

RECEIVING PALAMAS: THE CASE OF CYPRUS, 1345–71

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The reception of the thought of St Gregory Palamas in a variety of contexts is a growing field of research. Some of the contours of this field are summarized before turning to an interesting test case in the late Byzantine period, namely, the Latin crusader kingdom of Cyprus. In the few extant sources related to the Palamite controversy on Cyprus we glimpse a generous range of both the theological as well as geo-political factors at play in the heat and immediate aftermath of the controversy. These factors are briefly discussed. On the theological level, it is argued that contrary to a certain scholarly trend that tends to see as many types of Palamism as there are Palamites, we in fact find that in spite of a striking diversity of expression, there is an impressive level of coherence among the disciples and defenders of Palamas in these sources, centred on the doctrine of deification. This is, moreover, a coherence that is not so easily found among the anti-Palamites.

*Introduction*¹

Among the chief purposes of *Analogia* is to discuss key principles of the Christian faith in fruitful dialogue with the problems of contemporary life. One such problem, at once academic and existential, is reception. It is a problem bound up in turn with the issue of interpretation and hermeneutics: *πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις*; ‘how do you read?’ (Luke 10:26). This question has particular significance in the context of these special issues on St Gregory Palamas. One of the ‘battles’ currently taking place in the study of Byzantine and Orthodox theology concerns the manner in which Palamas is received, interpreted, and re-deployed, both historically and in our current environment.² Broadly speaking, there are two—often interrelated—debates at play. The first has to do with the Byzantine reception(s) of Palamas from the beginning of

¹ I am grateful to Alexander Beihammer for giving me the opportunity to present some of this material at the *Knighthood, Crusades, and Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean at the Time of King Peter I of Cyprus* conference held in Rome in 2016, and for the precious feedback I received there. I am also grateful to the journal’s readers for their suggestions, and to Tikhon Pino for his helpful comments (and for catching an infelicity). Any remaining errors are my own.

² In the previous journal issue of *Analogia*, Tikhon Pino and Normal Russell offered valuable assessments of several contours of this debate: T. Pino, ‘Beyond Neo-Palamism: Interpreting the Legacy of St Gregory Palamas’, *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 3.1 (2017): 53–73, and N. Russell, ‘Inventing Palamism’, *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 3.1 (2017): 75–96.

the Hesychast Controversy in the 1330s to the Fall of Constantinople and the early Ottoman period (primarily in the person of Gennadius Scholarius). The second debate has to do with the twentieth century reception of Palamas, epitomized on the one side by the damning assessment of Roman Catholic Assumptionist, Martin Jugie (who goes so far as to call Palamas' thought a divine punishment³), and on the other by the so-called 'neo-Palamite' thought of Orthodox theologians, such as Dimitru Staniloae, Vladimir Lossky, Georges Florovsky, and especially John Meyendorff.

Among the recent trends in this discussion has been the desire to push back against the kinds of easy dichotomies that have long been at work in the reception of Palamas, especially hesychasm vs rationalism/humanism and East vs West.⁴ The fact that one did not necessarily have to be in favour of union with the Latin West to be against St Gregory Palamas (e.g. Gregory Akindynos, Nicephorus Gregoras, Gregory Lapithes), and that one could be intellectually—even 'scholastically'—engaged without necessarily betraying the Palamite cause (e.g. St Nicholas Cabasilas, St Mark Eugenikos, Gennadius Scholarius) is indeed an important point to make. It is also helpful in delineating and tackling separately the different theological issues and principles at stake: the essence-energies distinction, for instance, is not itself inherently anti-intellectual, nor was it discussed by Palamas on the basis of an anti-Western agenda. That said, the elision of these categories is not the pure invention of Lossky or Meyendorff. While the sources allow us at times to bracket off one issue from the other, they are also frequently combined by both sides, as we shall see below: it would be foolhardy to ignore this by simply appealing to ecumenical expediency, or the importance of the life of the mind. The Palamite debate very quickly became, already in the fourteenth century, a debate conditioned by both East-West questions and discussions over the relative importance of intellectual pursuit in the Christian life. Not, of course, *controlled* by these, but most certainly *conditioned* by them.

Two further trends in the discussion are worth highlighting by way of introduction, one relevant to Palamas' modern reception, the other to his late medieval reception. The first calls into question the application of terms like 'existential' or 'existentialist' to Palamas' thought, something that had been developed in earnest by Meyendorff.⁵ Meyendorff was concerned to prove the contemporary relevance of Palamas, adapting his thought in a 'neo-patristic' vein to the philosophical categories current in his day. He held such an approach in common with other scholars

³ M. Jugie, 'Palamite (controverse)', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 11.2 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1932), cols. 1777–1818, reference to Palamism as a punishment permitted by God at col. 1817.

⁴ Helpful in this regard is M. Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). There is also the 'creativity-fundamentalism' dichotomy discussed in Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 64ff.

⁵ Against this, see especially J. Demetracopoulos, *Is Gregory Palamas an Existentialist? The restoration of the true meaning of his comment on Exodus 3,14: 'Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν* (Athens: Parousia, 1996) and also Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 59–63.

of the *ressourcement* such as Jean Daniélou, though his most direct inspiration was doubtless Georges Florovsky's call for a methodology of 'neo-patristic synthesis'. If one wishes to study St Gregory Palamas from a purely historical-critical and/or philological perspective, taking issue with this methodology makes sense: it is a methodology that draws its meaning from theology. But on its own terms as a theological contribution, it is much harder to delegitimise such an approach. Properly understood, one could even argue that Palamas' theology itself, as well as its immediate reception, is an example, in context, of what Florovsky describes as neo-patristic synthesis: summing up, in a creative and relevant way, the theology of the Fathers. Indeed, this methodological label would fit far more comfortably than the highly charged concept of 'development of doctrine' proffered by Pino to describe Palamite thought.⁶

The last trend I will mention here involves the field of 'Palamism after Palamas', that is, the reception of St Gregory Palamas in the Byzantine world. While earlier discussions (led again by Meyendorff) tended to emphasize the ultimate vindication and victory of Palamas' theology across the 'Byzantine commonwealth' by the late fourteenth century ('Hesychast international'), attention has turned to the possibility that Palamas' theology was somehow 'softened', 'modified', or 'transformed' by the Palamites of the fourteenth century.⁷ This is of course not a new trend, having been inaugurated with Jugie's discussion of 'mitigated Palamism'.⁸ This perspective takes the surprising position that theologians consciously and openly defending Palamas' legacy—many of whom were his direct disciples—were simultaneously somehow secretly embarrassed by him.⁹

To do justice to the complexity of Palamas' reception, either in the Byzantine period, the modern period, or in between, is beyond the purview of this article.¹⁰ Neither can each of the enumerated 'trends' be adequately treated here. Rather than

⁶ See Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 66–69. In fact, the passage from St Philotheos Kokkinos celebrating Palamas' achievement, which Pino cites in support of his use of the category of 'development of doctrine' is practically a description of neo-patristic synthesis as understood by Florovsky: according to Kokkinos, Palamas is 'seen to synthesize', 'with great understanding and freedom', all that the Fathers had done before him: cited in Pino, 'Beyond Neo-Palamism', 67. There seems little reason, as Pino does, to elide the concept of a Palamite gathering together, explication (*ἀνάπτυξις*), clarification, or synthesis of doctrine, with the concept of doctrinal 'unfolding' or 'development'.

⁷ See especially J. Demetracopoulos, 'Palamas Transformed: Palamite interpretations of the distinction between God's "essence" and "energies" in Late Byzantium', in *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History, 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger and C. Schabel (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 263–372.

⁸ Jugie, 'Palamite (controversy)', cols. 1795–1802.

⁹ The sticking point is generally seen to be the question of whether the essence-energies distinction is a 'real' distinction or simply a 'conceptual' one. More work on this is called for, though see the suggestions in A. Lévy, 'Lost in translation? *Diakrisis kat'epinoian* as a main issue in the discussions between fourteenth-century Palamites and Thomists', *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 431–71, and N. Russell, 'The Christological Context of Palamas' Approach to Participation', in *Triune God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, ed. C. Athanasopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 190–98.

¹⁰ See the helpful summary of the historical reception of Palamas in M. Plested, 'Gregory Palamas', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. K. Parry (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015): 293–305.

offer a sweeping assessment, I propose to shine a light on a limited but significant set of texts from the mid-fourteenth century that form a certain microcosm of the Palamite debate, perhaps even a test case for understanding the reception of Palamas more broadly. These texts are all related to the island of Cyprus—at that time a Latin crusader kingdom outside the direct control of Constantinople—and are composed in the heat of the controversy and its immediate aftermath (1345–71). Focusing on a circumscribed area and timeframe such as this allows us to pay closer attention to the arguments of the sources themselves. More than this, Cyprus proves an interesting test case because if anti-Palamism were to have succeeded anywhere, it ought to have been on Cyprus, given both the geopolitical factors at play and the status of the island as a kind of sanctuary for anti-Palamite intellectuals at least until the early fifteenth century.¹¹

On the basis of the insights gleaned from these sources, broader (albeit tentative) conclusions can be drawn as to the question of Palamas' reception. The documents of chief concern for our enquiry are the correspondence from the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos to the Cypriot anti-Palamite George Lapithes (dated by Hero to 1345–48);¹² the letter of the pro-Palamite Joseph Kalothetos to certain monks of Cyprus who had petitioned for information regarding the controversy (dated by Tsames to 1346–47);¹³ a synodal letter of Patriarch Kallistos from 1361/2 to Cypriot clergy and nobles;¹⁴ and the letter of John VI Kantakouzenos (then monk Joasaph) to Bishop John of Karpasia dated by Darrouzès to 1370/71.¹⁵ It will be argued that the texts defending Palamas' thought and the essence-energy distinction (Kalothetos and Kantakouzenos), while rather distinct in their expressions and approaches, nonetheless share a fundamental theological coherence centred on the possibility and reality of deification. It will be concluded that this unifying coherence among the Palamites is too often overlooked by scholars who, for one reason or another, wish to create

¹¹ I am consciously using the term 'anti-Palamism' here and elsewhere to describe the thought of the adversaries of Palamas. Russell seems to suggest that these adversaries 'referred simply to his "innovations" or his "heresy"' rather than resorting to the use of slurs like 'Palamite' or 'Palamism': Russell, 'Inventing Palamism', 75. This, however, is not the case. While Jugie may have invented 'Palamism' in a certain sense, Palamas' opponents were quite happy to attack τὰ Παλάμια ('Palamite doctrines') and ἡ Παλαμική μανία ('the Palamite madness'), just as Palamas and his disciples were happy to anathematize the 'Barlaamites' and 'Akindynists': see, for instance, Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 62.228, 70.27 in A. C. Hero, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983), 262, 286, and John Cyparissiotis, *Orations against Nil Cabasilas* 4.4.118–19.

¹² Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 42, 46, 47, 60, pp. 174–87, 194–203, 242–47.

¹³ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4, in Δ. Γ. Τσάμης [Tsames], ed., *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου συγγράμματα* (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Research, 1980), 385–94. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

¹⁴ See J. Darrouzès, ed., *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople* I.V (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1977), No. 2443, 370–72. The text of the letter remains, to my knowledge, unedited, but I am grateful to the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies and its director Professor Symeon Paschalidis for kindly giving me access to the microfilm copy of MS Athon. Stauronik. 62 f. 295–298 in which the letter is found.

¹⁵ In J. Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène relative à la controverse palamite', *Revue des études byzantines* 17 (1959): 7–27 (Greek text of letter at 15–21).

the impression of a virtual theological free-for-all among the partisans of St Gregory Palamas. On the pivotal issues of sanctification and deification, however, there is a clear and united front that has no obvious counterpart amongst the anti-Palamites.

Cyprus in the Late Byzantine Theological Landscape

In terms of the direct and active role of Cyprus in late Byzantine theology, several figures, documents, and events have been emphasized in secondary scholarship.¹⁶ Given the status of the island as a Crusader Kingdom from 1192–1489, an overarching theme is, of course, East-West relations.¹⁷ Most of the examples serve as a commentary of one kind or another on this larger question. There is, for instance, the incident of the thirteen monks of Kantara martyred as heretics by the Latins in 1231, an event which fuelled at the time and continues to fuel a certain ideological and even theological stance among the Cypriot Orthodox vis-à-vis Roman Catholicism. Or, conversely, there is the treatise by George Lapithes (whose name will emerge again below) on the seven sacraments. This treatise, influenced by the Latin enumeration and explanation of the sacraments, became popular in the Byzantine theological world into the early modern period.¹⁸ By contrast to the incident of the thirteen monks, here we find a counter-example for those who would rather emphasize the shared theological and (to some extent) liturgical heritage of East and West. Another would be the importing of the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin from the Byzantine rite via Cyprus to the West.

Beyond the incident of the thirteen martyrs and a few curiosities of liturgical history, the theological place of Cyprus in the late medieval period is rarely discussed. An exception to this is the life and work of St Neophytos the Recluse residing near Paphos, who died in 1214. His fame and writings were disseminated beyond Cyprus, and the unique iconographic program in his enclosure (*enkleistra*) continues to be of tremendous interest to Byzantine art historians.¹⁹ Further into the thirteenth century, the figure of Patriarch Gregory II, or Gregory of Cyprus, is of no little significance. Famous as the anti-unionist Patriarch who rejected the Union

¹⁶ See, for instance, H. J. Magoulias, 'A study in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox relations on the island of Cyprus between the years A.D. 1196 and 1360', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.1 (1964): 75–106; B. Englezakis, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus, 4th–20th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), esp. 213–20; C. Schabel, 'Religion', in *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191–1374*, eds. A. Nicolaou-Konnari and C. Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 157–218.

¹⁷ The institutional subjugation of the Greek Church to the Latin during this period is a tragic tale, but one which we cannot deal with here in detail. For more, see esp. Magoulias, 'A study'. Schabel's revisionist account of Greek-Latin relations 'on the ground' (Schabel, 'Religion') does not affect the facts of the real institutional emaciation of the Orthodox on Cyprus under the Latins.

¹⁸ On which, see Englezakis, *Church of Cyprus*, 218.

¹⁹ See C. A. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of St Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 119–206; Englezakis, *Church of Cyprus*, 97–211; and C. Galatariotou, *The making of a Saint: The life, times and sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

of Lyons (and whose thought was taken up by several Palamites), his ties to the Kingdom of Cyprus, where he was initially educated, remain understudied.²⁰

Another person to mention as we come to our main topic is a figure who becomes a hero of the Hesychast movement, namely St Gregory of Sinai (died 1346). His link to Cyprus is small yet intriguing. In his *vita*, composed by the Palamite Patriarch St Kallistos I, he recounts how Gregory, after having been ransomed from captivity at Laodikeia in Syria, sails to Cyprus and becomes the apprentice of a seasoned ascetic there, becoming a rasophore (novice) monk on Cyprus. He does not stay long, and settles into monastic life not on Cyprus, but at Sinai.²¹ This would be near the end of the thirteenth century. However, Kallistos records a detail here worth pondering, namely that a certain 'Leo the Cypriot', a learned ascetic who had emigrated to Constantinople, had written glowingly about Gregory's piety and sweet nature.²²

There is a significance here that begins to open onto the issue of the role of Cyprus in the Palamite Controversy. In a letter written in the summer of 1346 to the Cypriot George Lapithes, the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos urges him to send out more treatises against Palamas, explaining that Lapithes could safely do so via his Cypriot compatriots who reside in Constantinople, who are all treated as fervent anti-Palamites.²³ Cyprus is considered by Akindynos to be a bastion against Palamism, and he perceives it as a base from which anti-Palamite thought can easily be copied and disseminated across the region. What is interesting, however, is that one of the Cypriots at Constantinople that Akindynos assumes is part of the anti-Palamite network is a certain 'Leo'. Is the Leo mentioned by St Kallistos the same as the Leo mentioned by Akindynos? The *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP) equates these two otherwise unknown Cypriot Leos, and there seems little reason not to do so.²⁴ However, it raises an interesting hermeneutical question. If these two Leos are one and the same, what is the relationship of Leo the Cypriot to the Palamite question? On the one hand, he is recorded as having written a glowing description of St Gregory of Sinai, an ardent practitioner and teacher of Hesychast principles, and on the other as being a safe recipient for the anti-Palamite discourses of George Lapithes. Is there a contradiction here? Perhaps in 1346 Leo the Cypriot was undecided regarding the Palamite affair, or perhaps (like Akindynos) he dissociated the monastic practices and experiences of the Hesychasts from Palamas' teaching on the divine energies, accepting the first but rejecting the second. Or perhaps Akindynos was assuming

²⁰ For more on Gregory of Cyprus, see A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus* (1283–89) (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), esp. 37–61.

²¹ For more on the life of St Gregory of Sinai, see D. Balfour, 'Saint Gregory of Sinai's Life Story and Spiritual Profile', *Theologia* 53.1 (1982): 30–62 and idem., 'Was St Gregory Palamas St Gregory the Sinaite's Pupil?', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28 (1984): 115–30.

²² The entry for 'Leo the Cypriot' in the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP) is 14772, in vol. 6, 172.

²³ Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 60, 242–47.

²⁴ PLP 14772, vol. 6, 172.

that Leo's Cypriot background was enough to make an ally of someone who was not an ally after all. We can only conjecture, although by 1351 Nicephorus Gregoras tells Lependrinus on Cyprus that he no longer wishes to correspond with Leo as their friendship had cooled, perhaps indicating that by then Leo had definitively sided with the pro-Palamas camp.²⁵ In any case, whatever we are seeing in the case of Leo the Cypriot, it gives us insight into the kind of problems of interpretation that face any scholar of the Hesychast and/or Palamite Controversy, to which we turn.

The Initial Controversy

Before engaging more directly with my chosen texts, it might be worth offering by way of context a brief summary of the issues at stake in the Hesychast debates. As Sinkewicz pointed out some time ago, the initial theological issue that sparked the controversy in the late 1330s was not monastic practice, or theories regarding the light of the Transfiguration, still less Greek versus Latin thought, but the concept of the knowledge of God, which escalated rapidly to the concept of sanctification.²⁶ Barlaam of Calabria and Gregory Palamas had both written against the Latin doctrine of the *filioque*, but Palamas was dissatisfied with the basis on which Barlaam had rejected it, namely an extreme form of apophaticism that ruled out any positive knowledge of God. From this spark, the debate escalated to matters of monastic practice and experience: Barlaam equated the Athonite spirituality of his day with Messalianism and mocked the alleged visions of divine light experienced by the ascetics. The debate was now to be dominated by the question of sanctification.

Palamas served as a key representative of the Athonite cause, arguing that Barlaam was attacking the very foundations of Christian belief and practice. He maintained that the sanctification experienced by Christian ascetics was God himself present to the believer through his own uncreated activity or energy (*ἐνέργεια*). Its end result was the deification (*θέωσις*) of the human being to an equality with God by grace. This uncreated energy of God that rendered human beings divine was not identical, argued Palamas, with the imparticipable divine essence (*οὐσία*) itself, even if it was properly inseparable from the divine essence and thus could be termed 'natural' or 'essential'. This deifying energy was identical to the glory and light of God, made manifest through the person of Christ to the disciples at the Transfiguration on Tabor, and subsequently to the saints down the ages.

This is the bare bones of Palamas' position, spelled out in detail early on in his *Triads* (1338–40), the *Tomos of the Holy Mountain* (1340), and then throughout his writings until his death in 1359. What is important to emphasize is that his thought

²⁵ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Letter 44*, 2.155.

²⁶ R. Sinkewicz, 'The doctrine of the knowledge of God in the early writings of Barlaam the Calabrian', *Medieval Studies* 44 (1982): 181–242.

hinges on the possibility and meaning of sanctification and specifically deification, and it is on this basis that the essence-energy distinction is elaborated.²⁷

Gregory Akindynos' Correspondence with George Lapithes

We turn now to the texts in question, beginning with the anti-Palamite Gregory Akindynos (ca. 1300–48), who was at first a mediator between Barlaam and Palamas, but later an enemy of both.²⁸ His extant correspondence is an extremely valuable source both for the controversy and the figures involved. One such figure, the Cypriot George Lapithes, was the recipient of several letters between 1345–48, though none of his replies to Akindynos or his other anti-Palamite works have survived.²⁹ What is clear from this correspondence is that Lapithes is perceived as a leader among the anti-Palamites, even an organizing force. He has not only reproached the 'great minds' of Constantinople for not speaking out against Palamas (he is thinking primarily of Nikephoros Gregoras, who will eventually take on the mantle for the anti-Palamites), but even Akindynos himself for speaking too feebly in opposition. There is evidently frustration in Lapithes' mind that Cyprus is not in a closer orbit of ecclesiastical influence.

We glimpse in the letters of 1345–46 a moment of excited opportunity for Akindynos and his sympathizers. He has finally won the support of Patriarch John Calecas and is counting up his allies, although his sense of victory will be short lived. He indulges in an interesting rhetoric of widespread anti-Palamism, boasting amongst others in the support of Cyprus (most particularly in the person of the philosopher Lapithes). Interestingly, in a letter to Nikephoros Gregoras at this time he praises Lapithes as a bastion against both Palamism and 'Latin profane new-fangled talk'.³⁰ Akindynos remained anti-Latin in the midst of his anti-Palamite diatribes, and seems to have known Lapithes to be likeminded.

It is hard to make any firm judgments on the reception of Palamas on the island of Cyprus at this point, except that treatises and correspondence regarding the controversy were flowing back and forth from a relatively early stage and, as mentioned above, it was, at least assumed by Akindynos, to be a haven for anti-Palamism. The intellectual exchange between Cyprus and Constantinople, particularly via elusive learned Cypriots living in the capital, such as Leo the Cypriot discussed earlier (and Akindynos also mentions a Bartholomew, a Kosmas, and a Blassios³¹), is intrigu-

²⁷ For more on the importance of this emphasis, see A. Torrance, 'Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers', *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009), 47–70.

²⁸ For detailed sympathetic discussion of Akindynos, see J. Nadal Cañellas, *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006) and idem., 'Le rôle de Grégoire Akindynos dans la controverse hésychaste du XIV^e siècle à Byzance', in *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, ed. H. P. Monferrer-Sala (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2007), 31–58.

²⁹ Gregory Akindynos, *Letters* 42, 46, 47, 60; 174–87, 194–203, 242–47.

³⁰ Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 44.56–69, 190–93.

³¹ Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 60, 244–45.

ing. Another figure among Akindynos' supporters is the Cypriot Hyakinthos, an anti-Palamite elected metropolitan of Thessaloniki in 1345, the predecessor to the see of none other than St Gregory Palamas himself.³² Are there firm grounds to elaborate a type of anti-Palamite theological network among Cypriot intellectuals by the mid-1340s? This is at least the impression Akindynos wants to make, though to establish it beyond doubt would require further work.

However we deal with the patchy history to be gleaned from Akindynos, Cyprus itself was supplied with a resident anti-Palamite spokesperson, George Lapithes. What was the theological content of his anti-Palamism? One can only assume that his major arguments are similar to those of Akindynos, outlined briefly in *Letter* 42 to Lapithes and in an accompanying anti-Palamite treatise.³³ The main and recurring charge of the anti-Palamites was that the single and undivided Godhead had been cut up into a multitude of countless 'divinities' (θεότητες) via the doctrine of divine energies. This was perceived as a new polytheism, or a species of ditheism (Akindynos also added, like Barlaam before him, the charge of Messalianism to Palamas and his followers). The language of 'higher' (τὸ ὑπερκείμενον) and 'lower' (τὸ ὑφείμενον) in God on any level was repeatedly attacked as execrable.³⁴ By contrast, for Akindynos the divine energies such as divine life, wisdom, goodness were either simply identical with the one divine essence, or in the context of sanctification, they appear as identical to the Son and/or Holy Spirit (never, that is, a *tertium quid*). Deification, in other words, seems to have a place in his thought, even if, in my opinion, it is rather muted and undeveloped (if not confused). He likewise has a concept of created grace (linked especially to the sacraments), which prepares for, but is not the same as, the deification given by the Son and Holy Spirit.³⁵

Without imputing all of Akindynos' views to Lapithes, we can nevertheless be confident that the basic thrust of their anti-Palamism was similar, and revolved around the concern that Palamas was 'cutting up' the one deity into innumerable 'di-

³² For more on the figure of the anti-Palamite Hyakinthos of Thessaloniki, see K. Π. Κύρρης [Kyres], 'Ο Κύπριος Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης Ὑάκινθος καὶ ὁ ρόλος τοῦ εἰς τὸν ἀντιπαλαμιτικὸν ἀγῶνα' ['The Cypriot Archbishop of Thessaloniki Hyakinthos and his role in the antipalamite struggle'], *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 25 (1961): 89–122. See also idem., 'Ἡ Κύπρος καὶ τὸ Ἡσυχαστικὸν ζήτημα κατὰ τὸν XIV αἰῶνα' ['Cyprus and the Hesychast question in the fourteenth century'], *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 26 (1962): 19–32.

³³ Gregory Akindynos, *Letter* 42, 174–87. We do not know which of his anti-Palamite treatises Akindynos sent to Lapithes.

³⁴ One could almost call it Akindynos' hobby-horse. In a letter to Akindynos early on in the controversy, Palamas may have made reference to the idea of lower and higher divinity in a relative manner with regard to divine energy (participable and thus 'lower') and essence (imparticipable and thus 'higher'). Akindynos refused to interpret this reference as anything other than a thoroughgoing polytheism or dith-eism. For the version of the epistle with this statement, and discussion, see J. Nadal Cañellas, 'La rédaction première de la *Troisième lettre de Palamas à Akindynos*', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 40 (1974), 233–85. For recent further discussion of this epistle, see the collected articles on the topic edited by K. Heyden in *Studia Patristica* 96 (2017), 507–46.

³⁵ The issue of sanctification and deification in the thought of Akindynos is briefly discussed in J. Nadal Cañellas, 'Gregorio Akindynos', in *La Théologie Byzantine et sa Tradition*, eds. C. G. Conticello and V. Conticello, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 189–314; at 241–50.

vinities'. Akindynos clearly saw Cyprus as a bastion for his cause, and even appears to be making plans to flee there if the going gets too tough for him in the capital.³⁶ Not all the Cypriots, however, were necessarily on his side.

Joseph Kalothetos' Letter to Certain Monks of Cyprus

If an alliance of sorts among Cypriot intellectuals had developed in favour of Akindynos and against Palamas, this was not the end of the story. According to the dating of Tsames, in 1346 or 1347 the ardently pro-Palamite monk Joseph Kalothetos was approached by some monks of Cyprus and asked to give a concise account of Palamite doctrine.³⁷ Kalothetos was a disciple of Palamas and had become a monk first at Esphigmenou monastery on Mount Athos before eventually becoming the superior of a monastery in Constantinople. His interlocutors from Cyprus were evidently confused by the debate, having no doubt heard the kinds of arguments reflected in Akindynos' correspondence with Lapithes. They wanted to hear the other side, and Kalothetos obliged with what Tsames describes as the 'most beautiful' letter of the collection.³⁸

The letter begins with an appeal to following the saints, and argues that if these were to be followed with a rigorous, pious, and upright life, then the issue at hand (namely, the teaching on the divine energies) would be known to us quickly. He will speak to them, he goes on, regarding the natural and essential energies of God (*τῶν φυσικῶν...καὶ οὐσιωδῶν ἐνεργειῶν*) and similarly 'about the divine light that shone forth on Mount Tabor'.³⁹

He argues that one must revere the three divine and uncreated persons, the divine and uncreated essence, and the common divine and uncreated energy of the uncreated essence, such as wisdom, goodness, power, providence, and foreknowledge.⁴⁰ As a faithful disciple of Palamas, he introduces the doctrine of the two wills and energies in Christ (divine and human) promulgated at the sixth ecumenical council. He does so both to reinforce a sense of patristic precedence and to argue that the divine energies must be uncreated: 'for all that is of the divinity is uncreated, and all that is of the humanity is created'.⁴¹

He turns briefly to the light of Tabor, emphasizing that this divine light can neither be an essence nor a creature. Rather, the saints called this light 'a natural glory of God, effulgence, grace, energy, Holy Spirit, chrism, seal, divinity, unapproachable light and diverse other names'.⁴² He then continues on to address the

³⁶ *Letter* 42.182–86, 184–185.

³⁷ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4, 385–94. It is discussed in Tsames, 354–56.

³⁸ Tsames, ed., *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου*, 354.

³⁹ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.4, 386.

⁴⁰ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.5, 386.

⁴¹ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.6, 387.

⁴² Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.7, 387.

anti-Palamites more directly and attempts to call them out on their own ambiguous and imprecise positions. His opponents state that they only glorify the Holy Trinity and its uncreated essence, whereas any divine energy (including the light of Tabor) is created.⁴³ But when confronted with the divine energies as uncreated in Scripture, such as divine power and wisdom, they say that the essence and energy are identical, not ‘divided undividedly’ or ‘united dividedly’ (Palamas’ position), but simply completely the same.⁴⁴

Kalothetos is in fact playing on the conflicts within anti-Palamite thought to bolster his case. Once they are ‘stuffed full’ of the testimonies of the saints regarding the distinction between the unnameable and transcendent divine essence and the nameable divine energies, they will say that the Son and the Holy Spirit are energies, which is absurd, or they will propose that the pure partake of the essence of God. When in turn the ‘voices of the theologians’ crowd them out on this point, they will argue that the saints participate in a creature. Notice that it is the concept of deification that serves as the hinge for Kalothetos’ argument. Rather than offer a clear doctrine of sanctification and deification, the anti-Palamites are ultimately happy, he says, to shift from one argument to another, because their goal is not to articulate truth but ‘by treachery to deceive the simple’.⁴⁵ In juxtaposing entangled intellectuals and the simplicity of the saints, he is composing a tune that all sides would play, but especially the Palamites.

Having extolled the straightforward and universal witness of the Fathers, and before supplying the standard florilegium of patristic quotations to back up his position, Kalothetos moves on to a more involved theological argument, in paragraphs 9 and 10. This is perhaps the most interesting section because he wholeheartedly uses several terms that constantly triggered the anti-Palamites. In particular, he defends the use of the terms higher/superior (*τὸ ὑπερκείμενον*) and lower/inferior (*τὸ ὑφείμενον*) with regard to God:

The essence of God is said to be ‘higher’, his energy what is ‘lower’...The essence is ‘higher’ according to the principle of cause, of being imparticipable, unnameable, having existence of itself. Again, the energy is said to be ‘lower’ as what is caused, participable, nameable, as not having existence of itself but existing in the essence. The energy is rightly called ‘divinity’ (*θεότης*) by the saints...The essence is also called divinity, but inexactly and not in a proper sense (*καταχρηστικῶς καὶ οὐ κυρίως*).⁴⁶

⁴³ This is Barlaam’s position.

⁴⁴ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.8, 387.

⁴⁵ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.8, 388.

⁴⁶ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.9, 388.

He continues in paragraph 10 with even stronger language:

There is, in short, the lower principle and the higher principle and both are named divinities (*καὶ τῶν δύο λεγομένων θεοτήτων*). While two divinities are named homonymously, yet there is one divinity, insofar as they are united, both the essence and the energy, and [the distinction between higher and lower is maintained] because the natural energy is from the essence, not the essence from the energy.⁴⁷

Kalothetos is living dangerously here. On the one hand, by using the language of higher, lower, and even 'divinities' (or 'Godheads') in the plural in a positive manner, he was supplying fuel to the anti-Palamite fire. On the other hand, he evidently perceives a real need to address the charges regarding these terms that were no doubt being levelled as a constant refrain against Palamas on Cyprus. The fact remains, however, that even St Gregory Palamas tended to be more guarded in his language.⁴⁸ Whether Kalothetos' explanation for the use of such terms would satisfy his audience is unclear. He clearly interprets the terms in a manner that precludes, to his mind, any ditheistic or polytheistic implications. Divine energy is, by definition, not a 'substance' with independent existence, but it is thereby also undividedly distinguishable from substance or essence. The divine essence is 'higher' than the energy in the sense of being the unnameable 'cause' of nameable energy. The word 'divinity' or 'Godhead' itself, being a divine name, must properly speaking refer to energy rather than the unnameable essence,⁴⁹ even if Kalothetos then awkwardly introduces the language of two 'divinities' or 'Godheads', before pulling back to apply the term 'one divinity/Godhead' to the whole (essence and energy). One can assume that the mere use of these terms would be considered sufficiently damning in the eyes of Akindynos' sympathizers such as Lapithes. While indeed providing, as he had promised, a succinct and useful summary of the Palamite position, Kalothetos' occasional exuberance of theological expression doubtless played into anti-Palamite hands.

St Kallistos I and John Kantakouzenos

Our knowledge regarding the relationship between Cyprus and the Palamite Controversy after the unexpected death of Akindynos in 1347–48 is rather scant. What is clear is that Cyprus continued to serve as a haven for anti-Palamite intel-

⁴⁷ Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.10, 388.

⁴⁸ A direct response by Palamas to the charge of propagating a theory of two 'higher' and 'lower' divinities/Godheads via the essence-energy distinction can be found in his *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 3.19, 3:220–223.

⁴⁹ This was already a key argument made by St Gregory of Nyssa against the Eunomians, on which see Torrance, 'Precedents', 64–65.

lectuals and churchmen in the decades that followed. Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch, Metropolitan Cyril of Side, and Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyr all take refuge there in the midst of questions regarding their fidelity to the Palamite cause. We cannot, however, precisely reconstruct their theological positions. The clearest anti-Palamite text attributed to one of these, a letter purportedly sent by Metropolitan Cyril to his *chartophylax* at Side, is recorded in the patriarchal register of Constantinople in 1359/1360.⁵⁰ However, under the patriarchate of St Philotheos Kokkinos, this text is declared a forgery by the synod and Cyril is posthumously rehabilitated in 1364/1365.⁵¹ That said, there is a rather consistent unease on the part of the patriarchate regarding the anti-Palamite potential of refugee bishops on Cyprus.

An important example of this is the letter of St Kallistos I (died 1363) to the Cypriot clergy and nobility.⁵² It was written in late 1361 or early 1362, and concerns at once the efforts of the papal legate Peter Thomas (soon to become Latin patriarch of Constantinople) to win the island over to obedience to the Roman Church, as well as the arrival on the island of the anti-Palamite Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyre. It is an illuminating instance of the intertwining of anti-Latin and anti-Palamite sentiments among the Palamites. The chief sentiment of the letter is anti-Latin, but it moves easily to an attack on Barlaam and Akindynos, with a warning against welcoming Metropolitan Arsenios of Tyre who had fled for refuge to Cyprus on being condemned by the synod as an Akindynist. The Barlaamites and Akindynists are sharers in the doctrines of the Latins, says Kallistos, and further claims that all their members in Constantinople had colluded with the papal legate when he was there. The episode with Arsenios of Tyre evidently gave the patriarchate the perception that Cyprus had become a dangerous sanctuary for anti-Palamites. Whether he also had in mind the anti-Palamite Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch, who had resided on Cyprus during the reign of Hugh IV, is unclear, but there is no direct record of animosity between Kallistos and Ignatius.⁵³

That Cyprus served as an intellectual outpost for anti-Palamites from the 1340s until at least the 1370s if not the early 1400s is clear, though what that meant for theology ‘on the ground’ is far harder to reconstruct. Continuing anxieties regarding the dissemination of anti-Palamite thought on Cyprus was enough for the former emperor John Kantakouzenos (c. 1292–1383), by then monk Joasaph, to send a dogmatic letter and copies of his pro-Palamite *Antirrhetics* against Prochoros Cydones to Bishop John of Karpasia in around 1370/1371.⁵⁴ By now, Palamas’ legacy had been liturgically enshrined at Constantinople (his official canonization took

⁵⁰ No. 248, in J. Koder, M. Hinterberger, O. Kresten, eds., *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, CFHB 19/3 (Vienna, 2001), 446–50.

⁵¹ No. 247, *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, CFHB 19/3, 442–46.

⁵² Darrouzès, ed., *Les Regestes*, No. 2443, 370–72.

⁵³ See G. Grivaud, ‘Literature’, in Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, eds., *Cyprus*, 219–84; at 233.

⁵⁴ The Greek text of Kantakouzenos’ letter can be found in Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 15–21.

place in 1368), but the ideological battle evidently still continued. Kantakouzenos' letter can almost be considered a 'pre-emptive strike' since his main order of business is to refute a set of theses written by the anti-Palamites that have, he has heard, been copied and sent to Cyprus.⁵⁵

Kantakouzenos' letter begins with a historical summary of the Palamite controversy from Kantakouzenos' perspective, mentioning several more anti-Palamites who had fled to Cyprus.⁵⁶ He utilizes a classic Palamite comparison between the anti-Palamites and the Arians of old: just as the latter accused St Basil the Great and St Gregory the Theologian of tritheism for worshipping the Holy Trinity, so too the former 'accuse and charge us as polytheists for saying that just as the nature of God is uncreated and uncircumscribed, so also the energy of this blessed essence is uncreated and uncircumscribed'.⁵⁷ He goes on to address a series of nineteen specific accusations against the Palamites.

His approach is particularly interesting given what we have seen in Kalothetos' letter to Cypriot monks. Whereas Kalothetos unabashedly uses the language that anti-Palamites found so problematic (divinities, higher and lower in God, as well as divine 'energies' in the plural), Kantakouzenos avoids all these. He talks exclusively of God's *ἐνέργεια* in the singular: there is 'one nature, one power, one energy, one divinity'.⁵⁸ He repeatedly anathematizes anti-Palamite slurs like 'lower/inferior divinities' (*ὑφειμέναι θεότητες*), but does not make any effort in doing so to appropriate or explain the Palamite use of some of the underlying terms (which, of course, were never used in this combination even by Kalothetos). Kantakouzenos is content with disowning the slurs and repeatedly affirming the inseparability of the divine essence and energy. This diplomatic approach extends even to offering no Palamite alternative to the accusation that God's energy is self-subsistent as visible light. He simply anathematizes this position without discussing the Palamite view of the light of Tabor. His careful language gave Jugie the impression of a softened or even modified Palamism here.⁵⁹ Darrouzès disagrees and views the letter, as a whole, a work more of diplomatics than theology.⁶⁰ Both, in other words, wish to distance us

⁵⁵ It might be worth noting that the recipient, John of Karpasia, appears to surface only here in the Greek sources and is thus said by Darrouzès and others to be otherwise unknown. However, Schabel mentions him as having lost a case in the early 1360s to the Latin bishop Leodegar of Famagusta regarding the pastoral care of Syrian (Melkite) Christians in his diocese, with Pierre Thomas arbitrating: see Schabel, 'Religion', 170. Perhaps bishop John of Karpasia's biography is worth revisiting.

⁵⁶ They are Antouemes the Coubouclarios, Anthony of Tyre (who had briefly become patriarch of Antioch before being deposed) and, at the time of writing, a certain monk named Anthony Colybas: Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 17.

⁵⁷ Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 17.

⁵⁸ Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 18 (anathema 8). For Palamas' own discussion of the issue of singular and plural for the divine energy, an issue to which he was sensitive, see his *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 68, ed. and trans. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 162–63.

⁵⁹ Jugie, 'Palamite (controversie)', col. 1796.

⁶⁰ Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 14.

from the idea that the contents of the letter might be understood as a true reflection of Palamite theology.

If anything, however, I would contend that such assessments reflect the ‘divide and conquer’ mentality among certain scholars who, through a form of hyper-contextualization of the sources, end up proposing nearly as many forms of Palamite theology as there are Palamites. Differences in modes of expression or emphasis need not imply differences in underlying theology. Let us consider a selection from Kantakouzenos’ nineteen anathemas to get a better impression of this:

- 1) For they say that we actually glorify two divinities in God, one essence and another non-essence, to which I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we glorify one divinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 2) Again they say that together with the persons (*hypostases*) of the Holy Trinity, we worship other divinities, to which I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we worship one divinity in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶¹

In these two anathemas Kantakouzenos disowns the language of ‘divinities’. But even Kalothetos’ brief foray into this territory is not necessarily at odds with the monk-emperor’s position. Let us not forget that Kalothetos, in the passage cited above, ends his argument with a clarificatory emphasis that ‘there is one divinity’, and he certainly never suggests that Christians worship multiple divinities. Kantakouzenos’ language here is not, in other words, a ‘modification’ of the theology of the Palamites. He goes on:

- 4) Again they say that we worship uncreated gods of infinite number, inferior (*ὑφειμένοι*) and issuing (*προιόντας*) from the essence of God, which we properly call gods and divinities: and I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 6) Again they say that we glorify the visible, natural energy of God, subsisting of itself as light: let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we glorify the natural energy of God that does not subsist of itself, but is inseparable from the essence of God, uncreated and uncircumscribed.
- 7) Again they say that we call the uncreated and natural energy of God a different nature (*ἐτεροφυής*) and unlike and lower to an infinitely infinite degree, anhypostatic and non-existent, being to the nature what the Son is to the Father and the Holy Spirit: and I say, let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we say that the uncreated natural energy of God exists inseparably in the nature and that wherever there is the nature, there also is the energy, and wherever the energy, there also the nature.⁶²

⁶¹ Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 17.

⁶² Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 18.

As before, Kantakouzenos is disowning the specific use of certain terms, usages that are in fact universally rejected by the Palamites. Kalothetos' particular theological use of the terms 'inferior' and 'divinities', as we saw above, is not put to the service of calling the divine energies 'inferior gods or divinities' that are independently subsistent and worshipped in themselves. In anathema seven, Kantakouzenos is deploying the logic of the sixth ecumenical council, something that is again common to all the Palamites. Consider two further anathemas, each conveying a classic Palamite concern:

14) Again they say that we call effects (ἀποτελέσματα) uncreated: let anyone who thinks this be anathema. Rather we say that the effects are creatures (κτίσματα), receiving a beginning to their existence: but the power that works these effects is uncreated (ἡ δὲ δύναμις ἡ ταῦτα ποιήσασά ἐστιν ἄναρχος).

15) Again they say that we consider the deified body of the Lord—the partaking of which renders us even now communicants of the divine nature—not to be sanctified and deified by that same divinity which sanctified the body nailed to the cross, but by some other non-essential and lower divinity. I say to those who think thus: anathema. Rather we say that that same divine power and divinity which sanctified the body taken from the Virgin, which is forever found to be holy, the same is that which sanctifies the blessed bread and the blessed cup and changes the bread into the same body of the Lord and the fruit of the vine into his same precious blood: and we believe that these things are the precious body and blood of Christ and not another; and whoever is not born again of water and spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, and whoever does not eat of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ and drink his blood, is unable to inherit the kingdom of God.⁶³

The distinction between uncreated divine energy or power and its created effects is nothing novel from a Palamite perspective. Kantakouzenos' words are taken practically verbatim from Palamas himself.⁶⁴ Similarly, the sacramental backdrop of Palamite spirituality is not out of the ordinary.⁶⁵

The last 'anathema' I wish to consider is perhaps the most interesting in that Kantakouzenos does not actually anathematize the position in question. It reads:

⁶³ Darrouzès, 'Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène', 19–20.

⁶⁴ St Gregory Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 140, 244–45. It is important to clarify here that both Palamas and Kantakouzenos are referring to the created effects of God's activity/energy in a general way. When speaking specifically of deification, there was a limited way in which the ἀποτέλεσμα or 'effect' of God's deifying grace could be understood by Palamas to be uncreated (ἄκτιστος), inasmuch as the deified saints can rightly be said to become uncreated by grace: see St Gregory Palamas, *Epistle 3 to Akindynos* [Letter 5], 1:308. On the whole, however, this particular argument regarding the term ἀποτέλεσμα is rare in Palamas' writings.

⁶⁵ On the sacramental dimension of St Gregory Palamas' thought, see G. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

17) Again they say that we consider that which is prepared by God for the saints to be uncreated. In fact, though liars in all things, they have spoken truly on this point, for this is indeed our thinking. They are undone by their own words, however, since in accusing us of this they profess to find satisfaction in some creature. For us, because we have been taught and learned from Christ that he himself is the inheritance of the elect, and of the apostle Paul, that the saints become inheritors of God and co-inheritors of Christ, it follows necessarily that the inheritance of the elect is uncreated. Thus the blasphemy falls on their own head.⁶⁶

The fact that Kantakouzenos gladly takes ownership of this position on behalf of the Palamites tells us something of its centrality to the overall cause. It should come as no surprise that it involves the themes of sanctification and ultimately of deification, themes with which the whole controversy had opened. The monk-emperor might indeed be considered diplomatic and sensitive with regard to certain of his formulations, scrupulously avoiding terms and concepts that would require further elaboration, such as divine ‘energies’ in the plural, the nature of the light of Tabor, higher and lower in God, and the use of the term ‘divinities’. This is to be expected given the text’s genre. Yet there was still something that remained utterly non-negotiable: the eschatological promise of deification, which, by definition, involved for the Palamites a real sharing and communion in the uncreated divine life.⁶⁷

Conclusion

From these few texts directed to the island of Cyprus during the Palamite Controversy we are given a glimpse, perhaps even a microcosm, of the larger intellectual tug-of-war that was taking place in the Byzantine theological world in the fourteenth century. In the correspondence of Akindynos with George Lapithes we were served the essential theological arguments as well as the larger political ambitions of the anti-Palamites: Cyprus and Cypriot intellectuals residing in the Empire were a significant part of these ambitions. The letter of Joseph Kalothetos gave to the Cypriot monks a spirited defence of Palamas’ thought, one which at certain points could, on the level of terminology rather than theology, play into anti-Palamite hands. Neither, incidentally, had combined anti-Palamism with pro-Latin sentiments in their texts. This was to occur in the letter of St Kallistos I, who was incensed by reports of the papal legate Peter Thomas’ conduct towards the Greek clergy on the island. He readily combined anti-Latin sentiment with pro-Palamite thought in his exhortation to the Cypriots, seeing the Latins and anti-Palamites

⁶⁶ Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 20.

⁶⁷ Kantakouzenos mentions deification again in the ninth anathema where the pure, united to God, become gods by grace: Darrouzès, ‘Lettre inédite de Jean Cantacuzène’, 18.

as practically co-conspirators. Finally, we discussed John Kantakouzenos' letter to John of Karpasia, which offered a more irenic and terminologically sensitive defence of Palamas' thought, even while holding fast to strong Palamite language of deification by uncreated grace. Reflective of his more diplomatic mould generally, there is no explicit link made in this text between anti-Palamite thought and pro-Latin sympathies.

While we cannot learn in detail from these texts what the Palamite Controversy looked like in the daily religious life of Cypriots at the time, we can at least witness some of the upheaval it caused. Despite the promise Cyprus held in the eyes of Akindynos as an anti-Palamite bastion, an island which, on the surface, boasted seemingly ideal conditions for the incubation and propagation of anti-Palamite thought, our scant evidence indicates that, contrary to what we might expect, it was the likes of Kalothetos, St Kallistos I, and Kantakouzenos who would eventually win the minds and hearts of the island's Greeks. A series of letters at the end of the fourteenth/beginning of the fifteenth century between the Greek Dominican Manuel Calecas and the Cypriot intellectual Manuel Raoul, both ardent anti-Palamites, indicate as much.⁶⁸

Our primary concern has not, however, been to give an in-depth view of ecclesiastical life on Cyprus during this period, but to see the brief but diverse texts under discussion as yielding a helpful microcosm through which to better assess the larger question of St Gregory Palamas' theological reception. The tidy dichotomy of hesychast monk vs intellectual/humanist, or the easy elision of anti-Palamite and pro-Latin, are certainly called into question by what we have examined, but not entirely so. While scholars such as Meyendorff may have taken such characterizations too far, they are nevertheless part of the 'climate' of the debate from its early days. Similarly, while the theology of St Gregory Palamas receives in Palamite authors particular and contextual 'inflections' that, at a superficial level, might appear substantially different if not diametrically opposed to one another, this proves to be more a terminological problem rather than a theological one. There is, I would argue, a definite and deep theological consensus among the Palamites, centred on the reality of the sanctification and deification of the saints through their sharing in the uncreated divine life, a deification begun even now in the ascetic, sacramental life of the Church. This consistency of vision is clearly lacking among the anti-Palamites, whose internal divisions over the question of sanctification and deification are far more theologically problematic than the varieties of expression among the Palamites. Even in the case of Akindynos—who according to Nadal Cañellas embraces hesychast ideals and a notion of deification with a strong ascetic and sacramental component—it is actually extremely difficult to find much positive

⁶⁸ Especially Manuel Calecas, *Letter 77*, 275–78, where he laments that the common people on Cyprus have embraced the thought of Palamas.

or detailed evidence for what his thinking on sanctification really was.⁶⁹ The whole enterprise of ‘receiving Palamas’ is ongoing: it should be an enterprise—whether dealing with Byzantium, the early modern period, the twentieth century, or our contemporary world—that keeps at its centre the full meaning of deification, the uncreated ‘inheritance of the saints in light’.

⁶⁹ This is even apparent in the treatment of this issue by Akindynos’ great modern defender: see Nadal Cañellas, ‘Gregorio Akindinos’, 240–44, where the material he cites only indirectly supports his claims, and arguably raises more questions than it answers.