

clearly shown by Peter, the leader of the apostles and foundation-stone of the Church: At the time of the holy Pentecost, when he was deemed worthy of the mysterious and divine union, he was nonetheless still able to see those who were being illumined and filled with light together with himself, and to hear what they were saying, and was aware what time of day it was ("It is the third hour," he said).

For when energy of the Holy Spirit overshadows the human mind, those in whom He is working do not become disturbed in mind, for this would be contrary to the promise of the divine presence. He who receives God does not lose his senses. On the contrary, he becomes like one driven mad, so to speak, by the Spirit of wisdom; for this light is also the wisdom of God, present in the deified man, yet not separate from God. "Through it," we read, "all knowledge is revealed, and God truly makes Himself known to the soul He loves," as He makes known at the same time all justice, holiness and liberty.

As St. Paul says, "Where there is the Spirit of God, there is liberty." And again, "He whom God has made wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption for us." Hear what St. Basil the Great teaches: "He who has been set in motion by the Spirit has become an eternal movement, a holy creature. For when the Spirit has come to dwell in him, a man receives the dignity of a prophet, of an apostle, of an angel of God, whereas hitherto he was only earth and dust." Hear also John Chrysostom: "The mouth by which God speaks is the mouth of God – for just as our mouth is the mouth of our soul, and the soul does not literally possess a mouth; so likewise the mouth of the prophets is the mouth of God." The Lord too set His seal on this truth, for after saying, "I will give you a mouth, and a wisdom which none of your enemies will be able to gainsay," He added, "For it is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

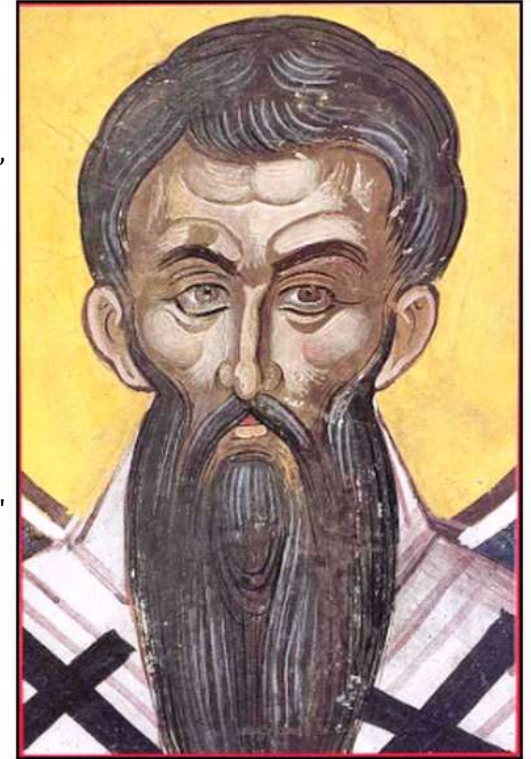
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## The Uncreated Glory

by St. Gregory Palamas

Such a divine and heavenly life belongs to those who live in a manner agreeable to God, participating in the inseparable life of the Spirit, such as Paul himself lived, "the divine and eternal life of Him Who indwelt him," as St. Maximus puts it. Such a life always exists, subsisting in the very nature of the Spirit, Who by nature deifies from all eternity. It is properly called "Spirit" and "divinity" by the saints, in-so-much as the deifying gift is never separate from the Spirit Who gives it. It is a light bestowed in a mysterious illumination, and recognized only by those worthy to receive it.



It is "enhypostatic," not because it possesses a hypostasis of its own, but because the Spirit "sends it out into the hypostasis of another," in which it is indeed contemplated. It is then properly called "enhypostatic," in that it is not contemplated by itself, nor in essence, but in hypostasis. ... But the Holy Spirit transcends the deifying life which is in Him and proceeds from Him, for it is its own natural energy, which is akin to Him, even if not exactly so. For it is said, "We

do not see any deification nor any life exactly similar to the Cause which goes beyond all things in its sublime transcendence." ... But the Spirit does not only transcend it as Cause, but also in the measure to which what is received is only a part of what is given, for he who receives the divine energy cannot contain it entirely. Thus there are diverse ways in which God transcends such a light, such an uncreated illumination and such a life which is similar to them.

The inspired Symeon Metaphrastes has composed, on the basis on the first book of Macarius the Great, treatises divided into chapters on the subject of this light and glory, giving a detailed, harmonious and clear interpretation. There can be no better way of contributing to the subject under discussion than to present here some of these chapters in an abridged version.

In chapter 62, he says: "The blessed Moses, by virtue of the glory of the Spirit which shone on his face, and which no man could bear to gaze upon, showed by this sign how the bodies of the saints would be glorified after the resurrection of the righteous. This same glory the faithful souls of the saints will be judged worthy of receiving even now in the inner man, for we contemplate the glory of the Lord with unveiled face"; that is, in the inner man, "transfigured from glory to glory according to the same image."

And in chapter 63 he adds: "The glory which even now enriches the souls of the saints will cover and clothe their naked bodies after the resurrection, and will elevate them to the heavens, clad in the glory of their good deeds and of the Spirit; that glory which the souls of the saints have received now in part, as I have said. Thus, glorified by the divine light, the saints will be always with the Lord."

According to the great Dionysius, that was the same light which illumined the chosen apostles on the Mountain: "When we become incorruptible and immortal," he says, "and attain to the blessed state of conformity with Christ, we will be ever with the Lord (as Scripture says), gaining fulfillment in the purest contemplations of His visible theophany which will illuminate us with its most brilliant rays, just as it illuminated the disciples at the time of the most divine Transfiguration."

This is the light of God, as John has said in his Apocalypse, and such is the opinion of all the saints. As Gregory the Theologian remarked, "In my view, he will come as he appeared or was manifested to the disciples on the Mountain, the divine triumphing over the corporeal."

And if the true light which "shines in darkness" comes down to us, we will also be light, as the Lord told His disciples.

Thus the deifying gift of the Spirit is a mysterious light, and transforms into light those who receive its richness; He does not only fill them with eternal light, but grants them a knowledge and a life appropriate to God. Thus, as Maximus teaches, Paul lived no longer a created life, but "the eternal life of Him Who indwelt him." Similarly, the prophets contemplated the future as if it were the present.

So the man who has seen God by means not of an alien symbol but by a natural symbol, has truly seen Him in a spiritual way. I do not consider as a natural symbol of God what is only an ordinary symbol, visible or audible by the senses as such, and activated through the medium of the air. When, however, the seeing eye does not see as an ordinary eye, but as an eye opened by the power of the Spirit, it does not see God by the means of an alien symbol; and it is then we can speak of sense-perception transcending the senses.

One recognizes this light when the soul ceases to give way to the evil pleasures and passions, when it acquires inner peace and the stilling of thoughts, spiritual repose and joy, contempt of human glory, humility allied with a hidden rejoicing, hatred of the world, love of heavenly things, or rather the love of the sole God of Heaven. Moreover, if one covers the eyes of him who sees, even if one gouges them out, he will still see the light no less clearly than before. How then could he be persuaded by someone who claims that this light is visible through the medium of air, and that it is in no way useful to the rational soul, as something belonging to the bodily senses?

But that contemplative, realizing full well that he does not see by the senses qua senses, may think he sees by the mind. However, a careful examination will cause him to discover that the mind does not apprehend this light by virtue of its own power. Hence our expression, "mind surpassing mind," meaning thereby that a man possessing mind and sense perception sees in a way transcending both of these faculties.

And when you hear the great Dionysius advising Timothy to "abandon the senses and intellectual activities," do not conclude from this that a man is neither to reason nor see. For he does not lose these faculties, except by amazement. But you should hold that intellectual activities are entirely bypassed by the light of union and by the action of this light. This is

essence, yet not the totality of this energy, even though it is indivisible in itself. Indeed, what created thing could receive the entire, infinitely potent power of the Spirit, except He who was carried in the womb of a Virgin, by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the power of the Most High? He received "all the fullness of the Divinity."

As for us, "it is of His fullness that we have all received." The essence of God is everywhere, for, as it is said, "the Spirit fills all things," according to essence. Deification is likewise everywhere, ineffably present in the essence and inseparable from it, as its natural power. But just as one cannot see fire, if there is no matter to receive it, nor any sense organ capable of perceiving its luminous energy, in the same way one cannot contemplate deification if there is no matter to receive the divine manifestation. But if with every veil removed it lays hold of appropriate matter, that is of any purified rational nature, freed from the veil of manifold evil, then it becomes itself visible as a spiritual light, or rather it transforms these creatures into spiritual light. "The prize of virtue," it is said, "is to become God, to be illumined by the purest of lights, by becoming a son of that day which no darkness can dim. For it is another Sun which produces this day, a Sun which shines forth the true light. And once it has illumined us, it no longer hides itself in the West, but envelops all things with its powerful light. It grants an eternal and endless light to those worthy, and transforms those who participate in this light into other suns." Then, indeed, "the just will shine like the sun." What sun? Surely that same one which appears even now to those worthy as it did then.

Do you not see that they will acquire the same energy as the Sun of Righteousness? This is why various divine signs and the communication of the Holy Spirit are effected through them. Indeed, it is written: "Just as the air around the earth, driven upwards by the wind, becomes luminous because it is transformed by the purity of the aether, so it is with the human mind which quits this impure and grimy world: it becomes luminous by the power of the Spirit, and mingles with the true and sublime purity; it shines itself in this purity, becoming entirely radiant, transformed into light according to the promise of the Lord, who foretold that the just would shine like the sun."

We can observe the same phenomenon here below with a mirror or a sheet of water: Receiving the sun's ray, they produce another ray from themselves. And we too will become luminous if we lift ourselves up, abandoning earthly shadows, by drawing near to the true light of Christ.

"But," Barlaam says, "this light was a sensible light, visible through the medium of the air, appearing to the amazement of all and then at once disappearing. One calls it 'divinity' because it is a symbol of divinity." What a novel opinion! How can one speak of a sensible and created divinity which lasts only a day, appearing only to disappear on the same day, rather like those creatures one calls ephemeral? In fact, it lasts even less long than they do, since it occurs and disappears in a single hour; it would be better to say it once appeared but never existed. Can this be the divinity which (without ever being the true divinity) triumphed over that venerable flesh akin to God? One should not say it triumphed for one minute, but does so continually, for Gregory did not say "having triumphed," but "triumphing," that is, not only in the present but also in the Age to Come.

What do you say to this? Is it to such a divinity that the Lord will be united, and in which He will triumph for endless ages? And will God be all in all for us, as the apostles and Fathers proclaim, when in the case of Christ, divinity will be replaced by a sensible light? According to the same patristic testimony, "We will need neither air nor space nor any such thing" in order to see Him; how then will we see Him by the medium of the air?

Why in the Age to Come should we have more symbols of this kind, more mirrors, more enigmas? Will the vision face-to-face remain still in the realm of hope? For indeed if even in heaven there are still to be symbols, mirrors, enigmas, then we have been deceived in our hopes, deluded by sophistry; thinking that the promise will make us acquire the true divinity, we do not even gain a vision of divinity. A sensible light replaces this, whose nature is entirely foreign to God! How can this light be a symbol, and if it is, how can it be called divinity? For the drawing of a man is not humanity, nor is the symbol of an angel the nature of an angel.

What saint has ever said that this light was a created symbol? Gregory the Theologian says, "It was as light that the divinity was manifested to the disciples on the Mountain." So, if the light was not really the true divinity, but its created symbol, one would have to say, not that the divinity manifested was light, but that light caused the divinity to appear.... Similarly, Chrysostom states that the Lord showed himself in greater splendor when the divinity manifested its rays. Note here the article: He says not "divinity" simply, but "the divinity," the true Godhead. And how could it be a question of "rays of the divinity" if the light was only a

symbol of divinity, formed from another nature?

Again, Basil the Great, after showing that the God Who is adored in three Persons is a unique light, speaks of the "God who dwells in light unapproachable," for the unapproachable is in every way true, and the true unapproachable. This is why the apostles fell to the ground, unable to rest their gaze on the glory of the light of the Son, because it was a "light unapproachable." The Spirit, too, is light, as we read: "He who has shone in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

If then the unapproachable is true and this light was unapproachable, the light was not a simulacrum of divinity, but truly the light of the true divinity, not only the divinity of the Son, but that of the Father and the Spirit too. This is why we sing together to the Lord when we celebrate the annual Feast of the Transfiguration: "In Your light which appeared today on Tabor, we have seen the Father as light and also the Spirit as light," for "You have unveiled an indistinct ray of Your divinity.." So, when all the saints agree in calling this light true divinity, how do you dare to consider it alien to the divinity, calling it "a created reality," and "a symbol of divinity," and claiming that it is inferior to our intellection?

Maximus, who is accustomed to reason by symbols, analogies and allegories, does not (as you know) always use the inferior as symbol of the superior, but sometimes the opposite: Thus he can say that the body of the Lord hanging on the Cross has become the symbol of our body nailed to the passions. Similarly, Maximus, speaking allegorically, claimed that this light was a symbol of the cataphatic and apophatic theologies; he spoke of a superior reality as the symbol of inferior ones, a reality which contains in itself the knowledge of theology, and is its source.

Did he not also say that Moses is the symbol of providence and Elijah of judgment? Are we for that reason to assume these prophets never really existed, but all was fantasy and imagination? Who else but Barlaam would have dared to say so, or claim that this light was a nature alien to the divinity, a simulacrum of divinity? This is why the choir of inspired theologians have almost all been chary of calling the grace of this light simply a symbol, so that people should not be led astray by the ambiguity of this term to conclude that this most divine light is a created reality, alien to the divinity. Nevertheless, the phrase "symbol of divinity," wisely and properly understood, cannot be considered absolutely opposed to the truth.

But let us then suppose it is a symbol of divinity, as you believe. Even so,

Lord called "the spirit of your Father," and also the sanctifying bestowal of the Spirit which those sanctified with these gifts receive from and through them. Thus God said to Moses, "I shall take the spirit which is on you and put it on them"; similarly, "when Paul laid his hands" on the twelve Ephesians, "the Holy Spirit came upon them," and at once "they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

Thus when we consider the proper dignity of the Spirit, we see it to be equal to that of the Father and the Son; but when we think of the grace that works in those who partake of the Spirit, we say that the Spirit is in us, "that it is poured out on us, but is not created, that it is given to us but is not made, it is granted but not produced." In the words of the great Basil, it is present in those still imperfect as a certain disposition, "because of the instability of their moral choice," itself in the things created by it, becoming thereby universally visible and at the same time reflected in them. On the contrary, deification manifests itself in these creatures "as art in the man who has acquired it," according to Basil the Great.

This is why the saints are the instruments of the Holy Spirit, having received the same energy as He has. As certain proof of what I say, one might cite the charisms of healing, the working of miracles, foreknowledge, the irrefutable wisdom which the Lord called "the spirit of your Father," and also the sanctifying bestowal of the Spirit which those sanctified with these gifts receive from and through them. Thus God said to Moses, "I shall take the spirit which is on you and put it on them"; similarly, "when Paul laid his hands" on the twelve Ephesians, "the Holy Spirit came upon them," and at once "they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

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The deifying gift of the Spirit thus cannot be equated with the superessential essence of God. It is the deifying energy of this divine

had the experience, he obtains a certain image of the truth. But if he tries to conceive of it by himself, he finds himself deprived even of the image of truth. He then puffs himself up with pride as if he had discovered it, and breathes forth his anger against the men of experience as if they were in error. Do not be overcurious, therefore, but follow the men of experience in your works, or at least in your words, remaining content with the exterior manifestations of grace.

Deification is in fact beyond every name. This is why we, who have written much about hesychia (sometimes at the urging of the fathers, sometimes in response to the questions of the brothers) have never dared hitherto to write about deification. But now, since there is a necessity to speak, we will speak words of piety (by the grace of the Lord), but words inadequate to describe it. For even when spoken about, deification remains ineffable, and (as the Fathers teach us) can be given a name only by those who have received it.

The Principle of deification, divinity by nature, the imparticipable Origin whence the deified derive their deification, Beatitude itself, transcendent over all things and supremely thearchic, is itself inaccessible to all sense perception and to every mind, to every incorporeal or corporeal being. It is only when one or another of these beings goes out from itself and acquires a superior state that it is deified. For it is only when hypostatically united to a mind or body that we believe the divinity to have become visible, even though such union transcends the proper nature of mind and body. Only those beings united to It are deified "by the total presence of the Anointer"; they have received an energy identical to that of the deifying essence, and possessing it in absolute entirety, reveal it through themselves. For, as the Apostle says, "In Christ the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily."

This is why certain saints after the Incarnation have seen this light as a limitless sea, flowing forth in a paradoxical manner from the unique Sun, that is, from the adorable Body of Christ, as in the case of the apostles on the Mountain. It is thus that the firstfruits of our human constitution are deified. But the deification of divinized angels and men is not the superessential essence of God, but the energy of this essence. This energy does not manifest itself in deified creatures, as art does in the work of art; for it is thus that the creative power manifests This is why the saints are the instruments of the Holy Spirit, having received the same energy as He has. As certain proof of what I say, one might cite the charisms of healing, the working of miracles, foreknowledge, the irrefutable wisdom which the

you will not utterly convince us of error nor deprive us of our blessed hope. For every symbol either derives from the nature of the object of which it is a symbol, or belongs to an entirely different nature. Thus, when the sun is about to rise, the dawn is a natural symbol of its light, and similarly heat is a natural symbol of the burning power of fire.

As to signs which are not connatural in this way, and which have their own independent existence, they are sometimes considered symbols: Thus, a burning torch might be taken as a symbol of attacking enemies. If they do not possess their own natural existence, they can serve as a kind of phantom to foretell the future, and then the symbol consists only in that. Such were the perceptible signs shown by the prophets in simple figures, for example, the scythe of Zachariah, the axes of Ezekiel, and other signs of this sort.

So a natural symbol always accompanies the nature which gives them being, for the symbol is natural to that nature; as for the symbol which derives from another nature, having its own existence, it is quite impossible for it constantly to be associated with the object it symbolizes, for nothing prevents it from existing before and after this object, like any reality having its own existence. Finally, the symbol lacking an independent existence exists neither before nor after its object, for that is impossible; as soon as it has appeared, it at once is dissolved into nonbeing and disappears completely.

Thus if the light of Tabor is a symbol, it is either a natural or a nonnatural one. If the latter, then it either has its own existence or is just a phantom without subsistence. But if it is merely an insubstantial phantom, then Christ never really was, is or will be such as He appeared on Tabor. Yet Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory the Theologian and all the others who await His coming from heaven with glory, affirm clearly that Christ will be for all eternity as He then appeared, as we showed above. This light, then, is not just a phantom without subsistence.

Indeed, not only will Christ be eternally thus in the future, but He was such even before He ascended the Mountain. Hear John Damascene, who is wise in divine things: "Christ is transfigured, not by putting on some quality He did not possess previously, nor by changing into something He never was before, but by revealing to His disciples what He truly was, in opening their eyes and in giving sight to those who were blind. For while remaining identical to what He had been before, He appeared to the disciples in His splendor; He is indeed the true light, the radiance of

glory."

Basil the Great testifies to the same truth: "His divine power appeared as it were as a light through a screen of glass, that is to say, through the flesh of the Lord which He had assumed from us; the power which enlightens those who have purified the eyes of the heart." And do not the annual hymns of the Church affirm that, even before the Transfiguration, He had previously been such as He then appeared? "What appeared today was hidden by the flesh, and the original beauty, more than resplendent, has been unveiled today."

Moreover, the transformation of our human nature, its deification and transfiguration— were these not accomplished in Christ from the start, from the moment in which He assumed our nature? Thus He was divine before, but He bestowed at the time of His Transfiguration a divine power upon the eyes of the apostles and enabled them to look up and see for themselves. This light, then, was not a hallucination but will remain for eternity, and has existed from the beginning.

But if Christ was such and will remain such for eternity, He is also still the same today. It would indeed be absurd to believe that such was His nature up to the most divine vision on Tabor, and that it will always be such in the Age to Come, but that it has become different in the intervening period, setting aside this glory. Today also He is seated in the same splendor, "at the right hand of the Majesty on high." All then must follow and obey Him Who says, "Come, let us ascend the holy and heavenly mountain, let us contemplate the immaterial divinity of the Father and the Spirit, which shines forth in the only Son." And if one refuses to be convinced by a single saint, one may be obedient to two, or rather all. So the blessed Andrew, who was as a shining and holy lamp in Crete, thus hymns the light which shone on Tabor: "The intelligible world of angels, in celebrating this light in an immaterial manner, gives us a proof of the love which the Word bears towards us."

The great Dionysius says almost the same thing when celebrating the sublime order of supercosmic powers: They do not only contemplate and participate in the glory of the Trinity, he declares, but also in the glorification of Jesus. Having been made worthy of this contemplation, they are also initiated into it, for He Himself is deifying light: "They truly draw near to it, and gain first participation in the knowledge of His theurgic light." Macarius similarly states..., "Our mixed human nature, which was assumed by the Lord, has taken its seat on the right hand of the

actualized by faith, is enhypostatic. Nonetheless, our opponent affirms that the imitation of God, which he alone considers to be the thearchy and the deifying gift, is not enhypostatic. It is therefore something different from the deification which the Fathers possessed and knew. Yet the divine Maximus has not only taught that it is enhypostatic, but also that it is unoriginate (not only uncreated), indescribable and supratemporal. Those who attain it become thereby uncreated, unoriginate and indescribable, although in their own nature, they derive from nothingness. But this man, intruding upon things of which he is ignorant, claims that deification is created and natural, subject to time; and because he conceives of it according to his own measure, reduces God (together with it) to the level of a creature.

According to the Fathers, deification is an essential energy of God; but any essence of which the essential energies are created must itself necessarily be created! ... Barlaam indeed does not blush to claim that all the powers and natural energies of God are created, even though our faith teaches us that every saint is a temple of God by reason of the grace that indwells him. How could the dwelling place of a creature be a temple of God? How could every saint become uncreated by grace, if this grace is created?

What is most astonishing to me is that he admits that the light which shone forth on Tabor is called "theurgic" light by the Fathers, but refuses to call it a deifying gift. Since the deifying gift of the Spirit is an energy of God, and since the divine names derive from the energies (for the Superessential is nameless), God could not be called "God," if deification consists only in virtue and wisdom! But He is called "God" on the basis of His deifying energy, while wisdom and virtue only manifest this energy. He could no longer be called "More-than-God" by reason of His transcendence in respect of this divinity; it would have to suffice to call Him "more-than-wise," "more-than-good," and so forth. So the grace and energy of deification are different from virtue and wisdom.

... When you hear speak of the deifying energy of God and the theurgic grace of the Spirit, do not busy yourself or seek to know why it is this or that and not something else; for without it you cannot be united to God, according to those Fathers who have spoken about it. Attend rather to those works which will allow you to attain to it, for thus you will know it according to your capacities; for, as St. Basil tells us, he alone knows the energies of the Spirit who has learned of them through experience. As for the man who seeks knowledge before works, if he trusts in those who have

participable.

He who says "the deifying gift is a state of perfection of the rational nature, which has existed since the first disposition of the world and finds its fulfillment in the most elevated of the rational beings," manifestly opposes himself to Christ's Gospel. If deification does no more than perfect the rational nature, without elevating those made in the form of God beyond that condition; if it is only a state of the rational nature, since it is only activated by a natural power, the deified saints do not transcend nature, they are not "born of God," are not "spirit because born of the Spirit," and Christ, by coming into the world, has not "given the power to become children of God" to those alone "who believe in His name."

Deification would have belonged to all nations even before He came if it naturally pertains to the rational soul, just as today it would belong to everyone irrespective of faith or piety. For if deification were only the perfection of the rational nature, then the pagan Greeks were not entirely rational, neither are the fallen angels; one cannot charge them with misusing their knowledge, yet they have been deprived of the natural state appropriate to such knowledge. Of what, then, were they really guilty? Even the pagan wise men admit that an essence cannot be more or less essential. How then could an angel or soul be more or less rational?

For imperfection in the case of those not yet mature in years resides not in the nature of the soul, but in that of the body. Is deification then to be identified with the age which brings rational thought? For our part, we consider the fact that some men know more than others belongs not to the nature of the soul, but to the constitution of the body. Is deification then this constitution in its natural state of perfection?

But we know that natural perfection is itself a gift of God, even though knowledge is not only a gift of God, but a state of perfection of the rational nature. However, this state, since it is not supernatural, is not a deifying gift, because the deifying gift is supernatural. Otherwise all men and angels without exception would be more or less gods, and the race of demons would be imperfect gods or demigods.... Thus, whatever the state in which the rational nature attains perfection, whether it is a knowledge, a constitution, a natural perfection of body and soul, whether it comes from within them or from outside a man, it can truly make perfect those rational beings who possess it, but it cannot make them gods.

But, as we have shown above, the saints clearly state that this adoption,

divine majesty in the heavens, being full of glory not only (like Moses) in the face, but in the whole body."

Therefore Christ possesses this light immutably, or rather, He has always possessed it, and always will have it with Him. But if it always was, is and will be, then the light which glorified the Lord on the Mountain was not a hallucination, nor simply a symbol without subsistence.

And if someone says that this light is an independent reality, separate from the nature of Him Whom it signifies, of Whom it is only a symbol – then let him show where and of what kind this reality is, which is shown by experience to be unapproachable, and not only to the eyes ("The disciples fell head-first to the ground," we are told), and which shone forth only from the venerated face and body of Christ. For otherwise, if it were an independent reality, eternally associated with Christ in the Age to Come, He would be composed of three natures and three essences: the human, the divine and that of this light. So it is obvious and clearly demonstrated that this light is neither an independent reality, nor something alien to the divinity.

Having reached this point in our treatise, we must now explain why the saints call this deifying grace and divine light "enhypostatic." Clearly, this term is not used to affirm that it possesses its own hypostasis. ... By contrast, one calls "anhypostatic" not only nonbeing or hallucination, but also everything which quickly disintegrates and runs away, which disappears and straightway ceases to be, such as, for example, thunder and lightning, and our own words and thoughts. The Fathers have done well, then, to call this light enhypostatic, in order to show its permanence and stability, because it remains in being, and does not elude the gaze, as does lightning, or words, or thoughts....

If then this light, which shone from the Saviour on the Mountain, is a natural symbol, it is not so in respect of both the natures in Him, for the natural characteristics of each nature are different. This light cannot pertain to His human nature, for our nature is not light, let alone a light such as this. The Saviour did not ascend Tabor, accompanied by the chosen disciples, in order to show them that He was a man. For during the three years previous to this, they had seen Him living with them and taking part in their way of life; as Scripture puts it, "in company" with them.

No, He went up to show them "that he was the radiance of the Father." In view of this, no one could say the light was a symbol of his humanity. If

then it was a natural symbol ... this light naturally symbolises the divinity of the Only Begotten, as John of Damascus has clearly taught: "The Son eternally begotten of the Father possesses the natural and eternal ray of divinity; yet the glory of the divinity has become also the glory of the body."

This glory did not appear or begin, it has no end, for natural symbols are always coexistent with the natures of which they are symbols.... As Maximus says, "All the realities which are by essence contemplated around God have neither beginning nor end." But since as he says, these realities ... are numerous yet in no way diminish the notion of simplicity, no more will this luminous symbol (which is one of them) cause any detriment to the simple nature of God.

Many other sources, in particular the liturgical hymns, confirm that this light is one of the realities contemplated around God. Let -78- this example suffice: "On the holy Mountain, O Christ, You showed the splendor of Your divine and essential beauty, hidden under the flesh, and enlightened, O Benefactor, the disciples who accompanied You." Also, the remark of Maximus, that "on account of His love of men, He became His own symbol," shows that this light is a natural symbol.

In the realm of nonnatural symbols, an object can be the symbol of another, but not its own symbol. But when the symbol naturally takes its being from the object of which it is the symbol, we say it is its own symbol. The capacity of fire to burn, which has as its symbol the heat accessible to the senses, becomes its own symbol, for it is always accompanied by this heat, yet remains a single entity, not undergoing any duplication; but it always uses heat as its natural symbol, whenever an object capable of receiving heat presents itself.

In the same way, the light of the rising sun has as symbol the glow of the dawn, which becomes its own proper symbol. We all know the sun's light as something accessible to sight, which also enables us to behold the dawn, even though no one can look directly at the solar disc, and it is almost impossible to gaze upon its brilliance.

Similarly, through the sense of touch, a man perceives the warmth of fire, even though touch cannot have the least knowledge of the burning power of which the heat is symbol (although it is well aware that this is the case). It knows neither its quality, nor its intensity, and would in fact perish (becoming itself all fire, and ceasing to be the perceiving subject), if it

enigmas."

But when you hear of the vision of God face-to-face, recall the testimony of Maximus: "Deification is an enhypostatic and direct illumination which has no beginning, but appears in those worthy as something exceeding their comprehension. It is indeed a mystical union with God, beyond intellect and reason, in the age when creatures will no longer know corruption. Thanks to this union, the saints, observing the light of the hidden and more-than-ineffable glory, become themselves able to receive the blessed purity, in company with the celestial powers. Deification is also the invocation of the great God and Father, the symbol of the authentic and real adoption, according to the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to the bestowal of which grace the saints become and will remain the sons of God."

The great Dionysius, who elsewhere terms this light a "superluminous and theurgic ray," also calls it "deifying gift and principle of the Divinity," that is to say, of deification. To one who asks how God can transcend the thearchy (that is to say, the very principle of the divinity), he replies: You have heard that God permits Himself to be seen face-to-face, not in enigmas, that He becomes attached to those worthy as is a soul to its body, to its own members; that He unites Himself to them to the extent of dwelling completely in them, so that they too dwell entirely in Him; that "through the Son, the Spirit is poured out in abundance on us," not as something created, and that we participate in Him, and He speaks through us—all this you know.

But you should not consider that God allows Himself to be seen in His superessential essence, but according to His deifying gift and energy, the grace of adoption, the uncreated deification, the enhypostatic illumination. You should think that that is the principle of the divinity, the deifying gift, in which one may supernaturally communicate, which one may see and with which one may be united. But the essence of God, which is beyond principle, transcends this principle, too.

This grace is in fact a relationship, albeit not a natural one; yet it is at the same time beyond relationship, not only by virtue of being supernatural, but also qua relationship. For how would a relationship have a relationship? But as to the essence of God, that is unrelated, not qua relationship, but because it transcends the supernatural relationships themselves. Grace is communicated to all worthy of it, in a way proper and peculiar to each one, while the divine essence transcends all that is



to the laws of nature.

The grace of deification thus transcends nature, virtue and knowledge, and (as St. Maximus says) "all these things are inferior to it." Every virtue and imitation of God on our part indeed prepares those who practice them for divine union, but the mysterious union itself is effected by grace. It is through grace that "the entire Divinity comes to dwell in fullness in those deemed worthy," and all the saints in their entire being dwell in God, receiving God in His wholeness, and gaining no other reward for their ascent to Him than God Himself. "He is conjoined to them as a soul is to its body, to its own limbs"; judging it right to dwell in believers by the authentic adoption, according to the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit. So, when you hear that God dwells in us through the virtues, or that by means of the memory He comes to be established in us, do not imagine that deification is simply the possession of the virtues; but rather that it resides in the radiance and grace of God, which really comes to us through the virtues. As St. Basil the Great says, "A soul which has curbed its natural impulses by a personal asceticism and the help of the Holy Spirit, becomes worthy (according to the just judgment of God) of the splendor granted to the saints."

The splendor granted by the grace of God is light, as you may learn from this text: "The splendor for those who have been purified is light, for the just will shine like the sun; God will stand in the midst of them, distributing and determining the dignities of blessedness, for they are gods and kings." No one will deny that this relates to supracosmic and supracelestial realities, for "it is possible to receive the supracelestial light among the promises of good things." Solomon declares, "Light shines always for the just," and the Apostle Paul says, "We give thanks to God who has counted us worthy to participate in the heritage of the saints in light."

We said earlier that wisdom comes to man through effort and study; not that it is only effort and study, but that it is the result of these. The Lord dwells in men in different and varied ways according to the worthiness and way of life of those who seek Him. He appears in one way to an active man, in another to a contemplative, in another again to the man of vision, and in yet different ways to the zealous or to those already divinized. There are numerous differences in the divine vision itself: Among the prophets, some have seen God in a dream, others when awake by means of enigmas and mirrors; but to Moses He appeared "face-to-face, and not in

tried itself to learn by experience what is the nature of the power of fire which gives rise to the heat. This is why, if it should ever venture to attempt this, it would at once shrink back and run away, bitterly regretting its curiosity. So we see that heat is accessible to the touch, but its burning power remains entirely beyond participation.

If such is the case, how could one say that the divinity, transcendent in mysteries, becomes knowable the moment its natural symbol is known? What, then? If the dawn, symbol of the light of day, were to remain unapproachable to human eyes, as does the sun (or even more inaccessible than that), how could our eyes see the day and behold other objects in the light of day? How could they know of what kind is the light of the sun which is analogous to that of the day? Even more are divine things recognised by participation only, since no one (not even the sublime supracosmic intelligences) knows what they are in their ground of being and principle of existence; for our own part, we are certainly far from knowing these things.

However, the disciples would not even have seen the symbol, had they not first received eyes they did not possess before. As John of Damascus puts it, "From being blind men, they began to see," and to contemplate this uncreated light. The light, then, became accessible to their eyes, but to eyes which saw in a way superior to that of natural sight, and had acquired the spiritual power of the spiritual light. This mysterious light, inaccessible, immaterial, uncreated, deifying, eternal, this radiance of the Divine Nature, this glory of the divinity, this beauty of the heavenly kingdom, is at once accessible to sense perception and yet transcends it. Does such a reality really seem to you to be a symbol alien to divinity, sensible, created and "visible through the medium of air"?

Listen again to Damascene's assertion that the light is not alien but natural to the divinity. "The splendor of divine grace is not something external, as in the case of the splendor possessed by Moses, but belongs to the very nature of the divine glory and splendor." And again: "In the age to come, we will be always with the Lord, and contemplate Christ resplendent in the light of the Godhead, a light victorious over every nature." And again: "He takes with Him the leaders of the apostles as witnesses of His own glory and divinity, and reveals to them His own divinity," which transcends all things, unique, utterly perfect and anticipating the End.

That this light is not visible through the mediation of air is shown by the great Dionysius, and those who with him call it the "light of the age to

come," an age in which we will no longer need air. Basil the Great similarly states that it is visible to the eyes of the heart. The fact that it is not visible through the medium of air shows us it is not a sensible light. Indeed, when it was shining on Tabor more brilliantly than the sun, the people of the area did not even see it! ...

Do you still insist that the light of the divine and essential beauty is not only sensible and created, but also inferior to our intellection? Heavens above! Are those also inferior to our intellection who see in themselves the light of the divine kingdom, the beauty of the Age to Come, the glory of the Divine Nature? This same light was seen by the apostles, after they had transcended every sensible and intellectual perception, and had received (in the words of Andrew of Crete) "the faculty of truly seeing by virtue of seeing nothing, and had acquired the sense of the supernatural by experiencing divine things." Since in such a case, an ecstasy inferior to intellection is demonic, is it then a demonic ecstasy which those initiated by the Lord have experienced? How unthinkable! On the contrary, we have learn to sing together to Christ: "The chosen apostles were transformed by the divine ecstasy on the Mountain, contemplating the irresistible outpouring of Your light and Your unapproachable Divinity."

You might as well claim that God is a creature, as declare that His essential energies are created! For no intelligent man would say that the essential goodness and life are the superessential essence of God. The essential characteristic is not the essence which possesses the essential characteristics. As the great Dionysius says, "When we call the superessential Mystery 'God' or 'life' or 'essence', we have in mind only the providential powers produced from the imparticipable God." These, then, are the essential powers; as to the Superessential... that is the Reality which possesses these powers and gathers them into unity in itself. Similarly, the deifying light is also essential, but is not itself the essence of God.

Our philosopher is not content to stop here, but goes on to claim that every power and energy of God is created. But the saints clearly teach that all the natural characteristics, all the power and energy of the uncreated nature are themselves uncreated, just as those of a created nature are created.

"But how can it be," asks Barlaam, "that a Reality that transcends the senses and mind, which is Being par excellence, eternal, immaterial, unchangeable—what you call 'enhypostatic' is not the Superessential essence of God, since it bears the characteristics of the Master, and

transcends every visible and invisible creature? Why do you say the essence of God transcends this light?" ...He alleges that the description that fits us best is "ditheist," even though he admits... that we hold that there is only one Reality that transcends all things, and that this is the Superessential; and so, according to him, we teach that there is only one God, and that this light is not an essence, but an energy of the divine essence, concerning which essence we state that it is unique and transcends all as working in all.

But even if we affirm that this energy is inseparable from the unique divine essence, the Superessential is not for that reason composite; without doubt, no simple essence would exist if it were so, for one would search in vain for a natural essence without energy. How is it possible for the deifying light not to bear the Master's characteristics?

... And since the saints speak here of an enhypostatic Reality, but not of an hypostasis existing on its own, how could the light be an independent essence or a second God, since it does not possess an independent existence? And if you are led to posit another God, on the pretext that this energy is unoriginate, uncreated and not intelligible, then you must also hold that the will of God constitutes a second God. As Maximus says, "The divine nature in three hypostases is entirely unoriginate, uncreated, not intelligible, simple and without composition, and so similarly is its will." And the same could be said of all the natural energies belonging to the divinity.

You claim that the grace of deification is a natural state, that is, the activity and manifestation of a natural power. Without realizing it, you are falling into the error of the Messalians, for the deified man would necessarily be God by nature, if deification depended on our natural powers, and was included among the laws of nature! ... But know that the grace of deification transcends every natural relationship, and there does not exist in nature "any faculty capable of receiving it."

For if it were no longer a grace, but a manifestation of the energy which appertains to natural power, there would be nothing absurd in holding that deification occurred according to the measure of the receptive power of nature. Deification would then be a work of nature, not a gift of God, and the deified man would be god by nature and receive the name of "God" in the proper sense. For the natural power of each thing is simply the continuous activation of nature. But in that case, I cannot understand why deification should cause a man to go out from himself, if it is itself subject