

On the Beginning and End of Rational Creatures

(PG 91:1068D-1101C)

[1068D] Gregory Nazianzen: "What does Wisdom have in mind for me? And what is this great mystery? Is it God's intention that we who are a portion of God and have slipped down from above should out of self-importance be so haughty and puffed up as to despise our Creator? Hardly! Rather we should always look to him in our struggle against the weakness of the body. Its very limitations are a form of training for those in our condition."¹

I

[1069A] It seems that some who read these words are unable to find their true meaning even though they have expended great effort. They have pursued a facile solution and borrowed too much from Greek teachings. According to their opinion there once existed a single entity (ἑνὺς) of rational beings. We were all conatural with God and had our *dwelling place* (Jn 14:2) and foundation in God. Then came movement from God and from this they make it out that, as rational beings were dispersed in various ways, God envisaged the

¹Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 14.7 (On Love for the Poor)* (PG 35:865C).

creation of this corporeal world to unite them with bodies as punishment for their former transgressions.² Those who hold these things think that our teacher had intimated them in the words cited above.³

[1069B] But they do not realize how untenable their views and how improbable their conjectures, as a more reasonable argument will surely demonstrate. For if the divine is unmoved, since it fills all things, and everything that was brought from non-being to being is moved (because it tends toward some end), then nothing that moves is yet at rest. For movement driven by desire has not yet come to rest in that which is ultimately desirable. Unless that which is ultimately desirable is possessed, nothing else is of such a nature as to bring to rest what is being driven by desire. Therefore if something moves it has not come to rest, for it has not yet attained the ultimately desirable. Those who are tending toward that which is ultimately desirable have not yet reached the end, since they have not yet come to rest.

[1069C] But if it is the case, as some hold, that rational beings had in fact reached this end, and afterward were moved from their secure abode in what is ultimately desirable, with the result that they were scattered, we must ask in no uncertain words: what proof do they have? For if this is so, it must be assumed that under similar circumstances rational beings will necessarily undergo such changes indefinitely. If God can be abandoned once for the sake of experiencing

²See Origen, *De principiis* 2.1.1: "Now since the world is so very varied and comprises so great a diversity of rational beings, what else can be the cause of this diversity than the different ways in which those who flowed away from the original unity (ἐνὶ ἑκ) fell." Text from Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam* (*Iustiniani Edictum Contra Origenem*) in E. Schwartz, ed., *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* 3:211 (= G. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* 9:5329).

³Barsanuphius, a monk from Gaza in the early sixth century, said that some who believed in the pre-existence of souls appealed to the writings of Gregory the Theologian (*Ep.* 604). See also Cyril of Scythopolis: the Origenists "affirm that the doctrines of pre-existence and restoration are indifferent and without danger, citing the words of Saint Gregory" (*Life of Cyriacus* 11). Gregory Nazianzen, according to a sixth-century life, was "the only one to be called 'the theologian' after the evangelist John" (Gregory the Presbyter, *Life of Gregory*, PG 35:288C). Gregory's authority was second only to that of the Holy Scriptures.

something different, there is nothing to prevent this from happening again and again. If reasonable beings are thus to be carried about and have no place to rest and cannot hope to have any abiding steadfastness in the good,⁴ what could be greater reason to despair?⁵

On the other hand, if our opponents should say that intellects could have adhered to the divine goodness, but did not, because they wanted to experience something different, then the beautiful would of necessity be loved not for itself, but because of what had been learned of it from its opposite. That would mean the beautiful is loved for some other reason than that it is itself lovable by nature. What is not good and lovable in itself, and does not draw all movement toward it simply because it is good and lovable, cannot properly be the beautiful. [1069D] Such beauty would be incapable of satisfying the desire of those who find delight in it. In fact those who hold this view would have to be grateful to evil, because it taught them what is right and how to hold firmly to the beautiful. [1072A] If our opponents are consistent, they would say that evil brought things into being and is more useful than nature itself, because in their view evil teaches what is fitting and allows one to attain the most precious possession, I mean love, by which all things made by God are brought back to abide in God forever.

Further, of the things made by God, whether intellectual or sensible, coming into being precedes movement.⁶ It is impossible to have movement before something has come into being. If the movement of things that have come into being is of intellectual things, it is intellectual movement, and if it is of sensible things, it is sensible movement. [1072B] As is apparent to those who have examined

⁴The phrase "steadfastness in the good" occurs in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* 199 (GNO 7, pt. 1: 102, 19–21).

⁵Augustine makes a similar point. Our present concern, he writes, "is to combat the theory of cycles." . . . (*Civ. Dei* 12.20).

⁶Elsewhere Maximus writes: "Before we think of any natural movement of things, we must think of their becoming; but movement must naturally be presupposed as prior to all rest. . . . Therefore it is impossible for becoming and rest to come into existence at the same time, since they are naturally separated from each other through the middle term of movement" (*Amb.* 15, PG 91:1217D).

these things carefully, no creature is by nature unmoved, not even those that are inanimate and perceptible by the senses. All movement is either linear, circular or spiral, that is it is either simple [linear] or complex [circular or spiral].⁷ If, then, coming into being is understood to precede movement, movement is subsequent to coming into being.⁸

The movement that is tending toward its proper end is called a natural power, or passion, or movement passing from one thing to another and having impassibility as its end. It is also called an irremissible activity that has as its end perfect fulfillment.⁹ But nothing that comes into being is its own end, since it is not self-caused. [1072C] For if it were, it would be unbegotten, without beginning and unmoved, since it has nothing toward which it can be moved in any way. For what is self-caused transcends what has come into being, because it exists for the sake of nothing. Hence the definition is correct even though it was spoken by an outsider: "The end is that for the sake of which all things exist, it, however, is for the sake of nothing."¹⁰

⁷Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: "The divine intelligences are said to move as follows. First they move in a circle while they are at one with those illuminations which, without beginning and without end, emerge from the Good and the Beautiful. Then they move in a straight line when, out of Providence, they come to offer unerring guidance to all those below them. Finally, they move in a spiral, for when while they are providing for those beneath them they continue to remain what they are and they turn unceasingly around the Beautiful and the Good from which all identity comes" (*Divine Names* 4.8, PG 3:704D-705A; trans. Colm Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, CWS [Mahwah, NJ]: Paulist Press, 1987], p. 78).

⁸For the Origenists the order of things coming into being was the following: stability, motion, becoming (γένεσις); for Maximus: becoming, motion, stability. "It cannot be squared with the truth to propose that becoming is prior to stability, since stability is of its nature without motion; but it is equally impossible to posit stability as the consequence of a motionless becoming, or to equate stability and becoming. For stability is not a potential condition of becoming . . . but is rather the end-stage of the realization of potency in the development of created things. To put it briefly, stability is a relative concept, which is not related to becoming but to movement, of which it is the contradictory" (*Amb.* 15, PG 91:1220C-D).

⁹As Sherwood observes: "The Maximian refutation [of the Origenist position] here starts from the idea of motion as essentially directed to an end" (*The Earlier Ambigua*, p. 98).

¹⁰The definition is Aristotelian, but as Sherwood observes, it is not a direct

Nothing that came into being is perfect in itself and complete. If complete it would have the power of action, but because it has its being from what is not, it does not have power of action. That which is perfect in itself is uncaused. Nor is anything that has come into being free of passions. Only what is unique, infinite and uncircumscribed is free of passions. The impassible is not of a nature to suffer at all, whether by loving another or by being moved by desire toward something else. No created thing then is at rest until it has attained the first and only cause (from which what exists was brought into being) or has possessed the ultimately desirable. [1072D] However, in the view of some, it was the breakup of the primordial unity that brought about the origin of bodies.

The saints Moses and David and Paul as well as Christ the Lord bear witness to the true understanding of these things.¹¹ Speaking of the first parents, Moses wrote: *You shall not eat of the tree of life* (Gen 2:9, 17). And elsewhere he said: *For you have not as yet come to the rest¹² and the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you* (Deut 12:9). [1073A] And David: *Crying out I will be satisfied when your glory appears* (Ps 16:15). And: *My soul thirsts for the strong and living God* (Ps 42:2).

And St Paul writes: *That if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own* (Phil 3:11). And to the Hebrews¹³ he writes: *For whoever*

citation. For similar statements in Aristotle's works see *Metaphysics* 999B8f and *De motu animalium* 700B5. Maximus's language approximates that of Alexander of Aphrodisias in *Metaphysics* B2 (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 1:181, 37ff). But Sherwood thinks Maximus may be quoting an aphorism of Evagrius preserved in Syriac. "The milieu of the definition, then, is beyond doubt. It is then the more piquant to know that the outsider cited is none other than Evagrius" (*The Earlier Ambigua*, p. 100). Nonetheless, it seems more likely to me that "outsider" refers to Aristotle.

¹¹The theme of the biblical texts cited by Maximus in this section is that things have not come to fulfillment.

¹²Note that the term "rest" is biblical. See also Heb 4:10 cited at 1073A.

¹³In the early church Paul was considered the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

enters into God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his (Heb 4:10). And again in the same epistle he affirms that no one received what was promised (Heb 11:39).

Also Christ says: *Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest* (Matt 11:28). [1073B] Therefore no creature has ever ceased using the inherent power that directs it towards its end, nor has it ceased the natural activity that impels it towards its end, nor harvested what it had anticipated. I am referring of course to being impassible and unmoved. For it belongs to God alone to be the end and the completion and the impassible. God is unmoved and complete and impassible. It belongs to creatures to be moved toward that end which is without beginning, and to come to rest in the perfect end that is without end, and to experience¹⁴ that which is without definition, but not to *be* such or to *become* such in essence. For whatever comes into being and is created is certainly not absolute.

It is important to understand correctly what is meant by passibility (πάθος). For the passibility spoken of in this connection does not refer to change or corruption of one's power; passibility here indicates that which exists by nature in beings. For everything that comes into existence is subject to movement, since it is not self-moved or self-powered. [1073C] If then rational beings come into being, surely they are also moved, since they move from a natural beginning in "being" toward a voluntary end in "well-being." For the end of the movement of those who are moved is "eternal well-being" itself, just as its beginning is being itself which is God who is the giver of being as well as of well-being.¹⁵ For God is the beginning and the

¹⁴The term is παθεῖν: "suffer," "be acted upon," "undergo."

¹⁵On being and well-being: The "logos of being . . . denotes the created existence of a thing as founded in God's will that it should be, it is the principle of its coming to be and implies a participation in God as being." The "logos of well-being . . . expresses participation in God as good and is the principle of motion in each being, i.e. logos as regulating moral action and will" (Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 74). "Well-being" is identified with acquiring the "likeness of God." There is a third mode, "eternal well-being" (τὸ αἰετὸν εἶναι) (PG 91:1392B). Cf *Chapters on Love*

end. From him come both our moving in whatever way from a beginning and our moving in a certain way toward him as an end.

If the intellectual being is moved intellectually in a way appropriate to itself, it certainly perceives. If it perceives, it certainly loves what it perceives. If it loves, it certainly experiences ecstasy (ἔκστασις) over what is loved.¹⁶ If it experiences ecstasy, it presses on eagerly, and if it presses on eagerly it intensifies its motion; [1073D] if its motion is intensified, it does not come to rest until it is embraced wholly by the object of its desire. It no longer wants anything from itself, for it knows itself to be wholly embraced, and intentionally and by choice it wholly receives the life-giving delimitation. When it is wholly embraced it no longer wishes to be embraced at all by itself but is suffused by that which embraces it. [1076A] In the same way air is illuminated by light and iron is wholly inflamed by fire, as is the case with other things of this sort.

From such speculation we are able to understand that participation in a goodness that is yet to come not one that existed once and was corrupted. The saints will participate in it, though only through a likeness,¹⁷ since what is hoped for is beyond all things, beyond vision and hearing and understanding, as is clear from the Scriptures (cf 1 Cor 2:9-11).

What is being referred to is that subjection about which the divine apostle spoke, when the Son subjects to the Father those who freely accept subjection (1 Cor 15:28). This subsection will be voluntary, and through it the last enemy, death, will be destroyed. [1076B]

3:24-25; also *Chapters on Theology and Economy* 1:56: "The sixth day reveals the principle of being of things, the seventh indicates the manner of the well-being of things, the eighth communicates the ineffable mystery of the eternal well-being of things" (PG 90:1104C). See also *Amb.* 42 (PG 91:325B-C, translated below, pp. 88-9). Other references in Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambiguum*, p. 67, n. 27; and von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, pp. 622-3.

¹⁶On Maximus's understanding of "ecstasy" and sublime passivity, see Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambiguum*, pp. 124-54; and Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme*, pp. 533-45.

¹⁷Cf Ezek. 1:26 where Ezekiel says that in his vision he saw "the likeness as it were of a human being."

That which is in our power, our free will, through which the power of corruption entered into us, will surrender voluntarily to God and will have mastery of itself because it had been taught to refrain from willing anything other than what God wills. As our Savior himself said, taking what is ours into himself, *Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Mt 26:39).¹⁸ And later St Paul, as though he denied himself and did not have his own life, said: *It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me* (Gal 2:20).

Do not be disturbed by what I have said. I have no intention of denying free will. Rather I am speaking of a firm and steadfast disposition, a willing surrender,¹⁹ so that from the one from whom we have received being we long to receive being moved as well. It is like the relation between an image and its archetype. [1076C] A seal conforms to the stamp against which it was pressed, and has neither desire nor capability to receive an impression from something else, or to put it forthrightly; it does not want to. Since it lays hold of God's power or rather becomes God by divinization and delights more in the displacement of those things perceived to be naturally its own.

¹⁸This text will become the basis for Maximus's later discussion of the question of the two wills of Christ. On Maximus's interpretation of this passage see in particular *Opusculum 6* (PG 91:65A–68D), translated below, pp. 173–76; also the study by François-Marie Léthel, *Théologie de l'agonie du Christ*.

¹⁹The Greek expression (ἐκχώρησις γνῶμης) is difficult to translate. Sherwood renders it "voluntary outpassing," by which he means a "voluntary handing over of our self-determination to God." This passing out of ourselves, however, does not mean the destruction of the will "but its perfect fulfillment according to the capacity of its nature" (Sherwood, *St. Maximus the Confessor*, ACW 21, p. 59). Maximus wishes to say that when one is firmly attached to the good there is a voluntary transcending of oneself, a giving over of oneself, a "willing surrender" in our translation, in which one passes over into the deifying activity of God. In this "willing surrender" free will is not eliminated but reaches its proper end in God. It is a "gnomic" (as opposed to "natural") volition, i.e., one undertaken on the basis of moral experience. "I did not do away with the natural activity of those who undergo this experience," writes Maximus, "as though its natural activity had ceased.... But I did show that the power that is beyond being is alone capable of bringing about deification in those who by grace are deified" (*Opusc. 1*, PG 91:33D–36A). For discussion see Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, pp. 128–37; Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 218, 424, 427; and Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme*, p. 537.

Through the abundant grace of the Spirit it will be shown that God alone is at work, and in all things there will be only one activity,²⁰ that of God and of those worthy of kinship with God. God will be *all in all* wholly penetrating all who are his in a way that is appropriate to each (cf 1 Cor 15:28).

It is absolutely necessary that everything will cease its willful movement toward something else when the ultimate beauty that satisfies our desire appears. [1076D] In so far as we are able we will participate without being restricted, as it were, being uncontainably contained. All our actions and every sublime thought will tend eagerly towards that end "in which all desire comes to rest and beyond which they cannot be carried. For there is no other end towards which all free movement is directed than the rest found in total contemplation by those who have reached that point," as our blessed teacher says.²¹ For nothing besides God will be known, nor will there be anything opposed to God that could entice one to desire it. [1077A] Instead, when God's ineffable majesty is made known, all intellectual and sensible things will be encompassed by him. It is like the light from the stars. The stars do not shine in the day. When the greater and incomparable light of the sun appears, they are hidden and cannot be seen by the senses. With respect to God this is even more so, for God is infinite, and uncreated things cannot be compared to created things.

When we learn the essential nature of living things, in what respect, how, and out of what they exist, we will not be driven by desire to know more. For if we know God our knowledge of each and everything will be brought to perfection, and, [1077B] in so far as possible, the infinite, divine and ineffable *dwelling place* (Jn 14:2) will be ours to enjoy. For this is what our sainted teacher said in his famous philosophical aphorism: "Then we shall know as we are known" (1 Cor 13:12), when we mingle our god-formed mind and

²⁰The term here is ἐνέργεια and Maximus was later to retract the expression "one energy," because of its monergistic implications. See *Opusc. 1* (PG 91:33A–B).

²¹Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 21.1*.

divine reason to what is properly its own and the image returns to the archetype for which it now longs.²²

Enough, then, with this foolishness of a non-existent henad! Drawing on the sense of the words and ideas in the Scriptures we have set forth what can be said about the ultimate condition that will one day prevail. Now it is time to discuss, with God's help, how we as portions of God have "slipped down" from God.

II

[1077C] If by reason and wisdom a person has come to understand that what exists was brought out of non-being into being²³ by God, if he intelligently directs the soul's imagination to the infinite differences and variety of things as they exist by nature and turns his questing eye with understanding towards the intelligible model (λόγος) according to which things have been made, would he not know that the one Logos is many *logoi*?²⁴ This is evident in the incomparable differences among created things. For each is unmistakably unique in itself and its identity remains distinct²⁵ in relation to other things. He will also know that the many *logoi* are the one Logos to whom all things are related and who exists in himself without confusion, the essential and individually distinctive God, the Logos of God the Father. He is the beginning and cause of all things in whom all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities [1080A] or authorities—all things were created from him and through him and for

²²Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 28.17.

²³This phrase is repeated at 1085A.

²⁴On this point see I.-H. Dalmatis, "La théorie des 'logoi' des créatures chez S. Maxime le Confesseur," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 36 (1952): 244-49.

²⁵The word in Greek is ἁσύγχροτος, "without confusion," one of the key terms used in the decree of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 to define the relation between the divine and human in Christ, who is "acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."

him (Col 1:15-17; Rom 11:36). Because he held together in himself the *logoi* before they came to be, by his gracious will he created all things visible and invisible out of non-being.²⁶ By his Word and by his Wisdom he made all things²⁷ and is making all things, universals as well as particulars, at the proper time.

For we believe that a *logos* of angels preceded their creation, a *logos* preceded the creation of each of the beings and powers that fill the upper world, a *logos* preceded the creation of human beings, a *logos* preceded everything that receives its becoming from God, and so on. It is not necessary to mention them all. The Logos whose excellence is incomparable, ineffable and inconceivable in himself is exalted beyond all creation and even beyond the idea of difference and distinction. [1080B] This same Logos, whose goodness is revealed and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in him, with the degree of beauty appropriate to each being, recapitulates all things in himself (Eph 1:10). Through this Logos there came to be both being and continuing to be, for from him the things that were made came to be in a certain way and for a certain reason, and by continuing to be and by moving, they participate in God. For all things, in that they came to be from God, participate proportionally in God, whether by intellect, by reason, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness, as the great and inspired Dionysius the Areopagite thought.²⁸ Consequently, each of the intellectual and rational beings, whether angels or human beings, through the very Logos according to which each was created, who is in God and is "with God" (Jn 1:1), is "called and indeed is"²⁹ a "portion of God" through the Logos that preexisted in God as I have already argued.

²⁶On the *logoi* see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names* 5.8 (PG 3:824C); also Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 1.46.2 (PL 40:30).

²⁷O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom has formed man . . . (Wis 9:1-2).

²⁸See Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names* 5.5-7 (PG 3:820A-821C).

²⁹Maximus's phraseology *we are and are called* comes from 1 John; *we are and are called children of God* (1 Jn 3:1). See also below, 1081C and 1084C.

[1080C] Surely then, if someone is moved according to the Logos, he will come to be in God, in whom the *logos* of his being pre-exists as his beginning and cause. Furthermore, if he is moved by desire and wants to attain nothing else than his own beginning, he does not flow away from God. Rather, by constant straining toward God, he becomes God and is called a "portion of God" because he has become fit to participate in God. By drawing on wisdom and reason and by appropriate movement he lays hold of his proper beginning and cause. For there is no end toward which he can be moved, nor is he moved in any other way than toward his beginning, that is, he ascends to the Logos by whom he was created and in whom all things will ultimately be restored.³⁰ Clearly one's movement toward the divine reaches its end only when one reaches God.

[1080D] St Basil makes this clear in his interpretation of the holy prophet Isaiah when he writes: "*The true Sabbaths are the rest laid up for the people of God* (Heb 4:9). God can bear these sabbaths³¹ because they are true. And the one in which the world is crucified (Gal 6:14) reaches these sabbaths of rest because he has clearly turned away from worldly things and returned to his own spiritual resting place. The one who arrives there will no longer be moved from his place, for there he finds quiet and tranquility."³²

[1081A] Hence God is the place for all who are worthy of such happiness, as it is written: *Be thou a rock of refuge for me O God, and a place of refuge to save me* (Ps 31:2).³³ The *logoi* of all things known by God before their creation are securely fixed in God. They are in him who is the truth of all things. Yet all these things, things present

³⁰Cf Acts 3:21. The Greek term is ἀποκατάστασις and refers to the restoration of all things to their original condition. It gained currency through the writings of Origen and was used by Gregory of Nyssa. For discussion of the idea in Maximus, see Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, pp. 205–22.

³¹See Isaiah 1:13: *I cannot bear your new moons and your sabbaths*.

³²Pseudo-Basil, *Commentary on Isaiah* 1:13 (PG 30:17C–D). This commentary, though traditionally attributed to St Basil of Caesarea, is generally thought to be the work of another writer.

³³*House of refuge to save me* is the Septuagint rendering of Ps. 31:2.

and things to come, have not been brought into being contemporaneously with their being known by God; rather each was created in an appropriate way according to its *logos* at the proper time according to the wisdom of the maker, and each acquired concrete actual existence in itself. For the maker is always existent Being, but they exist in potentiality before they exist in actuality. [1081B] It is impossible for the infinite to exist on the same level of being as finite things, and no argument will ever be capable of demonstrating that being and what is beyond being are the same, nor that the measured and immeasurable can be put in the same class, nor that the absolute can be ranked with that which exists in relation to other things, nor that that which has nothing predicated of it and that which is constituted by predication belong together. For all created things are defined, in their essence and in their way of developing, by their own *logoi* and by the *logoi* of the beings that provide their external context. Through these *logoi* they find their defining limits.³⁴

We are speechless before the sublime teaching about the Logos, for He cannot be expressed in words or conceived in thought. Although he is beyond being and nothing can participate in him in any way, nor is he any of the totality of things that can be known in relation to other things, nevertheless we affirm that the one Logos is many *logoi* and the many *logoi* are One. [1081C] Because the One goes forth out of goodness into individual being, creating and preserving them, the One is many. Moreover the many are directed toward the One and are providentially guided in that direction. It is as though they were drawn to an all-powerful center that had built into it the beginnings of the lines that go out from it and that gathers them all together. In this way the many are one.³⁵ Therefore "we

³⁴Cf *Amb.* 15 (PG 91:1217A–B): "All beings, by the *logos* by which they were brought to being and exist, are perfectly firm and immovable; by the *logos* of things seen as related to them, by which the ordering (*oikovoμία*) of this universe is clearly held together and conducted, all things move and admit of instability."

³⁵See Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: "The first gift therefore of the absolutely transcendent Goodness is the gift of being, and that goodness is praised from those that first and principally have a share of being. From it and in it are Being itself, the

are and are called"³⁶ a "portion of God" because the *logoi* of our being pre-existed in God. Further, we are said "to have slipped down from above" because we do not move in accord with the Logos (who preexisted in God) through whom we came to be.

One who has learned to think devoutly about the *logoi* of existing things can explain this matter in another way. [1081D] There can be no doubt that the one Word of God is the substance of virtue in each person. For our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the substance of all the virtues, as it is written: *This one God made our wisdom, our justice, our sanctification and redemption* (1 Cor 1:30). These things of course are said about him absolutely, since he is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification itself. They are not, as in our case, simply attributed to him, as for example in the expression, a "wise man" or a "just man."³⁷ It is evident that every person who participates in virtue as a matter of habit unquestionably participates in God, the substance of the virtues. [1084A] Whoever by his choices cultivates

source or beings, all beings and whatever else has a portion of existence. This characteristic is in it as an irrepressible, comprehensive, and singular feature. Every number preexists uniquely in the monad and the monad holds every number in itself singularly. Every number is united in the monad; it is differentiated and becomes plural only insofar as it goes forth from this one. All the radii of a circle are brought together in the unity of the center which contains all the straight lines brought together within itself. These are linked one to another because of this single point of origin and they are completely unified at this center. As they move a little away from it they are differentiated a little, and as they fall farther they are farther differentiated. That is, the closer they are to the center point, the more they are at one with it and at one with each other, and the more they travel away from it the more they are separated from each other" (*Divine Names* 5.6, PG 3:820D-821A; trans. Luitheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, pp. 99-100).

³⁶1 Jn 3:1. See note 29 above.

³⁷On Maximus's interpretation of 1 Cor 1:30 see Origen: "Justice itself, essential justice is Christ whom God made our wisdom, our justice, our sanctification, and redemption. The justice in each person, however, is formed from that justice, so that many kinds of justice come into existence in those who are saved; wherefore it has also been written, *The Lord is justice and has loved justice* (Ps 107)" (*Commentary on John* 6:40). Also Gregory of Nyssa: "It seems to me that through the ideas of virtue and justice the Lord proposes himself to the desire of his hearers. For he became for us wisdom from God, justice, sanctification and redemption. . . ." (*Homilies on the Beatitudes* 4, GNO 7, pt. 2:122).

the good natural seed shows the end to be the same as the beginning and the beginning to be the same as the end. Indeed the beginning and the end are one.³⁸ As a result, he is in genuine harmony with God, since the goal of everything is given in its beginning and the end of everything is given in its ultimate goal. As to the beginning, in addition to receiving being itself, one receives the natural good by participation: as to the end, one zealously traverses one's course toward the beginning and source without deviation by means of one's good will and choice. And through this course one becomes God, being made God by God. To the inherent goodness of the image is added the likeness (cf Gen 1:26)³⁹ acquired by the practice of virtue and the exercise of the will.⁴⁰ The inclination to ascend and to see one's proper beginning was implanted in man by nature.

In such a person the apostolic word is fulfilled: [1084B] *In him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). For whoever does not violate the *logos* of his own existence that pre-existed in God is in God through diligence; and he *moves* in God according to the *logos* of his well-being that pre-existed in God when he lives virtuously; and he *lives* in God⁴¹ according to the *logos* of his eternal being that pre-existed in God. On the one hand, insofar as he is already irrevocably one with himself in his disposition, he is free of unruly passions. But in the future age when graced with divinization, he will affectionately love and cleave to the *logoi* already mentioned that pre-existed in God, or rather, he will love God himself, in whom

³⁸Cf Origen's comment on the end or consummation of all things: "The end is always like the beginning. Therefore, as there is one end of all things, so one must understand that there must be one beginning of all things; and as there is one end of many things, so from one beginning there arose many differences among things and kinds of things which through the goodness of God, by being subject to Christ and united with the Holy Spirit, are restored to one end which is like the beginning" (*On First Principles* 1.6.2).

³⁹On the distinction between image and likeness in Maximus see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 120-129.

⁴⁰See *Chapters on Love* 3.25.

⁴¹On life with God as the ultimate goal of human life, see Augustine: "Why should human frailty hesitate to believe that we will one day live with God?" (*Sermon* 208c.1).

the *logoi* of beautiful things are securely grounded. In this way he becomes a "portion of God," insofar as he exists through the *logos* of his being which is in God and insofar as he is good through the *logos* of his well-being [1084C] which is in God; and insofar as he is God through the *logos* of his eternal being which is in God, he prizes the *logoi* and acts according to them.⁴² Through them he places himself wholly in God alone, wholly imprinting and forming God alone in himself, so that by grace⁴³ he himself "is God and is called God."⁴⁴ By his gracious condescension God became man and is called man for the sake of man and by exchanging his condition for ours revealed the power that elevates man to God through his love for God and brings God down to man because of his love for man. By this blessed inversion, man is made God by divinization and God is made man by hominization.⁴⁵ [1084D] For the Word of God and God wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment.

⁴²"Of all things that do exist or will exist substantially . . . the *logoi*, firmly fixed, pre-exist in God, in accordance with which all things are and have become and abide, ever drawing near through natural motion to their purposed *logoi*. These things are rather constrained to being and receive, according to the kind and degree of their elective movement and motion, either well-being because of virtue and direct progress in regard to the *logos* by which they are, or well being because of the vice and motion out of harmony with the *logos* by which they exist. Or, to put it concisely: according to the having or the lack, in their natural participative faculty of him who exists by nature completely and unparticipated and who proffers himself entire simply and graciously by reason of his limitless goodness to all, the worthy and the unworthy, producing the permanence of everlasting being as each man of himself has been and is then disposed. For these the respective participation or non-participation of the very being, well-being and ever-being is the increase and augment of punishment for those not able to participate and of enjoyment for those who able to participate" (*Amb.* 42, PG 91:1329A-B).

⁴³Cf. *Ad Thal.* 60 (CCSG 22, 2:79, 117-120): "For truly he who is the Creator of the essence of created beings by nature had also to become the very Author of the deification of creatures by grace, in order that the Giver of well-being (*τὸ εὖ εἶναι*) might appear also as the gracious Giver of eternal well-being (*τὸ αἰεὶ εὖ εἶναι*)."

⁴⁴Cf. 1 Jn 3:1. See note 29 above.

⁴⁵Maximus here reflects an expression in Gregory Nazianzen: "I became God to the extent that [God] became man" (*Oration* 29.19). See also Maximus, *Amb.* 60 (PG 91:1085B): man "becomes God to the extent that God became man."

Since each person is a "portion of God" by the *logos* of virtue in him, as the argument has shown, whoever abandons his own beginning and is irrationally swept along toward non-being is rightly said to have "slipped down from above," because he does not move toward his own beginning and cause according to which and for which and through which he came to be. He enters a condition of unstable gyrations and fearful disorder of soul and body, and though his end remains in place, he brings about his own defection by deliberately turning to what is worse. [1085A] Keeping these things in mind the phrase "to slip down" can be understood properly. It means that someone who had the ability to direct the steps of his soul unswervingly toward God voluntarily exchanged what is better, his true being, for what is worse, non-being.

III

With examples from Scripture St Dionysius the Areopagite teaches us to call these *logoi* "predeterminations" and "products of the divine will."⁴⁶ Similarly the disciples of Pantaenus, who was the teacher of the great Clement who wrote the *Miscellanies*, said that it is in keeping with Scripture to call them "products of the divine will."⁴⁷ Moreover when Christians were asked by some outsiders puffed up with their learning, how they can claim God knows existent things (which these critics had assumed), [1085B] and that he knows intellectual beings intellectually and sensible things sensibly, they replied that he neither knows sensible things sensibly nor intellectual things intellectually.⁴⁸ For it is out of the question that the one who is beyond

⁴⁶See *Divine Names* 5.8. The Greek here is simply "divine wills." The translation of "products of the divine will" comes from Brian Daley's forthcoming translation of von Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy*.

⁴⁷See O. Staehlin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus*, GCS 3 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), lxxv.

⁴⁸This may come from Clement's work *On Providence* (GCS 3:224). See also J. Draeske, "Zu Maximus Confessor," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 47 (1904): 250-259.

existent things should know things in the manner proper to beings. But we say that God knows existent things as the products of his own acts of will, as the following argument will show.

If God made all things by his will⁴⁹ (which no one denies), and it is always pious and right to say that God knows his own will, and that he made each creature by an act of will, then God knows existing things as he knows the products of his own will, since he also made existing things by an act of will. Furthermore, I think that these assertions are in accord with what is said in the Scripture to Moses: *I know you above all* (Ex 18:11). And about some it was said: *The Lord knows those who are His* (2 Tim 2:19). [1085C] And to others he said: *I do not know you* (Mt 7:23; 15:12). Voluntary movement, either in accord with the will and word of God or against the will and word of God, prepared each person to hear the divine voice.

It is such things, I believe, that this saintly man meant when he said: "For then we will mingle our god-formed mind and our divine reason with what is properly its own and the image will return to the archetype it now longs for."⁵⁰ In a few words he attempts to dissuade those who hold these things from thinking that any being has at one time reached this point, [1085D] and explains in what sense we are a "portion of God." He also hints at the future possession of this blessed state and urges on those who are purified by hope and who yearn to enjoy it always, securely and unfailingly. For he knew that if we progress in a straight course, [1088A] led by reason and by nature toward that which has been impressed on our being by the Logos, as far as possible, without any searching whatsoever (for only in searching is there the possibility of stumbling and going wrong), we too will know things in a godlike way. No longer will we out of ignorance hold fast to the movement that envelops everything, but our mind and reason and spirit will advance to the great Mind, Logos

⁴⁹Cf Rev 4:11.

⁵⁰Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 28.17. This passage was already cited at 1077B.

and Spirit,⁵¹ indeed our entire self will wholly pass over to God as an image to its archetype.

In his *Oration on Hail* Gregory taught something similar when he said: "They will be welcomed by the ineffable light and will contemplate the holy and majestic Trinity that shines clearly and brightly and unites itself wholly to the entire soul. This alone I take to be the kingdom of heaven"⁵²—and here I dare add my words to his—[1088B] this will take place when every rational creature, whether angels or human beings, is filled with delight over spiritual pleasures, and has not carelessly corrupted the divine *logoi* which by nature were inclined towards the end set for them by the Creator. Instead they have kept themselves wholly chaste and steadfast, confident in the knowledge that they are to become instruments of the *divine nature* (cf 2 Pet 1:3–4). The fullness of God permeates them wholly as the soul permeates the body, and they become, so to speak, limbs of a body, well adapted and useful to the master. He directs them as he thinks best, filling them with his *own glory* (cf 2 Pet 1:3) and blessedness, and bestows on them unending life beyond imaging and wholly free from the signs of corruption that mark the present age. [1088C] He gives them life, not the life that comes from breathing air, nor that of veins coursing with blood, but the life that comes from being wholly infused with the fullness of God. God becomes to the soul (and through the soul to the body) what the soul is to the body, as God alone knows, so that the soul receives changelessness and the body immortality; hence the whole man, as the object of divine action, is divinized by being made God by the grace of God who became man. He remains wholly man in soul and body by nature, and becomes wholly God in body and soul by grace and by the unparalleled divine radiance of blessed glory appropriate to him. Nothing can be imagined more splendid and lofty than this.

For what is more desirable to God's precious ones than to be divinized, that is for God to be united with those who have become

⁵¹Maximus is thinking of the Holy Trinity.

⁵²*Oration* 16.9 (On his Father's Silence during the Plague of Hail).

gods and by his goodness to make everything his own. Hence the state that comes from contemplating God and enjoying the gladness it gives is rightly called pleasure, rapture and joy. [1088D] It is called pleasure because the term means that for which we naturally strive; rapture, because it is an active receptivity by which what has received power from without becomes itself capable of generating power that is effective beyond itself, as in the previous examples of light permeating air and fire suffusing iron. [1089A] For God's precious ones are persuaded that in truth human nature is given no loftier goal. When it is achieved by necessity it brings with it impossibility. It is called joy because it has nothing to gainsay it, neither from the past nor from the future. For it is said that joy is neither conscious of past sorrow nor has any place for that satiety that inevitably disappoints, one reason why satiety is anticipated with trepidation. It is the same with pleasure. Therefore, as the inspired Scriptures and our fathers, who are wise from hearing the Scriptures read in the divine mysteries, confirm, "joy" is the most appropriate term to refer to the life that is to come.⁵³

Though the discussion has only skimmed the surface and my abilities are limited, I have tried to show by arguments from reason, from the Scriptures and from the Fathers, that none of the created things that move has ever come to rest, nor obtained the prize laid up in God's plan. It is impossible that those who have found the stability that comes from having their dwelling place (cf Jn 14:2) in God will turn away from God. [1089B] How can those who have actually found rest in God become satiated and be drawn away recklessly by desire. For by definition, satiety quenches appetite. To demonstrate this let me briefly offer an argument from reason.

Satiety comes about in two ways: either appetite is quenched because it desired things that are trivial, or because it becomes nauseous by being drawn to what is base and repugnant. In the latter case desire turns into loathing. But for those who enjoy fellowship

⁵³See, e.g., Mt 25:21; Jn 16:20-24.

with God who is infinite and beautiful, desire becomes more intense and has no limit.

If this is so, as has already been demonstrated, there was no single entity (ἔνός) of rational beings, that became satiated with its abode in God, then was divided, [1089C] and by its scattering brought about the origin of the world. Let us then not make the Good finite and valueless, capable of producing satiety and bringing about a revolt among those whose desire it could not satisfy. It appears, however, that some vainly assert this, and what is more, falsely claim that our blessed father Gregory taught these things. For they hold not only that he thought that souls fell from their former life into bodies to be punished for evils they had previously committed, but they also attempt with sweet sounding words to mislead others into thinking this is so by appealing to their personal integrity. But their behavior is neither commendable nor holy. [1089D] Let us then put an end to their fantasies by reverently examining the thinking of our teacher from yet another angle.

I V

In the passage under discussion Gregory did not intend to explain how human beings came to be, [1092A] but why misery attends their lives. For he laments the wretchedness we experience in our bodies when he writes: "O how I am united with the body yet alien from it. What I fear I treat with the utmost care, and what I love I have come to fear," and so on.⁵⁴ In the course of this oration he puts a question to himself about the reason for the evils that hold us in their grip and explains the role of the most-wise providence in this matter, when he says: "What does Wisdom have in mind for me and what is this great mystery?" In what follows he gives his answer to the question: "Is it God's intention that we who are a portion of God and have slipped down from above should out of self importance be so

⁵⁴Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 14.7 (PG 35:865C).

haughty and puffed up because of our dignity that we despise our Creator? Hardly! Rather we should always look to him in our struggle against the weakness of the body. Its very limitations should be a form of training for those in our condition.”⁵⁵ [1092B]

Gregory is saying that out of God’s great goodness human beings were composed of a soul and body. The rational and intellectual soul given to man is made in the image of its maker and through desire and intense love it holds fast to God and participates in the divine life. The soul becomes godlike through divinization, and because God cares for what is lower, that is the body, and has given the command to love’s one’s neighbor, the soul prudently makes use of the body. By practicing the virtues the body gains familiarity with God and becomes a fellow servant with the soul. God who dwells in the soul uses it as an instrument to relate to the body and through the intimate bond between body and soul makes it possible for the body to share in the gift of immortality. [1092C] The result is that what God is to the soul the soul becomes to the body, and the one God, Creator of all, is shown to reside proportionately in all beings through human nature. Things that are by nature separated from one another return to a unity as they converge together in the one human being. When this happens God will be *all in all* (1 Cor 15:28), permeating all thing and at the same time giving independent existence to all things in himself. Then no existing thing will wander aimlessly or be deprived of God’s presence. For through the presence of God we are called *gods* (Jn 10:35), *children of God* (Jn 1:12), *the body* (Eph 1:23) and *members* (Eph 5:30) of God, even “portion of God.” In God’s purpose this is the end toward which our lives are directed. For this end man was brought into the world.

Our forefather Adam, however, used his freedom to turn toward what was worse and to direct his desire away from what had been permitted to what was forbidden. [1092D] It was in his power to be united to the Lord and become one spirit with God or to join himself to a prostitute and become one body with her (1 Cor 6:15–16). But Adam

⁵⁵ Oration 14.7, the passage from Gregory that is the basis for this *Ambiguum*.

was deceived and chose to cut himself off voluntarily from God’s happy end for him, preferring by his own free choice to be drawn down to the earth (cf Gen 2:17) than to become God by grace. Out of wisdom and love for mankind, [1093A] as befits his goodness, God who works out our salvation, fixed a punishment that is suitable to the irrational movement of our intellectual faculty. The punishment was death, which means that the capacity to render to God what is due God alone, to love him with all our mind, was destroyed. As a result it is only when we have been taught by suffering that we who love non-being can regain the capacity to love what is.

Further on in the oration Gregory makes this clear: “But it seems to me, for this reason none of the good things of this present life can be relied on. They are shortlived. The things we see, though made by the creative Logos and the wisdom that transcends all wisdom, are always changing, now one way and now another, [1093B] born upward and then downward. That is why it seems we are being played with. Before something can be laid hold of it flees and escapes our grasp. Yet there is purpose in all this, for when we reflect on the instability and fickleness of such things, we are led to seek refuge in the enduring things that are to come. For if life always went well, would we not become so attached to our present state, even though we know it will not last, and by deception become enslaved to pleasure? In the end we would think that our present life is the best and noblest, and forget that, being made in the image of God, we are destined for higher things.”⁵⁶

Further, in his *Oration to the Citizens*, Gregory says: “We are nothing in relation to the authentic and original wisdom. Yet through the irregularity and fluctuation of what is seen, God leads us to what is stable and enduring, and beckons us to seek him alone [1093C] and to be illumined by the beams of light that come from him. Through the irregularity of things that are seen and shift back and forth God directs us to those that are stable and enduring.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Oration 14.20

⁵⁷ Oration 17.4.

As I have already said, in the passage under discussion our teacher is not explaining the reason for the creation of mankind, but the reason for the misery that sin brought into our life after we were created. This should be evident to anyone who studies Gregory's divine writings carefully and diligently. He is explaining whence this condition came to be, for what reason, by whom and for whose sake. In short his words show that the fall into sin became the occasion for God in his wisdom to work out our salvation.

[1093D] In his *Oration on the Nativity*, where he discusses the mystery by which human beings came to be, Gregory makes clear the significance of what he said. "Intellect and the senses, once distinguished from one another, remained within their own limits, and bore the magnificence of the Creator-Word in themselves . . . Though they praised God's mighty words silently, they were piercing heralds (cf Ps 19:1-3). But the two had not yet mingled, because the mind and the senses had not been joined together. This mingling would be a mark of greater wisdom and God's extravagance in the creation of living things, but the abundance of God's goodness was not yet made known. Hence the Creator-Word, wishing to display this mingling and to produce a single living being with both intellect and sensation, invisible and visible, made man. [1096A] Taking a body from already existing matter and breathing life into it from himself (Gen 2:7), the Word fashioned an intellectual soul made in the image of God as a kind of second cosmos. He placed this marvelous creature, though weak in comparison to other animals, on the earth, like an angel he was able to worship God with the senses as well as the intellect," and so on.⁵⁸

Gregory also wrote in the *Oration on the Lights*: "Since this is the way things are with the three persons,⁵⁹ or with the one God, the worship of God should not be limited to heavenly beings, but should include worshippers here below so that all things may be filled with the glory of God. For everything is of God. This is why man was

⁵⁸ *Oration* 38.11.

⁵⁹ The context of the passage is a discussion of the Holy Trinity. See *Oration* 39.12.

created by the *hand of God* (Isaiah 66:2) and was honored by being made in the image of God."⁶⁰

Though I have spoken only briefly about how Gregory understood these words I think it sufficient to establish what he meant, unless of course one is hostile to these ideas and is interested only in a debate. [1096B] If someone still wants to argue about what the teacher meant when he called us a "portion of God," further discussion will be futile. I have already explained the matter from several different perspectives. But, in order to show that what has been said is faithful to the inspired words of the holy and blessed apostle Paul, who received the *wisdom hidden in God before the ages* (1 Cor 2:7), and illuminated in every way the dark life of men and dispersed the cloud of ignorance, it is enough to cite what he wrote to the Ephesians: *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, [1096C] that you may know what is the hope, to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come, and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all* (Eph 1:17-23).

[1096D] And later in the same epistle he writes: *And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no*

⁶⁰ *Oration* 39.13.

longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, [1097A] by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love (Eph 4:11–16).

I do not think further testimony is required for someone who lives a devout life and accepts the revelation of the truth as it has been believed by Christians. One clearly learns it from the following expressions: We are his *members* and his *body*, and *the fullness of Christ of God who fills all things in every way* according to the plan *hidden in God the Father before the ages*. And we are being *recapitulated in him* through his Son our Lord Jesus the Christ of God.⁶¹

[1097B] The *mystery hidden from the ages* (Col 1:26) and from the nations is now revealed through the true and perfect incarnation of the Son and God. For he united our nature to himself in a single hypostasis, without division and without confusion, and joined us to himself as a kind of first fruits. This holy flesh with its intellectual and rational soul came from us and is ours. He deemed us worthy to be one and the same with himself according to his humanity.⁶² For we were predestined before the ages (cf Eph 1:11–12) to be in him as members of his body. He adapted us to himself and knitted us together in the Spirit as a soul to a body and brought us to the measure of spiritual maturity derived from his fullness. For this we were created; this was God's good purpose for us before the ages. [1097C] But this renewal did not come about through the normal course of things, it was only realized when a wholly new way of being human appeared. God had made us like himself, and allowed us to participate in the very things that are most characteristic of his goodness.

⁶¹In contrast to the two previous citations from Ephesians here Maximus provides a pastiche of phrases taken from the epistle: Eph 4:16, 13; 1:23; 3:9; 1:10.

⁶²On the particularity of Christ and cosmic redemption see David Yeago, "Jesus of Nazareth and Cosmic Redemption," pp. 163–94.

Before the ages he had intended that man's end was to live in him, and to reach this blessed end he bestowed on us the good gift of our natural powers. But by misusing our natural powers we willingly rejected the way God had provided and we became estranged from God. For this reason another way was introduced, more marvelous and more befitting of God than the first, and as different from the former as what is above nature is different from what is according to nature. [1097D] And this, as we all believe, is the mystery of the mystical sojourn of God with men. For if, says the divine apostle, *the first covenant had been blameless, there would have been no occasion for a second* (Heb 8:7). It is clear to all that the mystery accomplished in Christ *at the end of age* (Heb 9:26) shows indisputably that the sin of our forefather Adam at the beginning of the age has run its course.

The term "portion," then was properly used by our teacher⁶³ in the ways we have explained, and anyone who approaches this matter with an open mind [1100A] and does not try to be clever, will understand it as follows: in this passage "portion" means member. For if member is part of the body and part is the same as portion, then member is the same as portion. And if portion is the same as member, and the bringing together and composition of the members produces an organic body, and an organic body united to an intellectual soul gives us a complete human being, then it is correct to say that the soul or the body is a part or member of man. The body is an instrument of the intellectual soul of a man, and the whole soul permeates the whole body and gives it life and motion. At the same time the soul is not divided or enclosed in it, since the soul is simple and incorporeal by nature. It is wholly present to the entire body and to each of its members. [1100B] The body is of such a nature that it can make place for the soul by an inherent power that is receptive to the soul's activity. The soul tightly clasps the various members that receive it in the different ways proper to each member's way of maintaining the unity of the body. Approach then the great and ineffable

⁶³Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 14:7, the passage cited at the beginning of this *Ambiguum*.

mystery that is the blessed hope of Christians with these things in mind. If one does not attempt to forge images of what is great and heavenly using trivial and earthbound things, one's thinking on these matters will be more discerning and subtle.

Away then with the foolish view that souls exist before bodies. We believe the Lord when he says that those raised in the resurrection will not be able to die, for on that day the one who is ultimately desirable will be fully revealed and we will participate in Him. [1100C] He says: "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:26). If the soul were pre-existent, it would be impossible, as has already been shown, for it to be so radically changed that it could die. Let no one, then, depart from good sense and foolishly assert false opinions about the soul.

If the body and the soul are parts of man, as we have seen, it must be granted that as parts each necessarily bears a relation to something other than itself. It is only as they are related to each other that they have the whole predicated of them. Something that is always spoken of in relation to something else must have come into existence with the other. For the parts by coming together constitute the whole, and what each is in essence can be distinguished only in thought. Therefore since they are parts of man it is impossible for either the soul or the body to exist before the other or indeed to exist after the other in time. [1100D] If that were not the case the necessary relation each has to the other would be destroyed.

Further, if the soul is a species in itself before it is joined to the body, and the body is a species before it is joined to the soul, and each, soul to body and body to soul, by being joined to the other brings about an entity that is different from what each is in itself, then there are two possibilities. Either they undergo a change or what they become is what they are by nature. If it is because of undergoing something, what they undergo makes them into something they were not. Which is to say they were corrupted. But if what they become is what they are by nature, this will always happen because it is their nature. The soul would never cease being

reincarnated, nor the body being reanimated. [1101A] In my view, however, this is not what happens. The constitution of the whole as a species has nothing to do with having undergone something nor with the natural power of the parts coming together with each other. Rather there is a simultaneous coming to be of the whole species with its parts. It is impossible for one species to change into another species without corruption.

But some say, because the soul exists and subsists after death and the dissolution of the body, the soul was able to exist and to subsist before the body. But their argument is not persuasive. For what one means by origin is not the same as what one means by essence. The former refers to whence something is, where it is and in relation to what it is, but the latter refers to what something is and how it is. If so, the soul, after it has come to be, always exists because of its being; but because it has come to be, it is not independent of other things and its condition is determined by whence it is and where it is and in relation to what it is. [1101B] For the soul, after the death of the body, is not simply called soul, but the soul of a human being, indeed the soul of a certain human being. Even after it has departed the body, the whole human is predicated of it as part of its species according to its condition. In the same way, although the body is by nature mortal, because of how it came to be, it is not an independent entity. For the body, after its separation from the soul, is not simply called body, but the body of a man, indeed the body of a certain man, even though it will decompose and be broken down into the elements of which it was composed. For like the soul it has the whole human being predicted of it as part of its species according to its condition.⁶⁴

Therefore the human being is composed of soul and body, for soul and body are indissolubly understood to be parts of the whole human species. [1101C] Soul and body came into being at the same

⁶⁴Maximus's thinking on the unity of body and soul is similar to that of Augustine who wrote: "Bodies are not for ornament or aid, as though simply external to the soul, but have to do with the very nature of man" (*De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 4.6)

moment and their essential difference from each other in no way whatsoever impairs the *logoi* that inhere naturally and essentially in them. For that reason it is inconceivable to speak of the soul and body except in relation to each other. It is only as they come together to form a particular person that they exist. If either existed before the other, it would have to be understood as the soul or the body of the one to which the other belongs. The relation between them is immutable.

But enough of these things. If this discussion has not strayed from the truth, the thanks goes to God. For by your prayers⁶⁵ God has led me to think rightly about these matters. If, however, the truth has escaped me in any way, you will be able to instruct me, because you have been inspired by God to know these things.

⁶⁵Maximus's essay was addressed to John bishop of Cyzicus to whom Maximus's early *Ambigua* are addressed.

On How the Creator Brings Order out of the Chaos of Bodily Existence

(PG 91:1101D–1105B)

[1101D] From Gregory's same *Oration*: "So long as matter bears with it chaos, as in a flowing stream . . ."¹

I think that the intent of Gregory's discourse at this point follows closely the thinking of the preceding chapter.² Having devoted as much of his discourse as possible to those infatuated with matter and the body, Gregory adds these statements so that whoever [1104A]

¹Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 14.30 (*On Love for the Poor*) (PG 35:897B).

²Gregory's full statement in question here reads: "But whether the affliction they suffer comes from God is not clear so long as matter carries with it chaos, as in a flowing stream." As Polycarp Sherwood has observed (*The Earlier Ambigua*, pp. 29–30), Maximus sees this statement, like the one under discussion in *Amb.* 7 (see esp. section IV, PG 91:1089D–1096B; trans. above, pp. 65–9), as fitting into a larger explanation of how the evils associated with bodily existence have come about, not as punishment for the sins of pre-incarnate souls (as in the Origenist scheme), but as the result of the historical (Adamic) fall. Gregory's present statement raises the issue of the precise origins of material instability and corporeal mutability within God's providential economy. In the background is the vexed question, already addressed by Gregory of Nyssa and taken up once again by Maximus (who with Nyssa rejected the Origenist solution), of how such instability and mutability could be only an *effect* stemming from Adam's sin in paradise and not somehow an antecedent *cause* of that sin. Was Adam not a possible being before he lapsed? Did he at first dwell in a state of *virtuous* passibility (cf. *Ad Thal.* 61, trans. below, pp. 131–43)? On the place of *Amb.* 8 in this larger debate, see Polycarp Sherwood, "Maximus and Origenism: APXH KAI TE'AOΣ," *Berichte zum XI. internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* III, 1 (Münich, 1958), pp. 1–27, and esp. pp. 16–21.