

DECLARATION OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

ON THOSE WHO PRACTICE THE HOLY LIFE OF STILLNESS, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO THROUGH THEIR OWN INEXPERIENCE, AND BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT FAITHFUL TO THE SAINTS, REJECT THE MYSTIC ENERGETIC ACTUALITY OF THE SPIRIT. OR BETTER: A DISCOURSE ON THOSE WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT THE OPERATION OF THOSE ENERGETIC ACTUALITIES WHICH MANIFEST IN WORKS, BUT WHICH ARE NOT EMBODIED IN WORDS.

The doctrine justly taught everywhere, universally known by all, openly preached, is the mystery of the Law of Moses, which in advance, through the Spirit, was only seen by the prophets. But the great things of the age to come, the great things promised to the saints who were rendered worthy to see through the Spirit, these are the mysteries of the life lived according to the Gospel, the mysteries which were given to the prophets in measure, partially, as tokens, for them to contemplate in advance. Now, as in other days a Jew, if he heard the prophets, without the gift of grace, say that the Word and the Spirit of God were both eternal and before the ages, he would cover his ears, believing he was hearing a voice forbidden by piety and contrary, to what the religious confess unanimously, that is to say the voice which says: 'The Lord your God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6 : 4); and just so today it happens that one does not listen with piety to the mysteries of the Spirit, know to those alone who are purified by exercise of virtue. But just as the accomplishment of those prophecies showed that the ancient prophecies do conform to the visible reality, and as we believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Divinity in three Persons, unique and simple nature, not composite, uncreated, invisible, incomprehensible, just so, when the age to come is revealed in its time, in the unspeakable manifestation of the unique God in three perfect Persons, the mysteries will be manifested in full alongside everything that is visible.

But it is, equally, necessary to consider that, if the three Persons of the Trinity were in later times manifested without any damage to the confines of the earth through the word of the divine monarchy, that even before the fulfilment of these things the three Persons were precisely known by the prophets, and were received by those who then heard them; so, today, in the same manner, we must not ignore the words confessed and preached openly and mystically manifesting things in advance to those who are found worthy in the Spirit. Some have been initiated by this experience – those who for the evangelic life have not only renounced the possession of money, the glory of men and the evil pleasures of the body, but they confirmed that renunciation by submitting to those

arrived in the wake of Christ - , for, after being consecrated to God beyond any doubt, in the life of stillness, having exceeded themselves and arrived in God through the pure prayer by uniting with Him in the mystic union which exceeds the intellect, they were initiated to what is higher than the intellect. Others have been initiated through respect, confidence, and affection which they bear toward men of this type.

It is the same for us, now, who hear the great Dionysios say in the second epistle to Gaius: 'We are persuaded that the deifying gift of God, the divinity, the divine origin, the good origin, the God who dispenses that grace to those who are worthy, is above that divinity.'¹ For God does not multiply himself, and thus one cannot say that there are two divinities. The divine Maximos, writing on Melchizedek, declares that this deifying grace of God is uncreated, that it is so eternally, and that it comes from the eternal God.² Elsewhere, in many places, he affirms that it is a personal and begotten light, which manifests itself to those who are worthy, at the moment where they are worthy, but which is not aroused by their worthiness. He calls this light 'the light of a glory more than ineffable' and 'purity of angels'.³ The great Makarios, as for him, calls it nourishment of the bodiless, glory of the divine nature, beauty of the age to come, divine and celestial fire, unspeakable light of the intellect, pledge of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 1 : 22), sanctifying oil which spreads joy (cf. Ps. 45 : 8).

Therefore he who counts himself with the Messalians and calls those ditheists who say this deifying grace of God is uncreated, unbegotten and personal, if he is such a man he should know that he is opposed to the saints and to God, and that he withholds himself from the company of the saved by not repenting, and that he falls away from the one God, who is by nature the single God of the saints. But he who believes, who is persuaded, who speaks with the saints, who does not look for excuses for his sins (Cf. Ps. 141 : 4. LXX), who in his ignorance does not reject what is said openly, but nonetheless also pays attention to the ways of mystery, and he does not think it indecent to search and to take from those who know. For he will see that everything is in accord with the words and acts of God, and that in the most necessary things, without which nothing can stand, not even the completely divine mystery.

¹ St Dionysios the Areopagite, *Letter Two*; P.G. iii, 1068A; E.T., trans. C. Luibheid, Pseudo-Dionysus, *Paulist Press* (New Jersey: 1987), p. 263.

² St Maximos the Confessor, *Ambigua*; P.G. xci, 1141B.

³ St Symeon Metaphrasis, *Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios*; E.T. *The Philokalia*, vol. iii, p. 312.

He who declares he has arrived at perfect union with God through imitation alone and natural human disposition alone, with the deifying grace of the Spirit, like those who live that union and love each other, and who affirm that the deifying grace of God is a state of nature endowed with reason, aroused by imitation alone, and not by a supernatural and mysterious illumination and a divine energetic actuality invisibly visible to those who are worthy, and conceived incomprehensibly, let him know that he has fallen without knowing it in the error of the Messalians. For it is by nature, by all necessity, that the deified man would be God, if the deification comes from a natural potential, and if it is built in to the limits of nature.

That such a man does not try to impute his bad comportment to those whose attitude is sure, and does not put the blame on those whose faith is irreproachable, but that he rather puts aside his arrogance and learns from those who have experience or those who have been taught by them, that the “grace of the Divinity is completely irreducible, in the measure that there is not found in nature any potential capable of receiving it. For then it would no longer be grace, but rather the manifestation of an energy of natural potential, and this would have nothing paradoxical about it if deification came from a potential capable of receiving it. For if it is reasonably an act of nature, deification would not be a gift of God. Such a man could become God through nature and properly call himself God. For the natural potential of all existence is nothing else than the movement which maintains nature in its energetic actuality. But how can he be deified if it springs from its own source? If it is simply contained in the limits of nature, I do not see how this can be.”¹

The grace of deification exceeds nature, virtue and understanding. These things are all, St Maximos says,² infinitely inferior. For every virtue, like the imitation of God of which we are capable, renders him who acquires it apt for divine union. But it is grace which accomplishes the mysterious union itself. It is by it indeed that “God entirely surrounds entirely those who are worthy, and that the saints, entirely, totally surround God entirely: they receive God entirely in exchange for themselves, and as reward for their elevation toward him they obtain God alone,”³ God himself: the direction of the soul, which attaches itself to the body as to its own limbs, and which renders them worthy of being in him.

He who supports the idea that they are Messalians who find the seat of the intellect in the heart or in the brain, he should know that he is in dispute with the saints. For the great

Athanasios says that the reasoning faculty of the soul is in the brain.⁴ And Makarios, who never lacks grandeur in anything, affirms that the energetic actuality of the intellect is in the heart.⁵ Almost all of the saints are in accord with them. Indeed, when the divine Gregory of Nyssa says that the intellect, because it is incorporeal, is not inside nor outside the body,⁶ he is not opposed to the saints Athanasios and Makarios. They affirm that the intellect is inside the body, because it is tied to it. They say this in another sense, and do not differ therefore in any way from St Gregory. For one who says that the divine is not in a place, because it is incorporeal, is not opposed to another who affirms that the Word of God was once inside the virginal and most pure womb, where beyond reason he was united with our nature, in his unspeakable love of man.

He who says that the light which shone around the disciples at Tabor (Matt. 17 : 5) is a phantasm and a symbol, which appeared and disappeared, that it is not for itself and does not exceed all understanding, but that it is nothing but a banal projection of the mind, he manifestly contradicts the opinions of the saints. The saints, indeed, as much in their chanting as in their writings, call it mysterious, uncreated, eternal, atemporal, inaccessible, immense, infinite, without limits, invisible to the angels and to men, original and immutable beauty, glory of God, glory of Christ, glory of the Spirit, ray of the Divinity, and other similar things. It is said, indeed, that “the flesh is glorified by the incarnation of Christ, and that the glory did not appear to those who did not bear in themselves that which is invisible even to the angels. He is therefore transfigured, and it is not that assumes something which he did not have before, nor that he is transformed into something he was not before. But manifesting to his own disciples what he was, he opened their eyes, and he made the blind see. All while remaining in the same state where he had been before, but now manifesting and revealing it to the disciples. For he is himself the true light (John 1 : 9), the beauty of glory. He shone like the sun (cf. Matt. 17 : 2) ... The image is not right, but it is possible to correctly represent the uncreated in creation in this way.”⁷

He who says that only the Being of God is uncreated, but that his eternal energetic actualities are not, for the Being surpasses everything as he who works surpasses what is worked on, let him hear saint Maximos, who affirms: ‘Everything which is immortal, and immortality itself, everything which lives, and life itself, everything which is holy, and holiness itself, everything virtuous, and virtue itself, everything which is good, and goodness itself, everything which is, and existence itself, are manifestly works of God.

¹ St Maximos the Confessor, *Ambigua*; P.G. xci, 1237B.

² St Maximos the Confessor, *First Century of Various Texts 75*; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 181.

³ *Ambigua*; P.G. xci, 1308B.

⁴ *Oration contra gentes*, (P.G. xxv, 61AB); *Ad monachos*, 70, (P.G. xxv, 776CD).

⁵ *Spiritual Homilies*, xv, 20.

⁶ *The Creation of Man*; P.G. xlv, 177BC.

⁷ St John of Damaskos, *Homily on the Transfiguration of Christ* 12-13; (P.G. xcvi, 564B-565A).

But on the one hand the things came to be in time (for there was a time when they did not exist), and others did not start to be in time: for there was never a time when virtue, goodness, holiness, and immortality did not exist.¹ And again: 'Goodness, and everything which is contained in this word, and in a word all life, all immortality, all simplicity, all immutability, all infinity, and everything which is considered in its Being surrounding God, are works of God and had no beginning in time. For that which previously was not will never be older than virtue, nor more ancient than the other characters which we could speak of, even when things which participate in them began with them to be in time. Every virtue is without beginning, because time is not more ancient than them, since they have in them God who completely alone begets existence eternally. But God raises himself infinitely to the infinite above all beings, participants and participated in.

Therefore, let a man learn through this that all existent things issue from God but are not all subject to time. For there are things, among them, without beginning, which are never effaced by the trinitarian Unity, which alone is pure nature without beginning, and by virtue of the supernatural simplicity which is in them. In the same manner the intellect, like an obscure image of that transcendent indivisibility, within minds which are natural to it, is absolutely not composite.

One who does not accept that spiritual dispositions are marked on the body, by the gifts of the Spirit in the soul of those who progress toward God; anyone who denies that impassibility is the habitual mortification of the passionate state, and that it is the energetic actuality which normally bears one who is totally disengaged from evil toward the best and turns him toward the good, leaving bad habits behind and enriching himself in good ones; such a one, conforming to what he thinks, denies that the body can lead its life in what is eternal. For if one day, through the soul, the body participates in eternal goods, it is probable that it participates then, as much as possible, mysteriously and indescribably, in grace accorded by God to the purified intellect, and that it trusts in the divine, when the impassioned part of the soul will be transformed and sanctified, but not in a deathlike mortified condition. The soul and the body exist in common, and the soul will sanctify the dispositions and energetic actualities of the body. For because it has disengaged from the goods of existence in favour of the hope of good to come, according to saint Diodokos, the intellect, vigorously borne into the absence of doubt, feels the indescribable divine sweetness. And it transmits to the body its proper sweetness, to the measure of its progress.² Such a joy, which supervenes then in the soul and in the body, in an infallible reminiscence of the incorruptible life.

The light which the intellect naturally perceives is one thing, and the light which the senses perceive is another. For the

senses perceive the sensible, and the sensible objects in their quality as sensible objects. But the light of the intellect, that is the understanding which is found in the mind. Life and the intellect do not perceive the same light, to the measure that each of them works according to its own nature, and in the domain which relates to its nature. But when they have a share in the grace and the spiritual potential, those who are rendered worthy see through the senses and through the intellect something which surpasses all senses and all intellect. And they achieve such miracles, as God alone knows, to do what is described by the great Gregory the Theologian. It is this which we have learned from the Scriptures. It is this we have learned from our Fathers. It is this which allows us to understand our small experience. It is this which, for the plain and sure information of those who read this text, with our very venerable brother among the hieromonks Gregory, who has written on the holy hesychasts while rigorously following the traditions of the saints, on account of which we have signed.

The primate of the venerable monasteries of the Holy Mountain, Hieromonk Isaac.

The hegumen of the holy imperial Lavra, Theodosios, Hieromonk.

Signature of the hegumen of the monastery of Iviron, in his language.

Hegumen of the venerable imperial monastery of Vatopedi, Hieromonk Joan

Signature of the hegumen of the monastery of the Serbs, in his language.

Philotheos, the least of the hieromonks, I agree with this. I sign.

The least of the hieromonks and confessor of the venerable monastery of Esphigmenou, Amphilochios.

The least of the hieromonks and confessor of Vatopedi, Theodosios.

The hegumen of the monastery of Koutloumousiou, Hieromonk Theosteriktos.

Gerontios Maroulis, sinner, living among the ancients of the venerable Lavra, this is what I think. I sign.

The least of monks, Kallistos Mouzalon.

Gerasimos, the last of the hieromonks, I have seen and read that which is written through the love of truth. I adhere and sign.

Geron Moses, the last and the least of monks, this is what I think. I sign.

The least and the last of the monks, Gregory Stravolankadites, self-styled hesychast, this is what I conceive and think. I sign.

Geron Isaiah, of the skete of Magoula, the least of monks, this is what I think. I sign.

The least of monks, Mark, of Sinai.

The least of hieromonks, Kallistos of the skete of Magoula.

Signature of Geron hesychast, of the monastery of the Syrians, in his language.

The least of monks Sophronios.

The least of monks Ioasaph.

¹ *Texts on Theology* i, 50; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 124.

² St Diadochus of Photiki, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, 25; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. i, p. 259.

Humble bishop of Hierissos and of the Holy Mountain, John, brought up in the hagioritic and patristic traditions, I testify that by these chosen men who have signed here, that the whole Holy Mountain hereby signs in one accord. I am myself in accord, I approve and I sign. And I add this afterword: he who is not in accord with the saints, as we are and as our Fathers were who came before us recently, we will not receive into our communion.