

The *Vita* of St. Peter the Athonite

The first literary opus from Palamas' pen is a hagiographical work, a *Vita* of St. Peter the Athonite, who was, according to tradition, the first hermit on Athos, probably in the ninth century.⁷¹ Explaining the intention of this work, Meyendorff writes that "à Byzance, l'éloge public d'un saint était un exercice souvent proposé au rhéteur débutant, à l'issue de ses études. [...] Pour acquérir le droit d'enseigner, on prononçait un discours d'essai devant le chapitre des moines."⁷² Therefore, such an inaugural lecture has to prove both one's rhetorical capabilities as well as a mastery of the content.

If, with the hesychastic revival, St. Peter became a model, a prototype for the Athonite hermits,⁷³ and "la spiritualité que le docteur hésychaste décrit chez St. Pierre est donc celle qu'il désire voir adoptée à l'Athos,"⁷⁴ then we should take a look to see if Palamas has anything to tell us about St. Peter's monastic formation. Concerning the saint's biography, information is sparse. Conversely, however, we have to be careful not to conclude from the absence of certain topics that Palamas considered them irrelevant.

The beginnings of the monastic career of St. Peter are rather quickly told.⁷⁵ Born in Constantinople, he took part as a young soldier in a military campaign

⁷¹ See, e.g., Mitrea, "Old Wine in New Bottles"? Gregory Palamas' *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (BHG 1506)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40.2 (2016): 243–263, here at 246.

⁷² Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383.

⁷³ Mitrea, "Palamas' *Logos*," 249–250.

⁷⁴ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383.

⁷⁵ Cf. Mitrea, "Palamas' *Logos*," 247–248, who compares Palamas' account with the earlier source, i.e., the *Vita* of Peter by Nicholas, another Athonite monk.

against the Arabs and was captured. In captivity, he made a vow to make a pilgrimage to Rome, to the tomb of his patron, and to assume the monastic habit there. After his liberation, miraculously procured by St. Nicholas of Myra, he fulfilled his promise and went immediately to Rome. There, again with the help of St. Nicholas, he was called by the Pope (most probably Gregory IV, who died in 844), who initiated him into the monastic way of life and vested him with the garments suitable for this way of life (ὁ δὲ πάπας εὐθὺς αὐτὸν μεταπέμπεται καὶ μυεῖ τούτῳ τὴν μονήρην δίαίταν καὶ μεταμφιέννυσι τὴν τῇ διαίτῃ⁷⁶ προσήκουσαν στολήν).⁷⁷

The “novitiate” is reduced here to merely five words, “μυεῖ τούτῳ τὴν μονήρην δίαίταν,” followed by vesting the “novice,” which is itself a reduction of Palamas’ model, the *Vita* of St. Peter by the Athonite monk Nicholas.⁷⁸ It remains unclear how long St. Peter remained in Rome (he is considered by some to be a legendary figure anyhow⁷⁹), and if there was any further instruction. On his way back from Rome, he had a vision of the Theotokos, calling him to settle on Mount Athos, destined to become a permanent monastic heritage under her protection. Arriving there, Peter embarks on fifty-three years of solitude, thus becoming a model of Athonite hesychasm.

The greater part of his ascetic life, as narrated in the *Vita*, consists of four assaults by the Devil, whose temptations Peter resists (§§ 21–32). According to a number of rules and *typika*, in order to fight the Devil, the hermit has to be prepared thoroughly in cenobitic life and has to be examined by his superior to see whether he has obtained this capacity. Here, this aspect is completely missing. However, this does not necessarily mean that Palamas recommends for his Athonite brethren to bypass such a preparation, but rather signals how great the dangers lurking in solitude can be.

In the last year of his life, St. Peter is discovered by a hunter, to whom the holy man subsequently narrates his life (and thus makes it known to the world). When the hunter wishes to stay and join St. Peter in his hesychastic life, the latter sends him back to his secular life for a year, to take care of his family, to serve Christ tending the hungry and the needy, but also to do some basic spiritual (hesychastic) exercises:

⁷⁶ “διαίτη” is obviously a misspelling in the critical text.

⁷⁷ Palamas, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἱσάγγελον βίον τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει τῷ Ἄθῳ ἀσκήσαντος* (hereafter *Λόγος*) 10, ed. Panagiotis Christou in *PS*, vol. 5, 166–167.

⁷⁸ Mitrea, “Palamas’ *Logos*,” 254; cf. the synoptic table of both *vitae* at 261.

⁷⁹ Mitrea, “Palamas’ *Logos*,” 246.

Pay attention to yourself, detach yourself from the earthly pleasures and worries as far as you can, take constant care of the remembrance of God in your heart, implanting the meditation of his name as engraved in the hidden inner chambers of your soul; converse with books and sayings [of the Lord and the Fathers] as much as you have days and hours.

προσέχειν δὲ σαυτῷ, καὶ ταῖς γηΐναις ὁπόση δύναμις ἡδοναῖς τε καὶ μερίμναις ἀποταξάμενος παράμονον τηρεῖν ἐν τῇ σῇ καρδίᾳ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ μνήμην, τὴν ἐπ' ὀνόματι τοῦτου μελέτην τοῖς ἐν κρυπτῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ταμείοις ἀνάγραπτον ὥσπερ ἐνθήμενος· θείοις τε βίβλοις καὶ λογίοις ἐντυγχάνειν ὅσαι ἡμέραι τε καὶ ὥραι.⁸⁰

These are not only characteristic topics of a hesychastic spirituality, but respectively also aspects of a novitiate, and St. Peter shows himself as a spiritual father to the hunter. A “normal” novitiate would have started with a separation from the world and attaching oneself to one’s spiritual father. By sending the hunter back home first, he may have intended—feeling that his time would come soon—to complete his earthly life in solitude, without a companion (or even novice). On the other hand, St. Peter—and Gregory Palamas—here attest that it is possible to live the essentials of a hesychastic spirituality also under the conditions of a secular life in the world.⁸¹ Such a kind of “urban hesychasm” was rather frequent in the time of Palamas.⁸² Philotheos Kokkinos writes that the young Palamas encountered Athonite monks in Constantinople who supported his vocation, and surely there were such monks whom Barlaam the Calabrian met in Constantinople and asked about hesychastic practices.

This episode can also imply the basic importance of proving one’s vocation to the monastic life and preparing for the next steps. Almost 1200 years after Pope Gregory IV, whose application of the novitiate was summed up in the words “μυεῖ τούτῳ τὴν μονήρην δίδαιταν” and in the vesting of the candidate, his current successor, Pope Francis, has issued the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei quaerere* regarding women’s contemplative life, which decrees, amongst other things, that the formation of nuns has to last altogether at least nine years.⁸³ As a follow-up, the Roman Dicastery for the Religious has issued an “implementing instruction” with the title *Cor orans*, wherein these nine long years are unfolded. The first of

⁸⁰ Palamas, *Λόγος* 39, ed. Christou, 184–185.

⁸¹ Mitrea, “Palamas’ *Logos*,” 257.

⁸² E.g., the case of Isidore Boucheir as told in his *Life* by Kokkinos; cf. Mitrea, “A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer,” 127, 192–193, 230.

⁸³ Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei quaerere on women’s contemplative life* (July 22, 2016), § 15, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20160629_vultum-dei-quaerere.html. The question remains why this applies only to women, while men can continue to be allowed to take solemn vows after about four years and a half.

these is now called the “aspirantate”⁸⁴ and has to precede the actual entry into a monastery. It involves continuing one’s previous secular life, praying and reflecting on one’s vocation, and working on possible “weak points,” accompanied by regular visits to the envisaged monastery. Only then may follow the postulate, novitiate, and temporary vows (which in turn have to be prolonged twice). As these demands are the same for the whole Latin Church worldwide, the following question arises (together with Palamas’ *Vita* by Philotheos as well as his *Vita* of St. Peter and the person of the hunter): How should one deal with the individual spiritual, intellectual, and other needs of a respective candidate? How should this responsibility be assumed?

With his “journeyman’s piece” (the *Vita* of St. Peter) Gregory Palamas qualified for his subsequent work as a monastic teacher, spiritual father, and not least a capable defender of Orthodoxy. One could (cautiously) call it a special part of the “novitiate,” namely, to acquire the ability to write such a piece, that is, knowledge of Holy Scripture, the Church Fathers and (at least some) philosophers, and the texts of councils and synods; and also, to acquire and exercise the necessary verbal skills and, most importantly, to integrate all this into a personal, existential theological and spiritual identity. Although the prospect of becoming a teacher does not apply to all novices, it is altogether indispensable for a living and sustainable monastic tradition (tradition understood in the way that there is not only something to be passed on, but also someone to pass it on, keep it alive, enhance it, and hand it over).

According to Philotheos, Palamas wrote the *Vita* of St. Peter after two years in the hermitage of St. Sabas,⁸⁵ when he was at least 36, or even 38. After no less than thirteen to fifteen years of monastic experience, he was definitely not a novice any more. However, monastic formation is not something resolved and completed once and for all, but a life-long process, in ascetism, in prayer, in studying the Scriptures and theology, and in caring for one’s fellow human beings. Palamas describes the fifty-three years Peter spent in *hesychia* on Mount Athos not as something static, but as a continuous inner growth.⁸⁶ Palamas himself would experience something similar, although in completely different circumstances, in the following decades of his eventful life.

⁸⁴ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Cor orans. Implementing instruction of the Apostolic constitution Vultum Dei quaerere on women’s contemplative life* (April 1, 2018), §§ 251.262-268, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_20180401_cor-orans_en.html.

⁸⁵ Cf. the timeline of Palamas’ biography as reconstructed by Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 45; Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” 151, dates it to 1332, while Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383, to 1334–1335. Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” 131, calculates it earlier, considering that Palamas left Constantinople to join monastic life already in 1314.

⁸⁶ Mitrea, “Palamas’ *Logos*,” 254.

Gregory Akindynos as a Novice of Gregory Palamas

It is reasonable that Gregory Palamas himself took on the duty of a spiritual father initiating novices into monastic life and hesychastic spirituality; he surely assumed this responsibility when he was superior of the monastery in Esphigmenou (1335/6).⁸⁷ Another hagiographical work by Philotheos Kokkinos, namely the *Life* of Isidore Boucheir, bears witness that the latter was tonsured (and consecrated deacon) by Palamas.⁸⁸ He remained his friend and comrade in theological and political disputes. As newly elected patriarch in 1347, Isidore appointed his former teacher as archbishop of Thessaloniki.

Another novice of Palamas was Gregory Akindynos,⁸⁹ who calls him in one occasion “καὶ ἀδελφὸς ἡμῖν καὶ φίλος καὶ πατήρ.”⁹⁰ Palamas himself mentions that Akindynos was his disciple, “although not studying until completion” (παρ’ ἡμᾶς εἰ καὶ μὴ διὰ τέλους φοιτήσας).⁹¹ In *Contra Akindynum* VII, 16, 59, Palamas reports that Akindynos came to him as a teacher (οὗτος ὡς διδασκάλῳ μοι ἐρχήτο). After some days, Akindynos told him of a vision of light (φῶς τι θεωρεῖν), which seemingly appeared to him from within as a human face (διαφαίνειν ἔνδοθεν ἀνθρώπειόν τι πρόσωπον). Palamas then told him about the deceptions of the Devil and offered to keep him in order to free him from his delusion. However, some of the older and experienced monks at the Lavra heard about this; they gave “not a good testimony” on Akindynos to the superior (οὐκ ἀγαθὰ τινα μαρτυρήσαντες αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν τότε προεστῶτα) and did not allow him into their common life (πρὸς συνοίκησιν οὐκ εἴασαν). “So he went away from us together with that illumination [that appeared to him] endued with a form” (Ἀπῆρε τοίνυν τόθ’ ἡμῶν μετὰ τῆς ἐσχηματισμένης ἐκείνης αὐτῷ φωτοφανείας).⁹² Hence, Akindynos’ opposition to hesychastic spirituality seems not to have existed in the beginning, but on the contrary he would have overdone it as a novice, refusing the correction of his “novice master.”⁹³ Polemical texts have to be read cautiously concerning such personal details, but, in any case, this example shows the pitfalls of an early and un-reflected *fervor monasticus* as well as the necessity of a proper supervision.

⁸⁷ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 63–64.

⁸⁸ Mitrea, “A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer,” 127, 193.

⁸⁹ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 61–63; Juan Nadal Cañellas, “Gregorio Akíndinos,” in *La théologie byzantine*, vol. 2, 189–314, here at 194–195.

⁹⁰ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 62, n. 94.

⁹¹ Palamas, *Contra Acindynum* III, 2, 1, ed. Christou in *PS*, vol. 3, 161; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 62, n. 94.

⁹² Palamas, *Contra Acindynum* VII, 16, 59, ed. Christou in *PS*, vol. 3, 505–506.

⁹³ See Andreas P. Zachariou’s article in this issue.

John Meyendorff and Juan Nadal Cañellas report that Akindynos delivered a paean to the Great Lavra in front of the assembled community and its abbot, encouraged by Palamas, but his performance failed.⁹⁴ As this seems to have taken place as early as in Akindynos' formative period, it was probably not yet intended as an "inaugural lecture" to receive the *venia legendi*, as was presumably the case with Palamas' *Vita* of St. Peter. However, it shows that Palamas as a teacher also attached some importance to this dimension of learning.

Akindynos does not seem to have had the opportunity for further learning from this failure; to the contrary, as Patriarch Kallistos I informs us, the monks of Lavra voted openly against him: "μὲν φωνῇ καὶ ἐνὶ στόματι 'διωχθήτω' ἔφεσαν ἅπαντες ὁ Ἀκίνδυνος ἀπὸ τῆς μονῆς."⁹⁵ Today, in Benedictine monasteries, there is a secret vote of the convent to determine whether a novice should be admitted to profession. This vote is prescribed and without doubt important, but if it fails, it raises the question for the novice master and the superiors if the novice was properly accompanied in his personal and spiritual development, including telling him in good time to leave if he is inept for the common life.

The Beginning of the Hesychast Controversy and the *Triads*

The year 1335 saw the beginning of the dispute between Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria, initially on various issues of theological argumentation and the use of Aristotelian logic and then on hesychast spirituality (the "Hesychast Controversy" proper).⁹⁶ With his *Triads*, Gregory Palamas responded to Barlaam, defending the monks from the latter's accusation of heresy. Barlaam himself was a Byzantine monk from southern Italy, not an outsider to the monastic tradition, but apparently not completely versed in the characteristics of its spirituality. The question regarding his monastic formation in his original monastery of St. Elias at Galatro in Calabria⁹⁷ and what he had learned as a novice in monastic and spiritual life will not be addressed here.

⁹⁴ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 61, n. 88; Nadal Cañellas, "Gregorio Akíndinos," 194–195.

⁹⁵ Quoted after Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 61, n. 88.

⁹⁶ Concerning the history of the Hesychast Controversy, its protagonists, contexts, and contents, see Russell, "The Hesychast Controversy," in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniossoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 494–508; idem, *Gregory Palamas*, 10–17; Sinkewicz, "Gregory Palamas," 132–134; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 65–94; idem, *Défense*, viii–xxiv; with a special focus on the role of Barlaam, see Giuseppe Schirò (ed.), *Barlaam Calabro. Epistole greche. I primordi episodici e dottrinari delle lotte esicaste* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di studi bizantini e neogreci, 1954).

⁹⁷ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 11.

“Poussé par son universelle curiosité ou par un vrai désir de vie monastique, le Calabrais s’était mise à l’école d’un moine de Thessalonique.”⁹⁸ In any case, he clearly intended to obtain a better understanding of the theological and spiritual background of his opponent or even to look for a weak point. However, it seems not to have been a “novitiate,” to have confided himself to a spiritual father, or even a kind of continuous education, but rather an investigation. The first of these presumably “urban hesychasts” whom Barlaam engages was a certain Ignatius, whom we find as an addressee of two letters by Barlaam, together with other monks called David Disypatos, Joseph Kalothetos, and “the good Luke.”⁹⁹ They seem to have been monks of good reputation.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Barlaam mentions in this context a certain youth (μειρακίσκος) who told him about his experiences in hesychastic prayer and whom he in turn tried to convince to abandon this. While Giuseppe Schirò quotes John VI Kantakouzenos that this “lad” would have been a fool and thus a bad informant,¹⁰¹ Russell assumes he might “simply have been a polite fiction on Barlaam’s part in order to avoid attributing heretical doctrines to his correspondent and his correspondent’s friends.”¹⁰² It seems at least arguable that this “lad” could have been a novice, conversing in public before completing his basic monastic formation.¹⁰³

The three treatises of Palamas’ first *Triad* each begin with a question posed by a young monk or even a novice to his spiritual father. Even if this is only a literary device, there is no doubt that Palamas would indeed have answered in this way to a real novice, and possibly even did so. The first *Triad* thus presents us with a kind of extensive “novitiate class.” In the first treatise, the “novice” tells his father he had heard certain people say that for a monk it would be necessary to study “profane wisdom” (ἔξω σοφία) and “Hellenic education” (καθ’ Ἑλλήνας παιδεία) in order to avoid ignorance, while his own experience had taught him the opposite. So he asks his father to teach him how to defend the truth (διδαχθῆναι τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγους).¹⁰⁴ The answer that secular learning

⁹⁸ Meyendorff, *Défense*, xiv.

⁹⁹ Meyendorff, *Défense*, xiv; Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 12–13; Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro*, 187–194; cf. the text of Barlaam’s respective *Letters* 4–8 in Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro*, 315–330.

¹⁰⁰ Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 12–13; Meyendorff, *Défense*, xvii; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 70: “Les moines qu’il rencontra étaient peu instruits et incapables de satisfaire dans le domaine de la spiritualité ses aspirations d’intellectuel sceptique.”

¹⁰¹ Schirò, *Barlaam Calabro*, 191.

¹⁰² Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 12.

¹⁰³ Cf. the case of Isidore Boucheir who only after some time under the direction of Gregory of Sinai was sent by the latter to assume an “urban hesychast apostolate,” which he carried out in Thessaloniki for ten years; cf. Mitrea, “A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer,” 126–127, 192–193, 230; cf. *supra* n. 82.

¹⁰⁴ Palamas, *Triads* I,1, first question; ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 4–7.

is neither from God nor necessary for a Christian, and respectively monastic life, does not have to be expounded here in detail. Palamas is speaking here about monastic life in general, not on a methodological level about teaching novices, while the literary situation implicates exactly this. It is worth mentioning the metaphor that the potentials of secular education should be used like snake venom as an antidote against attacks from this very direction.¹⁰⁵ This entails that these aspects of the ἔξω παιδεία not only have to be learned but also discerned and clarified.

In the first treatise of the second *Triad*, dealing with the same subject, Palamas states that he does not want to deprive the monks of secular education: “Therefore the time before entering the monastic way of life is appropriate for all those who do not take things easy to acquire of all kinds of literary [education] (ἐγὼ δ’ οὐκ ἀποστερεῖν μοναχούς. Ἰκανὸς γὰρ ὁ πρὸ τοῦ τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην ὑπελθεῖν χρόνος πρὸς λόγου κτήσιν παντοίαν τοῖς οὐ ῥαθύμοις).¹⁰⁶ This is what Palamas himself (and many others) did, as is attested by Philotheos in his *Life of Palamas*¹⁰⁷ and by the quality of his own writings.

Byzantine *typika* do not have much to say about this topic and there is nothing in the *Rule of St. Benedict*. According to the *Vita* of Benedict by Gregory the Great,

he was born in Nursia of distinguished parents, who sent him to Rome for a liberal education (*liberalis litterarum studiis*; ἐλευθερικῶν γραμμάτων διδασχῇ). When he found many of the students there abandoning themselves to vice, he decided to withdraw from the world he had been preparing to enter; for he was afraid that if he acquired any of its learning he would be drawn down with them to his eternal ruin. In his desire to please God alone, he turned his back on further studies, gave up home and inheritance and resolved to embrace the religious life. He took this step, fully aware of his ignorance; yet he was truly wise, uneducated though he may have been.¹⁰⁸

While the motivation to choose the monastic life sounds basically connatural in St. Benedict and St. Gregory Palamas, the latter completed his studies before leaving the imperial capital for solitude. However, monasteries in East and West have become places of education and research, of schools and libraries. In the

¹⁰⁵ Palamas, *Triads* I,1,21, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 58–61.

¹⁰⁶ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,35, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 296–297.

¹⁰⁷ Kokkinos, *Λόγος* 10–11, ed. Tsamis, 36–38, trans. Russell, 60–62.

¹⁰⁸ Gregory the Great, *Vita Benedicti*, ed. de Vogüé, Antin, 126–127; idem, *Vita di San Benedetto*, ed. Rigotti, 102–105; English trans. Odo J. Zimmermann and Benedict R. Avery, *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 1.

present Benedictine *ratio formationis*, at least in my own Beuronese congregation, a graduation certificate, graduation from vocational training, or an academic degree are the regular prerequisites to be accepted as a postulant. The decisive bit, then and now, seems to be the “home address” of the various subjects of education and their common goal to seek God alone.¹⁰⁹

In the second treatise in the first *Triad*, Palamas’ interlocutor asks his “spiritual father” about the criticism he has heard about the hesychastic way of prayer, especially, when the novices were exhorted to look at themselves and by their respiration send their mind within themselves (τοῖς ἀρχαρίοις παραινοῦντας ἐφ’ ἑαυτοὺς βλέπειν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀναπνοῆς εἴσω πέμπειν τὸν οἰκεῖον νοῦν).¹¹⁰ As in the introductory question, Palamas mentions the novices explicitly. In § 7 of this second treatise, he refers to St. John Climacus to explain this method of prayer as indispensable for those who truly want to become monks (τοὺς [...] ὡς ἀληθῶς γενέσθαι [...] μοναχοῦς), especially for beginners, who are to be introduced into the monastic life (μάλιστα τοὺς εἰσαγομένους). This time, learning is not about acquiring a certain knowledge, but about exercising an existential practice. For none of these beginners does any of this happen without labor, and their teacher is not a word, but toil, and the experience resulting from toil (οὐ λόγος, ἀλλὰ πόνος καὶ ἡ διὰ πόνων πεῖρα διδάσκαλος).

Learning a handicraft or an art is impossible if one remains in the distance of “theory.” It needs practical involvement. If one wants to learn to play the piano, it does not suffice to understand the keyboard and the notes, but one has to practice, exercise, with patience and perseverance, to be critically attentive, to see the goal, and to avoid bad habits. First of all, one has to understand the music, otherwise all technical studies are meaningless. And for all this one has an indispensable need for the direction of a good teacher, whom one trust and whom one allows to work on oneself. The same applies to learning a spiritual practice. For such a process of learning, a relationship of mutual confidence and transparency is absolutely necessary to evade the danger of manipulation or even spiritual abuse. What may sound like a rather modern problem we find in fact considered already in some middle Byzantine *typika*, for example in the *Typikon* of Emperor John Tzimiskes for the monasteries of Athos:

A layman who has come to one of the superiors [ἡγουμένων, here in the sense of “spiritual director,” see below] and stays with him for six months or an entire year, but who becomes dissatisfied with the superior’s direction for certain causes and has good reason to claim that he has not been helped by him, may give himself to another spiritual director (εἰς ἕτερον ἡγούμενον

¹⁰⁹ See *Rule of St. Benedict* 58.7, ed. Hanslik, 147, trans. *RB* 1980, 266–267.

¹¹⁰ Palamas, *Triads* 1,2, second question, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 72–73.

πνευματικὸν παραδίδοσθαι), whomsoever he might select, provided that other persons testify that this new director is irreproachable and capable of helping souls.¹¹¹

“Lord, teach us to pray,” the disciples ask Christ (Lk 11:1). Teaching novices to pray means to share in Christ’s ministry, with all its responsibility. The issue of teaching and learning how to pray is a highly sensitive matter. Therefore, it seems important that a Benedictine novice today can rely on a separation of the *forum internum* from the *forum externum*, and always has the right to approach his abbot directly. All the more it is important to find and live a solid balance between confidence and transparency, to avoid dangerous dependencies as well as the risk of playing one spiritual director off against another.

A problematic relationship of its own kind between a novice and his spiritual father arises in the question preceding the third treatise of the first *Triad*. The young monk reports that the adversaries of the hesychasts would falsely pretend they wished to become disciples [of hesychast fathers], but were not willing to learn earnestly (λέγουσι δ’ ὁμως ὑποκριθῆναι μὲν μαθητιῶντας, ἀλλ’ οὐκ εὐμαθεῖς): “Therefore they put into writing the things they heard the teachers telling them that they should cling to and believe in” (διὸ γραφῇ διδόναι τὰ παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων πρὸς αὐτοὺς λεγόμενα λιπαρῆσαι τε καὶ πείσαι). Such a sham novitiate and deceptive novices should hopefully not appear in our monasteries today, or should be quickly identified. In the case mentioned in the *Triads*, they write that their teachers would assert that they should give up all the Holy Scriptures as something bad, but rather devote themselves only to prayer, by which the evil spirits would be driven away (γράφουσι τοίνυν φάναι τοὺς διδάσκοντας αὐτοὺς πάσης μὲν Γραφῆς ἱερᾶς ὡς πονηρᾶς ἀφεῖσθαι, προσανέχειν δὲ μόνη τῇ εὐχῇ, δι’ ἧς ἀπελαύνεσθαι μὲν τὰ πονηρὰ πνεύματα).¹¹² Something similar is expressed in the first treatise of the second *Triad*: “Ἐλεγε [sc. Barlaam] γὰρ ὡς ἐδιδάχθη παρ’ ἐκείνων ὧν κατηγορεῖ, τὴν μὲν θείαν πᾶσαν Γραφὴν ἀνωφελῆ πᾶσι παντάπασιν εἶναι.”¹¹³

Palamas in turn admits that beginners in hesychasm should indeed abstain from long readings and devote themselves to the “prayer of a single thought” [i.e., the Jesus Prayer] until this has become an uninterrupted habitus of their mind (Ἀφεῖσθαι μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀρχομένους ἡσυχάζειν μακρᾶς ἀναγνώσεως καὶ προσανέχειν τῇ μονολογίστῳ προσευχῇ, μέχρις ἂν ἕξιν τινὰ σχοῖεν τοῦ ταύτης ἀδιαλείπτως ἔχεσθαι κατὰ διάνοιαν).¹¹⁴ Therefore, he is speaking only of a

¹¹¹ Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 144, trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 236–237.

¹¹² Palamas, *Triads* I,3, third question, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 102–105.

¹¹³ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,2, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 229.

¹¹⁴ Palamas, *Triads* I,3,2, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 108–109.

temporary reduction. Even more, he suggests that novices will find better conditions later, when they will be able to read the Scriptures on a foundation of continuous prayer. Palamas returns to a similar accusation in the first treatise of the third *Triad*, that some of the monks would consider reading the Scriptures as [a source of] confusion (τῶν λογίων ἀνάγνωσιν σύγχυσιν οἶονται): “However, we do not know among us any hesychast who would not devote himself to the Scriptures (if he has learned to read); and those who do not know to read you can regard as ‘living books,’ for they recite the greater part of the Scriptures by heart.”¹¹⁵ With the word of Jesus, “if you would believe Moses, you would believe me, too” (Jn 5:46), Palamas understands Christ himself commanding us to explore the Scriptures (τὰς ἱερὰς Γραφὰς ἐρευνᾶν ἐντεῖλατο) and to find eternal life in them.¹¹⁶ The benchmark is to be in accord with the Prophets, with the Apostles, and with all the Fathers (τὸ φρονεῖν προφήταις, ἀποστόλοις, πατράσι πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς), since through all of them the Holy Spirit is speaking.¹¹⁷

Even more important than reading and understanding the Scriptures, Palamas considers, is putting the Word of God into practice, quoting Rom 2:13: “μὴ τοὺς ἀκροατὰς τοῦ νόμου, τοὺς δὲ ποιητὰς σωθήσεσθαι”¹¹⁸ and “τὴν πρᾶξιν δὲ εἰδότες, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὴν γνῶσιν, σώζουσιν.”¹¹⁹ Whoever listens to the Word of God and acts accordingly (cf. Mt 7:24) will possess God within himself (ὁ τὸν τοῦ Κυρίου λόγον ἀκούων καὶ ποιῶν, αὐτὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ κτᾶται). In other words, “He who has acquired God within himself by keeping his commandments no longer needs to study the Scriptures, but knows them all exactly without studying” (οὐδὲ τῆς μαθήσεως τῶν Γραφῶν δεῖσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ χωρὶς αὐτῆς πάσας οἶδεν ἀκριβῶς).¹²⁰ First, this means studying the Scriptures thoroughly and keeping the commandments. If secondly, though, at a certain point a “possession” of God should be taken for granted, this would be rather problematic. The objective criterion of the Scriptures would be somehow internalized and thus be missing for a discernment of spirits. Throughout his writings, however, Palamas does not only show a comprehensive knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, but takes them as his essential point of reference in a way that he does not lose their objectivity.

¹¹⁵ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,11, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 246–247: Ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ἡσυχάζοντων οὐδένα ἐγνωμεν ὃς τοῖς λογίοις οὐ προσανέχει, γράμματα μεμαθηκώς, καὶ τοὺς μὴ γράμματα εἰδότας ἴδοι τις ἂν βίβλους ἄλλας ἐμπύχους ἀπὸ στήθους τὰ πλείονα τῶν λογίων εὐφυῶς ἀπαγγέλοντας.

¹¹⁶ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,43, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 312–313.

¹¹⁷ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,42, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 312–313.

¹¹⁸ Rom 2:13 reads “δικαιωθήσονται,” the variants “σωθήσονται” or “σωθήσεσθαι” are not attested. If Palamas is quoting by heart, does this imply that he knows the Scriptures well, shows shortcomings, or is even another step further as he knows how to use them sensibly in various contexts?

¹¹⁹ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,11, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 246–247.

¹²⁰ Palamas, *Triads* II,1,43, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 314–315.

As already mentioned, a prerequisite for studying the Bible and then putting it into practice is the ability to read or to memorize biblical texts. In no. 95 of St. Basil's *Shorter Rules* we have the question whether the newly accepted (i.e., the postulants, respectively the novices) should immediately learn parts of the Scriptures by heart (Εἰ συμφέρει τοῖς ἄρτι προσερχομένοις εὐθύς τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν Γραφῶν ἐκμανθάνειν). St. Basil answers that each one should learn by heart what he needs (τὸ γὰρ πρὸς τὴν χρεῖαν ἕκαστον ἐκμανθάνειν ἐκ τῆς θεοπνεύστου Γραφῆς ἀκόλουθον καὶ ἀναγκαῖον). The answer to the following question, no. 96, whether everyone should be allowed to learn reading and writing according to his own wish (Εἰ παντὶ τῷ βουλομένῳ ἐπιτρέπειν δεῖ γράμματα μανθάνειν, ἢ ἀναγνώσασσι προσέχειν), St. Basil leaves for the superior (προεστώς) to decide.¹²¹

Learning the Scriptures by heart (especially if one is not able to read) requires listening to someone else reading aloud. The question arises whether there was a special reader reciting the sacred texts repeatedly to the novices to help them memorize them. Subsequently one may ask if it would not be easier to teach all of them to read for themselves. That is what St. Pachomius prescribes:

If someone is not able to read (*litteras ignorabit*), then he shall go in the first, third and sixth hour to someone who can teach him and is assigned for this, and he shall stand in front of him and shall study with the greatest intentness (*studiosissime*) [...] and even if he does not want to read, he shall be compelled to do so (*compelletur*). There shall be no one in the whole monastery who does not learn reading (*discat litteras*) and comprehends something from the Scriptures, at least from the New Testament and the Psalms.¹²²

This is also the demand of St. Benedict who assigns in chapter 48 of his *Rule* several hours each day for each brother to read, without exception; they shall be free for reading (*lectioni vacent*) as well as occupied with it (*occupari debent in lectione*), especially on Sundays.¹²³ At the beginning of Great Lent all brothers receive a single volume of the Bible which they shall read completely until Easter (*in quibus diebus quadragesimae accipiant omnes singulos codices de bibliotheca, quos per ordinem ex integro legant*). In this case, *bibliotheca* does not denote a library, but the whole of the Bible, so that everyone receives a different one of the various biblical books.¹²⁴ Neither here nor in chapter 58 on

¹²¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae brevius tractatae* 95–96, PG 31, 1148–1150.

¹²² Pachomius, *Praecepta* 139–140, ed. Boon, *Pachomiana Latina*, 47–48; cf. Puzicha, *Kommentar*, 516.

¹²³ *Rule of St. Benedict* 48.1, 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 17, 20, 22, ed. Hanslik, 125–130, trans. RB 1980, 248–253.

¹²⁴ Puzicha, *Kommentar*, 525–526. Here, however, we may indeed see the beginnings of a monastic library as the necessary place where the codices were kept.

the reception of novices does Benedict speak about *teaching* them, but it seems reasonable to assume that many, if not most of them, were still in need of acquiring literacy after entering monastic life.

It is a bit astonishing that in the Byzantine *typika* “relatively little is said about literacy or reading.”¹²⁵ In the twelfth-century *Typikon* for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Phoberos, the chapter on tonsuring novices has the addition (compared to its model in the *Typikon* of Evergetis) that the newcomers first have to read the procedures in the rule and to promise to observe everything drawn up in it.¹²⁶ Strictly, this would presuppose literacy as a precondition for entering monastic life, but probably this was not the case. “The most interesting reference to literacy is in [the *Typikon* of] *Neilos Damilas* of Crete, where reading aloud was said to be more important than psalmody.”¹²⁷ Palamas, as already seen, knows both literate and illiterate monks, but all of them have to engage in the Holy Scriptures. Learning to read them or learning them by heart with the help of another one’s recitation are both part of the education of a “novice.” To put the Word of God into practice after hearing it takes even more work and will not come to fruition without the accompaniment of a spiritual director.

The Question of the “Great Schema”

The matter of the monastic habit in connection with the way of becoming a monk (which garment is given when, what are the accompanying liturgical rites, what do they signify for the canonical status of the novice or monk, etc.) are discussed comprehensively by Oltean.¹²⁸ Different regional traditions mingle in various developments, leading again to different results and open questions. How do the “small habit” (μικρὸν σχῆμα) and the “great habit” (μέγα σχῆμα) relate to each other? Do they correspond to succeeding stages of the monastic “career”? If the μικρὸν σχῆμα is not the habit of the novices (that should be the ῥάσων), is it a kind of intermediate form for a limited period (as the temporary vows of the Benedictines, which precede solemn vows)? Or do the two habits relate to

¹²⁵ Giles Constable, “Preface” to *BMFD*, xxviii.

¹²⁶ *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Phoberos*, trans. Jordan in *BMFD*, 872–953, here at 929; cf. the *Typikon of Evergetis* 37; ed. Gautier, 78–81, trans. Jordan in *BMFD*, 494–495.

¹²⁷ Constable, “Preface,” xxviii; *Testament and Typikon of Neilos Damilas for the Convent of the Mother of God Pantanassa at Baionaia in Crete* 13, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot in *BMFD*, 1462–1482, here at 1475: “for prayer and reading are like two eyes.”

¹²⁸ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*; while the first part of the book is entirely devoted to this issue (9–86), it frequently recurs especially in the third part on postulate, novitiate, and profession (217–316).

permanently different “levels” of monastic life, the simpler monks sticking with the small habit for a lifetime, while the great habit would show a higher degree of spiritual perfection? Or perhaps the small habit was for the cenobites, while the hermits took on the great one? There is evidence for quite a number of diverging customs,¹²⁹ while at the time of Gregory Palamas the division of small and great habit according to hierarchical degrees was common.¹³⁰

Against this background, Palamas receives a request from the hieromonk Paul Asen, who asked if he should take on the great habit. In his response,¹³¹ Palamas approves of his taking on the μέγα σχῆμα, but has to offer some basic considerations as well as some personal advice for his correspondent. Beginning with the common vocation of all baptized Christians, to show in deeds, words, and thoughts that they have mastery over the passions and are developing in virtue, have love for God and one’s neighbor (§ 2), he continues with the special features of a monastic vocation, which are withdrawal from the world, renunciation of pleasures, and the inclination of oneself totally to the love of God (ὡς ἂν ὅλως νεύσας πρὸς τὴν θεϊαν ἀγάπην, § 3). The subsequent sentence, “τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ μέγα καὶ μοναχικὸν σχῆμα” (§ 4), hints at the twofold meaning of the word “σχῆμα.”¹³² First, the shape, appearance, bearing of a (monastic) figure. Secondly, derived from there, the monastic vestment. The Latin word “habitus” is in this case a faithful translation of the Greek “σχῆμα.” Then, Palamas points out, with direct reference to St. Theodore the Stoudite, that the monastic σχῆμα/*habitus* is essentially one and the same. The brief original sentence in the Testament of Theodore the Stoudite reads: “You shall not grant what they call the little habit, and after that the great one, for the habit like baptism is one according to the usages of the fathers.”¹³³ Palamas adds:

So it seems to me that those who later divided the form of the prescribed garments restricted and took away the *analavon* and the *koukoulion* from the young monks because [these garments] are the most venerable symbols for onlookers and constitute a way of formally showing off in front of those inducted into the monastic life yet still pursuing [i.e., or not yet firm in] holy humility.

¹²⁹ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 11–12, 65–77.

¹³⁰ Peter J. Hatlie, “The Answer to Paul Asen of Gregory Palamas: A Fourteenth Century Apology for the One, Grand and Angelic Schema,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989): 35–51, here at 35.

¹³¹ Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 384–385, gives no date of composition, Hatlie, “The Answer,” 35, and Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” 151, date this letter around 1334.

¹³² Palamas, *Letter to Paul Asen*, PS, vol. 5, 247–250, here at 247–248; Hatlie, “The Answer,” 46–49.

¹³³ *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*, in *BMFD*, 67–83, here at 78, no. 12.

δοκεῖ δέ μοι τοὺς ὕστερον ἐν τοῖς νενομισμένοις περιβολαίοις τὸ σχῆμα μερίσαντας παρακατασχεῖν καὶ ἀφελέσθαι τῶν ἀρχαρίων τὸν ἀνάλαβόν τε καὶ τὸ κουκούλιον, ὡς τοῖς ὁρῶσι σεμνότατα καὶ τοῖς εἰσαγομένοις ὡς ἔτι πρὸς τὴν ἱερὰν ταπείνωσιν ἀπαγέσι ῥαδίως πρὸς ἐσχηματισμένην ἐπίδειξιν μεθελκόμενα.¹³⁴

If we have to read this together with the *Athonite Rule* (§ 18)¹³⁵ and the latter indeed means that the προερχόμενος after two or three weeks in the hospice is already vested in the ordinary habit,¹³⁶ then the term “ἀρχάριος” in this letter does not denote a novice in the strict sense,¹³⁷ but a young monk, who is still at the beginning and “εἰσαγόμενος,” but already vested, tonsured, and professed. If we link this with the information from Philotheos’ *Vita* that Palamas was tonsured by his spiritual father Nikodemos rather quickly, made his vows, and then submitted himself in obedience to him,¹³⁸ then we should add that Palamas was probably also vested with the regular habit.

Like Theodore the Stoudite, Palamas does not so much oppose the great or the small habit, but their division as such. On the other hand, he does not criticize the intention to keep the novices away from the fallacious impression that the monastic habit, in this case the Great Schema, would be a kind of honor in which to boast, instead of rather carrying it as a yoke. Palamas approves of his correspondent receiving the great habit. Wearing it in public, however, should be a constant exhortation to exercise himself in humility. When he shall bring the outward symbols (i.e., his dress) into agreement with the inward disposition of his soul (τοῖς ἔξω συμβόλοις συνάδουσιν ἔχειν σπεύδης τὴν ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς σου διάθεσιν),¹³⁹ then this again shows the ambiguity of the word “σχῆμα.” The ἀρχάριος will have to work on himself to get his outer and inner shape into harmony (συνάδω), and as an εἰσαγόμενος, that is, a novice, he literally has to be introduced to this, for which he needs help from his spiritual father.

The Theotokos in the Temple as a Kind of Hesychastic Novitiate?

The second literary work of St. Gregory Palamas, written right after the *Vita* of St. Peter the Athonite, is his *Homily* 53 for the Feast of the Entry of the

¹³⁴ Palamas, *Letter to Paul Asen*, PS, vol. 5, 248–249; Hatlie, “The Answer,” 48–49.

¹³⁵ *Rule of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery* 18, ed. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 135–136; trans. Dennis in *BMFD*, 225.

¹³⁶ Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 52–53.

¹³⁷ The novice proper is normally designated with the term ῥασοφόρος. Palamas, however, does not use this term.

¹³⁸ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 17–18, ed. Tsamis, 47, trans. Russell, 71.

¹³⁹ Palamas, *Letter to Paul Asen* 5, ed. Christou in PS, vol. 5, 249; Hatlie, “The Answer,” 48–49.

Theotokos into the Temple. Palamas' corpus of homilies largely date from his years as metropolitan of Thessaloniki. Only four or five of them were delivered to a monastic audience.¹⁴⁰ The extensive encomiastic *Λόγος* on the Presentation was written at the hermitage of St. Sabas, close to the Great Lavra.¹⁴¹ In several instances Palamas depicts the Theotokos dwelling in the Holy of Holies as a child, as a *πρωτότυπος* of hesychastic life.¹⁴² He follows closely the narration of the Protoevangelium of James. As Mary spends her childhood years from age three to twelve in the Temple, a time critical for education and formation, we may look for possible traces of a "novitiate" here.¹⁴³

First, there is the separation from the world. Palamas omits in his account that according to the Protoevangelium (6.1) the little child already had a kind of sanctuary in the bedroom at home to keep it ritually pure. He starts with her being brought to the Temple by her parents, which further unfolds in the quasi-liturgical procession with the "daughters of the Hebrews" carrying candles, and the High Priest receiving her and quoting Psalm 45(44):11-12: "Hear, o daughter [...], forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty."¹⁴⁴

The outward separation is followed by the inner one: "She lived, as though in paradise, in a place removed from the earth, or rather, as though in the courts of heaven [...]. Thus she led an unencumbered life without cares or occupation, free from sorrow, with no share in base passions, above that pleasure which is inseparable from pain."¹⁴⁵ The negative separation from the things below is connected with the positive attachment to the things above: "Through the beauty of what she saw [in the Holy of Holies], she immediately cast her mind's eye to the unseen beauties,"¹⁴⁶ and these in the end are not "something" but God Himself: "She lived for God alone and was sustained and preserved only by Him [...]. Obviously she saw only God, making God her delight and continually waiting on Him."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Ralph Greis, *Von der Menschenfreundlichkeit Gottes. Analyse und Kommentar der Homilien des Gregor Palamas in liturgietheologischer Perspektive* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2021), 1040.

¹⁴¹ Greis, *Von der Menschenfreundlichkeit Gottes*, 580–581; Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 37, ed. Tsamis, 68, trans. Russell, 92; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 60, 391.

¹⁴² Cf. Mitrea, "Monasticism and Kinship in Byzantine Hesychastic Hagiography," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 61 (2021): 396–422, here at 396–398.

¹⁴³ An interesting question in its own right, which we must omit here, is that of children given to monasteries by their parents; cf. Oltean, *Devenir moine à Byzance*, 91–138.

¹⁴⁴ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 25 (cf. also 53, 30 and 53, 50), ed. Basil Pseftonkas in *PS*, vol. 6, 563; English trans. Christopher Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The Homilies* (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), 425.

¹⁴⁵ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 47, ed. Pseftonkas, 575, trans. Veniamin, 435.

¹⁴⁶ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 46, ed. Pseftonkas, 574, trans. Veniamin, 435.

¹⁴⁷ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 47, ed. Pseftonkas, 575, trans. Veniamin, 435.

This may remind us of Palamas' *Vita* of St. Peter the Athonite who "went up the mountain and entered into the innermost sanctuary" (καὶ ἀνέβη τὸ ὄρος καὶ εἰσέδω τὰ ἄδυτα), while "τὰ ἄδυτα" also appear as the dwelling place of the Theotokos in *Homily* 53, 20.¹⁴⁸ There St. Peter committed himself to God only (Θεῷ μόνῳ τὰ καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐπιτρέψας).¹⁴⁹ It may remind us as well of the *Life of St. Benedict* who turned his back on his studies in Rome "in his desire to please God alone" (μόνῳ Θεῷ ἀρέσαι ἐπιθυμήσας).¹⁵⁰ The *Rule of St. Benedict* in turn expresses as a basic demand for every monk that, "The love of Christ must come before all else" (*nihil amoris Christi praeponere*),¹⁵¹ while for a novice (and for those examining him) the first "concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God" (*et sollicitudo sit, si revera Deum quaerit*).¹⁵²

We find Mary's separation from the world connected with some classical hesychastic tropes: She "chose to live in solitude and out of sight of all, inside the sanctuary. There, having loosed every bond with material things, shaken off every tie and even risen above sympathy towards her own body, she united her mind with its turning towards itself and attention (συνῆψε τὸν νοῦν τῇ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν στροφῇ καὶ προσοχῇ), and with unceasing holy prayer" (καὶ προσοχῇ καὶ δι' ἀδιαλείπτῳ θείᾳ προσευχῇ). She saw the glory of God and divine grace (δόξαν ὁρᾷ Θεοῦ καὶ θείαν ἐποπτεύει χάριν).¹⁵³

Obviously, for the little child there is no need to learn these things like a novice; everything is already there. Palamas emphasizes that little Mary "did not learn anything from lessons by studying with teachers. Instead, making her sovereign mind obedient to God in everything, she decisively abandoned human instruction and so received abundant instruction from above."¹⁵⁴ Thus God himself takes the place of the spiritual director. There is no need for any secular, philosophical education which is described in the usual skeptical patterns (§§ 51, 58). More important is *hesychia*, not so much a subject to be learned but a teacher itself: "The virgin found that holy stillness was her guide" (τὴν ἱερὰν ἡσυχίαν εὕρισκε χειραγωγόν), and under the guidance of *hesychia* we are set free from the things below and incline ourselves to God (τῆς ἀπὸ τῆς καθ' ἡσυχίαν ἀγωγῆς ὅτι δι' αὐτῆς ἀπολυόμεθα τῶν κάτω καὶ συννεύομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν).¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 20, ed. Pseftonkas, 561, trans. Veniamin, 423.

¹⁴⁹ Palamas, *Λόγος* 17, ed. Christou, 171.

¹⁵⁰ Gregory the Great, *Life of St. Benedict*, ed. de Vogüé, Antin, 126–127; idem, *Vita di San Benedetto*, ed. Rigotti, 102–105; trans. Zimmermann, Avery, 1.

¹⁵¹ *Rule of St. Benedict* 4.21, ed. Hanslik, 33, trans. *RB* 1980, 182–183; cf. *Rule of St. Benedict* 5.2, 72.11.

¹⁵² *Rule of St. Benedict* 58.7, ed. Hanslik, 147, trans. *RB* 1980, 266–267.

¹⁵³ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 59, ed. Pseftonkas, 582, trans. Veniamin, 441.

¹⁵⁴ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 18, ed. Pseftonkas, 560, trans. Veniamin, 422.

¹⁵⁵ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 52, ed. Pseftonkas, 578, trans. Veniamin, 437–438; Veniamin's translation seems to be missing a line.

Young Mary learns everything without a human teacher, and on her own initiative. Most of the “contents” of monastic life are not to be acquired once and for all during the novitiate but are subject to a life-long process of learning and practicing. The Theotokos, however, simply does what a hesychast novice has to exercise for a long time and she is gifted with a vision of the glory of God from the beginning. There is no need for her to fight any vices, and when she practices πᾶν ἀρέτης εἶδος, there is no word about any struggles (§ 50).

According to Evagrius Ponticus, after separation from the world and the πρακτική [τέχνη] of ascetism, there follows the θεωρία φυσική. This means that by contemplating the λόγοι of the created things one can reach an indirect knowledge of their transcendent Creator. In Palamas’ *Homily*, it is Abraham and Melchizedek who are meditating on the *kosmos* as the great proof of God (τὸ μέγα τοῦτο δεῖγμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν μέγαν τοῦτον κόσμον), and by what the natural laws proclaim they recognize God who is above them (τᾶλλ’ ὅσα πάντα λόγῳ φύσεως τελούμενα τὸν ὑπὲρ ταῦτα Θεὸν κηρύττει δι’ αἰῶνος). Mary, however, cannot use any of these intermediate cognitive steps, as she is too young (τὰ γὰρ τῆς ἡλικίας οὐπω συνεχώρει), but also does not need them; she simply recognizes God (Θεὸν ἐννοεῖ).¹⁵⁶

The way Palamas recounts the young Virgin’s encounter with the Holy Scriptures seems to be a bit closer to how novices might approach it: on every Sabbath, Mary listens to the liturgical readings in the Temple (ὥς δὲ καὶ τῶν Μωσῆ γεγραμμένων καὶ τῶν τοῖς ἄλλοις προφήταις ἐκπεφρασμένων κατηκροᾷτο μετὰ συνέσεως ἀκροτάτης, τοῦ λαοῦ παντὸς ἔξωθεν ἐκάστου σαββάτου ταῦτα διεξιόντος). Hence she hears about Adam and Eve, how they were created in the image and likeness of God, settled in paradise, she hears about their sin, being expelled from paradise, and about the subsequent continuous deterioration of man’s situation.¹⁵⁷ On the one hand, these belong to the basic tropes of a liturgical *anamnesis* of the history of salvation as we find it in the *postsanctus* of the Anaphora of St. Basil. In the Divine Liturgy, the account of creation, original sin, and corruption leads via God’s help through the Law, Angels, and Prophets to the Incarnation of Christ. This, and how Mary is in fact a very part of the Incarnation, Palamas shows here and in many other homilies.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, in this *Homily* the situation of man provokes Mary’s compassion (οἶκτον λαβοῦσα) and her incessant intercession (πρέσβεια) to God, and she turns herself to him with all her mind (ὅλῳ νῷ).¹⁵⁹ We do not find here a monastic or hesychastic vocabulary of prayer, but the harmony of Sacred Scripture, prayer, and (at least implicitly) liturgy.

¹⁵⁶ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 28–29, ed. Pseftonkas, 565, trans. Veniamin, 426.

¹⁵⁷ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 48, ed. Pseftonkas, 575–576, trans. Veniamin, 435–436.

¹⁵⁸ Greis, *Von der Menschenfreundlichkeit Gottes*, 601–603; cf. *ibid.*, 453–458.

¹⁵⁹ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 48, ed. Pseftonkas, 576, trans. Veniamin, 435–436; cf. the πρεσβεία again in *Homily* 53, 49 and 53, 61.

Reaching the age of twelve, Mary has spent nine years in the Temple (Protoevangelium of James 8.2). This might evoke the aforementioned legislation that came recently from Rome that nuns have to undergo at least nine years of basic monastic formation. More important, however, seems the fact that Mary in the end leaves the Temple. She “forsakes the world for the world’s sake” (§ 50), and for the sake of the world, for her ministry in the Incarnation of God, she again leaves the Temple.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, Mary’s “novitiate” is a preparation for a ministry outside.

Palamas’ *Homily* 40 on St. John the Baptist shows a number of similar features. This homily, too, was delivered on Mount Athos,¹⁶¹ where the preacher is speaking of “us, whose life is monastic.”¹⁶² Again, he represents the Forerunner of Christ as a model for hesychastic life; firstly, as living in solitude: “As the world was unworthy of him, he dwelt continuously in desert places from his earliest years, leading a frugal life without cares or worldly concerns, a stranger to sadness, free from coarse passions and above base, material pleasure, which merely beguiles the body and its senses.” And again, the separation from the world entails a total attachment to God: “He lived for God alone, beholding only God and making God his delight.” We have seen this “Θεῷ μόνῳ” in very similar words in *Homily* 53, 47. Instead of the Temple, we here have the desert, and instead of “καθάπερ ἐν παραδείσῳ” for the Theotokos, “it was as if he [the Baptist] lived somewhere exalted above the earth.”¹⁶³

What kind of formation could John the Baptist have followed? What could he have learned during his years in solitude? In his *Triads*, Palamas states that it was not profane philosophy or secular education at all:

Where in the desert were the schools of the vain (but as they say, ‘saving’) philosophy? Where were the voluminous books and those who cling to them all their lives and try to convince others [to do the same]? But where in these books are precepts for the eremitic and virginal life? Where is their struggle written down, to exalt them for the sake of imitation by those who get to read them?¹⁶⁴

In *Homily* 40, Palamas does not mention any education or formation of John the Baptist at all, but it is evident that he needed to be versed in the Sacred Scriptures, in the Prophets and the history of Israel, to announce the coming of

¹⁶⁰ Palamas, *Homily* 53, 32, ed. Pseftonkas, 567, trans. Veniamin, 428.

¹⁶¹ Palamas, *Homily* 40, 26, ed. Pseftonkas, 440, trans. Veniamin, 323.

¹⁶² Palamas, *Homily* 40, 20, ed. Pseftonkas, 437, trans. Veniamin, 320.

¹⁶³ Palamas, *Homily* 40, 6, ed. Pseftonkas, 430, trans. Veniamin, 314.

¹⁶⁴ Palamas, *Triads* I,1,4, ed. Meyendorff, *Défense*, 16–17.

Christ and the Kingdom of God as a prophetic message, as well as in the Law of Moses, to denounce the adultery of Herod Antipas.

In this context (the beheading of the Baptist, Mk 6:14-30), Palamas interprets Herod and Herodias as his own opponents:

Standing accused by the prophetic, apostolic and patristic words which we offer, initially it is as if they shut them up in books [like the Baptist in prison], saying: "Let them stay in there, and may nobody use them or pronounce them," for they do not listen to the Lord who tells us, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye shall find eternal life" (cf. Jn 5:39).¹⁶⁵

With Jesus' own words Palamas declares the importance of the Scriptures and exhorts the assembly to explore them. *Homilies* 40 and 53, both delivered in a cenobitic monastic setting, presuppose more than just basic biblical knowledge on the part of the listeners. In addition, there should also have been novices present, and such a homily as part of the liturgical celebration clearly form part of the monastic formation. Again, this does not fit with Barlaam's accusation that the hesychast monks would despise the Sacred Scriptures or even forbid the novices to read them.

"And he was in the deserts, it says, till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (cf. Lk 1:80).¹⁶⁶ Like the child Mary, John the Baptist has to leave his hermitage when the time of his ministry has come: "But did John, the Lord's Baptist and Herald, leave that peaceful wilderness? He did, but he was sent by the Lord to give his people knowledge of salvation (cf. Lk 1:77) and to rebuke the disobedient."¹⁶⁷ Like the Theotokos and John the Baptist, St. Gregory Palamas and other hesychast monks had to leave their beloved hermitages, be it to minister as bishops, to engage in theological debates, or even to take up political issues. It remains an open question if the preparation for such ministry, even outside a cenobitic setting, could reasonably be called a "novitiate." If it is about following a vocation from God, to serve Him in His brothers and sisters, then I would say: yes. And it seems to me to be one of the questions for the twenty-first century whether we should not actively promote respective possibilities for the sake of the Church and our monasteries.

¹⁶⁵ Palamas, *Homily* 40, 17, ed. Pseftonkas, 436, trans. Veniamin, 319.

¹⁶⁶ Palamas, *Homily* 40, 6, ed. Pseftonkas, 430, trans. Veniamin, 314.

¹⁶⁷ Palamas, *Homily* 40, 26, ed. Pseftonkas, 440, trans. Veniamin, 323.

Concluding Remarks: “Enlighten My Darkness”

Neither Philotheos Kokkinos in his *Vita* of St. Gregory Palamas nor Palamas himself in his own writings have left us a *ratio formationis*, that is, regulations for the formation and education of novices. These we find, of various kinds and differing extent, in the legislation of Byzantine emperors (e.g., Justinian), the canons of councils and synods, and in *typika*. From all these, however, we cannot reasonably reconstruct a monolithic, comprehensive, and consistent version. With the examples analyzed above, I have tried to look at Palamas’ own monastic life against this contemporary background, to show conformities and differences, and also some affinities with the Western monastic tradition. More important, it would indeed seem, is how these details contribute to the larger picture of Palamas’ own personality, beginning with his childhood in a pious home, already influenced by monastic spirituality, his comprehensive secular education, even before entering monastic life, his mastery of the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers, his ascetic endeavors, his continuous prayer, his love for the hesychastic life as a living communion with God, and also his willingness to leave his favorite way of life, when necessary, to accept this, too, as a call, as a vocation from God.

Philotheos reports in his *Vita* that Palamas in the third year of his original “novitiate” with Nikodemos, “eagerly practicing fasting, keeping vigil, watchfulness and unceasing prayer to God day and night,” in some way adopted the Theotokos as his inner “novice master,” as a guide, patron, and intercessor (ὁδηγόν τε καὶ προστάτιν ὁμοῦ καὶ μεσίτιν προΐσταμένω τὴν Θεομήτορα). One day, St. John the Evangelist appeared to him, sent by the Theotokos, to ask him why he kept crying “Enlighten my darkness, enlighten my darkness” all the time. Palamas, in his answer, recognizes himself as full of passion and sins (i.e., the darkness) and thus asks for God’s mercy and illumination “to know his saving will and put it into practice.” The “apostolic visitor” then comforts and assures him of the constant accompaniment by and support from the Theotokos.¹⁶⁸ There are several aspects worth accentuating.

First, whatever I may have learned, added to my shelf of knowledge and capabilities as a kind of possession, be it biblical, theological, or philosophical, be it ascetic discipline or the various forms of prayer, nothing can substitute for the will of God and, even more, for putting it into practice. The greater the knowledge, the greater the need for light. It may be a hagiographic *topos*, but St. Gregory will have sensed its truth. Moreover, such illumination, if it is granted, is not once and for all, but the quest for it is a lifelong task. In this sense, the novitiate does not end before death. Secondly, I would like to take St. Gregory’s vision as an

¹⁶⁸ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 18, ed. Tsamis, 46–47, trans. Russell, 71–72.

encouragement for a broad education of novices, according to everyone's gifts, the needs of the respective communities, and the Church, just as it was in the case of St. Gregory. At the same time, I must keep this constantly under the heading of "enlighten my darkness" in order to discern the spirits within myself. Philotheos reports another, later vision of St. Gregory. A vessel full of milk in his hand started to flow over, the milk turning into excellent wine, which however was wasted. With reference to Jesus' parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30), Palamas is then told not to waste his gifts but to use them for the good of all, thus beginning to write, teach, and subsequently engage in the theological debates of his time.¹⁶⁹ The theologians and spiritual directors, monks and fellow Christians, which we need today, should know not only their subject matters, but also their own darkness. If their confidence in God's help is part of their life, then it is also an important part of the message itself. Thirdly, there is the Theotokos as a peculiar "novice master." She was willing to receive God Himself within her. In her, God became incarnate. From her, He comes to the world. Every Christian is called to be God's temple (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). I consider this an important part of our monastic spirituality which we must also convey to all that come to us, not least to the novices.

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¹⁶⁹ Kokkinos, *v.G.Pal.* 35-36, ed. Tsamis, 66-68, trans. Russell, 90-92.

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Contemporary Applications and Reflections



ON THE JESUS PRAYER

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ABSTRACT. This paper focuses on the Jesus Prayer, attempting to explain (1) how in this prayer, by the grace of God, our mind can be united with the heart and (2) what the fruits of this marvellous union are.

Keywords: prayer of the heart, Jesus Prayer, *hesychia*, hesychasm, St. Silouan the Athonite, St. Sophrony (Sakharov), knowledge of God, God's grace, return of the mind, contemplation, the "deep heart" of man, repentance, vision of light, discernment of thoughts

Introduction

Divine revelation makes manifest to us God as the Creator of all things, Who by the energy of His Word, "spake, and [all things] were made; He commanded, and they were created."¹ He fashioned man with special care, crowning him with glory and honour. He created his heart in a unique manner and rendered him capable of receiving Divine Being within himself. The honour that God bestowed on His creature lies in the fact that man can become a co-worker with God in bringing forth the divine image in his own heart and in the hearts of his brethren. The supreme act that manifests man's cooperation in the work of his own salvation is prayer.

Prayer is the union of two forms of energy: human created energy and divine uncreated energy. Its strength can become an intense spiritual upsurge that bursts through the tight ring of heavy matter.² Prayer is indeed an infinite

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¹ Ps 32:9 (LXX).

² Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *On Prayer*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1996), 49.

creation, superior to any art or science, since true prayer to the true God is communion with the Spirit of God, Who “maketh intercessions” in us “with groanings which cannot be uttered.”³

The pattern and example⁴ for the practice of prayer was left to us by Christ, Who “departed into a solitary place a great while before day,”⁵ and “He was there alone.”⁶ In His eternal Gospel, the Lord bears witness that He did not come to earth to minister unto the treacherous peace of this world, but to bring “a sword and division.”⁷ Prayer is one of the forms of that “division”⁸ the Lord has brought into the world, since it lifts him who is fond of it from the troubled multitude, as a mother lifts her child; it delivers him from the daily turmoil and despondency of the world that makes love grow cold.

Interpreting the writings of St. Silouan the Athonite, Elder Sophrony distinguishes two ways of knowledge.⁹ In the first, the main means of knowledge is the human mind. Along the typical path of science and the intellect, the mind of man is turned towards the exterior with the aim of seeking knowledge. Thus it comes unavoidably into confrontation with countless polymorphous phenomena and forms of information. In its effort to create, albeit artificially, some kind of unity from all the information, the mind takes refuge in a synthesis that does not ultimately respond adequately to the objective and ontological reality. The fascination that the power of reason exercises over man leads him to want to investigate and comprehend even the Divine world with his mind, mobilizing principally the workings of his imagination.¹⁰ Such an endeavor, which many would refer to as ‘theological creativity,’ can result in the subversion and contortion of the truth, so that man creates God according to his own image and likeness.¹¹

The second way of knowledge is spiritual in kind. This differs substantially from the intellectual way, because this knowledge is apprehended through existential communion as union “in very being.”¹² For St. Sophrony, knowledge

³ Rom 8:26.

⁴ See 1 Pt 2:21.

⁵ Mk 1:35.

⁶ Mt 14:23.

⁷ See Mt 10:34.

⁸ See Lk 2:53.

⁹ Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, trans. Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1991), 103.

¹⁰ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 155.

¹¹ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*; idem, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, trans. Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2004), 223.

¹² St. Sophrony the Athonite, *Ὁψόμεθα τὸν Θεὸν καθὼς ἐστὶ*, 8th edn (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2020), 310.

of God is experienced as “communion in being.”¹³ The one who knows comes into existential communion with the One Who is known. Man participates in this act not only with his intellect, but with all the fulness of his nature, and for this reason it restores his wholeness.¹⁴ In other words, this kind of knowledge of God differs qualitatively from the knowledge that man acquires through philosophical thought, because another form of life is imparted along with spiritual knowledge.¹⁵

By the strength of his mind, man can perhaps comprehend a few of the phenomena of this world. Apprehending Divine revelation, however, is possible only in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ This invisibly imparts knowledge of God to the soul, revealing the mysteries of eternal life and granting man strength to love the Beloved.¹⁷ Without the living experience of God, the human intellect alone cannot approach the ontological content of faith, which is ‘knowledge’ received from entering into the Energy of Divine Eternity.¹⁸ It is one thing for someone to believe “by hearing”¹⁹ and another entirely to know God.²⁰

According to Elder Sophrony, pure prayer is the safest path to knowledge of God.²¹ God is always known “in the bond of love” in the state of pure prayer, when the mind is “stationed in the heart in prayerful attention,”²² from where it also turns to God in “imageless prayer.”²³ Through pure noetic prayer the human mind enters initially into the fleshy heart. Gradually, however, it penetrates the depths of the heart that are no longer flesh. It discovers the deep, spiritual heart.²⁴ The man who prays from the depth of his being strives to stand before

¹³ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 112, 170; idem, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 217; idem, *Truth and Life* (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2016), 35.

¹⁴ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ζωῆς*, 4th edn (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2020), 18.

¹⁵ Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 35.

¹⁶ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 289.

¹⁷ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 366. For the reasons why man can only know God in the Holy Spirit, see Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 371, 396, 353–354, 361–372, 382–383.

¹⁸ “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3). See also Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 8.

¹⁹ Rom 10:17.

²⁰ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 86–87, 189, 301, 354. See also idem, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 223.

²¹ For a definition of pure prayer, see Archimandrite Peter (Vryzas), *Theology as a Spiritual State in the Life and Teaching of Saint Sophrony the Athonite* (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2019), 75–119 (chapter 2, “Hesychastic Prayer and the Emerging of the Deep Heart”).

²² Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 133.

²³ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 155.

²⁴ See Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 47.

God “with a pure mind.” Through the action of grace, man’s attention that before was turned towards the earth is now confined within his heart, and from there it ascends to the spiritual sphere of “the things which are not seen and eternal,”²⁵ where “he prays as an eternal mind before the first eternal Mind.”²⁶ Because of the vastness of the subject of prayer, this paper will focus on the Jesus Prayer, attempting to explain (1) how in this prayer, by the grace of God, our mind can be united with the heart and (2) what the fruits of this marvellous union are.

The Jesus Prayer

In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul says, as if it were common knowledge to all Christians: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”²⁷ And we have three means of becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit: the word of God, the Jesus Prayer, and the Divine Liturgy. The opening of our heart to the word of God, the invocation of the Name of Christ through the Jesus Prayer and the communion of His precious Body and Blood constitute our three main activities in our act of worship towards God.

It is nevertheless very important for us to point out that in the conscience of our Church and of the Holy Fathers, who are the glorious members of the Church, the word ‘worship’ signifies something truly sublime. It signifies the true calling of man, which lies within the pre-eternal plan of God. This plan has destined for man to become incorruptible and eternal through a life of loving communion with God his Creator. From the beginning, man was fashioned according to God’s “image” and after His “likeness.” He was given the potential to receive the divine form of being, to become a god by grace and precisely for this reason the true knowledge of God is accessible to man. Prayer is one of the most precious and necessary means for the fulfilment and perfection of this glorious purpose. According to the words of Saint John of Sinai, “Prayer, by reason of its nature, is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the world and brings about reconciliation with God.”²⁸ God’s image is preserved in man even after the Fall and that is why it is natural for him to seek for the

²⁵ Cf. 2 Cor 4:18.

²⁶ Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Οἰκοδομῶντας τὸν ναὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ μέσα μας καὶ στοὺς ἀδελφούς μας* (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2013), vol. 1, 140; vol. 2 (2014), 53.

²⁷ 1 Cor 3:16.

²⁸ St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2012), 212 (step 28).

Absolute in his life. Being a bearer of the immortal breath of God, man can never be content with the created things of this world; neither can he find real peace while he is separated from his Creator:

Being made in the image of the Absolute, he is possessed by an unquenchable thirst for the ultimate knowledge of God, and does not feel satisfied with intermediate states. This knowledge will shed light in the darkness of his ignorance concerning his own existence and his personal destiny.²⁹

The Jesus Prayer is a short invocation which the faithful try to repeat ceaselessly calling upon the Name of the Lord with the words: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner" or else, "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me." The first part of the prayer, "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God," contains a confession of faith in the divinity of Christ, but also in all the Holy Trinity. In the second part there is a confession made by the one praying who acknowledges his sinfulness. These two parts of the prayer, the confession of faith and the repentance of the one praying, give fullness and content to the prayer.³⁰ The foundation of the Jesus Prayer can be found in the words of the Lord: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full [...]. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."³¹ Among the first who witnessed the power of the Name of Christ were surely His disciples:

When they were sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves" to bring peace to the world, to heal the sick, to proclaim the coming of the Divine Kingdom, according to the Gospel "the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Thus the history of the Jesus Prayer dates from apostolic times.³²

Already from the beginning of Christianity we see that the invocation of the Name of Christ and the communion of His Body and Blood had become the two poles of the life of Christians.

²⁹ Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou), *Christ, Our Way and Our Life – A presentation of the Theology of Archimandrite Sophrony*, 2nd edn (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2012), 159.

³⁰ Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou), *The Enlargement of the Heart in the Theology of Saint Silouan the Athonite and Elder Sophrony of Essex* (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2013), 138.

³¹ Jn 16:24, 23.

³² Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 122.

Purpose: Union of Mind and Heart – Stages in Prayer

Progress in the practice of the Jesus Prayer depends greatly on having a correct theory concerning the ways that lead to salvation. The beginning of spiritual life is signified by the fight against the passions. The more man is initiated in prayer the more he realises that the centre of all the spiritual battles against the passions and the devil is a specific part of his body: his very heart. There, in his heart, he feels the influence of passionate thoughts, but he cannot see further than that yet. However, when his prayer attracts the waves of God's grace, these visitations of grace reveal to him that in fact the heart is something far greater than he could ever suspect. In the Old Testament, man is defined as a "deep heart."³³ We also read that "the heart of man seeks a spiritual and divine sensation."³⁴ In other words, the deep heart of man is the place where he accepts the visitations of God's grace and, even more, it is the place where man is united with God:

The heart of every individual human is made by God in a specific and unique way. It is unrepeatable; it is the centre of the human hypostasis-person. Man is majestic when he approaches God with his "deep heart," for there is the place [...] where the infinity of the Lord is revealed, and the prayerful spirit of man is concentrated.³⁵

The way that leads to the "deep heart" passes through our physical heart. The relationship we find between the two of them is the same as that which we can trace between our mind and our brain. The significant difference lies in the fact that man uses his brain and his physical heart only until the time of his death, whereas the mind and the spiritual "deep heart" accompany the soul after the departure from this world. Nevertheless, during the time of our earthly life, the actions and the energies of our mind are strongly connected with the function of the brain, and in the same way our physical heart remains the centre of our being where all the aspects of our spiritual life are made manifest.

The purpose of the Jesus Prayer is the unity of the mind and the heart. The mind of man (νοῦς) has its own energies. Usually, as we grow up living in the world, we learn to live outside our heart and our mind uses its energies through the functions of our brain and the senses of our body; in this way, our mind is dispersed in the things of the world around us. However, the purpose of all our labours as Christians is for the mind to seek and find the heart anew. When man starts to live with repentance and with the invocation of the Name

³³ Cf. Ps 64:6.

³⁴ Cf. Prv 15:14 (LXX).

³⁵ Archimandrite Zacharias, *Christ, Our Way and Our Life*, 169.

of Christ, the moment comes when, by the grace of God, the heart emerges from the thick layers of passions that had covered it over the years. This is a very significant moment, because now the mind which was before scattered outside must make an inward movement and be united with the heart.

Already from the first centuries of Christianity we find that some of the Fathers of the Church speak about this threefold progress: the mind makes an inward movement through prayer and is united with the “deep heart;” then, through this incredible unity, it is lifted up to union with God, which union transmits the perfect knowledge of God. Saint Dionysios the Areopagite was one of the first Fathers to name this movement “the cyclical movement of the mind.” Many Fathers of the Church call this cyclical movement “a movement that knows no delusion.” This means that during this movement the devil cannot pollute the mind with his alien thoughts. The fervency of the spirit that is activated in the “deep heart” of man through the invocation of the Name of Christ becomes for the devil an intolerable furnace and that is the reason why he cannot approach the “deep heart” of man. The pain of repentance together with the Jesus Prayer kindles a certain warmth in the heart, which forces the devil to stay outside the walls of the fortress of our soul. “This is the baptism of fire which the Lord promised: the mind descends into the heart to be baptised in its fire [...] that it may recover its proper function. Man then regains the capacity to be in possession of his whole nature, his whole being, and to direct it towards God.”³⁶

Comments on the return of the mind to the heart can also be found in the works of St. Basil the Great. But the one Father that made a very inspiring analysis of this cyclical movement of the mind is our Father among the saints Gregory Palamas. According to this great saint of our Church, the first movement has already happened with the original Fall of man when our mind spread out into the visible world and became attached to it. The second movement occurs when, by the grace of God and through the practice of the Jesus Prayer, the mind finds the heart and is united with it. Once the mind is united with the heart, then man possesses his entire nature, the powers of his soul are united again. And the third movement takes place when man directs his whole being to God.³⁷ This is why the Fathers say that if you enter the inner chamber of your heart, you have entered the chamber of heaven.

If we follow the history of the Old Testament we find that one of the most important moments for the people of Israel was when King Solomon succeeded in building a temple for God in Jerusalem. And we read that the temple was

³⁶ Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou), *The Hidden Man of the Heart* (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2007), 193 (chapter 12).

³⁷ St. Gregory Palamas, “The Hesychast Method of Prayer and the Transformation of the Body,” in *The Triads*, trans. Nicholas Gendle (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 44.

consecrated when God “placed His Name there forever;” and because of this Name “His heart would be there for all time.”³⁸ God’s presence in the temple was so strong that for the Jews of old it was truly the place where God lived; it was the house of God beyond any doubt. In the same way, man becomes the temple of God when he “calls upon the Lord from a pure heart.”³⁹ It was a great miracle of God’s goodness to come and fill with His presence the temple which His elect had built. But when the fullness of the time was come God showed that His love for mankind was infinite. The coming of Christ into the world made manifest that our God is a jealous God for whom the temples made by stone are too little, for he wants to make the heart of every man a living temple not made by hands. Then, the glory of the Lord and His love, which is love unto the end, fills the house of our heart and it becomes His house for ever.

The Creator of our nature “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” The Word of the Father “was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The Eternal manifested Himself in time. This new revelation brought us a new Divine Name upon which we can call: JESUS which means Saviour. The Name Jesus first and foremost indicates to us the purpose of God’s coming in the flesh “for our salvation.” In assuming our nature God indicates the possibility for us, too, to become sons of God. A great Light came into the life of the world. A new period began. History from Adam to Moses was indeed holy. It was also holy from the moment of the Appearance of God on Mt. Sinai; but it is holier still from the moment of the coming of Christ.⁴⁰

Something that is very interesting to note, however, is the disposition with which Solomon offered up his great prayer to God before the consecration of the temple. Before posing his supplication, his request, king Solomon confessed a great truth: he acknowledged that man is fallen, that man is justly separated from God and that there is an immense distance between the earth and the place where the Lord of hosts lives; and that is why Solomon said the following words in his prayer: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”⁴¹ As we know, God’s response to that prayer was that immediately He filled the temple with His Glory. Now however, His condescension is much greater, because He accepts to come and dwell in our hearts. This makes it evident that

³⁸ Cf. 1 Kgs 9:3.

³⁹ 1 Tm 2:21-22.

⁴⁰ Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 130.

⁴¹ 1 Kgs 8:27.

our approach to Him should be even more humble than before. Something that can help us keep a humble spirit is the knowledge that our heart is too small for Him. The unity of mind and heart, and through it our union with God, is a work that can be accomplished only by the grace of God; and it is given to us freely as a gift, not as a reward for our efforts. We have done nothing to deserve recompense from God, since He first loved us, and “He died for us while we were yet sinners.”⁴² If the Jews, during their journey in the desert suffered persecutions and tribulations longing for the day they would meet the Promised Land, then we should also suffer the pain of repentance, bearing the Name of Christ with patience, because it is the only Name under heaven that can transform our hearts into living temples for the showing of His glory and thus lead us into the Promised Land where we shall live in the Lord’s presence for ever.

The rule in prayer is that quantity brings quality. That is to say, the prayer of the beginner cannot be pure and undistracted, and that is why it has to be said aloud and as frequently as possible. In practice, the Jesus Prayer should be said continuously, and we must try to hold fast to it, but not only with our spirit, because we are easily distracted. A gradual ascent into prayer is the most trustworthy. The beginner is usually recommended to start with the first step, which is verbal prayer (saying the prayer aloud), until body, tongue, brain, and heart assimilate it. The time this takes varies, yet: the stronger the repentance, the shorter the road.

It is possible to establish certain stages in the development of the Jesus Prayer. First, we say the prayer with our lips while trying to concentrate our attention on the Name and the words. Next, we no longer move our lips but pronounce the Name of Jesus Christ, and what follows after, in our minds, mentally. In the third stage mind and heart combine to act together: the attention of the mind is centred in the heart and the prayer is said there. Fourthly, the prayer acts on its own. This happens when the prayer is established in the heart and, with no special effort on our part, continues there, where the mind is concentrated. Finally, the charismatic prayer. Now the prayer starts to act like a gentle flame within us, as inspiration from on High, rejoicing the heart with a sensation of Divine love and delighting the mind in spiritual contemplation.⁴³

According to Saint Sophrony, this last stage is sometimes accompanied by a vision of Light—the uncreated Light of God. The invocation of the Name of Christ creates such a state in man’s heart that life becomes really a foretaste of the life in heaven.

⁴² Rom 5:8.

⁴³ Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 142–143.

Fruits of the Jesus Prayer

But what are the fruits that spring forth when the mind is united with the heart and invokes the Name of the Lord therein?

A. Peace and Joy

The aim of the Jesus Prayer is to help the Christian remain in the living presence of God. This presence in some of its forms becomes “a consuming fire.” It contains divine strength that restores our hearts from the death of sin and light that enlightens the mind. It is a power that banishes the spirit of evil and helps us to discern what goes on in our heart and mind. Our being is healed and this awareness of being whole again transmits great joy to the heart of man.

Once we surrender ourselves to the labours of repentance and we shed tears of compunction, then the cage in our heart is demolished, the fire of the passions is extinguished, we are spiritually reborn through the presence of the Comforter and once again the soul becomes a palace of purity. God who is above nature descends into the heart and sits on it as upon a throne of glory, giving peace to all our inner powers.⁴⁴

B. The Mind Is No Longer Attached to the Vain Things of This World

“Walking in the Spirit” man no longer “fulfils the lusts of the flesh.”⁴⁵ The “pride of life”⁴⁶ by which the world is led astray cannot influence his heart the way it did before. Likewise, the intellect no longer becomes the victim of the intrusion of unclean thoughts through imagination, since it is no longer dispersed throughout the whole creation, but it has found a stable base in the heart.⁴⁷ The whole man is freed little by little from the dominance of sin and becomes the target of the secret visitations of the Lord.⁴⁸ Having put off the old man and being renewed in the spirit of his mind, he now puts on the new man which is created in righteousness and perfect holiness in the fear of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Niketas Stethatos in *The Philokalia. The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. Gerald E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 120–121 (modified).

⁴⁵ Cf. Gal 5:16.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1 Jn 2:16.

⁴⁷ Cf. Archimandrite Zacharias, *Christ, Our Way and Our Life*, 174.

⁴⁸ Cf. Jb 7:18.

⁴⁹ Cf. Eph 4:22–24; 2 Cor 7:1.

C. Man Enters the Presence of the Living God

By invoking the Name of Christ with the mind in the heart, man enters the presence of the living God and in the light of that presence he is able, for the first time in his life, to see the true state of his heart. Seeing the darkness and the corruption that he bears in himself, he realizes the mortal wages of sin he has been carrying all the years of his former life.⁵⁰ Having allowed his senses to follow “the carnal mind”⁵¹ of this world, he now recognises the distorted image that covers his heart and he thus acquires a humble spirit. He now boldly takes upon himself the work of spiritual mourning, feeding his soul with the bread of tears which the Lord provides sumptuously to those who make a sincere decision to follow Him to the end.⁵² This sight may seem fearful to our eyes, but in fact it is a great gift from God. The Lord in His goodness allows man to see his true state so that the tension of his prayer increases more and more. “Progress in prayer unfailingly entails an ever-deepening recognition of our sinfulness. Only then we can invoke the wondrous Name of Christ with an ever-increasing inspiration, eagerly seeking for the restoration of His image in us.”⁵³

Just as the senses of the body are pulling us almost violently towards what attracts them, so also the intellect, once it tastes the divine goodness, leads us towards invisible blessings. Everything desires what is similar to itself: the soul, since it is bodiless, desires heavenly goods, while the body, being dust, seeks earthly comforts. Therefore if we labour to refine our material nature through prayer and repentance we shall surely come to experience the immaterial consolation of God’s grace.⁵⁴

D. Discernment of Thoughts Happens Naturally

The man who has restored the unity of mind and heart through the Jesus Prayer is “no longer ignorant of the devil’s devices.”⁵⁵ Discernment of thoughts happens naturally, since his heart becomes like a crystal clear mirror in which man can perceive all the evil inclinations of his mind and all the machinations of the unclean spirits. The heart is now like a fortress in which the mind is enthroned as a king, seeing the thoughts of the enemy from far and not allowing them to intrude into the sacred work of prayer. In a peculiar way, he who loves

⁵⁰ Cf. Rom 6:23.

⁵¹ Cf. Col 2:18.

⁵² Cf. Ps 79:6.

⁵³ Cf. Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 162 (part 2).

⁵⁴ St. Diadochos of Photiki, “On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination,” in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 259 (modified).

⁵⁵ See 2 Cor 2:11.

the Name of Christ becomes familiar with His word. The reading of the Gospels gives great joy to the heart and becomes a very creative act, since the inner prayer of the heart inspires man to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”⁵⁶

E. Man Acquires Purity of Mind and Heart

In the practice of the Jesus Prayer the heart holds a central place, but the function of the mind as well is extremely significant. As the wise Solomon declares, we must “keep our heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the senses of our body may be five, but, considering the inner man, these five senses merge into one inner sense which is based in the heart. The mind and the heart constitute the centre of every individual human being. Once the mind and the heart are cleansed, purity is restored both in the body and the soul of man. Nevertheless, it is very important to note here that it is easier to cleanse the mind than to purify the heart.

Purity of mind is one thing, and purity of the heart is another, just as a limb differs from the whole body [...]. The heart is what contains and holds the inner senses: it is the root of all the senses; but if the root is holy, then the branches are holy. It is evident, therefore, that if the heart is purified, all the senses are made pure. Now if the mind, on the one hand, is a little diligent in reading the divine Scriptures and toils a little in prayer (in fasting, vigil, and stillness), it will forget its former activity and become pure, as long as it abstains from sinful thoughts (alien concerns). Even so its purity will not be permanent, for just as it is quickly cleansed, so too it is quickly defiled.⁵⁸

But the heart, on the other hand, is only made pure by many afflictions and deprivations. Man has to pass through the fire of repentance and to keep this fire for a substantial amount of time in his life. He really has to humble himself under the mighty hand of God until the Lord grants him again “in due time”⁵⁹ the purity of heart. Only tearful prayer of repentance can destroy the roots of passion in our heart and only the invocation of the Name of Jesus can cleanse, regenerate, and hallow our nature. Man must be patient in the invocation of the Name of Christ knowing that: “Any purity that comes quickly, with little

⁵⁶ Cf. 2 Cor 10:5.

⁵⁷ Prv 4:23.

⁵⁸ *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011), 133 (*Homily* 3).

⁵⁹ Cf. 1 Pt 5:6.

time and slight labour, is also quickly lost and defiled. But the purity that comes through many afflictions and is acquired over a long period of time in the soul's superior part (which is the heart) is not endangered by any moderate assault."⁶⁰ "Once the heart is purified, its purity can no longer be stained by little things, nor is it discouraged by great and open conflicts,"⁶¹ because "greater is He that is in our hearts, than he that is in the world."⁶²

The heart that has been purified by God's grace acquires the humility which St. Silouan the Athonite describes when he speaks about the soul of the humble man: "The soul of the humble man is like the sea. Throw a stone into the sea—for a moment it will ruffle the surface, and then sink to the bottom. Thus do afflictions disappear down in the heart of the humble man because the strength of the Lord is with him."⁶³

Conclusion

During the years that the Jews were wandering in the desert it is said that the Lord was feeding them by sending manna from heaven. This heavenly food had a very special property: once the Jews would put it in their mouth it would transform into that kind of food that each one of them desired. Thus the Lord was satisfying the hunger of His people in a way that was fulfilling their personal desires as well. Using this as an example we could say that the same miracle happens with the Name of the Lord; it responds to the personal needs of each one of us, feeding us with bountiful mercies. The Jesus Prayer becomes all in all: it feeds the hungry, it heals the sick, it transmits "the peace of God which passeth all understanding,"⁶⁴ it gives us such an inspiration that every day is teaching us something new and also it satisfies our desire for freedom in a way that surpasses all our expectations. Man is truly free when he is in full possession of his true nature. Unity of mind, heart, and senses allows him to fulfil the two great commandments; he is now free because he can "love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself."⁶⁵

In the act of prayer we strive to unite with that which transcends our created nature. Consequently, in this world, prayer is a 'supernatural' act, which is why every natural thing proves to be an obstacle to this activity. Sometimes

⁶⁰ *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, 133.

⁶¹ Cf. *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, 133.

⁶² 1 Jn 4:4.

⁶³ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 305.

⁶⁴ Phil 4:7.

⁶⁵ Lk 10:27.

the heart of man becomes dry, the struggle to turn to God in prayer becomes toilsome, and the corruptible body, which is unable to ascend to the realm of the Spirit, resists prayer or grows weary. Nevertheless, according to the words of Saint Sophrony the Athonite, we must always take care to ensure that “every reduction in our prayer-strength must be as brief as possible.”⁶⁶

It is impossible for the man who prays to know when God will be well-pleased and condescend to His suffering creature. Even when man surrenders himself to prayer unto exhaustion, it does not necessarily mean that God will draw nigh. Such events depend purely on the good pleasure of God alone. “We only yearn for Him; weep in repentance over our perversion; long for Him to heal us; weary of being separate from Him.”⁶⁷ As we read in the writings of Saint Silouan the Athonite:

The Lord does not desire the death of a sinner, and on him who repents He bestows the grace of the Holy Spirit, which gives peace to the soul and freedom for mind and heart to dwell in God. When the Holy Spirit forgives us our sins we receive freedom to pray to God with an undistracted mind. Then the soul can freely contemplate God and live serene and joyous in Him. And this is true freedom.⁶⁸

Prayer loves those who pray. The invocation of the Name of Christ unites us with the Person of Christ, bestowing upon us the royal freedom of sonship because “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”⁶⁹ “Unto us is the promise.”⁷⁰ We only need to try and then we will surely “taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁷¹

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⁶⁶ Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 12.

⁶⁷ Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 81.

⁶⁸ Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 342.

⁶⁹ 1 Cor 6:17.

⁷⁰ Cf. Acts 2:39.

⁷¹ Ps 33:9.

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STILLNESS AS A MEANS TO ATTAIN TO THE GODLY PASSION OF LOVE

Zacharias ZACHAROU*

ABSTRACT. This paper explores the role of mental prayer in achieving the image and likeness of God and renouncing worldly passions, bringing hesychastic theory into conversation with the life and outward conditions of modern man.

Keywords: St. Silouan the Athonite, St. Sophrony (Sakharov), ascetic labor, stillness, *hesychia*, hesychasm, spiritual perfection, mental prayer, prayer of the heart, divine likeness, contemplation and vision of God, spiritual pleasure

In writing the *Life* of his Elder, Saint Silouan, Saint Sophrony summarized the spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church. In the book *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, he describes the path of repentance and spiritual perfection in all its length; he shows how man turns from his fallen state to God, how he undertakes the work of repentance, and which measures he can attain by the grace of Christ.

God is passionless and, as His image, man was also created passionless. Man is a reasonable creature. His beauty and his ability to receive and bear the breath of his Creator constitute the image of God in him. The dynamic increase from one fulness of love and sanctification to a greater fulness is the ineffable gift of likeness to God. By bestowing His image upon man, God gave him a spiritual capital. Through the gift of His likeness, He opened before him the way, so that by walking therein and cooperating with God, he might attain to the fulness of the gift. God wanted His creature to become the author of his own likeness to Him, so that He might render praise to him.

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According to the words of the holy Fathers, the model for man's creation was the Son and Word of the Father, Who was not yet incarnate, but known by God. Moreover, St. Gregory Palamas underlines that God created man's nature to be suitable for the "future teaching" of the Gospel.¹ This word of the saint explains the fact that for those who are images of God and who strive to acquire His likeness, the word of the Gospel is known, intimate, one with their nature. Conversely, it is a criterion of man's spiritual progress: when the Christian athlete begins to feel intimacy with the word of God, when he has similar thoughts and dispositions to those contained in the Gospel, it means that the image of God in him grows towards His likeness.

True human nature is revealed in the man who rises to the likeness of God. After the Fall, man is divided. He wants to do good, but a greater force impels him towards evil. The Apostle Paul vividly explains:

For the good that I would do, I do not: but the evil which I would not do, that I do ... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.²

The passions are indeed part of every man's inheritance from his forefathers; but they also represent the rust that he himself has accumulated by his own transgressions under the influence of the enemy, who is the author of all evil, the "murderer of men from the beginning,"³ always plotting ways to bury man's life under the earth.

The purpose of the ascetic labor of mental prayer is precisely to find the primordial beauty that God had bestowed upon man when He created him, as well as to attain to divine likeness. Man's striving is centered on the removal of the rust that covered the beauty of the reasonable creature through the counsel of the devil. The image and likeness of God in man are in a sense the preconditions for beginning this struggle. Man could not undertake any ascetic labor if he did not bear the breath of God within him and if he were not destined to acquire His likeness.

In Paradise, instead of cultivating the power of the mind with which God had endowed him, and instead of absorbing the vision of God with every pore of his being and imitating Him, man turned toward the created world and desired it with sensual pleasure. In this way, the senses opened the door to the fall and the

¹ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 45*, 1, trans. Christopher Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The Homilies* (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2014), 353.

² Rom 7:19, 22-23.

³ Jn 8:44.

perversion of the blessed vision. The mind, which until then had been immersed in contemplation of God, now turned toward the earth and was dispersed into the creation.

In order to reverse this vicious circle, the worker of godliness first blocks the outlets of his senses. So that his mind can freely ascend to God, he does not allow his eyes to wander and cling with curiosity to visible things. He does the same with his other senses. When he has gathered all his senses into his heart and his spirit has dominion over the passions, he begins to discern the true nature of his soul. Only then does he begin to discover the hidden treasures concealed in his innermost parts and to behold the beauty of the image of God which he bears within. If the senses are not transformed, man remains spiritually blind and unable to reach the blessedness of likeness to God. Certainly, the man who practices holy stillness is not annihilated but rather becomes a true hypostasis. The senses are not abolished but are transformed into spiritual faculties. Likewise, sinful passions are transformed into godly passions.

A concrete example is the passion of love for sensual pleasures, which nowadays has been elevated to the rank of art and is presented as natural, ensnaring most people. However, there is also spiritual pleasure. Carnal pleasure lasts for a short while and afterwards becomes destructive, stripping man from grace. At the other end of the spectrum, spiritual pleasure is indescribable. When man curbs the senses that cause carnal pleasure, he gradually comes to know spiritual pleasure, incomparable to the carnal in its effects, intensity, and duration. Spiritual pleasure is regenerating and renewing.

Those who have never experienced the indescribable tension of spiritual life believe that it is tedious, dull, and deprived of joy. Yet when the saints speak of spiritual pleasure, they describe it as a sober drunkenness of spirit. What more powerful experience can man have on earth than that described by the Apostle Paul?

I knew a man in Christ ... (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one was caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.⁴

After the Fall, man's mind is fragmented and dispersed. It imagines, thinks, flies from one thought to another, from one desire to another; in general, it cannot remain anchored anywhere. But he who receives the illumination of the Holy Spirit

⁴ 2 Cor 12:2-4.

naturally brings down and anchors his mind in the heart, blocking all its entrances. In this state, the heart melts with a flame of divine love and becomes like soft wax which can be molded into any shape. On such a heart Christ hastens to imprint the seal of His holy Form. Now, astounded and reduced to silence, the mind can turn its attention nowhere else. It only beholds the image of the Word of God engraved on the heart.

The state described by St. Sophrony Sakharov, wherein the mind is stationed in prayerful attention in the heart, is fearful. The mind now resembles a king who has entered the safety of his fortress. He sees from afar the enemies who attempt to attack, but he repels them, and they are unable to enter this holy place. "All these additional elements – alien, intrusive factors – the mind stationed in the heart resists and repels with prayer."⁵ In this way, with his mind firmly established in his heart, the Christian ascetic becomes passionless.

To be sure, these states are too lofty for the earthly man. However, "the Lord is at hand."⁶ If man turns to God with his whole heart and offers repentance with mighty tears from the depths of his contrite spirit, God can grant him lofty states within a short period of time. At other times, He allows man to be tested so that he learns to appreciate His gift. Some saints received the gift of the prayer of the heart very quickly, even the first time they tried to practice it, while others received the gift simply by hearing of it.

God desires to give His grace; and if He foresees that the Christian will be worthy of His trust, He will not tarry to bestow His gift upon him. Again, if man is unstable, God may let him struggle for years until, through repeated oscillations, he learns one lesson, that salvation is "not of ourselves: it is the gift of God,"⁷ Who does not give His gifts without discernment.

The mind that stands in prayer in the heart discerns every thought that approaches before it attempts to enter in. The whole being of the hesychast ascetic becomes one eye, and the tension of his spirit cannot be described or conceived by human imagination. Outwardly, he shows no piety, nor does he make spectacularly devout gestures. He who possesses the gift does everything to remain unnoticed, "so as not to appear unto men,"⁸ so that no one suspects what is taking place in his heart. Deep sighs and outward manifestations of contrition are unacceptable in the spiritual life. In his cell or his private space, the man of prayer is more free to express himself; there his heart can groan, and his eyes can shed "rivers of waters;"⁹

⁵ Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1991), 145.

⁶ Phil 4:5.

⁷ Cf. Eph 2:8.

⁸ Mt 6:16.

⁹ Cf. Ps 119:136.

his body can freely take the posture of sorrowful mourning, with hands raised in anguish to find the mighty helping hand of God. When he is alone, the ascetic is only mindful of attracting the mercy and grace of God.

In *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, we find the story of an ascetic who had gone to pray in the evening in the church of the monastery long before the beginning of the service. Thinking he was alone, he let out a sigh from the depths of his heart. At that moment, he heard a rustling and realized that someone was behind him. He turned and saw a young novice sitting in the corner. He went, made a prostration before him and said to him: "Forgive me, brother, for I have not yet made a beginning."¹⁰

In order not to provoke his brother, neither the monk nor the Christian in the world is allowed to reveal his spiritual state. This is the guidance that the holy Fathers have bequeathed to us. In this way, he who has a gift is protected and does not scandalize his brethren. St Sophrony refers to and analyses the subject of concealing one's inner self.¹¹ True prophets are lords over their own spirit, since, according to the word of the Apostle, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."¹² In order to conceal the treasure of their hearts and not be esteemed by men, the saints sometimes behave as if they have lost their wits in the eyes of the world. Their minds scrutinize everything like lightning, while outwardly they appear poor, pitiful, and witless. Thus, their heart remains wounded with spiritual pain and avoids the false satisfaction of vainglory and human praise. Saint John of the Ladder calls vainglory an "underground sewage pipe" that waters the passions of the soul with its foulness; whereas praises, he describes as "fertilizer."¹³

Saint Isaac calls the passions "an addition" to the soul. Indeed, passions and demons are alien to the nature of the soul. However, as long as man accepts the energy of the devil and follows his suggestions, he is "taken captive by him at his will,"¹⁴ unable to distinguish truth from the phantoms of truth. Thoughts bombard him, accuse, and clash with one another. A great struggle is required for man to separate his way from the way of the enemy, to expel him from his nature. If he succeeds, he sees henceforth the spirit of evil existing and moving outside him. But while he is still at war and the enemy has access to his soul, man is in great confusion and turmoil.

¹⁰ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 90 (John the Dwarf), 237 (Tithoes).

¹¹ See Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, 248–249.

¹² 1 Cor 14:32.

¹³ St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2012), 61 (step 2:6).

¹⁴ Cf. 2 Tm 2:26.

At holy Baptism man renounces Satan. If he has prepared himself properly, through the grace of the sacrament, the devil no longer finds a place in him. The question, however, is how to preserve this grace. If man begins to yield to the suggestions of the enemy, the devil makes his way back into his soul. He finds his house "swept, and garnished... and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there."¹⁵

He who has succeeded in keeping the grace of Baptism or has regained it through the union of mind and heart, receives strength to resist the power of the enemy and can only be tempted from without. Such were the temptations that approached Christ in the wilderness. They were entirely external. Therefore, after His dialogue with the devil, he departed. With man, however, such events do not occur exactly in the same way because the enemy usually finds a grip and tempts him from within. Then the struggle against sin is relentless, "unto blood,"¹⁶ but the Lord is also "nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."¹⁷

The struggle is rough, arduous, and prolonged. However, sometimes the Lord gives deliverance in the twinkling of an eye, as it happened with the good thief on the cross. "Few were the words that the thief uttered upon the Cross, yet great was the faith that he showed. In one moment, he was saved: he opened the gates of Paradise and was the first to enter in."¹⁸

Something similar can happen to the man who is going through a great trial, hanging, as it were on a cross, even if he caused it himself with his errors and sins. If he finds the strength to transform the energy of his suffering into the spiritual energy of prayer, in one instant he can be saved. How many times has this happened to people suffering from terminal illnesses? How many people suffering from cancer have received the great grace of the saints without any asceticism and made their journey to heaven as martyrs without any obstacle? They only embraced the word of the Apostle: "Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's,"¹⁹ and they were praying: "I am Thy servant, O Lord; save me."²⁰

In general, if the Christian rejects the temptation to face his afflictions on a human level; if with the energy of the pain he endures on his cross he lifts his mind to God; if his sole concern is whether he lives or dies to be pleasing to Him; then his cross becomes the Cross of Christ that leads to the Resurrection and eternal life.

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 12:44-45; Lk 11:25-26.

¹⁶ Cf. Heb 12:4.

¹⁷ Ps 34:18.

¹⁸ Matins of Holy Friday, *antiphon* 14.

¹⁹ Rom 14:8.

²⁰ Cf. Ps 115:7.

Even the great calamities of our times can be a way in which God Himself evangelizes. And since people are no longer able to undertake great ascetic labors, it may be that, through the trials He allows, God opens the way to enlarge the hearts of His servants and grant His great grace. In the pit of his spiritual poverty, man has become a faint-hearted and self-centered creature. But when the grace of the Holy Spirit visits him and opens his heart, he begins to ponder the fate of all men and live it as his personal destiny. Then, not only the life of his brethren, but the life of the whole world becomes his own.

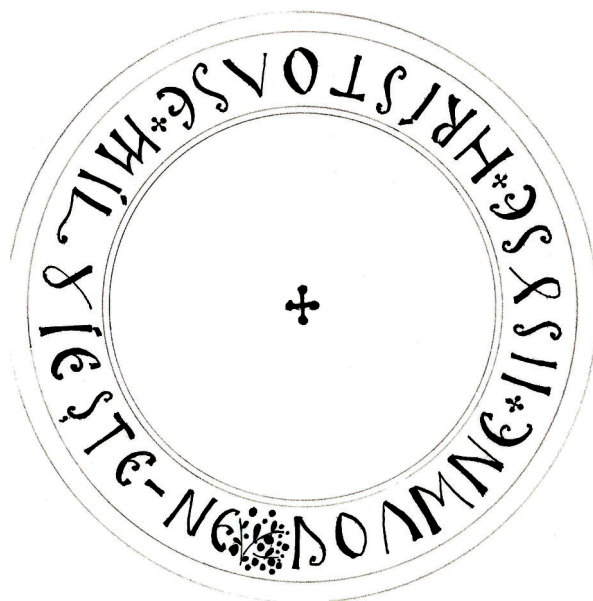
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“ATTEND TO THYSELF:” ATTENTIVENESS AND DIGITAL CULTURE

Maximos CONSTAS*

ABSTRACT. The rise of digital culture has created both tremendous human possibilities as well as tremendous challenges and problems. Powerful corporate and commercial interests compete for our attention, which has become a valuable commodity in the online world. Living in a culture of organized distractions, human awareness is fragmented, causing us to lose touch with ourselves, our neighbors, the world around us, and God. This paper explores the traditional ascetic practice of attention and watchfulness which it recommends as a counterweight to modern cultural, psychological, and spiritual fragmentation. The principal sources under consideration are drawn from the *Philokalia*, a collection of writings devoted to the practice of “attending to oneself.”

Keywords: digital culture, attention, watchfulness, hesychasm, *Philokalia*, spirituality, distractions

The Distracted Life

Having promised us a technological utopia, our ubiquitous and intrusive cyberculture has instead precipitated a spiritual crisis in which human experience has been systematically fragmented and the coherence of the self increasingly threatened. Living in a culture of organized distractions, our thoughts are isolated and disconnected, preventing us from seeing and experiencing the wholeness of life. Distraction and fragmentation have negative consequences for the organization of knowledge; they prevent us from engaging our spiritual depth

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and render us incapable of engaging the spiritual depth of others, for having lost touch with our own personhood, we can receive neither the personhood of our neighbor nor of God.

Beginning in 2009, the New York Times ran a series of articles called “Driven to Distraction,” focusing on accidents and fatalities involving distracted drivers.¹ The series expanded to include “Distracted Doctoring,” reporting on the large number of surgeons who are placing personal calls during surgery; on medical technicians who are texting while running cardio-pulmonary bypass machines; and anesthesiologists who are shopping online for airline tickets.²

Distractions created by social media in the work place cost the American economy \$650 billion per year, with social media interruptions occurring every ten minutes, and with workers spending 41% of their time on Facebook. In the US alone, over 12 billion collective hours are spent browsing on social networks every day. The average college student spends 3 hours a day checking social sites, but only 2 hours a day studying. Alongside the official statistics, there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence, such as the September 2013 report concerning train passengers in San Francisco who were too distracted by their smartphones and tablet computers to notice the presence of an armed gunman, who had been brandishing his weapon in plain view for several minutes before he shot and killed a 20-year-old commuter (the entire episode was caught on the train’s surveillance camera).

In addition to the financial costs and loss of human life, there are spiritual costs that the New York Times and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are not competent to diagnose, namely, the loss of human agency, the fragmentation of human subjectivity, and the growing incoherence of the self. In his recent book, *The World Beyond Your Head*, Matthew Crawford has referred to this situation as a “crisis of self ownership,” arguing that we are now living in an “attentional economy” in which “our attention is not simply ours to direct where we will,” making “the effort to be fully present” an intractable struggle. Crawford claims that our insatiable need for endless distractions means that the *content* of our distractions has become largely irrelevant, revealing a deeper crisis of values. According to Crawford, we have become “agnostic” on the question of *what* to pay attention to, which means we no longer know what to value.³

¹ In 2012, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 570,000 accidents and 3,328 fatalities, the latter marking a 9% increase from the previous year.

² 50% of all medical technicians surveyed acknowledged that they had texted while in surgery and nearly 60% acknowledged talking on cell phones.

³ Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 5. Here, Crawford acknowledges his debt to Simone Weil, “Attention and Will,” in *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario van der Ruhr (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 116–122.

As a result, our inner lives become "shapeless," and we become susceptible to what is presented to us by powerful commercial forces that have taken the place of traditional cultural authorities.⁴ To be attentive, on the other hand, is the first step in claiming our humanity, our agency and self-determination as human beings. We choose what to pay attention to, and, in a very real sense, this determines what is real for us; what is actually present to our consciousness. By contrast, distraction and fragmentation reveal an ethical void at the center of our existence, prompting Crawford to call for an "ethics" and "ascetics" of attention for our time, grounded in a realistic account of the human mind.⁵

Crawford's previous book was an essay on the importance of labor, lamenting the loss of manual competence in digital cultures, which, he believes, have distanced human beings from actual tools and the physical world those tools were designed to engage. Unsurprisingly, his proposal for an "ethics" and "ascetics" of attention is similarly focused on participation in a skilled craft or practice, an activity that requires the craftsman to grapple directly and attentively with, and thus to be fully present to, objective reality.

Being Attentive

Without wishing to minimize the importance of skilled craftsmanship (which the Holy Mountain has been practicing and supporting throughout its long history), I would like to focus on the logically prior moment of "attentiveness" itself, independent of any (logically sequent) activity for which it might be deemed necessary or useful. As I show below, attentiveness offers us a profound and effective response to our modern culture of organized distractions. To be sure, the "ethics and ascetics of attention" that Crawford is seeking are central to Orthodox anthropology and moral psychology, namely: the practice of "attentiveness" (προσοχή) or "attending (or giving heed) to thyself" (προσέχειν σεαυτῷ).⁶

This phrase—which is only superficially related to the Socratic injunction to "know thyself" (γνῶθι σεαυτόν)⁷—occurs in various forms in the New Testament,

⁴ Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*, 6.

⁵ Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*, 7, 15.

⁶ The various translations of προσέχειν reflect the multiplicity of English translations of Scripture, which offer valuable nuances of meaning: "Be careful," "Beware," "Take care," "Take heed," "Attentively observe yourself," etc. The Greek word προσοχή is derived from προσέχειν (πρὸς + ἔχειν), which in its basic sense means to hold to, to turn to or towards something, and thus, to take heed, attend, devote oneself to, etc. Note that the *Suda*, s.v., glosses "προσοχή" as "νηφαλισμός."

⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, in his sermon "On Those Who Have Fallen Asleep" (*Λόγος εἰς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας*), fleetingly identifies the two sayings (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 9: *Sermones*, pars I, eds. Günter Heil, Adrian van Heck, Ernestus Gebhardt, and Andreas Spira (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 40), as does (pseudo-?) John of Damascus, *Sacra parallela* (PG 95, 1049), although the identification is obviated

but is in fact derived from Deuteronomy 4:9: “Attend (*or Give heed*) to thyself, and keep thy heart diligently” (πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ φύλαξον τὴν ψυχὴν σου σφόδρα), or, alternately, from Deuteronomy 15:9: “Attend to thyself, that there be no hidden, iniquitous word in your heart” (πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ μὴ γένηται ῥῆμα κρυπτὸν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ἀνόμημα).⁸ The phrase, which is an ethical imperative, has a long and rich history, from which only a few examples can be cited here.

In the fourth-century *Life of Antony* 3.1, we are told that Antony’s first ascetic practice, which he undertook before entering the desert, was to “attend to himself.”⁹ Antony’s younger contemporary, Basil of Caesarea, wrote what is likely the first homily devoted exclusively to Deuteronomy 15:9 (“On the Words, ‘Give Heed to Thyself’”).¹⁰ Though the *Life of Antony* does not describe the practice of attentiveness in any detail, Basil describes it at length. Far from mere external “self observation” and having nothing to do with any kind of solipsistic self-absorption, “attentiveness” is comprehensive in scope, being at once: (1) the awakening of the rational principles that God has placed in the soul; (2) vigilant stewardship over the movements of the mind, which govern the movements of the body and society as a whole; (3) the awareness of the mind’s (or soul’s) priority over the body, and of the beauty of God over sensory pleasure; (4) an engagement with reality and a rejection of mental fantasies; (5) self-examination and the refusal to meddle in the affairs of others; and (6), not least, the very knowledge of God, insofar as the “self” is the image of God, a connection with which Basil concludes

by the differences between Christian and Hellenic anthropology; cf. John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 326–341 (= “Plotinus’s Theory of the Human Person”).

⁸ Cf. Lk 17:3 (προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς), Lk 21:34 (προσέχετε δὲ ἑαυτοῖς), Acts 5:35 (ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς), and Acts 20:28 (προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ).

⁹ *Vita Antonii* 3.1: αὐτὸς πρὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἐσχόλαζε λοιπὸν τῇ ἀσκήσει, προσέχων ἑαυτῷ καὶ καρτερικῶς ἑαυτὸν ἄγων, ed. Gérard J. M. Bartelink, *Athanase d’Alexandrie, Vie d’Antoine. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes et index* (SC 400) (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 136; cf. *Vita Antonii* 91.3, ed. Bartelink, 368, where Antony on his deathbed tells his disciples: “Live as though you were going to die each day, attending to yourselves, and remembering the exhortations you have heard from me” (Καὶ ὡς καθ’ ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκοντες ζήσατε, προσέχοντες ἑαυτοῖς καὶ μνημονεύοντες ὧν ἠκούσατε παρ’ ἐμοῦ παραινέσεων). Note that the phrase and corresponding practice are well attested in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

¹⁰ PG 31, 197–217. A foundational essay on the inner life, Basil’s homily (CPG 2847) is found in later Byzantine and post-Byzantine “Philokalic” collections, such as *Lavra M 54* (Eustratiades 1745), ff. 629–632, which Paul Géhin calls a “Filocalia bis.” See also Ephraim Graecus, *Εἰς τὸ πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ κεφάλαια δώδεκα* (CPG 3932), ed. Konstantinos G. Phrantzoles, *Ὅσιον Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα*, vol. 2 (Thessaloniki: Τό Περιβόλι τῆς Παναγίας, 1989), 142–198. According to Rufinus and Cassiodorus, Origen is said to have written four homilies on Deuteronomy, which have not survived.

the entire sermon: "Give heed, therefore, to thyself, that you may give heed to God" (πρόσεχε οὖν σεαυτῷ, ἵνα προσέχῃς Θεῷ).¹¹

The practice of attending to the self, firmly established by the fourth century, remained central to Christian anthropology and ethics. Subsequent generations of writers and practitioners developed the concept, generally aligning attentiveness with cognate practices such as "stillness" (ἡσυχία) and "vigilance" (νήψις).¹² In this more comprehensive form—already suggested by Basil—it was given a foundational role in Christian life and was ultimately considered a necessary presupposition or pre-condition for salvation.¹³

The extraordinary emphasis given to attentiveness is explained, not simply because the human mind is prone to distraction, but because the disintegration of our inner life began precisely with the fall, when humanity separated itself from

¹¹ Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 2*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, *Basil. Letters 1–58* (LCL 190) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 16–17 (modified): "Prayer is to be commended, for it engenders in the soul a distinct conception of God. And the indwelling of God is this: to hold God ever in remembrance, firmly established within us" (Εὐχή δὲ καλή, ἡ ἐναργὴ ἐμποιοῦσα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔννοιαν τῇ ψυχῇ. Καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶ Θεοῦ ἐνοίκησις, τὸ διὰ τῆς μνήμης ἐνιδρυμένον ἔχειν ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν Θεόν).

¹² See, for example, St. Nikephoros the Solitary (d. 1340), *On Watchfulness and Guarding the Heart* (Λόγος περὶ νήψεως καὶ φυλακῆς καρδίας): "Some of the saints have called attentiveness the guarding of the intellect; others have called it the custody of the heart, or watchfulness, or noetic stillness, and others something else. All these expressions indicate one and the same thing" (Τὴν μὲν προσοχὴν τινὲς τῶν ἁγίων νοὸς τήρησιν ἔφησαν, ἄλλοι δέ, καρδιακὴν φυλακὴν, ἕτεροι δὲ νήψιν, ἄλλοι νοερὰν ἡσυχίαν, καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλως. Τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ δηλοῦσιν) (*Philokalia τῶν ἱερῶν νηπτικῶν* (Athens: Ἀστήρ, 1991), vol. 4, 26). English translation taken from *The Philokalia. The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. Gerald E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 204. Nikephoros goes on to define "attentiveness" as: (1) the sign of true repentance; (2) the soul's restoration; (3) hatred of the world; (4) return to God; (5) rejection of sin; (6) recovery of virtue; (7) unreserved assurance that our sins are forgiven; (8) the beginning and presupposition of contemplation; (9) the revelation of God to the intellect; (10) serenity of intellect; (11) the subjugation of thoughts; (12) the palace of the mindfulness of God; (13) the stronghold that enables us patiently to accept all that befalls us; and (14) the ground of faith, hope, and love. See also Hesychios, *On Watchfulness and Virtue* (Λόγος πρὸς Θεόδουλον ψυχωφελὴς καὶ σωτήριος περὶ νήψεως καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐν κεφαλαίοις διηρημένος διακοσμοῖς τρεῖς) 115: "If you wish to be in the Lord ... with all your strength pursue the virtue of attentiveness—that guard and watch of the mind, that perfect stillness of heart and blessed state of the soul when free from images" (Εἴπερ ἐν Κυρίῳ θέλεις ... προσοχικὴν ἀρετὴν πάσῃ δυνάμει μέτελθε, ἣ ἐστὶ νοὸς φυλακὴ, νοῦ τήρησις καὶ τελείωσις καρδιακὴ γλυκείας ἡσυχίας, ἀφάνταστος μακαρία τῆς ψυχῆς κατάστασις) (*Philokalia*, vol. 1 (1982), 158). English translation taken from *The Philokalia*, vol. 1 (1983), 182; and the anonymous *Ἐκλογή ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων περὶ προσευχῆς καὶ προσοχῆς* (*Philokalia*, vol. 4, 373–375), which is also found in PG 147, 828–832, under the name of Kallistos Telikoudes.

¹³ See, for example, Peter of Damascus, *The Guarding of the Intellect*: Χωρὶς δὲ προσοχῆς καὶ ἐγρηγόρσεως τοῦ νοὸς ἀδύνατον σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς (*Philokalia*, vol. 3 (1991), 30).

God. “Distraction,” from this point of view, has rightly been called “the original sin of the mind.”

The notion of the primal transgression as a fall from attentiveness into distractions is a central element in the theology of the fifth-century writer, St. Diadochos of Photiki: “Divine knowledge teaches us that our natural perceptive faculty is single, but that it split into two different modes of operation as a result of Adam’s disobedience.”¹⁴ Created with a single, simple, and undivided consciousness, the fall shattered the integrity of the self into two conflicting activities, one drawn to divine realities, and the other dragged outward into the surface appearances of the visible world through sense perception, and subject to a process of ongoing fragmentation.

We find similar views in the writings of St. Gregory of Sinai (d. 1346), who argues that the human mind, created in a state of rest, became agitated and distracted when it fell from grace by choosing corporeal sensation over God, and subsequently found itself lost and wandering among the things of the world.¹⁵ St. Gregory Palamas, perhaps alluding to teaching of St. Gregory of Sinai, states that: “A great teacher has said that after the fall, our inner being naturally adapts itself to outward forms,” and urges the reader to “attend to himself,” citing Deuteronomy 15:9 directly.¹⁶

Forgetting God and grasping at the world, we become subject to unhealthy desires and addictive behaviors, driven by a continuous preoccupation with and pursuit of nothing. Being fixated on the superficial appearances of things, we have no awareness of their deeper meanings or mutual relatedness, but seek only that part of an object or person that can temporarily satisfy our desire for pleasure. Habitually surrendering to our irrational drives and impulses, the mind becomes

¹⁴ Diadochos of Photiki, *On Spiritual Knowledge* 25: Μίαν μὲν εἶναι αἴσθησιν φυσικὴν, αὐτὴ ἡ τῆς ἀγίας ἡμᾶς γνώσεως ἐκδιδάσκει ἐνέργεια, εἰς δύο δὲ λοιπὸν διὰ τὴν παρακοὴν τοῦ Ἀδάμ διαιρουμένην ἐνέργειας (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 1, 241); English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 259, modified; cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Ambigua* 45.4, ed. and trans. Nicholas [Maximos] Constas, vol. 2 (DOML 29) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 197.

¹⁵ Gregory of Sinai, *On Commandments and Doctrines* 60: “The source and ground of our distractive thoughts (λογισμοί) is the fragmented (διαρρεθειῖσα) state of our memory. The memory was originally simple and uniform (ἀπλὴ καὶ ἐνοειδής), but as a result of the fall its natural powers have been perverted: it has lost its recollectedness in God and has become compound (σύνθετος) instead of simple, diversified (ποικίλη) instead of uniform” (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 4, 39). English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 222 (modified).

¹⁶ Gregory Palamas, *In Defense of Those Who Practice a Life of Stillness* (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων) (= *Triads* 1.2): Ἐπεὶ δὲ καθάπερ τις τῶν μεγάλων περὶ ταῦτα λέγει, τοῖς ἔξω σχήμασι πέφυκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος συνεξομοιοῦσθαι μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 4, 128). English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 338; cf. Hesychios, *On Watchfulness* 172: “Woe to what is within from what is without” (Οὐαὶ τῷ ἔσω ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξω) (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 1, 168). English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 193.

enslaved to sensations (bodily or psychological); we splinter into isolated fragments, leading double and triple lives, being self-divided into numberless, unrelated acts, so that our pursuit of pleasure contributes, not to the unity of the self and the world, but to the disintegration and disorganization of both. Divided into unrelated acts of irrational sensation, the mind receives only the fleeting impression of something finite and isolated from everything else.¹⁷

This condition has been diagnosed and described by Orthodox spiritual and ascetic writers, who call it the "scattering" or "dispersal" of the mind. For example, Niketas Stethatos, the disciple of St. Symeon the New Theologian, contends that:

To the extent that our inner life is in a state of discord and dispersed among many contrary things, we are unable to participate in the life of God. We desire opposing and contrary things, and we are torn apart by the relentless warfare between them, and this is called the 'discord' of the mind, a condition that divides and destroys the soul. As long as we are afflicted by the turmoil of our thoughts, and as long as we are ruled and constrained by our passions, we are self-fragmented and cut off from the divine Unity.¹⁸

Yet, if attentiveness is the answer to the dilemma of human fragmentation and disintegration, the aim is not a return to a presumed Edenic form of consciousness, but rather to the grace of the Holy Spirit, placed in our hearts at the time of our baptism. This sacramental focus is central to the spiritual theology of Diadochos, for whom healing begins with the gift of the Holy Spirit, while the duality of the fallen self is unified through the invocation of the Jesus Prayer.¹⁹ It follows that the primary motivation for the practice of inner attention, the purpose of turning inward and entering the heart, is to encounter the indwelling Holy Spirit, a principle that was consistently and indeed systematically reaffirmed by the later Byzantine Hesychasts.²⁰

¹⁷ For these remarks, I am indebted to the work of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, trans. Archimandrite Jerome (Newville) and Otilia Kloos (South Cannan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁸ Niketas Stethatos, *On Spiritual Knowledge* 16–17 (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 3, 330). English translation from *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 144. For the sake of brevity, I have combined the central ideas of the two chapters.

¹⁹ Diadochos of Photiki, *On Spiritual Knowledge* 77–80 (*Philokalia*, vol. 1, 279–282).

²⁰ Cf. Gregory of Sinai, *On the Signs of Grace and Delusion* 1. English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, 257; Kallistos and Ignatios, *Μέθοδος και κανών συν Θεῷ ἀκριβής* 1, 4–6 (*Φιλοκαλία*, vol. 4, 196, 199–201). The doctrine has much older roots in writers such as Mark the Monk, *On Those Who Imagine They Are Justified by Works* 56, 92, 118; English translation in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 130, 133, 134–35; and Maximos the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 6, eds. Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium I. Quaestiones I–LV, una cum latina interpretatione Iohannis*

We find essentially the same teaching in Scripture. The Prodigal Son left his home and went into a faraway place, where the Gospel says he “dispersed” (or “scattered”) his “substance” (διεσκόρπισεν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ) (Lk 15:13). On one level this means that he squandered all his money, but the deeper meaning is the wealth of the soul, our spiritual inheritance, since our “substance” is the spirit that God has placed within us, and in which, through Holy Baptism, He has planted His own grace, clothing us in “our original garment of glory” (cf. Lk 15:22), and “sending forth His own Spirit into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). But when we separate ourselves from this grace, we lose our spiritual unity and become fragmented.

Conclusion

The fallen human mind is fragmented, prone unceasingly to distractions, and scattered across a troubled infinity of disconnected thoughts and sensations. Our minds are always elsewhere than our bodies. Rather than working to alleviate this constitutive weakness, we have built a culture of organized distractions, aiding and abetting the mind in its fallen condition. It can be argued that the computer itself is a fallen mind, a powerful extension of our own dubious desires, created after our own image. Lingered unregenerately in a realm of illusions; mesmerized by the images flitting about on our computer screens, we become “dull, predatory flies buzzing on the chamber window,”²¹ desperate to consume all the futility of the world.

Yet we are not the predators, but the prey. We are not the users of information technologies and social media, but rather are being used, manipulated, and exploited by them. In our culture of distractions, public and private spaces are saturated with technologies designed to arrest and appropriate our attention; our interior mental lives, like our bodies, are merely resources to be harvested by powerful economic interests (Crawford suggests that distractibility is to the mind what obesity is to the body). Our focus, then, should not be on technology and digital culture alone, but on the interests and motivations that guide their design and promote their dissemination into every aspect of our life.

Scoti Eriugena iuxta posita (CCSG 7) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), 69–71; and is conveniently summarized by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Handbook of Spiritual Counsel*, trans. Peter A. Chamberas (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), chapter 10 (= “Guarding the Mind and the Heart”).

²¹ A line adapted from Emily Dickinson (d. 1886), “How Many Times These Low Feet Staggered” (= poem no. 238, published posthumously in 1890).

Throughout its long history, Christianity has often been subservient to the prevailing political and economic structures, forgetting that the Gospel is not derivative of human culture, but generative of a new way of life. We need to recover the power of the Gospel as a counter-cultural force, not with the aim of destabilizing society, but in order to create life-affirming communities. We need to rediscover, not simply that our faith and vocation to holiness set us apart from the world, but that they also engender a new, alternative world; not a virtual reality, but the reality of virtue.²²

In order to realize our calling, attentiveness must be our fundamental attitude and ethos. Without attentiveness there is no prayer, and without prayer, there is no communion with God, no participation in divine life. The practice of inner attention, of descending with the mind into the heart, is both an activity and a way of life that locates us in authentic existence, that is, in our relationship to God. This is why attentiveness is so often said to be equivalent to the recollection of God, the conscious awareness of the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Taking heed of, and attending to, ourselves is the most effective method for reclaiming ownership of our self-determination from those who wish to take it from us. Transfigured by grace, attention will discover new objects of attention, because it will have its source in a new subject, no longer conformed to the form of the world, but transformed in the renewal of its mind (Rom 12:2), possessing and possessed by the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).

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²² On which, see the insightful study by Christopher Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

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Book Reviews



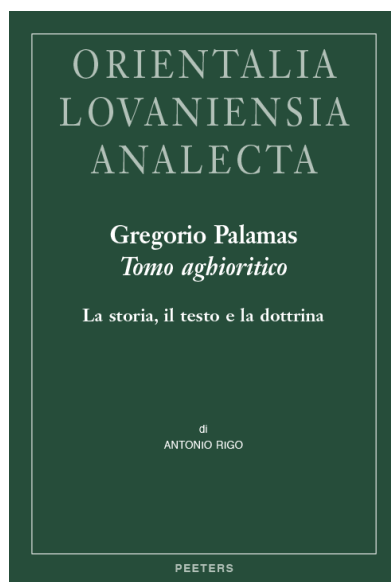
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Book Review:

Antonio Rigo, *Gregorio Palamas, Tomo aghioritico: La storia, il testo e la dottrina*. OLA 298. Bibliothéque de Byzantion 26. Leuven: Peeters, 2021. x + 187 p. (with 6 plates). ISBN 978-90-429-4077-2

The publication of the critical text of a work by Gregory Palamas – especially one as important as the *Hagioritic Tomos* – is a cause for celebration. Until now the only Palamas text that has been edited in accordance with the best modern standards is Anne Philippidis-Braat's 'Captivity Dossier' (1979).¹ Even Robert Sinkewicz's *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (1988) falls a little short in this respect.² With regard to the *Hagioritic Tomos*, we have had to rely hitherto on the very inferior text of Basil Pseftonkas published in 1967 in the second volume of Panagiotis Christou's edition of Palamas' collected works.³ Besides making some eccentric emendations of his own, Pseftonkas bases his text on the four earlier printed editions (including Jacques-Paul Migne, which is only a reprint of the text published in the *Philokalia* by Nikodemos the Hagiorite), supplemented by readings from an arbitrary selection of early manuscripts.⁴



¹ Anne Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs: dossier et commentaire," *TM* 7 (1979): 109–222.

² Robert Sinkewicz, *Gregory Palamas, One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988).

³ *PS*, vol. 2, 567–578.

⁴ Some of Pseftonkas' more egregious errors are silently corrected by Sinkewicz in his helpful English translation of the "Tomos of the Holy Mountain," in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*,

For his own edition, Antonio Rigo, the world's leading Palamas scholar, has collated all twelve manuscripts that contain the text, besides also taking into account the indirect tradition and the readings of the earliest printed edition, that of Dositheos II of Jerusalem (1698).⁵ As a result, Rigo's *Tomo aghioritico* not only establishes an authoritative text that is unlikely to be superseded but also gives us insights into how and when Palamas drafted his *Tomos* and the use he subsequently made of it.

The *Hagioritic Tomos* is a very short document, the Greek text in Rigo's edition occupying barely eight pages (p. 108–127, with facing Italian translation). It is preceded in the *Tomo aghioritico*, however, by an important introduction of 107 pages on the historical context and manuscript tradition that elucidates many interesting details. The first point Rigo establishes is that the *Hagioritic Tomos* is indeed a work of Gregory Palamas. Giovanni Mercati in his classic *Notizie* (1931) had expressed the opinion that the author was in fact Philotheos Kokkinos, who later became *hēgoumenos* of the Lavra and eventually ecumenical patriarch.⁶ This opinion was repeated by Martin Jugie⁷ and as recently as 2006 by Juan Nadal Cañellas.⁸ In 1959, however, John Meyendorff, had shown conclusively that Palamas was the author of the *Tomos*, although Meyendorff was unsure when it had been drawn up, coming down finally in favor of “towards the end of 1340.”⁹ Other scholars, such as Despos Lialiou, have proposed November 1340, or even later.¹⁰ Rigo, however, demonstrates that the *Tomos* was composed by Palamas earlier that year in order to be presented at the *katholikē synaxis* (a kind of annual general meeting) of the Holy Mountain held on August 15, the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. It was then subscribed by a number of

vol. 2: (*XIII^e–XIX^e s.*), eds. Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 183–188.

⁵ Dositheos' edition (published in his *Τόμος αγάπης κατὰ Λατίνων*, Iași, 1698, 34*–36*) is based on an exemplar, no longer extant, that once belonged to Athanasios of Kyzikos and witnesses to the second of the two families of manuscripts (group b). Nikodemos the Hagiorite's *Philokalia* edition (Venice, 1782) is based on a very late manuscript of the first family (group a) and, although carefully examined by Rigo, has not been used to establish the text.

⁶ Giovanni Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV* (Studi e testi 56) (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1931), 245–246.

⁷ Martin Jugie, “Palamite (controverse),” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XI (1931): 1784–1785.

⁸ Juan Nadal Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment*, 2 vols (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et documents, 50–51) (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), vol. 1, 150.

⁹ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Patristica Sorbonensia 3) (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 350–351.

¹⁰ Despo A. Lialiou, “Ο αγιορειτικός τόμος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων (Εἰσαγωγικά, ἱστορικά, θεολογικά καὶ ἐρμηνευτικά συμφραζόμενα),” *Κληρονομία* 28 (1996): 31–54.

those present, including the *prōtos*, Isaac, and the ordinary of the Holy Mountain, the bishop of Hierissos, between August 16–20, 1340. This document was to be of capital importance in acquitting Palamas from Barlaam's charge of heresy, as Palamas (who was living in Thessaloniki at the time) well understood when he ignored the summons of his dying sister, Theodote, in order to dash off to the Holy Mountain to be there in time for the *katholikē synaxis* (Philotheos Kokkinos, *Encomium*, § 55).

Barlaam of Calabria had accused Palamas of Messalianism (i.e., Bogomilism), which Rigo describes as a "real and characteristic obsession of Byzantine heresy-hunters from the twelfth century onwards" (p. 14). It was a serious charge that carried all the more weight because of an episode that had disturbed the Holy Mountain a few years before when a group of monks who actually had held Messalian beliefs had been unmasked, punished, and expelled. The support of the authorities on Mount Athos was crucial to Palamas. For this reason, Rigo gives particular attention to the signatories who subscribed the document. The first of these was the *prōtos* (the elected representative and head) of the Holy Mountain, Isaac of Anapausa. Isaac, as Rigo says, was one of the more notable holders of the office of *prōtos* in the Byzantine period, not only because he was an able administrator who held it for more than 25 years but also because he was regarded as a saint even in his own lifetime. After Isaac's signature come the signatures of four *hēgoumenoi* (of the Lavra, Iviron, Vatopedi, and Chilandar), then that of the hieromonk Philotheos (Kokkinos) of the Lavra, future *hēgoumenos* and patriarch and obviously already a very senior Athonite monk, then that of 14 more monks, including the *hēgoumenos* of Koutloumus and three monks of Palamas' *skētē* of Magoula, and finally that of Ioasaph, bishop of Hierissos, the ordinary of Mount Athos. The list is impressive. The fact that all the *hēgoumenoi* of the Holy Mountain did not sign is not significant. The signatories are actually more numerous than in most official Athonite documents of the period and include all the more senior figures.

The document itself was from the beginning called a *tomos*, a document containing a formal disciplinary or dogmatic decision, and was qualified by the term *hagioretikos* as issuing from the monastic synod of the Holy Mountain rather than the patriarchal synod of Constantinople. It is cast in the form of the condemnation of six erroneous propositions, each beginning with "Whoever says" or an equivalent expression. These propositions are (1) that those who hold the deifying grace of God to be uncreated are Messalians or ditheists; (2) that the deifying grace of God is a *habitus* of rational nature attained by imitation; (3) that those who hold the intellect to be located in the heart or the head are Messalians; (4) that the light of Mount Tabor seen by the disciples was merely a phantasm produced by the mind; (5) that only the essence of God is uncreated

and not also his energies; (6) that the body does not participate in the charisms of the Spirit. Barlaam's understanding of these issues is decisively rejected.

Philotheos Kokkinos' account in his *Encomium* of what happened next is not entirely reliable. It appears from Palamas' own writings that he returned to Thessaloniki, where he drew up another *tomos* of very similar content which was signed by the leading hesychasts (but not hierarchs) of that city, including, no doubt, the monk and future patriarch Isidore Boucheir. It is interesting, as Rigo points out, that when Barlaam presented his critique of the Hesychasts (*Against the Messalians*) to the patriarchate, no immediate action was taken. It was only when he began to denounce the two "conventicles," of Mount Athos and Thessaloniki, that proceedings were initiated against Palamas. Barlaam knew about these "conventicles" through engaging with Palamas at a meeting in Thessaloniki in late September/early October. In November both *tomoi* were forwarded to Constantinople. In the meantime, Barlaam had set off for the capital, where he not only denounced Palamas to the patriarchal synod as a ditheist who preached two gods, one superior, the other inferior, but also began an intense lobbying campaign against Palamas on the basis of the irregularity of the two "conventicles," particularly that of Thessaloniki—a clear case of non-bishops trying to put the Church right on a matter of doctrine. These events may be followed closely with the help of Gregory Akindynos' *Report to the Patriarch* (1343), which Rigo regards as an important and relatively objective source that enables us to reconstruct the events after Barlaam's denunciation of Palamas and during the lobbying campaign that was pursued by both parties. This campaign was protracted because a synod to resolve the dispute could not be held until the emperor, Andronikos III, returned to Constantinople from a military expedition in the Balkans. The emperor re-entered the imperial city at the beginning of June 1341, by which time Palamas had gained the upper hand.

The synod that exonerated Palamas and consigned Barlaam's writings to the flames was held on June 10, but the *tomos*, which was issued in July, is problematical because in the interval the emperor had died suddenly and events were moving swiftly towards civil war. The fact that the *Hagiorctic Tomos* was laid before the synod is something we only know from two of Palamas' supporters, Dorotheos Blates and Joseph Kalothetos. The *Synodal Tomos* itself makes no mention of it. Moreover, it is almost certain that the Thessalonian *Tomos* was not produced at all. Indeed, this document has disappeared without trace. The issue of "conventicles" was obviously a sensitive one, the *Hagiorctic Tomos* surviving because of the official status of its signatories but not the Thessalonian *Tomos*.

The use made of the *Hagiorctic Tomos* by Palamas and others after the synod is interesting and reveals a certain evolution in Palamas' thinking. At first, as his letters to John Gabras and Philotheos Kokkinos show, Palamas holds the

Tomos in high esteem as an authoritative rebuttal of the higher and lower gods theory imputed to him. Later, in his *Refutation* of Gregory Akindynos, he appeals to the *Tomos* more as his personal profession of faith. His opponents, beginning with his unnamed interlocutor in the letter to John Gabras, also made use of the *Tomos* as evidence of the perversity of Palamas' thinking. Its most significant use by opponents, however, comes quite late, after the synod of 1351, with the refutations of Palamite teaching by the monk Niphon, who assigns the text to Philotheos, and John Kyparissiotes, who claims that Palamas had tricked the Athonites into signing the document.

In sum, through this fine critical edition, introduced by a masterly discussion of the text in its historical setting and accompanied by an Italian translation and a valuable commentary, Antonio Rigo has placed both Byzantinists and Orthodox theologians deeply in his debt.

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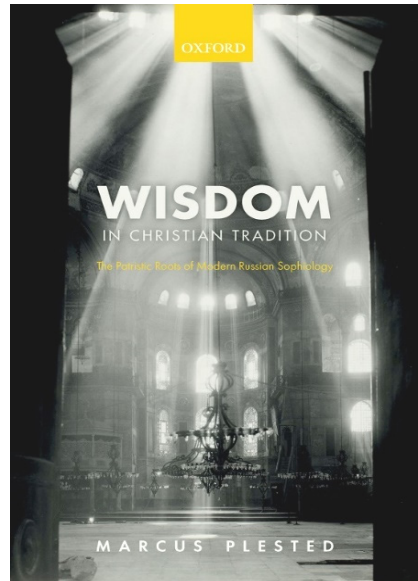
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Book Review:

**Marcus Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition: The Patristic Roots of Modern Russian Sophiology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
x + 274 p. ISBN 978-0-19-286322-5**

The Sophiology of Soloviev, Florensky, and Bulgakov has always had an ambivalent relation to patristic tradition. Soloviev frankly averred that his own sources lay primarily in the esotericism of authors such as Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg. Florensky, although clearly indebted to Soloviev, nonetheless made a determined effort to claim a patristic lineage for his own teaching about Sophia. This tendency culminated in Bulgakov, who (especially in his later works) repeatedly and emphatically claimed that his teaching about Sophia was in line with the best of the patristic tradition. In the present work, Marcus Plested undertakes to assess the accuracy of such claims. In the process, he offers an evaluation of both the strengths and weaknesses of Sophiology as seen from an Orthodox standpoint. The work concludes with a “framework for a re-oriented sophiology” that seeks to develop biblical and patristic teaching about wisdom in a way that is both grounded in Orthodox tradition and open to Sophiology’s legitimate insights.

After an introductory chapter on Sophiology and its critics (primarily Lossky and Florovsky), the bulk of the work consists in a detailed examination of wisdom as it is presented in the classical, biblical, and patristic sources. The study of the Greek Fathers is selective, as nothing is said of even such



prominent authors as John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, and Symeon the New Theologian. There is, however, an extensive treatment of the authors most invoked by the Sophiologists, including Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas. There is also a relatively complete survey of the Latin West up through the thirteenth century, including Augustine, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Eriugena, Anselm, Hildegard of Bingen, Bernard of Clairvaux, and others. I confess that the principle behind these selections was not wholly clear to me. It would seem that in treating the Greek Fathers the focus is on those whom the Sophiologists regularly cited, whereas in treating of Latin authors the aim was to give an accurate sense of the Latin tradition as a whole. This is reasonable enough, but it leaves one wondering whether the Greeks who are not covered had anything important to say on the subject.

In any case, the historical survey quickly turns up a number of ways in which Sophiology is out of step with the patristic tradition of both East and West. One is its largely ignoring wisdom as a human trait, whether this be “merely” human wisdom or wisdom as a divine gift that can bring one into a participatory relationship with God. As Plested shows, a great deal of the patristic discussion of wisdom focuses on the virtues and various ascetic and spiritual disciplines as a means of becoming receptive to wisdom as a divine gift. He is surely right that this is a major lacuna within Sophiology. To repair it, however, requires merely an addition rather than an alteration to the existing structure. The same cannot be said of another major failing—the fact that the Sophiologists’ conception of divine Sophia as (in Bulgakov’s words) “the Godman before and beyond the Incarnation” has no real foundation in biblical or patristic sources. Plested finds Sophiology sharply deficient on this score: “rather than centering itself on Christ, Sophiology remains more in line with the classical philosophical notion of wisdom somehow ‘in between’ God and the world and associated with the realm of ideas . . . Somehow, *personification* of Sophia (as Lady Wisdom or the realm of ideas represented by the heavenly Aphrodite) has come to prevail over the *person* of Christ” (p. 97). This is an important point—indeed, to my mind, the most important made in the whole book. Assuming it is correct, Sophiology can only be seen as fundamentally unfit to serve as a framework for Christian theology.

That is not to deny, however, that it may offer important insights. Several of these emerge from Plested’s historical review. One is that Bulgakov was correct to insist that the Fathers by no means always identify divine Wisdom with the Son; sometimes they instead identify it with the Holy Spirit and sometimes equally with any of the three Persons. There is also abundant support for Bulgakov’s view that Wisdom can be understood as a divine energy, so that Sophiology is, to this

extent, in line with the teaching of Palamas and other advocates of the essence-energy distinction. Bulgakov identified Augustine's doctrine of divine simplicity (with its equation of the divine essence and attributes) as the reason why there is no "gap" or "in-between" in Latin theology whereby divine Wisdom could be anything other than the divine essence or one of the divine Persons. This, too, Plested finds to be correct. On the other hand, he gives credit to the Latin tradition for more fully appropriating the biblical imagery of Wisdom as feminine than did the Greek Fathers. Plested advocates more fully exploring this feminine dimension of Wisdom within a "re-oriented sophiology."

These conclusions seem to me largely correct, and Plested's treatment of the historical material is in general both well-informed and illuminating. Nonetheless, there are a few points at which I must demur. Several of these relate to the divine Ideas, or (in the Greek Fathers) the divine *logoi*. Plested says that for Dionysius, Wisdom (which, of course, is one of the names treated in the *Divine Names*) "corresponds" to the Ideas. This is imprecise at best, for Dionysius does not in fact speak of Ideas, either in *Divine Names* 7 (which Plested here cites) or elsewhere. It is instead to the *logoi* of *Divine Names* 5 that we must look for the nearest correlative in Dionysius to the Ideas, for it is they that serve as paradigms for creation. The *logoi* are not Ideas, however, but "divine and good acts of will," a definition that became canonical in the later tradition. The *logoi* thus have an active and voluntaristic dimension that is lacking to the Ideas. The difference is relevant because the Sophiologists equate divine Wisdom with the realm of Ideas, and Bulgakov faults the Greek Fathers for failing to say much about this realm. Dionysius and Maximus say quite a bit about the paradigms of creation, however; they just do so under the heading of *logoi*, not that of Ideas. All of this is surely worth discussing in any examination of the relationship between Sophiology and the patristic tradition.

A couple of other issues related to the Ideas and *logoi* also call for some comment. Plested includes among the *logoi* the "things around God" discussed by Maximus in a famous passage of his *Chapters on Theology and Economy* (I.48-50); in fact, however, *logos* is not mentioned in this passage, and the *logoi* and "things around God" are different concepts with sharply distinct lineages (some of which Plested himself relates). I am also puzzled as to why Plested says that for the Latin tradition the divine Ideas are "temporal (or perhaps pan-temporal) and created." It is true that Augustine and Eriugena speak of the Ideas as created, but they do so in a decidedly non-standard sense, which Augustine (in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*) immediately corrects to "begotten." Aquinas does not do so at all; nor do any of these authors understand the Ideas as temporal, unless one means by this that they have temporal effects.

I also found Plested's advocacy of a more feminine view of divine Wisdom somewhat problematic. He rightly applauds the Sophiologists for moving in this direction. At the same time, however, he dismisses as "outdated" their understanding of the feminine as "intuitive rather than rational and as all-encompassing rather than strictly focussed" (p. 239). Very well—but then what *does* count as feminine? The biblical sources that Plested primarily has in view, Proverbs 8–9 and Wisdom 7, also have a view of the feminine that is "outdated" by modern standards. Are they too to be dismissed on this basis? These are difficult and perhaps awkward questions. Still, without a willingness to face them squarely, to call for a more feminine understanding of divine Wisdom is little more than a pious gesture.

Finally, there is a passage in the program for a "re-oriented sophiology" at the end of the volume that I find puzzling. Plested writes, "As vessel and house of wisdom, the Mother of God is also to be identified with the Church as the body of wisdom incarnate and the pre-eminent means by which humans are incorporated into the divine life" (p. 242). This came as a surprise, for there is otherwise very little in the book about the Theotokos. The only substantial discussion is a summary of Bulgakov's view that she is the hypostasization of created wisdom, whereas the Holy Spirit is the hypostasization of divine Wisdom and Christ is the hypostasization of both. Even Bulgakov says only that she is a *personification* of the Church, however, not that she is to be *identified* with the Church. And in any case, no patristic texts are mentioned that would give support to Bulgakov's view. Since the book's aim is to assess Sophiology in light of patristic teaching, it is odd to find one of Bulgakov's more extravagant ideas here adopted wholesale (if that is how we should take this statement) without any argument or explanation.

These are all fairly minor quibbles. They by no means detract from the value of this learned and informative volume. We can be grateful to the author for shedding light on the extent to which Sophiology does, and does not, live up to its claim to represent the best of the patristic tradition.

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