

**FROM 'VEIL' (καταπέτασμα) THEOLOGY TO 'FACE'
(πρόσωπον) CHRISTOLOGY. BODY AS A VEIL
CONCEALING DIVINE GLORY - DIRECT EXPERIENCE
AND IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION (αἴσθησις) OF GOD**

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ABSTRACT. According to Pauline theology we are 'earthen vessels' (2 Cor. 4:7) till Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19). Into the most holy place of our being, in which the very presence of God dwells, He 'enters within the veil' (Heb. 6:19) and 'put in our hearts the light' (2 Cor. 4:6). So, being 'clothed in Christ' (Gal. 3:27) we all are being 'transformed into his image' which is the 'form of God' ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ (Phil. 2:6). To Saint Ephrem, "The First-born wrapped himself in a body / as a veil to hide His glory" (CNis XLIII,21, *LumE* 74). He juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus' veiling on Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body (*Nativity* 73). Also, the veil of the temple was intended by Moses to symbolize the veil of heaven, and both veils together prefigured the flesh of Christ, which enfolded and concealed his divinity. Firstly, we will focus on the analogy between Thabor's garments and bodies in the water of Baptism (*De Epiphania* 9, 12), both glory / Light garments of the Son, the "Father Ray" (Heb. 1: 3; *Sogyatha* I 1-2). Secondly, we are interested in St. Ephrem's interpretation of Matthew 27:50-51 (*The Crucifixion* IV, 1-12, *Comm. Diatess.* XXI, 4-6). Here, he combines two Pauline texts (Heb. 6:19 and 2 Cor. 3: 14-18) showing that, in fact, the veil split gave back to the Lord the glory that Jews have rejected. The latter dressed him with veil altar (*Azym.* V, 6 – the purple, which was the inner veil of the temple; *Katapetesma*: a curtain) actually they clothed Him with His symbol of the divine glory presence. The Veil of Light is that who hides the apophatic 'aesthetics' of God's Face. This is the way of concealing the divinity from *velum scissum* to the eucharistic bread. In this view the Body becomes the 'Veil of flesh' (καταπέτασμα) in accordance with the clothing imagery. This study is about the Biblical, syrian and hesychast perichoretic interweaving of visible (created) and invisible (uncreated). First, the syntagm "Within the Veil" (καταπέτασμα) is related to the biblical and patristic understanding of salvation as a garment. Thus, the Syrian (nuhrā qaddīša Ephrem's "*estal šubha*") is nothing less than the reception of Paul (veil of flesh, Heb 10:20) spirituality of divine light (δόξα). Dionysius speaks of his spiritual father, Hierotheos who is "suffering" the mystery of

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the Incarnation (παθὼν τὰ θεῖαν, DN II, 9). So, holy man is “theophanic”, becoming present to the Trinity (DN III, 1) and the hierarchy’s members becomes “spotless mirrors of the primordial light” (icons of the divine energies). Theurgic light and deiformity (θεοειδεῖ) by union with the rays of the unapproachable light. “Suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) vision of Christ in light represents the divine motion as God extended “ecs[aes]tetically” into immanence. Therefore, the theophany of light (ἀπρόσιτον φῶς) is Imparticipable participable (τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα) and God ad extra.

Accordingly, the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology is the hermeneutical key to reveal by concealing the divine presence, a real point of contact or somatic experience. In a word, God’s self-revelation as concealing presence. *Perichoresis* of the visible and the invisible (interweaving of the created and the uncreated in biblical, syrian and hesychast clothing metaphors) becomes possible within the body, understood as a ‘veil’. The biblical theology of clothing, especially the Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline and the Clothing Metaphors, as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition are both engaged to understand the late hesychast theology of uncreated light, this vision of God being “veiled unveiling” or hidden in his manifestation. The flesh becomes the veil of (καταπέτασμα) God’s self-revelation (a concealing presence) and the “shining face” of both the Desert Fathers, as well as the byzantine hesychasts, during prayer, is the witness of the realism of that communion, being the point of tangency of created (*aesthetics*) body and uncreated (*apophatic*) light.

Keywords: Veil (καταπέτασμα), Ephraem the Syrian, robe of glory, Divine Names, Dionysius the Areopagite, Pneumatic bodies, “clothed with Christ”, divine ‘Face’, ‘Light’ theophany, Gregory Palamas

1. The *pārōket* veil of the *Holy of Holies* and the degrees of holiness. The Tabernacle as a living extension of Mount Sinai’ theophany¹

“And you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). A correct understanding of these verses which summon Israel, as a result of Sinai, to its vocation, is vital.² *Priestly kingdom* (*mamleket kōhānīm*), as a *hapax*

¹ An abridged version of this paper, with the title “Within the Veil” (καταπέτασμα) – salvation as a garment. The Syrian (nuhrā qaddīša), reception of Paul spirituality of divine light (δόξα), was presented Wednesday 7th September in the Nicolson Building to *The Sixth British Patristics Conference*, held at the University of Birmingham (5th–7th September 2016).

² W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1994), 80: “The history of Israel from this point on is in reality merely a commentary upon the degree of fidelity with which Israel adhered to this Sinai-given vocation”.

legomenon, has been the most difficult to interpret.³ In seeking the nature of the priesthood, we look ahead to the tabernacle material in the presentation of *Exodus*. First, the priest represented the Lord. *Exodus* illustrates this association through the garments of the high priest. Aaron's garments were made of the same materials, woven in the same manner, as in the Holy of Holies, the specific place in the tabernacle where the Lord dwelt (Ex. 25:22; 26:34). The unmistakable association between Aaron's garments and the Holy of Holies suggests that Aaron, so dressed, symbolized the Lord's presence: "In wearing the garments, Aaron effectively represented the Lord as he displayed his glory".⁴ Picking up the language of *Exodus* 19:4-6, Peter writes, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt. 2:9). Similarly, Jesus told his disciples: "You are the light of the world..., let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16). Saint Paul refers to Christ's ability to radiate his divine light of himself while other OT luminaries like Moses could only reflect that light: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). This experience is being, also, described as "transformation into unveiled glory" (2 Cor. 3:7-18). Man is *the mirror of divine glory* (δόξα). Likewise, for Finlan, Phil 3:21, 2 Cor 3:18 and 1 Cor 15 demonstrates that participationist language is central to Paul's soteriology. In glorification, the Christian participates in Christ'd divine power and receives a pneumatic body: "Christ transmits God's light to believers, who shine with Christ's glory".⁵

What is the tabernacle material of *Exodus*, in particular the *pārōket* veil, which guards the Holy of Holies, meant to communicate?⁶ The preciousness of the

³ Georg Steins has argued that the grammar offers five possibilities: a kingdom under the authority of priests, a royal priesthood, a divine kingdom over a people of priests, a priestly kingdom, or a kingdom consisting of priests. Apud, Georg Steins, "Priesterherrschaft, Volk von Priestern oder was sonst? Zur Interpretation von Ex. 19,6," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 45, no.1 (2001): 20-36, here 23-24. Priest (*mamleket*) and holy (*gōy*) are often used synonymously (1 Kgs 18:10; 1 Chr. 16:20; 2 Chr. 20:6; 32:15; Ps. 46:7; 79:6; 105:13; Isa. 13:4; 60:12; Jer. 1:10; 18:7; Ezek. 29:15, Nah.3:5). As Sarna writes: "This concept of priesthood provides the model for Israel's self-image and for her role among the nations of the world", in Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 104.

⁴ W. Ross Blackburn, *The God who makes himself known. The missionary heart of the book of Exodus* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 90-91.

⁵ Stephen Finlan, "Can We Speak of Theosis in Paul?," in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Michigan: Baker, Grand Rapids 2007), 68-80, here 75.

⁶ The principle at work in the system of concentric circle is that the closer one moves to the Holy of Holies (containing the ark and the golden cover, or *kippōret*), the more elaborate and magnificent the materials and workmanship involved, and everything else was subordinate. See: Philip Peter

fabrics corresponds to the relative sanctity of particular zones in the tabernacle. The *pārōket* veil of the Holy of Holies is made of the three dyed wools and linen, with *hōšēb* workmanship. The pillars of the *pārōket* veil are overlaid with gold, with golden hooks and silver based.⁷ Again, the preciousness of the materials corresponds to their proximity to the Holy of Holies. Conforming to the gradations noted above, the priestly vestments exhibit the same pattern of relative sanctity. The garments worn exclusively by Aaron are of a superior quality both in materials and workmanship. The ephod and the breastpiece are both constructed of the same materials as the *pārōket* veil. Nahum M. Sarna says it well:

“... [this] gave expression to the presence within it of the ultimate Sources of holiness. God’s holiness is the very essence of His Being, and is intrinsic to Himself. The graduated sequences described above effectuate the gradual distancing from that ultimate Sources of absolute holiness. Precisely because the Tabernacle was constructed in the first place to give concrete, visual symbolization to the conception of God’s indwelling in the community of Israel, that is, to communicate the idea of God’s immanence, it was vitally important that His total independence of all materiality, His transcendence, not to be compromised. The gradations of holiness are one way of articulating this, of giving voice to God’s unapproachable holiness, and of emphasizing His ineffable majesty and the inscrutable mystery that He is.”⁸

The Tabernacle was meant to be a living extension of Mount Sinai. During the theophany, the mount was separated into three distinct zones of increasing degrees of holiness and restriction of access.⁹ The summit of the mountain constituted the third zone, which was exclusively reserved for Moses. Its counterpart in the Tabernacle (*miškān*) was the Holy of Holies.

Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOPSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 40-88; Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSup 91 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 181-190.

⁷ The *pārōket*, or veil, separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This hung from golden hooks on four wooden posts overlaid with gold. The posts were set in four silver sockets (Exod. 26:31-33, 36:35-36).

⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus. The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 221.

⁹ The three zones are: the top of the mountain (only Moses is permitted to ascend, Ex. 19:20), the second zone extends upwards from the border of the mountain, but not include the top of the mountain (here the select group of Aaron, his sons and the seventy elders are permitted, Ex. 19:22) and the foot of the mountain (guarded by a border to prevent the common Israelite from ascending the mountain, Ex. 19:12-13). See: Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24, no. 2 (1986): 127-145, for here p. 131-137; also: B.J. Schwartz, “The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai”, in M.V. Fox et al., (eds.), *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 103-134.

“Just as the Lord communicated with Moses on the mountaintop, so He does in the Holy of Holies; and in the same way that the cloud covered Mount Sinai after Moses had ascended, so the Tabernacle become enveloped in cloud on its completion, and the pillar of fire hovered over both Sinai and it”.¹⁰

Thus, says Blackburn, “The Holy of Holies, the locus of God’s presence was associated with the law... In her obedience to the law Israel would encounter the Lord’s presence”.¹¹ The tabernacle is also seen as microcosm of the universe, and in creation “God functions like an Israelite priest”.¹² Wenham has observed striking parallels between the tabernacle and the Garden of Eden.¹³ For instance, the entrance to Eden faced east, guarded by cherubim, while tabernacle entrances likewise face east, the Holy of Holies symbolically guarded by the cherubim woven into the *pārōket* veil.

Regarding the significance of the Veil as Clothing, the veil’s primary function is to facilitate movement from one state or spatiality to another, either away from or toward the higher state of being. Yet the veil also had another function similar to the function of clothing. In Numbers 4:5 we are told: “And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it”. The veil represented the demarcation of the ark, the symbolic presence of God. The association of the veil with clothing is also found in the color scheme of the veil. The scriptures state that the primary function of the clothing was “for glory and for beauty” (Exodus 28:2).¹⁴ That the priest himself functions like the veil between God and the rest of the host of Israel goes without saying, and the veil, like clothing, defines the spaces it covers or separates. “With this in

¹⁰ Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 218.

¹¹ Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 134.

¹² Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 127. World is a sanctuary, that is “a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness is palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive”, in J.D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 86.

¹³ Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (eds.), *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, SBTS 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404. See also Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, NSBT 18 (Leicester: Apollos: Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 29-80.

¹⁴ Blake Ostler, “Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity,” *BYU Studies* 22, np. 1 (1982): 35-36: “Many ancient texts confuse the garment with the veil of the temple, such as Ambrose of Milano’s *Tractate of the Mysteries* or the *Hebrew Book of Enoch* where ‘garment’ and ‘veil’ are used interchangeably. Enoch is clothed with the veil in the *Hebrew Book of Enoch*: “The Holy One . . . made me a throne similar to the throne of glory. And He spread over me a curtain [veil] of splendour and brilliant appearance of beauty, grace, and mercy, similar to the curtain [veil] of the throne of glory, and on it were fixed all kinds of lights in the universe.”

mind, it is not surprising to see that Christ, our intermediary, is symbolically associated both with the temple veil and as clothing.”¹⁵

Lord may dwell among his people, his glory remains hidden. In response to Moses’ request ‘Please show me your glory’, the Lord says: “*You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live*” (Ex. 33:20). According to Irenaeus, life is given to those who see God: “*The glory of God is man fully alive. If the revelation of God through creation already brings life to all living beings on the earth, how much more will the manifestation of the Father by the World bring life to those who see God*”.¹⁶ So, the glory of God remains hidden, at least in part, even for Moses (yet he saw the glory of the Son on Thabor mountain), because Irenaeus defines life as that which is brought to those who see God, and the Father is being made known only through the Son, the Word of God. Blackburn says that

“The Lord’s presence is crucial throughout the book of Exodus. The Egyptian deliverance was accomplished because the Lord fulfilled his promise to Moses that ‘I am with you’ (3:12). The Lord trained Israel in the wilderness so that Israel would trust the Lord’s presence with her.”¹⁷

In *Exodus* 28 the priestly clothing are to be made for “*kavôd* and *tipheret*” (תִּפְאָרָה or “*tipharah*”, with the meaning of beauty, glory). This term is used to describe concrete, physical phenomena. For instance, *tiph’erah*, derived from the root *pe’er* (with the meaning to adorn) and in *Isaiah* 28:5, the Lord himself is a crown of *tiph’eret* that will be worn. Also, it appears that the *tiph’erah* of an object referred to the brilliance, or luminosity of the object. This association is clear in *Isaiah* 60, where the reader is told that someday the sun and moon will no longer provide light but that “Yahweh will be an eternal light to you, your God will be your *tiph’erah*.” Earlier, in verse 7, the temple is the place of God’s *tiph’erah*, suggesting a relationship between the tangible cloud of light that characterized the presence of God. Like *tiph’eret*, *kavôd*, the other term used in *Exodus* 28 to

¹⁵ Daniel Belnap, “Clothed with Salvation: The Garden, the Veil, Tabitha, and Christ”, *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 43-69, here 61. The fear of being naked, without identity, is strong in rabbinic perspectives. Nakedness is a nakedness of self in a social context, not just a nakedness of body. On this see: Rita C. Poretsky, “Clothing and Self: Biblical and Rabbinic Perspectives,” *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 10, no. 1 (1986): 42-54, here 53; Robert A. Oden Jr., *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), especially chap 2: “Grace or Status? Yahweh’s Clothing of the First Humans” (Oden, *Bible without Theology*, 92-105), Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London: Clark International, 2004), 17-20.

¹⁶ Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresis)* 20.7, in Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies: Dénonciation et réfutation de la gnose au nom menteur*, préface A. Decourtray, traduction Adelin Rousseau (Paris: Le Cerf, 2001).

¹⁷ Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 199.

describe the function of the priestly clothing, appears to reflect an actual physical visual. It is often used to describe the physical, tangible presence of light denoting the presence of God that was seen by Israel.¹⁸ The association of both *tiph'erah* and *kavôd* with light or the reflection of light may explain their use in Exodus 28. Along with the color scheme, gold filament appears to have utilized in the priestly clothing as well. In Psalm 104, God is described as clothed "with *hōd* (הוֹד - meaning "splendor," "majesty," or "glory") and *hadar* (הָדָר - *splendor*)" and who covers himself with light like a garment." Similarly, in Job 40:10, Job is told to clothe himself in the selfsame "hod and *hadar*." Like, *tiph'erah* and *kavôd*, these terms represent both abstract concepts as well as actual, physical properties (all three terms, *tiph'erah*, *hod* and *hadar* appear in *Psalm* 96).¹⁹

The term "theophany" is used not in figurative sense of "encounter with the divine", but, in keeping with the Greek *φαίνειν*, "to appear", it implies the presence of a visual component in addition to verbal interaction.²⁰ The *kabod* is described consistently as a "visible and palpable manifestation of the divine",²¹ which appear (בִּשְׂאוֹף; in: Exod 16.7, 10; Lev. 9.6, 23; Num. 14.10, 22; 16.19; 17.7; 20.6; Deut. 5.24; 2 Chron. 7.3) in plain sight of all Israel. The *malakh* (מַלְאָךְ meaning "angel" or "messenger") another representation of numinous presence, is most often described as visibly apparent.

¹⁸ Daniel L. Belnap, "Let the Beauty of the Lord Our God be Upon Us'. The Importance of an Aesthetic in the Ritualized Visualizations of the Israelite Cult," *Temple on Mount Zion* 3 (2015): 121-140, here 127; this paper was presented by Belnap for the "Ritual in the Biblical World: Ritual Symbolism and Visual Arts session of the 2014 International Society of Biblical Literature Meeting" in Vienna, Austria (my thanks to Father John Mihoc for the indication).

¹⁹ Belnap, "Let the Beauty of the Lord", 128. Von Rad suggested as much when he stated that Moses's encounter with God's *kavôd* in Exodus 33:18, was a cultic etiology "that associates God's dwelling in his house with the experience of a theophany", in Gerhard von Rad, "Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. by E.W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 243-266, here 258. See also, Victor H. Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'" in Avraham Gileadi (ed.), *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 307-317. "Temple worship expressed a confidence in a Sinai-like epiphany in Jerusalem" (Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic", 312).

²⁰ George Savran, *Encountering the Divine. Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (Oxford, T&T Clark 2005), 6. F. Polak distinguishes between theophany as displaying an 'outside perception', while simple address (not a theophanic experience) involves what Polak calls an 'inner light'. This is a distinction between theophany and epiphany as denoting divine presence and divine power. See: Frank Polak, "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus", in Marc Vervenne (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus. Redaction - Reception - Interpretation* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 113-148, here 113, n. 4; N.F. Schmidt and P.J. Nel, "Theophany as Type-Scene in the Hebrew Bible", *Journal for Semitics* 11 (2002): 256-281, here 260.

²¹ Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 49.

2. “Καταπέτασμα” and the “velum scissum”. The veil guarding the Holy of Holies - ‘the curtain of the temple was torn in two’

The final words of Exodus: “*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (Ex. 40:34). Here is the manifestation of the Lord’s presence among Israel: the return of the cloud. Exodus is suggesting that the Lord, dwelling in the tabernacle, still cannot dwell directly among his people, a veil shielded the presence of God from people. We see the Lord dwelling with Israel a final time at the end of Revelation:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God’ (Rev. 21:2-4).”

In effect, says Blackburn

“this takes us right back to the garden of Eden, the original sanctuary, where the Lord dwelt and where he met with Adam and Eve, walking with them in the cool of the day. How did we get there? Again we turn to John 1:14, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth’. In a reference to the tabernacle, Jesus ‘tabernacled’ (eskēnōsen) among his people, fully revealing the glory of God... It is in the death of Jesus that the glory of God – the glory of both the father and the Son – is most clearly revealed. It is also through the death of Jesus that the barrier between God and humanity is removed, as the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth, bears the sin of the world. To use an image from Matthew to illustrate, it is at the death of Jesus that ‘the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom’ (Mt. 27:51; Mk 15:38). The veil guarding the Holy of Holies, with its two cherubim, is in Jesus’ death removed, restoring access to God that was characteristic of life in Eden, but impossible since Genesis 3. The point is that, in Jesus, and particularly in his death, fellowship with God is fully restored”.²²

In Paul’s words, “*For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6). To return to Irenaeus, the glory of God can be seen, face to face – in the face of Jesus.

By far the most common interpretation of the *velum scissum* associates this event with the veil tradition discussed at three locations in Hebrews. Here, the believer’s hope lies “behind the καταπέτασμα” (6:19) in the holy of holies, where Christ offered himself as a sacrifice (9:3) and has opened for believers a “new and living” way to God through the καταπέτασμα, which, the author says, is Christ’s body (10:20).²³

²² Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 205.

²³ Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil. Matthew’s Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 11.

Among the most creative (as well as most ancient) interpretations of the rending of the veil is one which highlights its close proximity to the statement of Mark 15:37: “ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείδς φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.” Evans insists that “the force” of Jesus’ “powerful shout” is what “actually tears the temple veil”.²⁴ D. Sylva highlights the close proximity of Jesus’ death to the *velum scissum*, using the rending of the veil to interpret Christ’s death.²⁵ Saint Ephraem the Syrian (*Comm. on the Diatessaron* 21.4–6) speaks of “using the rent veil to clothe honorably the naked body of Jesus on the cross”.²⁶

Matthew’s *καὶ ἰδοὺ* in 27:51²⁷ is likewise used to indicate something unexpected and theophanic in nature, for a theophanic understanding seems most congruent with the divine origin of the *velum scissum*. Also, a theophanic understanding of *καὶ ἰδοὺ* appreciates the correlation between the *velum scissum* and two other places where the expression occurs: the opening of heaven (3:16) and the transfiguration (17:3).²⁸

Matthew’s veil was torn ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο. The phrase is found nowhere else in Greek literature save in subsequent references to the Matthean *velum scissum*. In the New Testament it can refer to the place from which Jesus’ garments were torn (John 19:23). The most common use of ἄνωθεν, however, is to designate divine origin (John 3:3, 7, 31; 19:11).²⁹ While the motion alluded to in John 19:23³⁰ may also be in view (by virtue of both the garment’s and the veil’s being of cloth material), that the divine origin is most

²⁴ It as both a prediction of temple destruction *and* the departure of God’s Spirit from the Jews.

²⁵ Dennis D. Sylva, “The Temple Curtain and Jesus’ Death in the Gospel of Luke”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 239-250, here 241. Also, see: D.D. Sylva (ed.), *Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1990), a collection of essays offering a variety of views.

²⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, Volume II: From the Gethsemane to the grave: A commentary on the passion narrative in the four gospels* (Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, New York, 1993), 1098-1117, here 1108, n. 22. Symeon the New Theologian (*Hymn* 36.41) and Leontius of Constantinople (*In sanctam parasceven*, 39-40), also describe the rending of the veil symbols (Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 21 and 36-39).

²⁷ “And the curtain of the Temple was parted in two from end to end; and there was an earth-shock; and the rocks were broken” [Καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσεισθη, καὶ αἱ πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν].

²⁸ See A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy*, JSNTSup 122 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), 127-128.

²⁹ See Daniel M. Gurtner, “Καταπέτασμα: Lexicographical and Etymological Considerations to the Biblical ‘Veil’”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (2004): 105-111.

³⁰ John 19:23: “And when Jesus was nailed to the cross, the men of the army took his clothing, and made a division of it into four parts, to every man a part, and they took his coat: now the coat was without a join, made out of one bit of cloth” [Οἱ οὖν στρατιῶται ὅτε ἐσταύρωσαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔλαβον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐποίησαν τέσσαρα μέρη, ἐκάστῳ στρατιώτῃ μέρος, καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα. ἦν δὲ ὁ χιτῶν ἄραφος, ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν ὑφαντὸς δι’ ὅλου].

prominent. The phrase, also, refers to a heavenly locale as God's abode and source of his blessings and, in a cultic sense, refers to the position of the glory of God *above* the ark.

The καταπέτασμα is the inner veil before the holy of holies and is torn as an act of God (ἐσχίσθη), alluding to God in the heavenlies and perhaps to his location. The singular veil before the holy of holies is now made into two (εἰς δύο), indicating the cessation of its function. The veil generally functioned to provide general *cultic "separation"*. This supports the traditional view that there is a new accessibility to God created through the removal of the separating function of the inner veil.

The veil's separation function was executed by its prohibition of *physical and visual accessibility* to God. If this function ceases at the *velum scissum*, then the barrier that prohibits one from physically entering the presence of God, as well as from seeing his face, is effectively removed. Yet, as we have seen, *physical accessibility* could only be accomplished when the entrant had a high priestly status. Matthew's Emmanuel Christology counters a theology of divine presence.

Other scriptures associate divine investiture of the priests with clothes of salvation: "let Your priests, o Lord God, be clothed with salvation" (2 Chronicles 6:41), and "I will also clothe her priests with salvation" (Psalm 132:16). Later, in Isaiah 61:10, the individual rejoices, "for [God] hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." The significance of this passage and the saving power of Christ was not lost to the early Christians, for Luke 4 records that Christ began his public ministry by standing up, reading from Isaiah 61, and sitting down, proclaiming that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Though the association of Christ with clothing has already been noted in the Garden of Eden narrative, Isaiah 61 explicitly reveals the Messiah as one who will invest others with clothing (פְּעֵר, *pě'er* as "beauty").³¹

Other scriptures associate divine investiture of the priests with clothes of salvation: "Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation" (2 Chronicles 6:41), and "I will also clothe her priests with salvation" (Psalm 132:16). Later, in Isaiah 61:10, the individual rejoices, "for [God] hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Christ began his public ministry by reading from Isaiah 61, and proclaiming that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Also, the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed (*enduo*, ἐνδύω)³² *array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on., and in his right mind*

³¹ Belnap, "Clothed with Salvation", 62.

³² The word "*enduo*", From *en* and *duno* (in the sense of sinking into a garment), *dunó*: to enter, to sink into - original word: *δύνω*; to invest with clothing (literally or figuratively). Matthew 6:25 "body, what ye shall put on. Is not life" (ὁμῶν τί ἐνδύσησθε οὐχὶ ἡ) *vb.-aor. subjunctive middle-2nd pers. pl.*;

(Luke 8:35). In the parable of the prodigal son Christ's transforming power is emphasized when the father has him clothed (*enduo*) in the best robe, a symbolically restoring him to his proper place within the family. Finally, Christ tells his disciples that they were to remain in Jerusalem following Christ's resurrection until "ye be *endued* with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In Revelation 7:14 the martyrs killed during the fifth seal are given white robes made "white in the blood of the Lamb." Eternal life is also described in terms of clothing. Those who have been baptized "put on" Christ. Similarly, Romans 13:14 exhorts the saints to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ.³³ But perhaps the

Matthew 22:11 "a man not *clothed with* clothes of wedding" (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου); Matthew 27:31 "and *put* His [own] garments *on* him" (χλαμύδα καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ) *vb-aor. indicative active-3rd pers. pl.*; Mark 1:6 "John was *clothed with* camel's hair" (ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου) *vb-perfect participle middle-nominative masculine sg.*; Mark 6:9 "sandals; and [He added], *Do not put on* two tunics" (καὶ μὴ ἐνδύσησθε δύο χιτῶνας) *verb-aorist infinitive middle*; Mark 15:20 "purple [garment] and *put on* him His [own] garments" (πορφύρα καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ) *verb-aorist indicative active-3rd person plural*; Luke 8:27 "with demons; and *who had not put on* any clothing" (ικανῶ οὐκ ἐνεδύσατο ἱμάτιον καὶ) *verb-aorist indicative middle-3rd person singular*; Luke 12:22 "for the body, *what you should put on*" (ὕμων τί ἐνδύσησθε) *verb-aorist subjunctive middle-2nd person plural*; Luke 15:22 "best robe and *put it on* him" (πρώτην καὶ ἐνδύσατε αὐτὸν καὶ) *vb-aor. imperative active-2nd pers. pl.*; Luke 24:49 "until *you are clothed with* power from on high" (ἕως οὗ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους) *vb-aor. subj. middle-2nd pers. pl.*; Acts 12:21 "Herod, *having put on* his royal" (ὁ Ἡρώδης ἐνδυσάμενος ἐσθῆτα βασιλικήν) *vb-aor. participle middle-nominative masculine singular*; Romans 13:12 "So let us *put aside* the deeds of darkness and *put on* the armor of light" (τοῦ σκότους ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ) *vb-aor. subj. middle-1st person plural*; Romans 13:14 "*But put on* the Lord Jesus" (ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον) *vb-aor. imperative middle-2nd pers. pl.*; 1 Corinthians 15:53 "must *put on* incorruption" (φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ) *vb-aor. infinitive middle*; 1 Corinthians 15:53 "mortal *must put on* immortality" (θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθάνασίαν) *vb-aor. infinitive middle*; 1 Corinthians 15:54 "perishable *will have put on* the imperishable" (φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσεται τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν) *vb-aor. subj. middle-3s*; 1 Corinthians 15:54 "mortal *this put on* immortality then" (θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσεται ἀθάνασίαν τότε) *vb-aor. subj. middle-3s*; Galatians 3:27 "were baptized into Christ *have clothed* yourselves with Christ" (ἐβαπτίσθητε Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε) *v-aor. indicative middle-2p*; Ephesians 4:24 "And *that ye put on* the new man" (καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν) *V-Aor. Inf. M*; Ephesians 6:11 "*Put on* the full armor of God" (ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν) *v-aor. imp. m-2p*; Ephesians 6:14 "with truth, and *having put on* the breastplate" (ἀληθεία καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα) *v-aor. part. m-nominative masculine pl.*; Colossians 3:10 "and *have put on* the new self [man]" (καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον) *v-imp-nmp*; Colossians 3:12 "and beloved, *put on* a heart" (Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς) *v-aor. imp. mid-2pl.*; 1 Thessalonians 5:8 "let us be sober, *having put on* the breastplate" (ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως) *v-aor. part. m-nom. masc. pl.*; Revelation 1:13 "of man, *clothed in* a robe reaching to the feet" (ὄϊον ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ) *v-perf. part. masc. sg.* [27 occurrences].

³³ Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism and Structure of a "True" Image* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 30-41. This is an intriguing study on the early Christian association of Christ with clothing, the role of cloth imprinted with the images of Christ in early Christian belief. See, also: Nahum M. Waldman, "The Imagery of Clothing, Covering, and Overpowering," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 19 (1989): 161-170; Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Rome: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998). As Sebastian

most intriguing image is that of Hebrews 10:19-20, where we are exhorted to have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” As the verse suggests, at least some in early Christianity associated Christ and his mission with the temple veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. Certainly there is affinity in function between the veil and Christ in that both must be approached if one is to enter into the presence of God. In this regard, Daniel Belnap honestly concludes: “Thus Christ represents the veil that all must pass through to enter the holy of holies, and the veil represents Christ as the keeper of the way to exaltation”.³⁴ The clothing became tangible symbols of spiritual and somatic transformation. Like Adam and Eve, we have a need to be clothed in divine glory and the garment is acting like the temple veil.

3. Ephrem’ “*eṣtal šubḥa*” – the robe of glory (στολή δόξης). The christological transformation of the sign (‘*ātā*) and the epiphanic function of the *rāzā*, or mystical symbol in Jacob of Sarug

In late antiquity there was what one might call a whole “theology of clothing”, and in the Judaeo-Christian context the beginnings can already be seen in occasional figurative language in the Old Testament, such as Psalm 13,17 (LXX): “I will clothe her priests with salvation”. But it is in Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period that the theme really begins to be developed,³⁵ as a ‘theology of clothing’.³⁶

Brock emphasizes “the eschatological aspects of the ‘robe of glory’ obviate any idea of a purely cyclical process, in that the *Endzeit* is by no means a straight reflection of the *Urzeit*: the last state of Adam/mankind is to be far more glorious than his former state in the primordial Paradise, for, as Ephrem puts it, ‘The exalted One knew that Adam desired to become a God, so he sent his Son who put Adam on, to give him his desire.’ The Syriac Fathers, no less than the Greek, see the theōsis or divinization of man as the end purpose of the inhumanization of God”; see: Sebastian Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” in Margot Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 11–38, here 20.

³⁴ Belnap, “Clothed with Salvation”, 66. Christ himself was experiencing the utter humiliation of nakedness. At least three times over the course of the atonement, Christ was stripped of his clothing. The first occurrence was prior to his scourging, as recorded in Mark 15:15, where he was stripped to be beaten with the whip. The second occurrence was experienced as the Roman soldiers stripped Christ of his own robe and placed purple clothing on him, mocking him as king. Finally, the last stripping occurred at the cross as his clothing was taken from him and gambled away among the guards.

³⁵ Sebastian Brock, “Some Aspects of Greek Words in Syriac” in Albert Dietrich (ed.), *Synkretismus im syrisch-persischen Kulturgebiet*, Symposion, Reinhausen bei Göttingen, 1971, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge*, 96 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 80-108, reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 80-108, here 85-86 and 98-104.

In Christian writers it is clear that the imagery of clothing is, in particular, employed in two fairly well defined contexts: when used in connection with Christ, the reference is to the incarnation, while, with reference to the Christian, the context is most frequently that of baptism. The robe of glory (στολή δόξης), become something of a technical term in Syriac, in the forms *est la d-šubha*, or *estal šubha*, i.e. preserving the Greek word *στολή*. The “robe of glory” is essentially something that one receives at baptism.

The phrase already occurs a number of times in Ephrem’s writings: in his Sermones, (I, 5,93), for instance, he writes “I gaze upon the *stole* of glory that I put on at baptism”.³⁷

- Elsewhere (H. Nativ. V.4,5) he links the baptismal connotations of the phrase very closely with the incarnation, and Christ’s selfabasement: “He hid his own glory (*tešbuhteħ*), and gave his swaddling clothes as a robe (στολή) of glory to mankind”.³⁸

- In one of the Hymns on Paradise (IV,5) he speaks of a new *stole* as having been woven for Adam by Mary (“Mary clothed us with an incorruptible robe (στολή) of glory”).

- In the same hymn collection (VI,9) the theme of Adam’s recovery of his original glorious robe is again introduced: Ephrem describes the new paradise of the Church, and writes: “none (of the saints) there is naked – they are clothed in glory... our Lord himself has caused them to rediscover Adam’s original *stole*”.³⁹

- Exactly how Adam recovered his original robe (*stole*) of glory is described in rather more detail in an interesting passage in the *Cave of Treasures*, which speaks of Adam putting on the robe of glory, *estal šubha*, at the baptism he receives by means of the water that flowed from Christ’s side on the cross.⁴⁰

³⁶ Erik Peterson, “Theologie des Kleides,” in *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* 16 (1934): 347-356; Erik Peterson, *Pour une théologie du vêtement*, Traduction by M.-J. Congar (Lyon : Éditions de l’Abeille, 1943); Edgar Haulotte, *Symbolique du vêtement selon la Bible*, Théologie 65 (Paris: Aubier, 1966); A. Kehl, “Gewand (der Seele),” *RAC* 10 (1978) 945-1045.

³⁷ See Beck’s note to his translation (*Scr. Syri* 131), p. 94 note 1.

³⁸ St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns and Homilies of St. Ephraim the Syrian* (Veritatis Splendor Publication, 2012) this is a re-publication of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church, Second series*, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1886, vol. 13), “Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh,” *Hymn V*, in *Hymns and Homilies*, 204. H. Nativ. XXII. 39.3: “our body has become thy garment (*lbušak*), thy Spirit has become-our robe (*estlan*)”.

³⁹ “*My beautiful garments have been ruined, and are no more*”; Two strophes later Adam speaks of the light (*nuhra*) that he wore (*d-lebšet*) in Paradise; in *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns On Paradise*, translation by Sebastian Brock (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 98 and 111.

⁴⁰ The blood and water from the side of Christ came down into the mouth of Adam (buried immediately beneath the cross), and Adam was thus delivered, and he put on the robe of glory. According to Ephrem (*Comm. Diat.* XVI.10), Jesus came “to heal Adam’s wounds, and to give a covering of glory to his nakedness” (*d-nasse maħwata d-Adam, w-taksit šubha l-pursayeh nettel*).

The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:21 reads: “and the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them”. The Palestinian Targums, together with Targum Onkelos, however, state that God provided them with *lbušin d-iqar*, “garments of glory” (aramaic *iqara* renders hebrew *kabod*. “garments of splendour (*mdt HDR*) in eternal light”). The difference between “garments of skin” (*’or*) and, the “garments of light” (*’or*) consists of a single letter.⁴¹

In Syriac tradition, it is clear that the “robe of glory”, *eṣtal šubḥa*, that the newly baptized received was none other than Adam’s original robe of glory which he had lost at the Fall. The phrase *eṣtla d-šubḥa* became a commonplace in Syriac literature, especially in a baptismal context.

Adam’s clothing before the Fall, the “robe of light” (*eṣtal nuhra*) in Syriac with its recurrent theme of the ascetic anticipating the life of paradise already in this world.⁴² Ephrem, too, speaks of a “garment of light” as worn by men and women in paradise, but he uses the Semitic word *lbuša* (*lbuš nuhra*)⁴³; at the end of the poem in question, however, he laments how his own sins have lost him “the crown, the name, the glory, the robe (*estla*), and the bride-chamber of light”. You will notice how similar the combination of these terms is to that in the passage I quoted from the Manichaean psalms.

First is the evidence of Scripture itself: commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you”, Ephrem points to the honour which God himself pays to the body by making it “a dwelling place and habitation of the Trinity” (*Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, quote John 14:23); and later on, commenting on 2 Corinthians 5, he says “Just as our bodies became worthy to be the dwelling of his Spirit, so he makes them worthy at the end to put on eternal glory” (*Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, p. 96). Ephrem elsewhere speaks of the human body as having become God’s new temple, replacing the Temple on Mount Sion (*Heresies 42:4*). Secondly, the very fact that God “put on a body” (*Nativity 9:2* and often elsewhere) indicates that there is nothing unclean or unworthy about the body. And finally, the Eucharist provides Ephrem with similar evidence of the worth of the body; in the following extract he is arguing against a group of Christians who hold the body to be impure but accept the Eucharist:

⁴¹ Cf. S. Brock, “Some Aspects of Greek Words in Syriac”, 101.

⁴² Sebastian Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” *Numen* 20 (1973): 1-19. Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Cistercian Studies, 124 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 37.

⁴³ *H. Parad.* VII. 5; Sebastian Brock, “Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses,” *Sobornost* 3 (1981): 70-85.

“for how could Christ have despised the body/
yet clothed himself in the Bread,
seeing that bread is related to that feeble body”.
(*Heresies 47:2*)

In a short poem, *Hymn Thirty-Seven* of the cycle on the Church, Ephrem compares Eve and Mary to the two inner eyes of the world: one is darkened and cannot see clearly, while the other is luminous and operates perfectly:

“It is clear that Mary/ is the ‘land’ that receives the Source of light;/ through her it has illumined/ the whole world, with its inhabitants,/ which had grown dark through Eve,/ the source of all evils./ Mary and Eve in their symbols/ resemble a body, one of whose eyes/ is blind and darkened,/ while the other/ is clear and bright,/ providing light for the whole./ The world, you see, has/ two eyes fixed in it:/ Eve was its left eye,/ blind,/ while the right eye,/ bright, is Mary. (...) But when it was illumined by the other eye,/ and the heavenly Light/ that resided in its midst,/ humanity became reconciled once again.”

“Praise to the Son, the Lord of symbols,/ who has fulfilled all kinds of symbols at His Crucifixion” (*Unleavened Bread 3*). The verse provides three main starting points for typological exegesis: the side, the lance, and the issuing forth of blood and water. The side looks back to Adam’s side, whence Eve was extracted (Genesis 2:22), the lance likewise looks back to the cherub’s sword that guarded paradise after the expulsion of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:24), while the issue of blood and water looks forward to the Mysteries of the Church, the Eucharist and Baptism.

“The sword that pierced Christ removed the sword guarding Paradise;/
His forgiveness tore up our document of debt” *Col. 2:14*
(*Crucifixion 9:2*)

“The piercing of Christ’s side thus makes it possible for humanity
to reenter Paradise:
so that, by the opening of His side/ He might open up the way to Paradise”.
(*Nativity 8:4*)

Saint Ephrem writes concerning the Incarnation:

“All these changes did the Merciful One make,/ stripping off glory and putting on a body;/ for He had devised a way to reclothe Adam/ in that glory which Adam had stripped off./ Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes,/ corresponding to Adam’s leaves,/ Christ put on clothes, instead of Adam’s skins;/ He was baptized for Adam’s sin,/ His body was embalmed for Adam’s death,/ He rose and raised up Adam in his glory./ Blessed is He who descended, put Adam on and ascended!” (*Nativity 23:13*)

'He put on Adam', that is, humanity, and so raised humanity to its original state, clothed in the 'robe of glory'. Thus, the continuum of salvation history is provided above all by the image of the 'robe of glory', a robe which Ephrem sometimes also calls the 'robe of light'.

Christ's baptism in 'the womb' of the Jordan looks back in time to His conception in Mary's womb. Both wombs, Mary's and the Jordan's, by bearing Christ the Light, are clothed with light from His presence within them:⁴⁴

As the Daystar in the river, the Bright One in the tomb,
He shone forth on the mountain top and gave brightness too in the
womb;

He dazzled as He went up from the river,
gave illumination at His ascent.
The brightness which Moses put on
was wrapped on him from without,
whereas the river in which Christ was baptized
was clothed in light from within;
so too did Mary's body, in which He resided,
gleam from within. (*Church 36:3-6*)

Christ's baptism, and the sanctification of the Jordan waters provide the occasion for the recovery of the lost robe of glory in Christian baptism. Already in Saint Paul we have clothing imagery "putting on Christ" at baptism.

Again the wedding garment is none other than 'the robe of glory', acquired at baptism, which must be kept unspotted for the eschatological wedding feast:

The First-born wrapped Himself in a body/ as a veil to hide His glory./
The immortal Bridegroom shines out in that robe:/
let the guests in their clothing resemble Him in His./
Let your bodies - which are your clothing - /
shine out, for they bound in fetters/ that man whose body was stained./
Lord, do You whiten my stains at Your banquet with Your radiance.⁴⁵
(Nisibis 43:21)

⁴⁴ Gabriele Winkler, "The Appearance of the Light at the Baptism of Jesus and the Origins of the Feast of Epiphany: An Investigation of Greek, Syriac, Armenian, and Latin Sources," in Maxwell E. Johnson (ed.), *Between Memory and Hope. Readings on the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2000), 291-348.

⁴⁵ "The Nisibene Hymns", ed. Philip Schaff (2012), 150.

Here Ephrem, with deliberate paradox, identifies the wedding garment of the parable, not with the baptismal robe of glory (as his readers might have expected), but with the actual bodies of the wedding guests, which are to correspond to the radiance and glory of Christ's body, that is, the garment that the Heavenly Bridegroom Himself put on.

The parable of the wedding guest in Matthew 22 can also serve to illustrate the tension between the baptismal and eschatological roles of the robe of glory.

“Among the saints none is naked,
for they have put on glory;
nor is there any clad in fig leaves,
or standing in shame,
for they have found, through our Lord,
the robe that belonged to Adam and Eve.”
(*Paradise 6:9*)

In *Discourse on our Lord* 48 “Christ is a coal of fire hidden in flesh” (cf also *Commentary on the Diatessaron* 1:25; *Nativity* 6:13).

Elsewhere, just as Christ's human body is ‘the garment of His divinity’ (*Faith* 19:2), so too the Eucharistic Bread is another garment:

“Who will not be amazed at Your various garments?
The body has hidden Your radiance – the awesome divine nature;
ordinary clothes hid the feeble human nature;
the Bread has hidden the Fire that resides within it.”
(*Faith 19:3*)

Ephrem uses another word, also with a rich sacral background in Jewish Aramaic, namely the verb *shra*, “take up residence, dwell”. It is this term that Ephrem regularly uses with reference to Christ's presence both in Mary's womb and in the consecrated Bread and Wine.⁴⁶ The verb is employed especially in connection with the *Shekhina*, the divine presence, and the *iqara*, divine glory. Christ is said to ‘reside’ (*shra*) in Mary's womb:

“Blessed is He who took up residence in the womb
and built there a temple wherein to dwell” (John 2:21), a shrine in which to be,
garment in which He might shine out.”⁴⁷
(*Nativity* 3:20)

⁴⁶ See Sebastian Brock, “Mary and the Eucharist: An Oriental Perspective”, *Sobornost* 1, no. 2 (1979): 50-59.

⁴⁷ “Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh”, ed. Philip Schaff (2012), 191-192.

As was to happen later with the term *aggen*, so too the term *shra* came to be extended to other salvific events: thus Ephrem uses it both of the action of Christ's body in the Jordan, and of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost (*Faith 14:12*). Just as the Divinity 'took up residence' in Mary's womb, so too does the divine 'hidden power' in the Bread and Wine 'take up residence' in the communicant.

So far we have been concerned with the body as the bridal chamber where the soul meets the Bridegroom. The imagery may also be interiorized, in which case the bridal chamber is no longer located in the body, but in the heart, the very centre of the human person.⁴⁸ Ephrem is conveying here in very compact form is schematically the following: the Divinity that resided on Mt Sinai, but which was rejected by the intended bride, Israel, now resides in the heart of the baptized.

In Ephrem's *Homily on Our Lord*⁴⁹ we will look specifically at his use of the word "sign" (*ātā*), mainly the christological transformation of the sign. The use of the word sign continues to be a distinguishing element in Ephrem's exegesis of Moses' theophany at Sinai (Exod 33:17-23; 34:33-35) and Paul's theophany on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) in *Homily*, §22-33. Just as the Israelites had erred by worshipping a golden calf in the wilderness, Simon the Pharisee is marked by his trust in physical signs. Ephrem writes, "But when our Lord stopped the signs, (the Pharisee) was overcome with the doubt of his countrymen." The sinful woman who lies prostrate before Christ in her posture of repentance is also an allusion to Saul who falls to the ground upon seeing the divine light (Acts 9:4). Unlike the Pharisee who doubts Christ, the woman recognizes the theophany before her. In this section, Ephrem points that Paul's blindness ironically led to his ability to see.⁵⁰ With similar irony, Moses is granted the opportunity to see the glory of YHWH but then conceals it from the Israelites with a veil. Ephrem writes:

"Even though the eyes of Moses were physical, like those of Paul, his interior eyes were Christian. For 'Moses wrote concerning me...' In the case of Paul, his exterior eyes were as open as those within were closed. The exterior eyes of Moses radiated because his interior eyes saw clearly. Paul's exterior eyes were kept closed, so that by

⁴⁸ Thomas Buchan, "Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian," in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine nature. The History of Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), 146-159.

⁴⁹ Edmund Beck, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermo de Domino Nostro*, (CSCO 270, 271; Louvain, 1966). See also the English translations by Edward G. Mathews, Jr. and Joseph P. Amar, *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Selected Prose Works*, The Fathers of the Church 91 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 269-332.

⁵⁰ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 2.

the closing of his exterior eyes those within would be open. He who had been unable to perceive our Lord through His signs with exterior eyes, perceived Him with interior eyes once his physical (eyes) were closed. And because he took an example from his own experience, he wrote to those whose bodily eyes saw clearly: 'May he enlighten the eyes of your hearts.' So visible signs in no way helped the exterior eyes of the Jews; faith of the heart opened the eyes of the hearts of the nations. If Moses simply had come down from the mountain without his face radiating, and had said, "I saw the radiance of God there," the infidel fathers would not have believed him. And likewise with Paul: the crucifying sons would not have put faith in him if his eyes had not been injured, and he had said, "I heard the voice of Christ." This is why, as though out of love, (God) set a desirable sign of radiance on Moses in order to convince them that (Moses) had seen the divine radiance. But on Saul, as on a persecutor, He set the infamous sign of blindness so that the liars would believe that he had heard the words of Christ" (Homily, §32).

Ephrem goes on to write that the Israelites fail to recognize the visible signs on their bodies and their clothes. The visible signs and transformations that God provides are ineffectual at persuading.⁵¹ The external sign, says Angela Y. Kim, corresponds to the interior state of the branded individuals. In the case of Moses, the sign refers to a state of grace because he was granted a vision of the glory of YHWH. For Saul the external sign is one of blindness. The implication is that it is only through interior vision that one comes to know Christ, not through physical sight and physical signs.⁵² Here, Ephrem reveals the complexity of his understanding of sign. The word sign is no longer used in a metaphoric sense, as in a sign on the heart (*Homily*, §7), but rather in a literal and visible way.

"Ephrem has transformed the visible sign of guilt into a visible sign of grace... The literal and the metaphoric understanding of the word sign plays an important role in illustrating the central theological theme of the homily, namely Christ's transformative power".⁵³

Regarding the 'epiphany of mystical symbols', Richard E. McCarron emphasizes the highly dynamic role that the *rāzā*, or "mystical symbol", will play in the Abraham narrative of Genesis 22. Jacob of Sarug explains that in the very telling of the story now the mystical symbol will be active once again in an "epiphany". Jacob begins with the injunction of the Lord to Abraham to take

⁵¹ P. Yousif, "Exegetical Principles of St. Ephraem of Nisibis," *Studia Patristica* 18, 4 (1990): 296-302.

⁵² Robert Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology," *Parole de L' Orient* 6-7 (1975/6): 1-20.

⁵³ Angela Y. Kim, "Signs of Ephrem's Exegetical Techniques in his Homily on our Lord," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3.1 (2010), 55-70, here 68.

his son and sacrifice (*dbh*) him. In the Peshitta text, Isaac is called the *ihîdâyâ*, or “only one”. The term *ihîdâyâ* has significant christological and spiritual meanings,⁵⁴ as the Syriac equivalent for *ho monogenes* and a frequent title of Christ (associations between Christ and Isaac). Jacob sees in Isaac the image (*surtâ*) of Jesus. He Image of the Son of God, carrying the cross himself to Golgotha, Isaac put on a coat of mystical symbols and shone with beauty as he walked on the way to his killing (“the mystical symbol of the Son that Isaac was clothed”). Having arrived at the spot on the mountain, Abraham sets about building the altar for the holocaust. He knew the spot because the “visible glory of the mystical symbols” (*škîntâ drâzê*) dwelt there. “The *râzâ* is not static, says R.E. Mccarron, Abraham’s mind works faster than his deeds: for in his mind, Isaac is already killed and the colors of the mystical symbol shine forth for him”.⁵⁵

Therefore, the key is the function of the *râzâ*, or mystical symbol. The mystical symbol is not a static image or thing. The *râzâ* breaks linear time (like in Jn 8:57: “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”): what matters for Jacob is the story of salvation being. For Jacob Abraham actually sees Jesus’s saving actions played out before him in his own actions. He describes the *râzâ*’s function as that of epiphany. Jacob speaks of Christ as working with gestures (*remzê*) or traces the mystical symbol is working once more, blazing or shining forth for the present listeners to see at work the traces of history that are indeed part of their tradition. They perceive once again the *râzâ*’s brilliance and are led to a deeper love of Christ and of his passion. The *râzâ* is almost always referred to by means of light or visual imagery. It blazes, shines, or burns. The visible quality is part of the mystical symbol by which an invisible reality is rendered visible. The work of the mystical symbol itself is the “presence of concrete spiritual reality” and it opens the way to the perception of God’s activity (this is the epiphany of the mystical symbol).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Sidney H. Griffith, “Singles in God’s Service: Thoughts on the *ihîdâyê* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian,” *The Harp* 4 (1991): 145-159.

⁵⁵ Richard E. Mccarron, “An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols: Jacob of Sarug’s Mêmâr 109 on Abraham and his Types,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* Vol. 1, no.1 (1998): 57-78, here 69-70. Typically, this mode of exegesis is identified as typological. Typology is generally defined as an exegetical strategy that interprets all of history in light of its fulfillment in Christ, shadows of New Testament truth in Old Testament events. But “to consider Jacob’s analysis solely in terms of the standard type-antitype relationship misses Jacob’s complex poetic contribution”. Indeed, while typology as ordinarily understood is considered outmoded by modern biblical scholars given to the historical-critical methods, one should note that “typology incorporates the old into the new and thereby helps to constitute a tradition” (Mccarron, “An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols”, 71-72).

⁵⁶ Verna Harrison, “Word as icon in Greek patristic theology,” *Sobornost* 10 no. 1 (1988): 40. See also Sidney H. Griffith, “The Image of the Image Maker in the Poetry of St. Ephraem the Syrian,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 258-269, who demonstrates that Ephraem’s work better exemplifies the phenomenon of iconographic language. She notes the tendency to dismiss patristic exegesis because

According to Richard E. Mccarron, Jacob seeks God's actions (activities or *energeias*) in the mystical symbols. Abraham and Isaac directly participate in the revelation of this way by painting the blazing portrait of mystical symbols: the literally blazing light of the Pasch manifested by *rāzê* (such would be the "spiritual" sense of the passage). By calling forth attention to the epiphany of mystical symbols that allow an almost ecstatic communion of past, present, and future. Thus, "truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, i.e., letting what shows itself be".⁵⁷

4. Dionysian' Χειραγωγία - "Sacred veils" and theurgic lights/rays. Holy σύμβολον (icon of the invisible) and the Face of Providence disclosed within the veils of the Church

Θεῖα ἀγάλματα - divine names as *notional icons* or "divine images". Transcendence and Presence

Divine Names for Dionysius are sacramental in their character. They carry the divine presence (divine light), because the divine names are θεῖα ἀγάλματα, "divine images" or "icons" of God.⁵⁸ The immateriality of the soul is an image of the incorporeality of God, Holy Scripture, too, is full of symbols. In the Incarnation God "became complex" by entering "into our nature". After the "vesture" of His Incarnation, God remains present into the "veils" of Scripture and Liturgy. But, even the revealed names (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are finally icons, images drawn from human experience in world. Thus, God can only be known in the experience of His presence, His light. Also the patristic meaning for "mystical" is hidden. God is hidden by the light (*Ep. I*) and His divine darkness (γνόφος) is the unapproachable light, his dwelling place (*Ep. V*).⁵⁹ Therefore, light is both the Presence (*shekinach*) as immanent transcendence or as tension between transcendent hiddenness and revelation.

it is often characterized as "typology" or "allegory" and suggests an "iconic" reading would be the way to bridge, judge, and rehabilitate patristic exegesis. For a developed argument for a "theoretic" hermeneutics (in the sense of *theoria* or "spiritual vision") see John Breck, *The Power of the Word in the Worshipping Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 49-92.

⁵⁷ Mccarron, "An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols", 76-77.

⁵⁸ Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikōn, 1994), 70-74.

⁵⁹ See *Ep. V* and *DN VII.2* for the equation of the cloud of Sinai (γνόφος) with the "unapproachable light" (ἀπρόσιτον φῶς) in 1 Tm. 6:16. Cf., John Anthony McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (*Oratio* 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory the Theologian," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 7-31.

As Golitzin says, “*Areopagite’s originality derives less from the imitation of the pagan masters than from his fidelity to patristic teaching on the Trinity and the divine names or attributes*”.⁶⁰ Regarding the “names” of God as “notional icons”, they bear a certain sacramental power. In his name is God, who goes “outside” of his hidden essence (ἐξῶ ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται, *DN IV*, 13).

“The patristic theology of divine transcendence and immanence is the foundation of the DN: God is transcendent as both One and Three, yet is fully immanent to creation in his powers, whose presence we may discern in the notional icons of his names given in revelation”.⁶¹

But, in the same time, the terminology bearing on light is consistent throughout the whole *CD*. God ad extra, the divine πρόοδοι, seem to indicate: ray, effusion of light, radiance. Thus, God takes on the name of “intelligible light” (φῶς νοητόν) or “overflowing outpouring of light” (ὑπερβλύζουσα φωτοχυσία). As Golitzin concludes, “the language of ‘rays’ direct us to the nonsubstantial character of the πρόοδοι and thus to Dionysius’ fundamental alteration of the pagans’ emanationism scheme”.⁶² As Bradshaw emphasizes, Dionysius uses πρόοδος to signify the presence of God as “outside” his essence: “The *proodoi* both *are* God and *manifest* God, who remains beyond them as their sources”.⁶³

God’s names are sacrament of his presence and they direct us to, and participate in, the greater sacrament (μυστήριον) of God’s self-giving love. In this context, the εἰκών has an ontological value, it does not imitate but rather reveals a “real presence”. With this meaning, Eucharist is an icon, a symbol and ritual gesture a theophany (ὑπ’ ὄψιν, recognition of a real Presence).⁶⁴ As icons, hierarchy is the revelation of the saving presence, an icon of the Thearchic beauty and the participants as divine images become recipients of the primordial light’s Thearchic rays (*CH III.2*).

Also, the symbol is putting-together matter and divine light (a revelation). The therachic ray illumine us by the variety of sacred veils, because the ‘rays’ of the divine energies are capable of appropriating or “puts-itself-together-

⁶⁰ Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita: 1 Cor 3:16, John 14:21-23* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota), 59.

⁶¹ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 67.

⁶² Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 77. God’s immanence is particularly developed by the cappadocians: the divine πρόοδοι as a kind of radiance or ‘penumbra’ about the transcendent essence. The Dionysios πρόοδοι represent in short the elimination of the pagan κόσμος νοητός (‘intelligible worlds’), the intermediary ‘henads’. Names of God are degrees of the divine processions, not God *in se*.

⁶³ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181. But, these are, after all, the divine energies, called by Dionysius ἀγαθουργίαι, πρόοδοι, διακρίσεις etc.

⁶⁴ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 200-201.

with" (συμ-βολή). As icons of the invisible the veils are guides (χειραγωγία) for us and we can speak about the pedagogical roll of these 'veils'. The 'veils' are stuff of our universe (matter, physical gesture or motion, spoken word), a diffusion of divine light which illumined matters for the transmission of the gift of light. This participation (μετουσία) to the super-abundant light (CH X.3) is a participation/revelation of the invisible through the visible. Thus, because of the capacity of matter to carry the light of God (holy σύμβολον), the veils are "material light icons of the immaterial gift of light".⁶⁵

To recapitulate: 1) symbols – carry a "real presence" (the nature of the symbol – indwelling of divine in matter), 2) hierarchy – as "icons of the divine energies" (EH V.1.7), 3) sacraments – hidden God's energies streaming into creation, 4) "sacred veils" – revelations, 5) χειραγωγία – brings us in accordance with the divine archetype.

Therefore, it is a light that renders us "co-workers" of God's divinity: "Veiled in the images of our hierarchy, as he was veiled in the flesh, he renders those veils mean of participation in, and revelation of, his glory".⁶⁶ But, says Golitzin, if "veils" never to be wholly dissolved, humanity clothes his divinity (the mystery hidden within the veils) and, thus, Jesus' humanity, his body, is our permanent "envelope". Christ is, thus, "the place of the presence of God" or "place of meeting" and "face of Providence disclosed within the veils of the Church".⁶⁷ The Areopagite Church is not an institution, but the continuation of the Incarnation, it is *'the'* icon of God. The unique mystery is to touch and sense the light of God himself, to know him in the darkness of his unattainable glory. Thus, God is forever transcendent, but we share his glory or light. This light and glory of Christ also reside within, rest upon the "altar". We know God in Christ partly hidden and partly revealed. This glimpse of the glory is at once concealed and manifested.

Christ as μύρον and as divine altar. In Him, transcendence and immanence (απόφασις and κατάφασις) have met

Having united himself the body and God communicated to it his own immortality. "Christ's body, clothed in the incorporeal Word of God, no longer fears death or corruption, because its garment is life."⁶⁸ "God molded together this holy body, as it were, and ineffably placed into it His own radiance and

⁶⁵ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 202.

⁶⁶ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 226.

⁶⁷ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 222.

⁶⁸ Athanasius, *De Inc.* 44, PG 25:173-176. Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 84.

incorruptibility.”⁶⁹ Therefore, if Christ died, it was only because it was pleasing to the Divine Logos to distance himself from his body for a time, but death could not hold in its power this temple of life itself. On Tabor, streams of divine glory flow through the garments of flesh, for God is light. “Even His garments Christ showed to be white as light, because out of the entire body of the Savior there flowed the glory of His Divinity and His light shone in all His members” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Or.* 32). After the resurrection, not everyone could see with physical eyes the spiritualized body of the Savior entering through closed doors. The Son of God completely covered himself with flesh as with a veil.⁷⁰

Ps.-Dionysius view of the univers as a structure essentially infused by the divine light reflects, also, a metaphysics of the light, whilst Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and “this light, which proceeds from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus”.⁷¹ Jesus appears to Paul as a blinding light from heaven, “his pseudonymous identity” in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: “suddenly (*ἐξαίφνης*) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]”.⁷² We enter into God through God, Christ and the Church as His body is the place of the encounter with God. Thus, “entering into” the divine presence (*γένομαι*, *Ep.* X) represent, according to Golitzin, a “key theophany”.⁷³ But Christ himself is the deifying gift (*θεοποιῶν δῶρον*, *Ep.* III). He gives his actions (*ἐνέργεια*) or powers (*δυνάμεις*), but not his essence (*οὐσία*). This is the distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra*.

There is in *CD* the explicit affirmation of three levels or aspects of the beatic vision: body, intellect (*νοῦς*) and union with the “supraluminary rays” of divinity:

“We shall... be filled, on the one hand, with pure contemplation of His most visible theophany, shining round us with manifest brilliance as it shone round His disciples at the divine Transfiguration, and, on the other hand, we shall [also] participate in His noetic gift of light with our intellects grown passionless and immaterial; and [finally

⁶⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Ador.* 9, PG 68:597. Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* (CPG 5200).

⁷⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 39.13, PG 36, 349; *Oration 39: “On the Holy Lights,”* in *Gregory of Nazianzus*, translation by Brian Daley, *The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 127-137.

⁷¹ Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite “No Longer I”* (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012), 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul’s rhetorical question from 2 Cor 6:14: “What fellowship is there between light and darkness?” (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

⁷² Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul’s letters support Dionysius’ understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 (“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”); Eph 5:8 (“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light”); Col 1:12 (“the Father . . . has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light”).

⁷³ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 42.

we shall share] in the union which transcends the [created] intellect through the unknowable and blessed impulses of [His] supra-luminary rays in a more divine imitation of the heavenly intellects because, as Scripture says, 'we shall be equals to the angels and sons of God, being sons of the Resurrection'.⁷⁴

The idea of the necessary connection between proto-image and image, which Pseudo-Dionysius had in mind when he speaks of deification through likening to God. Like an artist "will make, if one can use such an expression, a *double* of the one he is portraying, and he will represent reality *in the likeness, the proto-image in the image and the one in the other, except the distinction of essence*."⁷⁵ The highlighted words of the Areopagite became the motto of the defenders of icons. Every representation presupposes a proto-image and an image. The real body of Christ is the proto-image, His icon is the image.⁷⁶

5. Palamas' consecrated bread is "like a veil concealing the divinity". The "Shining Face" as Hesychast Veil (καταπέτασμα)

Following Dionysios the Areopagite, hesychasts thinkers understand the symbolic function of the veil. So, creation as a theophany or manifestation of God is analogous to Incarnation as true theophany of the divine. This movement or self-manifestation, the paradoxical visibility of the invisible, is a direct ontological communion with God, which take place in or through various symbolic mediations. To reify the dichotomy between sense and mind is "*the farthest thing from Dionysios' intent... (he) insists that God is both inaccessible and accesible to both the sense and*

⁷⁴ DN I.4, 592BC (114:7-115:5). On this passage, see A. Golitzin, "'On the Other Hand': A Response to Father Paul Weshe's Recent Article on Dionysius", *SVTQ* 34 (1990), p. 305-323, esp. 310-316. Notes as well Macarius' insistence on the divine and objective nature of the light which appears – not a νόημα, a product of the intellect, but an ὑποστατικόν φῶς, "substantial light" 58.2.5 (II:183, lines 14-15): "And the Lord has clothed them with the garments of the kingdom of unspeakable light, the garment of faith, hope, love, joy, peace, goodness, human warmth, and all the other divine and living garments of light, life, and ineffable tranquillity. The result is that, as God is love and joy and peace and kindness and goodness, so too the new man may become by grace." (Homily 2, 5, Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies And The Great Letter*, translated, edited and with an introduction by George A. Maloney, S.J., preface by Kallistos Ware (New York: Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1992), 46.

⁷⁵ Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 4.3.1, PG 3:473.

⁷⁶ About the body in the context of *theosis* as liturgy (sacramental and anthropological aspect of deification), see: Vladimir Kharlamov, *The Beauty of the Unity and the Harmony of the Whole. The Concept of Theosis in the Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 204-225; and, also, about the Christ as Light, resplendent in His hierarchies see: William Riordan, *Divine Light: The Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 2008), 151-169.

mind".⁷⁷ Even in his self-revelation in the uncreated light or in the Incarnation, God "remains hidden even after his manifestation, or to speak more divinely, in his manifestation".⁷⁸ The nature of the symbolic is simultaneously 'to reveal by concealing'.⁷⁹ If veils are 'ontological symbols', what is required is a movement into the signs, a paradox of a "mediated immediacy" (ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα).⁸⁰

To Palamas, Adam was clothed in a garment of divine illumination while he dwelt in paradise under God's command, but he lost this gift in the Fall. Access to this grace was restored to man in the incarnation and manifested anew by Christ on Mount Tabor, revealing what we shall become in the future age. The apostle Paul, who himself received a pledge of this illumination in his vision on the road to Damascus, referred to it as "our heavenly dwelling place" (2 Cor 5.2: cap. 66-67).⁸¹ The deifying gift of God is his energy, which the great Dionysius and all the other theologians everywhere call divinity, while insisting that the title of divinity belongs to the divine energy rather than to the divine substance. [*Ep 3 Akindynos* 15]. Palamas began by setting out his favoured scriptural and patristic witnesses to the Taboric Light. These all point to the divine and uncreated character of that Light and its intimate association with the Godhead (*Cap.* 146).

That this light is not visible through the mediation of air is shown by the great Denys,⁸² and those who with him call it the "light of the age to come", the deifying light is also essential, but is not itself the essence of God.⁸³ The great Denys, who elsewhere terms this light a "superluminous and theurgic ray",⁸⁴ also calls it "deifying gift and principle of the Divinity",⁸⁵ that is to say, of deification. Uncreated light is the glory of God, of Christ our God, and of those who attain the supreme goal of being conformed to Christ.⁸⁶ This light at present shines in

⁷⁷ Eric Perl, "Symbol, Sacrament, and Hierarchy in Saint Dionysios the Areopagite," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), p. 311-355, for here p. 319.

⁷⁸ Dyonisios, *Letter 3* (1069B).

⁷⁹ Maximos Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2014), 230.

⁸⁰ Dyonisios, *On the Divine Names* 2.5 (644A).

⁸¹ Saint Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, A Critical Edition*, Translation and Study by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B, Studies and Texts 83, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), p. 39.

⁸² Cf. *De Div. Nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592BC. Cf. *Hom. in Transfig.* VII, PG XCVII, 949C.

⁸³ Tr. III.i.22-23, in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, Edited with an Introduction by John Meyendorff, translation by Nicholas Gendle, Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan (Paulist Press, 1983), 80-81.

⁸⁴ Cf. *De Cael. Hier.* 111.2, PG III, 165A.

⁸⁵ *Ep.* II, PG III, 1068-1069.

⁸⁶ Tr. II. iii. 66, Gendle ed., 67.

part, as a pledge,⁸⁷ for those who through impassibility have passed beyond all that is condemned, and through pure and immaterial prayer have passed beyond all that is pure.

Such is the vision of God which in the Age which is without end will be seen only by those judged worthy of such a blessed fulfillment. This same vision was seen in the present age by the chosen among the apostles on Thabor, by Stephen when he was being stoned, and by Anthony in his battle for inner stillness⁸⁸ Palamas also affirms that the prophets and patriarchs were not without experience of this light. For indeed, why should God have simulated some other light, when He possesses the eternal light in Himself, made visible (albeit in a mysterious way) to the pure in heart today just as in the Age to Come, as the great Denys affirms?⁸⁹ Denys the Areopagite⁹⁰ reveal to us that most divine knowledge according to the supernatural union with the superluminous light, which comes to pass in a manner beyond mind and knowledge.⁹¹ According to Denys, that was the same light which illumined the chosen apostles on the Mountain: His visible theophany which will illuminate us with its most brilliant rays, just as it illuminated the disciples at the time of the most divine Transfiguration."⁹²

Who are of one body with Him, they will be transformed into a temple for the triunitarian divinity: "This is an unsurpassed miracle: He is united even with human hypostases, mingling Himself with each of the faithful through participation in His holy body, becoming one body with us and making us the temple of the entire divinity" (*Defense*, p. 449, Tr. I.3.38). The sacraments are not simply "media" for they are the grace, but still Mantzarides says that "The sacraments are created media which transmit the uncreated grace of God".⁹³

⁸⁷ Cf. Rom. 8:23. The light of the Age to Come can truly be seen by anticipation by the saints in this life. Although their full transfiguration, body and soul together, awaits the final Resurrection, deification can and must begin in this life.

⁸⁸ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 10, PG XXVI, 860AB. The reference is to the "ray of light" from heaven, which appears to banish the demons and give respite to Anthony in his struggle against the forces of evil.

⁸⁹ Tr. II. iii. 66, Gendle ed., 67-68. Cf. *De Div. Nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592 BC.

⁹⁰ Tr. II. iii. 68, Gendle ed., 68. *De div. nom.* VII.3, PG III, 869CD.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 872AB.

⁹² Tr. III.i.10, Gendle ed., 72. cf. *De div. nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592BC. The saints in heaven enjoy the same vision of the transfigured Christ as the apostles did on Thabor. So, Gregory is referring to the Second Coming, when Christ will appear in the same glory as that in which He was revealed on Thabor.

⁹³ Georgios I. Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1984), 41. Through baptismal grace that which is "in the image" is purified and brightened and acquires the power to achieve likeness to God (*On Divine and Deifying Participation* 7). On this point, Palamas faithfully follows the teaching of St Diadochus of Photike. He too said the grace of God confers two benefits on man through baptism, one of these being the regeneration of that which is "in the image" and the other the possibility of realizing that which is "after the likeness" (Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man*, 46).

As Michaels Kunzler has demonstrated⁹⁴, participation in the grace of the sacraments was the basis for saint Gregory Palamas's theology, because it was understood as participation in the uncreated energies of God. It is not simply a moral union. They do not constitute a single hypostasis with Him. This sacramental union is a real union with His deifying grace and energy (partakes of the divine energy).⁹⁵

This mingling of human existence, renewed in baptism, with Christ's deified and deifying body, provides the basis for Palamas' teaching on the mystical vision of the uncreated light. At the transfiguration Christ's divine body illuminated His disciples from without, because it had not yet entered into the bodies of men, whereas now it lumines their souls from within, because it is commingled and exists within them.⁹⁶

Because the Holy Eucharist is spiritual, it must be viewed in a spiritual manner. The bread of the Eucharist is a sort of veil concealing divinity: "For the consecrated bread is like a veil concealing the divinity... If you give attention only to its outward appearance, it is of no benefit to you; but if you perceived its spirit, and regard it spiritually, you will in partaking of it be given life" (*Homily 56*).⁹⁷

Through communion in the sacraments of Christ man partakes of His uncreated grace and is united with Him into one body and one spirit. "Through His grace we are all one in our faith in Him, and we constitute the one body of His Chrch, having Him as sole head, and we have been given to drink from one spirit through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and we have received one baptism, and one hope is in all, and we have one God, above all things and with all things and in us all" (*Homily 15*).⁹⁸ It is possible, even in the present life, for man to experience his deification as already taking place. Palamas and the mystical theologians of Byzantium link this experience with the practice of continual prayer, whose aim is perpetual communion with God and hence the vision of divine light. This light is not a created medium nor a symbol of the divine light,

⁹⁴ Michael Kunzler, *Gnadenquellen: Symeon von Thessaloniki als Beispiel für die Einflußnahme des Palamismus auf die orthodoxe sakramentologie und Liturgik* (Trier: Bonifatius, 1989), 95-148. Cf., Nicholas P. Constatas, "Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen," in Sharon E. J. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspective on Religious Screen, East and West* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks/ Harvard University Press, 2006), 163-184, here 165.

⁹⁵ John Meyendorff, "Le dogme eucharistique dans les controversies théologique du XIV^e siècle," in *Commemorative Volume on the Sixth Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of St Gregory Palamas* (Thessalonike, 1960), 82-83.

⁹⁶ Tr. I.3.35 in Grégoire Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par Jean Meyendorff (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1959), 436.

⁹⁷ Saint Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, trans. by Christopher Veniamin (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 460-467.

⁹⁸ Palamas, *Homilies*, 108-114.

but an uncreated, natural energy deriving from God's essence. Williams noticed that, "once again we see him wanting to preserve both the authenticity of divine self-communication and the ultimate otherness of God".⁹⁹

The theme of uncreated light is the central point of the hesychastic dispute and it represents the heart of Palamas' teaching on the deification of man, reckon as a new illumination or, as Palamas says, the reassumption of his vestment of light (*Homily 35*).¹⁰⁰ The theophanies of the Old Testament, the illumination of Moses' face, the vision of Stephen the first martyr, the light on the road to Damascus, and above all, the light of Christ's transfiguration on Tabor – all these are various forms of the revelation of God's natural light to men. Barlaam of Calabria denied the concept of a real theophany, the revelation of the glory of God in the Old Testament is not form him a real presence within history or natural energy of God, but a created symbol.

The light of the transfiguration does not constitute a hidden, third nature of Christ, or another element between His human and divine natures, but it is the natural brightness of divinity, which has been hidden underneath His human body, revealing Himself as He was.

As Christ on Mount Tabor shone with the uncreated glory of His divinity, the righteous who partake of uncreated grace will shine in the Kingdom of God like the transfigured Christ. Man may share in God's glory and brightness, but the divine essence remains inaccessible and nonparticipable (Tr. III.1.33). The Byzantine theologians and Palamas synthesized these two traditions and linked the vision of God with the incarnation of the Logos and with man's deification, achieved in the Holy Spirit through the incarnation (*Homily 34*).¹⁰¹ For Norman Russell, "The spirituality of the Orthodox Church is both liturgical and monastic and takes full account of our corporeal nature as part of our identity".¹⁰² An experience of *participation* with the *imparticipable* Godhead, and this conceptual contradiction constitutes a real (unique) possibility of knowledge of the reality of God: "This, then, is the kernel of theosis – participation in the divine energies through communion with Christ in his Body which is the Church."¹⁰³ Gregory of Nyssa speaks about three stages in the spiritual life:

⁹⁹ Anne N. Williams, *The Ground of Union. Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 124, 137.

¹⁰⁰ Palamas, *Homilies*, 274-281.

¹⁰¹ Palamas, *Homilies*, 266-273.

¹⁰² Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers With God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, 2009), 170.

¹⁰³ Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 138-139. To Russell, "Yannaras and Zizioulas represent two different approaches to participation in God, each of which is the fruit of profound meditation on different strands of the patristic tradition. Yannaras locates theosis on the level of the divine energies, Zizioulas on the level of the hypostasis. Yannaras speaks of participation in

light/purification, cloud/ contemplation, darkness/perfection. By clothing ourselves in Christ through the agency of the Spirit our nature is transformed in Christ, sharing in the divine attributes of glory. Our dynamic participation in the divine life is sacramental and ecclesiological. And our participation in Christ through the Eucharist is both corporeal and spiritual: “For St Symeon the New Theologian this is expressed on the one hand by the vision of the divine light, and on the other hand by union with Christ through receiving in the Eucharist. These are not two ways, two alternative approaches”.¹⁰⁴ St Gregory Palamas repeats the Maximian idea and even strengthens it when he says that those who attain deification ‘become thereby uncreated, unoriginate, and indescribable (ἀκτίστους, ἀνάρχους καὶ ἀπεριγράπτους).¹⁰⁵

6. Momentarily lifted veil of time: Theophanic Light as “Natural Symbol”

To “draw the mind into the heart,” the “controlling organ” and “throne of grace” (*Triads* i.2.3), means to “recalls into the interior of the heart a power which is ever flowing outward through the faculty of sight” (*Triads* i.2.8). The effect is a transformation of the whole person, body as well as soul: “their flesh also is being transformed and elevated, participating together with the soul in the divine communion and becoming itself a dwelling and possession of God” (*Triads* i.2.9). The light beheld by the hesychasts is identified by Palamas with the light that shone around Christ at the Transfiguration. It is not a created symbol, but the “garment of their deification” and a foretaste of the light that will eternally illuminate the blessed (*Triads* i.3.5, 26). The light is in fact the eternal and uncreated glory of God: “God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power, and communicates to us not His nature but His proper glory and splendour” (*Triads* i.3.23). It is beheld, not by any sensory power, but by the intellect (*nous*) through bodily eyes (*Triads* i.3.27). This light is not an intelligible object; the intellect itself becomes like light, so that “with the light it clearly beholds the light, in a manner surpassing not only the bodily senses but everything that is knowable to us” (*Triads* i.3.9). The light is perceived only in the “cessation of all intellectual activity” (*Triads* i.3.17) as a gift of grace.

the energies, Zizioulas of communion through the Eucharist. The approaches are different but complementary” (Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 141).

¹⁰⁴ Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 146.

¹⁰⁵ *Triads* 3.1.31, trans. by Gendle (1983), 86. Cf. Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford University Press 2008), 212-213.

Although he denies that the light is a created symbol of God, Palamas allows that it is a *natural* symbol. A natural symbol always accompanies that which it symbolizes and depends on it for existence, as dawn accompanies the rising sun and heat the burning power of fire (*Triads* iii.1.14). Because of this innate association, the object symbolized may be said to “become” its natural symbol, although it remains one: “the capacity of fire to burn, which has as its symbol the heat accessible to the senses, becomes its own symbol, for it is always accompanied by this heat yet remains one and does not exist as double” (*Triads* iii.1.20). According to David Bradshaw, this contrast between the impalpable (sun, fire) and palpable (ray, heat) serves as an analogy between the Divine Essence and the palpable energies (e.g. glory or light). “This is as close as we can come to reconciling the reality of *theosis* with the absolute transcendence of God”.¹⁰⁶

Symbol is opposed to allegory and in the *Triads* and other works, St. Gregory distinguishes, therefore, between created and natural symbols. The theophanic light is the natural symbol of divinity and deification (*theosis*). Yet he rejects the notion that the light is an independent reality, for this would heretically add a third nature to Christ (*Triads* iii.1.17). Rather it is connatural and coessential with God. Palamas approaches the ontological status of the divine glory with the concept of *enhyposstasis* (persistent in being, substantial) as used by the Fathers.¹⁰⁷ This indwelling of divine energy is not like “art in works of art,” but rather as “art (*techne*) in the man who has acquired (i.e., learned) it.” In other words, the energy of divinization is something given to us but not something produced in us. The saints thus act as instruments of the Holy Spirit, working miracles by His energy (*Triads* iii.1.13).¹⁰⁸ The purified can by

¹⁰⁶ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236-237. Palamas’ language here is inspired by the remark of Maximus that in the Incarnation God “became His own symbol,” *Ambigua* 10 (PG 91 1165d). Palamas interprets not only the light seen by the hesychasts but also the “things around God” spoken of by Maximus as, in this sense, natural symbols of the divine (*Tr.* iii.1.19).

¹⁰⁷ The light, according to Palamas, is obviously a natural symbol of Christ’s divinity, not humanity. For Palamas and many Greek Fathers, a “nature” (*physis*), consists of essence (*ousia*) and energy (*energeia*). Energy is not an accident, but the actualization of a nature. Those deified “have received an energy identical to that of the deifying essence,” (*Triads* iii.1.33) i.e., the divine energy received is the same as the natural energy of the Divine Essence. Deification is made possible by the Incarnation, for “In Christ the fullness of divinity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:19).

¹⁰⁸ Edmund M. Hussey, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Theology of Gregory Palamas* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Publishing, 1972), 72; George Maloney, S.J., *A Theology of Uncreated Energies* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1978), 66; Scott F. Pentecost, *Quest for the Divine Presence: Metaphysics of Participation and the Relation of Philosophy to Theology in St. Gregory Palamas’s Triads and One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Ann Arbor, MI: Catholic University of America, 1999); Thomas L. Anastos, “Gregory Palamas’ Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 38:1-4 (1993): 335-349.

virtue of an excellent spiritual gift see the light of God just as the disciples had done in Thabor. And though this light is called a symbol, it is a natural one and does not exist apart from God; in other words, it is an uncreated operation of His (*Tr.iii.1.14*).¹⁰⁹

The opposite of seeing God “by means of an alien symbol” would be seeing by means of a natural symbol. So, the man who has seen God by means not of an alien symbol but by a natural symbol, has truly seen Him in a spiritual way. The natural symbol Palamas refers to is Christ, the physical and spiritual embodiment, manifestation, and revelation of God’s deifying presence. It is, says Eugene Webb, in Theoleptus’s words, “the light of the knowledge of God” that comes over one “like a luminous cloud” – not a light that one looks at, but a light one lives in and knows God in.¹¹⁰ Palamas refers to the light as a “natural symbol”, as it reveals the nature of that which it symbolizes. In showing forth uncreated light from His person, Palamas argues, the Lord “become His own symbol”, and the Archetype for all instance of human nature, both by revealing Himself as the “form” of all humanity and by showing “how God’s splendor would come to the saints and how they would appear in the age to come”.¹¹¹

God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power.¹¹² Palamas also interprets the light of Thabor as a “natural symbol” of the divine essence: “natural symbol always accompanies the nature which gives them being, for the symbol is natural to the nature”.¹¹³ Palamas thus clearly lays the foundation for a realist understanding of divine presence and self-disclosure. For this reason Palamas underlines that experience of the divine light and the divine energy is an *immediate* experience of God. This notion of immediacy is not an innovation in Byzantine theology.¹¹⁴ But how can this immediacy be reconciled with the “hiddenness” of the divine essence? As Bradshaw, Loudovikos and Clouser remark, by experiencing the divine energies

¹⁰⁹ Panayiotis Christou, “Double Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1966): 20-29; Kallistos Ware, “The Transfiguration of the Body,” in A.M. Allchin (ed.), *Sacrament and Image. Essays in the Christian Understanding of Man* (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1967), 17-32.

¹¹⁰ Eugene Webb, *In Search of the Triune God: The Christian Paths of East and West* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2014), 260-262.

¹¹¹ Demetrios Harper, “Becoming Homotheos: St Gregory Palamas’ Eschatology of Body,” in Constantinos Athanasopoulos, *Triune God: Incomprehensible But Knowable-The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 232-245, here 240.

¹¹² Tr. i.3.23, trans. N. Gendle, 39.

¹¹³ Tr. iii.1.14, trans. N. Gendle, 75.

¹¹⁴ Maximus the Confessor, for instance, speaks of the direct experience (πεῖρα, εμπειρία) and immediate perception (αἴσθησις) of God, which surpasses rational and conceptual knowledge about God (Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22, 77-78).

we directly participate in God and are not restricted to a “divine mask”, behind which lurks as unknown and possibly dark deity. It is rather the synchronic and diachronic inexhaustibility of the divine self-manifestation and its human reception that constitutes the divine mystery.¹¹⁵ Thus, indeed, for Plotinus there is continuity between sense and intellect. “Vision is not merely a metaphor for a Platonist. On the contrary, sensation and intellection belong on a continuum – the ‘vivid sensations’” (έναργεῖς αἰσθήσεις *Ennead* VI.7[38].7, 30-31), the presence of the Divine in the physical cosmos, an intimate and unmediated relation.¹¹⁶

Instead, Augustine decides in favor of a manifestation of God that takes place *through* created signs (“per formas”, “per creaturam”, “significative”). The concern of the East was not so much to safeguard the reality of the Old Testament manifestations (which was never contested) but their validity as precisely *theophanic* revelations. The Eastern theologians sought to affirm that it was indeed God who appeared to the prophets. That particular concern led them back to the who question that Augustine had avoided answering. The answer that the East has to offer us, and especially in the context of Palamite theology and its subsequent reception, is quite unexpected. It is not God the Father who appears in the Old Testament theophanies, nor is it God the Son, nor is it God the Holy Spirit, but rather the divine energies that manifest God. Now, the energies, being divine,

¹¹⁵ Constantinos Athanasopoulos, Christoph Schneider (eds.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co Ltd, 2013), 19: “This also explains why it would be nonsensical in Orthodoxy to hope for a direct vision of the divine essence in the Eschaton: there are infinite degrees of union with God, but already here and now, we experience God himself, and not a ‘secondary’. But Milbank is entirely right in pointing out that in Christian theology we always have to do with a ‘mediated immediacy’.”

¹¹⁶ Douglas Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 14-16; see also his chapter about the “Symbol, Participation and Divine Ideas,” 119-148. Frederic M. Schroeder says that the Platonic Form is often presented as an instrument of explanation and as a cause in ontology, epistemology, and ethics. The most adequate of all the sensible figures employed by Plotinus to describe intelligible reality is light. Light is also in an immediate, dynamic, and continuous relationship with its source, as “light from light”. The light from luminous bodies, therefore, is the external activity (ένέργεια) of a luminous body; (4-5 [29].7.33-49) “Abiding” (μένοντος from μένειν) may then appropriately describe the intransitive activity of the source of light. Therefore the image of light is the most adequate to express the nature of intelligible reality and its dynamic and immediate presence. In fact, “emanation” is not a term fondly embraced by Plotinus. Aristotle specifically denies that light is an emanation (ἀποροή) *De Anima* II.7.418b15. For here, see: Frederic M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), mainly chap. “Light” 24-39, in particular 24-25, 33-34. Tuomo Lankila, “The Byzantine Reception of Neoplatonism,” in Anthony Kaldellis, Niketas Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 314-324; Andrew Louth, “Platonism from Maximos the Confessor to the Palaiologan Period,” in Kaldellis, Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 325-340.

are fundamentally uncreated. According to Manoussakis, here we can see the conflict between Augustinian and Palamite Theology taking shape:

“for Augustine the means of God’s manifestations is creation touched by God, for Palamas it is rather God appearing to creation. It is interesting to notice how Palamas’s suggested solution, instead of solving the problem, re-produce the old dichotomy (the root of the problem) between an invisible God and his visible manifestations, by transcribing it into a new modality – that of the unknown divine essence and the knowable divine energies. By introducing the solution of divine energies the East too avoids answering the disputed who question. Or to put it better, Palamas’s answer is not an answer... We often read that Augustine takes these theophanies to have happened by means of merely created ‘sings’ or ‘symbols’ – that the theophanic events themselves were nothing more than modulations of creation; and it would seem so with good reason, for Augustine himself employs such terminology”.¹¹⁷

Augustine regards Moses (in *Exodus* 33) and Paul (when he was taken up into the “third heaven”, *2 Cor.* 12:2) as having been granted a distinctive form of the vision of God known as “intellectual” vision, unlike corporeal theophanies (dreams, prophetic visions). The intellectual vision is precisely a vision of “God in himself”; to David Bradshaw that is the point of “distinguishing it from visions of corporeal theophanies and the like, which Augustine regards as mediated”.¹¹⁸

For Palamas the light that shone on Mt. Tabor, the mystical experiences of the saints throughout the history of the Church, and the beatific vision of God at the eschaton are one and the same event (*Tr.* i.3.43). Eschatology is implicated in the Theophanic events in a twofold way: “*proleptically* and *retrospectively*... the overcoming of the present limitations of the body so as to experience, as if in preview, the eschatological vision. However, such a *pre*-eschatological vision of God is precisely made possible only retrospectively by the eschaton itself – that is, the kingdom which is to come and yet always coming, flowing, as it were, into history. At the moment of Christ’s transfiguration the eschaton is not anticipated, if by this we mean simply expected, but must rather be revealed – as if the veil of time is momentarily lifted so as to allow us to take a peek at the kingdom behind it, which we, from this side of the veil, still await, but which itself already exists and unfolds.”¹¹⁹ Palamas clearly reads in the Old Testament theophanies

¹¹⁷ John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock, 2015), 56.

¹¹⁸ David Bradshaw, “Augustine the Metaphysician,” in Aristotle Papanikolaou, George E. Demacopoulos, *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 227-251, here 248.

¹¹⁹ Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 67. The Kingdom is already a reality active in historical reality and as it manifests itself in such moments as the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. Similarly, the transfiguration, in its turn, was itself retroactively reaching back in history to those Old Testament theophanies.

the *results* of Christ's transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, and he considers the latter, in turn, the result of the final and eschatological vision (*Tr.* iii.38.1). For Manoussakis, this holds, then, as a general principle of any theological aesthetics, of which the Old Testament theophanies cannot be an exemption: "there is no revelation without a transfigurative sanctification (deification), and there is no deification without revelation. The revealer always gives something of himself (more accurately: he gives himself) to those to whom he reveals himself".¹²⁰

Thus, says Saint Gregory Palamas, "the tabernacle, the priesthood, and their appurtenances were sensible symbols and veils, covering the things which Moses saw in the divine darkness" (*Triads* 2.3.55), and because "the Holy Spirit that takes its seat (ἐφιζάνων) on the intellect of the prophets... how is it not obvious that the Spirit is light, visible to the intellect, different from intellectual understanding," (*Triads* 2.3.59). In the case of the light of Thabor, its substrate is the uncreated God, this is what Palamas calls a "natural" symbol. Thus we posit that, even though it co-exists with God in the substrate of the divine nature, it was (or is) something projected outward like a veil (παραπέτασμα), in the same way that God is said to "clothe himself with light as with a garment" (Ps 103:2).¹²¹ Those who, having

¹²⁰ Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 68. See, also: Aidan Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Aldershot Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 80-82, for a perspective on the 'neo-iconophile theology' of the icon.

¹²¹ According to Fr. Maximos (Constat) the icon (*or* image) and the symbol are alike in necessarily bearing a likeness to their prototypes, for this is how they are related to them. Thus, the Son of God is called the "exact image" of the Father (cf. Hebr 1:3), for they share the same nature. Symbol can never have the exactitude of likeness, and from this point of view is of a lower rank than the image. Conversely, the image, unlike the symbol, cannot share the same substrate (*now in the sense of "subject"*) with its archetype, on account of its irreducible otherness. The "veil" as the self-revelation of God offers a valuable distinction between a "symbol" (light of the Transfiguration was a "symbol" of the divinity in *Ambigua* 10.29) and an "icon": "They were taught, in a hidden way, that the wholly blessed radiance that shone with dazzling rays of light from the Lord's face, completely overwhelming the power of their eyes, was a symbol of His divinity, which transcends intellect, being, and knowledge" (τὴν μὲν ἀκτινοφανῶς ἐκλάμπουσαν τοῦ προσώπου πανόλβιον ἀίγλην, ὡς πᾶσαν ὀφθαλμῶν νικῶσαν ἐνέργειαν, τῆς ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ αἴσθησιν καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ γνῶσιν θεότητος αὐτοῦ σύμβολον εἶναι μυστικῶς ἐδιδάσκοντο); in Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua. Volume 1*, edited and translated by Nicholas Constat, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard University Press, 2014), 190-191.

This statement, which describes the divine light as a "symbol," provoked considerable discussion during the Hesychast controversy of the fourteenth century; see Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 2.3.21-22; 3.1.13-14 (ed. Meyendorff 1959, 2:431-33, 583-87); John VI Kantakouzenos, *Refutation of Prochoros Kydones* 1.5 (CCSG 16:8); and Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Thabor* 3.8,4.21 (ed. Zacharopoulos 2003, 224-25, 276-77). Note that in *Ambigua* 10.7: "Why does the teacher say that the flesh (σάρκα φησίν) is a 'cloud' (νέφος) and a 'veil' (προκάλυμμα)?" Maximus says that the 'cloud' (νέφος) have the meaning of 'fleshly passion' and the 'veil' (προκάλυμμα) the sense or 'sensation' (*Ambigua* 1, ed. Costas, 158).

beheld the things of God beyond the veils subsequently shape within themselves a certain image.¹²² Therefore, the “journey beyond the veil” is a journey into the holy of holies where God’s immanence and His transcendence meet.¹²³

7. Pneumatic bodies as being “clothed with Christ” (Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε). God’s breath ‘ἐμφύσημα’ and man’ face ‘πρόσωπον [πρός-ὄψις]’ – infusing (ὁ Θεός ἐμφύσησε) the uncreated energies of the Holy Spirit

Using the ascetic phenomenology Saint Mark the Ascetic (Hermit) interprets the *καταπέτασμα* (*katapetasma*) by the way in which the soul enters within the veil:

“The temple is the holy place of the soul and body that is built by God. Finally, the altar is the table of hope placed in this temple. Here the first born thought is sacrificed by the mind... But this temple also has a place within the veil. There Jesus entered for us as the Forerunner (Hebrews 6:20), living from baptism in us”.¹²⁴

This place is the innermost, more hidden, and more sincere room of the heart, a room which, unless it opens through God, can certainly not know the One who lives in it. “Wherefore, O man, says saint Mark, that you have been baptized in Christ, give only the work for which you have taken power (δὸς τὴν ἐργασίαν εἰς ἣν δύναμιν εἴληφας) and prepares you to receive the revelation of Him who dwells in you”.¹²⁵ And if we do not work God’s commandments, the grace given to us will not be revealed. The grace of the baptism gives us help to the growth in Christ.

So, Christ is living from baptism in us, where He enters into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος). Further, Saint Mark explains this presence of Christ beyond the veil as a

¹²² Maximos the Confessor, *Second Century on Theology* 80-83: “A pure heart offers the mind to God free of all image and form (ἀνείδεον καὶ ἀμόρφωτον), and ready to be imprinted (ἐνσημανθῆναι)¹²² only by God’s own types, by which God himself is made manifest ... But if ‘we have the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16), it is because the saints receive Christ’s intellect” (PG 90:1161D-1164A). The repeated use of compound words beginning with ἐν-, which at once signals the polarities of Byzantine thought as well as their harmonies and unions realized in this “middle place,” where divine and human energies meet and coalesce, the “threshold” of the noetic *parapetasma*.

¹²³ Ps.-Basil, *Commentary on Isaiah*: “The perfect attain to the very Holy of Holies, behind the veil (εἴσω τοῦ καταπετάσματος), that is, having passed through (διαβάς) corporeal realities, they commune with beings by means of naked contemplation” (PG 30:173A); Alice Smith and C. Wagner, *Beyond the Veil: Entering into Intimacy with God Through Prayer* (Hampshire, Bloomington-Minnesota: Chosen Books, Baker-Grand Rapids, 2010), 195-211.

¹²⁴ Mark the Hermit, *De Baptismo* (“On Baptism”), in *Philokalia*, vol. 1, (rom. transl. by D. Stăniloae, București, Humanitas 2^{ed}, 2004), 265.

¹²⁵ Mark the Hermit, *De Baptismo*, ed. Stăniloae, 271.

presence of light. And he do that through some, well-selected, mostly Pauline, texts in order to to emphasize the triad Christ-Light-Baptism by the connection between: τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων (“Father of lights”)¹²⁶ – Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε (“clothed with Christ”)¹²⁷ – becoming φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ (“light in the Lord” or τέκνα φωτὸς “children of light”)¹²⁸ – τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (“the stature of the fullness of Christ”).¹²⁹

There is a connection between the light of the Holy Trinity in which the Father baptizes us when He clothes us in Christ or in the light of His Son. Now the perfect man is the one who, by the work of the commandments, makes this uncreated light or grace of baptism to shine on his face. Until then, Christ-Light is hidden with the Spirit within our heart from Baptism. This is, in fact, “the stature of the fullness of Christ”, when Christ from within us, like a thaboric metamorphosis, is irradiating “*exothen*” His Light or divine energy. This happens beginning with our heart and even upon our glowing body and shining face.¹³⁰

The revelation of God in our deep coincides with the discovery of “inner self”. This fact inherently relates to St. Mark’s teachings of Baptism, as the dwelling of Christ in the hidden depth of the heart, “within the veil”.¹³¹ The heart is the ontological *topos* of perceiving God’s presence in ourselves, meant to “be filled

¹²⁶ James 1:17: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν, καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπὴς ἀποσκίασμα)”.

¹²⁷ Galatians 3:27: “For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ” (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε).

¹²⁸ Ephesians 5:8: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε).

¹²⁹ Ephesians 4:13: “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature (perfect man), attaining to the whole measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

¹³⁰ Robert E. Sinkewicz, “The Concept of Spiritual Perception in Gregory Palamas’ First Triad in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts,” *Χριστιανικὴ Ἰστορία* 1:7 (1999): 374-390; John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustinian and Palamite Aesthetics,” *Modern Theology* 26, no.1 (2010), 74-91.

¹³¹ Saint Mark the Hermit’s baptismal-mystic theology will be found later in Diadoch spirituality as “*aisthēsis noeras*”, at Evagrius through the dwelling place of the *nous* and as the metaphor of the “descent” in hesychasm. See: Kallistos Ware, “The Sacrament of Baptism and the Ascetic Life in the Teaching of Mark the Monk”, *Studia Patristica* (Berlin, 1970, vol. X), p. 441-452; Kallistos Ware, “Prayer in Evagrius of Pontus and the Macarian Homilies”, in Ralph Waller, Benedicta Ward (ed.), *An introduction to Christian Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1999), 14-20; Michel Van Parys, “La liturgie du Coeur selon saint Grégoire le Sinaïte,” *Irénikon* 51 (1978): 312-337.

with divine light”.¹³² From the ‘endothen’ presence of the uncreated light of Christ, is radiating then ‘exothen’ upon the illuminated body and concentrating this light as “shining face”.¹³³ “Deified man is endowed with divine energies, which become his own energies. Human being retains their created human essence and obtains uncreated divine energies”.¹³⁴ In the result of a sacramental life, “Christ’s uncreated life and energy become the property of the man who is united with Him, and in whose person Christ himself lives and operates”.¹³⁵

All the powers of the soul are concentrated in the heart, which is “the meeting place and mystical synthesis between the body and the soul, and thus between whole man and grace, the place where man sees God”,¹³⁶ because it is “the inner chamber of the Veil (καταπέτασμα), where Jesus Christ is dwelling it from the baptism”.¹³⁷

But, putting on of the *clothing of holiness* by baptism is another component of the Glory likeness, is the visible glory of Transfiguration. This study is about the contemplative experience of *an outward luminosity, a physical radiance*. On the *unveiled shining faces*,¹³⁸ *the divine energy of the ‘Christ the Image and Glory of God’*

¹³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, transl. By Archimandrite Jerome and Otilia Kloos, foreword by Alexander Golubov (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2003), 199.

¹³³ Marcin Podbielski, “The Face of the Soul, the Face of God: Maximus the Confessor and πρόσωπον,” in Sotiris Mitralaxis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, Sebastian Lalla (eds.), *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 193-228.

¹³⁴ Paweł Rojek, “The Logic of Palamism,” in Andrew Schumann (ed), *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking* (Frankfurt, Piscataway, NJ: Ontos Verlag, De Gruyter, 2013), 38-81, here 56; Christophe Erismann, “Logic in Byzantium” in Kaldellis, Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 362-380.

¹³⁵ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, transl. L. Sherrard (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1984), 128.

¹³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Natură și har în teologia bizantină,” *Ortodoxia* 26, no. 3 (1974): 392-439, here 429.

¹³⁷ Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, 283.

¹³⁸ This is the Christology of the Desert Fathers, which the specialists are looking for and they are trying to find it. So, according to Harmless “*The Apophthegmata says nothing about Christology; it neither touches on nor encourages such theological concerns. Is this silence intentional? It is an intriguing possibility*”; W. Harmless, *Desert Christians* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 250. But in Ps 67:1-2, 80:3, and 80:7 God’s shining face or presence (פניו) procures salvation (ישועה). See: David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel. Divine presence and God’s people in the First Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116-138, for paradigms of presence in the Old testament, and 192-196, for parallels of presence: Shekinah and Jesus; Christopher Barina Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord’s Glory. Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 265-300, here, in particular, the description of the three movements that marginalized visions of the anthropic form of the Lord (Judaism, Gnosticism and Arianism), that moved the church from an anthropic Deity to an aniconic (apophatic) one; N.T. Wright, “Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18” in *Climax of the Covenant*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992): 175-192; Carey C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology: Tradition and*

is being revealed.¹³⁹ Our nature is transformed in Christ, sharing in the divine attributes of glory and receives a pneumatic body: *Christ transmits God's light to believers, who shine with Christ's glory*. Christ is the "Splendor" (φέγγος) of the Father and the visible appearance of the unseen Father.¹⁴⁰ The robe of glory with which the baptismal candidate is clothed thus becomes simultaneously the wedding garment without which one may not enter into eternal light. The righteous are light for their clothing is splendor. Their brightness become their own light. Therefore, saints have 'put on glory' and they always wear the luminous robe at the wedding banquet. But the hermeneutic key is that the Light is Christ himself.¹⁴¹ Thus, the sting of Theophilus of Alexandria's argument was directed not only against the

Rhetoric (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 184-212, about the glory as a 'sign' of Christophany; David A. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 25-46, here, as the temple, the believers are corporately the place of God's presence, and they are God's temple through the indwelling Spirit; Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103-197, here 161; Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory. Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* (New York: T&T Clark 1991), 204-205; M. David Litwa, "2 Corinthians 3:18 and Its Implications for Theosis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation (JTI)* 2 (2008): 117-133, here Paul's soteriology can be called deification or sharing in God's reality through Christ, we are being transformed into the same image; Willem Cornelis van Unnik, "With Unveiled Face: an Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:12-18," *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 153-169; and, also, Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 91-97.

¹³⁹ Speaking of the hesychast method of prayer and transformation of the body, Gregory Palamas also uses this Pauline theology of 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 in *Triad* 1.2.2: "So we carry the Father's light in the face (*prosōpon*) of Jesus Christ in earthen vessels, that is, in our bodies, in order to know the glory of the Holy Spirit." For him, Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic are examples from the Bible and the Fathers are men who were visibly transformed by divine light (*Triad* 2.3.9). God transcends the senses yet the knowledge of God is experiential: seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. For the light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accessible to the senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves. *It is only by having Christ radiant within us that we can enter into the truth which even in the Gospels is veiled from ordinary eyes*" (Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 103). *Transfiguration* becomes an interior experience to Abba Pambo, Sisoës, Silvanus, St Seraphim of Sarov, St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) and Archimandrite Sophrony (1896-1991).

¹⁴⁰ Juan Ochagavia, SJ, *Visibile Patris Filius. A Study of Irenaeus's Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Romae: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 43-81.

¹⁴¹ The hermeneutic key is the transfiguration of Christ, The light seen on Mount Tabor Gregory calls it 'enhypostatic', i.e. without any hypostasis of its own (*Triad* 3. 1. 28). For its hypostasis is Christ; he himself is the deifying light (*Triad* 3. 1. 16). Deification is a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (*Triad* 3. 1. 33). For what Christ is by nature the Christian can become by grace. The saints henceforth live with the life of God (*Triad* 3. 1. 35). Only through hesychast theology we could understand the christology of the Desert Fathers. If we equate Christ with light of the *visio Dei*. But, this light must be uncreated to ensure that there is real presence of Christ, not a transitory visible effect.

denial of God's image in man in postlapsarian humanity¹⁴², but also is a recognition of the Presence of Christ – the Face of the Father – in the shining face of the ascetics. He says to the angry monks: “In seeing you, I see the face of God”.

It is the Son who is the eternal image and form and indeed - to recall both Clement of Alexandria and Theophilus' answer to the lynch mob - the “face” of the Father.¹⁴³ Christ will radiate within us like to the desert Fathers: Pambo, Sisoë, Silvanus. Christology of the Desert Fathers overlaps with pre-Nicene Christology. Choufrine conclude that the Light that illumined Abraham is for Clement, just as it is for Philo, the Logos. In Clement's interpretation the theophany is a Christophany as a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ, who, as the Logos, is the one who reveals God.¹⁴⁴ In *Paidagōgos* Clement uses the “gnostic” metaphors of light as in the *Protr.* 77.3. Knowledge that Clement has in mind is baptismal “illumination” (φωτισμός implies presence of φῶς - light).¹⁴⁵ Clement seems to be stressing that the awakening effected by baptism is “from within”: “εὐθέως ενδοθεν... ου τό φῶς αὐτοῖς ἐξωθεν χορήγησι” (*Paed.* 1.28.1). This might be a hidden polemic, says Arkadi Choufrine, against Philo's view that the soul encounters the divine Word when it “despairs of itself and secretly waits” for His visitation “from without” (ἐξωθεν) (*Somn.* 1.119). The “essence” that becomes “free” (ελευθερα) according to Clement is the organ of gnosis: the “pupil” of the “eye” (κόρη οφθαλμοῦ) of the soul, its “divine spirit.” This element of the soul is integral to the constitution to the human being, since it is identical with the “breath” (πνοή) God breathed into (ἐνεφύσησενousia or

¹⁴² Paul A. Patterson, *Visions of Christ: The Anthropomorphic Controversy of 399 CE* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2012), 12. For an attempt to link body metaphysics to anthropomorphic controversy, all seen through scholastic lens, see, also: Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 75-96. This is an attempt to recover within the catholic theology of the uncreated light theology and body's participation in this divine light from this life, which the positive reception of Palamas' interpretation of Transfiguration (Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God*, 165).

¹⁴³ Georges Florovsky, “Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemdje” in *Aspects of Church History* 4 (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing Co, 1975), 97-129. Aphou seems clearly to have believed in a humanlike, though divine, form of glory which provided the prototype for the human body, and he adds to our collection of texts the evocation of the descent of the heavenly man in John 6, together with a reference to the “unapproachable light” of divinity in I Tim.6:16. The Son as *morphe* (76-77), “face of the Father” (78-81), and as the “heavenly bread” and “light” (82-85), and recall Apa Aphou's use of Jn. 6:51.

¹⁴⁴ Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria's Appropriation of His Background*, (Patristic Studies 5, New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Dragoș Andrei Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts. The Case of the Divine Noetic Anthropos*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, Volume 123 (Leiden: Brill 2014) 99-103.

¹⁴⁵ Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 17.

ἐνφύσησε) Adam at his creation (Gen. 2:7).¹⁴⁶ The coincidence of the Light and Face is, also, the *Casiday's contribution* through the study of the evagrian theology. Kindred light (τό συγγενές φῶς – *Skemmata* 2) is the splendour of the Lord's face.¹⁴⁷

Like Evagrius, too, "Macarius" is also an advocate, and if possible even more forcefully so, of the *visio del luminis*, which he insists is not a mere product of the intellect, a *noema*, but: "a divine light, shining essentially and substantially [*en ousia kai hypostasei*] in the hearts of the faithful... the divine and essential [*ousiodes*] light which appears and shines in souls more than the light of the sun".¹⁴⁸ Here Macarius opposes scriptural accounts of a *visio luminae*, including Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road, the vision of Stephen at the latter's martyrdom, and his favorite text, 1 Corinthians 3:18. The visionaries behold themselves as being luminescent, they become "entirely" luminous by this metamorphosis. Regarding the source of the divine light, it is all about the "inner" nature of the luminous metamorphosis - the illumination that comes from inside. In later Jewish and Christian traditions the radiant luminosity is the hidden *Kabod* that is revealed through its light. The Macarian homilies Moses' shining countenance and the luminosity of Adam's prelapsarian *tselem* serve as metaphors for major paradigms of the transformational vision. But in a peculiar Macarian understanding of Christ's transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, the duality of inner and outer in *visio Dei*, the internal and external aspects of transformational mystical experience are resolved:

"For as the body of the Lord was glorified when he climbed the mount and was transfigured into the divine glory and into infinite light, so also the bodies

¹⁴⁶ Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 66. Cf., e.g., *Paed.* 1.7.1-2: "τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον δι' αὐτοῦ ἐχειρουργήσεν καὶ τι αὐτῷ τῷ ἴδιον ἐνέφύσησεν". The ἴδιον here clearly means "A piece of his [God] own being". From 'εμφύσημα' to 'πρόσωπο' of Adam. God infused (ο Θεός εμφύσησε) the Holy Spirit into Adam (ie the uncreated energies of the Spirit). The "breath" (πνοή) that God "inspired" (ενεφύσησε) man was not just the breath but also the Holy Spirit. The "εμφύσημα" was the Holy Spirit and not only biological life. Also, Christ breathed (ενεφύσησε) on the disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The death of the soul is its separation from the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit (Ιωάννης Ρωμανίδης, *Το Πρωπατορικό αμάρτημα*, σελ. 119). Our face is the mark of a seal on our earthly nature. Seal is divine and unique. It is the face of God's Word. This breath (πνοή) of God, the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit is the same as that which is planted for Christians as the seed of the Church in the Holy Baptism.

¹⁴⁷ Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2013), 185.

¹⁴⁸ Macarius' insistence is on the divine and objective nature of the light – not a νόημα, a product of the intellect, but an ὑποστατικόν φῶς, "substantial light" (II:183, lines 14-15). Alexander Golitzin, "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form»: Controversy over the Divine Body and Vision Of Glory in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature," *Studia Monastica* 44, no. 1 (2002): 13-43, here 39.

of the saints are glorified and shine like lightning. Just as the interior glory of Christ covered his body and shone completely, in the same way also in the saints the interior power of Christ in them in the day will be poured out exteriorly upon their bodies" (II.15.38).

The bodies of visionaries are now not simply covered externally with the divine light but are 'lightened': "Similarly, as many lamps are lighted from the one, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same which Christ himself is" (II.15.38). Human luminous transformation is "glorification". First, Christ is the Glory after which a visionary is transformed. Second, He is also the visionary himself, whose face and garments are transformed. In the Macarian writings Christ's interior glory is poured out upon external body, making it luminous. As Golitzin pointed out, "the locus of the visionary's perspective now is not external to the divine luminous form, but is rather immanent within it"¹⁴⁹ (inner glory pours out exteriorly upon the body). The interior power of Christ will lighten us as a lamp, so we can 'become the same which Christ himself is'.¹⁵⁰

We receive the "deifying gift" mentioned in Dionysius' *Ep. II* and we are led to encounter the mystery of Christ's divinity in "transcendent outpouring of light".¹⁵¹ Ps.-Dionysios' view Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and "this light, which proceeds from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus".¹⁵² Jesus appears to Paul as a

¹⁴⁹ Andrei Orlov and Alexander Golitzin, "Many Lamps Are Lightened from the One: Paradigms of the transformational vision in Macarian Homilies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 281-298, here 298. So, there is a theological connection between Adam's creation after the image of God and Christ as the image of God. But, says Golitzin, by the fourth century in patristic Trinitarian debates about the divine light the Kabod terminology was almost completely substituted by the symbolism of the divine image. A thousand years later, in Hesychast theological and mystical visions of the Taboric light, the concept of the image of God still continued to play a crucial theological role. Gregory Palamas' theology of the divine image shows parallels to the concepts of Macarius' luminous tselem of Adam and with Syrian understanding of the luminous reflection of God's Glory. Notably in *2 Enoch* from which we learn that the Lord created Adam after His face (Orlov and Golitzin, "Many Lamps Are Lightened from the One," 289-294).

¹⁵⁰ In Gregory of Nazianzus' 39th Oration, entitled *On the Holy Lights*, he lays out a pattern of human life, integration with God: "forming ourselves in God's image and receiving the Word"; Brian E. Daley, *Light on the Mountain: Greek Patristic and Byzantine Homilies on the Transfiguration of the Lord* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 132.

¹⁵¹ Plotinus, too, uses "sudden" (*Enneads* V.3.17 and VI.7.36) to point out the vision of the One in light. See, A. Golitzin, "'Suddenly', Christ: The Place of Negative Theology in the Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagites," in Michael Kessler and Christian Shepherd (ed.), *Mystics: Presence and Aporia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8-37; and István Perczel, "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius: the Fourth Letter in its Direct and Indirect Translation," *Le Muséon* 117, no. 3-4 (2004): 409-446.

¹⁵² Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No longer I"* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul's rhetorical

blinding light from heaven, “his pseudonymous identity” in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]”.¹⁵³ A theophany of light attached to the word “sudden” intends to signify the presence of Christ, as the sudden flash of the “unapproachable light” within together with his visitation within the temple of body of the ascet. St Ephrem links the “sudden” to Christ, to light. It is Christ Who is the “star of light Who shone forth suddenly” in the Incarnation.¹⁵⁴

Bogdan G. Bucur notes that “face” Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never become a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.¹⁵⁵ Bucur outline the occurrence of “face” Christology in Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation.¹⁵⁶ But, this *unveiled shining face* is the participation to the divine energy of the ‘Christ the Image and Glory of God’. Therefore, there is a convergence of desert wisdom with the Palamite hesychast theology regarding the visible glory of Transfiguration.¹⁵⁷

question from 2 Cor 6:14: “What fellowship is there between light and darkness?” (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

¹⁵³ Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul’s letters support Dionysius’ understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 (“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”); Eph 5:8 (“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light”); Col 1:12 (“the Father . . . has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light”).

¹⁵⁴ Ephrem Syrus, *De natura*, 6.7, *CSCO* 186, 52; ET: K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 112, apud Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology”, in Robert J. Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids 2009), 143-153.

¹⁵⁶ Mark S. Burrows, “On the Visibility of God in the Holy Man: A Reconsideration of the Role of the Apa in Pachomian,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March 1987): 11-33; John Chrysavgis, “Fire and Light in the Egyptian Desert: Aspects of Desert Spirituality,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34, no.4 (1999): 455-467. David Frankfurter, “Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints’ Shrines in Late Antiquity,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no.1 (2010): 27-46; Thore Bjornvig, “Metaphors and Asceticism: Asceticism as an Antidote to Symbolic Thinking,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 19 (2007): 72-120.

¹⁵⁷ John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustian and Palamite Aesthetics” *Modern Theology* 26, no. 1 (2010): 74-91. George C. Padademetriou, “The Human Body According to Saint Gregory Palamas,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34, no. 1 (1989): 1-10.

8. Forms of the veil – forms of the light. The ‘uncreated link’ between *pārōket* veil, *καταπέτασμα*, “*eṣtal šubha*”, *θεῖα ἀγάλματα* (or *σύμβολον*) and the *Eucharist bread*

We saw that God’s theophany in earthly tabernacle take place behind an elaborate cultic veil, wherein the invisible God dwelt. But in Byzantine thinking, the liturgical veil (‘icon screen’), enclosing the divine presence, has in addition the gates of the sanctuary decorated with the icon of Annunciation. Here the Mother of God is depicted as spinning thread for the veil of the temple, an Orthodox faith in Incarnation: Invisible God had been revealed through paradoxical concealment in a veil of flesh. So, the veil of the temple provides a superlative expression for the mystery of the Incarnation, resulting in a “new Christian epistemology, metaphysics and aesthetics”.¹⁵⁸ This theology of the veil was used to symbolize the Hesychast distinction between essence and energies within God.¹⁵⁹ Both the doctrine of revelation and the symbolic architecture of the church are formally unified. The Palaiologan hesychasme employs a ‘binary formula’ closely associated with cognate patterns (visible-invisible) of Christology (two natures: divine-human), anthropology (body-soul) Triadology (essence-activities, manifestations) and Holy Sacraments (in a twofold form: visible and material – intelligible and mystical). Analyzing the theological contribution of Simeon of Thessaloniki (1375-1430) who is turning to the hesychast language of “veils” and “symbols”, Maximos Conostas says that:

“Once again, the principle of physical and metaphysical union is a direct corollary of the Incarnation, an event in which the invisible God has visibly ‘appeared among us’, traversing and thereby abolishing the opposition of ‘above’ and ‘below’. In the dual-natured person of the God-man, both the (created, visible) image and its (uncreated, invisible) archetype are woven together in a uniform coincidence of opposites rendered present in the sacramental mystery of the liturgy”.¹⁶⁰

For father Conostas the sanctuary veil is a sacramental symbol, which make communion possible as medium of the experience. Among the Hesychasts,

¹⁵⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 99, 107.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas L. Anastos, “Gregory Palamas’ Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God,” *The Greek Theological Review* 38, no. 2-4 (1993); 335-351; Leonidas Contos, “The Essence-Energies Structure of Saint Gregory Palamas with a Brief Examination of its Patristic Foundation,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12 (1964); 283-297.

¹⁶⁰ Maximos Conostas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2014), 210.

he stresses, “the image of the veil was used to represent the ‘symbolic’ character of God’s self-revelation”.¹⁶¹ This realistic notion of the symbol, a sacramental theology of “real presence” (symbolic forms participate directly in their referents), is taken directly from the Dionysios the Areopagite, whose doctrine of divine revelation played a prominent role in the Hesychast controversy.¹⁶² In this context, Symeon provides a similar interpretation for the veil as “garment of light”, a designation for the uncreated energies of God: “The veil (καταπέτασμα) on the altar symbolizes the immaterial tabernacle around the God, which is the glory and grace of God, by which he himself is concealed, ‘clothed himself with light as with garment’ (Ps. 103:2).”¹⁶³ Conostas lacks of any reference to Saint Gregory Palamas’ *Homily* 56, to the theology of Ephrem the Syrian and to the “shining face” spirituality of the Desert Fathers, and that makes incomplete his analysis about the ‘veil’ theology. For Conostas the veil “separates” but also it is the very thing that enables contact, disclosing or revealing precisely to the same degree that it conceals. The gradations of sacred space are marking a dynamic continuity between the sensible and the intelligible. Thus, a paradigmatic symbol, the “veil,” has a symbolic function in the domain of spiritual vision, (interchangeable symbols for veil are: the garment, the mirror). The παραπέτασμα or καταπέτασμα was seen as bodying forth the very nature of vision itself (a “spreading out” and “opening outwards”). In the microcosmic temple of the human person, the veil is *psyche*, serving as link between the visible and the invisible, between corporeality and intellect (*aisthesis* and *noesis*). Even the incarnate Christ, veiled in flesh, is “an image of Himself.” He is hidden and totally beyond all manifestation (with the visible divine actions of his flesh as signs of his invisible infinity, which is totally transcendent, and secretly hidden).

At issue was Dionysios’ understanding of the vision of God, mediated by “symbols” described as “veils” (*παραπετάσματα*) and being read it in conjunction with Saint Maximos the Confessor interpretation of the divine light as a “symbol” of

¹⁶¹ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 213.

¹⁶² For the liturgical veils in Dionysios, see: Eric David Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 65-81; Carl Schneider, “Studien zum Ursprung liturgischer Einzelheiten östlicher Liturgien: Καταπέτασμα,” *Kyrios* 1 (1936): 57-73; Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Collegeville, 2013), 117-119.

¹⁶³ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 215-216. Symeon sees the sanctuary portal/veil, as a symbol of Christ who gave us entrance into the Holy of Holy through the veil of his flesh (Heb. 10:19-20). Also the ritual use of incense symbolizes the effusions of glory emanating from the divine presence. Also, Symeon make an association of incense with the presence of the Holy Spirit, being an ‘impartation of divine grace’.

the divinity (*Ambigua* 10.29).¹⁶⁴ In his *Refutation of Prochoros Kydones* and in his *Letters* (5.10) to Paul the Calabrian, John VI Kantacouzenos wrote in defense of the Hesychast view. So, as shown by Conostas, “the created symbol in question is the body of Christ, the physical medium of the divine light, and thus he identifies the ‘symbolic veil’ of Dionysios with the ‘veil of flesh’ from the Letter to the Hebrews”.¹⁶⁵ Illumined by the theurgic/thearchic ray, we can see the light by means of the veil, that is, the flesh of Christ (Heb. 10:20).

Dionysius’ symbolic ontology offers a sacramental vision of the world, since the entire cosmos participates in the divine energies. Perl writes: “Dionysius represents precisely those doctrines which are most typical of Orthodoxy in distinction from the west: creation as theophany; grace as continuous with nature; knowledge as union of knower and known; Incarnation and sacrament as fulfillment.”¹⁶⁶ For Dionysius, the closest parallel to the Hellenic term *theourgia* is the term *hierourgia*,¹⁶⁷ the ritual enactment of divine works. Dionysian sacraments, given by God, are enacted to recreate the divine work – the incarnation of Christ. Dionysius uses the Hellenic vocabulary for theurgic tokens (*synthema*, *symbolon*, *sphragis*, *typos*) to describe the Christian sacraments, the efficacy of which divinize the soul, just as in Hellenic theurgy. For Dionysius, *theourgia* is first and foremost the sacred acts of Christ, particularly the incarnation, which is enacted by men through sacramental *hierourgia*. “In addition to meaning the salvific works of Jesus, *theourgia* refers also to human co-operation in this

¹⁶⁴ Defending the union with God, Palamas make the distinction between: “natural symbols” (share the nature of their referents), “non-natural symbols” (only a conventional relation with their referents) and “appearance” (having non independent reality).

¹⁶⁵ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 226. The same ideas are advanced by Philotheos Kokkinos, who asserts that “the glory of the divinity becomes the glory of the body, but the mystery beyond nature cannot be contained by human eyes, and thus the unendurable and unapproachable light concealed itself by means of the flesh, as if under a kind of veil” (*Refutation of Nikephoros Gregoras*, Oration II).

¹⁶⁶ Eric D. Perl, “Symbol, Sacrament, and Hierarchy in Saint Dionysius the Areopagite,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39, no. 3-4 (1994): 311–355, here 355.

¹⁶⁷ Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 99. Unlike Iamblichus or Proclus, used the term ‘theurgy’ to mean ‘work of God’, not as an objective genitive indicating a work addressed to God but as a subjective genitive meaning God’s own work. Andrew Louth, in his article, “Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 432-438, agrees through *hierourgia*, we become *theourgikoi*: participants of the work, co-workers of the work. Thus, Rorem and Louth correctly assert that *theourgia* pertains only to divine works. More recently, Dylan Burns also lays out similarities between Hellenic and Dionysian treatment of theurgy in his article, “Proclus and the Theurgic Liturgy of Dionysius,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 111-132.

salvific work (as *theourgikos*), a state very rarely achieved through *henôsis* and *theôsis*. *Hierourgia* is the ritual engagement and reproduction of *theourgia*.¹⁶⁸

In contrast to icons (or “image”), which share the likeness of their archetypes, but which differ from them in terms of their nature or substance, the divine light, as a special kind of ‘symbol’, shares the nature of that which it symbolizes, but differs from it outward appearance. Thus, “the uncreated light is not the ‘image’ of God, but rather the ‘symbol’ of God”.¹⁶⁹ Palamas maintains the dionisyian paradox of uncovered/veiled brilliant darkness, but also speaks clearly of a direct vision unmediated by veils:

“The Most High came to dwell in the Virgin in his own person. He did not reveal his presence through darkness and fire, as he did to Moses, nor through a tempest and cloud, as he did to Elijah, but immediately, and without any kind of veil, the power of the Most High overshadowed the Virgin’s womb with nothing intervening” (*Homily 37, 4*).¹⁷⁰

Just as the light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe of the unfallen Adam has a equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification means to be “re clothed in cleanliness” and it is built on the idea of Adam and Eve being clothed first in light/glory and then skin/fig leaves/shame. Therefore, the concept of clothing in early Syrian writings is a representation of a state of being, namely *theosis*.¹⁷¹ Embodiment is at the heart of Syrian theology and anthropology. Before Christ “put on the body”, God “put on words”, clothed himself in language.¹⁷² The divinizing function of the Incarnation is also explicitly phrased as a process of stripping off and re clothing, a symmetrical stripping of the glory of the Godhead to match that lost by Adam, and re clothing of Adam through Jesus being “clothed in a body”, as expressed in *Hymn 23 on the Nativity* (13).¹⁷³

Late antique writers use images of clothing to show the interchange between divinity and humanity.¹⁷⁴ A recurrent image in Syrian writings is that

¹⁶⁸ Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite* (2007), 102.

¹⁶⁹ See Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Tabor*, Or. 3; in Constatas, *The Art of Seeing*, 227.

¹⁷⁰ Saint Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, trans by Christopher Veniamin (Mount Thabor Publishing, 2016), 266-273, here, p. 270-271. In similar way we shall behold the eternal light immediately, with no intervening veil (Tr. ii.3.24).

¹⁷¹ Hannah Hunt, *Clothed in the Body. Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity (London: Ashgate, 2012), 136-137.

¹⁷² Susan A. Harvey, “Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syrian Perspective,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1999): 105-130, at 109.

¹⁷³ Sebastian Brock, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1987), xxiv.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syrian Tradition* (London: Gorgias Press, 2006), 69-94, ad 80.

of God being veiled from Moses. Ephrem juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus' veiling on Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body (*Hom. on Nativity* 73). Sebastian Brock extends comparison between two forms of light with the internal light of Mary's womb when bearing Jesus: "brightness which Moses put on" is coming from outside him, but to the river in which Jesus was baptized, He "put on Light from within".¹⁷⁵

Baptism cleans the robe of glory. The robe of glory with which the baptismal candidate is clothed thus becomes simultaneously the wedding garment without which one may no enter into eternal light. The righteous are light for their clothing is splendor. Their brightness become their own light. Therefore, saints have "put on glory" and they always wear the luminous robe at the wedding banquet. *Theophanies* here, can be termed apophatic and the body mediated the promised realities.¹⁷⁶ The theophanies of ritual required "symbols and signs", but the flesh participated in sacramental theophanies not by symbol but in reality. Laity, also, were deemed capable of theophanic lives or to be theophanic, they may materially encounter God by means of their transfigured bodies, but through the work of the Holy Spirit' grace.¹⁷⁷ Cyril of Alexandria likewise focused on the transformative rehabilitation of the senses, on how believers might presently participate with the body in the life of God.¹⁷⁸ So, when our texts use

¹⁷⁵ Sebastian Brock, *The Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syrian Churches* (Kottayam, 1994), 29. Sebastian Brock, "St Ephrem on Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: *Hymni de Ecclesia* 36," *Eastern Churches Review* 7 (1975): 79-88.

¹⁷⁶ Sarah Coakley studied Nyssa's phrase, "αἰσθητήρια τῆς ψυχῆς" (Gregory of Nyssa's fifteen homilies on the *Song of Songs*, covering Song 1:1-6:8) and concluded that this does not mean "spiritual senses" in opposition to "bodily senses". Instead, she translates the phrase as "senses of the soul" that "refer to the transfigured workings of ordinary perception". Indeed she argues that Gregory's corpus reveals "an emerging and developing sense of the significance of bodily life for 'spiritual sensation'"; see Sarah Coakley, "Gregory of Nyssa," in Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36-55, here 48.

¹⁷⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 12-13; François P. Möller, *Words of Light and Life: The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believers* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1998), 1-9.

¹⁷⁸ For Chrysostom, the catechumens that once illumined in baptism, they should be God's torches in order to "illumine those who look to you". On this topic see: Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 86-92, with very important biblical conclusions here. Chrysostom connected this sacramentally light's experience of baptism to the effects of being united to the Body of Christ through the Eucharist. Chrysostom insisted on Paul's choice to describe the effect of the Eucharist (in 1 Cor 10:16) through the stronger term of "participation" (*μετοχή*). Saint Paul intended point out how close was the union (*τὴν συνάφειαν*): "in that we communicate not only by participating, but also by being made one (*οὐ γὰρ τῷ μετέχειν μόνον καὶ μεταλαμβάνειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ*

dichotomous language opposing spiritual and bodily senses, the correct meaning refers to the bodies as “theophanic vehicles”.¹⁷⁹ Holy Fathers and their ‘splendid deeds’, says Gabriel Bunge are thus an *example* (ὑποτύπωσις) or a ‘pattern’¹⁸⁰ for us today.

Conclusion: ‘Veil’, ‘Face’, ‘Light’ - a ‘somatic’ experience

In this study I make a connection between: 1) *pārōket* veil of the *Holy of Holies*, 2) *καταπέτασμα* or *velum scissum* as ‘the curtain of the temple who was torn in two’, 3) Ephrem’s “*eṣtal šubḥa*” or the robe of glory (στολή δόξης) theology, 4) Dionysian’ *Χειραγωγία* - “Sacred veils” (theurgic lights) and holy *σύμβολον* (icon of the invisible) and 5) Palamas’ *Eucharist bread which, for him, is like a veil concealing the divinity*. The link is provided by the Ephrem’s statement of Christ’ “body, as a veil” (CNis XLIII.21) and the *pārōket* veil, having as its function to hide God’s glory. All these theological themes are being synthesized in the hesychast theology about our bodies which are shining out in that glory robe, with Christ’ radiance (divine light or energy). I argued here that there is an inward connection between this ‘Veil’ theology and the ‘Face’ Christology. So, in contrast to “name” Christology, “wisdom” Christology, and “glory” Christology, Bogdan G. Bucur notes that “face” Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never became a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.¹⁸¹ Bucur outline the occurrence of “face” Christology in

ἐνοῦσθαι κοινωνοῦμεν). For as that body is made one with Christ, so also are we made one with Him by this bread (καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐκεῖνο ἦνωται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ ἄρτου τούτου ἐνούμεθα); see *Homily 24* on 1 Corinthians 10:16 (*Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios*, PG 61:200). See: John N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995); Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London: Routledge, 1999); Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), in particular, the chapters: “Union with Christ and the theology of the Body” 458-457, “the semantic of ‘one bread... one body’” 750-778, “Spirit-Baptism” 998-1085; Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Christian Medieval Commentators* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 159-176.

¹⁷⁹ Patricia Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination. Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2009) 41. This is a study of the evolution of materiality in Christian spirituality. It incorporates both contemporary aesthetic theory and patristic theology. The anthropology of “spiritual senses” is based on the encounter with saint’s relics and holy men as ‘other Christs’.

¹⁸⁰ Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer according to the Patristic Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 22.

¹⁸¹ Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology,” in Robert J. Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Thought in Early*

Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation. It is also interesting the Anastasius the Sinaite speaks in his work *Hodegos* & 8 about the glorious face of a son of Adam, Seth, as a component of God's image. Notably in *2 Enoc*, from which Golitzin quotes, we learn that the Lord created Adam after His face (let's emphasize the theological uniqueness of such creational imagery). From my point of view, the Face Christology will be developed in the theology of the icons through the seven ecumenical council.

Also, only through hesychastic theology of the taboric light, systematized by Saint Gregory Palamas, I could recognize this 'Face theology' as being hidden revealed experientially into the "shining face" of Desert Fathers (about their christology, until now, the specialists said it was missing). So, what binds the theology of "Veil" with the theology of "Face" is the presence of God in the "uncreated Light" irradiating on the bodies of the ascetics. Therefore, the "shining face" is a veil (*καταπέτασμα*) that hides the inner presence of Christ. The temple is the body of the ascetic. Also, according to Mark the Ascetic, the heart as the spiritual center of the human being, also has an intrinsic veil beyond which Christ has entered from Baptism as Forerunner. But, the veil of Moses is removed, the veil (*καταπέτασμα*) is split into two and, in the future age, the energies of Godhead will be concentrated in the human face of Christ. The nature of the *glory* (of Moses, Stephanus, Antonius, Pambo, Silvanus, Sisoe, Symeon the New Theologian, Seraphim of Sarov, Sophrony Sakharov or Paisios Aghioritis) and his visible splendor, shining from their brilliant faces, represent the direct contact with God or God's visible, divine presence. As all believers encounter God directly (with *unveiled faces*) through the Spirit's presence they reflect this glory as mirrors and are themselves glorified in the process (*from glory to glory*). The *transformation into this glory is not only noetic but also embodied because it is a visible manifestation*. The noetic enlightenment is associated with participation in divine glory is correlated to the somatic experience of glory. In spiritual tradition of hesychasm the vision of light at the culmination of intense periods of prayer is the deification of our nature. This light is "enhypostatic symbol", the uncreated radiance of God, a divine energy. This manifestation of Christ in the divine nature is not something external to ourselves, but it is interiorized through the life of ascetism and prayer. But if the gates of the heart are opened by repentance, Christ rises as from a tomb (Maximus the Confessor) and the light of the resurrection wraps the body of the ascetic, focusing on his face, a sign of intersubjectivity claiming the existence of the real deified 'person'.

Christianity (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology: Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2009), 143-153.

The body partake of uncreated light what I call the “aesthetic of apophaticism” another name for deification as christification by uniting with uncreated light. Theosis, also, is described as “*transformation into unveiled glory*” (2 Cor. 3.7-18), a somatic experience of glory in which we *cannot separate ‘christosis’ from ‘theosis’*. This aspect of deification as transformation into glory (*glorification*) is both an inward quality of spiritual knowledge and an outward radiance. Transfiguration becomes an interior experience. The epistemic process of contemplation generates the ontological mirroring process, because for us there is no veil over the face, we all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into his likeness (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) with ever-increasing glory (ἀπὸδόξης εἰς δόξαν). Deification to the Desert Fathers acquire a specific anthropological content in christophanies, a face-to-face encounter. *In other words, it is both a theological theme and a spiritual teaching, both the goal of the divine economy and the process by which the economy is worked out in the believer.* To Palamas, deification is, also, a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (*Triad* 3.1. 33). Likeness also means a radiation of the presence of God within man, a “reciprocal interiority”. In the saints this communion is expressed in the way God’s glory is reflected in their faces, in anticipation of the age to come. Therefore, *being able to find God through the senses suggests a rehabilitation of the whole of the human person, operating not just at an intellectual level but in an enfleshed body which perceives rather than intuit God.* Participation is in the mainstream Greek-Byzantine tradition of theological thought, means that God is actively working in what He has made. This is the way through which we have to find out how Palamas thinks that such a transcendent activity is accommodated to created otherness.

This study is the echo of Nicaea-Constantinople in “light of light”, the mingling language prominent in Syrian Christianity and the identification of God’s real presence with light – the Father is the Glory, the Son its ‘ray’, and the Holy Spirit its light. We must emphasize here that the macarian homilist the first who binds the “shining face” to the uncreated light, by identifying this divine light with that of the future age. For him the man “*becomes all light, all face, all eye*” (*Hom* 1, 2), because beauty of the ineffable glory of the light of Christ Light will make the body and the soul completely all light, brilliantly shining. So, the “*kingdom of light and the heavenly Image, Jesus Christ*” (*Hom* 2, 5), now mystically illumines the soul and holds dominion in the souls of the saints. But, what the soul now stores up within shall then be revealed as a treasure and “*displayed externally in the body*” (*Hom* 5, 8). The glory of the Holy Spirit “*rises up from within, covering and warming the bodies of the saints*” (*Hom* 5, 9). This is the glory they interiorly had before, hidden in their souls. For that

interior fire, inhabiting our hearts, emerges then and brings about the resurrection of the bodies (*Hom 11, 1*). The Lord, even now, forms an image in the soul which will be manifested exteriorly in the resurrection, “*glorifies their bodies interiorly and exteriorly*” (*Hom 11, 3*). Just as the interior glory of Christ covered his body and shone completely, in the same way also “*in the saints the interior power of Christ in them in that day will be poured out exteriorly upon their bodies*” (*Hom 15, 38*). Similarly, as “*many lamps are lighted from the one*”, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same which Christ himself is. The first who connect the Transfiguration specifically with theosis is St Andrew of Crete. For him the Transfiguration is the revelation of the deified humanity of Christ.

The authority (*exousia*) of the Holy Fathers comes from the presence in them (*enousia*) of the light of Christ, the seal of the Spirit. It exaggerates the relationship between the holy man of the late antiquity and the ascetics of the desert. In this regard, even certain authors introduced and then follow another pseudomorphosis: the quest for the “inner” or “real self”, for me a kind of non-Christic, non-mystagogical and pagan-paideic asceticism. This rather philosophical line, starts from Augustine (*Confessiones*) and it is developed by Michel Foucault (*Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 1981), Peter Brown’s (*Body and Society*, 1988), James F. Masterson (*Real Self*, 1990), Phillip Cary (*Inner Self*, 2000), Gavin Flood (*Ascetic Self*, 2004), Hannah Hunt (*Clothed in the Body*, 2012).¹⁸² They do not understand that this “inner” or “real self” is actually Christ present within their baptismal being (Gal. 2:20), revealed as light in a Christophanic face to face encounter. Thus, theology is not only a theology as ascetic act (self-denial’), it’s also a theology of the experience of God or mystagogy. During the hesychast controversy, St Gregory Palamas defended precisely this reality of the encounter with God of those monks who reported seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. For the light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accesible to the senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves. *It is only by having Christ radiant within us that we can enter into the truth which even in the Gospels is veiled from ordinary eyes.* The Transfiguration becomes an interior experience. In the

¹⁸² Also, Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1992). For an orthodox outlook on this theme, see: Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Closed Spirituality and the Meaning of the Self: Mysticism of Power and the Meaning of Personhood and Nature* (Ellinika Grammata, Athens, 1999); N. Loudovikos, *Beyond Spirituality Christian Mysticism of Power and the Meaning of the Self in the Patristic Era* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers NV, 2018 forthcoming); N. Loudovikos, *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality. 21st Century Greek Theologians* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2015); Norman Russell & Christos Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2017).

fourteenth century Gregory Palamas make the distinction between the divine essence and actions, *energeiai*, in order to allow for the possibility of the vision of light or the Glory, of the radiance of God himself, without at the same time compromising the divine transcendence. Through *a direct experience of God in the vision of the uncreated light, God works in his hiddenness*. Just as the light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe of the unfallen Adam has an equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification means to be “re clothed in cleanliness” and it is built on the idea of Adam and Eve being clothed first in light/glory and then skin/fig-leaves/shame. Therefore, the concept of clothing in early Syrian writings is a representation of a state of being, namely *theosis*.

Golitzin argues the *visio Dei* shifts from the “outer man” of the physical senses to the “inner man” of the spiritual. But this is actually a contradiction of the hesychast theology of the body participation to the divine light. Thus, we will not support Golitzin’s opinion about the ‘shift from exterior to interior’, from anthropomorphism to the “formless light” beheld within, firstly because God is above the distinction between objective and subjective and secondly because the ascetics certainly had no fear of displaying their own theological opinions using linguistic shifts as subterfuges and dissimulations instead of their original experiences. Therefore, this study try to demonstrate through the “Veil” and “Face” theology, understood as being clothed and hidden revealed into divine light, that the Palamite theology and the Orthodox spirituality are being both liturgical-communitary and hesychast-contemplative. Embodiment is the theological and anthropological key. Ephrem, as we have seen above, juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus’ veiling oh Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body. On the other hand, mesopotamian mystic, John of Dalyatha’ distinction between the (revealed) divine Glory and (permanently hidden) divine nature anticipates Gregory Palamas’ essence-energies language by six centuries.

For me the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology reflects both the distinction between being and energies, as well the lived “immanent” apophaticism of the uncreated light. This light is that illuminates through Holy Spirit grace activity the “shining face” of the fathers. But the most eloquent explanatory text about the importance, not only of the theological but also liturgical, of the veil in *Orthodox Spirituality* is that of the father Stăniloae:

“The Orthodox East, keeping the καταπέτασμα closing the altar, continuously suggests that the divine being remains hidden and incomprehensible to the faithful. Westerners have removed the veil, for they do not know the difference between

divine energies, communicated to the world and the divine being forever remain unshared, as an inexhaustible reservoir of mystery".¹⁸³

See here the genius of the hesychast theology. Therefore, Palamas' liturgical-sacramental theology about the consecrated bread who is "like a veil concealing the divinity" and the hesychast continuation of the experience of Desert Fathers "shining face" theophanic experience understood as the "Hesychast Veil" (καταπέτασμα), are both reconcilable into a theology of the uncreated light. Here the 'Veil' and the 'Face' are Christo-(logical)phanic related. 'Veil' theology and 'Face' Christology represents the forgotten roots of being-energies palamite-hesychast distinction and the 'somatic' experience of 'Christ-Light'.

As I have already explained in other studies published so far, the "aesthetics of apophaticism" establish in a "deconceptualization of concepts" form the experience of uncreated light (the apophatic aspect) in which the body (the aesthetic aspect) participates too. So, we delimitate our 'antinomic' *syntagm*, from the beginning, from three other forms of conceptualization of the experience of seeking and meeting the divine: 'theo-poetics' (from late antiquity), spiritual senses (in intellectual understanding) as well as Augustinian quest for the real self (as 'inner self').¹⁸⁴ I find my approach much closer to Andrew Louth' interpretation of dogma, because for him, also "the Orthodox dogma is

¹⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și Mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe* (București: EIBMBOR, 2002), 411, n. 527.

¹⁸⁴ Now the "theo-poetics" in 'process theology' (Alfred North Whitehead, Stanly Hopper, David Leroy Miller, Amos Wilder, Catherine Keller) or in the 'theo-poetic school' (namely, Drew University in New Jersey) is an alternative to the conceptual systematics of classical theology and the literalist hermeneutics in the use of religious language and symbols. "Theo-poetics" first appears in antiquity as the elongated for *theosis*, a process of deification: *theo-poiesis* as *becoming* divine ('apotheosis' of the world into God). Whitehead' *Process and Reality* as "trading beauty" and his use of 'poetics' as creative essence of reality (events are *aesthetic* processes), appear to be a mode of thought contrary to the *Theodramatic* of Hans Urs von Balthasar. On this, see: Roland Faber, *The Becoming of God: Process Theology, Philosophy, and Multireligious Engagement* (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock, 2017), especially: "theo-poetics" and "theophany" 187-194, and 'God and Cosmos in creative mutuality ('mutual imanence') 121-127. Also, for the western theological and philosophical point of view regarding the form-critical schema for a theophany *Gattung* (genus, type) and the recurs to 'negative' thinking about the Graeco-Christian apophatic tradition (different from Orthodox understanding of apophaticism), see: John Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self Revelation of God*, (Westminster Press, 1967), 58-71; Bernard McGinn, "Hidden God and Hidden Self: The emergence of apophatic anthropology in Christian mysticism", in April D. DeConick, Grant Adamson (eds.), *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 87-100; David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 87-291; Brendan Cook, *Pursuing Eudaimonia: Re-appropriating the Greek Philosophical Foundations of the Christian Apophatic Tradition* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 133-199.

glimpsed more as beauty, than as logically coherent exposition”.¹⁸⁵ The distinctions, therefore serve to unite. Union and distinction – *gnosis* and *diakrisis* – belong together (would be no more *explanandum* but rather *explanans*). What remains antinomy, contradiction, concepts not properly formed at the level of concepts, may find resolution at the level of experience. 215 The single passage from the New Testament that perhaps most perfectly expresses the answer for the “*aesthetics of apophaticism*” is Paul’s comparison, in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, between the veiled face of Moses and the unveiled faces of those being transformed, from glory to glory, into the likeness of Christ; and perhaps no word in that passage more perfectly captures the essence of that answer than the single, somewhat amphibologous participle κατοπτριζόμενοι¹⁸⁶: either “beholding in a mirror” or “reflecting upon” in mirroring Christ within ourselves we are somehow being conformed to the very ‘splendor of his glory’, becoming radiant vessel of divine glory. Thus, the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology and its “clothing” cognate, will be able to restore understanding the signification of both “*aesthetics of apophaticism*” and “*shining face*” Christology.

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¹⁸⁵ Andrew Louth, “St Gregory Palamas and the Holy Mountain”, in Dimitri Conomos, Graham Speake (eds.), *Mount Athos, the Sacred Bridge: The Spirituality of the Holy Mountain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 49-68, here 62-65. Louth borrow from Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, 1997), 117-119: any dogma contains an antinomy – a contradiction; if it did not, it would not be a dogma of *faith*, it would be something rationally apprehensible.

¹⁸⁶ David Bentley Hart, “The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics after Nicaea,” in Aristotle Papanikolaou, George E. Demacopoulos, *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 191-226, here 215.

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