

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE LIFE: LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN ST GREGORY PALAMAS' *ON THE DIVINE AND DEIFYING PARTICIPATION*

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Abstract: In his treatise *On the Divine and Deifying Participation*, St Gregory Palamas introduced an important nuance. Namely, he pointed out the existence of a radical difference between the direct (deifying) and indirect (providential) ways of experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit. By emphasising this difference, Palamas did not question the Holy Spirit's omnipresence; instead, he considered the various receptive capabilities naturally pertaining to created beings and the consequences of the human persons' existential choices. The aim of this article is to explore St Gregory's significant contribution to pneumatology and the spiritual life within the framework of the traditional theory of divine participation.

The ultimate promise of Christianity is undoubtedly the access to God, usually termed as participation in the divine life. This theme, consistently pondered by the early scriptural, liturgical and patristic tradition of the Church, has been brought to further refinements during the fourteenth century Byzantine controversies. In the following, I shall address the topic of divine participation together with some of its ramifications, as illustrated in the Palamite treatise *On the Divine and Deifying Participation* (Περὶ θείας καὶ θεοποιοῦ μεθέξεως).¹ This treatise constitutes a patristic gem practically unknown to English-speaking readership.

Concretely, the paper will challenge the consensus according to which the cornerstone of St Gregory Palamas' thought was the distinction

between divine essence and energies. After sketching the immediate context in which this distinction came to be formulated, it will argue that St Gregory's primary intention – at least in the treatise considered here – was to defend the traditional theory of divine participation (which he amended by the various levels of perception) against its misinterpretation by the so-called Byzantine humanists. This approach draws on Bradshaw's note that St Gregory used the concept of energy in an attempt to articulate the transfigurative experience of divine light.² Furthermore, the paper will argue that Palamas construed the related themes of participation and divine energies from the angle of the hesychast experience, within the broader tradition of the saints. In line with this standpoint, in addressing the topic of divine participation the paper will consistently differentiate between the various levels of perception and the corresponding existential modes, that is, above nature and within nature, as pondered by St Gregory. Perfectly exemplified by the Palamite treatise, this differentiation seems to find support in Lossky's approach to the dialectic of person and nature.³ Or, by juxtaposing Lossky's terminology and Palamas' reasoning, we can easily infer that St Gregory believed in a full personal life as experienced only by the saints, above nature, through divine participation, whereas the sinners and the rest of creation lead an incomplete existence within the confines of nature. Nevertheless, in spite of highlighting this existential rift, Palamas remained far from nurturing misanthropy and an indifference towards the environment. In fact, the awareness of this rift allowed him to further contemplate the consequences of the presence of saintly persons in the world.

Whilst the main goal of the article will be to analyse significant passages referring to the communion of the saints with the Holy Spirit, it will also point out the relevance of this approach to contemporary Christian issues and experience.

Some Background Notes

The distinction between essence and energies has been considered for a long time as the core of 'Palamism' and has been fiercely debated; the bibliographical material on this topic is immense; recently, more additions

have been made to this reductionist approach. In a very modern fashion, a series of authors tend to isolate the distinction from its immediate and broader contexts, still referring to it as the focal point of Palamas' thinking and pondering its semantic nuances.⁴ Perhaps the most peculiar use of St Gregory's understanding of the distinction, however, is that of Orthodox authors like Ware and Nesteruk.⁵ Interested in setting points of interaction for scientists and theologians, such authors are tempted by facile generalisations, interpreting the uncreated energies within the paradigm of panentheism. Soon, it will become obvious that if this approach is legitimate in its intentions, it can only indirectly be associated with St Gregory's name; in fact this position runs parallel to his immediate goals.

The famous distinction between essence and energies, by default associated with Palamas' theological legacy yet easily traceable through St Maximus the Confessor back to the Cappadocians and the early apologists,⁶ has to be tackled within its historical context and acknowledged as a perennial aspect of ecclesial tradition.⁷ In fact, St Gregory's elaborations brought the topic to clarity, mainly by setting its existential parameters. Palamas was not drawn to controversy by some ideological concerns with the distinction *per se*; the distinction seems to have been brought under consideration only given its traditional use in articulating the participation theory. I propose here that St Gregory's reaction was chiefly prompted by the criticisms of Barlaam the Calabrian and other Byzantine humanists against the understanding of knowledge as divine participation, the way it was experienced by the hesychast saints. St Gregory undertook to clarify the matter in his first Triad (group of three works) of his famous *Λόγοι ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων* (*Treatises in Support of Those Seeking Serenity through Holiness*),⁸ where he formulated divine knowledge in terms of participation in God's life.

This approach should be taken as the layout for the entire discussion concerning the distinction between essence and energies, which Palamas consistently addressed only in the third and last, Triad.⁹ The third Triad propounded a defence against Barlaam's allegations that the hesychast theory and practice was affiliated to the charismatic-like movement of Messalianism.¹⁰ Since the Messalians, or Bogomils, believed that they

were able to access the inner being of God, St Gregory had to articulate the hesychast experience in terms of essence and energies, pointing out that the divine glory – mystically participated by the saints – is God's energy or manifestation. After the defeat of Barlaam and the emergence of a new opponent, Akindynos, Palamas endeavoured to synthesise the message of his Triads, reiterating the distinction within the framework of the participation theory. This effort led to the publication, in 1342,¹¹ of the treatise here considered. Nevertheless, after the *On the Divine and Deifying Participation* and due to the technical aspects raised by his opponents, St Gregory had to specifically address the distinction between essence and energies, time and again.¹²

This briefly sketched context notwithstanding, it becomes apparent that Palamas' reaction against the humanists was exclusively motivated by his conviction that to know God truly is to participate in God's life. The natural outcome of this conviction is that he made use of the distinction only for the purpose of articulating this experience on sound ecclesial grounds. Therefore, Mantzaridis was right when asserting that communion with God and the vision of his glory represent 'the aim of all Palamite theology,'¹³ a point appropriated by this paper.

Knowledge as Participation

As it has become obvious, the starting point for the fourteenth century Byzantine controversies between the witnesses of tradition and humanists consisted in their antithetical understandings of divine knowledge.¹⁴

Being deeply familiar with the hesychast milieu,¹⁵ St Gregory conceived the divine knowledge as participation in the life of God through the Holy Spirit, here and now. Within the Athonite monastic circles indeed, experiencing God was no longer assimilated to knowledge, at least not in its discursive dimension. The saints' experience of the 'incomparable ocean of [divine] love for mankind' (φιλανθρωπίας ανείκαστον πέλαγος) was taken as an experience of 'enlightenment' (φωτισμός)¹⁶ that surpasses any natural capacity of the mind. Symptomatically, within the treatise here considered, the specific terminology of knowledge emerges only in the

last two chapters.¹⁷ In Chapter 29 for instance, and applying his favourite distinction, St Gregory argued that from the point of view of his ‘power’ (δύναμις) or ‘energy’ (ἐνέργεια)¹⁸ God can be ‘to some extent known’ (γινώσκεται ὀπωσδήποτε) whereas his ‘essence’ (οὐσία) ‘can by no one be known’ (οὐ γινώσκεται παρ’ οὐδενός).¹⁹ This statement draws on the apophatic tradition of the Church, according to which God remains transcendent and inexhaustible even though participated in by the saints.²⁰ Furthermore, Chapter 30, which basically represents a dense collage of Pauline texts (Colossians 2:3; Ephesians 1:17-20; 3:20), reiterates the traditional idea of divine knowledge as a gift coming from the ‘giver of wisdom’ (σοφίας χορηγός), ‘the Lord of [all] knowledge’ (ὁ τῶν γνώσεων κύριος).²¹ Undeniably, Palamas intimated that the only true knowledge of God comes through his direct revelation,²² being personally experienced by the saints.²³ One might note that the divine energies and revelations or teachings of God are here interchangeable terms.

In turn, the humanists equated knowledge with erudition and a speculative exercise, termed by Barlaam as ‘wisdom,’²⁴ sharing with the Western scholastics the opinion that the *visio beatifica* is only possible in the afterlife.²⁵ It is true, their propensity to indefinitely postpone the vision of God (together with their noted scepticism in regards to mystical experience) developed in correlation with the Western doctrine of divine grace as a created element.²⁶ The outcome of this association was obvious: if grace is created, the bridge between humanity and God collapses together with the possibility of a direct experience of God in the present life. Such a conclusion was unacceptable to the ecclesial tradition, given that it ignored the people of God’s concept of the newness of life – indeed Christianity’s ultimate promise – as a call to become partakers of the divine life (cf. 2 Peter 1:4). Consequently, for Palamas the true message of the Gospel was spelt out not by the sharpness of logic and refined metaphysical speculations, but through the mystical experiences of the hesychast saints. The decisive criterion, therefore, against the humanist theory of knowledge did not consist in St Gregory’s intellectual convictions; it was the unambiguous evidence that this theory presented no affinity with the experience of immortal life and eternal glory as lived by the saints.

Whilst immediately inspired by the hesychast theory and practice, St Gregory's elaborations likewise remained faithful to the soteriological concerns of the early Church, identifying as ecclesial only that which corresponded to the people of God's ideals of salvation and perfection. For instance, in the fourth century St Athanasius²⁷ and St Basil²⁸ refuted – on soteriological grounds – the irreverent attacks against the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, both stating that if they are not true divine persons our adoption by God remains an empty metaphor²⁹. In the same vein, Palamas was aware that if grace is created, the overcoming of mortality and the renewal of life are both impossible:

If the deifying gift of the Spirit (ἡ θεοποιὸς δωρεὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος) [bestowed upon] the saints is created (κτιστὴ), like some natural feature or resemblance (ὡς ἕξις ἢ μίμησις τις φυσικὴ), [...] even though deified (θεοούμενοι) the saints could not transcend nature (ὅπερ φύσιν γίνονται³⁰) and would not be born of God [...].³¹

The two lines of argumentation, from tradition and the experience of the hesychasts, coincide. One may infer that the same logic functions in regards to divine knowledge, which remains a vain ideal in the absence of a direct or uncreated contact with God. This was precisely one of Palamas' points in defending the distinction between essence and energies: whilst God remains absolutely transcendent in his essence, he can be participated in through his manifestations.

Levels of Participation

Although thoroughly ignored by contemporary scholarship, the topic of various levels of spiritual perception and/or communion with God has already been addressed by earlier Church fathers³² and indeed constitutes an important dimension of the ecclesial tradition. For instance, an old Byzantine prayer, *Καταξίωσον, Κύριε* ('Grant, Lord'),³³ still used daily in the Orthodox Church, echoes this aspect by depicting a triadic process of perfection, which progresses from learning through understanding to enlightenment. Even though the prayer does not explicitly affirm them, it certainly points to the different levels of perception – or spiritual receptivity – pertaining to the three stages. Nevertheless, and illustrating

the current concerns of the time, in the treatise here considered St Gregory introduced significant nuances to this topic. More precisely, he made use of a distinction between the direct or uncreated (*ἄκτιστον*) experience of divine presence, pertaining to the saints, and the indirect or created (*κτιστήν*) experience, pertaining to all other beings.³⁴ Before discussing the differences between the two ways, some background remarks are in order.

One might argue that such distinction between the uncreated and created experience of God would affect the traditional concept of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the world, as celebrated for instance by another notorious Byzantine prayer, *Βασιλεῦ οὐράνιε* ('Heavenly King').³⁵ More precisely, this distinction would imply that whilst tackling the divine indwelling one could not refer to more than what the saints can reach, as though the cosmos were otherwise deprived of God's active presence. In other words, Palamas' teaching would in some way anticipate the classical Protestant concept of the Spirit/grace as exclusively present within the invisible communion of the saints. In his quoted article (see n. 4) however, Coffey denies such a possibility. From the outset, it is important to note that by emphasising the differences between the various levels of perception, St Gregory had no intention to question God's omnipresence and continuous care for creation. On the contrary, given its ontological inconsistency and therefore its incapacity to exist without divine support, creation represented for him – and the entire Eastern ecclesial tradition – an interactive framework, an event of participation in the life and presence of God's Spirit.³⁶ In the words of Archbishop Stylianos,³⁷ hanging between its 'ontological mortality' and the 'charismatic immortality' to which it is called, creation could not exist nor could it reach fulfilment without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, Palamas was compelled by evidence to highlight within the created realm a range of receptive capabilities in regards to the divine presence.³⁸ Employing a trichotomical scheme, appropriated by the early Church fathers from the Platonic tradition, St Gregory presented these capabilities in terms of three distinct levels of perception and/or modes of participation: the *αἰσθητικῶς* (sensorial, material), the *λογικῶς* (reasoning, intellectual) and finally the *νοερῶς* (noetic, spiritual) one.³⁹ Throughout

the treatise, however, he mostly operated with a dichotomical scheme, consequently identifying two main differences, which can be respectively termed as natural and existential. Reiterating the ancient distinction between the senses and reason, the first category refers to the natural variations between humanity and the rest of creation, between merely being and being aware. Given the topic at hand though, St Gregory did not manifest much interest in exploring this variance. The second category, solely applicable to the human level, refers to the existential differences between saints and sinners. This constitutes in fact the main topic of the treatise, to which I will turn in the following.

Building upon a distinction between the divine works of creation and deification,⁴⁰ St Gregory clearly delineates the personal participation of the saints in the grace of the Spirit, on the one hand, and the reception of the Spirit's presence in creation, on the other. More precisely, whilst the saints experience the divine life as an immediate and deifying participation, all other beings are only capable of a providential or mediated participation in the 'effect' (ἀποτέλεσμα) of God's 'demiurgic energy and power' (τῆς δημιουργικῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ δυνάμεως).⁴¹ This significant difference stems from the fact that, whereas sinful people and the rest of creation remain confined within nature, only the saints are those that 'live divinely' (τῶν θεϊως ζώντων)⁴² or Godlike, on the superior level of the personal life. The latter is indeed the only existential mode compatible with God.⁴³ Thus, the true and full participation in God's life has as a prerequisite reaching a degree of existential or personal compatibility with him, which nonhuman beings are unable to accomplish yet this is readily accessible to people, and prominently those that have undergone the baptismal regeneration.⁴⁴

It is on this point that the major, existential, divide among humankind emerges. Whilst many people make no effort to transcend the limitations characterising their natural state, or simply refuse any spiritual renewal, the saints ascetically master their nature and attain a measure of detachment or personal freedom. Textually, through ascetic toils they reach the state of an 'utter purity of the heart' (ἄκραν καθαρότητα καρδίας).⁴⁵ Thus equipped for the mystical experience, the saints open up to the 'transcendent and divine participation' (τὴν ὑπερφύα καὶ θεϊαν μετοχήν),

being permeated by the Holy Spirit through ‘uncreated effulgence and grace’ (κατὰ τὴν ἄκτιστον ἔλλαμψιν καὶ χάριν).⁴⁶ This difference of receptivity drives Palamas to state that:

...although the divine (τὸ θεῖον) is [present] in all and participated by all (ἐν πᾶσιν ἐστὶ καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων μετέχεται), it [truly abides] in the saints only (ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις μόνοις ἐστὶ) and is truly participated only by them (ὕπ’ αὐτῶν μόνων μετέχεται κυρίως).⁴⁷

All are in God yet not all are equally receptive to God’s presence. The Spirit shines wholly and continually to all creation yet the receptive capabilities vary from one being to another. St Gregory makes an important point when affirming that, whilst different degrees of perception and/or participation may be discerned in the experiences of the saints,⁴⁸ they are far more obvious between the saints and the rest of creation. Compared with the saints’ intense and conscious experience of the divine presence, all other beings have no immediate knowledge of their Creator – according to the example of the objects manufactured by a craftsman that benefit from the skills of their maker but have no awareness of him.⁴⁹ Consequently, only ‘the deified life and grace’ (ἡ ἔνθεος ζωὴ καὶ χάρις) of those living ‘divinely and above nature’ (θείως καὶ ὑπερφυσίως) constitute true participation in the Spirit. Such a way of life means a continuous interaction with the ‘divine and transcendent’ energy (θεία καὶ ὑπερφυσῆς ... ἐνέργεια).⁵⁰

The saints are therefore not just partakers of the results of divine actions, like the rest of creation; they are indeed connected to the uncreated radiance of the divine energies, foretasting the perfection of the age to come.⁵¹ Nevertheless, even though the participation or deification of the saints is an uncreated reality (μέθεξιν ἄκτιστον, ἀγένητον θέωσιν)⁵² this does by no means imply that they have access to the very essence of God or that deification annuls the ontological gap between God and his creation. Textually, the saints ‘do not receive the Holy Spirit by essence (κατ’ οὐσίαν) but through his uncreated effulgence and grace (κατὰ τὴν ἄκτιστον ἔλλαμψιν καὶ χάριν).’⁵³ We see here the spirit in which St Gregory employed the distinction between essence and energy – to prevent any confusion between created and uncreated whilst advocating the reality of divine participation.

Existential and Cosmological Consequences

Related to what the Church fathers call *θεώσις* (deification), it is noteworthy that the signs of true participation in the Holy Spirit are its existential outcomes, more precisely the imprint of some divine features upon human nature.⁵⁴ These imprints become manifest through the variety of *charismata*.⁵⁵ Without annihilating our natural character, the experience of divine participation has therefore transformative dimensions.⁵⁶ St Gregory speaks about the transfiguration of the human receptive capacity into a ‘divine sense’ (*αἴσθησιν θείαν*), so that the saints can ‘divinely’ perceive the uncreated radiance of the Spirit.⁵⁷ As such, they can see God here and now, becoming likewise capable of spiritual and prophetic discernment. All these lead us to realise that for St Gregory the centre of Christian experience – the experience of holiness – is not the accomplishment of moral perfection. The true participation of the saints in the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of life, is an achievement of a different order: ‘... those that are deified (*οἱ θεωθέντες*) do not simply better (*ἀπλῶς βελτιοῦνται*) their nature; they actually receive the divine energy (*τὴν θείαν ἐνέργειαν*) or indeed the Holy Spirit.’⁵⁸

Consequently, and furthermore, reiterating in the Holy Spirit the mystery of Christ’s transfiguration, the saints are traversed by the unfathomable radiance of God and are made incandescent. In this way, they witness to the call of the human body to become an epiphany of the eternal majesty of God: ‘the divinity’s glory becomes the glory of the body (*δόξα τοῦ σώματος δόξα τῆς θεότητος γίνεται*).’⁵⁹

This last statement shows St Gregory’s affiliation to the incarnational realism of the liturgical, biblical and patristic tradition of the early Church,⁶⁰ against any definition of spiritual life as incorporeal. In fact, precisely because the body is not excluded from the divine and deifying participation – and given the inner relationship between human body and the world – the outcomes of the mystical experience are mediated to the whole of creation. Much evoked within current debates, mostly seeking traditional solutions for the environmental crisis, this aspect (i.e., the cosmic priesthood of the saints)⁶¹ is not well illustrated in the treatise

under consideration. Obviously, in the fourteenth century there was no environmental crisis to ponder. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that precisely this nuance is implied by Palamas when he speaks of the saints as not just bearers but also givers of life – ecosystemic agents, one might say – since they are not merely ‘partakers’ (μετέχοντες) of God but also capable of ‘transmitting’ (μεταδιδόντες) God.⁶²

The mystical experience of the saints does not ultimately lead to the abandonment of the world, since it does not envisage the abandonment of the body. On the contrary, its purpose is the vivification and transfiguration of the entire creation together with the body.

Concluding Remarks

The brief and rich treatise *On the Divine and Deifying Participation* is in many ways relevant to contemporary Christian experience. In the following, I shall succinctly highlight a few aspects.

St Gregory was not interested to defend an intellectual conviction regarding the distinction between divine essence and energies. He aimed instead to theologically articulate the differences between the experiences of the saints, other human beings and the entire creation. Personally acquainted with the hesychasts, Palamas was overwhelmed not only by the fact of divine participation but also the uniqueness of this experience. Thus, speaking of the participation of the saints in the uncreated energies of the Spirit and, respectively, that of all the other beings in the effects of these energies, Palamas endeavoured to affirm both the reality and unicity of the experience of the saints. Outside this immediate context of his elaborations, the distinction between essence and energies tends to lose its ecclesial significance.

By emphasising the uniqueness of the mystical experience, nevertheless St Gregory’s purpose was not to imagine a distant God, isolated from created nature and the world. On the contrary, he aimed to overthrow the theory of the created grace that suggested an unbridgeable gulf between Creator and creation. This point is of great interest if we

think of the psychological impact of a world construed as devoid of divine presence and therefore meaningless, as is the case with secular worldview.

Likewise, Palamas' insistence on the necessity of purification as a prerequisite for the experience of the Holy Spirit might inspire contemporary charismatic movements to recover the apostolic sense of divine participation. It can also give more substance to the current quest for a lifestyle able to counteract the environmental effects caused by the greed and irresponsibility characterising modern societies. Last but not least, St Gregory's depiction of a Church constituted of people situated on various levels of participation and/or perception may contribute to the revival of the traditional understanding of God's people as both a hierarchical and a charismatic structure.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented for the ANZATS Conference 2009 (Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide, 5-9 July 2009). I am grateful to His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos and the referees for the recommendations that led to the improvement of this work, and to Mario Baghos for patiently rectifying my stylistic shortcomings.



NOTES:

¹ The edition referred to throughout the paper is Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ΑΠΙΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΕΡΓΑ, vol. 3, ed. Panayiotis Chrestou (Θεσσαλονίκη: Γρηγόριος Ο Παλαμάς, 1983), 212-60. English translations are mine. I have also consulted the available translations in modern Greek (ed. Chrestou) and Romanian (ed. Dumitru Staniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. 7 (Bucharest, 1977), 374-411).

² Cf. David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236-7.

- ³ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 123-4.
- ⁴ See e.g. Reinhard Flogaus, 'Palamas and Barlaam Revisited: A Reassessment of East and West in the Hesychast Controversy of the 14th Century Byzantium' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42:1 (1998): 1-32; David Coffey, 'The Palamite Doctrine of God: A New Perspective' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 32:4 (1988): 329-58. For a more balanced approach, witnessing to a holistic understanding of tradition, see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 234-42.
- ⁵ Cf. Kallistos Ware, 'God Immanent yet Transcendent: The Divine energies according to Saint Gregory Palamas,' in P. Clayton & A. Peacocke (eds.), *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2004), 157-68. See also Alexei Nesteruk's works, *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), and *The Universe as Communion: Towards a Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Theology and Science* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2008).
- ⁶ Cf. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 71-3; John Chryssavgis, 'The Origins of the Essence-Energies Distinction' *Phronema* 5 (1990): 18-25; Vladimir Lossky, 'The Theology of Light in the Thought of St Gregory Palamas,' in vol. *In the Image and Likeness of God* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), 54; George Mantzaridis, 'Spiritual Life in Palamism,' in J. Raitt (ed.), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, World Spirituality: An Encyclopaedic History of the Religious Quest, vol. 17 (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1988), 212; Vasilios Karayianis, *Maxime le Confesseur: Essence et énergies de Dieu* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1993), 137-205.
- ⁷ Lossky ('The Theology of Light,' 46) states that what the West calls derogatorily 'Palamism' refers in fact to 'the very essence of the tradition of the Christian East.'
- ⁸ The Triads are edited in Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ΑΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΕΡΓΑ, vol. 2, ed. Panayiotis Chrestou (Θεσσαλονίκη: Τὸ Βυζάντιον & Γρηγόριος Ο Παλαμᾶς, 1999), as follows: the first at 46-219, the second at 220-477, and the third at 478-609.
- ⁹ Cf. John Meyendorff, 'The 'Defense of the Holy Hesychasts' by St Gregory Palamas,' in vol. *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*, second print (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 171, 177; idem (ed.), 'Introduction,' in vol. *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (Mahwah:

- Paulist Press, 1983), 8-10; George C. Papademetriou, *Introduction to St Gregory Palamas* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 8-9.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 304.
- ¹¹ Cf. Papademetriou, *Introduction to St Gregory Palamas*, 13.
- ¹² Cf. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 235.
- ¹³ Cf. Mantzaridis, 'Spiritual Life in Palamism,' 211. Similarly, Meyendorff, 'The 'Defense of the Holy Hesychasts' by St Gregory Palamas,' 192; idem, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 77.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 221, 229-30.
- ¹⁵ Palamas claims affiliation with the hesychast tradition from the outset: 'we state, together with the saints' (ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῖς ἁγίοις συμφωνοῦντες); cf. *On the Divine and Deifying Participation* [from now on DDP] 1 (at 212). See also *The Declaration of the Holy Mountain* [from now on DHM], PG 150, 1232D.
- ¹⁶ DDP 20 (at 246). Along with its immediate reference to the mystical experience, the term might suggest the baptismal regeneration; see below n. 44.
- ¹⁷ Cf. DDP 29-30 (at 260).
- ¹⁸ On the Palamite use of 'power' and 'energy,' see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 239.
- ¹⁹ DDP 29 (at 260).
- ²⁰ The aspect was repeatedly noted by Staniloae, *Filocalia*, vol. 7, at 402-3, n. 635; 403-4, n. 636 etc.
- ²¹ DDP 30 (at 260).
- ²² Literally, God is 'the one that teaches knowledge to man' (ὁ διδάσκων ἄνθρωπων γνώσιν); cf. *ibidem*. See also Lossky, 'The Theology of Light,' 56.
- ²³ Cf. Chrysavgis, 'The Origins of the Essence-Energies Distinction,' 29.
- ²⁴ Cf. Meyendorff, 'The 'Defense of the Holy Hesychasts' by St Gregory Palamas,' 177.

- ²⁵ Cf. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 233-4.
- ²⁶ Cf. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 76-7. Palamas addresses this aspect explicitly; cf. DDP 2 (at 214) and 4 (at 218). This indicates as flawed Flogaus' affirmation that 'Western theology did not play any decisive role in the Hesychast controversy.' See his 'Palamas and Barlaam Revisited,' 31.
- ²⁷ Cf. *First Oration against the Arians* 9, PG 26, 28C-32A; idem, *Second Oration against the Arians* 9, PG 26, 168C. Basically, St Athanasius builds the proof of the Son as true God on the grounds of him being mediator between God and humanity; if the mediator is not true God, the participation is impossible. St Athanasius' teachings are referred to in DDP 8 (at 224), 9 (at 228) and 12 (at 230-2).
- ²⁸ Cf. *On the Holy Spirit* 13, PG 32, 120A. St Basil infers the Spirit's divine identity from our necessity to become familiar with God; or, if the Spirit is not God he cannot bring us in the vicinity of the Father. St Basil's works are often quoted by Palamas throughout the book; cf. DDP 3 (at 214-6), 8 (at 226), 12 (at 232), 15 (at 236-8), 16 (at 238), 17 (at 240), 19 (at 244) and 28 (at 258).
- ²⁹ Mantzaridis (*The Deification of Man*, 35) finds a similar understanding in Sts Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa.
- ³⁰ Literally, 'become above nature.'
- ³¹ DDP 2 (at 214). Lossky ('The Theology of Light,' 59) points out that for Palamas participating in grace is participating in God. See also Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, 37.
- ³² Cf. e.g. St Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* 9 (PG 32, 108ABC; partially quoted in DDP 17, at 240) and 26 (PG 32, 180C).
- ³³ See *Book of Prayers: A Selection for Orthodox Christians* (Sydney: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, 1993), 44-5. The prayer contains three invocations of God, who is successively asked to teach (διδάξον), to give understanding (συνέτισον) and illumine (φώτισον) the believers with his norms.
- ³⁴ Cf. DDP 9 (at 226), 11 (at 230).
- ³⁵ See *Book of Prayers*, 2-3, where the prayer acknowledges the Spirit as ὁ πανταχοῦ παρῶν καὶ τὰ πάντα πληρῶν, 'present everywhere and filling all things.'
- ³⁶ Cf. DDP 10 (at 228). Similarly, St Maximus the Confessor asserts that by 'existing and moving' all things 'participate in God' (μένοντα καὶ κινούμενα μετέχει Θεοῦ); cf. *Difficulty* 7, PG 91, 1080B.

- ³⁷ Cf. Archbishop Stylianos (Harkianakis), ‘The Sacredness of Creation’ *Phronema* 5 (1990): 8-9.
- ³⁸ Cf. DDP 1 (at 212-4), 14 (at 234-6).
- ³⁹ Cf. DDP 14 (at 236). St Gregory uses the same terms to depict a tripartite scale of knowledge in *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 63 (PG 150, 1165C), applying them to the human cognitive apparatus.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. DDP 19 (at 242-4).
- ⁴¹ Cf. DDP 14 (at 236).
- ⁴² Cf. DDP 11 (at 230).
- ⁴³ An aspect pondered by Staniloae, *Filocalia*, vol. 7, 378, n. 572; 380, n. 574; 384, n. 586 etc.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. DDP 3 (216), 7 (at 222-4). Meyendorff (‘The ‘Defense of the Holy Hesychasts’ by St Gregory Palamas,’ 176; *Byzantine Theology*, 77) notes that for Palamas baptism is the main prerequisite for the mystical experience. On the role played by the sacraments in Palamas, see George I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. L. Sherrard (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 41-60.
- ⁴⁵ DDP 4 (at 218). See the notes by Mantzaridis (‘Spiritual Life in Palamism,’ 214) on purification.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. DDP 9 (at 226), 15 (at 236).
- ⁴⁷ DDP 10 (at 228).
- ⁴⁸ Cf. DDP 1 (at 212-4).
- ⁴⁹ Cf. DDP 14 (at 236). See also DDP 18 (at 240-2). The idea of creation as ignorant with reference to God coincides with St Maximus’ observation that what denotes the difference between Creator and creation is the ignorance (*ἀγνοία*) of the latter in regards to the former; cf. *Difficulty* 41, PG 91, 1304D-1305A.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. DDP 19 (at 242); see also 16 (at 240).
- ⁵¹ Cf. DHM, PG 150, 1228A & 1233BCD. See Mantzaridis, ‘Spiritual Life in Palamism,’ 219-20.
- ⁵² Cf. DDP 11 (at 230).
- ⁵³ Cf. DDP 9 (at 226).

- ⁵⁴ Cf. DDP 19 (at 244).
- ⁵⁵ Cf. DDP 16 (at 240).
- ⁵⁶ Cf. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 305-6. Nevertheless, in light of all the above, the message of the treatise cannot be reduced to these aspects, as maintained by Russell. See also Staniloae, *Filocalia*, vol. 7, 397, n. 625.
- ⁵⁷ Cf. DDP 16 (at 238). On this capacity to see God, cf. Lossky, 'The Theology of Light,' 62.
- ⁵⁸ DDP 3 (at 214); cf. DHM, PG 150, 1229B.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. DDP 12 (at 230). See also DHM, PG 150, 1232C. On the transfigurative aspect of divine participation, see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 237.
- ⁶⁰ On the incarnational dimension, see Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 305-6; Bogdan Bucur, 'Foreordained from All Eternity: The Mystery of the Incarnation According to Some Early Christian and Byzantine Writers' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008): 208-9.
- ⁶¹ In this point, Staniloae (*Filocalia*, vol. 7, 398, n. 627) refers to ordained priesthood but not to the cosmic priesthood of the saints.
- ⁶² Cf. DDP 16 (at 240). See also in DDP 20 (at 244) an explicit reference to the tradition/succession of the saints that 'hand on' the Spirit from a generation to another. This idea echoes St Maximus' concept of tradition as espoused in *Difficulty* 41, PG 91, 1304D. On the two fathers' understandings of tradition, see the relevant fragments in my article 'The Seekers of Truth, the Egalitarian Myth and the Aristocracy of Spirit: Reconnecting Today with Mystical Tradition' *Inter* 2/1-2 (2008): 361-4.

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