

**THE SYMBOL AS A MEETING POINT OF ENERGIES AND CATEGORIES – THE SYMBOLICAL  
STATUS OF THE EUCHARISTIC GIFTS ACCORDING TO THEOPHANES OF NICAIA  
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Theophanes of Nicaea (1315/20-1380/61) is a Byzantine philosopher and a polemist, whose biography remains enigmatic and whose works came relatively late into the focus of scientific research<sup>1</sup>. Since he is a successor of Byzantine Palamism, the study of his works has been predominantly concentrated on conceptual overlaps and discrepancies between his views and the philosophy of Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). The treatise on the Tabor light is the work, mostly representative of Theophanes' positions on issues discussed in the Palamite controversy<sup>2</sup>. Ioannis Polemis suggests that it was probably composed soon after the condemnation of Prochoros Cydones (1330-1369) at the Council, summoned in Constantinople in 1368 by the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (1330-1377/78). From the few fragments of a nowadays-lost work of Prochoros, quoted in the Tomos of the council, one can infer that Theophanes' purpose was to refute certain anti-Palamite arguments elaborated by Prochoros. According to the view criticized by Prochoros, the Light seen by Christ's disciples on Tabor was uncreated. This notion is not an innovation of Palamas, but comes to the foreground by the defense of the spiritual praxis of Byzantine hesychasts and of the uncreated status of the light seen by some of them. The arguments of Prochoros probably provided ground for the speculation of Philotheos<sup>3</sup>.

As the passages quoted in the Tomos indicate, Prochoros was referring to a motif, stemming from Maximus Confessor: the statement that the Light of Transfiguration was a symbol<sup>4</sup>. Prochoros comes to the following conclusion: "If that light was a symbol of the truth, which is above intellect and reason, it is neither the first truth, nor is it

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of his life, as well as a study of his works see: Ioannis Polemis. *Theophanes of Nicaea: His Life and Works*. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1996.

<sup>2</sup> ΛΟΓΟΙ ΠΕΡΙ ΘΑΒΟΡΙΟΥ ΦΩΤΩΣ - The critical edition of the treatise used in this article is to be found in: Georgios Zacharopoulos. *Theophanes of Nicaea (? - ± 1380/1) – Biography and Writings*, Byzantine Research Centre of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. 2003 (further quoted as: Log. Tab.).

<sup>3</sup> Polemis, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> *Ambigua*, MPG 91, 1125D-1128A.

above intellect and reason, but only above the senses”<sup>5</sup>. He opposes the phenomena, transcending the capacity of human senses and the representative limitation of contingent being, to the ones, surpassing human ability of intellectual comprehension. The ‘true’ presence of Christ in the Eucharist belongs to the second category. In order to clarify in what way it is correct to speak of the Transfiguration of Christ as a symbol, Theophanes has to give an answer to the following questions, asked by his opponents: 1) is the Light seen on Tabor superior or inferior to Christ’s body; 2) why is Judas allowed to participate of the body of Christ on the Last supper, but not to see the Light of Transfiguration<sup>6</sup>. By giving a solution to these questions, he elaborates his concept of symbol.

Theophanes’ concept on the symbolical status of the Eucharistic gifts has been used as a test case for the consistency of his thought with the theological and philosophical positions of Gregory Palamas. John Meyendorff, who is one of the first to comment on Theophanes’ Eucharistic theology, concludes that Theophanes’ view denies the reality of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament, due to which this author should be considered a “nominal Palamite”<sup>7</sup>. On the basis of Meyendorff’s interpretation, Alexander Dunaev insists that the symbolical understanding of the Eucharistic gifts is an extreme version of the Palamite concept of the Holy Communion as partaking not of divine essence, but “only of divine energy”<sup>8</sup>. Andrew Louth, for his part, is ready to ascribe the symbolical understanding of the Eucharist to an alleged favoring of individual spiritual praxis, defended by the hesychasts, as opposed to the participation of the community in the Eucharistic mystery<sup>9</sup>. After scrutinizing the sources, Polemis concludes that Theophanes’ speculation on the symbolical status of the Eucharistic gifts does not justify his labeling as anti-Palamite, since very often in

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted after the Greek text, published in: Polemis, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Polemis, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> John Meyendorff. Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas, Paris 1959. p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Dunaev. Eucharist in the Palamite controversies, in: *Christianesimo nella storia*, 29 (2008), p. 33-52.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Louth. The Eucharist and the Hesychasm with a special reference to Theophanes III, Metropolitan of Nicaea, in: *Miscellany*, De Wulf Mansioncentrum, Leuven University Press, 2005. p. 199-208.

Byzantine tradition symbolical terminology has been used when describing the sacrament of the Eucharist<sup>10</sup>.

Before deciding whether the philosophical view at stake is a voice of consistent Palamism, of extreme Palamism or of anti-Palamism, the philosophical context of the argumentation should be made clear. This context is not confined to the intellectual debates of that particular epoch, but is also connected to the longue dureé of philosophical tradition in Byzantium. Identifying the sources is only the first step in registering the historical interconnection of ideas. The conceptual criteria for dealing with the sources require special scrutiny.

### **1. The reality of the Transfiguration according to the treatise *De domini luce* by Philotheos Kokkinos**

In his treatise *De domini luce*<sup>11</sup> Philotheos Kokkinos tries to prove that the understanding of the Tabor Light as uncreated divine energy is a common place in the tradition of Orthodox theology. He presents arguments from authorities, such as: Gregory of Nazianz, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus Confessor, John Damascene and Symeon the New Theologian. The interpreter should be ready to differentiate between sources used simply as authoritative evidence and sources that are instructive for developing particular arguments. It can be easily proved that one of the sources that stimulated the philosophical speculation of Philotheos, instead of simply supporting it, is John of Damascene.

In John Damascene's treatise on the Transfiguration, as well in some chapters from the fundamental work of the Palestinian monk *Expositio fidei*, Philotheos finds strong support for his central thesis. Philotheos refers to John's oration on Transfiguration, which contains a subtle explanation of the real differentiation between the divine nature, which is beyond any perception, and its essential activity, which is manifested and perceived in the contingent world at God's discretion. Gregory Palamas also finds in this text proof that on Tabor the disciples witnessed the

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<sup>10</sup> Polemis, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Philotheos Kokkinos. *De domini luce* – editio princeps of the Greek text and translation in Bulgarian by Petya Yaneva. Istok-Zapad, Sofia 2011. Further quoted as: Dom. luc.

participation of created nature in the uncreated energy of God<sup>12</sup>. But Philotheos makes use also of another Damascene's philosophical concept, this time from chapter 13 of *Expositio fidei* - the "divine place" (τόπος θεοῦ)<sup>13</sup>. A key element in John's metaphysical system, the category "place" denotes the localization of existential energy in the created world - be it in the pure intellectual sphere of angelic being (νοητός τόπος), be it in the dimensions of physical reality (σωματικός πέρας). Philotheos uses John's speculation on divine place in order to build a concept for the phenomenological manifestation of divine existential energy, sojourning in Christ's body.

Both the speculation of John Damascene on Transfiguration and his view on the localization of divine energy in the contingent world stem from his understanding of existential energy of the essence, which is the conceptual basis for his philosophy, as well as for some innovative concepts of his, e.g. the image-model<sup>14</sup>. Contrary to the activity, which has an external goal, and can be termed as movement, there is a more fundamental manifestation of an essence, which is for Aristotle "energy" in proper sense. It realizes the essential being, understood as an act. In Exp. 58 and 59 John makes clear that each essence (divine and created) has its corresponding energy. Since the uncreated divine energy penetrates the created world, it is everywhere. Nevertheless, there are among the created things concentrations of divine presence, i.e. of the divine existential energy, revealed and grasped within created boundaries<sup>15</sup>. "Place" is the boundary of manifestation of divine existential energy within the categorical continuum of created world<sup>16</sup>. God does not need any place in order to observe his own activity, as he contains everything and is above everything, as he is self-evident and "a place for himself"<sup>17</sup>. Entering the status of divine place, created being participates in divine activity - as far as possible and in as much as one was purified. John underlines that Christ himself, in whose body divine energy dwells, is the perfect divine place in

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<sup>12</sup> Especially in his *Triads*, and in the *150 Chapters*.

<sup>13</sup> Exposition fidei 13, 10-26, in: Die Schriften des Johanne von Damaskos II. Ed. B. Kotter. Berlin 1973 (further quoted as: Exp.).

<sup>14</sup> The concept of existential energy goes back to the Aristotelian concept of act in *Metaphysics* (Met. IX, 9 (1065b-1066b)).

<sup>15</sup> Exp. 53, 53-56.

<sup>16</sup> Exp. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

the world and, consequently, the personal center of all divine places<sup>18</sup>. With his speculation on the category “place” John positions himself at the last stage of a long tradition in Byzantine philosophy of subordinating the concept of categories to the view of energetic manifestation of essential being<sup>19</sup>.

The phenomenological aspect of manifestation of divine energy according to Damascene’s model is related to the personal disposition of those who partake of it. The manifestation of the hypostatic image of Christ through supernatural energy in a certain contingent localization transforms those who connect their existence to this localization of divine glory; thus the world is absorbed in the life of the Trinity.

Philotheos tries to demonstrate that Christ’s Transfiguration has the same ontological and phenomenological structure as the place of God in the concept of John. The phenomenological structure of this supernatural vision is human flesh, perceivable by the senses and reflecting divine glance – a mortal body, from which divine glory springs. Divine energy is intrinsic, and not external, to Christ’s humanity. Normally its presence is not perceivable by the senses; men can only register its effects. Philotheos repeats the affirmations of the Palestinian monk that the eyes of the three disciples, chosen by Christ to witness this event, saw things invisible for human vision<sup>20</sup>.

Dwelling in his human body, Christ showed on Tabor “**through himself**” and “**in himself**” the glance, i.e. the energy, of His divine nature. Not the divine essence but its essential energy is revealed<sup>21</sup>. The subject of this manifestation of divine glory in human body is the hypostasis of the Son - the person who is God in eternity and became man. Not the subject of divine energy changes, but the mode of his appearance. Philotheos quotes from John Damascene: “So Christ transforms himself not by

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<sup>18</sup> Exp. 13.

<sup>19</sup> John makes a strong point in stating that divine energy are simply the things around God, i.e. certain properties of divine nature that are manifested, but God himself as he is participated by creatures: “The true doctrine teaches that the divine essence is simple and that it has one single simple act, which is gut and activates everything in all, like a beam of sunlight, which warms up and acts in each thing according to its natural capacity and receptivity” (Exp. 10, 11-12).

<sup>20</sup> In Transfigurationem, 2, in: Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos V. Ed. B. Kotter. Berlin 1988. (further quoted as: Transfig).

<sup>21</sup> Dom. luc., p. 163.

incorporating what he was not, nor by changing into such that he was not, but by showing to his disciples what he was, opening their eyes and making them seeing after being blind... Preserving the same identity, contrary to what he showed them before, now he **was seen** to appear to them as different”<sup>22</sup>. The Transfiguration takes place through the energies of his two natures and within the reality of his hypostatic existence as God and man on earth. The new mode of phenomenological representation can be grasped only if a corresponding change on the side of the subject of perception takes place. Such change is also decisive for partaking of Christ’s person through the Eucharist.

## **2. Theophanes’ definition of a symbol and its application in Christology**

When Theophanes’ refutes polemic arguments against his mentor, he expresses ideas similar to these of Philotheos. As a result, certain Damascene’s ideas penetrate his discourse. Giving reasons for his concept of the symbolical status of divine gifts, Theophanes refers to a statement of John Damascene that bread and wine in the Eucharist are ἀντίτυπα of divine kingdom and of the divinity, perceived by the intellect<sup>23</sup>. Such terminological borrowings do not allow yet the reader to conclude that Theophanes means the same as Damascene. At the same time, one discovers not only terminological structures originating from John, but also argumentative lines, that were not originally limited to the theology of the Eucharist.

Theophanes refers to the vision of Isaiah, used by John Damascene as an argument for the thesis that the uncreated energy of God is revealed in some places in the created world: “I saw God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple”<sup>24</sup>. The author makes clear that this vision was not a product of the prophet’s intellect or imagination<sup>25</sup>. The source of the representation is divine power itself, which

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<sup>22</sup> Transfig. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Exp. 83, 180-183. In fact John Damascene, quoting Basil the Great, notices that before the consecration bread and wine are ἀντίτυπα of the body and blood of Christ. However, Theophanes does not refer to this meaning, as he is not interested in it.

<sup>24</sup> Is. 6,1. Log. Tab. III, 5, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Here Theophanes attacks an argument of Prochoros, according to which the symbols are in the realm of cataphatic theology and, hence, are products of human understanding, which means that they cannot be uncreated.

did not endure any transformation. Furthermore, the manifestation and the thing manifested have one and the same subject: “οὐκ ἕτερον τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ”<sup>26</sup>. There is no split between reality and visual replica. As sitting on a throne (the act and the throne being corporeal) is not an essential act of God, this symbolical representation of him in the created world is designed for men’s perception. However, the representative dissimilarity does not defy the ontological authenticity of the manifestation; the hypothesis that there should be mediators between divine essential activity (energy) and the created world is refuted. Isaiah’s prophetic vision and many others of its kind are forms of divine energy<sup>27</sup>, bearing the hypostatic identity of the Son, although in enigmatic form<sup>28</sup>. These manifestations of divine energy in the created world have a categorical localization, in which the identity of the divine hypostasis revealed is preserved<sup>29</sup>.

So for Theophanes a symbol is an expression of essential energy, preserving the identity of the thing represented but possessing some dissimilarity<sup>30</sup>. In the fourth part of the treatise *On the Tabor light* he quotes from John Damascene, Theodore the Studite and Patriarch Nicephoros in order to explain the difference between a symbol and an image. A symbol is of the same nature and hypostasis with its prototype. The difference between symbol and prototype concerns the manifestation of existence and is stable. The energy of a created essence can only be revealed through a created symbol and that of an uncreated essence through an uncreated symbol. In fact, Theophanes talks also of symbols, belonging to a nature, different from that of the prototype, but in this case the term “symbol” is used as a synonym of “image”. An image is a hypostasis, which has either the nature of the prototype, or a different nature<sup>31</sup>. The similarity of

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<sup>26</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5, 175.

<sup>27</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5, 187-190.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>29</sup> Theophanes uses the word κύριος, when talking about the visions of the prophets of the Old Testament, thus implying that the Son was the hypostatic subject of representation. By the vision of St. Paul, however, as Theophanes explicitly notes, the subject of representation of divine energy was the Holy Spirit.

<sup>30</sup> Polemis, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Log. Tab. IV, 4, 170.

the image is a dynamic characteristic: it varies according to the capacity of the image to assimilate the natural energy of the prototype.

After having exposed his concept of symbol, Theophanes refers to Dionysius the Areopagite. He tries to position this model into the Dionysian system of cosmological hierarchy. Theophanes explains that symbols correspond not to the members of the ontological hierarchy of the Dionysius, i.e. to the different angelic orders, but to the enlightening of divine power, which proceeds from God and passes through these orders<sup>32</sup>.

### 3. The Eucharistic gifts as symbols

Also in connection to the Eucharist the main source of symbolical terminology for Theophanes remains Dionysius the Areopagite: “But the body and blood of Lord are divine symbols according to the great Dionysius”<sup>33</sup>. How do Theophanes’ definition of symbol and its application to Christology justify the interpretation of the Eucharistic gifts as symbols?

The norm for Theophanes’ speculation on the Eucharist follows from the purpose of the Incarnation: man should become God by grace through communion with divine nature<sup>34</sup>. In other words, human deification is the criterion for conceptualizing the cosmological and the ontological dimensions of incarnation. But as Christ, the θεούργος, is twofold by nature, so is also his θεουργία<sup>35</sup>. Each of the two energies of Christ acts with its own way of communion (ἐκάτερα φύσις μετὰ τῆς θατέρου κοινωνίας ἐνεργεῖ), although human nature is asymmetrically penetrated by the divine energy. Before the Resurrection the body of Christ was not a symbol of divine energy, because the energy of its essence is not divine<sup>36</sup>. Now the author has to explain in what sense the Eucharistic body of Christ, human and created as it is, is considered a symbol<sup>37</sup>.

He begins his answer by pointing to the twofold conceiving of Christ by the Theotokos Marry. The Holy Spirit invisibly conceived the hypostasis of the Son in the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 6, 259-262.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, Eccl. hier. 3, 3, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5, 225-230.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Theophanes refers to Dionysius the Areopagite, Eccl. hier. 3, 3, 12.

womb of Marry and simultaneously built in her a visible human body for Christ to dwell in. Here the causal and the existential aspects of divine energy meet. Consecrating the blood and body of Christ in the Eucharist has the same twofold structure. The bread and wine are transformed (μεταβολή) into body and blood, in which divine energy sojourns. At this point the analogy is violated. Christ's body, once formed in the womb of Marry, continued to exist as all other human bodies do, with no need of heteromorphic representations in order to reveal itself. In the Eucharist, however, his body is represented in a dissimilar form – by bread and wine. This fact attests for divine condescension, because, as Christ is sitting to the right of the Father, his deified body cannot be directly perceived by human senses.

The Eucharistic gifts, seen as bread and wine, are symbolical manifestations of Christ – not in the sense that they have a different subject or that they manifest the energy of another nature, but as far as they are visible representations of his deified human body. Theophanes does not adhere to the Thomistic view, shared, for example, by Georgios Scholarios, according to which in the Eucharist the essence of bread and wine is transformed into a new essence, bearing only the accidental characteristics of the former<sup>38</sup>. He follows the subtler and more traditional terminology of Byzantine theology, implying energetic transformation instead of an essential change. The dichotomy at stake is not between the essence of bread and wine and that of the human body of Christ, but between his two natures, which belong to the most fundamental ontological hiatus: created vs. uncreated being. The representation of Christ's body in the created form of bread and wine is not unreal, as he possesses a human nature, and as the Eucharistic gifts are penetrated by divine energies.

Theophanes insists that in the epoch after Christ's resurrection Christians dispose of two levels of communion with the hypostasis of Christ in the Eucharist - symbolical representations of Christ's body, perceivable by the senses, and real participation of his deified body, which is realized by the intellect: ἔχομεν τὸ πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ' ἀμφοτέρα συνημμένον<sup>39</sup>. Whereas, before the Resurrection, the deified existential status of his human nature was revealed through the Light of Tabor for the sake of human

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<sup>38</sup> Sermon sur la Sainte Eucharistie, in: Ouvre Completes de Georges Scholarios. Tome I. Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris 1928. p. 123-136.

<sup>39</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5, 240.

instruction and through supernatural symbolical representations, now his appearing in earthly body – e.g. as a gardener to the women, or as a stranger to the two disciples, traveling to Emaus<sup>40</sup> – is a symbol of his sojourn as a human being in Trinity. Before his resurrection the characteristics of weakness, the innocent passions and circumscription were not overcome and he showed himself as triumphing over them by virtue of his saving condescension (συγκατάβασις). After that his condescension is expressed by his symbolical appearing as perishable and circumscribed flesh<sup>41</sup>.

Theophanes quotes the opinion, common for the fathers, according to which Christ chose bread and wine as symbolical representations of his bodily presence in the Eucharist, because these are closer to the everyday needs of men. They strengthen human body and support the soul; and in the same manner communion with Christ's body through them strengthens the union with him.

The interpretation of the Eucharistic gifts as symbols of Christ's humanity is justified, because this symbolical concept is compatible with the main criterion for the ontology of the Eucharist – deification of humanity without changing the essential status of the latter as created being. Bread and wine are concentrations of divine energy and structures through which the human body of Christ, once having totally adopted the divine mode of existence, is unveiled for human senses.

#### **4. Phenomenology of communion**

Theophanes uses the term “symbol” not only for the gifts of the Eucharist, but also for the communion with them: συμβολική και τυπική<sup>42</sup>. He does not mean that communion with Christ's body is unreal; on the contrary, he insists that in the sacrament the divine flesh is authentic and identical with that of the historical Jesus<sup>43</sup>. It has to be clarified in what sense do Christians take communion symbolically.

The symbolical meaning of the communion refers to the difference in perceiving and experiencing the phenomenon of union with Christ. Polemis notes that for Theophanes μετουσία is the union of two different entities, whereas κοινωμία is the

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<sup>40</sup> John 10, 15; Mt. 24, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 295-305.

<sup>42</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Log. Tab. I, 15, 580.

participation of two or more persons or things in one and the same reality<sup>44</sup>. The participation of Christians in the body of Christ happens initially on the bodily level through κοινωνία. Μετουσία is rather the final stage of communion; at this stage possession (μετοχή) of Christ is clearly grasped by the intellect. The reality of communion molds the existence of the participant and, as a result, likeness (ὁμοίωσις) occurs to the divine person, of which the human person partakes. This likeness is of such nature that the supernatural energy does not suspend the properties of humanity<sup>45</sup>. The corporeal form of communion is a symbol of the intellectual one.

Theophanes' formulation is definitely not typical for Byzantine theology, and for Palamism in particular<sup>46</sup>. However, the interpretation, which sees in this model a defense of anthropological dualism, i.e. giving ontological priority to the intellect as an agent of existential activity and personal identity, is far-fetched. One should be ready to accept that in this respect Theophanes adheres to his own definition of a symbol as a dissimilar manifestation of natural energy, which has localization in the created world. Human body is not an autonomous subject of activity; in other words, receiving Christ's body corporeally has an existential validity for the entire human person and is not an imperfect analogy of another existential act. Not all who receive Christ's body become participants of his divine energy, as the divine energy cannot be transmitted, given that the person has no disposition for it. Theophanes uses the analogy with healthiness. It is impossible to become healthy by merely touching a healthy person, because healthiness is not a passive impregnation with existential energies, but an active arrangement of them<sup>47</sup>. Of course, the energetic disposition of a healthy human being is present in the act of touching, but it does not cause transformation to the person touching. In order to partake of the 'healthiness' of Christ's humanity, one should acquire the respective personal disposition. The symbolical realism of Eucharistic gifts implies degrees of validity of the communion with them.

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<sup>44</sup> Polemis, op. cit. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Log. Tab. I, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Georgi Kapriev. Die Eucharistie-Diskussion im Lateinischen Mittelalter und ihre Inkommensurabilität mit der östlichen Tradition, in: Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur VIII (2002), S. 27-48.

<sup>47</sup> Log. Tab. I, 17, 635-640.

Theophanes develops a detailed semiotic interpretation of the personal attachment to Christ through the communion. Important to note is that gestures, such as stretching out the hands and touching his flesh with the lips, are not perceived as allegorical signs of some transcendent content. Any concept of denotation, by which meaning is expressed according to a certain index of signification, is here irrelevant. The corporeal binding is expressed through a certain code of gestures, but the connection between the symbolical representation and the perfect communion with divine grace is not subordinate to an autonomous system of signs. By the symbolical representation of the Eucharistic communion one can talk about transfer of meaning in the pattern of a synecdoche – touching Christ's body and blood with the lips exemplifies the communion with all his bodily members.

The author illustrates the relation between the symbolical aspect and the full ontological content of the divine gifts in the Eucharist<sup>48</sup> by a parallel to the coherence between corporeal and spiritual aspects of the relations between human persons. When men share mutual love, they are in every moment connected to the soul of the other person. And they try to demonstrate (δεικνύει) the symbols of union through handshaking, kissing or embracing. According to the standard anthropological intuition of Byzantine philosophy, the relation between human body and human soul is not functional, but existential, and is co-coordinated not merely by the soul, but by the hypostasis as a self-dependent, unique center of being. The interpretation of divine gifts as symbolical manifestations of the energetic content of communion rests on this holistic anthropological vision.

The Eucharistic gifts are symbols of human partaking of divine grace. Why does this partaking have symbolical representation, i.e. representation through dissimilarity? The symbolical corporeal dimension is constitutive for partaking of men of all epochs after Christ's resurrection, precisely because a symbol is a center of coordination between the orders of natural energies and of categories. In the "place" of the Eucharist the hypostatic identity of Christ, of whom the community partakes, is witnessed. That is why Theophanes talks of a local (τοπική) and corporeal (σωματική)

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<sup>48</sup> In this treatise he is not interested in comparing the status of the gifts before and after consecration, nor does he speculate in which moment of the liturgy the consecration takes place.

fusion (συμπλόκη) of the body of those who eat the flesh of Christ, this fusion being a symbol of the union of human persons in Christ through divine energy<sup>49</sup>. Thanks to this local fixation, the partaking of the sacrament of the Eucharist appears as a historical symbol.

### 5. The Eucharist and the Transfiguration

When explaining why Judas was allowed to take communion, but not to witness Christ's Transfiguration, Theophanes underlines that in the Eucharist there is **no difference** between the things, seen as a symbolical manifestation (συμβολικῶς καὶ τυπικῶς), and the things, of which men partake (ἕτερον ἂν εἶπομεν εἶναι τὸ ὁρώμενόν τε καὶ μετεχόμενον παρ' αὐτό;)<sup>50</sup>. The symbolical representation in the Eucharist is of such character that it differentiates only touching (ψάθειν) Christ's body from attaching (ἄπτεσθαι) to his divine energy. The Eucharistic symbolical representation corresponds more precisely to the existential status of human persons, who communicate, than the vision of divine energy on Tabor<sup>51</sup>.

The specific symbolical representation of the deified flesh of Christ on Tabor, which was confirmed by two prophets and by the Fathers' voice, did not fully encompass the ontological content of the events to come – Christ's death and Resurrection. In contrast to Gregory Palamas, Theophanes states that Judas could have seen the uncreated symbol of Christ's glorified body, but he was not allowed to witness this event, because he was a sinner. Although he was allowed to partake of the divine flesh of the Son of God on the Last summer, he did not have anything to do with the grace sojourning in it and could not grasp this grace. The same is valid for the soldiers who beat and crucified Christ. Those, who participate with the due personal disposition, are able to witness the entire glory of the hypostasis of Christ, as far as it is possible for a created being. Whereas the event on Tabor was a single representation with a limited ontological capacity, the communion with Christ's body in the Eucharist enables Christians to acquire perfect hypostatic union with him by becoming members

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<sup>49</sup> Log. Tab. I, 16, 610-615.

<sup>50</sup> Log. Tab. III, 5, 319-320.

<sup>51</sup> In this respect Theophanes differs from Gregory Palamas, cf. Triades, I, 3, 38 (Gregorios Palamas. Syngrammata, edd. P. Chrestou, vol. I, Thessalonike 1966, p. 449).

of his mystical body. This is becoming Gods in proper sense<sup>52</sup>. That is why the Eucharistic gifts are more perfect symbols than the Tabor Light.

## 6. Conclusion

In order to defend his symbolical interpretation of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, Theophanes re-interprets the ontological model of Dionysius the Areopagite. For Dionysius the symbolical manifestation of divine energy flows through the order of cosmological instances that are hierarchically arranged according to the dissimilarity to the first cause, i.e. the divine being. Theophanes transforms this model by following the pattern of Philotheos Kokkinos and Gregory Palamas, who analyze the manifestations of divine energy in the created world in the perspective of Christology. The limits of this manifestation are not dependent on the ontological status of the members of a hierarchy; the categorical markers of hypostatic identity of created beings determine them. Continuing the line of subordination of the categorical model to the essence-energy ontological scheme – a standard, definitely sanctioned in Byzantine philosophical tradition through the metaphysical system of John Damascene – Theophanes develops a specific concept of symbol as dissimilar manifestation of natural energy within the contingent world. The same conceptual tendency stays behind the image-concept of John Damascene. Both the image and the symbol are concentrations of divine energy, the difference being that by the divine symbol there is no subject of a created nature.

The veneration of the images, of which John Damascene develops a detailed concept, is a personal gesture, predisposing the existential form of the viewer of the image towards communion with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The ontological content of the symbol of communion by Theophanes is much broader: it leads to a complete appropriation of divine energies through hypostatic union with Christ through his mystical body. Contrary to the images of Christ, which are always hypostatically differentiated and are created, the symbolical manifestation of his body in the form of the Eucharistic gifts is hypostatically identical with him, although this

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<sup>52</sup>Log. Tab. III, 5, 330.

manifestation takes place in the categorical constellation of the contingent things and is designed for human perception.

The ontological prerequisite for Theophanes' concept of symbol is the differentiation between divine essence and divine energy, which enables the perfect participation of created being in the divine life, without damaging the uncreated status of divine essence. Without neglecting the influence of some scholastic doctrines, one should acknowledge that Theophanes' symbolical concept of the divine gifts is a modification of doctrines and argumentative models, intrinsic to the Byzantine tradition.