

GREGORY PALAMAS: ON DIVINE AND DEIFYING PARTICIPATION (ΠΕΡΙ ΘΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΠΟΙΟΥ ΜΕΘΕΞΕΩΣ)

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*Introduction*¹

*On Divine and Deifying Participation*² was written by Gregory Palamas during the middle phase of the Hesychast Controversy, 1341–1347, between his two most important works, the *Triads* (1337–40) and the *One Hundred Fifty Chapters* (1350). Soon after the condemnation of Barlaam at the Patriarchal Synod of 1341, Palamas faced a new opponent in Gregory Akindynos, who had formerly supported and defended Palamas and the Athonite monks through 1341.³ Akindynos began to have misgivings about Palamas' notion of grace at the Synod, and urged Palamas then to retract from his writings expressions Akindynos thought objectionable, such as referring to the divine 'essence' and 'activities' as 'greater' and 'lesser' divinities. After the Synod, he began official proceedings against Palamas. In response to these new accusations, Palamas wrote six treatises from 1341 to 1342, sometimes called the *Dogmatic Orations*, of which *On Divine and Deifying Participation* is the third. These writings constituted an act of defiance against the prohibition in the Synodal Tome of 1341 of further debate on the subject. Consequently, Palamas was imprisoned for a time, and then temporarily excommunicated in November 1344.⁴

The first two of the six treatises written at this time (*On Union and Distinction* and *Apology*) address the ways we can speak of union and distinction with reference to the divine, arguing that a distinction between 'essence' and 'activities' does not entail a belief in two gods. The third (*On Divine and Deifying Participation*) focuses on the difference between the general participation in God that every creature

¹ Special thanks go to Alexis Torrance, for whose doctoral seminar on the Hesychast Controversy I first translated this text in the fall of 2015, and who gave me many helpful comments on the translation in preparation for its publication.

² Gregory Palamas, *De participatione quae deos faciat*, in Greek as *Περὶ θείας καὶ θεοποιου μεθέξεως*, in Panagiotis Chrestou, ed., *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1966), 2:137–63.

³ For a summary of Akindynos' interaction with Palamas, and his later opposition to Palamas' concept of grace, see the introduction in Angela Constantinides Hero, ed., *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983).

⁴ Robert Sinkewicz, 'Gregory Palamas', in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, ed. Carmello Giuseppe Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 2:134–35.

naturally shares by virtue of existence, life, or intelligence and the participation in the deifying action of God. The next three treatises (*Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite*, *Theophanes*, and *Barlaam and Akindynos Divide the One Divinity*) further develop the theme of participation in the context of the ‘essence’-‘activities’ distinction.⁵ The debate continued with Akindynos’ response to the fourth of these six treatises, and Palamas’ subsequent *Antirrhetic Treatises*.⁶

Gregory Palamas’ understanding of participation has been subject to especial critique, both by his contemporaries⁷ and ours.⁸ Palamas’ position that God’s ‘essence’ is inaccessible and unparticipated while his ‘activities’ are participated has been interpreted by opponents as meaning that God is composed of different parts—one part inaccessible, another part accessible, one part simple, another multiple, one part indivisible, another quantified and divided among many participants. Further, posing the ‘activities’ as intermediate between creatures and the divine ‘essence’ seems to indicate that the saints participate in a ‘lesser’ level of God’s being, or in some mysterious effusion from God that is not really God himself. Defenders of Palamas, on the other hand, maintain that this distinction is the only way to preserve a coherent notion of participation, in which creatures truly participate in God, but do not themselves contain the divine ‘essence’ or become extinguished in fusion with it.⁹

This short treatise, devoted entirely to explicating what Gregory thinks deifying participation in God is, how it works, and what it says about the nature of God, contributes a valuable resource for further study of Palamas’ notion of ‘participation,’ and should be taken into account along with the relevant material in the *Triads* and *150 Chapters*.

The main points that concern Palamas in this treatise are three: first, Palamas argues that the saints who are deified participate in God himself, not a created reality; thus, the ‘activity’ of God in the saints is the divine life itself, the indwelling of God. According to Palamas, Akindynos thinks of grace as a ‘natural imitation.’¹⁰ Palamas argues, in contrast, that what the saints partake of is God himself.¹¹ Paul says, ‘I live,

⁵ Ibid., 140–41.

⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁷ Participation becomes a more significant part of the controversy with the accusations of Gregory Akindynos, but the most vigorous and critique of Palamas’ understanding of participation came later from Nikephoros Gregoras, in his *Antirrhetika*.

⁸ One of the more severe critiques can be found in Rowan Williams, ‘The Philosophical Structures of Palamism,’ *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977): 27–42.

⁹ Some recent voices in favor of reconsidering Palamas’ notion of participation include Eric Perl, ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation,’ *Dionysius* 14 (1990): 105–30, and Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antiquity and Early Christian Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). David Bradshaw has also spoken out strongly in defense of Palamas’ distinction, although his treatment of participation in particular is not very thorough. David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Gregory Palamas, *De participatione* 2, 4, 7, 15.

¹¹ Ibid., 4, 7, 11–13, 20.

but I no longer, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20), and the saints perform that which belongs properly only to God—e.g. raising the dead back to life—testifying to the presence of God himself in them.¹²

Second, Palamas aims to clarify that this deifying participation is 'participation' in the true and proper sense (*kuriōs*), as opposed to that general 'participation' that all creatures have by virtue of their nature as creatures.¹³ In one vivid image, he points out that when a pot is in the kiln, it shares in the very life of the fire, taking on its hot and burning qualities, becoming capable of transferring that very 'activity' to something else.¹⁴ When removed from the fire, the pot still participates in the fire's effects (thanks to the fire, it now has a particular colour, hardness, weight, etc.), but it no longer participates in the 'activity' of the fire itself.¹⁵ The participation in the 'activity' of the fire is the truer participation than the participation in the effects. Thus, while all creatures participate in the effects of their creator, not all participate in God's very life; that is reserved for the saints, who have God not only as 'maker', but also as 'Father', through divine adoption.¹⁶

Third, Palamas argues that God's self-impartation to many participants, in varying kinds and degrees, is fully compatible with divine unity and simplicity. In response to Akindynos' worry that this understanding of participation 'chops God up',¹⁷ making him a composite thing that is divisible among so many different participants, and in so many different degrees, Palamas calls upon the concept of emanation (*aporroia*) to communicate a kind of impartation in which what is given is not cut off from the giver. Thus, like a ray from the sun, divine life may be imparted to creatures without being cut off from God.¹⁸ The unity and simplicity of God are not endangered by this view of creatures' real participation in God's 'activities', because they are neither 'self-subsistent' entities (*authupostata*) nor properties that admit of change in the subject.¹⁹ To maintain that the 'activities' are identical to the 'essence', he claims, would be to believe either in many different Gods or in a totally insubstantial set of properties.²⁰

A few words on the translation: I have chosen to translate Palamas' *energeia* as 'activity' rather than the more common rendering, 'energy'. My choice has two motivations: I believe that the English term 'energy' unnecessarily reifies the concept, inviting the misinterpretation of *ἐνέργεια* as some *thing* mysteriously flowing from God, and distinct from him. Further, 'energy' is not immediately recognizable as the same concept as 'activity', 'actuality', or 'operation', the English words with which

¹² Ibid., 20.

¹³ Ibid., 9–10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 12–14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 15–16.

¹⁹ Ibid., 25–26.

²⁰ Ibid., 27.

energeia is generally translated in philosophical and theological writings from Aristotle through the Patristic literature preceding Palamas. The word ‘activity’ more readily suggests this historical continuity.²¹

The Greek vocabulary of participation employed by Palamas comprises verbs and nouns formed by the combination of *meta-* and the verbs *echō*, *lambanō*, *lanchanō*, *didōmi*, and *eimi*. I have tried to capture the nuances evoked by the different base verbs in my choices for translation. For example, *metechō* indicates a *state* of ‘participating’, but *metalambanō* a *process* of ‘getting a share’. *Metalanchanō* similarly represents a *process*, but with a slightly stronger emphasis on ‘receiving’.²² I have rendered *metousia* as ‘communion’, but the etymological continuity with the other vocabulary of participation, maintained by *meta-*, should be kept in mind.

To describe the obverse of ‘participation’, that is, participation viewed from the side of the giver, God, Palamas consistently uses *metadidōmi* and its variants. No perfect English counterpart exists for this word. Most English translators of Palamas use a variety of terms meaning ‘give’ or ‘communicate’, obscuring both the unity of the concept and its relation to participation.²³ Wishing to preserve in English a similar etymological link between the terms describing the two sides of participation, maintained in the Greek by the shared prefix *meta-*, I have rendered *metadidōmi* as ‘impart’.²⁴ Erring on the side of redundancy, I have expanded the translation from time to time with ‘a share’ or ‘of oneself’, in order to highlight the self-involvement that the verb *metadidōmi* entails.

Translation

1) Come, let us set forth now what each side says, when intending to account for the difficulty. Against us they say, ‘If you maintain that grace in the saints is “uncreated” for no other reason than that they participate in God, and all creatures participate in God (for he pervades all and imparts a share to all: to some [a share of] being, and to others, in addition to being, life that is sensitive, rational, or intel-

²¹ Several recent works of scholarship dealing with Palamas have adopted the language of ‘activity’ over ‘energy’: Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*; ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation’; and the translation of Gregory Palamas’ *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite*, trans. Rein Ferwerda (Binghamton, NY: Global Publications, 1999). Tollefsen is expressly interested in linking the term with its historical philosophical and theological use (Tollefsen, 186). On the other side, David Bradshaw (*Aristotle East and West*, 238), changes from ‘activity’ to ‘energy’ when he begins his treatment of Palamas, wishing to emphasise the sense of ‘divine power and presence that is perceptible to the purified senses’.

²² My attention was drawn to this distinction between *state* and *process* verbs of participation by Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan in their translation of Plato’s *Parmenides* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), 26, n. 36.

²³ Other translators of Palamas’ works use a variety of different English verbs for *metadidōmi* within the same work, further obscuring the fact that the term represents a central and unified concept of participation. See for example Robert Sinkewicz’s translation of *150 Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), and John Meyendorff’s translation of the *Triads*, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

²⁴ Eric Perl also uses ‘impart’ for *metadidōmi*, ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation’.

lective), then all things will possess something uncreated: some having being, others life, and still others reasoning and intellection.²⁵ If we were in perfect harmony with the saints, we would have considered these things unworthy of response. For faith governs Christian doctrine, not rational demonstration. But for the sake of those being swept away by their seemingly plausible arguments, it may be necessary to reply to their accusations with the following: if this is why *you* call divine-working grace in the saints ‘created’, then since all created things participate in God, according to you every created thing will be called ‘holy’ and every creature ‘deified’. Not only will rational creatures be ‘holy’—let alone rational creatures who partake of the deifying gift of the Spirit—but, in addition to these, the non-rational and inanimate. But why, if this is the case, does one receive a share of a better existence and life than another? Even among the saints, you should perceive a difference. Thus, according to you, the bee would be holier than the fly, the lamb holier than the bee, certain others holier than the lamb, and a human being, in turn, holier than these, even if it happens to be Jezebel. And again, an ant would be holier than mosquitos, a ram holier than an ant, and, if you like, a bull or stag or some other wild animal holier still, while a human being would in turn be holier than these, even if he is like Ahab. Even the sort of person who drags us down to such laughable notions through his absurd teachings, who is clearly marshaled against the Gospel of Christ, would be ‘holy’.

2) For if the deifying gifts of the Spirit in the saints are ‘created’, and are ‘like a habit’ or a ‘natural imitation’, as our trouble-maker goes around teaching,²⁶ then the saints are not deified beyond nature, nor are they born of God, nor are they spirit, as having been born of the Spirit, and, one spirit with the Lord, being joined to him (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). Neither is it only to those who believe in his name that Christ, who resided with us, has given the authority to become children of God (cf. John 1:12). For even before his residence with us, he was already present among the nations—if, that is, he is in us by nature—even now in both the irreverent and ungodly. Listen to the seventh dialogue of Maximus with Pyrrhus, where he says, ‘By the Spirit of God Moses and David were moved (and whoever else became capable of containing God’s activity), when they put off human and fleshly characteristics.’²⁷ And again, in another place, he says, ‘When the image ascends to the archetype and receives the divine activity (or, rather, when it [the image] becomes god by deification), and when the soul’s enjoyment increases in ecstatic separation from that which by nature

²⁵ This is not a direct quotation, at least among the texts from Akindynos that we have. Here, as elsewhere in the treatise, Palamas paraphrases his opponent’s accusation.

²⁶ Palamas attributes this claim to Akindynos in several places (*Epistula* 1.6.6; *Epistula ad Acindynum et Barlaam* 5.15.27; *Orationes Antirrheticæ* 2.11.42; *Dialogue between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* 21. Cf. *Triads* 3.1.25). In his refutation of Palamas’ *Dialogue*, Akindynos responds to Palamas’ accusations against him on this count (*Refutatio Magna* 1.19, 2.30, 2.31). The language seems to derive from Ps. Dionysius’ *Epistle* 2.1.3, where he calls grace an *amimēton mimēma*, or ‘inimitable imitation’.

²⁷ Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrhus* 165 (PG 91:297A).

belongs to it and is thought to pertain to it, this happens through the triumph of the very grace of the Spirit.²⁸

3) Therefore, the deified are not simply improved with regard to their nature; rather, they receive in addition the divine activity itself, the very Holy Spirit. For this is how it is, according to the great Basil: ‘Whenever we reflect upon the Spirit’s proper place, we contemplate him as being with the Father and the Son, but whenever we consider the grace activated in his partakers, we say that the Spirit is *in us*.’²⁹ But if grace is in the saints just like it is in all creatures, and if God, according to his wise purposes, creates holiness in the saints just like he creates in other creatures whatever is proper [to their nature], what need is there of Christ and his coming? What need is there of his baptism, and of the authority and power given to us from him? What need is there for the Spirit to be breathed forth afresh, sent, and made to indwell? For since he is in everything, he is already in us. If this is so, it will be the case that God creates and deifies in the same way. However, Basil the Great states clearly, ‘If God creates and begets in the same way, then Christ is both our Creator and Father in the same way; for he is God, and has no need of [giving] adoption through the Holy Spirit.’³⁰ The Apostle says, *He raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that, in the coming ages, he might show the excessive wealth of his grace, through his goodness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone boast* (Eph 2:6–9). Are you trying to fashion deification to be of works alone that proceed from natural imitation, saying that this deifying gift and divine grace is ‘imitation from nature’? *If someone does not have the spirit of Christ, this one does not belong to him* (Rom 8:9), and *the Spirit of God abides in us* (1 Cor 3:16) and *we have all been given to drink one Spirit* (1 Cor 12:13), and *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with him]* (1 Cor 6:17). Christ resides in the hearts of believers through the Spirit, and *hearing the word of truth, and believing in it, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance* (Eph 1:13–14), and *in this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given to us of his Spirit* (1 John 4:13), and *you did not receive a spirit of slavery, but a spirit of adoption* (Rom 8:15).

4) But are you saying that even those who, through the utmost purity of heart, see and experience the brilliance of God, and receive the Son with the Father—when he comes and makes his abode with them, and manifests himself in them according to his promise—are you saying that these partakers are only spectators of created things? What are you saying? *The Spirit of Christ* (Rom 8:9), *the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 3:16), *the Holy Spirit of promise, the pledge of the inheritance for the saints* (Eph 1:13–14), *the Spirit of adoption* (Rom 8:15), *the promise of the Spirit* (Gal

²⁸ Maximus, *Ambigua ad Ioannem* 7.12 (PG 91:1076C).

²⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 26, 63 (PG 32:184C).

³⁰ Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 4 (PG 29:692A).

3:14), which the Son, receiving from the Father, gratuitously bestowed on those who believe in him, which, according to the prophet Joel, *has been poured out on the male and female servants of God from his Spirit* (Joel 2:29, Acts 2:17)—do you think that this Spirit is a natural imitation? And you go about, proclaiming the ‘ungodliness’ of those who ‘do not cease to slander you’? Are you not put to shame by the Apostle when he says that *our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor 6:19)? And again, *You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you* (1 Cor 3:16)? Indeed, was a slave habitation ever permitted the honour of the name ‘temple’? But if he is in us just like he is in everything, then every other non-rational creature, beast, and creeping thing is a temple of God, not to mention the Hellenes who worshipped these creatures and other objects they fashioned for reverence. If this is so, then the Apostle elevates believers and ‘the approved’ in vain when he says, *For do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1 Cor 3:16) *Unless of course you are unapproved* (2 Cor 13:5).

5) But ‘you chop up the divine Spirit’, he says, ‘by calling what is uncreated and transcendent “lower”. And you measure God off by saying that more grace is present in one of the saints, but less in another. And you say that this grace is not that likeness to God which each obtains for himself by imitation, but something else beyond this, from above, both gift and uncreated.’³¹ Against whom are you resolved to bring this charge—against us or against the Prophet? Rather, you bring it against the God of the prophets, who said through one of them, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh* (Joel 2:28), and against the Apostle, who says, *apportionments of the Holy Spirit* (Heb 2:4), and against Dionysius, who writes clearly, ‘It is the One whom all “one-like beings” desire, but it is not in a single manner that they participate in him who is one and the same, but as he distributes to each, proportionately according as [each] is worthy.’³² The Spirit, then, is neither weighed nor measured; rather, the Spirit himself measures what participates, distributing to each according to each one’s own worthy and saving righteousness. It is not that the Spirit is divided into parts, but that we only have room in the smallest degree to contain the whole [Spirit] in a partless way, when he illumines us.

6) Paul too is recorded to have met briefly with the lustre of that great light (cf. Acts 9:3). And on the mountain, those who ascended saw the glory of the Lord, [although] ‘not the whole [of it], lest they throw away their life by such a sight.’³³ Not only is it undivided among the divided, but also, as a unifying power, it unifies the participants to the extent possible, and elevates them to the unity and deifying simplicity of the Father who draws them together. Thus, fittingly, on account of the unity of those under his providence, the Spirit, proceeding forth and multiply-

³¹ Palamas’ own paraphrase of his opponent’s argument.

³² Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1.2 (PG 3:373B; Günter Heil and Adolph Martin Ritter, eds., *Corpus Dionysiacum II* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991], 65).

³³ Third sticheron (second tone idiomelon) at Vespers, the Feast of the Transfiguration (Aug 6).

ing, remains within himself according to his super-essential power. But if such a 'pouring out', 'sending forth', and 'procession' is a manifestation—for, [Paul] says, *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each for benefit* (1 Cor 12:7)—will the Spirit be measurable, who measures out his appearance in proportion to those who mystically petition him? Not being profitable for everyone, he is never manifested completely. Since he infinitely surpasses all manifestation and intellection, is he divided or composed out of something lesser and something greater? Do you, who are wise in every respect, not comprehend that what is manifested or intellectually grasped or participated is not a *part* of God—so that there be division, and that God suffer, as you suppose—but that the whole is both shown somehow and not shown, both understood intellectually and not understood intellectually, and both participated and unparticipated?

7) But if, as even the great Dionysius says, 'deification is a making-like and a union with God',³⁴ how could we hold deification to be a 'natural imitation'? For, while there is need of our becoming-like, so that we may be harmoniously disposed to that union *through which* deification is completed, yet, apart from union, becoming-like does not suffice for deification. I say that there *also* needs to be a becoming-like, arising from vigilance and practice of God's precepts, but this is not simply accomplished through natural imitation, but through the power of the Spirit, which descends from above at the time of our holy regeneration and adheres to³⁵ the baptised in an ineffable way. Through this grace, those *born not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God* (John 1:13), like newborn babes, *are able to arrive at the measure of the fullness of Christ* (Eph 4:13). For, Dionysius says, 'No one could know what is divinely delivered, nor indeed would any one be able to practice it, who does not have a divine beginning.'³⁶ Learn then, beloved friend, 'from the get-go', as they say, the supernatural character of deification. How could this deification, to which nature itself, by its own power, does not give access, be the natural and created *telos* of nature? And if, in its source, it surpasses natural imitation by a wide margin, how will it be a perfected natural imitation? John the son of Zachariah also baptised, but only in water. Jesus the Son of God baptises, but in water and Spirit. What rise in rank is this? Is it in word only? Not at all. It is the divine-working grace and power itself, the Holy Spirit itself, being poured forth on the baptised, not according to essence, but adhering³⁷ in the manner of the immanent, implanted grace of sanctification. But if this grace itself is a creature, and we who have a share in it have partaken of some created thing, how is the Holy Spirit uncreated?

³⁴ Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1.3 (PG 3:376A; Heil and Ritter, 66).

³⁵ Literally, 'grows upon' (*prosphuetai*). Palamas employs organic language like this several times to indicate the manner of the divine life in those being deified.

³⁶ Ps. Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 2.1 (PG 3:392B; Heil and Ritter, 69).

³⁷ Literally, 'growing round about' (*periphuomenon*).

8) As the great Athanasius says, ‘If by communion in the Spirit, we have become sharers of the divine nature, someone would be raving mad to say that the Spirit is of a created nature and not that of the Son.’³⁸ How then is Christ the Son of God, if he also baptises in a creature, like John did, and instils a created power and grace into the baptised? [How can we say this of him] who is *ordained*, according to Paul, clearly foreknown, and confirmed as *Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead* (Rom 1:4)? Why then, is the power, which reveals and demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God, a creature? And how would he have been made known as God through it? Do not be preoccupied with the power of cleansing the lepers, enlightening the blind, raising the hunched, and straightening the paralysed—for it belongs to pharisaical dim-sightedness to look at that first [power]—rather, consider the power that invisibly loosens the bond of former sins, preparing a place for the Spirit of holiness, setting upright the inward human being and illuminating him, and, through union with God, raises the soul from the dead and causes it to live in a divine manner, granting it the divine and truly everlasting life of God. For the resurrection of the body naturally follows upon the resurrection of soul, just as the death of the body followed upon the death of the soul at the beginning. For this is the death of the soul: alienation from life in God. And such a death is truly dreadful; but the other that comes after, namely the death of the body, can even be prayed for (Phil 1:21–22). For love of humankind is divine, of which the throng of condemned—alas!—will be deprived in the coming judgment. For such a resurrection awaits those who have not used well their ‘talent’ of God-given divine grace (cf. Matt 25:29–30). This resurrection follows immediately upon that second death, just as John has revealed to us in his *Apocalypse*, and it is worse than death. But if in this manner they live, deathless, although already dead, then also many of those now living are dead, just as the Lord of life and death attested. There is, then, a death of the soul, even if it remains deathless by nature. How then does it live, receiving a share of creaturely life? Actually, it is dead, even while living by its own power. Indeed, to live once more, in a better manner, it must obtain a share of the uncreated life, which is itself not separated from the Spirit. For this reason, Basil, a partaker, says (speaking from experience), ‘The life which the Spirit emits to the hypostasis of another is not separated from him, but he holds the life in himself, and those participating in him live in a divine manner, having acquired a divine and heavenly life.’³⁹

9) Are you willing for this to be taught clearly, that those made worthy to be deified have a share in the Holy Spirit himself, not according to essence, but according to uncreated illumination and grace? Listen to Dionysius, who says, ‘Making-like God and union with him is the aim of the hierarchy, perfecting his worshippers as divine images, clear and spotless mirrors, receptive of the primal light and thearchic

³⁸ Athanasius, *Epistula ad Serapionem* 1.24 (PG 26:585C–588A).

³⁹ Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:772B).

ray.⁴⁰ But if, being One, he is participable by all, though not in the same one way, but varyingly, what will prevent both those who are holy and those who are not from participating, but with a difference in their participations, the one being an uncreated kind, and the other a created one? Athanasius the Great said, ‘There is one God, the Father,’ the source of all things, according to the apostle (1 Cor 8:6), ‘and the Word, begotten of him, and the Spirit processed from him.’ Consequently, if someone had asked him, ‘how then, if they come from the Father, do you say that, of all beings, only the Son and Spirit are “true God”, and “undivided from the Father”?’ he would have answered accurately, that this is so because of the difference in the mode of their existence. For the Son and the Spirit exist from the Father as effulgence and ray from light—in a self-subsistent way (*authupostatōs*)—while all other things [exist] as creations of the Creator. So we also say that, [even] if everything participates in God, yet we see that there is a great difference when it comes to the participation of the saints. For how is it, tell me, that of those participating in God by having life (whether sensitive, rational, or intellectual), none is said to have a deiform or divinely inspired life, nor is any of them divine or possessed of God or a bearer of God, or rather [simply called] ‘god’, except those who have been deified? There are some that have only the life of the senses, and some that are completely cut off from sensation, and never enjoy a divinely inspired life; nevertheless, even these things participate in God.

10) Do you see how, even if the Divine is in all things, and is participated by all things, yet is in the saints alone, and is participated in the proper sense by them alone? And so this is certain and true: although many are divine and are called such, there is one true ‘God’ for us. Just as many are sons of God and are called such, yet there is proclaimed among us *one* true ‘Son of God’, since he is the only-begotten; so also, of the many—or rather of *all*—who participate in God, only the saints are called ‘partakers of God’ and ‘partakers of Christ’. Since they were not partakers in every way previously, Paul says of them, *For it is not possible that those once illuminated, who have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit...* (Heb 6:4).⁴¹ The Lord has promised to come and to make his abode with them where he was not previously present or residing. It must be, then, that those who have been deified have a great likeness to him who is God by nature, and those who have been made sons, a great likeness to him who is Son by nature. Thus, God alone *is*, he alone lives, alone is holy, alone is good, *alone has immortality, inhabiting unapproachable light* (1 Tim 6:16), even though many others ‘are’, and are ‘holy’, ‘good’, ‘immortal’, and inhabit the light and realm of living things. So also the saints alone are partakers of God, although there are many ‘partakers’.

11) Does the difference in degree of participation seem to you wide enough yet to render the participation of those living in a divine manner to be ‘uncreated’, even

⁴⁰ Ps. Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* 3.2 (PG 26:53B; Heil and Ritter, 18).

⁴¹ Palamas quotes only the first part of the verse.

apart from Paul saying, *I live, though I no longer, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20)? And even apart from Maximus saying about himself and those with him that ‘they do not conduct a temporal life, having a beginning and an end, but the divine and everlasting life of the Word who resides in them’?⁴² Again, he says, ‘The divine and incomprehensible life, even if it gives of itself to those partaking of it by grace, yet it does not give them a complete grasp. For it remains, even in the participation of those enjoying it, ungraspable, because, according to its nature as ungenerated, it possesses the infinite.’⁴³ And again, ‘The reward given to those who obey him is ungenerated deification.’⁴⁴ And I call it ‘ungenerated deification’ [because it is an] ‘enhypostatic illumination according to its form, which has no generation, but only an inconceivable manifestation in those who are worthy.’⁴⁵

12) The great Athanasius says, ‘That we say that we are partakers of Christ and of God shows the chrism and seal in us that is not of the nature of generated things.’⁴⁶ And again, ‘This is God’s love for humankind, that, for those of whom he is Maker, he later becomes “Father” according to grace; and he becomes [their “Father”] whenever created human beings receive *into their hearts the Spirit of the Son, who cries, “Abba, Father”* (Gal 4:6). They would not otherwise become sons, since they are by nature creatures, unless they received the Spirit of him who is true Son by nature. For this reason, *the Word became flesh* (John 1:14): in order that humankind might be made receptive of divinity.’⁴⁷ And again, he says, ‘So also to the apostles has the Spirit and the power of the Most High been promised, as they were to the Virgin.’⁴⁸ And the great Basil says, ‘Through the Holy Spirit one can become a sharer of the grace of Christ, be called a child of light, and participate in everlasting glory.’⁴⁹ And again, ‘The living being, moved by the everlasting motion of the Holy Spirit, became holy. And with the Spirit indwelling him, the human being obtained the honour of prophet, apostle, messenger, god, although formerly he was earth and ashes.’⁵⁰ In another place, ‘For he who took the part of a slave is not established as Son on account of being a slave; nor does he have the freedom of calling God “Father” by sharing in the part of a slave.’⁵¹ And again, ‘They participate in the Creator according to the image, but they become this way through the Spirit. For all things made by God are, in respect to their created nature, base and lacking of the Creator’s glory, unless they participate of divinity. And it is an unworthy account of God, which says that he neglects creation, leaving it naked, so to speak, and bereft

⁴² Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua ad Ioannem* 10.48 (PG 91:1144C).

⁴³ Maximus, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (PG 90:644D–645A).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 61 (PG 90:637D).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 61 (PG 90:644D).

⁴⁶ Athanasius, *Epistula ad Serapionem* 1.24 (PG 26:585B–C).

⁴⁷ Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.59 (PG 26:273A).

⁴⁸ Ps. Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem Deiparae* (PG 28:929A).

⁴⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 15.36 (PG 32:132B).

⁵⁰ Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:741B).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (PG 29:769B).

of him. Neither is his creation so base, nor God so incapable, that he does not send forth a sacred impartation of himself to his creatures.⁵² Once more: ‘The creation is new again, when it obtains a share in the Spirit, but grows old when deprived of it.’⁵³...For it is necessary that the present renewal and conclusion of things agree with the newness of the beginning. He moulds and breathes in, he himself through whom God gave the inbreathing, being no other than the one who breathed from the beginning—before [merely] *with* the soul, but now *in* the soul.⁵⁴ Father Chrysostom would hymn the grace of divine baptism this way: ‘[At that time] *the human being became a living soul*, but now, *a life-creating spirit* (1 Cor 15:45). Much, then, lies between these two. For the soul does not provide life to another, but the Spirit not only lives, but also provides life to others. In this way, the apostles even raised the dead.’⁵⁵

13) These things also the divine Cyril sets out in a detailed way, refuting those who say that the divine in-breathing became the soul in [the first] human being. Concluding, he gives these words: ‘What has been breathed in is in some way entirely from him, and is understood to be his own, or of his essence. What then? How could the Spirit of God be changed into the nature of the soul? Surely then the living creature was ensouled by God’s ineffable power. And by likeness to God he became by nature good and just, and receptive of all possible virtue. But he was made holy by being appointed partaker of the divine Spirit. This he threw away through sin.’⁵⁶ Where are they who say that the deifying gift of the Spirit is ‘a created and natural imitation’, not an ineffable and ineffably arising divine activity? Hear the following things said by holy Maximus: ‘We experience deification as being above nature, but *we* do not produce it.’⁵⁷ And again, ‘Nothing of deification is producible by nature.’⁵⁸

14) Having come full circle, let us proceed in our discourse to what comes next. For, indeed, nothing yet prevents us from saying that, just as *no one is good except one: God* (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19), so also there is no partaker of God except for the good angels and human beings who have mystically received into their souls the divine in-breathing, which originally departed from Adam when he rejected the divine command. Gladly would I question the one who spurns this view. But is it not entirely necessary to assume that what partakes of another is capable of being something in itself previous to participation? Well then, as to those creatures who, by partaking of God, live with sensation, rationality, or intellect, what sort of sensation, reason, or intellect could they enjoy without partaking of God? Could

⁵² Ibid. (PG 29:724 A–B).

⁵³ Ibid. (PG 29:728A).

⁵⁴ Ibid. (PG 29:729A).

⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, *In Ioannem homilia* 25.2 (PG 59:150).

⁵⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *De dogmatum solutione* 2 (P.E. Pusey, ed., *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872], 3:549–566; at 553–4).

⁵⁷ Maximus, *Ad Thalassium* 22 (PG 90:324A).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 22 (PG 90:321A).

one say that they have at least the being by which they came into being, without partaking? Even this being they have by participation in God. Rather, it is clear that these do not participate in God in the proper sense, but in the way that the effects of his creative activity and power are said to participate in him: insofar as all artefacts might be said to participate of the intention of the artificer, to the degree of a dim echo, not sharing in the agent's intention in every respect.

15) But the saints, in addition to their previously subsisting created nature, acquire a supernatural and divine participation, not as a yielding substrate receives the effects of handiwork, but as people obtain and acquire knowledge, which is 'always present, but becomes manifest in activity only when there is need',⁵⁹ according to the various forms of the Spirit's gifts. 'And as the Word is in us', Basil says, 'so the Spirit is in us, when the Word himself is in our heart—whenever *the Spirit bears witness with our spirit* (Rom 8:16), and whenever *he cries in our hearts, Abba, Father* (Rom 8:25, Gal 4:6)—and when the Word is borne forth by the tongue. 'For you are not the ones speaking', he says, delivering incontrovertible wisdom, '*but the Spirit of our Father is the one speaking in you* (Mat 10:20). Thus, the whole may be known in its parts, through the distribution of gifts', he continues. 'For this reason, *we are all members of one another* (Eph 4:25).'⁶⁰ In addition, he says, 'As the power of seeing is in the healthy eye, so the activity of the Spirit is in the purified soul.'⁶¹ Consequently, he himself names the illumination of the Spirit an 'emanation': 'For just as things which lie among the brilliant colours from a surrounding ray of light are themselves coloured, so also the one who is fixed actively on the Spirit is somehow transformed by his glory into something brighter, shined on by the truth of the Spirit, like some light.'⁶² And Gregory, called 'Theologian', having catalogued all the people who welcomed his deceased sister Gorgonia, said, 'I know well that your present circumstances are better now and more honourable by far than eye can see: the ringing sound of those feasting, the dance of the angels, the heavenly array, the vision of glory, the illumination—more pure and more perfect than any other—of the exalted Trinity, mingled in its radiance with our souls by the whole light of the Divinity.'⁶³ Saying these things, he turned back to her, picking up his speech and finishing it off: 'You now enjoy in full all the things of which you had the emanation while still on earth, because of your natural inclination toward them.'⁶⁴ For such is the nature of emanation: even imparted, it remains undivided from that which imparts it, which undergoes no diminishment or lessening by the impartation. For how would light suffer on account of its ray or the ray itself on account of its gleam?

⁵⁹ Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 26.61 (PG 32:180C–D).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 26.61 (PG 32:181A).

⁶¹ Ibid. (PG 32:180C).

⁶² Ibid., 21.52 (PG 32:165B).

⁶³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem sororis Gorgoniae* 23 (PG 35:816C).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

16) And do not publicly charge me with [espousing] ‘material emanations’. After clearing away every unsuitable sense from the word [emanation], look then as you can, for me, to the manner of the abundance of the Spirit toward those who are worthy. How does [the Spirit] ineffably but manifestly illumine all the worthy? ‘Just like the beams of the sun’, Basil says, ‘illuminate a cloud and make it shine too, giving it a golden appearance.’⁶⁵ For he knows, it seems to me, that these clouds are the apparel of the light, having the divine sense impression of that light. It is just like [the case of] well-ordered eyes, which, by partaking of light, are naturally disposed to become a similar kind of light, and to be furnished with just such a light. Thus, indeed, the saints, having become divinely inspired and deiform, are the only ones who participate in God in the proper sense—not participating only, but also imparting. They are not only acquainted with things past, but also knowledgeable of some things not yet brought forth from non-being. They are not only living, but also life-making, which does not [otherwise] belong to a created power. Still, we need to hear again from the truth’s heralds the demonstration of the truth that the saints alone, of all the [creatures] mentioned, participate in God. For we always set before ourselves these witnesses of the truth.

17) Thus, the great Basil says, ‘Having been cleansed from the ugliness impressed upon him through vice, having returned to his natural beauty, restoring through purification his ancient form to something like a kingly image, only then can a person approach the Paraclete.’⁶⁶ And again, ‘The Holy Spirit is unapproachable by nature, but containable through goodness. [The Spirit] fills all things by his power, but is participable only by the worthy; for he is not participated to the same one degree, but distributes his activity according to the proportion of faith.’⁶⁷ And again, he says, ‘Thus, as to that one [the Spirit] which the world cannot contain, which the saints alone can behold through purity of heart, what kind of idea should we have of him, or what sort of honours are fit to belong to him?’⁶⁸ And again, ‘Indeed, having testified to his disciples that [their] purity of life came through his teachings (cf. John 15:3), the Lord further granted them to be contemplators and beholders of the Spirit.’⁶⁹ And again, he says, ‘For those who have trampled down earthly things and have surpassed them are attested to be worthy of the gift of the Holy Spirit.’⁷⁰

18) To illustrate for you the difference between these participations, take the following example that faintly resembles it: an earthen bowl participates of fire, and after being taken up again for use, it preserves the traces of fire from the furnace: the redness of colour, the appropriate dryness, and stiffness of the material owe directly to the fire. For as the moisture is dried up from it and the fire feeds on it and blackens

⁶⁵ Ps. Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:769B).

⁶⁶ Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 9.23 (PG 32:109AB).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.22 (PG 32:108C).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.53 (PG 32:168C).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.53 (PG 32:168B).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

it, the yellow of the flame is plaited together in the heat with the natural whiteness of what is earthy. Thus, from the combination of yellow, white, and black an outer coating forms on the inflamed mixture, and the loose earth is bound up, while the pores within hiss under the force of the fire. The result is that the bowl no longer has any chink for water to leak through. Because of these features, it is not subject to dissolution or softening when water flows in and around it. But it is lighter by far than a stone of an equal measure, and warmer, doubtless because of what was added to it from the fire. The earthenware participates then of fire, even after being put to [ordinary] use. But it also participates at the time it is placed in the burning furnace and is heated, being in contact with the fire. But *then*, it participates not only of the effects of fire, but also a little of the activities of the fire: it does not lack of the fire's warmth and burning power. It would easily impart a share of that activity, of which it itself has a share, to everything coming close to it (provided that what approached it be suited to getting a share), even though it [the pottery] has an unchanged nature and remains, in itself, earth. And whatever is transported from the furnace for use partakes of the *effects* of the fire's activity, but no longer of the activities themselves.

19) Consequently, having collected as best we could from the materials what is useful for examining the subject before us, pay attention to what I have to say, as to how natural life, existence, knowledge, and the rest are effects of such divine activities, but are not the activities proper. For those who exist and live in a divine and supernatural way, the inspired life and grace are most truly divine activity, through which union is effected between God and those who are worthy of God. The *effects*, then, of the divine activities are created, but these effects—all things that have been produced from nonbeing by the command of the Creator—are not also *activities*. But when he, with the Father, makes his abode in the worthy, as the Lord promised (cf. John 14:23), that which is produced in the God-bearing is perfected—though not by the Creator's command, but by God's divine union and indwelling—through the divine-working power and grace of him who imparts the properties he has by nature to those in contact with him. For the saints do not participate of his effects only, but even of God's very activities, in a manner imitative of and proper to the angels. For the great Basil says that this is the difference between the angels and the Holy Spirit, 'that for the latter, holiness is by nature, but for the former, being made holy happens by communion.'⁷¹

20) Thus, the just will shine as the Lord shone on the mountain; and they will possess a kingdom that is not created, nor wholly other [than his], but that very one which is his. Just so, then, Christ lives and speaks in Paul; indeed, even *while* Paul is the one living and speaking (cf. Gal 2:20). Just so, Peter puts to death (cf. Acts 5:1–10) and makes alive (cf. Acts 9:37–42), even though it is God alone who puts to death and makes alive (cf. Deut 32:39). Just so, James and John, along with

⁷¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 3.2 (PG 29:660B).

him [Peter], beheld on the mountain with their bodily eyes the unshadowed and perpetual light that later shone around Paul, blinding his vision because he could not bear the excess of brilliance (cf. Acts 9:3, 22:6–11, 26:13). For the nature of flesh [in itself] is not capable of the power of that light. So also Stephen looked from earth to heaven even with his body (cf. Acts 7:55). Even through sensible contact of bodily hands the abundance of the Spirit is present, imparting a share to one who genuinely and truly approaches divine activity and grace, which is distributed to another through the first, and through the second, again to a third. And it advances in succession, stretching on forever. O Only-Begotten Word of God, who will worthily hymn the power of your presence on earth? Your divine altar is never ignited with a foreign and *earthly* fire (cf. Lev 10:1); rather, [it is ignited] with a foreign fire of another kind, a *heavenly* flame, by the distribution of the ever-preserved unquenchable fire which you came to earth to spread (cf. Luke 12:49), because of your love of humankind, an incomparable ocean. Of this also your ministering spirits participate (cf. Ps 104:4), and through it the demons are banished. Moses saw it upon the bush (cf. Exod 3:2), and by it Elijah was snatched up from the earth (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11). The band of apostles saw it flowing forth from your body (cf. Matt 17:12, Mark 9:3, Luke 9:29), and through it, Paul was surrounded by light and transformed from a persecutor to a disciple (cf. Acts 9:3, 22:6–11, 26:13). It is the power for resurrection and the actuality⁷² of immortality, the illumination of holy souls, and the conservation of all rational powers.

21) But the proof of these things is in the clear signs that were received sensibly at that time, even if the obstinate were not wholly persuaded. For the daughter of the Synagogue official and the son of the widow partook of life by the touch and voice of the Master (cf. Mark 5:41–42, Luke 7:14–15). And both Tabitha in Joppa and the young man Eutychus in Troas partook [of life], the latter by the touch of Paul (cf. Acts 20:10, 12), the former by the voice of Peter (Acts 9:40). Of what sort of life were they participating? Was it not that life which is itself life-creating, that life which the Lord *had*, but of which he did not participate? Can anyone still say that the saints do *not* partake of the natural and uncreated divine activity? I mean those who come to know by grace alone the defect of their nature in the will, and who then receive of this power, in itself, to the same degree that God shared in the weakness of our nature when he was made flesh. Weakness he took, as he knew, by his self-emptying (*kenosis*), in exchange for the deification of those who are saved by grace. And how is it that, as is in fact the case, they will inherit the kingdom of God, which ‘is an impartation by grace of goods that belong to him by nature’?⁷³ It is through him that they [the saints] enter wholly into him who welcomes them and imparts a share of his own glory and brilliance, which they are utterly unable to discover by

⁷² Here, *energeia* is better rendered as ‘actuality’, as Palamas appears to be relating *dunamis* and *energeia* in the Aristotelian manner of ‘potentiality’ and ‘actuality’.

⁷³ Maximus Confessor, *Capita Theologiae* 2.90 (PG 90:1168C).

themselves. They are like pure air lit up altogether by light; or, rather, like abstracted, unadulterated gold, tried in the furnace by the immaterial and divine fire. ‘They have become divine by deification, and have come within reach of the unique divine activity through the completely conquering grace of the Spirit. Thus, there is only one activity through them all, of God and of those worthy of him, as God co-inheres in the worthy, whole in wholes,’ Maximus says in an inspired way.⁷⁴

22) Just as everything rubbed bare can participate of a seal, still, each thing is defined in whatever way it is altered. Once one of them receives an impression from a seal, it is no longer able to bear another [impression]. It is altered to be like the archetype, having become that one thing itself, differing only in its underlying matter. Thus when the divine image in us ascends to the archetype, the words of that divine prayer on our behalf are fulfilled: *Grant to them*, he said, *that all may be one, as I, Father, am in you and you in me, that they also may in us be one* (John 17:21) in truth. Thus, *there is one Spirit joined to the Lord* (1 Cor 6:17). So the mystery of the union of bodies in one flesh is great, but [it points] *to Christ and the Church* (Eph 5:32). The seal bestows itself as a whole to that which is impressed, but each thing receives a share of the seal only to the extent it is able, proportionate to its own aptitude—and I am speaking not only of the characters impressed, but also of the union of each thing with that which impresses.⁷⁵

23) Why do you still fear composition in God, if the activities both *are* uncreated and are spoken of as such? Fear much more, rather, lest you make God into a creature, by thinking that his natural activities are created, when the divine Damascene speaks of two activities in Christ, saying that ‘the created will shows the created nature, and the uncreated will indicates the uncreated essence. For it is necessary that the [properties] belonging to the natures correspond to the natures.’⁷⁶ These words are in harmony with those of the august Maximus: ‘If the [distinction between] natural will and the essential activity is obliterated, and that between the divine and human essences, how then will there be either God or man?’⁷⁷ What then, is it not that the hypostatic properties of the transcendent Trinity are many, and are uncreated? How are there not many gods, or one composite God, as a result? Or will you say that those properties are the same one thing in every respect, differing in no way from the essence of God, just like you say about the activity? I fear that you are introducing to us a God that is altogether without essence or hypostasis. For all these [properties] of themselves are entirely without hypostasis. But you are maintaining that these properties are identical in every respect to the essence of God, that God is one in every respect and partless. You do not understand that he is multiplied *while*

⁷⁵ Cf. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 2.5–6 (PG 3:644A–C); Beata Regina Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum I* [Berlin: DeGruyter, 1990], 129).

⁷⁶ John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3.15 (PG 94:1056C).

⁷⁷ Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91:96B).

remaining one, and is divided *while* remaining partless, and is participated variously *while* being completely undivided, preserving his own unity inseparably, according to his superessential power.⁷⁸

24) Indeed, tell me: are there not many hypostatic properties for each single hypostasis? For the Father is both uncaused and cause, originator and begetter; and doubtless the Father has all these things in an uncreated way. Or do you think that the properties of the hypostasis are in every way the same thing as the hypostasis, just as [you suppose that] the properties of the nature in no way differ from the nature, and the properties of the essence from the essence? Will you say, then, that the hypostatic properties are the hypostasis, just as you have said that the properties of the nature are synonymous, not homonymous, with the nature? But the Fathers do not speak that way. For they speak of these as ‘enhypostatic properties’, but not as the ‘hypostasis’, just as they call the other properties not ‘essence’, but ‘essential’. If we take it the other way, since there are many and diverse properties for each one of the hypostases, how will hypostasis and hypostatic property be the same? Since it is shown that there are many diverse, uncreated hypostatic properties (according to your shrewd, elevated, and unshakable understanding), either there will be many gods, or each of the divine hypostases will be composite. Consequently, you have proclaimed to us a god composed of many elements, you self-appointed defender of a simplicity beyond all understanding!

25) But composites are [made] of independently-subsisting things (*tōn authupostatōn*), and not of accidents in a thing—this is the common teaching, both of those who are wise in profane disciplines and of those who are wise in things above—nor is any being said to be compounded with its own activities. For neither is the power of burning compounded because it gives heat, nor is a ray, on account of its light. But indeed, such would be the case if you maintained that the idea of the uncreated One is indistinguishable in any way from the Three Hypostases. With respect to these hypostatic properties of God, many are joined in one [being], but none of these *is* as an independently-subsisting thing (*en hypostasei hōs authupostaton*), nor were they formerly, nor will they be in the future; nor is it possible for any of these natural properties to exist in some other essence, as natural to it. But everything ‘composite’ is either made up of different essences, by way of expansion, or is [unified] through an uncompounded union. For these [of the latter kind], there are multiple hypostatic properties observed for each, and yet the hypostases are complete, with no more than one hypostasis for each. Otherwise, they would not be ‘one’ or ‘composed’. With regard to these [conditions of composition], the difference is either between different essences, or between the essence and the contrary properties observed in it as in a subject. And indeed, [composition is possible] not in this way only, but also in other kinds of naturally occurring properties, according to

⁷⁸ Cf. Ps. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 9.5 (PG 3:912D; Suchla, 210).

which all created things admit of changes in growth and depletion, acquisition and excretion, acting and suffering, and in this way exhibit loss of things they formerly had. Hence, they are shown to be wholly divisible; and everything subject to such division is necessarily composed.

26) But in God, since there is one indivisible essence, there is no depletion, no growth, no addition, no loss; therefore, there is no division that would make apparent to us a previous composition. And ‘however many things God has’, to speak like the great Athanasius does, ‘he has by nature and not as acquired’,⁷⁹ and as *acting* only, not *suffering* on account of these things. Therefore, he does not in any way admit of a contrariety that produces change, as he alone has no essential differences. But, as Scripture has demonstrated, he has activities, through which everything is subjected to him like matter (even intellectual beings), to him who bears up all things, transforming them by his utterance (cf. Heb 1:3)—or, rather, by his will, which is to say, by his timeless, tireless, and impassible activity. And you would never see what belongs to him occurring naturally in any other being. And this is the case since he alone acts in this way. *For no one, he said, is good, except one: God* (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19), *He alone is blessed and ruler, he alone having immortality, residing in light inaccessible* (1 Tim 6:15–16). Why, then, do you suspect composition of different natures in God, since he is shown to be unitary from every perspective? Each of the three hypostases is complete and distinct, even in that ineffable union, beyond every thought and word. But no one will be able to conceive of each [Person] alone, as ‘before’ or ‘after’, apart from the others, so that composition might follow therefrom. ‘For no sooner do I call to mind the One’, [Gregory] says, ‘than I am surrounded in light by the Three.’⁸⁰ Accordingly, the bond and perfection of the hypostases drives away composition.

27) So, reflect on and guard the divine simplicity, but do not reject his natural processions, as though they *were not*. And do not deem that perpetual light simply to be the Evening Star or the Northern Light, or say that there are two Divinities, two Thearchies, and two Primal Goods—namely, one created and another uncreated, so that there are, in the proper sense, two. Since both are uncreated, both essence and activity, nothing will prevent them from being one, as a ray and the sun are one light. And do not suppose that the very divinity of God is a created kingdom; for God’s activities belong to his nature. Do not drag down his deifying grace to [the level of] creation, or drag down with it the One who has and supplies this grace. Do not treat it as useless that the Son of God became like us. For how would he have thought it fit to become like us, on our behalf, if he had not in fact imparted the Holy Spirit, but some creature; or, further, if he had not given the Spirit of adoption in exchange for the flesh he took of the Virgin, when he became Son of Man? Nor should you

⁷⁹ This line does not appear in the known works of Athanasius, but it is frequently attributed to Athanasius by both Akindynos and Palamas.

⁸⁰ Gregory Nazienzen, *In Sanctam Baptisma* (Homilia 40) 41 (PG 36:417B).

treat the temples of God, which are obviously holy (cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19), as mere habitations of creatures, nor make yourself so wretched that you not only withhold yourself from the divine and deifying participation, but also end your life without hope of it. And do not make God out to be so powerless that he is unable to imbue his rational and purified creatures with a holy impartation of himself. Further, do not treat him as something without essence and without hypostasis, saying that he is identical to his activities, which by themselves have no essence or hypostasis, since they are clearly not essences and hypostases. Do not treat it as participable, that essence of God, which is beyond being, beyond name, and in itself unparticipable and inexpressible, while you maintain that it is entirely uncreated. Do not show yourself to be another Eunomius, saying like him that, since all the hypostatic properties are uncreated, they are substances, purportedly for the sake of the simplicity of God. Do not become a Monothelete, assuming that the divine nature of Christ does not have a share of activity. Do not be another Sabellius, maintaining in a different way that the names of God are empty of realities, because you take all of them to refer to one signified reality: the essence alone. May you not suffer all these [beliefs], declaring the activities of God to be ‘created’, with hollow fabrications of simplicity that in no way *is*. Believe me: the same God is both divided and undivided, one in differentiation and differentiated in union, inseparable from himself in his processions, ever moving even in his immovability, apportioned partlessly, and wholly participated in the manner of a sun’s ray.

28) But let the great Basil take centre-stage (who preaches—if anyone does—that God is one and simple), and show us clearly that God will not be composite on account of such activities: ‘How’, he asks, ‘could the simplicity according to essence not be uncompounded? For the demonstrable modes of his particularity will not trouble the account of his simplicity, or else everything reckoned as wholly known of him, whatever is said about God, would reveal to us that God is composite. And, as it seems, if we should preserve a concept of the simple without parts, either we will say nothing about God except [that he is] ungenerated, and will refuse to name him “incorruptible”, “unchangeable”, “creator”, “judge”, and all that we now receive in doxology, or, if we accept the names, how will we do so? Will we ascribe them all to the essence? If so, we will demonstrate that he is not only composite, but also compounded of dissimilar parts, because each of the names signifies something different.’⁸¹

29) Whenever, then, you hear us saying that the essence is one thing and the activity another, let this be understood: when we say ‘one thing and another’, what is signified by each is as the great Basil said: ‘If we thought of the “ungenerated” as *part* of the essence, the Word would have space and be compounded of different things. But if we consider “the Light” or “the Life” or “the Good” to be the essence

⁸¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 2 (PG 29:640BC).

of God—whatever is wholly Life, wholly Light, and wholly Good—since Life has the attribute “ingenerate”, how is it not incomposite, being simple according to its essence?’⁸² And again, toward those heretics of his time—who were saying the very thing which our opponents are saying to us, that God is simple, and that everything you can enumerate as knowable of him belongs to his essence—he says, ‘This is a sophism having a thousand absurdities, for if such things are enumerated, are these names belonging to the one essence also equal in power to each other?’⁸³ Again, ‘We say that we know the majesty, power, and wisdom of God, but not the essence itself.’⁸⁴ Whenever, then, you hear us saying that the essence of God is one thing and his power or activity is another, know that we are saying this: that the power or activity of God is known in some respect, but the essence is not known by anyone.

30) And the Lord of knowledge, who teaches human beings knowledge, patron of wisdom and the guide to the wise, *in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid* (Col 2:3), *may he give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, and grant you, with the eyes of your hearts illumined, to know, what is the hope of his calling, and the wealth of the glory of his inheritance in his holy ones, and the great excess of his power, for us who believe, according to the activity of his might and strength, which he worked in Christ* (Eph 1:17–20), *to him who is able to do abundantly more than the things which we ask and consider, according to his power working in us* (Eph 3:20), to him belongs glory for ever and ever, Amen.

⁸² Ibid. (PG 29:640B).

⁸³ Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula* 234.1 (PG 32:868D).

⁸⁴ Ibid. (PG 32:868C).