

THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND
SPIRITUALITY

Symposium

**Rediscovering God:
The Relation Between God and Man
and its Significance for Our Life Today**

*The Fifth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium*

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**THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
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Introductory Address

Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

Sociologists, theologians, anthropologists, philosophers, scientists, see the religious situation of postmodern man in our society as rather ambiguous: On the one hand the post-enlightenment secularism is still very evident at all levels of life in our society: religion, excommunicated at the periphery of the social life, is still a private matter for those who accept it; the values promoted by the money hungry mass media are still either distorted or misgiven, and in many cases missing altogether. That is equivalent to a lack of moral compass which mirrors the psychopathology of post modern man, as Oskar Gruenwald puts it (“The Quest for Transcendence” in *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. IX, Nr. 1-2/ 1997, p. 159); on the other hand, it seems that exactly because of this situation we witness a more intense quest for meaning, for spirituality, for values, for moral stability; it is because of this situation and in its context that the dialogue between science and religion is today more open than ever in the post-Enlightenment era. As Oskar Gruenwald again notices, “late twentieth century science is reaching the limits of self understanding and, confronted with metascientific questions, knocks on theology’s door” (see “Science and Religion: The Missing Link”, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. IX, Nr. 1-2/1997).

In such a context rediscovering God is a reality and an invitation at the same time. And once God is discovered, a relationship with Him must be established. And in order to understand adequately man’s position before God there is serious need for sound critical reflection and guidance.

Old religions and social values must be looked at again, analyzed from the point of view of their relevance for our life today.

This is the context in which and for which our symposium is organized.

We hope that the papers here presented, then published, the discussions that we will have in relation to the topics, will represent a modest but significant contribution to the important task of conscientization of the fact that today’s man must work hard in order to give more meaning to his/her life and destiny.

Let me give you some information about the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality that sponsors this event: The ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY was founded in 1993. It promotes an ecumenical exchange with other churches trying to bring witness of our Christian Orthodox faith, theology, and traditions (which, even though not very well known here, are a fundamental part of the personal and cultural identity of Romanian immigrants in this country). It is also a place to learn about the theological differences of the various American faiths. We believe that in the framework of our religious tradition, ecumenism is the foundation for life together based on freedom, respect and harmony. At the same time, we also want to educate our own people and especially the younger generation in the values of the Romanian culture and Orthodox faith and spirituality.

To accomplish this, the Institute has published a weekly bulletin with spiritual, homiletic, pastoral, and cultural articles. Since May 1996, the bulletin has been transformed into a quarterly review, approximately 100 pages, called *Lumină Lină, Gracious Light*. This review is published in Romanian and English, but Romanian is the predominant language.

The Institute organizes annually a Theological Ecumenical Symposium, at which theologians, clergy, and lay people from various Christian denominations are invited to present papers. The presentations are then published in a journal. There have been four symposiums with the following themes: *Worship and Identity in our Contemporary Society* (1993), *Quo Vadis Homo? Salvation and the Modern World* (1994), *Divine Creation and Human Responsibility in the Context of Contemporary Ecological Preoccupations* (1995), and *Freedom and Responsibility in Contemporary Society* (1996).

This year the theme is: *Rediscovering God: the Relation Between God and Man and its Significance for Our Life Today*.

I warmly welcome you to the Fifth Ecumenical Theological Symposium and look forward to your important contribution to it.

Introductory Remarks

First of all I would like to thank Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian, for his generous words of introduction and especially for inviting me and my wife to attend and preside over the Fifth Theological and Ecumenical Symposium, academically organized by him as President and Founder of the highly appreciated Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality. Indeed, it is for me a rare privilege to be president of this Symposium and I deeply recognize the honor vested on me.

At the same time, our warmest thanks and gratitude are extended to Mrs. Preoteasa Claudia Damian and to all the reverend clergy and distinguished members and supporters of the Institute, for their dedication and hard work, for their untiringly pursuing the spiritual growth and material prosperity of this distinctive Romanian-American foundation, whose noble purpose is to academically promote interdisciplinary theological and ecumenical research, in order to properly represent in The United States of America the best values of the Romanian Orthodox spirituality, culture and art.

I think, it is worthy to be noted that neither in America and Canada, nor in Romania does such a theological and ecumenical institution exist having the same spiritual profile as the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality of New York, a non-profit organization, founded and organized by Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Theodor Damian and Mrs. Preoteasa Claudia Damian, with the only help of God and their own sacrifices. Both of them deserve our heartfelt congratulations and sincere wishes in the fulfillment of all the ideals and hopes they graciously invested in the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality.

We have to admit that all of us attending this Symposium and many others who for blessed reasons are not with us today, are the happy beneficiaries of all the cultural and spiritual activities developed by this unique institution.

And now, following its academic tradition, I welcome all of you to our Fifth Ecumenical and Theological Symposium, which symbolically represents also its Fifth Anniversary. In fact, on this very occasion we are celebrating at the same time three major other

anniversaries closely related to each other: the fifth anniversary of the Church “St. Peter and Paul”, of the literary circle “Mihai Eminescu” and of *Lumină Lină. Gracious Light, Review of Romanian Culture and Spirituality*, all of them under the umbrella of the Institute.

As you may know, the Fifth Theological and Ecumenical Symposium explores one of the most dramatic issues of our everyday life: “Rediscovering God: the Relation Between God and Man and its Significance for Our Life Today.” The topic assigned to this Symposium is self evident. The changing relations between God and man, especially throughout the modern era, has tragically affected the spiritual orientation of our time. There are many existential questions deserving our attention and meditation. For this reason, our Symposium seeks to academically render, for your consideration, the theological inquiries of its distinguished contributors on these ardent contemporary problems. In this regard will be presented a number of five papers, symbolically fitting with our Fifth Anniversary.

After my paper dealing with “The Image of Modern Man Without the Likeness of God in the Light of Fr. Stăniloae’s Theology”, Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Audrey Cohen College, NY, and President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, will present his paper titled “The Concept of *Imago Dei* in St. Gregory of Nyssa’s Theology and its Significance for Our Life Today”. Then Fr. Dr. Eugen Pentiu, Research Fellow at Harvard University, will present his paper “That Good Which Is in Us: a Few Insights in the God-man Relationship in the Book of Hosea”, followed by Prof. Dr. Șerban Andronescu of Danubian Academic Society of America, as well as of the American Institute for Writing Research, publisher, journalist, writer and member of the Romanian Academy of Scientists, whose paper is entitled the “Rejection of God in Modern Society: Counter-Culture, Secular Humanism, New Age”. We hope that Mr. M.N. Rusu, literary historian and critic, writer, member of the Romanian Union of Writers and our editor in chief of *Gracious Light*, will be present in time to address his paper “Prophecy as a Mode of Communicating with God”.

All papers are approaching existential problems that mankind is facing today. In their inner spiritual complexities, these problems are not modern but the consequences of the modern era’s moral and spiritual characteristics. We have to mention that contrary to the modern approach, which inevitably is addressed by the papers assigned to this

Symposium, our approach is not modern but theological and post modern. I kindly invite you to pay attention to these papers by taking notes in order to participate with your observations and commentaries in the general discussion after the break.

Before starting, I would like to thank everyone of you for coming and attending the Fifth Ecumenical and Theological Symposium. Also, we thank again Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Theodor Damian and Mrs. Preoteasa Claudia Damian, who dedicated themselves to this noble cause.

The Image of Modern Man Without the Likeness of God in the Light of Fr. Stăniloae's Theology

The eternal dialogue between God and man and its spiritual significance for our Christian life today was always emphasized by Fr. Stăniloae in his theology. There is a never ending personal communion of man with God, because man is the image of God and His likeness. The image of God is transparent in man only through its likeness of God. In fact, rediscovering God in the Western culture and society of our times means rediscovering the image and likeness of God in man, and the restoration of the filial relationship between God and man, which has been ontologically founded on the image and likeness of God in man.

In this sense, Fr. Stăniloae's theology is spiritually actualizing the Orthodox teaching of the image and likeness of God in man and its implications for the salvation of the modern world, pointing out not only the spiritual significance of the world created by God but also the fundamental understanding of man's own destiny, inside and outside of his personal relation with God.

Unfortunately, the modern era, followed by our postmodern one, which we are living in, has tragically changed the filial rapport between God and man. There are many causes that generate the emancipation of the modern man from God and Church, leading to the actual crisis of a permanent conflict between religious and modern thought, especially between the theological and naturalist world views of existence.

It became a common knowledge that the modern man was strangely alienated from God, from nature and even from himself by the tragic denial of the divine origin and ontological unity of mankind. Trying to find a new equilibrium for his life, only by himself, modern man has totally lost his sense of spiritual orientation. He turns his back to transcendence by adapting his existence to immanence in order to realize his terrestrial happiness as the only master of nature and of his own destiny. More than that, he found himself in a direct competition and confrontation with God. The fatherhood of God, who created man in his own image and likeness, is replaced in our modern times by the parenthood of man pretending to create God

according to his human image and likeness. This new modern anthropomorphism seems to be an evil joke, a flat joke, but it is not. The modern disintegration of the human universe was denounced by Nichifor Crainic as the atheistic work of the dissociative ideas of positivism, Darwinism and Marxism. They are considered the titans of modern atheism, but they are at the same time the founders of Western anthropolatry, and especially of the Western secularized culture and civilization that in the East has shamefully degenerated in the well known totalitarian ideologies.

Mircea Eliade has scholarly considered that the theology of the death of God is the only religious creation of the Western modern world, and that it represents the last stage of the world's desecralization.

Face to face with the modern man without the likeness of God, whose spiritual salvation is equally approached by both, Western as well as Eastern Orthodox Christianity, we have to remember that the Adamic sin was the tragic engine that pushed the world in a wrong direction. The image and likeness of God, in which the primordial man was created, were dramatically distorted and satanically deviated from their normal functionality. Through the original sin not only man but the entire creation was existentially affected. In the correct understanding of the relation between God and man, based on the image and likeness of God in man, before and after the original sin, lies the normal relationship between God and the entire mankind throughout centuries and millennia.

Fortunately, this wrong direction never reached its point of no return because, at the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ, the New Adam, has spiritually changed, in the right direction, the transition of the world, by restoring the image and likeness of God in the failed man, and by establishing a new relation between God and man for ever.

According to Fr. Stăniloae's theology,¹ the salvation of mankind in Jesus Christ is finally the restoration of the perfect communion between God and man, because, from the very beginning, the world was the masterpiece of God's love, created in His image and likeness, and its destination was always its divinization by grace.

In the light of this spiritualization and divinization of the world toward its eternal perfect communion with God, the transition of the modern world could be seen as a permanent struggle in the life of the nations to restore, by the divine grace, the image and likeness of God in

man, especially in the modern man whose image does not have any more the likeness of God.

Obviously, our main concern is to find out what kind of relationship exists between the image of the modern man without the likeness of God and the image and likeness of God in man, according to Fr. Stăniloae's theology.

Following the Holy Fathers, especially St. Athanasius the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Gregory Palamas, Fr. Stăniloae has always insisted that the real identity of man comes from the image and likeness of God, which makes each man a distinct person who reveals his own identity only in communion with other distinct persons and in close relation with the world. Each person is recognized by the other persons, by the world, and what is very significant, by God Himself, whose image and likeness is the existential center of man.

Only through his image and likeness of God, the person becomes a subject apart from the world made up of objects. So the relationship of man with the world is included in his capacity as "image" of the Logos, the second person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Logos is the subject of the divine reasons, man is the subject of the world's reasons created according to the model of the divine ones.

Never was Fr. Stăniloae theologically or philosophically overwhelmed or overpowered by the transition of the modern world and its changing relations between God and man. He was in a spiritual dialogue with the modern world and its existential problems, and made a permanent theological and philosophical effort to progress in the understanding, by grace and meditation, of the wonderful mysteries of God's creation and especially man's ontological destiny and salvation as a person and communion of persons. Fr. Stăniloae's theology is deeply concerned with emphasizing the destiny of mankind and the meaning of history the way in which they are rooted in the tradition of the Holy Fathers who have themselves a complete vision of the cosmos recapitulated in God.

Fr. Stăniloae notices that we are facing a kind of turbulent precipitation in which theologians, artists, philosophers and scientists are seeking out, inside or outside the communion between God and man, a new emerging spirituality of our contemporary world in its transition toward the 21st century and third millennium.

But this new emerging spirituality is jeopardizing first of all the

relation between God and man and its spiritual significance for our life today. A closer look at the Christian development at least in the last three centuries (especially in the Western Hemisphere), during which reason has divorced faith and the world evolved from the medieval to the modern era, will give us the opportunity to better understand the secularization, demythicization, moral disintegration, desecration and other alterations especially of the Western Christianity in contrast to the Eastern Christianity.

Nevertheless, we do not have to ignore the very fact that secularism, liberalism and modernism have almost de-Christianized America. Without exaggeration, America is about to lose its Christian image and likeness. And this is a real danger for her and for the entire Christianity. The image of modern man without the likeness of God, who is dramatically oscillating between the image of an unknown God and the likeness of Lucifer, is not any longer a metaphor, but a strange reality.

We refer to the so-called Americanization of Eastern Europe and especially that of Romanians which seems to be quite dangerous if East Europeans and Romanians will be unable to make a clear distinction between what is the real American Christianity, culture and civilization, and the hybrid counterfeit of it, principally in the religious field. Not everything which is highly advertised as “made in America” and which is exported from America expresses the true reality. Let us be aware of this kind of Americanization which does not represent the real American spirit.

In this context characterized by a constant fight between theocentrism and anthropocentrism Fr. Stăniloae’s theological synthesis can be considered as a solid foundation for the process of the world’s returning to its original unity and spiritual communion between God and man.

Fr. Stăniloae’s theology is morally strengthening the image and likeness of man in Eastern Orthodox Christianity by denouncing the westernization of the Orthodox theological thinking and by creating a new spiritual bridge between the Eastern and Western Christianity.²

In this framework one has to critically analyze the Roman-Catholic traditionalism and Protestant fundamentalism that were paving the way to “postmodernity”, as our era was tentatively called by the liberal Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng in his book *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View*,³ even if his approach and

interpretation of truth was insistently criticized among others by Mortimer J. Adler.⁴

Indeed, Küng identifies all religions as being true, because for every Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist the truth is his own religion and faith. There is not a general, but an existential truth. In this sense, for him, there is only one true religion.⁵

We cannot imagine what salutary effect the spiritual challenge of Fr. Stăniloae's theology would have had upon Hans Küng's theology of the third millennium. Hans Küng is not promoting better human relations in the light of the Holy Spirit, who is also "The Spirit of Truth," as Fr. Stăniloae did by developing a theology of communion between God and man, obviously based on the image and likeness of God in man. As Fr. Stăniloae taught us, true spirituality implies communion, and true communion implies spirituality. A true organic unity in plurality, that is a real unity, cannot make abstraction of a mutual recognition of many diversities and a mutual respect for freedom in a shared unity in diversity, based on Christian love and communion. Following St. Irenaeus who also said: "Where the Church is, there truth is," Fr. Stăniloae has clearly demonstrated that truth is the fullness of reality, and the fullness of reality is God made man, and the communion with Him.

Deeply convinced that the theology of today and tomorrow can no longer remain an individualist or psychologist theology preoccupied exclusively with the inner motives and needs of the soul, nor can it be a strictly confessional theology, nor one which sees the Church as something hermetically sealed off from the world, Fr. Stăniloae insistently stressed his firm belief that "The theology of tomorrow must be open to the whole historical and cosmic reality, but at the same time it must be spiritual. It must help all Christians to achieve a new spirituality, a spirituality proportional to the cosmic dimensions of science and technology and to the universal human community, a spirituality which has already begun to spring up before our eyes"⁶

In this sense Fr. Stăniloae has created a new spiritual synthesis, a new world view of the Eastern Orthodox spirituality based on the image and likeness of God in man.

There is in Fr. Stăniloae's Christian thinking a broader view of religion that makes his theology more comprehensive, articulate and acceptable in a multi confessional world of ideas. All modern Christian problems, especially the changing relations between God and man

during the modern era, are solved in a neoplatonic manner. However, we do not have to disregard the fact that the era of modernity did not totally pass away. The image of the modern man who denies the likeness of God in him is a daily reality whose impact we have to recognize as being obvious. Almost three centuries of “modernity”, fundamentally based on rationality, enlightenment and anthropocentric humanism, have promoted not only science and technology, or colonialism and imperialism, but also the death of religion and that of God in the soul of the modern man.

Studying the basic errors of the modern thought, Mortimer J. Adler has identified ten among which one is called “the fallacy of reductionism”. That means to assign a much greater reality to the parts of an organized whole than to the whole itself. Describing the fallacy of reductionism in the physical world as a mistake that has become most prevalent not only among scientists but also among contemporary philosophers, Mortimer J. Adler insists on its metaphysical aspect affirming that “only the ultimate component parts have reality and that the whole they constitute are mere appearances or even illusory.”⁷

The fallacy of reductionism can also be detected in the contemporary Christian world, which is made up of many parts, as a whole; in many cases one or another part of Christianity is pretending to completely substitute or represent the reality of the whole, thus reducing the whole to the reality of the respective parts.

In this case, the true reality does not belong to the unfragmented whole but to the parts, so to say to the fragments broken apart from the reality of the whole, which therefore is deprived by its fundamental reality and identity.

As a result of this situation the relation between God and mankind, based on the image and likeness of God in man, appears to be also an illusion of these confessional and denominational parts which being separated from the whole, are being deprived of their fundamental reality and identity.

From a different point of view, the relation between the whole and the part was also debated by Bart Kosko in his *Fuzzy Thinking. The New Science of Fuzzy Logic*.⁸ He said that today we can call the whole in the part the probability of the part, by asserting that, according to the fuzzy theory, the relation between the whole and its parts is a matter of degree.

On the contrary, Fr. Stăniloae’s theology is avoiding any kind

of reductionism and the spiritual reality of Eastern Christianity is not presented by him as a substitute for the entire Christianity or in competition for primacy with the Roman Catholic, Anglican or Protestant churches, as well as with the other religions.

One could remark that Fr. Stăniloae's approach to Christianity as a whole is totally different from that of the fallacy of reductionism, because in his theology he emphasizes the person and the communion as the ultimate reality of the Christian world; this approach is based on the doctrine of the image and likeness of God in man; it reveals the true essence of Christianity and its fundamental values on which man's relation to God is founded.

In fact, theologically speaking, the relation between God and man as it is manifested in person and communion constitutes the spiritual background, the fundamental existence of the entire Christianity, upon which the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was based from its very beginning.

The spiritual salvation of the modern man who is refusing to accept the image and likeness of God appears to be even more complicated by the apparition, especially in the Western part of the world, of so many beliefs, cults and new faiths that are openly threatening not only the relation between God and man and its spiritual significance for our life today, but even the existence of the entire Christianity.

As Pat Robertson, the founder and chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in Virginia Beach is reporting, "From the rise of secularism to the fall of communism, the world has now endured a 300 years assault on its very soul. Now the tide is turning. The year 1990 will be remembered as the beginning of the end of secularism. For today we are standing at the threshold of a massive collision of beliefs."⁹

Evidently, we have to prepare ourselves for this imminent collision of such cults and beliefs as *The Children of God*, *Christian Science*, *The Divine Light Mission*, *Eckankar*, *Gurdjieff*, *The Jehovah's Witness*, *Krishna Consciousness*, *Meher Baba*, *the Moonies*, *the Mormons*, *The People's Temple*, *Scientology*, *The Way*, and the *Worldwide Church of God*, as well as new provocative faiths, such as *Baha'i*, *Freemasonry*, *Moral Re-Armament*, *Rastafarianism* and *Transcendental Meditation*, to mention at least some of them. They are largely constituting the new religious emerging realities of the Western

culture in general and the American society in particular.¹⁰

Certainly, the most dangerous among them are those pretending to be Christian and falsely using the Christian terminology, as the *New Age Movement* or the *Cosmic Humanism*, whose essential heresy is the denial of God's authority and the promotion of man into the role of God.¹¹ They create a man-God without likeness of God against the God-Man. There is a strong confrontation, now in full progress, between the secular religious world views and the Christian world view as it is promoted especially by the American Protestants,¹² who want to defend Christianity against these new competing ideologies.

Summarizing the notable studies made by the American Protestants, we have to emphasize here three fundamental world views of Western culture and civilization. I am referring to the "Biblical Christianity", "Marxism/Leninism", and "Secular Humanism", to whom has to be added the "New Age Movement". These preeminent Western world views are largely discussed and analyzed by David A. Noebel, who diligently explores each world view's fundamental beliefs with regard to the field of theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history. His conclusions are to be taken into serious consideration as a substantial contribution to the Christian world view.¹³

Finding fertile soil in the egocentric Western culture of the modern man who lost his image and likeness of God in him, especially in the middle of the 19th century and since, this mystical pantheism promoted by those movements has surprisingly infiltrated the Western culture and art from which it has spread all over the world. It is simply based upon a satanic tautology: God is the world and the world is God. Consequently, the individual humans are part of God's being. The authors are exemplifying this pantheistic heresy with the famous saying of the Oscar-winning actress Shirley MacLaine. While Shirley MacLaine was leading a meditation on the New Age thinking, a voice from the audience called, "With all due respect, I don't think you are a god." Not missing a beat, MacLaine replied, "if you don't see me as god, it's because you don't see yourself as god."¹⁴

Again Fr. Stăniloae's theology of the image and likeness of God is paternally warning us in the spirit of the Holy Fathers that "The mystical experiences which many young people are seeking today in yoga or in Hindu metaphysics are destined to failure unless they lead to personal communion with Christ, to the inexhaustible depth and warmth

of his divine-human person. It is only in the divine-human person of Christ..., that the human person escapes from the hell of solitude..., because only in Jesus Christ do we find the Spirit of inexhaustible communion among men, that is the Church.”¹⁵

Coming back to Shirley MacLaine, we are far from the very truth expressed in 1907 by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935), who stated that “the great act of faith is when man decides that he is not God.”¹⁶

In this context of ideological confusion that characterizes our world today, what is going to happen? Nobody knows. Pat Robertson predicts that the 1990s will be a decade of religious faith but what kind of religious faith? He sincerely said that we do not yet know. “Will the world embrace the claims of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible, or are we to expect the world to turn to an *Age of Aquarius* dominated by the Hindu religion and led by mystic holy men in touch with demonic spirits known as *ascended masters*?”¹⁷

That is the crucial question. It is no secret that Western Christianity, culture and art is already penetrated and infiltrated by the New Age Movement. Already the mass media, the entertainment business, and other means of public influence, occultism and similar sub-cultures are paving the pantheistic ways to the secular religion of self-actualization, self-realization and other New Age-type religious concepts born out of Hinduism.

So, instead of an intellectual and civilized confrontation between the Western Christianity, culture and art, and the Far Eastern religions and cultures, there is now a real conflict between authentic Christian values and pseudo-values pertaining to the above mentioned cults that are totally ignoring the image and likeness of God in man, in other words, the relation between God and man and its spiritual significance for our life today.

However, the most alarming situation seems to be not in the Protestant Churches, although their contribution to some aspects of the New Age Movement might be demonstrated in one way or another, but incredibly enough in the Roman Catholic Church.

Pointing out the contradictions, as well as all the philosophical and theological errors of the New Age Movement, Prof. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., is strongly criticizing Fr. Matthew Fox, O.P., Director of the Institute for Creation Centered Spirituality at the College of the Holy Names in California, especially his theory on creation centered spirituality, because he became a vehicle for Catholics to enter into the New Age Movement with a pseudo Catholic sanction.¹⁸

The Roman Catholic world view of Fr. Matthew Fox is based on two capital questions of our time: In our quest for wisdom and survival, does the human race require a new religious paradigm? And does the creation centered spiritual tradition offer such a paradigm?

Both questions are positively answered by Fr. Fox, despite Catholic criticism that he is operating with “tendentious half truths”, “inadequate analysis” or “downright falsehood”.

Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., clearly shows that Fr. Fox borrows New Age ideas, like the paradigm shift, the threat of ecological disaster, and the need for a new religion and social paradigm. For instance, using the standard New Age belief in astrological ages, Fr. Fox emphasizes his version of Jung’s description of two-thousand-year-long stages in human history. They are: the bull (Taurus) from 4,000 to 2,000 B.C., representing “primitive, instinctual civilizations”; the ram (Aries), from 2,000 B.C. to A.D. 1, characterized by Judaism, conscience, and awareness of evil; and the fish (Pisces), from A.D. 1 to 1997, “dominated religiously by the figure of Christ”.¹⁹

The second question of Fr. Fox’s worldview is directly referring to the so called “Creation Centered Spirituality” as the new religious paradigm proposed by him. This new theological approach is centered “on the inherent goodness of creation and rejects the traditional

Christian focus on the fall of humanity into sin and the need for redemption. He describes it as panentheistic ('everything is in God and God is in everything'), creative, compassionate, justice-seeking, ecological, feminist, and sensual, filled with ecstasy and eros".²⁰

Thus Fr. Matthew Fox, O.P. fundamentally changes the entire Roman Catholic soteriology as well as the Christological dogma when he declares that the birth of the Cosmic Christ in our being and doing is the reason for our existence.

But who is this Cosmic Christ? In the world view of Fr. Matthew Fox, O.P., the "Cosmic Christ" is a *pre-Christian archetype of God* who exists in every creature, the divine pattern "I AM". Jesus incarnates the Cosmic Christ, "but by no means is [it] limited to that person." According to Fox, if Christ was born in the year 1 AD, then in the year 2000 all of us must give birth to the Cosmic Christ.

Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., considers that Fox's statements about the Cosmic Christ sound pantheistic, and it is hard to tell if he believes that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. For this reason, Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., categorically affirms that "the Cosmic Christ theology must not be believed or lived at the expense of the historical Jesus".²¹

If we will take into consideration Fr. Fox's affirmations that "the Church as we have known it is dying", or that "the Christianity as we know it will not survive...", then we have to admit that not only the Roman Catholic Theology is jeopardized, but the entire Christianity.

We have to recognize that much attention was deliberately given to the New Age Movement. But I think for good reasons. Western Christianity and indirectly also Eastern Christianity are under the massive siege of the New Age Movement which wants to replace Christianity forever. "When we see the false religions of the New Age rising from the ruins of the rationalistic and humanistic culture, can we ever again hope that America will know itself to be one nation under God"?²²

To summarize our considerations, we turn now to the concise conclusion of David A. Noebel, who pointed out that, "The New Age worldview is based on theological pantheism (all is God), philosophical monism (all is one substance), ethical relativism (all is changing), biological punctuated evolution (all is progressing), and psychological higher consciousness (all is perfectible). The Cosmic Humanist believes that perfectible human nature provides the best means for governing

under a new world order and that it will create the most just world economic order and legal system - in short, personal freedom will usher man into utopia, where every human being ultimately will experience Christ-consciousness. If God exists within everything, then mankind must simply get in touch with this higher consciousness to attain collective godhood".²³

Thus the image and likeness of God in man and the personal relation between God and man are totally ignored by the man of the New Age Movement, and therefore the Christian religion does not make any sense to him. The old Adam awakened in the man of the New Age Movement rejects the restoration of his image and likeness of God brought to him by the New Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ. Consuming all the fruits offered to him by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the man of the New Age Movement, illusorily enjoying his false godhood, is about to eat from the forbidden Tree of Life. So the second original sin is about to be committed, unfortunately, without any promise of a Saviour or of a new salvation from God.

However, what seems to be really alarming for the human consciousness, is the frightful syncretism that can be noticed in the tendency of the New Age Movement to combine various religious and philosophical systems against a common opponent which is, in our case, the Christian world view. There are so many similarities between the New Age Movement and the Secular Humanism and Marxism/Leninism that one might suspect against apparent reality that we are witnessing a phoenix rising from its ashes to live through another cycle in the centuries ahead. We certainly lack the perspective, but, again, as David A. Noebel has found, "at the foundational level, New Age biology is Marxist biology; New Age psychology is Secular Humanist psychology; New Age politics is Humanist and Marxist politics. While one would think that pantheism would be closer to theism than to atheism, the truth seems to be, 'if everything is God; nothing is God.' The only realm in which Cosmic Humanism is supportive of Christianity is its insistence that the universe could not happen by chance, and there is more reality than matter. In most every other respect, Cosmic Humanists, Secular Humanists, and Marxist/Leninists are family... This sudden ascendancy of the New Age worldview has now made it impossible for the Western world to dismiss Cosmic Humanists as cranks. Indeed, Cosmic Humanism must be viewed with utmost seriousness".²⁴

This severe warning should be completed with the worry of Pat

Robertson. According to him Europe is now the most irreligious part of the world. Europe united under the control of a New Age dictator would menace the globe.²⁵

Communism, humanism, secularism, modernism and particularly atheism may have collapsed at this crossroad of centuries and millenia, but from their ashes the phoenix of the New Age Movement is rising to our Christian astonishment. No wonder that there are so many Hindu temples in the West, and Swamis, Yogis, Gurus and Zen masters seem to be multiplying everywhere. No wonder that the “Lord Meitreya” (the Sanskrit name for Buddha) was declared by a British cult organization the true Messiah and someone who is pretending to be Meitreya is only waiting for his followers around the world to help bring about his “Declaration Day”, when he will proclaim himself the new Christ.²⁶

It is only sad to learn from Fr. Matthew Fox, O.P., about the birth of his Cosmic Christ, but it is really scandalous to understand from the liberal theologian Hans Küng that even Jesus Christ is an obstacle of separation in the way toward the union of all religions. He said: “And in the end there will no longer be standing between the religions a figure that separates them, no more prophet or enlightened one, not Muhammad and not the Buddha. Indeed even Christ Jesus, whom Christians believe in, will no longer stand here as a figure of separation”.²⁷ Any comments are superfluous.

We see in the analysis above a tendency to identify religion with mythology, or at least the study of religion with the study of mythology.²⁸ Perhaps there is more than a matter of preference.

But reversing the historical connection between mythology and religion by inclining the balance in the favor of mythology at the expense of religion, or by considering all religions as being mythologies in disguise, means to fundamentally replace religion with mythology and therefore to open the gate to the New Age movement at the very expense of the Western Christinity in particular and of the entire Christianity in general.

In relation to this disappointing situation what we learn from Fr. Stăniloae is that we have to constantly conscientize the fact that we still live in the age of the Divine grace, that through the uncreated energies of God overflowing upon us we are still able to sanctify our life, to strengthen the image and likeness of God in us.

Referring to the same situation, the well know Western

orthodox theologian Olivier Clément authoritatively concludes: “Thus in a universe desacralized by Christianity, but abandoned to its fall by Christians, we have seen on the one side a science and technology growing up, either with no goal beyond themselves or else secretly inspired by a Luciferian titanism, while on the other side, pantheisms, and mystical atheisms captivated by the mystery of cosmos but opposed to the personal God have flourished... The drama of modern Christianity in the West is to have unleashed the scientific movement without knowing the divine energies, while the East held the secret of these energies, but did not know the humanist impulse and the exploration of matter”.²⁹

What is necessary in our present context for the restoration of God’s image in us is, Fr. Stăniloae suggests, to start the pilgrimage to God by taking up the Cross that is “the only way which carries creation towards the true heights for which it was made, after its fall into the lower regions of existence”.³⁰

Anyhow, the signs are not looking good for the Western Christianity. The evangelist Pat Robertson, after he visited Europe and particularly Eastern Europe following the collapse of Communism, has declared that “despite the efforts of the Christian Democrats and especially the Catholic Church in many countries, Europe is a post-Christian society and a thoroughly hedonistic culture. *We can only pray that the flame of Christianity which has emerged from Eastern Europe - unextinguished and more powerful than anyone even dared to imagine - may be the spark that ignites a great revival throughout Western Europe as well.* [emphasis mine] But that is still just a hope and a prayer at this moment”.³¹ The situation has not changed.

It is very hard to understand the Christian theology, culture, science and art without the doctrine of man’s image and likeness of God and its correct acceptance and interpretation not only as a fundamental dogma of the ontological relationship between God and man in eternity and history, but also as a crucial act of faith that reveals through our Lord Jesus Christ the mystery of this ontological relationship.

According to the great American theologian Jaroslav Pelican, recently converted to the Orthodox Faith, “The doctrine of the image of God has been a major force in the development of characteristically Western ways of looking at the meaning and promise of human life, and as such it deserves the serious attention of anyone seeking to interpret the value systems that have shaped us. If the doctrine of the image is

lost, it is difficult to provide alternative grounding for the ethical norms that are derived from it”.³²

Certainly, his opinion deserves attention, for there is a long history concerning the Western development of the doctrine of the image of God in Christian life, theology, culture, science and art. Prof. Pelikan shows that this doctrine “became a full-blown article of faith - and then went beyond faith to become a part of the philosophy of secular humanism of the Enlightenment and of nineteenth-century idealism”.³³

In this way the conflict between anthropocentrism and theocentrism has reached its maturity. Strictly scrutinizing the doctrine of God’s image and likeness in man, as it was implemented and applied in life and history by the Western Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, one easily understands why the New Age Movement is about to intellectually and probably spiritually conquer the Western culture, civilization and religion. And this will happen because the personal relation between God and mankind, based on the image and likeness of God in man, does not have any spiritual significance for the modern man in our time.

In contrast with the Western Christianity, the doctrine of the image and likeness of God, more especially as Fr. D. Stăniloae elaborated it, has always been the essential and creative force of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Thus it lies at the foundation of the development of characteristically Eastern ways to theandrically achieve the salvation of man through the ontological restoration of his image and likeness of God, and through the establishment of his communion with God and with the world.

In his theological world view, Fr. Stăniloae is revealing the spiritual destiny of the Romanian Orthodox Christianity to be at the same time an ethnical and ecumenical bridge between the Eastern Romanity and Western Romanity, and between the Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Western Christianity. Also, through the ethnical and spiritual equilibrium of the Latin structure of its Eastern Romanity, the Romanian Orthodox Christianity is brotherly exercising its characteristic moderation by ecumenically sharing its sense of communion between the Orthodox world of the Greeks, Arabs and Slavs.

Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia in his foreword to Fr. Stăniloae's

work *The Experience of God*, has deeply perceived the ecumenical vocation of the Romanian Orthodox Christianity as it was expressed by Fr. Stăniloae. “For Romania,” remarks Bishop Kallistos, “represents what Fr. Stăniloae terms ‘oriental Latinity’. As the only Orthodox Church that is Latin in its culture, it has always stood at the cross-roads: between East and West, between Orthodoxy and the Latin tradition, and also between Byzantium and the Slav world. *Within Orthodoxy and within Christendom as a whole, the Romanians see themselves as bridge-builders, whose special vocation it is to express balance, convergence and universality...*”³⁴

In his book *Reflexions concerning the Spirituality of the Romanian People*, recently published in Romania,³⁵ Fr. Stăniloae is splendidly introducing the Romanian Orthodox spirituality, by analyzing the striking parallel between the individualistic and pantheistic character of the Western culture, and the interpersonal spirit of communion of the Romanian culture. Thus the original way in which the Romanians are humanizing the Universal in their national synthesis, according to their own image and likeness of Thraco-Roman distinctiveness, is emphasized by Fr. Stăniloae as a vocational factor of the Romanian spirituality which can be used as a paradigm in the great world cultural dialogue to come, as it was predicted by Mircea Eliade.

We have to stress that during the period of intellectual tyranny of the communist totalitarianism, a period called by Olivier Clément the “Babylonian Captivity” of the Orthodox Theology, Fr. Stăniloae, praised even by his adversaries “as a zealous defender of the Orthodoxy,”³⁶ tacitly created, avoiding any kind of inutile polemics, a very impressive movement of spiritual resistance against the Marxist atheism of that time. And he succeeded. He demonstrated that the true communion of Romanians is their communion in our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

I was blessed by God to be one of Fr. Stăniloae’s disciples of the first generation of students he taught in 1946 at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. The spiritual intimacy I shared with Fr. Stăniloae from the very beginning has essentially changed my theological and literary structure, as I was directly initiated by him in the Romanian Theology of culture.

The *Romanian Communion*, a literary magazine of theology, culture and art, that I founded together with my wife Didi, in Detroit,

Michigan (1973-1984), was written and edited in the spirit of Fr. Stăniloae's theology.

In December 1979, I attended the first session dedicated to the Romanian Humanism that was academically organized and presided over by Professor Dr. ăerban C. Andronescu at the Convention of the Modern Languages Association of America, in San Francisco, California. On this occasion, in my paper *The Christian Essence of the Romanian Humanism*,³⁷ I presented the three volumes of the *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* by Fr. Stăniloae, as the most authentic Romanian monument of spiritual thinking dedicated to the real theandric humanism as it was always lived, confessed and practiced by the Romanian Christianity in direct relation with the mystery of the hypostatic union of the two natures, divine and human, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Following Fr. Stăniloae's way of thinking, based on the image and likeness of God in man, I demonstrated then that through the hypostatic union, our Lord Jesus Christ saved mankind, opening the gate of the real theocentric humanism which means, in essence, the spiritual perfection of man in full communion with God, with the created world and with himself.

At Jacques Maritain's prediction that at the end of this secular evolution we will find ourselves facing two absolute positions: pure atheism or pure Christianity,³⁸ I stressed in the conclusion of my paper that "only the hypostatic structure of the Romanian theandric humanism, uniting the anthropocentric and theocentric humanism in the same ontological reality, could be the best alternative of any kind of contemporary anthropocentric humanism."

That is why I always have considered Fr. Stăniloae's theology the best Christian world view, able to answer all the anthropocentric challenges of our secular society and, certainly, all the religious hesitations of the modern man in his search for his image and likeness of God.

NOTES

1. For American readers two books by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae are extremely important: 1. *Theology and the Church*, a collection of essays from various Romanian theological journals, translated by Fr. Robert Barringer and foreword by John Meyendorff, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1980; 2. *The Experience of God*, which is the first volume of Fr. Stăniloae's *Dogmatic Theology*, excellently translated by the Reverend Fathers Ioan Ionița of Lansing, Illinois, USA, and Robert Barringer of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, accompanied by a very comprehensive foreword about

Fr. Stăniloae's personality and work, by His Grace Bishop Kallistos Ware, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994, 280 pp.

Also the English reader could take advantage of Fr. Stăniloae's numerous essays published or edited by A.M. Allchin, especially in *Sobornost*, the Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (London, England). A special note deserve for their large circulation *The Victory of the Cross, A talk on suffering given at Fairacres in 1970*, Introduction by A.M. Allchin, 5th edition 1983, SLG Press, Convent of the Incarnation, Fairacres Oxford, and *Prayer and Holiness, The Icon of Man Renewed in God*, Introduction by A.M. Allchin, second edition 1984, SLG Press, Convent of the Incarnation, Fairacres Oxford.

A list of Fr. Stăniloae's theological books and essays translated and published in various European languages could be found in the Notes of His Grace Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, in his foreword to Fr. Stăniloae's book *The Experience of God*, mentioned above.

For Romanian-American and Romanian-Canadian readers we recommend Fr. Stăniloae's articles and essays published in Romanian or English, especially in *The Faith, Romanian Herald of Orthodox Spirituality* and *The Faith-Calendar*, both published in Detroit, Michigan, by the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada, as well as in the *Romanian Communion, Literary Magazine of Theology, Culture and Art*, founded and edited by George Alexe (Detroit, Michigan 1973-1984).

Last but not least we have to mention that in the 1993 edition of the *Credința-The Faith Calendar*, Romanian-American and Romanian-Canadian readers could spiritually share Fr. Stăniloae's meditation *The Prayer and the Light of the Holy Spirit* (pp. 77-80, in Romanian), as well as the homage devoutly paid to Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae on his 90th birthday by the Very Rev. Fr. Ioan Ionița in his essay "Theology as experience of the Divine Mysteries" (pp. 72-77, also in Romanian).

2. See: Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. II, London, Oxford University Press, 1934, pp. 180-181. Also: *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, edited by John Mc Mannors, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990, especially Chap. VIII: "Enlightenment: Secular and Christian (1600-1800)".

3. Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View*, Transl. by Peter Heinegg, First Edition, New York, Doubleday, 1988, pp. 1-11.

4. Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion, The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth, An Essay in the Philosophy of Religion*, New York, NY, First Collier Books Edition, MacMillan 1991, pp. 83.

5. Hans Küng, *op. cit.*, pp. 237 and 249.

6. D. Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, Transl. by Robert Barringer, Foreword by John Meyendorff, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1980, p. 226.

7. Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, MacMillan, New York, and Collier MacMillan, London, 1985, p. XIX.

8. Bart Kosko, *Fuzzy Thinking, The New Science of Fuzzy Logic*, Hyperion, New York, 1993, First Edition, pp. 56-64.

9. Pat Robertson, *The New Millennium*, Word, Dallas-London-Vancouver-Melbourne, 1990, pp. 69-70.

10. See: John Butterworth, *A Book of Beliefs, Cults and New Faiths*, David C. Cook, Elgin, Illinois - Weston, Ontario, 1981.
11. Pat Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
12. Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict, Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992.
13. David A. Noebel, *Understanding the times, The Story of the Biblical Christian, Marxist/Leninist, and Secular Humanist Worldview*, Summit Press, Manitou Springs, Colorado, 1991, 896 pp. The author mentions that he received requests for this book to be translated into Romanian, Polish, Russian and Lituanian.
14. See: David K. Clark and Norman L. Geisler, *Apologetics in the New Age, A Christian Critique of Pantheism*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991, pp. 9-10.
15. Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "The Holy Spirit in the Theology and Life of the Orthodox Church," in *Sobornost, The Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius*, London, Series 7: No. 1, Summer, 1975, p. 11.
16. See: *The Great Quotations*, compiled by George Seldes, with an Introduction by J. Donald Adams, New York, Pocket Books, 4th Printing, 1969, p. 341.
17. Pat Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
18. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., *Catholics and the New Age. How Good People Are Being Drawn into Jungian Psychology, the Enneagram, and the Age of Aquarius*, Published with the permission of Superiors, Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, MI, 1992, especially Chap. VIII: "Matthew Fox and Creation Centered Spirituality," pp. 173-189. Fr. Pacwa is critically quoting the following books of Fr. Fox: *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1988); *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1983); *A Spirituality Named Compassion and the Healing of the Global Village, Humpty Dumpty and Us* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); and: *WHEE, Wee, wee All the Way Home: A Guide to the New Sensual Spirituality* (Wilmington: A Consortium Book, 1976); *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
19. *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 184.
20. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 219.
21. *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 188
22. Pat Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 297.
23. David A. Noebel, *op. cit.*, p. 870.
24. *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 873. See also: George Hague, "Subtle Seduction, Why some Christians are turning to the New Age," in *The Plain Truth, A Magazine of Understanding*, Published by the Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, 1993, Vol. 58, No. 8 (September), p. 14-18.
25. Pat Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
26. *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 76, 88.
27. Hans Küng, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
28. Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion*, p. 80. Especially Chap. IX: "The Study of Religion and Mythology," pp. 40-68.

29. Olivier Clément, "Purification by Atheism," in *Orthodoxy and the Death of God, Essays in Contemporary Theology*, edited by A.M. Alchin, London, Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1971, p. 37.
30. Dumitru Stăniloae, "The Cross as the Gift of the World," in: *Sobornost, The Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius*, London, Winter 1971, Series 6, No. 2, p. 101.
31. Pat Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
32. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Melody of Theology, A Philosophical Dictionary*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1988, p. 138.
33. *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 139.
34. See: Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, "Foreword," in: Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, Transl. by Ioan Ionița and Robert Barringer, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts. Also: George Alexe, "Thraco-Roman Distinctiveness of Byzantine and Romanian Christianity," Paper presented at the 25th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 10-13, 1990, in: *Calendarul Credința-The Faith 1992*, Detroit, Michigan, The Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada, pp. 94-105.
35. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflexions concerning the Spirituality of the Romanian people*, [in Romanian], Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1992, 162 pp. The first two chapters of this book were previously published in our literary magazine *Romanian Communion*.
36. _____, *History of Romanian Philosophy*, [in Romanian] Vol. II, The First Part (1900-1944), Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1980, p. 613. See pp. 565-758: "Systems and philosophical currents of spiritualistic orientation."
37. George Alexe, "Christian Essence of the Romanian Humanism," Paper presented at the Convention of the Modern Languages Association of America, San Francisco, California, December 29, 1979, published in: *Romanian Communion*, Detroit, Michigan, VIII-IX, 1980-1981, No. 18-20, pp. 12-14.
38. See: Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938, p. 126.

The Concept of IMAGO DEI in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Theology and its Significance for Our Life Today

“We walk troubled and unwillingly through
the powers of night we pursue you We kiss
the star under heel in the dust, and we ask of
You Elohim....Up to the ultimate margins we
look We the saints, we the waters, We the
thieves, we the stones; The way back we do
not know anymore Elohim, Elohim!”

Lucian Blaga

Acknowledgement

In an age coming after the theology of the death of God, in a post-Christian, new pagan society (Leslie Newbegin) where the worrying process of secularization and detraditionalization (R.N. Bellah, R. Madsen et al., *Habits of the Heart*, Harper & Row, 1985) led to a new kind of theological syncretism and crisis of theological identity in the churches, people become more and more aware of the importance of the inner life and the interest for spirituality becomes a major preoccupation for churches.

In this society, which becomes more and more electronic, and where the super power of continually new technologies glorifies and depersonalizes the human beings, immersing them in speed instead of ecstasy,¹ contemplation, wonder and devotion, making them the image of the machines they worship and running them to perdition, the problem of the authenticity of human beings, of their real image, the problem of *imago dei* continues to be a very contemporary concern.

In this sense, the tradition of the Early Christian Church is a rich resource of inspiration for finding concepts, interpretations, ways of actualization of fundamental human values as a help in the imperious necessity to overcome the multi-leveled crisis of today's life.

In this context, the concept of *imago dei* in St. Gregory of Nyssa's theology finds its value and relevance.

Method and Development

In this paper I will try to present some guidelines of St. Gregory of Nyssa's theology of *imago dei* introducing first, in a few words, his personality, theology and a general theological background of his time. After that, I will proceed to a systematic presentation of the development of the concept of *imago dei* in its different stages: before the Fall, after the Fall and its restoration in Jesus Christ, including different aspects and implications of the involution and evolution of the image of God in the life of human beings and in that of creation.

In a way which might be unusual in such a paper, I related Gregory of Nyssa's thought throughout the paper to authors from our modern history who are not theologians and who might not have known him, but whose teaching in the aspects mentioned here is in full consistency with that of the bishop of Nyssa. I did that, so that the relevance of St. Gregory of Nyssa's theology of *imago dei* for the spiritual life in the Church and our society today could become more evident.

Biographical Data

St. Gregory of Nyssa, recognized as the most honored among the Nicene Fathers, rightly called "Fathers of Fathers" or "the star of Nyssa",² was one of the three Cappadocian Fathers along with his brother St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus or the Theologian. G. Florovsky writes that St. Gregory of Nyssa "had perhaps the most strictly logical mind of all the Fathers",³ and that he was "one of the most powerful and most original thinkers ever known in the history of the Church."⁴

He was born around 331 A.D.⁵ in a well-to-do devoted Christian family of ten children, some of whom became saints of the church. His grandmother Macrina, his mother Emmelia and his sister, also named Macrina, exercised a strong influence in the family concerning the dedication to an authentic Christian faith and life. Gregory was educated at the local schools. He did not attend foreign schools for special studies as his brother Basil did. Later, however, when he spent time in the monastery with Basil, he learned from his brother much of what he studied in Athens, for which Gregory always spoke with great respect of him. Gregory was a diligent auto-didact and he became very well instructed in theology and philosophy. He tried to introduce what was the most valuable in the lay classical culture into Christian thought and

developed steadfast efforts in defending the Nicene doctrines vis-à-vis the heresies of his time, a fact for which all Cappadocians were famous.

Later he became a rhetorician and married Theosebeia, but this was not an impediment to entering the monastic life after some years. After many hesitations and tribulations, he even became bishop of Nyssa in 371. A few years later he began to have problems at Nyssa, and in 374 the Arian emperor Valens exiled him and replaced him with an Arian bishop. But in 378 Valens was succeeded by the orthodox emperor Gratian and Gregory and all other bishops who were exiled were reinstated. In 379 his brother Basil died and Gregory became “one of the foremost champions of Orthodoxy.”⁶ His zeal in the defense of Nicene doctrines established him as a theological authority, and thus he had a major role in the whole of the work of the Second Ecumenical Council, at Constantinople, in 381, where the terminology adopted to define the dogmas of the Trinity and hypostases were especially taken from his works.⁷

In 394 he was present at another synod at Constantinople, and after that there is no more information about him.⁸ Probably he died in 395 A.D.. He is commemorated in the Eastern Church on January 10th and in the Latin Church on March 9th.⁹

On his works; characteristics

St. Gregory of Nyssa, the most intellectual, the most profound of the Cappadocian Fathers, called by St. Maximus the Confessor, VII century, “le docteur de l’ univers”, wrote a great variety of works: theological, moral, ascetical, treatises, apologetic books, letters. I mention here just a few of them, “à titre d’ exemple”: *The twelve books against Eunomius, The Great Catechism, On the Making of Man, On the Holy Trinity, On “Not Three Gods”, On the Holy Spirit, On Virginity,*¹⁰ *The Life of Moses, The Life of Holy Macrina, etc.*

In his books, he treated a large variety of problems from the divine essence and energies - in this respect being a predecessor of St. Gregory Palamas - to the two natures of Christ; from the existence of evil in the world to the final re-integration of creation in the divine communion, where he shows his Origenism; from the knowledge of God through contemplation - εὐαὐνῆσά - to self-knowledge - αἰὼὸᾶ ὀάάίὸδὶ - of concern both to Socrates and to the Apostle Paul; from the humility of God to the glorification of man in the divine communion in

the Kingdom of God and many others. However, three great directions in his theological preoccupations can be distinguished: the problem of evil, the relation between the ideal man and the actual man, and the Spirit.¹¹

In his writings, where he proved an excellence of style, St. Gregory used any means to put philosophy in the service of theology at the level of speculation, reflection, expression, vocabulary, method, etc. But when he does that, he does not become servile and dependent on philosophy, but does it with authority and competence. Even if he can be highly speculative, he does not want through that to rationalize the revelational truth. He remains a mystic of the Christian Church and a theologian of *via negativa*, showing evidently his apophatism in the way of doing theology.

Like the other two Cappadocians, St. Gregory of Nyssa was visibly an Origenist, but not to the point of being overwhelmed and dominated. While following Origen he still kept his distance and independence.¹² He diligently studied Origen when he spent time in the monastery with his brother Basil, and they even wrote a book, *Philocalia* with excerpts from the most beautiful parts of Origen's works. From Origen he kept as an inheritance the extensive use of Holy Scriptures as a work method. This is visible in all his writings, and sometimes he produced entire books where he just interpreted passages or books of the Holy Scriptures, such as *On Beatitudes*, *The Life of Moses*, and others. He also inherited from Origen the concept of Apokatastasis - ἐπίστασις - understood as a universal restoration of all things in their primordial virginal state. Gregory also has Platonic and Plotinian influences in his writings.¹³

The heresies of his time

The heresies of his time were especially related to the theology of the Trinity and of the Incarnation. First, Arianism, with its teaching that Jesus Christ was creature and the resultant confusion concerning the understanding of the Trinitarian doctrines, to which Gregory responds largely in his books against Eunomius. Second, Apolinarianism, which taught that in Jesus Christ the divine Logos had replaced the human soul, to which St. Gregory, like the other two Cappadocians, answered by teaching that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man and only in that way the power of God was fully manifested in the works of

Incarnation, and that Jesus saved what He assumed and if He assumed only the human body He saved only that, and the soul remained unsaved, which is contrary to the Scriptural revelation. Third, Macedonianism, or the heresy of pneumatomaches, which considered the Holy Spirit to be a creature and to which St. Gregory answers in detail in his works on the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His consubstantiality with the Father and the Son.

Generally we can say that Gregory and the other orthodox theologians fought against these heresies in three main ways: (1) reconsidering the scriptural passages which were controverted, reinterpreting those texts in a more rational way than allegorical; (2) stressing the unity of Scripture as a whole, which only in this way is a means in the economy of salvation, fighting against the method of isolating texts from their general context and interpreting them arbitrarily; (3) the effort to give a more harmonious expression to the Tradition - *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παράδοση* - as unity between the faith confessed and lived and the contemporary expression of the theology of the Church.¹⁴

St. Gregory's Apophatism

As St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, speaking on God, starts with what God is not, thus inscribing himself in the line of apophatic theology, being indeed also one of its creators. In order to better justify his position, St. Gregory recalls one's attention on the human condition in the world, invoking definition-texts or images from the Scriptures. The human being is "dust and ashes" (Gen. 18,27), "grass" (Isaia 40,6), "like the grass" (Ps. 36,2), "vanity" (Eccles. 1,2), "miserable" (I Cor. 15,19). And then, when the problem of speaking on God comes, St. Gregory doubts that one can express God's nature, which is inexpressible.¹⁵ Or, as we find mentioned aphoristically, only God can talk appropriately about God.¹⁶

And not only speaking on God's essence do we not have adequate words, but even in trying to speak about God's attributes manifested in creation, about God's incorruptibility and perfections, as long as the attributes refer to the divine nature, our words would be insufficient to express the plenitude of God's essence or relation between essence and attributes.¹⁷ And this, because the nature of God in itself is totally unapproachable and we do not have the capability that would make us comprehend Him.¹⁸

It is interesting to find out that even though there is such a difference and inadequacy between our words and the reality of God, St. Gregory makes evident that we have something in common with God, connatural with Him and this is the humility. The humility is in conformity to our nature, and if one in life follows that which is in conformity with one's nature, that is, the humility, because it conforms to God's nature, too, one will wear like a vestment the beatific form of God.¹⁹ St. Gregory offers a very plastic image to express the ineffability of God and to found his apophatic theology. He says that just as every person breathes air according to the capacity of his or her lungs, a capacity ordered according to how much is necessary to that person, and nobody can exhaust all air, so in the same way with the understanding of Scripture, of Revelation, of God, every person understands according to his/her own capacity and intelligence. But the real grandeur of God, no one can understand.²⁰ And in order to be scripturally founded, he quotes: "Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on the earth, so let your words be few" (Eccl. 5,2).

*The place of **imago dei** in St. Gregory's theology*

As R. Leys noticed, the image of God is the key of Gregory's spiritual teaching, "la pièce maîtresse" of his theological speculation.²¹ To explain the notion of image in all its aspects and implications, from the face to face position of man *coram Deo*, through the involution by Fall and the evolution in Christ, until the final glorification of man in the same face to face position of the divine communion, is one of the major preoccupations of Gregory, present throughout his work.

The concept of the Image of God encompasses the whole of Gregory's Anthropology. J. Daniélou says that all anthropology in Gregory of Nyssa is centered on the theology of God's image.²² This concept forms the foundation of his teaching not only on the intuition of God but also on the mystical ascent of man.²³ For Father Florovsky, Gregory ignores the ontological aspect of the problem, and the image has in view man's communion with God. This is based on St. Gregory's own affirmation that the image of God in us does not explain the ontological status of man because it is beyond our comprehension; The image does not explain but is only a reflection of God's ontological status which is beyond our comprehension.²⁴

Indeed, for St. Gregory as an apophatic theologian, any theological discourse and everything in creation does not explicate but indicates the mystery. According to his thought, and especially in *On Virginity* and *On the Making of Man*, the human being as God's image and the whole creation as a "lieu théophanique" express more or less visible but permanently their ultimate tension, their most profound desire and longing for the reintegration in God's communion, and at the same time, they represent a silent witness of God's mystery.

Listening to the Icon in silence

Although apophatic, but having to deal with so subtle problems like what the image tells us about God or what and how God speaks to us about image, Gregory wants to make these problems understandable at the level of the human logic; in order to be clearly and correctly understood in his explanations, St. Gregory appeals to analogies and examples. For instance, when he wants to show how the image speaks about God, he uses the example of the glass reflecting the sun. One can see God through the image the way in which the sun can be seen in a small piece of glass, just for a second. However, the sun is not identical with the glass nor with that reflection. In the same way, the reflections of the divine attributes shine forth in the narrow limits of our nature.²⁵ Or "if you look at the sun in a mirror," Gregory says, "even though you have not turned your eyes to heaven, you still see its radiance no less than those who look at its actual orb; in the same way, the Lord tells you that although you do not have the power to look directly at the light, by returning to the original state of grace in which your image was given to you in the beginning, you will have what you seek within yourself."²⁶

Also through analogies, St. Gregory explains how the image is possible and how it is to be understood. He uses the example of a painter: as a painter transfers human forms to his/her pictures by the means of certain colors, laying on the copy the proper and corresponding tints so that the beauty of the original may be transferred to the likeness, so our Maker, also painting the portrait to resemble His own beauty, by the addition of virtues, as it was with colors, shows in us His own sovereignty.²⁷ He specifies yet that the image does not lay only in form as it can be suggested by the example, but in the spiritual traits or interior tints such as mind, word, love, apprehension,

understanding.²⁸ When Gregory says that the image does not consist *only in form*, he does not give to that any materialistic meaning but he speaks allegorically because in many other places he speaks clearly that the soul alone is made in God's image.²⁹ As P. Evdokimov explains, we have to put aside any substantialist thinking of the image. The image is not an element of our being; rather our entire being is created in God's image.³⁰ This spiritual character of the image and its reference to the totality of human being, is reflected in G. Florovsky and Quasten's comments on this subject when they discuss the theology of Gregory of Nyssa: Although the intellect is the focal point of *Imago Dei*, it encompasses all spiritual qualities of humanity.³¹ "Gregory uses the term *image*, as the comprehensive expression for man's entire endowment of divine gifts, his original state of perfection."³² In fact, all the terms used by Gregory for Image indicate supernatural realities³³ but refer at the same time to the nature of man. Man after the Image is what he/she is by nature. But nature for Gregory refers to our intellectual and supernatural life.³⁴

In the fact that in St. Gregory's theology the Image refers both to supernatural realities and to human nature, one can see a contradiction. However, this understanding of the Image by Gregory is consistent with his concept about the compatibility of human nature with God's nature. For Gregory, *natura capax infiniti*; this is not to be understood in the sense of identity but of unity in diversity; human nature is for Gregory even co-natural with God's nature, as we will see later in the development of his thought. But this excludes any confusion and is better explained when he speaks about prototype and image in terms of similarity and dissimilarity. For Gregory there is no separation between *natura pura* and *dona superadita* or between nature and grace; the human nature is the human being with all its essential attributes and this all is the expression of God's grace. Hans Urs von Balthasar explains that in terms of *analogia entis* and of what he figuratively calls "created grace": The image of God in us is the concrete form of analogy of being; it is this relationship that elevates us from the level of nature (as creature) to the level of created grace.³⁵

This compatibility between the divine nature and human nature or co-naturality, obviously and again, understood in terms of grace and in terms of similarity and dissimilarity, is underlined also in St. Gregory's exegesis of man's primordial state. In virtue of man's similarity with God, man was not endowed with the capacity to die,

man was not made mortal, otherwise human beings would not be or have been image of God. Here St. Gregory is very subtle but clear. In other words, man was not created *posse mori*, nor was he created *non posse mori*, neither *non posse non mori*, but *posse non mori*. St. Gregory makes a difference between *posse mori* and *posse non mori*. For him the *posse mori* was not given to man but the *posse non mori*; the *posse mori* condition is man's work, not God's. In his primordial nature, Gregory says, man had not the capacity to die, nor was this capacity joint as an essential property to his nature, because if that would have been the case, man would have been in an opposite image to the archetype, not in the image of the archetype.³⁶

In relation to this direct proportional rapport between image and archetype, St. Gregory develops his theology of beauty. Not without Platonic influences, the bishop of Nyssa sees the divine beauty as unspeakable bliss³⁷ which is transferred to another level to the image. For him, the human mind was made as if to be a mirror to reflect the figure of that which is expressed,³⁸ the beauty. To be image of God is to have the possibility of being beautiful,³⁹ the deiform beauty- εἰκαστικὸν -is our real condition as *Imago Dei*.⁴⁰ If, in reflecting God's beauty, man is Image and if man is created by God's love, then the degeneration of the beauty of God's image in human being is due to the rejection, by man, of God's love. The integrity of the Image supposes love. Love maintains the elements of the Image in their proper form. If love is absent, the elements of the Image are no longer deiform but deformed, Father Meyendorff comments on Gregory's theology at this point.⁴¹

The original condition

For St. Gregory of Nyssa, the possibility of being of the created order is related to the divine will and power. All creation that came into existence is a "movement of divine will, an impulse of design, a transmission of power beginning from the Father, advancing through the Son and completed in the Holy Spirit."⁴² But this power and love do not stop at the level of Trinitarian circuit but being self-diffusion and overflowing, they are a manifestation of God outside the intra-Trinitarian divine life, and this is creation. That is how the human being appears as a reproduction of the supreme power of God,⁴³ as a manifestation of the economic Trinity. As Gregory shows throughout all of his works, the attributes of God cannot be understood separately from

each other, but only operating together in a divine perichoretic way; as the world and the human being are the expression of God's will and power, so are they also the expression of God's love. That is why St. Gregory says that God was not obliged to create man. He created him out of a burst of love.⁴⁴

In the light of this understanding of creation as a "prolongation" of the power and love of God outside the Trinity, the human being as image is in a relation of kinship (parenté) with God. Gregory develops in several places in his works this concept of kinship; God's image in us is founded on our kinship with Him, R. Leys reads in St. Gregory.⁴⁵

In their primeval condition the human beings living in an incorrupted body and keeping the kinship clean by obedience, lived *coram Deo* in a face-to-face relationship. This kind of relationship was consistent with the structure and definition of *Imago*, in the fact that God is The Seer and man as Image is the one who sees Him whom sees him. St. Gregory shows that the word εἰδὼ comes from εἰδῶράιέ, εἰδῶνάιέ, εἰδῶν, to see; God is εἰδὼ, the Seer, the One who sees everything, penetrates all things.⁴⁶ Therefore, in likeness of the Seer, to see the Seer is the life of the soul⁴⁷ and its normal ontologic condition. But this does not imply any materialistic dimension because, consistent in his apophatism, St. Gregory explains that in front of the abyss of God's mystery, in fact to see is not to see. The real vision is not to see as the real and ultimate knowledge is not to know. However, this limit of man in front of the divine mystery is not the cause of darkening the Image, but contrarily, being in such close relationship to God, the divine beauty reflected in the soul was the cause of a strong attraction or propension of the soul towards the original.⁴⁸ With the Image unstained, in the beginning man was not bound to necessity in any way, otherwise it would mean to falsify the meaning of the Image,⁴⁹ therefore one can say that man enjoyed the state of incorruptibility even in the body,⁵⁰ of honor and power, of freedom in the spirit (apatheia).⁵¹ This freedom remained an essential dimension of the human being and also the ultimate human mystery.

The essential relation: Image-Prototype

The incorruptibility and the immortality of the Prototype whose image the soul is, are described by St. Gregory of Nyssa in the

following terms: “the Prototype is the only one who does not receive His beauty from another source, who is not beautiful only temporarily or unilaterally but is beautiful in Himself, through Himself, of Himself, always beautiful without never becoming or having to cease of being, always identical to Himself, superior to any addition or improvement, unmodifyable and unchangeable.”⁵² It is clear from this description that the image cannot be identical to the prototype,⁵³ but the relation is a paradoxical one, of revelation and of hiddenness concomitantly: the image is the place where God uncovers and hides Himself at the same time.⁵⁴ Vis-à-vis the Image we are, God remains a luminous mystery that irradiates light, life, sense.⁵⁵ “Between man as Image,” says Father Stăniloae, “and God as prototype, there is that unity of the contrasts that gives to man permanently the possibility to approach God and to God to be more and more present in man, but in a way which is perfectly inconfoundable.”⁵⁶ This dialectic of the relationship image-prototype leads to the problem of similarity and dissimilarity. The difference does not consist in attributes of being but in the mode of subsistence: uncreated on the one hand and created on the other hand.⁵⁷ St. Gregory explains it plastically: the uncreated Prototype is *A* and the created image is *a*.⁵⁸

It is obvious that the bishop of Nyssa speaks of *imago dei* at this level, in both ways: in terms of similarity and of dissimilarity as well. For him, *imago* cannot be called so except if it sums up all the traits of the archetype. But on the other hand, while defending the divine transcendence against Eunomius, he stresses the difference between Image and Archetype, saying that “it would not be an Image if it would be identical with the Archetype.”⁵⁹ Gregory is aware of the risk of misinterpreting this subject and he warns specifically not to make a one-to-one correspondence between the terms because again likeness excludes identity.⁶⁰

In its relationship to the Prototype, the soul as *imago* is the *locus Dei* in the sense that the soul not only participates in the divine beauty of the Prototype but is also the place of its manifestation.⁶¹ The image is a tension, longing, desire, propension towards its source; “the image does not exist in itself, it is totally oriented towards the ‘manifestation’ of the archetype, it is mediator between beings that seek each other, it is *sign*.”⁶²

St. Gregory distinguishes between similarity and dissimilarity of the Image with the Prototype before the Fall and after. In this respect,

thinking of the situation after the Fall, he asks, how the corruptible is image of the incorruptible, how the mortal is image of the immortal? He says that what was created in the Image was one thing, and what we have here now, in our fallen state is another thing. However, this is not an explanation, but just a distinction. Although he mentions that in so far as we are capable to apprehend the conjectures and inferences of things, nevertheless, for questions like the one he put he specifies, “perhaps only the very Truth knows!”⁶³

In any state, before or after the Fall, the soul's ardent desire for the essential beauty of the Archetype, pushes the Image toward this goal. This goal is just to have again what the soul had. Speaking in ideal terms, St. Gregory says, the one who is made in God's image - ἐὰν ἂν ἀποστῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰκόθεν - does not turn away from the divine resemblance, but carries in him the characteristics⁶⁵ of his archetype.⁶⁶

The World as Locus Imaginis

For Origen, the marks of the divine image in man are not in the form of the human body but of human mind.⁶⁷ St. Gregory of Nyssa also maintains that the body is not part of the Image. However, the body is not foreign to it, the body is image of the image or mirror of the mirror.⁶⁸ The reference is made here to the body in the present state.

Father Stăniloae finds in St. Gregory's theology a compatibility between spirit and body without any confusion; the human body is organized through its reason and through spirit in such a way that these could manifest themselves in it.⁶⁹

And as Origen had also his doctrine of the spiritual body, so has Gregory. He may seem to be contradicting himself at times but one should pay attention to the fact that Gregory has the firm belief that the real world is immaterial, intelligible, ideal.⁷⁰ That is why when he speaks of world or body, one should have in view the whole understanding of Gregory on these notions and also the context in which he speaks.

For instance, in *De hominis officio* and *Oratio Catechetica*, the bishop suggests that the body belongs after all to the image of God in man because of the beauty of its form and the royal nature of the way in which it presents itself. This is another way of saying that the body belongs to the essential nature of man and must have a place in its ultimate destiny.⁷¹ Far from being contradictory to Gregory's understanding of the body, as we mentioned above, this text is fully consistent with the theology of Incarnation, in that, Jesus took human body in order to restore the spiritual body and to keep it after Resurrection. The text is also consistent with the theology of creation according to which man is not only spirit, nor only body but both at once in an indissoluble unity with no confusion and in that God is creator not of something that existed already but of something totally new, unique. For St. Gregory, man is not the image of the world and the

world is not the image of God. He combats the philosophers that speak of man as world's image and who "dignify man with the attribute of the gnat and of the mouse." In this image, there is no excellence, no greatness, he says.⁷²

However, Father Florovsky reads in Gregory's theology the fact that man is also world's image but this is not like man is God's image but in the sense that man as microcosm encompasses the world, and, of course, the chief dignity of man is not in that, but being God's image.⁷³

L. Thunberg has a similar interpretation, thinking that in Gregory's theology there is a likeness of man to the world but only it is not there where the greatness of man is.⁷⁴

However, man is a mediator between the intelligible and the sensible world,⁷⁵ as he/she is living between two extremities, the beginning and the end; but at this point Gregory builds his theology of the interval explaining that in each of these extremities, the divine power is there to strengthen our nature. The power of God occupies also all the space of the interval. But the interval is our life, the life of creation.⁷⁶ As image of God in the interval, "man is the center of creation and his free self-determination defines the ultimate destiny of the universe."⁷⁷ The dialogical position of man as intermediary between the two worlds, spiritual and material,⁷⁸ man's cosmic role in the universe⁷⁹ and his/her responsibility towards it, makes man to be a leader of creation in its ascendent, spiritual evolution towards its deification.

From Image through contemplation to the Mystery

R. Leys sees in St. Gregory's theology the kinship we spoke previously of, as a principle of knowledge.⁸⁰ On this basis, the Image is understood more completely as a sign of God that challenges and introduces man to the divine knowledge.⁸¹ This interpellation, challenge and introduction to the process of the knowledge of God, is already the way of participation. This is a participation *by* knowledge and love *in* the knowledge and love of God with the perspective of a participation in God's fullness⁸² which will lead man to the union with God. But as Leys observes, in St. Gregory of Nyssa, all this process is already grace. *Imago* is a way of knowledge but the theology of *imago Dei* is a theology of grace because it is the grace that makes man to be *imago Dei*.⁸³

The grace of knowledge of God yet starts with the contemplation (εἰςὐὴβᾶ, from εἰδὸ and ὐὴὔ = to see God) of things visible. The energies of God can be contemplated in creation. The energies, the power of God can be discovered and contemplated in the universe because they are the ontologic structure of it. The beauty of creation, its stability and harmony, are traces that lead to the “understanding” of God’s ineffable power that overcome any understanding.⁸⁴

Because the power of God is differently manifested in human beings and the rest of creation, Father Florovsky says that Gregory of Nyssa teaches also about the knowledge of God through self-knowledge.⁸⁵ For V. Lossky, this self-knowledge is an interiorization of contemplation by purification through virtues. At this point, the soul contemplates in itself like in a mirror the deifying energies of God. This is the real way for procuring the beatitude, not simply contemplating the divine attributes, not knowing something about God, but having God within oneself.⁸⁶ In this way, one can say that the contemplation repatriates the soul in the Being.⁸⁷

For St. Gregory, therefore, the Image introduces us to and is realized itself through knowledge. With visible Platonic influences, Gregory stresses permanently the necessity of going *beyond* - from the sensible world to the intelligible realities. One should not stop one’s eye to the appearances, nor should one count for nothing what, at first view, is not visible,⁸⁸ but one should exercise one’s eye to see the reflection of the divine beauty beyond the beauty of things.⁸⁹

There is always a *beyond* in St. Gregory’s theology. This is the foundation of any knowledge. In the *beyond* is hidden the reality that the knowledge of man cannot exhaust or overcome but only indicate: the mystery. Gregory says that our true knowledge is what we do not and cannot know because that which we seek is beyond our cognition.⁹⁰ Indeed, St. Gregory teaches the acceptance of the mystery of God, of creation, of man. Explanation is superficial and misleading. As E. Cioran says, “in an explained universe, nothing would still have a meaning but madness itself,”⁹¹ a fact noticed by Einstein also: “The most incomprehensible thing in the world is that the world should be comprehensible.” As Lucian Blaga said, in the presence of the mystery, one should not try to clarify it, to explain it, but our task is to deepen it in order to transform it in a greater mystery.⁹² Understanding Gregory and Origen in precisely this way, Pseudo-Dionysius, teaching on the

stages of spiritual ascent of man, said that after purification and illumination or knowledge, the third stage consists in giving up even knowledge and illumination and in losing oneself in the abyss of God's mystery. This is because, as O. Clément remarks, man cannot approach the Inaccessible except through an adoring unknowing⁹³ and this is exactly what St. Gregory teaches: the knowledge of God is not reflection but prayer, it is not exterior spectacle but assimilation, transforming vision.⁹⁴ Therefore, the real knowledge of God is to know God infinitely close and permanently inaccessible.⁹⁵ It is clear for St. Gregory of Nyssa that man's knowledge of God culminates in apophasis.

Natura capax infiniti

St. Gregory makes a very subtle distinction between image or likeness and archetype. As we saw, for him the image is not image if it is identical with the archetype; but he holds also that if the image is less than the archetype, it is no more image either! He has this idea of the image as being *more than image* - that shows what a high understanding and value he assigned to the Image and what a dignity man has by being this Image. This idea is found especially in the texts where Gregory speaks of the image as bearing on *all points* the semblance of the archetypal excellence;⁹⁶ indeed, to be in the image of God, for Gregory, is to be endowed with the capacity of participation in *all* good, the *imago* of the Archetype is *filled* with *all* Good;⁹⁷ the likeness has a real participation in *all* of God's attributes.⁹⁸ Does it imply a kind of consubstantiality of man with God?! Yes, it does imply *a kind* of consubstantiality, not in the sense of being of the same essence with God, but in the sense of being given the possibility, the grace to participate as far as we can, even in God's nature and not only in God's energies. This idea is expressed by Gregory in terms of connaturality, *ὁμοειδέα*, between the spiritual man and God. On this ground, the image designates the real communion of nature⁹⁹ with the archetype and that is how the Image keeps in it all its spiritual dynamism, as Fr. Meyendorff shows.¹⁰⁰ Again, because man is made in the likeness of the nature of God,¹⁰¹ for Gregory all the divine reflects itself in our nature.¹⁰²

Although he speaks of man in such high terms, Gregory does not forget the weakness of man. Commenting on this problem in

Gregory, H.U. von Balthasar formulates that man is on the one hand “too weak”, but “not diminished” on the other hand, and this is the whole problem of Image.¹⁰³ It is here where the tension of the Image is and where its dialectic and its dilemma are as well. If the Image of God is to possess all the divine perfections, D. Balás explains, whereas in God, they are found essentially, we possess them as a gift by participation;¹⁰⁴ yet this possession through participation is possible only on the ground of freedom. As Corsini shows, freedom is the essential element in which the likeness consists.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, the Image is the royal freedom of man to be in the world in the likeness of the King of the universe; through freedom as its essential element, the Image has all its other attributes: Immortality, Justice, Purity, “Apatheia”, Beatitude, Distance from evil, etc.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, it is freedom that introduces the Image in History because, as A. Malet would say, it is only freedom that has history; because it is capable of a radical change, it can be what it is not.¹⁰⁷

Imago versus similitudo

If for Origen the Image was given but the likeness had to be obtained by man’s striving for it and given to him/her at the consummation of time,¹⁰⁸ for Gregory, both Image and likeness, as most of the time he sees them as synonymous,¹⁰⁹ imply this striving. They imply not only an openness of man towards God but they also are a function and a task for man in the whole of creation.¹¹⁰

What he said about Image, Gregory says also about likeness: the likeness consists in the attributes of divine and human nature;¹¹¹ likeness is implied in the Image; it is a summary¹¹² of all things that characterize the Deity.¹¹³ The Image supposes likeness: “The Image is properly called so, if it keeps its resemblance to the prototype.”¹¹⁴ If the likeness is perverted in any way, there is no longer real Image. From texts like this one, M. Aubineau deduces that Gregory does not establish a clear distinction between these two notions and uses them interchangeably.¹¹⁵ D.L. Balás acknowledges this interchangeability and specifies that image and likeness are not synonymous with participation, ἰσὸς-ἴ. ¹¹⁶ Indeed, one can see that although strongly connected, they are not identical. Image and likeness are participation in the sense of sharing the divine goods or attributes, but participation in itself has a much larger meaning, it refers finally to the whole creation and its restoration

through the Image of God in man. Image and likeness are the foundation of participation. The participation is the dynamic aspect of Imago or, as Balás says again, the image and likeness are characterized by a “dynamic vocation for progressive participation.”¹¹⁷

Although in Gregory’s theology ἀἰεὶ and ὁμοιωτέον generally have the same meaning, J. Daniélou notices that at times he distinguishes them.¹¹⁸ Leys also would see the Image as being more static and the likeness more dynamic, in the sense that the likeness realizes, achieves the Image.¹¹⁹

The Fall

Man was made, St. Gregory holds, in the likeness of the undefiled nature of God. Therefore, at the beginning man did not have an inclination toward passion and mortality because if so, there would have been a contradiction between Image and Archetype.¹²⁰ Gregory explains how corruption came into man’s nature by introducing the concept of power; God is the almighty ruler of all the universe and as Image of God, man has been endowed with the power of self-determination. In his/her given freedom, by this power, not God but man invented evil by drawing away from God, and Gregory gives a plastical example: as the eye which closes itself will not see the sun and as a man can build a house with no windows and in that, there will be no light inside, and this will happen not because of the sun but because of man’s will, so was in the case of the Fall.¹²¹

Through sin the divine beauty of the soul became ugliness of evil,¹²² despaired beauty, as he will say in other words. Man took an image of clay and became mortal and this is the image he should remove away in order to let the divine beauty to shine again in him.¹²³ The gift of God (Imago) is not separated from our nature nor is it far from those who choose to look for it; it dwells in everyone of us, ignored and forgotten, waiting to be discovered. In order to illustrate this, St. Gregory uses the example of the dragma: the Image of God in us is like the image of the King on the dragma lost in our own home, in ourselves. This image is lost somewhere under the dirt of our bodily passions and the house needs to be cleaned up in order to find the dragma and to make its image shine again.¹²⁴ As P. Evdokimov interprets, although the Fall happened, the Image is still entire. But because of the Fall, it was only reduced to ontological silence, thus it

became inefficient because it lost the likeness that made it efficient.¹²⁵

Consistent with the example of the drahma, speaking about man's present condition, E. Cioran would say that, having lost the *Imago*, man took the wrong identity and errs between impassivity and imposture,¹²⁶ or as A. Heschel puts it, losing the *Imago*, man failed to remember his true destination, man became "a messenger who forgot the message."¹²⁷

Turning away from virtue, from God, Gregory says, by his/her own choice,¹²⁸ man introduced a separation between human nature and *Imago*¹²⁹ that is to be read both as a separation between man and God but also as a separation within man's being, a tragic, inner division. This separation is sin and it has universal implications¹³⁰ on the basis of the universal sympathy between man and the cosmos.¹³¹

Speaking about the Fall, St. Gregory uses for image, over and over again epithets like darkened, dirty, soiled. Being not totally lost but partially or just darkened and "covered by an earthly cloth", "hidden under dirt", by putting away the passions man can bring the Image to the light of its initial splendor.

For Gregory, by man's losing the grace of the Image,¹³² man was not "thrown into being" as Heidegger says (as though, if we relate this expression to the Fall, before the Fall man had no being) but if man is "cast into Time", to use Cioran's expression, this is due to himself and only to himself. Referring to this man that deliberately had chosen to stay away from God, K. Barth said in radical words: "Man, the way we know him is impossible; this man cannot, in God's presence, but die!"¹³³

The Fall made possible the passions, the vices as a foreign element in human being or life; these keep man away from his real "shape", from the "deiform beauty", from the communion with the divine "impassibility" of God,¹³⁴ through passions man lost the communion with the transcendent God. As Heschel writes, reflecting Gregory's theology, man's true fulfillment depends upon communion with that which transcends him/her¹³⁵ because existence without transcendence is a way of living where things become idols and idols become monsters.¹³⁶ Gregory speaks insistently about the imperative of liberation from the idolatry of passions. A hope and a chance for this liberation resides in the Image itself which waits to be discovered.

The capacity to die for St. Gregory, appeared by a deviation of the choice of the free will¹³⁷ that cast man from the abyss of God into

the abyss of God's absence. Knowing the state of the Fall, man still remembers the enthusiasm of the heights and tends toward it. The evil has not an ontological reality, it is man's product against man's own interest, against his/her own nature.¹³⁸

According to Gregory's understanding but in Cioran's words, Fall is desertion from Being,¹³⁹ dilapidation of Being;¹⁴⁰ "the form of knowledge man had chosen is an offence, a criminal misdemeanor against the creation before which he stands as its self-proclaimed destructor."¹⁴¹ In this state, as Heschel puts it, "how embarrassing for man, to be created in the Image of God and not to recognize Him!"¹⁴² Indeed, "the ultimate embarrassment for man is to be the greatest miracle on earth and not to understand it" and the problem does not stop here, for the real problem is what man does with this ultimate embarrassment.¹⁴³

"Male and female He created him"

Man in Paradise before sin had an asexuate life, St. Gregory teaches.¹⁴⁴ The Image in its initial condition excludes sexuality as it excludes mortality.¹⁴⁵ Sexuality is a consequence of sin. He holds that before the Fall, man would have had multiplied the way the angels do.¹⁴⁶

Speaking on this subject, volens nolens, Gregory comes to a classical dilemma that he does not try to avoid; this is related to the two expressions of the narrative of creation about the creation of man; the first one is: "God created man in His image" and the second, "male and female He created him." Gregory makes an attempt to demonstrate the reason and meaning of the second expression by speaking of man as an intermediary being between the order of God and the order of brute creation. Both expressions are meant to explain the condition of man in the world. The first one: "God created man in His image", does not imply sexual duplicity; this refers to the relation of man to God and in that, to man as God's image. The second expression: "male and female He created him" refers to the brute nature of animals that are sexually differentiated.¹⁴⁷ For Gregory, the expression "male and female" means already a departure from the Prototype; the proof for that is that Jesus is the restoration of God's image and we know from Paul that in Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3,28).¹⁴⁸ When the Scripture said: "Male and female He created him" this happens after creation, this is a

“resumption” of the account of creation, implying a distance, a difference between the real condition of the Image and the one it had later.¹⁴⁹ J. Daniélou calls this second creation “une reprise de la première.”¹⁵⁰ This doctrine of the double creation, first of man immortal and with no sexual life, and the second of the man mortal and with a sexual mode of multiplication, founds Gregory’s strong doctrine of virginity.¹⁵¹

E. Corsini thinks that St. Gregory does not speak here of two creations but only that there are two Scriptural expressions for the creating act of God that refer to two different aspects of man.¹⁵² However, conscious of the difficulty and the dilemma of this double formula in the account of man’s creation, and maybe about the insufficiency of his own attempts to explain it, in full modesty, Gregory recognizes that the cause of this double formula and its real meaning, “ultimately we do not know, we just imagine as far as we can, by means of conjectures and similitudes and we say the result of our investigation in form of a theoretical speculation before our kindly hearers(!)”¹⁵³

Jesus Christ our Image

For St. Gregory of Nyssa to be in the Image of God is to be in the Image of Christ who is among us as an example of God’s image.¹⁵⁴ As Origen said that the Son is God’s image and through Him we know the Father,¹⁵⁵ or that the true man is made in God’s image¹⁵⁶ and that the true man is Christ who, as the Son of God, is the invisible image of the invisible God,¹⁵⁷ but as Christ is the visible image of God, so Gregory holds that the image of the person of the Father is the Son,¹⁵⁸ and that we are not the image of the Logos but of Christ.¹⁵⁹

Jesus Christ as the human face of God or “the living icon of God”¹⁶⁰ is the liberation of the freedom of the Image, St. Gregory says.¹⁶¹ In Christ that unites in Himself the image of God and the image of man¹⁶² is realized, as D. Stăniloae reads Gregory, a unity of the contrasts, but of all contrasts in the most tight unity of the most distanced margins of the reality, in a unique hypostasis.¹⁶³

St. Gregory holds that the image is like a projection in which one can see the original present there and the clearer the projection is, the more the original is visible.¹⁶⁴ P. Evdokimov expresses this idea saying that Jesus Christ is the divine in human, the human being there deified and that in Jesus Christ “God and man look at each other as in

a mirror and recognize each other.”¹⁶⁵

For Gregory, J. Daniélou shows, man in the image of God is like the coming Christ,¹⁶⁶ in Him man rediscovers the threefold character of the Image he is: prophetic, royal, priestly.¹⁶⁷

Jesus Christ in St. Gregory’s understanding is the light in which we achieve our ascent to God. This light is assigned to Christ also, being called ὁὸ ὀῖϑ̄ ÷ñέόῃϑ̄.¹⁶⁸ In the same way, Christ introduces us to virtues but He *is* our Virtue as the virtues are the way to the Image¹⁶⁹ introducing us to Christ¹⁷⁰ and subsuming us into his theandric person. As image of the Image or image of the Man from heaven, to use Origen’s expression,¹⁷¹ we follow the One in whom our original possibilities are restored. These possibilities restored in Jesus consist of our participation in Being and Life.¹⁷²

At the question why did we need Christ and Incarnation in order to be saved, to have restored our Image, and why did not God chose to do that through a simple act of the divine will, St. Gregory answers that a sick person does not ascribe to the physician the nature or kind of remedy or the regime that is necessary but is content and happy to have someone qualified in remedies to take care of him/her.¹⁷³

In Incarnation the quality of human nature was valorified at maximum in all its faculties.¹⁷⁴ Incarnation shows that being marked by the divine subject, humanity was able to become His humanity.¹⁷⁵ Seen as a sign of dialogue the Incarnation is the *Imago Hominis* of God as an answer to man’s *Imago Dei*.

Speaking of the Resurrection of Christ, St. Gregory teaches that this is where the reconstitution of our nature takes place and is restored in its original form.¹⁷⁶ The Resurrection is also the foundation of the transfiguration of the whole creation. As O. Clément puts it, the Creator chased out of creation could not reenter it but crucified, and the Resurrection needs our freedom in order to achieve the transfiguration of the universe.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that man as image and likeness-ἀἰεὶ ἑἶ ὀῖϑ̄¹⁷⁷ of God is work and imitation - ἰβῖἰά - of the divine nature.¹⁷⁸ We have Christ given to us in order to see what we have to become and to imitate Him in order to become what we see, because for Gregory, by contemplation one becomes what one sees through conscious imitation.¹⁷⁹ Imitation is to draw near to God. Gregory exhorts that each soul should have the faith to become nearer to God in His impenetrable cloud.¹⁸⁰ This imitation is what the angels do too.

Therefore, following the way of the angels, the soul advances towards deification with its beauty restored according to the beauty of the Prototype.¹⁸¹

Imago Dei corresponds, therefore, to the following of God - ἔδῶσθαι Θεῷ. But to follow God, as Father Florovsky remarks, is to see only the back of God.¹⁸² St. Gregory explains this: to follow God is to walk behind, to let God be your guide; in this way you do not see the face of God but you will be protected against any evil and so will arrive in the divine places - εἰ ὀπίσθου ὄψου.¹⁸³

In the process of imitating God in Christ, St. Gregory stresses the role of the human will. If one wants to enter in the process of imitating Christ, one will be spared of deforming the Image of the Archetype. The conformity of our Image to Christ through imitation, he says, is similar to the technical preparation of a painter before he/she starts to paint or to reproduce images.¹⁸⁴ Through such a work “it is possible to see all the features of the Prototype, the Image of God. Looking towards that Image and adorning our own form clearly in accordance with that one, each person becomes himself an image of the invisible God, having been portrayed through endurance.”¹⁸⁵ This is how in Jesus Christ we are led towards perfection: in Him we are helped to grow toward what is better and not to put any limit to perfection.¹⁸⁶ This is the essence of Christianity: imitation of the divine nature in Christ. Restoration of man in his/her original state of image and likeness of God.¹⁸⁷

For St. Gregory, to be a Christian is a great responsibility vis-à-vis of God and of other people. He says that the Christian is responsible for the fidelity in which he/she imitates Christ because it is easy to distort God’s image and make people think that God is as they see in the image that the Christian presents to them. For this reason, the life of a Christian should be perfect; perfection, Gregory teaches, is not impossible, nor is it inappropriate to us. It is possible through good works free of any evil.¹⁸⁸

Virtue as a way to Restoration

For St. Gregory, the soul is like a mirror. If the mirror is clean, it can reflect the ray coming to it; if the mirror is not clean, it cannot reflect the ray, even if in itself, the mirror is endowed with the capacity of this reflection.¹⁸⁹ There is a natural inner turn toward virtue that is

actually a turn towards future goods which print their image on the soul's purity.¹⁹⁰ The tendency of the soul toward virtue is natural because the soul is the reflection, the image of the Virtue, that is God. Manifesting some Platonic influences, St. Gregory teaches that God is the Good, the Truth, the Beauty and these virtues all together are the Virtue.¹⁹¹ Speaking about Christ, he also holds that God is our Virtue in Jesus Christ. The virtues are a ladder in the process of moral ascent; the overcoming of vices is another ladder that leads the soul to the place which is its own *de jure*. These two ways of spiritual life, *via positiva*, the cultivation of virtues and *via negativa*, the renunciation of passions leads to the same goal, the restoration of God's image in the human being, a theme that is central in St. Gregory's theology;¹⁹² Gregory relates both these ways to virginity that is a foundation for the soul's struggle for its uplifting and in this sense, because it leads to the perfect life, virginity is a deifying virtue.¹⁹³

In order to restore the Image of God, one should make the way back from the last point of one's errance, that is marriage.¹⁹⁴ As M. Aubineau notices, Gregory depicts marriage negatively in order to stress more by opposition the value of the virtue of virginity,¹⁹⁵ because he says, after one overcomes the need of marriage, it is virginity that becomes the foundation for detachment and purification, that paves the soul's way to God. Virginity as a solution for the soul's restoration by overcoming the passions of the body and of the material world is called the philosophy through which we learn the therapy against any passion that touches the soul.¹⁹⁶

The passions - δᾶεçìᾶôá - are also overcome by askesis that leads to apatheia, ᾶðᾶᾶβᾶ. Apatheia is the normal state of the soul in God's image because God himself is impassible; Gregory explains that apatheia is not a destruction of passions¹⁹⁷ because the passions reflect the spiritual powers, only that they are wrongly oriented and they need reorientation. In this sense, apatheia is not at all a lack of dynamism but it supposes this interior creative dynamism. Without this conversion of the soul towards its restoration through virtues, and first of all through virginity and askesis, the soul cannot step into the superior stage of its life, namely the contemplation of the intelligible realities inaccessible to the senses.¹⁹⁸ In fact, St. Gregory says, this restoration is not a process of reintegration of the soul into something new, foreign to it, but it is reinstatement in the state to which it belongs already. This is therefore, in fact, a regressive progress, a retrospective one, an evolution

in the coming back; it is accomplished by traveling the road backwards, by coming back to the initial beauty.¹⁹⁹

Virginitas as offering

Virginitas appears to be the highest virtue in Gregory's theological and moral system. It is an art, a profession, a science of divine life that lifts the human nature to the dignity of the incorporeal nature.²⁰⁰ Virginitas is first related to God. It characterizes the entire Trinitarian life and each Trinitarian divine person apart, it is the divine purity and incorruptibility. This purity of virginitas makes man to partake of the "hypercosmic nature" - ὁἷ ὑδᾶνῆϊοῖβω ὄόόάέ - which is the world of angels.²⁰¹ St. Gregory considers virginitas, which belongs to the incorporeal nature, a gift destined to help human beings to restore themselves from the fallen condition. This gift is coming to us fully in Jesus Christ. It is precisely in order to emphasize the value of virginitas that Jesus did not come into the world by means of marriage but incarnated from a virgin; in that He wanted to show how virginitas is compatible with the divine life.²⁰² The virginal birth of the Son of God reintroduces the virginitas in the world²⁰³ as a saving value. The divinity of Christ shines in the virginal birth.²⁰⁴

As it is an abstinence from the corporeal union that gives us the similarity of the angelic life,²⁰⁵ virginitas is a way for the fecund union with God in the Holy Spirit. In other words, it gives man wings to elevate him/herself to God, it unites two distant realities, God and man, it makes man familiar to God.²⁰⁶

It is obvious here that virginitas is a process and a state at the same time. A process of purification, a state of purity. It keeps pure what is already pure and purifies what is impure, Gregory says. Through purification - ἐέέάόάῖῆᾶεί or ἄδῖέάέᾶῖῆᾶεί - the restored man into the pure life, ἐάόᾶῆδò ἄβῖò, reflects the incorruptible image of God.²⁰⁷

Virginitas is not only a physical askesis, but a moral one and even more so, the plenitude of the divine life; these aspects are also steps: the physical abstinence or purification, the spiritual or moral abstinence from evil doing and the plenitude of the divine life; it is easy to recognize here the classical pattern of the soul's spiritual ascent in three stages: purification, illumination and union.

Gregory teaches that from the earthly life already, through virginitas as a purifying power, one has access to the divine life. The

power of virginity comes from the virginity of God,²⁰⁸ as M. Aubineau observes.

For us, living after the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, virginity is a way of giving birth to Christ spiritually in our souls, in a sort of a spiritual prolongation of His Incarnation, because Jesus comes where virginity is and brings with and in Him the entire Trinity. If one lives in purity, St. Gregory says, one is able and compatible to receive the divine Trinity in one's life.²⁰⁹

The spiritual progress

Intrinsically related to the theology of *Imago Dei* is the theme of the spiritual progress which is central to Gregory's theology. Man's desire for the real *Imago*, which is a response to God's desire for the salvation of man that comes to us in Jesus Christ, is part of the spiritual progress, of the mystical ascent to God in/through Jesus Christ; this ascent gives an ultimate sense to any pilgrimage that leads to ἐεὼόεὸ, the deified Image of God in man in God's Kingdom.

As all this process is related to *Imago*, the dynamic character of the Image as a basis for the spiritual growth, makes relevant the fact that the Image of God in us is not only a status but also a potentiality.²¹⁰ This potentiality in the framework of soul's ascent to God is at work in man's liberation from the flesh, from human passions - ἀίθνηδβίύι δάεçìÛóá; this is *apatheia* that lifts up man's condition at the level of angelic life.²¹¹ This idea will be much developed by Pseudo Dionysius who also taught about the angelic condition of man liberated from passions and longing for the Good,²¹² a longing that makes the angels what they are.²¹³ Father Florovsky shows that in St. Gregory's thought this longing for God as a virtue, strives endlessly for the propension of the soul towards the intelligible realities and for the communion with the divine, because it is a virtue and every virtue by definition is unconstrained by any limitation. This longing is *Eros*, the passion of love.²¹⁴ When this longing appears as the divine immanence in the soul, this is not something accomplished, finished but to finish, to accomplish.²¹⁵ In this sense, P. Evdokimov said that one can never invent God for one can never go towards God if one does not start from God. Augustin expressed the same idea when he paraphrased God's address to man: You would not look for me if you had not found me already.

The spiritual progress includes contemplation. It is by Image that we contemplate and it is by contemplation that we become more conforming to the Image.²¹⁶ This dialectic of *Imago* and contemplation, a very close subject to Gregory's heart, will become the preoccupation of many mystics after Gregory. In the line of this thought M. Zundel said about human condition: man is not yet; he must become; this is the main object of our hope.²¹⁷

The theme of becoming is also developed by St. Gregory in his expositions on beauty. With obvious Platonic influences, Gregory thinks that the beauty represents for the soul an eternal aim. The *Imago Dei* is in its reality the beauty of God. The restoration of this beauty is an ascent from the base and ephemeral objects which attract man's desire, not to the beauty of stars and heavens, but to the beauty whose glory the stars and heavens give testimony. In this ascent from beauty to Beauty, the soul should not waste the power of desire in attaching itself to unworthy things and even not to the worthy objects in so far as they are only intermediary for us; this attitude is necessary in order to let the soul to be free to invest itself totally in the supreme Beauty; however, St. Gregory warns, the desire should not close itself in any sterile immobility.²¹⁸ Or, as the bishop of Nyssa says in *De vita Moses*, we have to keep away the image from the model offered by history; we have to become students at the school of the mystery of faith.²¹⁹ The Image of God supposes a spiritual growth that equals a permanent spiritual birth in which man is never totally identical with him/herself but is subject to change.²²⁰

What determines one's body is the image one adopts, writes A. Heschel.²²¹ St. Gregory taught it long before, when he wrote that the spiritual progress is to look to the Archetype whose Image one is, and with the purifying fire in the heart, to move in that direction.²²²

If one would ask where is the place of grace in all this theology of the ascent of the soul, one should see the ascent in the context of Gregory's theology of the power and compassion of God. For instance, he teaches that it is the presence of the divine power that helps man to pass from a corruptible nature into the state of incorruptibility.²²³ He also writes: Man is a beggar at God's door and while the divine gentleness responds to the essential human expectation, it also overwhelms man's most profound aspiration.²²⁴ The problem of God's part in the spiritual ascent of the soul will also be visible when we will present later on Gregory's concept of synergy and participation.

A possibility to start the spiritual uplifting is for us to look deeply into ourselves and to see there the *Imago*, to remember it. The anamnetical character of *Imago* shows it to be a sign of another world. In its actual state the Image is the expression of the painful inquiry of the origin, a way toward the Beginning, the dynamism and the dialectic of the permanent return. But this is return by progression, as we mentioned above. The final goal is the union with God as an infinite progress in the darkness of ignorances, superior to contemplation, as Vl. Lossky shows.²²⁵ “The culmination of the ascent to God is a ‘divine and solemn intoxication’ as the highest stage of contemplation”, G. Florovsky writes.²²⁶ This ascent is not only an elevation of man to the point of being God’s friend, therefore, but the image brings man into the trinitarian ineffable mystery to the point that man is a mystery to himself.²²⁷ Man becomes to himself *Homo absconditus!* Viewed this way, *Imago* is the tendency of man to overcome himself in order to enter the infinite divine ocean,²²⁸ as P. Evdokimov reads Gregory. This is the abandonment of man to the final silence of God, who is “une Parole à l’extrémité du silence” (a word at the extremity of silence) in O. Clément’s mystical understanding. Or, as Augustin said: “fecistis nos ad Te Domine post imaginem et similitudinem Tuam et inquietur est cor meum donec requiescat in Te.”²²⁹ Speaking of our deviated world, Paul Florensky uttered the same idea in more radical words: There will be not final choice for humanity but the Trinity or insanity.

Participation in freedom

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that God created man for the participation in God’s own peculiar good.²³⁰ In that the Image, as creation, finds its aim,²³¹ this is its primordial vocation.²³² The Image is the foundation of this participation in the divine bliss.²³³ The participation is only possible for the rational beings as the highest form of creation,²³⁴ it develops the capacity of the participant for a higher participation.²³⁵ If man is called for such a type of relationship with God, it is because man is necessarily apt for that²³⁶ by his/her constitution: In order to participate in the divine one must possess something in oneself that corresponds to what one is participating in, P. Evdokimov quotes St. Gregory, and then he says that to the divine “God is love” of St. John the Theologian corresponds the human Dostoyevskian concept “amo ergo sum.”²³⁷

The dialectic of participation is also expressed when Gregory speaks of the divine Beauty. From the one side the beauty of *Imago* in man pushes us upwards; from the other side the divine Beauty attracts us. The soul becomes more and more beautiful the closer it approaches the Beauty; this approach to God is directly proportional to the soul's illumination and the illumination is already participation and knowledge.²³⁸

Participation is also in a dialectical relationship with purification. In the process of the restoration of *Imago* based on man's participation in the divine life, the purification is the opening of the way to deification. But at the same time, without participation there is no purification. D. Balás reveals the same idea when he says that "the participation in God's perfections is both the foundation and the unfolding of the 'Image of God' in man. Sin is the refusal of participation. Redemption is accomplished by our sacramental and moral participation in Christ."²³⁹ By being Image, we participate already in God's attributes, but all the more they become efficient to us when we remain in union with Christ. In this, we have life and salvation. As St. Gregory puts it, in God is the Life and the supply of any good; the participation in God keeps us alive. Without this, we die,²⁴⁰ we lose our salvation. In St. Gregory's thought the Image is not added to human nature, as we mentioned above. The Image is the constitution of human nature itself. This is not a dead Image, separated from the Archetype but in relation of participation in the divine nature, on the basis of the connaturality - *ὁμοειδέα* - between Image and Archetype.²⁴¹

Now when I speak of participation in its eschatological perspective more than retrospective, as I did in another part of this paper, I consider it necessary to specify again, in this particular context the fact that St. Gregory believes in a participation in God's nature, as Fr. J. Meyendorff writes²⁴² and as J. Gaïth also understands: it is specific to human nature to participate in the divine nature.²⁴³ In our human situation, the highest level of participation in Good and the union with it, St. Gregory says in D. Stăniloae's interpretation, has the form of a loving dialogue with Him and between us with Him; for those animated by the Good tend by this fact itself towards the unconfounded union of them.²⁴⁴ In that, Father Stăniloae sees the capacity of humanity of becoming nature of the divine Hypostasis;²⁴⁵ he explains how St. Gregory understands the participation in the divine nature: "Between God and humanity there is something in common, the good; God is the

uncreated and unchanged Good, and man the created and changeable good, although man, through this good, is capable to participate in the divine nature. Yet between God and man there is an essential distinction in the sense that the divine Good is eternally apophatic and from another plan than humanity; the humanity yet can progress eternally in union with Him and He also can be eternally more present in humanity.”²⁴⁶

This participation in the divine nature, at the level of the knowledge of God corresponds and culminates in the apophasis: The apophatic knowledge as a result of man’s personal communion with God, of his participation in the entire divinity,²⁴⁷ or as O. Clément says, God is at the same time participable and inaccessible, the more participable the more inaccessible, the more hidden, the closer.²⁴⁸

This participation in the divine nature is strictly related to the freedom of the Image in its two aspects: structural and functional, ‘ἀσάθῃ ἀνάβῃ and πῆϊάβῃ ἰούεῖο.²⁴⁹ The independence of man as Image is, in St. Gregory’s thought, his/her main characteristic that makes man equal to God in the sense that man is independent from God in his/her choice.²⁵⁰ This independence, that in a sense makes human beings to be creators of themselves,²⁵¹ gives a higher value to man’s choice to participate in God’s life. Without this free participation, Father Meyendorff shows, the Image is not Image.²⁵² All the value of human beings stands in the fact that man’s freedom integrates itself in the divine one.²⁵³

The concept of synergy

One would be tempted to say that the ascent of the soul towards the intelligible realities, beyond the realm of senses, is accomplished through the powers of the soul itself. But even if it may appear that Gregory stresses the human part in the spiritual progress, certainly, in order to underline the powers we have in us as divine gifts, however, the ascent is a synergetical process which man works in collaboration with God in Christ and Holy Spirit. The soul, after detaching itself from the base things in the sensory world, is purified by the Holy Spirit, and through that, it is brought into the participation to the supreme purity.²⁵⁴ In fact, wherever St. Gregory speaks of participation this implies the divine grace, because as Fr. Meyendorff writes, in the Eastern Tradition, grace is identified with participation.²⁵⁵

Sometimes, in respect to synergy indeed, St. Gregory may

appear contradictory to himself because he has places where he stresses, on the one hand, the human effort as a basis for purification and ascent,²⁵⁶ and on the other hand, in other texts, he affirms that it is impossible for human beings to perform this progress that is possible only through divine intervention.²⁵⁷ M. Aubineau sees this as a dualistic aspect of Gregory's theology at this point.²⁵⁸ But, as I mentioned above, St. Gregory has to be read and understood in the totality of his thought, and not in fractions.

The concept of synergy is obvious in Gregory's insistence on examples like that of the eye closed for the light of the sun, or that of the house without windows built by man. If the *Imago* becomes darkened in man by man's free will as appears in these and other examples where man works alone, in the process of uplifting, man uses his/her own free will in collaboration with God. If man closes his eyes and does not receive anymore the light of the sun, it is also man who opens them. But the eye is already the gift of God, and the Holy Spirit's contribution and presence is in the idea, the intention of man to open the eye, to open him/herself to the light.

Therefore, generally speaking, every time Gregory elaborates on the soul's ascent through detachment and purification, through the abandonment of passions and the performance of virtues, this implies, in his thought, the presence of the Holy Spirit as a help and divine contribution in the work of man's salvation.

Theosis

St. Gregory holds that the created order was mingled with the divine nature of God.²⁵⁹ On the basis of this connaturality, *ὁμοϊότης*, he builds the doctrine of deification. The conscientization of the soul of its divine constitution is the ground of all mystical life²⁶⁰ and the anticipation of the final victory of the soul over all earthly tribulations. The mystical soul is born out of the anticipatory attitude of the victory, says C. Rădulescu Motru. This sense of the final victory helps human beings in their effort for a perfect life lived even while in the body. St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches that perfection consists in the fact that the spiritual progress has no limits or any kind of barrier.²⁶¹

Origen spoke of deification in terms of man's final participation in the nature of God;²⁶² St. Gregory holds this understanding but he develops it and gives it new nuances. He states that the movement of

deification starts with Incarnation and goes intensifyingly towards the infinite,²⁶³ or in Evdokimov's words, the image predestinates man to *theosis*.²⁶⁴

If I spoke in the beginning of this paper of a face-to-face state of man *coram Deo* in Paradise, I have to mention this again here in this eschatological context, because Gregory himself treats this in a retrospective way and also in a prospective one. For him, this face-to-face of man's position vis-à-vis God is the final aim of the spiritual life, it is deification.²⁶⁵ As I said, the divine character of human nature, its connaturality with God, in Gregory's thought, generates "le désir foncier de voir Dieu,"²⁶⁶ the desire to contemplate God eternally in this face-to-face ineffable way that implies the total presence to each other. This is the end that never ends: the Image of God in man, beautiful, passionless, delighting in a face-to-face manifestation of the personal Deity.²⁶⁷

Conclusions

I presented here a few guidelines in St. Gregory of Nyssa's theology of *Imago Dei*. This doctrine is present in all of his writings; he does not neglect any aspect of it. He treats the difficult doctrine of the Paradise with the condition of *Imago Dei* before the Fall, then he writes extensively about the fallen state of humanity and its possibilities, ways and means of restoration; he does not neglect the Christological aspect of the restoration and treats also extensively about its eschatological perspective culminating in Theosis.

I divided these conclusions in two parts: one in which, starting from Gregory's theology, I generalize the concept of *Imago Dei* in a broader context, relating it to other theologians or philosophers, as I did in a lesser way during this presentation, and the second part of these conclusions is an actualization of St. Gregory's thought and its relevance for our situation today.

The iconic man

If human being is defined to be the image of God and precisely in his/her most profound reality and integrity, if in man the divine beauty, love, freedom shine so much to the point that, as St. Gregory says, the face of God is expressed in human traits,²⁶⁸ then one can say that man is contemporary with God²⁶⁹ and in that he/she finds his or her

highest dignity and hence the greatest responsibility.

Imago is *locus Dei*; as G. Ebeling writes, *Imago* is not a property of human beings but a word of institution uttered upon them; it is essentially God's manifestation in his holiness,²⁷⁰ it is the light in which the inexpressible is hidden, the light pregnant of a mystery that cannot be explained but only indicated. In that, the Image is our anteriority which comes on us and renews us permanently, and progressively takes us from the state of counter-nature in which we are, into the real dimension of our condition, the state of grace, the final communion with God, when God will be all in all as Origen and Gregory himself taught, or as Lossky puts it, that state when all is immanent to all.

But the accomplishment of this desideratum depends on the awareness of man concerning his/her own mystery. The Image is a mystery, it cannot ultimately be seen, that is why in a dialogue with an atheist, Theophilus of Antioch said: "Show me your man and I will show you my God"; but the Image can be felt. Once it is felt, it does not bring with it explanations, but it puts a new light on everything which then can be understood differently; through this new light, it helps man to go deeper into the essence of things in an attitude of humility penetrated by love, the only way in which man lets the Image to reinstate him/her in the threefold dimension of his original position *coram mundo*: prophetic, royal and sacerdotal.²⁷¹ Becoming an overflowing cosmic charity, he shares to the whole creation, in an enthusiastic, transparent sincerity that which God shares with him: the divine beauty and love in freedom. It is only in this way that a human being can be a prophet of a bursting hope that illumines the whole history until its fulfillment in the eschatological time, a king that dominates with tender compassion what God entrusted to him/her for dominion, and a sacerdote, a liturgist whose burning prayer makes him/her to become a liturgical offering in a permanent epiclesis in which doxologically and eucharistically he brings the whole creation back to God: "Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all."

As a free and transcendent structure in human beings, that contains a power of freedom and spiritualization,²⁷² the Image, as St. Gregory teaches, liberates human beings from all necessity and bondage and makes them able to take their own decisions in what they want to do.²⁷³ Here is evident the creative dynamism of the Image that makes the

Image to be not a noun but a verb, not a concept but the person itself, not only a way toward the supreme vocation of man but the vocation itself: *Imago Dei, vocatio hominis*. Indeed the Image is movement,²⁷⁴ it is essentially dynamic as resemblance is essentially ontologic.²⁷⁵ Its dynamism is founded on the real presence of God in it,²⁷⁶ as the word *Image* itself, *tselem* in Hebrew, implies the real presence of what it represents.²⁷⁷

There are two ways in which the dynamism of the relationship prototype-icon reveals itself; they are implied in the two questions: What does the prototype tell us about his image? and, What does the image tell us about its prototype? With respect to the first question, St. Gregory of Nyssa uses extensively the positive Revelation of Scriptures. On this basis we know more correctly who God is and then, who we are; we know that the Image of God refers to the total man, not to a part of his/her being,²⁷⁸ that *Imago Dei*, although darkened by sin, is a permanence in human life and being²⁷⁹ and through it, the eternity is implanted in human nature.²⁸⁰ The image is the origin that never ceases to be and which makes us to be the bearers of the experience of the divine life because, as J. Daniélou says, the image of God in human being presents in itself the characters of the divine life.²⁸¹ In that, *Imago* reminds us that human life is intrinsically holy, sacred and, therefore, unquestionably valuable.

With respect to the second question, it can be said that the splendor of the archetype in us opens itself the way of the movement back from man to God through contemplation; St. Gregory makes clear that only on the ground of the contemplation of the ineffable divine beauty, the Image becomes a way of knowledge and love of God.²⁸² Through all this understanding, one can see the solid foundation of the value of human life as a unique, unsubstitutable presence in the universe. And with that we come to another direction of the dynamism of the Image, also twofold, namely that of the relation man-world. Here also the double question appears: What does the Image of God tell us about the world? and What does the world tell us about the Image we are?

Indeed in Gregory's theology and anthropology, human being occupies an intermediary position between God and world. Therefore, there *is* a relationship of the Image in both directions and a significant one. The world tells us about ourselves from what we do to the world. In this sense, one can say the world is a reflection of man's image. This makes relevant the dynamism of the relation man-world and the

responsibility here incumbent. The Image of God in man embraces the whole creation. In this image, all creation resounds like the sea in a shell, because the Image expresses the life in its universal burning.

In all these manifold relationships, man discovers who he/she is; human beings are mystery and surprise, persons and not things;²⁸³ they cannot underestimate their nature, life and role in the universe; therefore, the real problem of human beings is not only that they are the Image of God but what they do with what or who they are.

Actualization

Viewed in its totality, the doctrine of *Imago Dei* is, first of all, strongly rooted in the Rule of Faith of the Apostolic Tradition; secondly, it is well-developed in such a way as make sense for the society of his time, and as we can see, for the people of any time, an even more especially for our own time, today. I say especially for us today, because we live in a time and in a society assailed by illness from all parts. Material and spiritual crises overcome the humans of our time although maybe not everybody acknowledges that. But there are voices in the world that try to make people aware of the grave situation in which we are, on the margin of the abyss. New diseases, suicide, crises of identity and other spiritual dilemmas and dramatic failures, the nuclear danger throw man in the desert of despair. The means of help are themselves in crisis. Psychology, psychoanalysis, science, do not solve the vital problems of our world. How should they solve the problems? All sciences, generally speaking, start their definition of man from the animal or in relation to the animal. This leads to the defamation of man, makes man to be *imago animalis* or *imago bestiae*, as Berdyaev would say; only Theology treats man in the highest possible way, as *Imago Dei*. This changes all the perspectives and all understanding. St. Gregory of Nyssa, with his theology of *Imago* as structure, foundation, and desideratum or task of human life, presents one of the most dignifying and optimistic concepts of man among all theologians and philosophers that developed a doctrine of man.

“After all the zoological definitions given to human beings, do I recognize myself in them?” asks A. Heschel; “Am I ready to identify myself as an animal with some particular adjectives?”²⁸⁴ St. Gregory answers that, by developing his doctrine of man’s connaturality with God, he presents systematically a whole scale of possibilities for man

to live a dignifying divine life in the world, with a bursting hope for his perspectives, against all the fear of the abyss of the future.

The man of our technical era loses him/herself in the technological process which he/she can no longer master. Through the idolatry of the machine, man loses God's image and takes the image of the machine he/she worships.²⁸⁵ To that, St. Gregory speaks about the inner space of the person. He shows that man is not what we see, but rather what we do not see; and what is beyond is greater than what is at the surface. He shows that the definition of man is not composed or extracted from the sum of a person's facts and manifestations, but is extracted from the root that is beyond, invisible, ineffable and yet most meaningful. We learn from St. Gregory that, as L. Blaga says, the fact that here all lives finish with death does not mean that death is the aim of life. Paraphrasing St. Gregory, one can say that in respect to *Imago*, man is a phrase in the process of being spoken, but not yet finished, in which *Imago* is the subject and the likeness is the predicate.

It is obvious that we become what we think that we are. To ignore the Image of God in us is to assume a false identity that leads to a false mode of being in the world and finally, to an existential catastrophe. Against man's alienation in a world in which he/she becomes an hostile errant, St. Gregory opposes and proposes the image of a man who grows spiritually and who, with him/her, brings to completion the entire world and universe. He proposes a moral and spiritual life rooted in contemplation, devotion, prayer, love and compassion. This is what A. Heschel means when he says significantly: "In receiving a pleasure, we must return a prayer; in attending a success, we radiate compassion."²⁸⁶ Man's cry for meaning, for the ultimate relationship, for the ultimate belonging,²⁸⁷ finds an answer in the man of Gregory's vision, the iconic man whose life in the world is a doxologic chant as a part of a cosmic liturgy in which man is the celebrant. To the man who transforms the universe into a marketplace, Gregory offers the image of a man who in his/her iconic vision of the world becomes him/herself an all-embracing cosmic charity.

Philosophers speak about man's imperative need of awe.²⁸⁸ In relation to that, Gregory offers the perspective of the man who discovers God in the most profound dimensions of his/her soul and who stands in front of God in eucharistic wonder and praise.

The doctrine of the Image of God in man in Gregory's theology is a basis for the correct understanding of man's ontological status and

moral nature, Father Florovsky notes.²⁸⁹ St. Gregory proposes for our days a theocentric anthropology in which the Image of God in man becomes a fountain of meaning for our disoriented humanity, for our man in agony in the process of creating an incalculable cosmic disaster. St. Gregory announces that the communion with God is possible, that an authentic, constructive relationship among people is possible, that redemption and salvation are possible. The doctrine of *Imago Dei* of St. Gregory of Nyssa is a theology of human dignity and hope.

NOTES

1. Emile Cioran, *The Fall into Time*, introd. by Ch. Newman, transl. by R. Howard, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, IL, 1970, pp. 67, 73.
2. "A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church", Vol. V, Translation, Preface, Prolegomena and Notes under the editorial supervision of Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1954, Reprinted Edition, 1988, See *Prolegomena*, p. 1. (All other references to this book will be made under the abbreviated form NPNF.)
3. George Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*, Ed. by R.S. Haugh, Transl. by Catherine Edmunds, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz, FL, 1987, p. 149.
4. Idem, *The Byzantine ascetic and spiritual Fathers*, Ed. by R.S. Haugh, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz, FL, 1987, p. 144.
5. The exact year of his birth is not known. NPNF opts for 331, as well as H.F. Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, Cambridge University Press, London, England, 1930; also Louis Méridier in the introduction of his French edition of Gregory's "Great Catechism", paralleled by the Greek text, Paris, 1908, and others; Tony Lane in his work *Harper's Concise Book of Christian Faith*, Harper and Row, 1984, mentions the year 335 A.D.
6. H.F. Cherniss, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
7. See: Grégoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique*, text grec, trad. française, introd. et index par Louis Méridier, Paris, 1908, p. XVI.
8. L. Méridier, *op. cit.*, p. VIII.
9. NPNF, *Prolegomena*, p. 8.
10. Father Florovsky numbers *On Virginity* first in line among Gregory's ascetic and moral works; see: *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century...*, p. 152.
11. NPNF, *Prolegomena*, p. 9.
12. Grégoire de Nysse, *Les Béatitudes*, trad. de Jean-Yves Guillaumin et Gabrielle Parent; Introd. et notes de A.G. Hamman, col. "Les Pères dans la Foi", Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1979, p. 13.
13. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 155.

14. M. van Parys, “Exégèse et théologie dans les livres *Contre Eunome* de Grégoire de Nysse”...dans *Ecriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, Actes du Colloque de Chevotogne, Sept. 1969, ed. par Marguerite Harl, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 170.
15. Grégoire de Nysse, *Les Béatitudes...*, p. 91.
16. *Ibidem*, p. 23.
17. Gregory of Nyssa, *On “Not Three Gods”*, NPNF, p. 333.
18. Idem, *Les Béatitudes...*, p. 83.
19. *Ibidem*, p. 32.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
21. R. Leys, *L’Image de Dieu chez St. Grégoire de Nysse*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1951, p. 15.
22. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie mystique*, Aubier, Ed. Montaigne, Paris, 1944, p. 48. See also: R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 60 and J. Quasten, *Patrology III*, The Newman Press, Westminster, MD, 1960, p. 292.
23. J. Quasten, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
24. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 186.
25. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the soul and on the Resurrection*, NPNF, p. 437.
26. See G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 155.
27. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, V, 1, NPNF, p. 391.
28. *Ibidem*, V, 2, p. 391.
29. See: T.J. Dennis, “Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body” in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, Ed. by Andreas Spira and Christoph Klock, Introd. by Christopher Stead, Philadelphia, 1981, p. 71.
30. Paul Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 1959, p. 82.
31. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 185.
32. J. Quasten, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
33. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, 50.
34. *Ibidem*, p. 49
35. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Présence et Pensée; Essay sur la Philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Gabriel Beauchesne et ses fils, Paris, 1952, p. 82.
36. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 4-8, introd. text critique, trad., commentaire et index par Michel Aubinau, “Sources Chrétiennes”, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1966, p. 401.
37. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, V, 1, NPNF, p. 391.
38. *Ibidem*, XII, 9, p. 399.
39. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 185.
40. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 48, p. 407.
41. J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, Fordham Univ. Press, New York, 1974, p. 138.
42. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit*, NPNF, p. 320; see also Gregory of Nyssa, *On “Not Three Gods”*, NPNF, p. 334.
43. Grégoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique...*, VI 5-7, pp. 32-40.

44. Idem, *Les Béatitudes...*, VII, p. 83.
45. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 47; for the idea of *parenté*, see St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les Hérésies*, III, Ch. 18, 7, in “Sources Chrétiennes,” Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1952, p. 327.
46. Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*, NPNF, p. 309.
47. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and on the Resurrection*, NPNF, p. 449.
48. *Ibidem*.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 479.
50. Jérôme Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté chez St. Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris, 1953, p. 53.
51. *Ibidem*.
52. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...*, XI, 5, 18-19, pp. 395-396.
53. Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Soul and on the Resurrection”, in *St. Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works*, transl. by Virginia Woods Callahan, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1967, p. 212.
54. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
55. D. Stăniloae, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu [The Immortal Image of God]*, Craiova, 1987, p. 179.
56. *Ibidem*.
57. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
58. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and on the Resurrection*, NPNF, p. 437.
59. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 24-25.
60. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, VI, 12, NPNF, p. 405; This is a theme which will be undertaken by Dionysius Areopagites and developed in his *On the Divine Names* and *Celestial Hierarchy*.
61. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 5, 7-18, p. 395.
62. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
63. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 4, 7, NPNF, pp. 404-405.
64. This text is translated differently in the two editions of *La Vie de Moïse*, that of 1955 and that of 1968 in respect to the word ἀσθένεια; ed. 1955 translates it by “a été”; ed. 1968 translates it by “est devenu”.
65. The words in paranthesis refer to the difference between the two translations mentioned above.
66. Grégoire de Nysse, *La Vie de Moïse*, III, 318, trad and introd. by J. Daniélou, Col. “Sources Chrétiennes”, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1955, p. 133; see also the other mentioned edition, the third, from 1968, II, 318, p. 323-324.
67. Origen, *On First Principles*, Ed. By G.W. Butterworth, Gloucester, MA, Peter Smith, 1973, p. 327; see also: *Origen*, transl., introd. by R.A. Greer, Preface by H. Urs. von Balthasar, Paulist Press, New York, 1979, p. 50.
68. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
69. D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
70. H.F. Cherniss, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
71. T. J. Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
72. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 1, NPNF, p. 404.

73. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 184.
74. Lars Thurberg, "The human person as image of God" in *Christian Spirituality*, I, Ed. by B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff, Crossroad, New York, 1985, p. 291.
75. *Ibidem*, p. 297.
76. Grégoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique...*, XXVII, 2, p. 127.
77. J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology...*, p. 138.
78. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
79. *Ibidem*, p. 51.
80. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
81. *Ibidem*, p. 19.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 44, 97.
84. Grégoire de Nysse, *La Création de l'homme*, Intr. by Jean-Yves Guillaumin and A.G. Hamman, transl. by Jean-Yves Guillaumin, col. "Les Pères dans la foi", Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1982, p. 41.
85. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 155.
86. Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1983, pp. 85-86.
87. Anoushka von Heuer, *Le huitième jour ou la dette d'Adam*, Genève, 1980, p. 38.
88. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...*, XI, 1, p. 381.
89. *Ibidem*, XI, 1, 17, p. 383.
90. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 156.
91. E. Cioran, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
92. See also E. Cioran, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
93. Olivier Clément, "Situation de la Parole Théologique selon la Tradition Orthodoxe", in *De l'Absence et de l'Inconnaissance de Dieu*, by Christos Yannaras, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1971, p. 20.
94. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
95. *Ibidem*, p. 57.
96. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 12, NPNF, p. 405.
97. *Ibidem*, XVI, 10; See also: H.U. von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
98. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 49; See also: R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
99. *Ibidem*, p. 48.
100. John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1983, p. 39.
101. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 2, NPNF, p. 404.
102. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
103. H. U. von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
104. D. L. Balàs, *ἸἈὐτὸἰὸἈἰἌ ἘἌἰῶ*, Rome, 1966, p. 142.
105. E. Corsini, "Plérôme humain et plérôme cosmique chez Grégoire de Nysse", in *Écriture et Culture...*, p. 116.
106. M. Alexandre, "La Théorie de l'Exégèse dans le *De Hominis Opificio* et l'*In Hexaemeron*", in *Écriture et culture...*, p. 101.

107. André Malet, *Mythos et Logos, La pensée de R. Bultmann*, Labor et Fides, Genève, 1962, p. 9.
108. Origen, *On First Principles...*, p. 245.
109. See: R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 116; J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 48; also J. Daniélou, his note in *La Vie de Moïse par Grégoire de Nysse*, Ed. 1968, p. 323; J. Quasten, *op. cit.*, p. 292; J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
110. J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 140.
111. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 13, NPNF, p. 406.
112. If “summary” here means “resumé”, then it seems that there is a contradiction in terms; because summary implies that it gathers only some or most of the elements of something, not *all*. Summary is less than all. However, Gregory speaks of a “summary of *all* things”! Only if he means by this that a summary is a collection of everything, a totalization of all things can this make sense.
113. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, V, NPNF, p. 479.
114. Idem, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 3 NPNF, p. 404.
115. See his note in *Traité de la Virginité*, p. 152.
116. D.L. Balàs, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
117. *Ibidem*, p. 146.
118. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
119. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
120. Gregory of Nyssa, *From Glory to Glory*, Selected texts and Introd. by J. Daniélou, transl. and edit. by H. Musurillo, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1961, p. 112.
121. *Ibidem*.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
124. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
125. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.
126. Emil Cioran, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
127. A Heschel, *Who is Man*, Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, CA, 1985, p. 119.
128. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 30-47, p. 405.
129. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
130. *Ibidem*, p. 117.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
132. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 48-51, p. 407. By saying that man lost the grace of the Image, Gregory does not mean the grace of Image in its ontologic sense, that is to say in the sense in which the whole image itself is a grace through/in which man came to being, but in the sense of quality of attributes, like in the case of man's incorruptibility that because of sin became corruptibility, etc. This is consistent with and in the sense of a partial and not total separation between man and God through sin.
133. K. Barth, *Word of God and Word of Man*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1935, p. 140.

134. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XXIII, 2, 28-30, p. 529.
135. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
136. *Ibidem*, p. 86
137. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, p. 405.
138. *Ibidem*, p. 405.
139. E. Cioran, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
140. *Ibidem*, p. 43.
141. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
142. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
143. *Ibidem*, p. 112.
144. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 4, 6-23, pp. 419-421.
145. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
146. M. Aubineau, see his introduction “Doctrine Spirituelle” for *Traité de la Virginité*, p. 159. With respect to the multiplication of man in the way the angels do, the question remains open because we have no explanation how the angels multiply themselves and if *they* do so. If *they* do so, they must normally not be understood as asexuate beings. This would suppose that when we say that God created the invisible world, that is the angelic one, God created one pair of angels or some pairs and then they multiplied themselves in their angelic way, different from anything we know, to the point of becoming hosts and millions of angels. But if they are asexuate, then it is possible to suppose that they do not multiply themselves but *are multiplied* by God, in the sense that God continues to create them, to add to their number. Also, it is possible to suppose that from the beginning, God created them. But if they *are multiplied* by God in the sense of creation, this is not any longer an analogy for the human case where the command of God is clear: “Grow and multiply yourselves!” (*You do it!*) It would seem that what we are left to conclude is that, if the angels are an analogy for human case and if, therefore, *they* multiply themselves, they are not asexuate beings but sexuate and when the scripture teaches that they are asexuate, that refers to a totally different mode of being sexuate, which has nothing to do with body, sex, pleasure, and pain, and the word “sexuate” becomes just a human analogy.
147. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 9, NPNF, p. 405. At this point, one may think that Gregory contradicts himself, because according to this explanation, man appears to be also in the image of the world, and this is exactly what he opposed.
148. *Ibidem*.
149. *Ibid.*, XVI, 7-9, p. 405.
150. J. Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1970, p. 90. Here is another problem: if the second expression is a “resumption” concerning the *account* of creation, why does he use the word: He *created* them male and female, if He, *in fact*, did not create them in this duplicity? “Male and female” cannot be a “resumption” of the *account* of the biblical *narrative* of creation because we *are*, in reality, male and female. Therefore, the “resumption” must refer to the *act* of creation itself. This would mean that indeed, we have to do with a double creation, the second being the “resumption” of the first. Normally, because the “resumption” includes the word *creation*, the “resumption” refers to God's act of creating, not to the evolution of creation itself from the *man* asexuate to the man male and female. In this

last case, the appropriate word would have been *became*, not *created*. However, one can suppose that the statement “male and female He *created* him” refers not to an actual second creation, but to the possibility that man, as creation, had to become what man became: male and female, although the question of the way of becoming remains still open. This would not be inconsistent with other Scriptural interpretations that go the same way, as for instance, the likeness that is interpreted by Origen and other Fathers of the Church as a possibility of becoming. God *created* man in His image and *likeness* but likeness would mean, in fact, an open possibility. Actually, St. Gregory, although does not explain the things this way, he seems to acknowledge this meaning when he relates this expression “male and female He created him” to the divine foreknowledge concerning the evolution, the becoming of creation (*On the Making of Man*, XVI, 14, p. 406).

151. Idem, *Platonism et Théologie Mystique...*, Aubier, Ed. Montaigne, Paris, 1944, p. 52.
152. E. Corsini, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
153. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 15, NPNF, p. 406.
154. Gregory of Nyssa, “On Perfection” in *Ascetical Works...*, p. 110.
155. Origen, *On First Principles...*, p. 20.
156. See: *Origen...*, p. 138.
157. Idem, *On First Principles...*, p. 19.
158. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Trinity*, NPNF, p. 329.
159. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
160. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
161. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.
162. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
163. D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
164. *Ibidem*, p. 167.
165. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
166. J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie...*, p. 52.
167. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
168. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 4, 35, p. 393.
169. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
170. *Ibidem*, p. 56.
171. Origen, *On First Principles*, p. 20; see also *Origen...*, pp. 125, 134.
172. Paulos Gregorios, *Cosmic Man, The Divine Presence*, Sophia Publications, New Delhi, Kottayam, 1980, p. 128.
173. Grégoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique...*, SVII, 2, p. 91.
174. D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
175. *Ibidem*.
176. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and on the Resurrection*, NPNF, p. 467.
177. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 11, p. 403.
178. *Ibidem*, XII, 2, 2, p. 399.
179. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

180. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 157.
181. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, IV, 4-9, pp. 331-333.
182. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 158.
183. Grégoire de Nysse, *La Vie de Moïse...*, II, 252-255, p. 281.
184. Gregory of Nyssa, "On Perfection", in *Ascetical Works...*, pp. 110-111.
185. *Ibidem*, p. 111.
186. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
187. Gregory of Nyssa, "To call oneself a Christian", in *Ascetical Works...*, p. 85.
188. *Ibidem*, pp. 86-87.
189. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 4, 35, p. 393.
190. Idem, *La Vie de Moïse...*, ed. 1955, II, 47, 6, p. 44.
191. Idem, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 30-47, p. 405.
192. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
193. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, I, 20-24, p. 259.
194. *Ibidem*, XIII, 1, 1-10, p. 423.
195. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
196. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XXIII, 2, 28-30, p. 529.
197. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
198. *Ibidem*, p. 171.
199. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 4-5, p. 417.
200. *Ibidem*, IV, 9, 4, p. 333.
201. *Ibid.*, II, 1, 6-23, p. 265.
202. *Ibid.*, II, 2, 1-16, p. 267.
203. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
204. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, II, 2, 17, p. 269.
205. *Ibidem*, XIV, 4, 14-16, p. 443.
206. *Ibid.*, II, 3, 5-17, p. 271.
207. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
208. *Ibidem*.
209. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
210. L. Thunberg, *op. cit.*, p. 298.
211. Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, Introd. texte critique, trad. notes et index par Pierre Marabal, col. "Sources Chrétiennes", Paris, 1971, pp. 141,179.
212. Pseudo Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, transl. by C. Luibheid and P. Rorem, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 84.
213. *Ibidem*, p. 72.
214. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, pp. 153-154.
215. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
216. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
217. Maurice Zundel, "L'homme tient Dieu dans sa main", in *Dialogue des amis de Maurice Zundel*, Nr. 25, Paris, Avril, 1988, p. 3.
218. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 3, 9-10, pp. 385-386.

219. Idem, *La Vie de Moïse*, II, 16, 117.
220. *Ibidem*, II, 2, p. 107.
221. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
222. Grégoire de Nysse, *La Vie de Moïse*, II, 318, Ed. 1968, pp. 323-324.
223. Idem, *Discours Catéchétique*, XXX, 4, p. 157.
224. Idem, *Les Béatitudes*, VII, p. 83.
225. Vl. Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
226. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 259.
227. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
228. *Ibidem*, p. 83.
229. “You created us God in your image and likeness and my heart is anxious until it will find rest in You.”
230. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, V, NPNF, p. 479.
231. Idem, *On the Soul and on the Resurrection*, NPNF, p. 449.
232. D. Balàs, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
233. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 185.
234. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
235. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 159.
236. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
237. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
238. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 4, 7-19, p. 389; see also note nr. 9, p. 389.
239. D.L. Balàs, in *Ecriture et culture philosophique...*, p. 78; this is a comment on Gregory's idea in *Against Eunomius*, V, 5 and VIII, 5, NPNF, pp. 181 and 210.
240. Gregory of Nyssa, *op. cit.*, VII, 5, p. 210
241. H. U. Von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
242. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, Corpus Books, 1969, p. 86.
243. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
244. D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
245. *Ibidem*, p. 169.
246. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
247. Christos Yannaras, *De l' Absence et de l' Inconnaissance de Dieu*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1971, p. 105.
248. O. Clément, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
249. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
250. *Ibidem*, p. 71.
251. *Ibid.*
252. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern...*, p. 97.
253. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
254. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XI, 4, 20-34, p. 391.
255. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern...*, p. 87.

256. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 1-2, p. 411.
257. *Ibidem*, XII, 2, 67, p. 411.
258. M. Aubineau, *op. cit.*, note nr. 1, p. 410. Indeed, while speaking of God's contribution to the uplifting of the soul, Gregory has an obscure phrase that may appear even as a contradiction in terms. He says that the return of the soul to its real nature and condition consists in its detachment from any foreign element to it, and this is not possible except by arriving again at the state in which it was created originally (*Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 2, 65-66, 409). He says that this return is operated by God, not by man. Therefore: the return is realized by detachment but this is not possible without arriving again at the original state. Indeed, one becomes again in this state precisely by detachment. Gregory seems to oppose the return by detachment to the arriving at the original state while these notions are not contradictory but complementary, because *arriving at, becoming*, ἀφίϋειϋί, is, in fact, consistent and compatible with *return* and *detachment*. Actually, the detachment makes the change of direction, the conversion from lower values to the higher ones. Detachment, therefore, *is* return and return through detachment *is* becoming; both terms of the problem are complementary parts of the graduate process of the soul's ascent.
259. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 184.
260. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
261. Grégoire de Nysse, *La Vie de Moïse*, II, 306, p. 315.
262. Origen, *On First Principles*, p. 255.
263. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
264. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
265. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité*, XII, 4, 6-7, p. 419.
266. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
267. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, VI, NPNF, p. 481.
268. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
269. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
270. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
271. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
272. J. Gaïth, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
273. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 11, NPNF, p. 405.
274. Anoushka von Heuer, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
275. H. U. von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
276. R. Leys, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
277. P. Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
278. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
279. M. Aubineau, preface to *Traité de la Virginité*, p. 157.
280. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 186.
281. J. Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
282. H.U. von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
283. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
284. *Ibidem*, p. 22.

285. N. Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1963, pp. 30-32.
286. A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
287. *Ibidem*, p. 73.
288. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
289. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers...*, p. 185.

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That Good within Us A Few Insights into the God-Humans Relationship in the Book of Hosea

Hosea (a prophet of the 8th century B.C.) was the first biblical writer who dared to talk about the relationship of God to Israel in terms of a marriage between a man and a woman. This innovative and courageous view, shaped out in a religious milieu dominated by the *hieros gamos*, relies on the experience Hosea had at the beginning of his prophetic mission.

We read in Hosea 1:2: “When the Lord first spoke to Hosea, He said this to him: ‘Go marry a promiscuous wife and have children of promiscuity. For the nation has turned from the Lord in gross promiscuity.’”

The first question which arises is: How is it possible that God Almighty, the Holy One of Israel, who repeatedly condemns adultery (cf. Exodus 20:14/Deuteronomy 5:18; Numbers 5:14ff.), could commission His messenger to marry a promiscuous wife (in Hebrew *éshet zenúnim*). This *crux interpretorum* has attracted the biblical commentators whether Christians or Jews, whether ancient or modern. Different answers have been offered to solve this dilemma. According to some commentators (so ibn Ezra) Hosea’s marriage with a promiscuous wife was only a dream or a vision. For others, the much debated Hebrew phrase would refer to a *latent prostitute* (so Lippel) or a woman inclined to idolatry (so Coppens). These are a few allegorical interpretations of the event. Yet, there are other interpreters (so St. Jerome) who emphasize the cruel reality of this fact of life; Hosea did marry a *promiscuous wife* and she was a *professional prostitute*.

There is another view (so Macintosh), more balanced, which interprets this expression as being proleptic. In other words, God commissions Hosea to marry a *wife* who later on proves to be a *promiscuous* person. The present situation, when God speaks to Hosea, differs from the subsequent situation, when the prophet’s wife behaves as a prostitute.

This marriage and the children born to it symbolize Israel's *promiscuity* translated into moral-social injustice and religious syncretism. To a certain extent, Hosea's conjugal drama is a parable of the human person's apostasy from God. The prodigal or rather the *lost son* in Jesus' beautiful parable (Luke 15) and Hosea's *promiscuous wife* are on the same track of *alienation* from God. Separated in time by hundreds of years, but not at all in the geo-spiritual space, both parabolic beings are witnessing the same bitter taste of a twisted freedom away from their own provider (whether father or husband).

Having given birth to three children (*Izre'el*, *Lo-ruhama*, *Lo-'ammî*), *Gomer*, Hosea's wife, ventures herself into an adulterous life, leaving her husband alone. "And the Lord said to me: 'Go again love a woman [at present] in an adulterous relationship, just as the Lord loves the Israelites while they turn to other gods and are lovers of raisin-cakes/wine flagons.'" (Hosea 3:1).

This is also the critical moment of the *lost son's* departure for a *remote country*. This is the hour of our apostasy, when we turn our back to our heavenly Father, passionately longing after a sinful adventure away from God. This is the moment when Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's temptation to *become like God* without God's assistance. This is the minute when our ancestors, and through them the whole humankind, lost *paradise* or the *personal communion* with the Creator. This is the very second when the *imago Dei*, according to which the first couple was created, started darkening.

We learn from the first chapter of Genesis that everything God has created during six days was *good*. At the end of each day, the Creator examines the respective sample of creation labeling it with a grade, *good*. For instance, in the first day: "God said: 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:3-4). Hebrew *tôb* is a notion of relationship. In other words, when God says that a piece of creation is *tôb* - 'good' - it means that piece is *according to* or in a *harmonious relationship* with His will or plan.

In a conversation with a wealthy youth, Jesus underlines the truth that "no one is good but God alone" (Luke 18:19). Thus, it is not surprising at all that the first attribute used by the Creator in describing His creation was good. Yet, according to Jesus' solemn statement only God is good or perfectly good, all the creatures are relatively good, or they are good as long as they are willing to stay in relationship with

God.

In reality, *Adam* and *Eve*, the *lost son*, Hosea's *promiscuous/adulterous wife* willingly each abandoned their *provider*, reaching the point where the *good* within them becomes an opaque reality. But that original grain of *good* within the human person or the *imago Dei* subsided the first great apostasy committed by Adam and Eve. It is in fact due to God's infinite love that in any human person there is a grain of the original *good*.

Hosea has a quite interesting line where he in passing alludes to a *good* hidden in the most remote corner of any adulterous soul. The prophet urges Israel to repent and turn to the Lord: "Take with you words and go back to the Lord. Say to Him 'Forgive all our iniquity and accept [what is] good; that we may requite [you] with our confession as if with young bulls'" (Hosea 14:3). In fact, Israel has previously tried to leave her wickedness and to return to the Lord, but their repentance *with flocks and herds* (Hosea 5:6) was shallow and momentary. Here is the evaluation of Israel's past repentance made by the Lord Himself: "What am I to do with you, Ephraim? What am I to do with you, Judah? Your good intentions are like the morning mist and like the dew which disappears early in the day" (Hosea 6:4).

This time Israel is humbly asking for *forgiveness* and pleading with God to accept that seed of *good* within her. Unlike Adam and Eve, who after committing the sin of disobedience, hid themselves failing to take responsibility and ask for forgiveness, the lost son, coming to his senses, said: "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired servants'" (Luke 15: 17-19). Notice the presence of the same *mea culpa* pattern in both cases: in order to be accepted by God into a new, restored relationship with Him, the penitent has to meet two conditions: to ask for *forgiveness* which implies acknowledging the state of sinfulness, and to plead with God to accept him/her as a humble receptacle of that grain of *good*. Israel cries out: "Accept [o Lord what is] good", whereas the *lost*, now *re-found son*, his eyes upward, accepts the total humiliation, praying: "Treat me like one of your hired servants". Both terms *good* and *hired servant* allude to a certain relationship between God and the human person. From this minuscule point God starts creating a new, restored communion with His rational

creatures.

As Hosea puts it, the new relationship with God is not simply a repaired or revised edition of the initial relationship. In His infinite love for humankind, God the merciful One, starts all over again. He receives his *lost son* as the true heir of all his possessions. All the details of the parable (ring, sandals, robe, banquet) point to this dignity. Likewise, in the book of Hosea, the new relationship between God and Israel, who returned to the Lord, is presented not in terms of a re-marriage, but in terms of an exciting and refreshing engagement. The Lord solemnly promises to Israel: “I will betroth you for ever; I will betroth you to myself with [gifts of] equity and justice, of kindness and compassion. I will betroth you with [the gift of] steadfast love and you will know the Lord” (Hosea 2:21-22).

What does that allegory mean? It means that God’s love and forgiving have no prejudice. He purely and simply loves us for *God is Love, Good, Perfect*. As humans, while forgiving each other we are often times tempted not to forget those who sin against us. Even in the most altruistic acts our self-love is still present.

Trying to depict what is indescribable, God’s love, Hosea has this unique glimpse into the mysterious Being who talks to Israel, who talks to us:

“I will love them generously. For my anger has abated from him... I shall be attentive and watch over him. [Ephraim] ‘I am like a luxuriant juniper. It is from me that your fruit will be assured’” (Hosea 14:5,9).

Rejection of God in Modern Culture: Secular Humanism

There are three prevailing movements in the modern cultural society, counterculture, secular humanism and New Age, whose members are committed not only to science and logic, but also to the transgression of the laws of God. Excellently subsidized by ardent admirers, secular humanism (the umbrella agent for the other two movements) is expanding with such persistence in the contemporary world that traditional organizations with serious and verified experience whether cultural or religious seem fading away. The directors of the secularist movement have published thus far three manifestos (in 1933, 1973 and 1980) and have distributed them in millions of copies worldwide. They print a well informed and well written magazine, *Free Inquiry*, their official voice (directed by Prof. Paul Kurtz of SUNY at Buffalo), and have at their disposal plenty of newspapers, reviews, newsletters, unions and congresses, allies and associates in all walks of life, thus gaining preeminence in universities, politics, literature and artistic life. The promoters of the “Liberal Theology” are also, in some respects, their followers. The secular humanist, whether he acts as a counterculture or New Age activist, makes use of the ideas of freedom, justice, reason, art and education like any other man of culture but avoiding any reference to God except of criticizing His laws. Depicting culture, politics, and social life as patterns of knowledge or behavior structurally different or even exempt of moral values, he deprives the above-mentioned concepts of their intrinsic ethics and axiology. For instance, a dedicated secular humanist admires a canvass by Rafael in the same way as the jumbling on canvas by a cow whose tail was imbued with paint; his reason: the former is figurative painting, the latter abstract. In the same way he appreciates a symphony by Beethoven alongside with the noise made on a scene by a so called conductor who is slapping the cheeks of his unfortunate human instruments. The reason of the secular humanist seems logical: one is symphonic music, the other “concrete music” or “music in relief”. As a theater go-getter, he applauds a play by Shakespeare as well as the pornographic gesticulations of the American Madonna, for him the two shows differing only in topic. For him the sexual initiation of children in a junior high-school is education; homosexuals who interrupt the

Holy Liturgy in St. Patrick Cathedral in New York are freedom fighters; a crucifix immersed in a vase of urine and signed Mapplethorpe is a work of art. Therefore, the National Endowment for the Arts, the nation's highest promoter of art, which is governed by moderate secular humanists, did well when it awarded Robert Mapplethorpe with one of its desirable prizes. Cases like these are innumerable. By mixing up cultural and non-cultural, even blasphemous, events, the secular humanist is mixing up the most important concepts of our civilization: beauty, truth, and good.

In their "Declaration of Principles" the secular humanists pledge to support several rules in modern society:

1. Critical intelligence in sciences and humanities;
2. Separation of Church and State;
3. Free inquiry (hence the title of their magazine), logic and practical evidence in all disciplines;
4. Encouraging children to make a choice between religion and science;
5. Defense of the pluralistic democracy against those who seek to undermine it, for instance, those who believe in a Supreme Being, in Marx, Lenin and in absolutism;
6. Encouraging reason independently of any religious ground.

At one point, the Declaration states: "We believe the scientific method, though imperfect, is still the most reliable way of understanding the world". Here is an example of how the "scientific method" was applied in a school. After several years of maintaining a curriculum without religion in a NY State school, a representative from Albany (obviously a secular humanist) initiated an investigation among students asking them to answer a question: is prayer to God necessary or not? As the students were never taught religion, they did not know what exactly the representative meant by that term "God", and their answer was "not". The man of law exulted: he found the evidence that prayer in schools was not necessary because the students themselves rejected it. He therefore sponsored a bill (and Congress voted it) taking prayer from the public schools curricula. An important social and moral decision was thus taken on the basis of some innocent and inexperienced children's opinion.

When schools hold classes of computation and reading in parallel with sex education, the students lose their interest in the basics

and become intested in sexual activities. With the banning of prayer from public schools, the youth loses whatever interest they might have in religion and become easy prey for all kinds of bad proclivities, some of which being so insinuating that neither their parents nor teachers can fight against. The phenomenon is not new. In economics it has been known a long time and even experienced financiers were unable to fight it: good currency is driven out of the market by bad currency: therefore gold and silver coins are kept in safes and people use paper and nickel money everyday. For teenagers, bad currency is doping and drugs, liquor and smoking tobacco, disco and rock-and-roll, sex and violence. Teachers and parents who try to transmit to children moral models of the past, such as the lives of the saints who died for their faith, or of heroes who gained public acclaim for their courage, appear to be backward or old-fashioned. In the schools I have visited thus far I have seldom found the portraits of the Founding Fathers, but I met with plenty of snapshots of many modern stars such as Mike Tyson, Mohammed Ali, Whoopi Goldberg, Woody Allen, Michael Jackson or the American Madonna. These stars are the luminaries of the young generation, not George Washington, not Andrew Jackson. In California I noticed that Hiram Johnson is but an obsolete figure of the past. The concept of education itself is slighting and students feel more comfortable with whatever does not belong to education. Responsible for this situation, in my understanding, are the dominant forces in the modern society who convinced many students to ignore the difference between a noun and adjective but be experts in narcotics, condoms and ways of copulation.

When we, readers, cherish a literature that extols sex activity and crime, depicting how a daughter kills her father or a son sleeps with his mother, as in some novels of Anais Nin (who won many literary prizes), when we read poems on same-sex copulation, when this literature discretely makes fun of old-fashioned people who still believe in the sanctity of marriage and are faithful to their spouses, then this literature does not belong to culture, but to counterculture. When a painter of some standing pretends that his artistic feelings are too rich to be expressed in finite painted forms; when he breaks the contours of the image and replaces them on his canvas with mutilated forms; when, at the same time, critics of art proclaim publicly that those crippled forms mean art and that beauty, order and truth are outdated esthetic

categories that should be “enriched” with minimal art and naught, the product in discussion is not art but counterart; it does not belong to culture but to counterculture.

An alarming phenomenon takes then place. An adult who has been educated in one of the few remaining serious schools can easily avoid such a phenomenon. When he notices the cheap products in galleries, he instinctively takes them as the are, aberrant expressions which are more psychopathic than esthetic; but when young boys and girls who are still in an early stage of acquiring knowledge are subject to the psychic influence of those delusive images called “modern painting” or “modern sculpture”, then their tender minds are strongly imprinted with deception and are deprived of essential knowledge; they are denied the rules of the common sense; they are kept back from understanding what real beauty, and real truth, and real good, are; they become alienated and hostile and mischievous; when they pass from puberty to maturity their lack of proper education comes out in its proper colors: they are unable to distinguish between truth and lie, good and evil, beauty and ugliness; for them love is sex; honor is a matter of interest, not of morality; chastity becomes a ridiculous out-of-date condition, religion a discipline of not much worth. Abominations such as blasphemies, marriages among homosexuals, abortion and homicide become part of everyday life. Killing an infant in the womb of his mother is considered nothing but a medical operation, like appendectomy. Perversion? Nothing but an old-fashioned term for ecstatic performances such as sodomy and adultery, group-sex or necrophilia. Were sodomites and adulterers punished by law in the past? Surely because of those old-timer bigots. What is also alarming is that young adults who were subject to countereducation such as teachers, priests or journalists, are hired and put in positions allowing them to control various social activities. They are now able to build a new spirit in young people, the spirit of secular humanism, the new modern religion.

In counterculture and New Age, all rationales are based on the amoral principles of secular humanism and are openly rejecting Christianity. These amoral principles are apparently fair. They include the practice of freedom, justice, and beauty, and therefore any unaware

individual is tempted to welcome them as presented by these movements. At a first glance, their principles appear reasonably true, but under investigation each one of them is lacking a moral unit, a basic one, the divine rule, and thus are but deluding. For instance, secular humanists use to plead for a free press, apparently a pretty fair option in publishing. However, we all know that a few decades ago, when this country was not under the pressure of secular humanists, the press was free for any earnest ideas. What the secular humanists mean by their term, “free press”, is freedom for the turpitudes that were held at bay in the past, such as sodomy, blasphemy, pornography, doping and the like. When secular humanists request freedom of speech, they do not mean freedom for decent ideas and doctrines which were and are free anyway, but for Satanist activities, homosexual practices and pornographic shows; when they demand the right to assemble, they mean swinger unions, gay clubs and witchcraft covens, the right to join incestuous, blasphemous or scatological associations. The secular humanists pretend they struggle to publish everything that was obstructed before their era and the candid listener thinks of the fruits of some philosophical or religious thought; perhaps the candid listener does not know that our culture and civilization have been the result of the long-lasting efforts of our forefathers who were free to develop and publish all earlier forms of culture and civilization; the secular humanists are well aware that all traditional values existed as such long before them; but they use the democratic term “freedom” with a hidden intelligence, to bring into the open the slum that was kept aside in traditional culture. When they speak of “scientific freedom” they refer mainly to abortion and transvestism; by “philosophical freedom” they mean freedom for atheists and blasphemers mainly; by “artistic freedom” they mean freedom mainly for “artists” such as the American Madonna or Michael Jackson; by “literary freedom” they mainly mean an alternate literature of lesbian or incestuous mode of living. But even from this standpoint the secular humanists bring nothing new because all these transgressions grew and advanced in secular culture, too. Let’s not forget Petronius’ *Satyricon*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Laclos’ *Les liaisons dangereuses*, and many other productions of the kind. The difference is that in the past these products were kept out of the reach of the youth, whereas today they are imposed on everybody, even on children. For promoting their obnoxious aspirations, the secular humanists and their supporters are directly responsible for the depravation of our youth. Indirectly they

are liable for the terror and violence in the modern world.

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