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**THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIFICATION THROUGH
PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER**

**A Study of the Theology of *Theosis* and Franco
Imoda's Understanding of the Recovery of the
Human Mystery**

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|--|
| <i>AG</i> | <i>Ad Gentes</i> |
| CCC | Catechism of the Catholic Church |
| Cf. | Confer |
| <i>CIC</i> | <i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i> |
| e.g. | <i>exemplis gratia</i> (for example) |
| Eds. | Edited by |
| EE | Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life |
| <i>EG</i> | <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> |
| <i>EN</i> | <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> |
| <i>ES</i> | <i>Ecclesiae Sanctae</i> |
| et al. | <i>et alii</i> (and others) |
| <i>ET</i> | <i>Evangelica Testificatio</i> |
| FLC | Fraternal Life in Community |
| <i>GS</i> | <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> |
| i.e. | <i>id est</i> (that is) |
| IPG model | Institute of Psychology (of the Gregorian) Model |
| <i>LG</i> | <i>Lumen Gentium</i> |
| <i>MR</i> | <i>Mutuae Relationes</i> |
| no. | number |
| <i>OA</i> | <i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> |
| <i>OT</i> | <i>Optatum Totius</i> |
| <i>PC</i> | <i>Perfectae Caritatis</i> |
| <i>PDV</i> | <i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> |
| <i>PI</i> | <i>Potissimum Istitutioni</i> |
| <i>RC</i> | <i>Renovationis Causam</i> |
| <i>RD</i> | <i>Redemptionis Donum</i> |
| <i>SC</i> | <i>Sacerdotalis Caelibatus</i> |
| <i>SS</i> | <i>Sedes Sapientiae</i> |
| Tran. | Translated by |
| <i>VC</i> | <i>Vita Consecrata</i> |
| VGS | Vocational Growth Sessions |

INTRODUCTION

Human persons are fundamentally relational beings – related to God, to other humans and to creation. God created in humanity an essential relationality that mirrors the relationality inherent in the Trinity itself. Joseph Ratzinger affirms: “I alone am not myself, but only in and with you am I myself. To be truly a human being means to be related in love, to be *of* and *for*”.¹ To explain the importance of relationality and the hazards of individualism, Vladimir Lossky makes distinction between ‘individual’ and ‘person’. Each ‘person’ shares a common nature and realizes uniqueness in terms of relation and love for the other, in the commune of humanity. He states that “the unity of nature is realized in persons; and persons can only attain to perfection -become fully personal- within that unity of nature, in ceasing to be ‘individuals’ living for themselves, having their separate individual nature and will”.² One of the major crises of the modern man can indeed be identified with the crisis of relationship. People seem to crave after individualistic motives and values. As a result, self-centredness and narcissism substitute the joy of sharing, and autonomy and freedom are misinterpreted for the sole benefit of individuals, while economic interests dominate human decision making. The situation worsens when the failure of relationship is attributed to persons and factors external to the self. Only an authentic search into the *essence* of man from which he was created can enlighten individuals regarding their existence through relationship. For such an accurate understanding of his essence (archetype), the theology of *theosis*/deification can contribute substantially.

The Fathers of the Church affirm that the basic structure of man is Christological. For, man, ‘the dust of the earth’ (matter) was truly bound to God through His breath (Gen. 2:7) and man’s life was raised to a spiritual (theocentric) status. According to them, Christ constitutes the image of God and man is the image of Christ (the image of the Image), i.e., the archetype of man is Christ. The biblical concept of the image of God has relational dimensions, and thus, man too has the ability to engage in dialogical communion with one another and with God. The characteristic features of the expression, man is created ‘in the image’ of God, explains that at creation God endowed man with certain natural gifts. These natural endowments constitute the image of God. Man having been created in the image of God, is called by his own nature to transcend the limited boundaries of creation and to become infinite, i.e., to be united with God (deification). Thus, for the Patristic Fathers, the uniqueness of the human is not found in his being a type of animal with the highest capacity for development of its biological faculties, but in his being a deified animal.

The Fathers of the Church contributed substantially to the theological development of the concept of deification. They proposed adequate spiritual pathways to attain ultimate union with God. However, the general use of the proposed spiritual pathways for deification seems to overlook the inherent psychological liabilities of the person. Thus, a proper (Christian) anthropology that is true to the totality of the human person, that integrates and balance both spiritual and psychological elements, has to guide our pursuit of understanding human relationship. An integral vision of human relationality requires an assessment of the Christological structure of man against the background of an anthropology that respects the fundamental reality of the human person. This necessitates a fruitful dialogue between the theology of deification and a model that deals with Christian anthropology; it is this dialogue which occupies the general goal of this work.

¹ J. RATZINGER, *In the Beginning...*, 72.

² V. LOSSKY, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 167.

A. Relevance and Purpose of this Study

Union with God is a concise theological term describing a state that Christ petitioned the Father to grant on our behalf: “that they may also be one in us” (Jn. 17:21). This petition has been answered for us in the death and resurrection of Christ. We have thus become, as Peter testifies, “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). According to the Patristic tradition, the ultimate aim of human life is deification and for this purpose God created man in His image (Gen. 1:27). Thus, the image of God (mystery dimension) constitutes the original (first) nature of man. The phrase ‘in the image’ signifies a potentiality in man to become infinite, i.e., it implies a gift within man but at the same time an ultimate goal set before him for *hypostatic union* with the Divine Logos. However, man’s rebellion and straying away from this goal constituted the fall. Yet, the goal of the first man always remains the same (even after the fall). In the postlapsarian state, God in His compassion, clothed man in the *garments of skin* (Gen. 3:21) - a second nature, which is a symbol of mortality and a blessing. In the single and unique reality of the garments of skin, we are to discern two aspects: (i) the repulsive form which man became when he acted with hubris towards God and traumatized himself; (ii) God, using the same material, adds a second form, and thus creating the positive aspect of the garments of skin (a remedy and blessing) for man to survive in the right way to reach fulness of life. According to the Fathers of the Church, the purpose of the garments of skin is not merely to ensure man’s survival within the postlapsarian state and return to the what is ‘in the image’. It also aims to bring to fulfilment the inherent impetus of man for hypostatic union with Christ, the unique purpose of Incarnation.

In the Eastern tradition, the holy Fathers and ascetics propose many spiritual pathways to recover the hidden image of God in man and finally to attain deification. For Panayiotis Nellas the anthropological meaning of deification is Christification.³ It is the process of realizing the potentialities of man (garments of skin) to recover the image of God obscured due to the fall by means of spiritual practices and thereby to attain hypostatic union with God. Nellas opines that union with Christ belongs to those who have undergone all that the Saviour has undergone, and have experienced and become all that He has experienced and become. Therefore, configuring with the person of Christ who conquered sin, death and nature in succession, the person undergoes all that Christ underwent and experiences all that Christ experienced and finally becomes another Christ. This process can also be called the process of the recovery of the human mystery dimension in the person that may have been lost or reduced. Nellas proposes five pathways to help the potentialities of the garments of skin to attain fulness of life in Christ. They are: the Christification of man’s being (through baptism), Christification of movement (through chrismation), Christification of life (through eucharist), Christification of mind and Christification of the will.⁴

The patristic tradition tries to explain the process of restoring the mystery dimension (image of God) of man to its original state mainly by means of spiritual processes. It necessitates the examination of the workings of the inherent psychological baggage of the person which can hinder the whole process of the recovery. So, it is important to take into consideration the spiritual and psychological aspects of the human condition in his efforts to become a son in the Son. This consideration paved the way for my research. Therefore, an

³ For the analysis on Christification and the restoration of the garments of skin, we primarily depend on the outstanding contributions of Panayiotis Nellas. Born in 1936, Panayiotis studied theology at the University of Athens, later spending two years on postgraduate works in France, at Lille Paris, followed by six months at Rome. From 1968 until his premature death in 1986, he taught religious studies at a high school in Athens. Unmarried, never ordained, Panayiotis was a lay theologian, one of the many active in Greece, where theology is taught more by the laity than the clergy. He had a deep love for monasticism, often stayed on Mount Athos. Most of what he wrote was devoted to the 14th C. Byzantine theologian St. Nicolas Kavalas (or Cabasilas). For Panayiotis theology was inseparable from prayer, and involved not the reasoning brain alone but the total human person.

⁴ The detailed explanation of these concepts will be offered in the later sections of this research study.

approach that integrates both spiritual and psychological elements in a balanced manner in the effort to help recover the diminished/less attended mystery dimension becomes necessary if we are to avoid a skewed approach. Franco Imoda's⁵ pedagogical approach seems to remedy this defect.

Imoda's understanding of the human person goes beyond the areas of psychology alone. He views the human person as a mystery.⁶ The mystery dimension of the person can be obscured or limited as a result of problems in psycho-spiritual development. To analyse these difficulties and help the person to recover the mystery dimension, Imoda introduces three parameters such as otherness, temporality and structure.⁷ He argues for the possibility of the recovery of the mystery dimension through the pedagogical project, namely, Vocational Growth Sessions (VGS). The psycho-spiritual encounter⁸ attempts to explore, challenge and change the motivational structures that limits the effective freedom of the person towards the recovery of the mystery dimension and orient him towards theocentric self-transcendence. The recovery of the mystery dimension means, the person begins to appreciate himself as created in the image of God, begins to appreciate the creation, and other people who are also created in the image of God. Thus, according to Imoda, the person initiates the process of living more and more like a son in the Son (in the East, it is termed as image of the Image).

The theological concept of Christification and the restoration of the mystery dimension of the person according to Imoda have direct relevance to the context of consecrated life and formation. According to the Magisterial teaching, the fundamental objective of consecrated life is configuring with the person of Christ. i.e., becoming another Christ. *Vita Consecrata* describes religious profession as a union with Christ, as "a special gift of the Holy Spirit" that leads to a "fuller, more explicit and authentic configuration to Christ" (VC 30).⁹ According to the document, the primary objective of the formative journey in consecrated life is to prepare people for a total consecration (VC 65) that concretely leads them to a progressive assimilation of the sentiments of the Son towards the Father (VC 19) and become not only of Christ but that they "have become Christ" (VC 109), i.e., becoming son in the Son.

Thus, the broader objective of this work is to explore the possibility of a mutually enriching interdisciplinary dialogue between the theology of *theosis* that deals with the recovery of the eclipsed image of God in man through the realization of the human potentials (garments of skin) by means of spiritual pathways and Imoda's understanding of the mystery of the human person and the proposed process of change for the recovery of the human mystery (image of God) through pedagogical intervention strategies of the VGS.

⁵ Franco Imoda S.J. is a Jesuit priest, born in Turin, Italy, in 1937. After graduation in philosophy and theology, he obtained a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Chicago and acquired clinical formation at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute and at the Psychosomatic and Psychiatric Institute of the Michael Reese Hospital at Chicago. Co-founder of the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian University, Rome, he has been a pioneer in formulating a formative approach utilising the resources of psychology and integrating them with theological anthropology. He served as a member of the Italian Society of Scientific Psychology.

⁶ Person as a mystery means that he is the presence of the finite as well as infinite, i.e., he is placed on the verge of two worlds, finite and infinite. When he tries to live the situation of being between these two worlds accepting the tension and restlessness, and strives toward the discovery of oneself in the other, he tries to live his reality of mystery.

⁷ Parameters indicate the areas, criteria, and factors of growth. Parameters propose to mediate between the mystery of man considered in its anthropological reality and the variety of patterns concretely existing, as chronicled in the observations of developmental psychology.

⁸ We use the terms pedagogical interventions, VGS and psycho-spiritual encounter interchangeably in this study.

⁹ Some of the references in the official Church documents on configuration with Christ are: *Vita Consecrata* 16, 70; *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 21, 22, 25; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2; *Gift of Priestly Vocation* 3, 35, 67, 68; *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priest* 8.

B. Scope of the Study

This study makes an attempt to analyse two propositions: (a) that experiencing the guide/formator as an empathetically receptive person in the psycho-spiritual encounter (VGS) can help strengthen the process of realizing the human potential (garments of skin) for Christification through the uncovering of the mystery in him; (b) that theology of *theosis* and the pedagogical approach of Franco Imoda can be reciprocally enriched through a critical interdisciplinary dialogue on the understanding of the human person and on the process of change to recover the diminished image of God in the person.

This interdisciplinary analysis has no pretence of proposing VGS as the absolute tool to recover the image of God in the person. We try to find out what is beneficial and useful in both the constructs and propose a possible integration of corresponding elements in them. Based on the documents of the Church pertaining to religious life we hope also to affirm that “the fundamental objective of consecrated life is Christification”. In formulating the practical applications of this study, we will try to look at how the psychodynamically oriented VGS can help in formation to recover the mystery dimension in the formee who experiences the inner disharmony of the basic dialectical tension and orient him to the path of Christification. Engaging the two constructs in such a dialogue seems to be relevant to the efforts towards an interdisciplinary study of the human person, which can aid us understand better the human reality and formulate more effective intervention strategies.

This study is the fruit also of a personal search, an exploration which I have made through the interior landscapes of my own self: the discovery of my archetype, the tension between my finite and the infinite existence, and the inherent psychological concerns which hinder the whole process of my recovery of the diminished mystery dimension.

C. Arguments and Limits

This study has been limited to a comparative analysis of the understanding of human person and the process of change within two different interdisciplinary models: the process of Christification and Imoda’s pedagogical interventions. In particular, our study attempts to analyse two research questions: (i) To what extent an empathetically receptive psycho-spiritual encounter can help strengthen the process of realizing the human potential (garments of skin) for Christification through the uncovering of the mystery in the person? (ii) Can the process of Christification according to Pannayiotis Nellas and the pedagogical approach of Franco Imoda be reciprocally enriched through a critical interdisciplinary dialogue on the understanding of the human person and on the process of change to recover the image of God in the person through VGS? We try to identify how close the concept of uncovering the mystery of the person through VGS is to the theological understanding of actualizing the potentialities of the garments of skin to attain fulness of life in Christ. Towards this end, we analyse parallelly, how the change process happens in the person as per the teaching of the Fathers of the Church and how it can be complemented with the proposed change achieved through psycho-spiritual encounter (VGS) by helping the person to transcend the psychological liabilities.

The theology of deification is vast in its profundity. Following Patristic Fathers, the on-going theological development on the understanding of *theosis* were further elaborated by the modern authors. Russian theologians Vladimir Lossky, Vladimir Solovyev and Nicolas Berdyaev¹⁰ popularized the idea of human potentiality of union with God through Christ, while the idea of ontological imitation of Christ was elaborated by J. R. Illingworth and Eric

¹⁰ V. LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God, The Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*; V. SOLOVYEV, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*; N. BERDYAEV, *The Beginning and the End, The Destiny of Man*.

Mascall.¹¹ Understanding of deification in the Latin tradition by Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, Augustine of Hippo and the modern authors like Louis Bouyer, Hans Balthasar and Karl Rahner among others attempted to highlight the re-creation of man in sharing God's transfiguring glory.¹² The Christocentric aspect of deification is well brought out by Manztaridis Georgios, John Zizioulas, Nicolas Berdyaev and Christos Yannaras and the traits of the same dimension is visible in the works of Ephrem the Syrian and others in the Syriac tradition.¹³ An inquiry into these areas lies outside the immediate scope of this research study. What is attempted here is confined to offering a general understanding of the theology of deification, its underlying anthropological vision and its insights on spiritual methods to attain *theosis*. Similarly, Franco Imoda's interests transcend psychotherapeutic applications; his interests constitute more an integrated pedagogical approach and deal with various aspects of human development such as cognitive, conative, religious, and so on. Our focus here, however, aims only at deriving psychotherapeutic applications from the pedagogical framework of Imoda, concentrating on his notions of mystery and self-transcendence.

D. Uniqueness and Contributions

- There already exists a number of theological works on the theme of the garments of skin and the proposed spiritual pathways to attain Christification.¹⁴ However, bearing in mind the psychological liabilities acquired by individuals during the process of development, how far an empathetically receptive psycho-spiritual encounter could strengthen the potentialities of the person (garments of skin) to recover the image of God has not yet been elaborated. A research into these issues could possibly be a contribution of this study.
- Although some attempts have been made by a few authors to apply the insights of the mystery dimension of the person and the theocentric self-transcendence concept of Franco Imoda¹⁵, the possible areas where these insights could be integrated into the theology of deification and the process of Christification is yet to be explored.
- The interdisciplinary approach of this study (dialogue between spirituality and psychology) overcomes the criticism of the overemphasis of psychology in the field of formation, which is likely to deform the person.
- In a postmodern secular society where there is often an aching absence of the Holy, where God seems to have been edged out, the study of deification (the ultimate goal of human endeavours) could help us have more light on the efforts for corrective measures.

¹¹ J. R. ILLINGWORTH, *Personality human and divine: being the Bampton lectures for the year 1894*; E. L. MASCALL, *The Importance of Being Human: Some Aspects of the Christian Doctrine of Man; Christ, the Christian and the Church: A study of the Incarnation and its consequences*.

¹² K. RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*; L. BOUYER, *History of Christian spirituality, The Christian Mystery*.

¹³ G. I. MANTZARIDIS, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*; C. YANNARAS, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*; J. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*; N. BERDYAEV, *The beginning and the End*; J. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*; SAINT EPHREM, *Hymns on Paradise*.

¹⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *On the Creation of Man*, S. Philiph (Tran.); GREGORY OF NYSSA, *On Virginity*, S. Philiph (Tran.); J. CRYSTOTOM, *Homilies on Genesis: 1-17*, R. C. Hill (Tran.); N. KAVASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, C. J. De Catanzaro (Tran.); P. NELLA, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspective on the Nature of the Human Person*; J. W. MCGARRY, *A Pythagorean Idea in Jerome*; W. J. VURGHARDT, *Cyril of Alexandria on Wool and Linen*; J. QUASTEN, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Exorcism of the Cilicium*; L. THUNBERG, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*; A. G. COOPER, *Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified: The Place of Body in the Theological Vision of Saint Maximus the Confessor*; J. H. SRAWLEY, *The Catechetical Orations of Gregory of Nyssa*; ORIGEN, *On Resurrection*; J. LOLLAR, *Maximus the Confessor: Ambigua to Thomas*.

¹⁵ Some of the studies relevant to this field appear in A. MANENTI – S. GUARINELLI – H. ZOLLNER, *Formation and the Person*; T. THARAYIL, *Beyond Secure Attachment*; B. SEBASTIAN, *From Restoration of the Self to the Recovery of Human Mystery*; R. REPOLE, *Antropologia teologica e psicologia della personalità umana: incontri suggestive* (234-248).

- Respecting the potentialities and the power with which God gifted human nature, the study takes a positive attitude towards the world and its modern scientific inventions.
- The study on Patristic teaching on the image and garments of skin calls on the Church to rediscover its ontological bond with the world, as it feels in the modern times a sense of alienation and break-off relation with the Church.
- This study is relevant to the context of consecrated life. According to the Magisterial teaching the fundamental objective of consecrated life is configuration with the person of Christ. This dimension has direct and immediate relevance to the finding of our study. The implications of the study can also be applied to the arena of formation.

E. Method and Structure

This study follows a theoretical and analytical method, following an integrated approach, comparing the corresponding elements of the process of Christification and the insights of Franco Imoda. In pursuing the research questions formulated earlier, we will draw the relevant data for analysis from primary and secondary sources related to the two models under consideration. In order to understand the concepts “the image of God in man” and “the garments of skin”, and for our evaluation of the theology of Christification, we will analyse as primary sources, the relevant works of Pannayiotis Nellas¹⁶ and Nicolas Kavalas¹⁷. As secondary sources, we investigate the contributions of Patristic Fathers and other theologians who have further enriched the discussion on the theology of deification. In order to analyse the mystery dimension of the human person and the process of Theocentric self-transcendence in pedagogical interventions, we use as the primary source, the works of Franco Imoda¹⁸ and to further develop some of his insights, we refer to other authors who have broadened the insights of Imoda¹⁹.

The presentation of the study is organized in two Parts. Part I, divided into two chapters, intends to provide the basic theoretical framework regarding the contributions of the theology of *theosis*. Accordingly, in Chapter 1, we aim at analysing the patristic understanding of the theology of *theosis* and its practical implications for Christian life. The main thrust of this chapter is to explain the concepts of *theosis* (terminology and definitions) and its development and orientations. We focus on, the ways in which the theme of *theosis* is associated primarily with the categories of the theological tracts of the patristic era, the contributions of the Fathers towards its theological development and on their diverse theological thrusts, its biblical basis, its relationship with the mystery of Incarnation and the sacraments and the role of the believer in its actualization in the ambience of the universal Church.

Chapter 2 aims at exploring the Old and New Testaments themes related to the ‘image of God’ (the Archetype), the Christological structure of human person and his destiny in the person of Christ. Subsequently, we also desire discuss in detail the meaning of “the Incarnate Logos as the Archetype of man” with a special reference to the fall of the first man and the concept of

¹⁶ P. NELLA, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspective on the Nature of the Human Person*, Norman Russel (Tran.).

¹⁷ N. KAVASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, Carmino J. De Catanzaro (Tran.).

¹⁸ F. IMODA, *Human Development: Psychology and Mystery; A Journey to Freedom: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Anthropology of Formation; The Spiritual Exercises and Psychology: The Breadth and Length and Height and Depth* (Eph. 3, 18); *Riscopri il mistero che è in te*; L. RULLA – J. RIDDICK – F. IMODA, *Entering and Leaving Vocation: Intrapsychic Dynamics*.

¹⁹ A. MANENTI – S. GUARINELLI – H. ZOLLNER, *Formation and the Person*; B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*; L. RULLA, *Anthropology of Christian Vocation I, Interdisciplinary Bases*; L. RULLA – J. RIDDICK – F. IMODA, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation II: Existential Confirmation*; F. SCANZIANI, *The Parameter of Otherness and its Importance for Dogmatic Theology*; A. FUMAGALLI, *The Parameter of Temporality and its Importance for Moral Theology*; T. THARAYIL, *Beyond Secure Attachment*; B. SEBASTIAN, *From Restoration of the Self to the Recovery of Human Mystery*.

“the garments of skin” according to the perspective of Panayiotis Nellas with its binary character. Finally, we explore the process of recasting the human nature in Christ, that is, transcendence of the human person from ‘in the image’ to ‘likeness’, which Nicolas Kavasilas and Nellas term as Christification, and the pathways to attain the same.

Chapter 3, in Part II of this study, intends to closely examine Imoda’s view of the human person as a mystery and his notions of self-transcendence and pedagogical interventions. Our study also plans to examine the inherent anthropology in the construct, the proposed pedagogical instrument of ‘vocational growth sessions’ (VGS), and the process of change in VGS. The pedagogical intervention is aimed at recovery of the dimension of mystery in the person. Chapter 4 attempts to engage an interdisciplinary conversation between the theology of *theosis* and the pedagogical approach of Imoda, in order to identify areas of conceptual interface between these two models and to seek ways to apply these insights to the context of formation of priests and religious. Based on the documents of the Church pertaining to religious life, we also try to affirm that the fundamental objective of consecrated life is Christification.

Chapter 2

The Theology of the Image and the Garments of Skin

Introduction

There are two sides to the human condition: misery and greatness. There are times when one feels literally cast down and lost in a corner of the universe yet forced to go on living. This has been the experience of most people around the globe in the initial months of 2020, due to the global spread of Covid-19. But there are other times when a mysterious inspiration, which however originates from deep within oneself, seems to put one up above necessity and permit a taste of true joy and freedom. The Fathers of the Church valued and highlighted such mysterious inspiration and offered it supreme priority within themselves, united with it all the functions of their existence. Seeing through this lens, they spotted the unique nature of the human person. And they concluded that man is inclined towards God precisely because he is an image of God, that is, the human person is simultaneously earthly and heavenly, transient and eternal, visible and invisible, truly and in fact a deified animal.

The theme of the “image” is very important for Christian theology, so much so that Vladimir Lossky gives the expression, “theology of the image”. According to him, if man contains within himself all the essentials of which the universe is made up, it is not in this that his true perfection, his claim to glory lies.¹ “What great thing is there”, asks Gregory of Nyssa, “then, in wishing to make man in the representation and likeness of the world - of the heaven that passes away, of the earth that changes, of all things that they contain, which pass away with the departure of that which compasses them round?”.² Therefore, the perfection of the human person contains in that which differentiates him from the created order and assimilates him to his Creator, and not in that which assimilates him to the whole of creation. Thus, the Fathers of the Church, both of the Orient and of the Occident, agree upon a primordial resemblance between the being of man and being of God in the fact that man is created in the image and likeness of God.

Humanity is not just made in the image of God, and given the job to rule over the world. “Rather, humanity is made in the image of God, and as such

¹ V. LOSSKY, *The Image and Likeness of God*, 125.

² GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Making of Man”, 404.

it represents God in creation”, states Christopher Fisher.³ That is, human beings are to mediate the rule of God to the world. As a mediator, humanity represents God in the cosmos and at the same time represents the creature and the cosmos to God. Thus holds T. F. Torrance a view on humanity: “From the perspective of theology, man is clearly made the focal point in the interrelations between God and the universe”.⁴ Only humans have such a personal and spiritual relationship with God. This truth can be better explained with the help of biblical insights, because relationship and fellowship with God are fulfilled only in the light of Incarnation. Through the incarnated Logos, human beings discover their supreme and ultimate relationship to God. The Son’s mediation of the love of God in the Spirit enable the human person to attain Theocentric self-transcendence or *theosis*. That is, Incarnation opens the way for divine-human union (which will be realized at the end of the age) and illuminates the eternal dignity of the human person founded on the image of God.

Thus, the themes like man’s creation in the image and likeness of God, his (man) Christological temperament and destiny, personal and spiritual relationship with God etc. are to be studied through the lens of Incarnation. Although the concept of *imago Dei* is largely an implied theme in the Old Testament, it clearly focuses in the person and works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Thus, the first part of this chapter will briefly explore the Old and New Testaments themes related to the image, the Christological structure of human person and his destiny in the person of Christ. Subsequently, we also discuss in detail the meaning of “the Incarnate Logos as the Archetype of man” with a special reference to the fall of the first man and the concept of “the garments of skin” according to the perspective of Panayiotis Nellas with its binary character. Finally, we explore the process of recasting the human nature in Christ, that is, transcendence of the human person from ‘in the image’ to ‘likeness’, which Nicolas Kavasilas and Nellas term as Christification (*theosis*), and the pathways to attain the same.

2.1. The Image: The Axis of Eastern Anthropology

The passion for transcendence sets human beings apart from other creatures. They long to belong within an ultimate reality that includes their personal particularity. The Biblical tradition tries to explain this longing by connecting human beings to the concept of the *imago Dei*. The phrase ‘image of God’ undeniably describes that the nature of humanity must be ultimately

³ C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and Natural Science*, 40.

⁴ As quoted in A. LINZEY, *Animal Theology*, 54.

understood in terms of its relation to God. That is, human ‘being’⁵ is inherently oriented to life with God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

2.1.1. The Evolution of the Terminology

Even though the creation of human being in the *imago Dei* has never been challenged, there has existed a wide difference of opinion about the nature of this image. Both in terminology and content, this theme goes back to a twofold source: one scriptural, and the other, philosophical. The doctrine about humankind being in the image of God is explicitly stated in the Old Testament in three texts: Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6, and in two other Priestly text such as Wis. 2:23; Sir. 17:3.⁶ All these texts attribute a special quality to human beings as against the sub-human creatures, described either as created in the image (*tselem*) of God or after (or according to) the likeness (*demuth*) of God, or both as in Gen. 1:26. The fundamental text is Genesis 1:26-27, describing the creation of man.⁷ According to Pannenberg, the Old Testament clarifies that “within the entire creation, man represents the sovereignty of God over against the other creatures of the earth”. However, humanity is able to represent God in the creation only as His image. This reality is illustrated by the proposition *in* from Gen. 1:26 – *in* our image, *in* our likeness. The proposition *in* may be translated as “according to” or “corresponding to”.⁸

⁵ Leron Shults chooses to use the word ‘being’ as a gerund with the opinion that “human being is not a static substance, but a becoming – a dynamic, historically configured movement in search of a secure reality. Like human knowing and acting, human ‘being’ is also experienced as both gift and call” (Cf. L. SHULTS, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, 217).

⁶ It is to be noted that the biblical texts which speaks of the ‘image and likeness of God’ are few in number. The reasons for it, according to some theologians, is that, overusing this phrase, the claim that the human being per se is the ‘image’ of God conflict with the biblical sense of the inappropriateness (and impossibility) of representing the divine with the images (Exod. 20:4) (Cf. Ibid., 219).

⁷ According to Tomas Spidlik, in the creation account of man, “the weight of the description is derived not so much from the term ‘image’ (the Semitic mentality is not ‘formal’), as from the context of the revelation proper to Scripture: man is ‘on the side’ of God. Adam comes from God just as he begets children himself (Lk. 3:38)” (Cf. T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 56).

⁸ C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and Natural Science*, 40. The translation of Moltmann is inspiring: “Let us make human being *as* our image, *as* our very form”. He continues, “As his image, human beings represent God on earth; as his similitude, they reflect him... To be an image of something always means letting that something appears and revealing it” (Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *God in Creation*, 215-216, 219; C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and Natural Science*, 40-41).

The *image* is also mentioned in the New Testament in James 3:9 and 1 Cor. 11:7. In addition to these explicit references to the human person created in the image of God, there are other Pauline references which bear the concept of the image of God. An analysis of the Pauline theology of Christ as the image of God allows us to divide these texts into two groups: (i) The texts which presents Christ as the image of God – 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15 and (ii) which deals with Christ as the model for Christians – 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24. In more general logic, one might say that the Christ reflects this image in his own divine sonship, which becomes the foundation for becoming children of God and being like him (1 Jn. 3:2). In the New Testament, the *Image of God* as the formative concept of the Old Testament for an understanding of the human being, “is ‘torn out’ of its structural or morphological rigidity and moulded to a more dynamic understanding of the *imago* as being-in-the-Word-of-God. The basis of this is the ‘loss’ of the *imago Dei* as a positive orientation of life towards God through the Fall, and the renewal of the *imago Dei* through the whole work of Jesus Christ as the incarnate and thus the original *imago*”.⁹ Paul affirms, “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation” (Col. 1:15).

The Fathers of the Church grounded their themes of the image on Scripture but enlarged them with the help of resources drawn from Greek philosophy. For example, concept of *homoiōsis* (assimilation) is derived from Plato, since for the Greek philosophers, the purpose of life was ‘likeness’ or ‘assimilation to God’. In his famous work, *Theaetetus*, Plato says, “Therefore, we ought to try to escape from earth to the dwelling of the gods as quickly as we can; and to escape is to become like God, so far as this is possible; and to become like God is to become righteous and holy and wise”.¹⁰ According to Spidlik, this idea became a commonplace in Stoic circles and in Neoplatonism; it occupied a significant place in the hermetic writings, and is closely related to the thought of Plotinus. The Christians incorporated some elements from the Greek doctrine of the likeness such as: the spiritual character of the image, the dynamic attraction of the image which prompted the soul to re-ascend to God, and the relationship between contemplation and likeness. However, elements like, the necessary character of the generation of the image in Plotinus and the danger of subordinationism in the generation of the Word were not assimilated.¹¹

In the pages ahead, we try to identify significant points in the history of

⁹ R. ANDERSON, *On Human Being*, 216.

¹⁰ As quoted in S. M. LEE, *The Cosmic Drama of Salvation*, 29.

¹¹ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 56.

the interpretation of the concept of *imago Dei* in the light of the ideas which the Fathers incorporated from the Greek philosophical tradition. The theme of the 'image' has a long history. Midway between the Greek philosophical tradition and the anthropological tradition of the Old Testament, Philo of Alexandria (Philo Judaeus) also uses the term in a manner central to his work, adding to it his own special meaning.¹² The core reference for a concept of 'image of God', from which all theologians seem to take their departure, is Gen. 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'. Then, verse 27 restates: "So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them". Though the word 'image' alone is used in this text, Gen. 5:1 states: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God". Here, the word 'likeness' alone is used. In the context of a warning against murder, Gen. 9:6 reads: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image".

2.1.1.1. The Distinction between Image and Likeness

It was Irenaeus who made the earliest significant commentary on the concept of *imago Dei*. As we have already mentioned in the first chapter, he posited a twofold character for the *imago* based on a distinction between the words, 'image' and 'likeness'. Etymologically 'image' signifies representation or resemblance, while 'likeness' means imitation. Thus, 'image' was interpreted to be the basic natural form of the human being and 'likeness' as the supernaturally gifted function of existing in right relation to God, the Creator. That is, the image characterises the ontic imprint of God on the human character, while likeness is the original state (*iustitia originalis*) of God-likeness which was lost in the fall.¹³ As described in his work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus explains that the first parents were immature at their creation because likeness was not yet fully developed; but through growth and maturity were expected to become the true status of the human person. However, with the fall the development was stopped and only through Christ is it restored. Thus, Adam could not lose the image, but could lose the likeness because this was given only in the form of 'seed' or 'promise'.¹⁴ For him, the couplet image-likeness corresponded to the Pauline spiritual couplet

¹² In commenting on the statement 'in the image of God He made humankind' Philo asks why God does not say "in his own image God made humankind", but rather speaks of Himself in the third person. Philo's response is that nothing mortal can be made in the image of his Logos. (Cf. As quoted in M. M. THOMPSON, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 35).

¹³ R. ANDERSON, *On Human Being*, 217.

¹⁴ IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", 531; R. ANDERSON, *On Human Being*, 217.

of fleshy man – spiritual man,¹⁵ and Holy Spirit is the agent that establishes the likeness.

In the same vein, Clement of Alexandria in *The Stromata* II, 22, delves into the origin of this distinction. It is neither Platonic, nor Stoic, nor Philonian; rather it is based on the commentary on Genesis (1:26-27). He affirms that, “man straightaway on his creation received what is according to the image, but that what is according to the likeness he will receive afterwards on his perfection”.¹⁶ Carthaginian apologist Tertullian is of the opinion that Satan had overthrown the image of God and had “entirely changed man’s nature”.¹⁷ Following an Eastern attitude, Origen utilized the dynamic character of the image. In *De Principiis*, he suggested that “the possibility of attaining to perfection being granted him [man] at the beginning through the dignity of the divine image, and the perfect realization of the divine likeness being reached in the end by the fulfilment of the (necessary) works”.¹⁸ That is, the ascension from ‘image to likeness’ will be completed in the glory of the risen body (1 Jn. 3:2) and in conformity with Christ’s prayer (Jn. 17:21), in unity. Man must acquire the perfection of this likeness for himself by his own diligence in the imitation of God (virtues of Christ).¹⁹ According to Basil, man is capable of knowing that they were made in God’s image. And the human task is to “acquire likeness by living a life according to virtue”.²⁰

Coming to an agreement to contemporary exegesis, however, the terms image and likeness are used to reinforce a single idea. That means, human being is created in God’s image, after His likeness. Thus, there is no distinction between the terms. Athanasius, who does not distinguish the terms, explains in *On the Incarnation of the Word*, that the divine image was affected as a result of the fall, setting in place an ongoing process of corruption: “the rational man made in God’s image was disappearing, and the handiwork of God was in process of dissolution”.²¹

The idea of humanity’s creation in the image of God has been pursued relentlessly by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine continued with the teachings of Irenaeus emphasising the distinction between image and

¹⁵ IRENAEUS, “Against Heresies”, 536.

¹⁶ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, “The Stromata or Miscellanies”, 376.

¹⁷ TERTULLIAN, “De Spectaculis”, 230.

¹⁸ ORIGEN, “De Principiis”, 344.

¹⁹ Ibid., 344.

²⁰ As quoted in P. ROUSSEAU, *Basil of Caesarea*, 345.

²¹ ATHANASIUS, “On the Incarnation of the Word”, 39. Later Greek Fathers like Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus too express similar viewpoint (Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On Virginity”, 358; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, “Select Orations”, 250).

likeness, but with a different approach. He affirmed an original state of perfection contrary to the notion of ‘immaturity’, which Irenaeus posited for Adam. The image and likeness, according to Augustine, were present as both a perfect form and a perfect function of the human person as truly and spiritually related to God. His unique contribution to the doctrine of the image is his stress on the God-directed character of the image: i.e., the image, being fundamentally a part of the being of the human person, is also a capacity for relation with God. In the sinful humanity, the image has no positive contribution to make but becomes a hunger for God.²²

Thomas Aquinas did not introduce any fundamental change in the doctrine developed by Irenaeus and Augustine. However, drawing upon Aristotelian concepts of human nature, Thomistic theology affirms that the *imago Dei* is in man in three ways. “First, inasmuch as man possess a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory”.²³ The first state of the image is found in all humans, the second is only in the just, and the third only in the blessed in heaven.²⁴ However, Spidlik is of the opinion that “those who identified image with likeness did not in the least deny spiritual progress”.²⁵

The terms such as ‘the image of God’, ‘in the image of God’, and ‘after

²² AUGUSTINE, “Eighty-three Different Questions”, 190-191; R. ANDERSON, *On Human Being*, 217.

²³ *Summa Theologica* I, 93, 5. According to Aquinas the image as an ontic imprint is indelible. The formation of a natural theology and natural ethics is based on this concept of the image of God. Even in the state of estrangement from God, man is capable of natural reason; hence the responsibility to know and seek God.

²⁴ With the emergence of the Reformation, a radical break with the scholastic tradition followed through the teachings of Luther and Calvin. Both returned to Augustine for their anthropological assumptions, even though each contributed a special emphasis. Luther understood that permitting the image of God to be defined by supposedly unfallen human capabilities, especially reason, would ultimately allow for even Satan to possess the image of God: “If the *imago* consists in the power of the soul (in the *anima rationalis*) then it would follow that Satan too would be formed according to the image of God, since in him these natural qualities are far stronger” (Cf. E. BRUNNER, *Man in Revolt*, 507). Thus, according to Martin Luther (and the theologians of the Reformation), with the fall the true knowledge of God is lost. There remains no ‘rational soul’ by which the sinner can continue to have free will and from which a natural theology can be developed. Here it is the question of a total loss of the image.

²⁵ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 59.

God's image' are not used synonymously. The expression 'in' the image, according to Spidlik, sounds as if God first created an image-prototype in terms of which He would then have created human being. This intermediate image could be the Logos or Wisdom (Wis. 7:26).²⁶ In his work, *On the Making of Man*, Gregory of Nyssa explains that Adam designates the complete and perfect man, created in the image of God, which prefigures the Christ, the true archetype of humanity, because God's plan for humanity is fully present in him alone.²⁷ Irenaeus believed that the God-man was the model according to which Adam was created by God, and that man was thus made "by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word".²⁸ Christ is the true archetype of man; he is "in the form of God" (Phil. 2:6), "the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). The entire tradition on this point may be summed up by describing that "man is in the image of the Word and that he is the image of God through the mediation of the Word. He is therefore 'an image of the image'".²⁹

2.1.1.2. The Image and the Person

We try to analyze an important question: Is the image of God the soul alone or the whole human person or only the Spirit? Taking into account the idea of the image in patristic tradition, we observe that it is not only the soul that possesses the image, but also the body. Irenaeus, as well as the Syrian exegetical tradition, includes the body in their definition of the image.³⁰ We have already analyzed how Irenaeus distinguished between image and likeness, and what he meant by each. Another significant contribution of Irenaeus is his key insight as formulated in the statement in *Adversus haereses* (IV, 20, 7): "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God".³¹ He also speaks of the goal of the history of salvation in terms of Christocentric recapitulation, whereby the Incarnate Logos becomes the head of a transformed world and humanity (Eph. 1:10). However, Origen in *Contra Celsus* (VI, 63) criticises those who located the image of God in the entire human composite, and Irenaeus falls under his censure. According to Origen, it is not the whole man, but only the spiritual soul is the image of God. He puts forward a hypothesis of Pre-existentialism regarding the origin of the souls. For him God creates each spiritual soul without a body.³²

²⁶ Ibid., 57.

²⁷ GREGORY OF NYSSA, "On the Making of Man", 392.

²⁸ IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", 544.

²⁹ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 57.

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

³¹ IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", 475.

³² ORIGEN, "Contra Celsus" (VI, 63). The Council Constantinople (543) condemned pre-

Gregory of Nyssa is of the view that along with divine and rational attributes, the human and earthly characteristics are to be ascribed to man, while all these attributes reflect the divine image.³³ Thus, man, being a harmonious mixture of intelligible and sensitive natures, possesses as mediatory role between the seen and unseen worlds. The elements that constitute the ontological structure of man are brought together by the divine image God stamped on the human person. Maximus the Confessor followed the same path emphasizing this integration very strongly when he described the effects of the image on the different levels of the human person. He demonstrated that the human being is composed of both soul and body, for soul and body are indissolubly understood to be parts of the whole human species. In his opinion, the image and creation came into being at the same moment and they embody the theological means through which human person gains familiarity with God.³⁴

Tertullian stresses the redemptive value and significance of human corporeality. With regards to Christ's Incarnation he suggests that the flesh of Christ is the place of encounter between God and the humans, and the guarantee of the reality and seriousness of our redemption. Tertullian's famous statement is: *Caro est cardo salutis*, that is, "The flesh is the very condition on which salvation hinges".³⁵ "We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh" (CCC 1015).³⁶

Gregory Palamas points to the fact that not only soul but also the body of man shares in the character of the image, being created in the image of God: "The word man", affirms Gregory, "is not applied to either soul or body separately, but to both together, since together they have been created in the image of God".³⁷ According to him, there exists a strong ontological relationship between body and soul, neither of these being able to operate without the other. The soul converses life to the animated body, and the body relates to the soul through love. The angels at creation were not endowed with the strength that man owns by the power of his soul. Man, in Gregory's view,

existentialism, which denied man's unity and despised (degraded) the body.

³³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, "On Infant's Early Death", 326.

³⁴ As explained in N. R. STAN, *Human Person as Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son*, 129.

³⁵ TERTULLIAN, "On the Resurrection of the Flesh", 94; ERIC OSBORN, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West*, 237.

³⁶ Augustine had a negative approach to body. According to him, man is a system of two unequal realities in which the soul has to master the body and use it as its instrument.

³⁷ As quoted in V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 116.

is more after the image of God than angels, because his spiritual being joined to a body, possesses a life-generating spirit, by which the bodily nature is quickened and controlled. The angels being bodiless spirits do not own this faculty, though at the same time by reason of simplicity of their spiritual nature they are nearer to God.³⁸

Defining the divine image in man as his rational ability to know God, Athanasius wants us to understand that man's creation in God's image refers to the body as well, since the human body is, according to Paul (I Cor. 3:16, 19), a temple of the Holy Spirit. For Athanasius, the human body has a great value. It is meant to be God's living temple and, at the same time, the instrument through which the embodied God speaks and does His work similarly to the soul. The body reveals the rational-speaking soul, but the soul reveals the Word of God in His work.³⁹

There are many other similar examples given by the Fathers. The diversity and multiplicity of their definitions clearly indicate that Fathers refrain from binding the image of God to any one specific part of the human person. After analyzing their arguments, Vladimir Lossky concludes that the doctrine of the image cannot be comprised in the compass of a definition. The various theories put forward by the Holy Fathers indicate exactly the complexity of the human being, who is created in the image of God:

Sometimes the image of God is sought in the sovereign dignity of man, in his lordship over the terrestrial world; sometimes it is sought in his spiritual nature, in the soul, or in the principle, ruling [...] part of his being, in the mind [...], in the higher faculties such as the intellect, the reason [...], or in the freedom proper to man, the faculty of inner determination [...], by virtue of which man is the true author of his actions. Sometimes the image of God is identified with a particular quality of the soul, its simplicity or its immortality, or else it is described as the ability of knowing God, of living in communion with Him, with the possibility of sharing the divine being or with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul [...] The number of these definitions and their variety show us that the Fathers refrain from confining the image of God to any one part of man.⁴⁰

The mystics approached the above question from a different perspective. According to Spidlik, they often searched for the *apex mentis*, the mysterious abode wherein the Holy Spirit indwells the human beings, the place where

³⁸ Ibid., 116; N. R. STAN, *Human Person as Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son*, 129-130.

³⁹ ATHANASIOS OF ALEXANDRIA, "On the Incarnation of the Word", 38.

⁴⁰ V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 115-116.

God and man meet. It had to be the noblest part of the soul: intelligence (*nous*), logos (*mens*), the ruling part (*hegemonikon*), the heart, or simply the spirit (*pneuma*). Therefore, the image of God is to be found in that part of the soul which is influenced by the mind, where it becomes one spirit with *Pneuma*.⁴¹

2.1.1.3. The Relational and Trinitarian Dimension of the Image

The essence of an image represents something and it tries to express or reproduce a reality. It resembles or points something beyond itself and it manifests something that it itself is not. Thus, “the image of God means”, explains Cardinal Ratzinger, “that human beings cannot be closed in on themselves. To be the image of God implies relationality. It is the dynamic that sets the human being in motion towards the totally Other. Hence, it means the capacity for relationship; it is the human capacity for God”.⁴²

Stressing on the relational dimension to the image of God, Gregory of Nyssa equates the image with the human capacity for moral action. He discusses the image of God in the context of Christian conduct. In his *Sermon on the Beatitudes*, commenting on the passage “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt. 5:7), Gregory writes: “He who made man in His own image endowed the nature of his handiwork with the principles of all goodness. Hence nothing good enters into us from outside, but it lies with us to have what we will, and to bring forth the good from our nature as if from some inner chamber.... Therefore, the Lord says to his hearers: “The kingdom of God is within you””.⁴³ The image of God, which is dynamic, bestows the human person with the inner resources for moral action. Through moral conduct, which unavoidably comprises action towards the other, human person brings the image to perfection. Inviting the hearers to “put on again the Divine Image”, Gregory exhorts: “Let us become clean of heart, so that we may become blessed when the Divine Image is formed in us through purity of life, in Christ Jesus our Lord”.⁴⁴

Explanation of the image of God in terms of moral conduct is visible in *Didache* as well. In the section “The Way of Death”, referring to the image of God, the text tells us that this way is constituted “of men that have no heart for the poor, are not concerned of the oppressed, do not know their maker; are murderers of children, destroyers of God’s image; of men that turn away

⁴¹ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 60.

⁴² J. RATZINGER, *In the Beginning*, 47.

⁴³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “Sermon on the Beatitude”, 74.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

from the needy, oppress the afflicted, act as counsels for the rich, are unjust judge of the poor – in a word, of men steeped in sin”.⁴⁵

Christopher Fisher categorises the Old Testament concept of the *imago Dei* under two relational dimensions such as vertical and horizontal.⁴⁶ According to him, “The creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 portrays the fullness of the image of God in both these dimensions, neither divisible from the other, each realizable only in conjunction with the other”.⁴⁷ Genesis 1:27 states that the first humans are created “male and female”. “This statement”, comments John Bequette, “immediately follows the one that says God created humankind in his own image, as if to imply that the complementary relationship between male and female is essential to the image of God”.⁴⁸ Ray Anderson remarks, “Only when the man and woman exist as complementary forms of human being is there a sense of completeness”.⁴⁹ On the creation account, John Sachs believes that “it is human *community*, both male and female, that most adequately images God as personal and relational”.⁵⁰

An older view within the Christian tradition, on the complementary relation between male and female, is represented by Gregory of Nyssa. He regards this relationship as something added to the image of God, locating the image itself in our common human nature. Gregory affirms:

And so, the Creator, who, as the prophet says, knows all things before they came to be, when he created man saw, or rather foresaw, what human nature would incline to, following its self-determining and self-mastering power. And as he looked upon the creature that was to be, he added to his image and likeness the division into male and female. To this division nothing corresponds in the divine archetype. It is borrowed, as I have said, from the nature of irrational creatures.⁵¹

⁴⁵ THE DIDACHE, 423; J. P. BEQUETTE, *Christian Humanism*, 12.

⁴⁶ The vertical relationships of the image are constituted between human beings and God, and between human beings and the rest of the creation as typified by the charge of dominion. The horizontal relationships of the image are between themselves in the initial instance male and female.

⁴⁷ C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and Natural Science*, 46.

⁴⁸ J. P. BEQUETTE, *Christian Humanism*, 10.

⁴⁹ R. S. ANDERSON, “On Being Human: The Spiritual Saga of a Creaturely Soul”, 180.

⁵⁰ J. R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology*, 18. Claus Westermann points out the kernel concern of the Genesis 2 narrative is not the creation of the woman as such, or even the origin of the mutual attraction of the sexes, but the creation of humankind. Making of woman completes the creation of humankind, and this is because “God’s creature is humankind only in community” (Cf. C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 192; R. LINTS, *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 86).

⁵¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Making of Man”, 406.

Gregory is of the opinion that the complementary relationship between male and female does not constitute the essence of God's image, for, male and female are qualities that reflect creation, not the Creator. In short, the corporate creation of human beings as male and female indicates the essential reality that the image of God is a relational image, and God himself is a relational being. "Man, in the image of God is essentially a 'being-in-relation' and human existence is essentially 'existence-in-community'".⁵²

The *imago Dei* has a Trinitarian reference as well. So far, we have analysed two views on the nature of the image of God: first, the complementary relationship between the sexes as the basis of the image, and second, the ancient view, represented by Gregory of Nyssa, that adopts a more essentialist understanding. In Gregory and *Didache*, however, even within an essential framework, the image of God is inherently relational. Henry de Lubac accents interpersonal solidarity as the defining characteristics of the human race. He perceives this as principally expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity, where the concept of relation defines each of the three divine persons.⁵³ Divine personhood signifies involvement in a relationship of absolute unity. De Lubac, drawing upon the original meaning of *persona*, asserts that the nature of human personhood also involves a person in fundamental unity: "Again, does not to be a *person*, if we take the old original meaning of the word in a spiritual sense, always mean to have a part to play? Is it not fundamentally to enter upon a relationship with others so as to converge upon a Whole? The summons to personal life is a vocation, that is, a summons to play an eternal role".⁵⁴

The basic quality of the *imago Dei*, that is, the human quality that this term articulates, is the solidarity of the entire human race, a harmony that reflects the unity of the Trinity. Relationship within this solidarity is its mode of working, while the complementary relationship between the sexes is its primal, concrete expression. In addition to embodying the solidarity of the human race, states John Bequette, "the trinitarian dimension of the image of God suggests the relationship between the person and himself or herself, and the person in his or her relationship to God".⁵⁵ The same idea of the image of God is stressed by Augustine in his *De Trinitate*. According to him, our capacity for a relationship with God, which is rooted in the intellect, helps us to find the divine image. The creation of the human soul in *imago Dei*

⁵² C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and Natural Science*, 47.

⁵³ H. D. LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 329; J. P. BEQUETTE, *Christian Humanism*, 13.

⁵⁴ H. D. LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 331.

⁵⁵ J. P. BEQUETTE, *Christian Humanism*, 13.

“represents its power to use reason and intellect for the understanding and beholding of God”.⁵⁶ Augustine continues, that it is in this image of God that we must look “for a trinity of a unique kind”.⁵⁷

In interpreting the idea of the image of God, Karl Barth draws an I-Thou relationality, which he claims, is grounded in the Triune God, was disclosed in Christ, and remains evident in both divine and human life. According to Barth, sexuality is theologically crucial because of the I-Thou relationship that the creation of humans as male and female facilitates. For him, fashioning of woman in the second creation narrative is crucial in that it facilitates in the created realm the kind of I-Thou relationality that characterizes the eternal Trinity. This God, he writes, “is in Himself the One who loves eternally, the One who is eternally loved, and eternal love; and in *this triunity* He is the original and source of every I and Thou, of the I which is eternally from and to the Thou and therefore supremely I. And it is this relationship in the inner divine being which is repeated and reflected in God’s eternal covenant with man as revealed and operative in time in the humanity of Jesus”.⁵⁸

This brief study illuminates some prominent features of the *imago Dei* such as: its fundamental sources both from the scriptural and philosophical traditions, and the distinction posited by theologians between the concepts of image and likeness together with its relational and trinitarian dimensions. While the Old Testament holds at the meaning of the concept in vertical, horizontal and moral dimensions, its thematic development happens in the New Testament, where the person and work of Christ unveil its fullness.⁵⁹ Personhood and relationality, expressed as love of God and neighbour, justice and authority, are its hallmarks. It is concrete and bodily and depends upon human rational and linguistic capacity (dominion, I-Thou relationship), and involves both vertical and horizontal relationship with God, creation, and other persons. Christ is the fullness of the image, and invites the Church to share in it. In short, the image of God might be summarized as the manifestation of the character and personhood of God in the cosmos.

⁵⁶ AUGUSTINE, “The Trinity”, 103.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁸ K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 220.

⁵⁹ As Pannenberg states, it is found in “the idea of Jesus Christ as the image of God in which believers share through the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18)” (Cf. W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 208).

2.1.2. The Christological Structure of Man

In the above analysis, we have identified that the Fathers refrain from a definitive formulation of a clear definition of the image. One of the reasons for it could be that the nature of the human person is inconceivable to contemplation. In *On the Making of Man* (11.4), Gregory of Nyssa affirms it stating that since humans are the image of God, they must be an incomprehensible image of the incomprehensible.⁶⁰ However, it is revealing that, in their recurring efforts to obtain an acceptable answer to the anthropological problems, they make use of the key expression ‘in the image’ in their investigation. We also have identified that this expression is enriched with the most varied meanings such as: man’s free will, his rational faculty, his characteristic of self-determination, sometimes referring to the soul along with the body, to the mind, to the distinction between nature and person, comprehensively to the whole person and so on. But, the deficiency of sharp and definitive formulations of the meaning of this phrase in the patristic tradition does not suggest lack of orientation, rather reveals the origin, the structure and the destiny of man.

What are the implications of the creation of the humankind in the image of God? Having been created in the image of God, human beings are expected to fulfil the divine intention for that image. Fathers strongly affirm that man is a rational being because he bears the image of God. That is, man is rational because he was created in the image of Christ, who is the hypostatic Logos of the Father. Athanasius, in *On the Incarnation of the Word* (3), explains with clarity: “He [God] did not barely create man, as He did all the irrational creatures on the earth, but made them after His own image, giving them a portion even of the power of His own Word; so that having as it were a kind of reflexion of the Word, and being made rational, they might be able to abide ever in blessedness, living the true life which belongs to the saints in paradise”.⁶¹

The second implication is man’s sovereignty, because, Christ, in whose image he was created, is omnipotent and King. It is precisely in his function as ruler that man is God’s image. In the ancient East, the setting up of the king’s statue was the equivalent to the declaration of his dominion over the sphere, in which the statue was erected (cf. Dan. 3:1, 5 ff.). When in the thirteenth century B.C., the Pharaoh Ramses II had his image hewn out of rock at the mouth of the Nahr-El-Kelb, on the Mediterranean north of Beirut, the image meant that he was the ruler of the area. In this light, we can

⁶⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Making of Man”, 396-397.

⁶¹ ATHANASIUS, “On the Incarnation of the Word”, 37.

understand the text Gen. 1:26^b: “Let us make Adam in our image, after our likeness and let them have dominion”. God wants to create mankind and to set them in the midst of creation as God’s “statue”. Humankind is the evidence that God is the Lord of creation. As God’s stewards, he also exerts his rule, fulfilling his task not in arbitrary despotism but as responsible agents.⁶²

Similarly, man is also a creator because he is the image of the supreme Creator, the Logos. Given the importance of procreation in the book of Genesis, Clement of Alexandria claims that one must become an image by cooperating with God and performing as He does, say, in the begetting of other persons. In his work *Paidagogos* (2. 10) Clement states: “The human person becomes an image of God in that he cooperates with Him in the procreation of other human persons”.⁶³

Having been created in God’s image and so addressed by God in dialogical relationship, human being is constituted as a person and so is an end in itself. The significant aspect of the image of God lies in the human ability to engage in dialogical communion with one another and with God. It points to his freedom. Persons are relational beings who go out of themselves and then return to themselves in conscious freedom. Boethius defines a person as an “individual substance of rational nature”.⁶⁴ Man is free because he is an image of absolute sovereignty. Thus, affirms Gregory of Nyssa (*On Virginity*, 12): “Being the image and the likeness, as has been said, of the Power which rules all things, man kept also in the matter of a Free-Will this likeness to Him whose Will is over all. He was enslaved to no outward necessity whatever; his feeling towards that which pleased him depended only on his own private judgment; he was free to choose whatever he liked; and so, he was a free agent”.⁶⁵

Another implication of being in the image of God is related to man’s responsibility. He is a responsible agent before God. The responsibility is not merely individual-personal, but also collective-communitarian. The Second Vatican Council as well as several social encyclicals of the Popes have stressed the aspect of collective responsibility towards the nature and with regard to a just society.⁶⁶ Pope Benedict XVI has highlighted it in his first

⁶² H. W. WOLFF, *Anthropology of Old Testament*, 160.

⁶³ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, “*Paidagogos*”, 164.

⁶⁴ As quoted in R. GROSS, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 239.

⁶⁵ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “*On Virginity*”, 357.

⁶⁶ Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII (rejection of war and a proposal for peace); Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of Paul VI (ecological concern and warning on the tragic consequence of unchecked human activity) and his speech to the Food and

encyclical (2005) by speaking of “charity as a responsibility of the Church” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 20).

According to Panayiotis Nellas, man is accountable for the creation, the recapitulation and consciousness of all that has been brought into being, because his archetype, Christ, is the recapitulator and savior of all men. He quotes Theodore of Mopsuestia: “Last in order, He brought forth man in His own image, as if the whole of creation were to appear to have been put together for the use of man”.⁶⁷ The idea of collective responsibility appears more visibly when we reflect over the dimension of co-humanity implied in the image of God. In Gen.1:26-27 we find that the plural form is used with reference both to God and man (“Let us make humankind”; “he created them”). Even though we cannot conclude from this a Trinitarian concept of God (or majestic plural), there is at least a suggestion as to a correspondence between the intrinsic plurality of human beings and the being of God.⁶⁸ Gen. 2:18 comments on the solitary existence as something “not good”. This would imply that the image of God is not totally present in the form of individual humanity, but is complete more as co-humanity. It is thus expected that God himself is also “we”. The idea of “being-with” (*Mitsein*)⁶⁹ is very significant here for the social dimension of human being. This significant dimension of human inter-subjectivity is based on the Trinitarian life of God and is reflected

Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on the 25th anniversary of its institution, on 16 November 1970 (emphasized on the urgent need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity and the necessity of authentic social and moral progress); Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of John Paul II (against the exploitation of natural environment), speech for General Audience on 17 January 2001 (a universal call for ecological conversion), Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (an invitation to safeguard the moral condition for an authentic human ecology), Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (a concern for the nature and the whole world); the speech of Pope Benedict XVI on 6 August 2008 (on the misuse of creation), the speech addressed to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on 8 January 2001 (an invitation to ensure respect for the environment), encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (on the deterioration the nature), speech on 22 September 2011 (on the damaged natural environment due to the irresponsible behaviour of human beings); Encyclical *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis (a dialogue with all people about our common home). Some of the other papal documents that teach the social doctrines of the Church highlighting the idea of justice, peace and social commitment include *Rerum Novarum* (1891) of Leo XIII, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) of Pius XI, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) of John XXIII, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) of the Second Vatican Council, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) of Paul VI, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Centesimos Annos* (1991) of John Paul II.

⁶⁷ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 26.

⁶⁸ Some suggest that God’s image and likeness is male and female, thus allowing for the use of plural pronouns in reference to God (Cf. R. ARTHUR, *The Sex Texts*, 5).

⁶⁹ H. CAREL, *Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger*, 67.

in the Church as a communion. The Second Vatican Council in its *Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World* speaks at length about the social and communitarian nature and responsibility of the human vocation (GS 23 - 93).⁷⁰

Made up of soul and body, man stands at the midway point of creation, uniting within himself matter and spirit. We bind up the enquiry on the implications of the creation of the humankind in the image of God with the observation made by Nellas:

man is at the same time both person and nature, characterized fundamentally by the mystery of love, which inwardly impels persons to a natural communion; he is conscious personal existence in time; he is an indissoluble psychosomatic unity with unfathomable psychic depths; he is free, sovereign, creative, rational, scientific, and so on. It is these things that reveal the true structure of man in a realistic way. It is also worth noting that these elements, while constituting the central dimension of the traditional teaching on the phrase “in the image”, are at the same time not very distant from the most profound conclusions of modern anthropological research.⁷¹

2.1.3. Christification in Biblical Anthropology

The New Testament provides ample evidences to Jesus as the full image of God. Pannenberg affirms that the true humanity that displays the image of God “has been fully realized only in Jesus of Nazareth”, the perfect image of God. The Old Testament trace of meaning for the image is “brought to focus in the person of Jesus Christ”.⁷² Therefore, of all human beings, only Jesus is fully and unbrokenly human, and his full humanity exceeds even that of his pre-fall ancestors, since Christ is, in type, superior to the first Adam. For, as Paul testifies (Phil. 2:7-9; 1 Cor. 15:45-49), he emptied himself to become one of us. There are indications in the Gospel of John which emphasizes Christ as the image or representation of God. Some of the typical passages are: “Whoever sees me sees him who sent me” (Jn. 12:45); “Whoever has

⁷⁰ “The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men” (LG 1; translation according to Colman O’Neill, in: Austin Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II). “Christians, as citizens of both cities, are to perform their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities” (GS 43). One important insight of the Council is that not only charity, but also “its works will remain” (GS 39). The Council also holds that Christ’s redemptive work involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order (Decree on the Laity, 5).

⁷¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 27.

⁷² C. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and the Natural Science*, 49.

seen me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). This view pervades through the writings of Paul as well. For him, Christ is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4), the image of the invisible God and the first born of creation (Col. 1:15). According to Paul, the elects are those who are “predestined to be conformed” to the image of the Son (Rom. 8:29) and all those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Rom. 8:14). The believers are to cloth themselves “with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10).

The relevant teachings of Paul on the image of God is summarized in the in the first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians.⁷³ “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones and dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church” (Col. 1:15-18). This passage highlights the Christological dimension of Paul’s anthropology. The same wavelength of the term “image” also re-emerges in Paul’s basic teaching that man, to be made whole, must put on “the image of the heavenly” man, who is Christ (1 Cor. 15:49), in order to attain “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13) so much so “that we may no longer be children” (Eph. 4:14). Man’s progress to full stature coincides for Paul with his Christification. The Fathers carry further this line of thought found in Paul and the Old Testament writers by uniting the Genesis theme of man in the image of God with the Pauline theme of Christ-image of God. Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and others agree to the point that Christ constitutes the image of God and man the image of Christ; i.e., man is the image of the Image.⁷⁴

2.1.4. Man’s Destiny in Christ from Creator’s Viewpoint

The destiny of man to bear the image of the heavenly man (1 Cor. 15:49) reveals the dynamic impetus that in every man there must be a certain internal disposition towards this end. Second Vatican Council testifies that Jesus is the perfect man, and in following him, man becomes more human (GS 41,

⁷³ It is most characteristic that it is expressed not as a personal thought of Paul but as a liturgical hymn of the early Christian Community (Cf. M. DALY-DENTON, “Singing Hymn to Christ as to a God”, 278).

⁷⁴ For example: Origen (*Against Celsus*) says, “The first-born of every creature is the image of God... while man has been created after the image of God” (Cf. ORIGEN, “Contra Celsus”, vi, 63). John Chrysostom identifies the Creator with Christ: “After the image of Christ; for this is the meaning of, ‘after the image of Him that created him’” (Cf. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *The Homilies on the Epistles of St. Paul*, Homily VIII, 272).

22, 38, 45).⁷⁵ Man, having been created in the image of the infinite God, is called by his own nature to transcend the limited boundaries of creation and to become infinite. This relates to all the components of his being from the most peripheral to the very core of his existence. To substantiate this point, Nellas gives some examples. The wisdom of man, by the very fact that it constitutes an image of the supreme wisdom of the Creator, itself has the power and the responsibility to raise itself to the level of supreme wisdom. He quotes Athanasius:

In order that what has come to be may not simply exist ... God has been pleased to bring down His own Wisdom to creatures... so that what has come to be may also be wise.... For as our own reason (*logos*) is an image of the true Logos of the Son of God, so the wisdom that has been created in us, whereby we possess the power to know and to think, is likewise an image of His true Wisdom; and so by virtue of our human wisdom we are capable of receiving the Wisdom of the Creator.⁷⁶

Thus, it becomes evident that the progress of man in scientific knowledge in the modern society is not an arbitrary or fortuitous matter. Human knowledge grows because development is an intrinsic element of it. Knowledge of the human person is driven by its own nature to raise itself up to the totality of knowledge.

The same is true regarding the dominion of man over nature, which we have analyzed as another implication of the creation of the humankind in the image of God. Considering man as the real governor of the universe, the Fathers interpreted this lordship to be one of the ways in which man articulates his royal character.⁷⁷ Thus, no modern scientific development causes surprise for the believer, who sees things under a theological lens. The unending thirst of the modern humanity to organize and discover the mysteries of the world, does nothing but fulfills one of the marks of its destiny. Certainly, in turn, whether (all that) humanity's organization of the world, in the past and in the modern scenario, proceeds in the direction of it becoming fully human, is a debatable question.

The Fathers, while appreciating the greatness of man in the created universe,⁷⁸ are also particular to specify his true and authentic greatness.

⁷⁵ Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 3, 22, 3) upholds the view that the Word, the universal architect, "had formed beforehand for himself the future dispositions of the human race", which humanity he himself was to take on. (Cf. IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", 455).

⁷⁶ ATHANASIUS, "Four Discourses Against the Arians", ii, 78; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 28.

⁷⁷ See GREGORY OF NYSSA, "On the Creation of Man", 4; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, "Orations", 45,7; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 29.

⁷⁸ See GREGORY OF NYSSA, "On the Creation of Man", 16.

Citing Basil the Great, Nellas writes: “[T]he true greatness of man is not found in his being the highest biological existence, a “rational” or “political” animal, but in his being a “deified animal”, in the fact that he constitutes a created existence “which has received the command to become a god”.... [T]he greatness of man lies in his destiny, in his appointed end”.⁷⁹ The human person is beyond definition. Thus, as Nellas continues, “[M]an remains and will remain a mystery to science is the fact that what lies at his core, by reason of his very structure, is a theological being which falls outside the scope of science”.⁸⁰ Human person can only be known through relationship and personal engagement.

What exactly is the element within man to resemble God and incline towards Him? By nature, anything created is distant from God, and the essential gulf between created and uncreated nature is absolute and infinite, where mere human beings are concerned. Therefore, the singular instance of the perfect union of the divine and the human in Christ himself cannot be used as the yardstick to measure the union of God with human being. Certainly, by assuming flesh, the second person of the Trinity, brought the created nature to the perfection it was created for in the beginning. The perfect communication between the two natures in Christ points us to the fact of how God shares His life with the creatures. The Chalcedon teaching reiterates this truth: only a perfect and unconfused “communion” of the divine and human in Christ offers any hope for the creation severed from God by death and sin.⁸¹ However, how this union is possible has continued to be a topic of strong disagreement for centuries.

Georges Florovsky makes the basic thesis that the essential gulf between divine and human nature is under no circumstances removed, but is only in some way hidden through God’s infinite love. The infinite goodness of God, without abolishing that essential gulf between the divine and human, has been willed to bridge it in a real way from the beginning with the uncreated divine energies.⁸² Nellas explains that the theological and cosmological theme of the uncreated energies of God and the anthropological theme of the expression *imago Dei* meet at this point. “The energies of God, which support and conserve the created order, and have in relation to the world the aim of guiding it towards its perfection, acquire in man a specific created vehicle, which is the freedom of man, and a specific direction, which is the union of man with the divine Logos. This is the meaning of the expression “in the

⁷⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 30.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸¹ M. MATTOX – A. G. ROEBER, *Changing Churches*, 92.

⁸² P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 31.

image”.⁸³

Resonating with the teachings of Gregory Palamas, St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain explains that there exist three things in God: essence, hypostasis and energy. According to him, the energy is more exterior, the hypostasis more interior, and the essence the most interior of the three.⁸⁴ Athenagores calls the exterior manifestation of God in creation as the divine “idea and energy”.⁸⁵ Lossky observes, “St. Paul’s saying about the invisible things of God, His eternal power and His divinity... made visible since the creation of the world, is sometimes interpreted as meaning the Logos, ‘Power and Wisdom’, who manifests the Father; sometimes in the more precise meaning of the ‘energies’ – the common operations of the Holy Trinity, showing forth in the creatures, ‘those things that can be known of God’..., according to the same passage of St. Paul (Rom. 1:19)”.⁸⁶ For Basil the Great, “The energies of God descend to us, but His essence remains unapproachable”⁸⁷, i.e., it is by His energies that we may know God but we cannot come near to His essence.

Nikodimos continues that, in accordance with His essence, hypostasis and energy, God possesses from all eternity three general relationships. First, the Father possesses the relationship of communicating in His essence with His consubstantial Son and His Holy Spirit; secondly, the hypostatic union was effected by the Logos when He assumed flesh; and thirdly, the union “according to energy” was granted to man with his creation in *imago Dei*. For, creatures participated only in the energy and power of God, and not in His hypostasis or essence and nature, since they obtain their being through the divine energy and power.⁸⁸

The union according to energy, comments Nellas, does not abolish the gulf between the divine and the human natures, but rather, simply bridges it. Its importance rests in the fact that it prepares for and leads to the hypostatic union, which is complete and perfect because, since the divine and the human natures possess in Christ the same person, it is impossible for any gulf to

⁸³ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁴ NIKODIMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, “The Apology”, 233.

⁸⁵ V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 71.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁷ NIKODIMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, “The Apology”, 233. Maximus the Confessor expresses the same idea when he says: “God is communicable in what he imparts to us; but He is not communicable in the incommunicability of his essence” (Cf. M. HORTON, *Covenant and Salvation*, 213).

⁸⁸ NIKODIMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, “The Apology”, 233.

separate them.⁸⁹ That is, the creation of Adam in the *imago Dei* had as its original goal of leading human nature to hypostatic union with the divine Logos in Christ. Man was formed after the archetype of Christ and thus his essence is found not in the matter from which he was created but in the archetype towards whom he tends. This is precisely because, explains Nellas, the archetype is that which organizes, seals and gives shape to matter, and which simultaneously attracts it towards itself. The archetype comprises the ontological content of the phrase *imago Dei*. And the ontological truth of man does not lie in himself conceived as an autonomous being - in his natural characteristics as materialist theories maintain, nor in the soul or in the intellect as many ancient philosophers considered – rather it lies in the Archetype. The structure of the human person is *theo*-logical: his ontology is fundamentally ‘iconic’, because the human is a soul-body unity in which both are made and equipped for fellowship with the divine. Nellas picks up threads of patristic interpretation and affirms that the archetype of man is not simply the Logos, but the Logos incarnate.⁹⁰ The two elements by which the Archetype comes to be present and truly operative in man, and which constitute the essential reality of man are: first, the theological structure of man and the attraction which the Archetype exercises on him in an interior way.⁹¹

2.2. The Incarnate Logos: The Archetype of Man

The Christocentric, eschatologically focused anthropology of the New Testament decodes the Old Testament notion of humankind as *imago Dei* reaching its fulfilment in the new humanity headed by Jesus Christ. In doing so, the New Testament anthropology escorts inevitably back to Gen. 1:26-27. The expression ‘to be in/after the image of God’ and ‘the image of God’ are not synonymous, rather each phrase is used with a different meaning. The

⁸⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 32. Nicolas Kavasilas supports it with the opinion that the common hypostasis “destroys the gulf between divinity and humanity since it is a term common to both natures and so could not be common to what is separated” (Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 105).

⁹⁰ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 33.

⁹¹ To substantiate his argument, Nellas quotes Gregory of Nyssa (*Catechetical Oration*, 5): “Through the natural glow lying within it, the eye, attracted by the innate power of what is akin to it, comes to have communion with the light. Similarly, it was necessary for something akin to the divine to be mingled with human nature, so that through this correspondence it should have a desire for what is its own.... For this reason, it has been endowed with life and reason and wisdom and every good thing befitting God [theological structure of man], so that through each of these things it might have a desire for what is its own.... The account of creation indicates all this succinctly by a single phrase when it says that man was made in the image of God” (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 34).

term ‘in’ the image sounds, explains Spidlik, as if God first created an image-prototype in terms of which he would then have created man. This intermediate image could be wisdom (Wis. 7:26) or the Logos.⁹² Christ is the true archetype according to which man is created. That is, the Fathers of the Church have agreed on that it is only the Son who dwells in God’s image (Phi. 2:6) and only the Son is ‘the image of God’ (2 Cor. 4:4). ‘In/after the image of God’ indicates to how man was made. “The entire tradition on this point may be summarized by saying that man is in the image of the Word and that he is the image of God through the mediation of the Word. He is therefore ‘an image of the image’”.⁹³

Regarding the nature of this image, there were different interpretations made by the Fathers. Some of them conceived the image as a visible reality while others as invisible. For example, Irenaeus, in *Against the Heresies* (v. 16. 1-2), states that the Logos was the model “after whose image man was created”, and that man was thereby made in likeness to “the invisible Father through means of the visible Word”.⁹⁴ However, Origen, Athanasius, Evagrius and other Alexandrians adopted Philonian concept of an invisible image which they applied to the Word. That this assertion on invisibility, attests Spidlik, ran the risk of minimizing the humanity of Christ was revealed more evidently after the soteriological dispute.⁹⁵

Byzantine theologian and mystic of the fourteenth century, Nicholas Kavalas (or Cabasilas - a contemporary of Gregory Palamas), in line with Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas and others, affirm that the archetype of man is Christ.⁹⁶ He

⁹² When Philo spoke of the Logos as an ‘instrument in which’ God created the world, he precisely intended to draw on the well-known picture of the role of wisdom in that creation. See T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *John and Philosophy*, 58.

⁹³ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 57. Dumitru Stăniloae complements with the opinion that man was made by God the Father through the Son and in the image of the Son, as a limited image of the Son. Human beings embody the Son’s images where God’s parental love dwells: “After He had made everything in His Word and His Only-Begotten Son (Jn. 1:3), God made men as images of His Son, in order to show the breadths of His parental love to other sons, who are not entirely Godlike and who are not His sons through an intrinsic law” (as quoted in N. R. STAN, *Human Person as Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son*, 134).

⁹⁴ IRENAEUS, “Against Heresies”, 544.

⁹⁵ T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 57-58.

⁹⁶ Von Balthasar writes: “For, the Jesus of history is, precisely, not a mere sign, but a form, and, indeed, the definitive and determinant form of God in the world, one which is distinguished from all other worldly forms and aesthetic images by the fact that Jesus’ form is the Primal Image – the Archetype itself” (Cf. H. U. V. BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord*, 182). Carl Jung defines archetypes as primordial forms in that they spring from the

explains:

It was for the new man that human nature was originally created; it was for Him that intellect and desire were prepared. We received rationality that we might know Christ, desire that we might run towards Him. We possessed memory that we might bear Him in us, since He was the archetype for those who have been created. For the old Adam is not a model for the new, but the new a model for the old.⁹⁷

Therefore, he continues, man's archetype is not simply the Logos but the incarnate Logos. "Man hastens towards Christ not only on account of [Christ's] divinity, which is the goal of all things, but also because of His human nature".⁹⁸

To the argument that Christ did not exist historically at the time of Adam's creation, Kavasilas defends with the biblical teaching that Christ is "the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1:15-17). His basic argument is that if man, for whom all the material creation was brought into being, rose last of all creatures from the earth, it is surely logical that Christ, who is the goal of the whole of the material and spiritual creation, should be later than Adam, since all things are led from imperfection to perfection. Therefore, Christ, as the highest realization of man, naturally constitutes the goal of human beings' upward journey, the beginning but also the end of history.⁹⁹ Nellas makes it clear:

The fact that Adam was created in the image of Christ implies that it was his vocation to be raised up to the Archetype or, more precisely, to be purified and to love God so much that God would come to dwell within him, that the Logos would enter into a hypostatic union with man, and thus appear in history as the Christ, be manifested as the God-man. The "entry of the first-born into the world" (Heb. 1:6) fulfils the eternal will of God, the highest mystery "hidden from the ages and from generations" (Col. 1:26). Christ was "the counsel and will of the Father". This was the destiny of man and [,] in consequence [,] his physiological path and his goal. In relation to Christ [,] man "was made in the beginning as if to a standard or pattern... so that he could receive God". Man's straying from this path constituted the fall.¹⁰⁰

To substantiate his argument, Nellas quotes both Gregory Palamas and

preverbal realm of the unconscious. See C. G. JUNG, "Archetype and the Collective Unconscious", 3-41.

⁹⁷ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 190.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 71; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 35.

⁹⁹ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 35-36.

Maximus the Confessor: “Hence the original creation of man, formed in the image of God, was for the sake of Christ, so that man should be able one day to make room for the Archetype; and hence the law laid down by God in paradise was on His [Christ’s] account, that is, to help man be guided towards Christ”.¹⁰¹ The comments of Maximus goes as follows:

This is the great hidden mystery. This is the blessed end for which all things were created. This is the preordained divine goal of the origin of beings, which we define as the preordained end for the sake of which all things exist, although this end itself depends on nothing. It was with a view to this end [Christ, the hypostatic union of divine and human nature] that God brought forth the essence of all beings.¹⁰²

Nicolas Kavasilas, with greater clarity, affirms: “God created human nature with no other end in view... but this, that when He needed to be born, He should receive His mother from that nature. And, having established human nature first as a necessary standard [in the person of the God-man, Christ], He then forms man in accordance with it”.¹⁰³ Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, in his *Apology*, explains with greater lucidity: “... the whole of the intelligible and sensible world was created for this end, namely for our Lady of Theotokos, and that our Lady the Theotokos was created in turn for our Lord Jesus Christ”.¹⁰⁴

That God fashioned man ‘in the image’ means, he might tend (of) his own nature towards the Image, i.e., God gave him as gifts in a realistic manner, the power and the aim of serving as the effective instrument of the incarnation of the Logos, who is the perfect and unique image of the Father. As a result, man, enhypostatized¹⁰⁵ in the Logos, becomes capable of being himself raised up into an ‘image’, of being himself manifested as ‘image of God’. Therefore, the phrase ‘in the image’ implies a gift within man, but at the same time a goal set before him, a possession but also a destiny, since it really does constitute man’s *being*, but only in potentiality. The ‘in the image’, asserts Nellas, is a real power, a pledge which should lead to hypostatic union, the unconfused but real and fulfilling mixture and commingling of the divine and the human natures. Only then does the potential being of man become real, authentic being, and he finds in the Archetype his true ontological meaning.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 36.

¹⁰² Ibid., 36.

¹⁰³ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 136; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ NIKODIMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, “The Apology”, 227.

¹⁰⁵ Enhypostatize means to come together in one person or hypostasis.

¹⁰⁶ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 36-37.

According to the Book of Wisdom (2:23), human persons are not only ‘in’ the image of God; they are ‘the image of God’ properly. The Trinitarian meaning of the image is found in the tradition of the East, i.e., man is made after the image of the Holy Trinity.¹⁰⁷ Man is the image of the Son, but he is made in the image of the Holy Trinity. The source for this argument, that the Supreme Trinity takes part in the creation of man, is based on Gen. 1:26, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness”.¹⁰⁸

Man is made in the image of the Trinity, but, through the work of the Son, he receives the filial dignity. Man is made as the image of the Son, so that he might lift himself to the love for the Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Son made man in his image, thus giving him the best filial potential. Being the image of the Image does not mean that man is the natural son of the Father. Rather, it means that man is offered the ability to work on his own filiation by cooperating with the divine grace.¹⁰⁹ The image enables man to accomplish this work, says Cyril of Alexandria. We were all called to receive the filiation through the Son, who received faith in him and are moulded in his image as images of the Archetype.¹¹⁰

We make the following affirmations of this truth before we progress to the next point:

- i. Christ event is no mere mythical event in history, nor the incarnation of the divine Logos a simple consequence of an act of Satan. The enhypostasis of the person of Christ is the eternal will of God.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ However, it was applied in a social sense of the Church, which Spidlik calls “the human collectivity united in divine unity” (Cf. T. SPIDLIK, *The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 57). Gregory of Nyssa, who in his anti-Arian polemic, stressed the perfect equality of the three persons in the Trinity, explains the image with a Trinitarian emphasis: God is always the archetype in whose image man is said to have been created (Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, “Answer to Eunomius’ Second Book”, 478).

¹⁰⁸ Orthodox theology explains this attribute in two ways. First, this attribute is understood as a special relationship with God, that man received at creation (an ability to receive the work of the Holy Trinity). Secondly, this attribute represents the principle of the communal dimension of his ontological constitution, which tells man to love his neighbour (Cf. N. R. STAN, *Human Person as Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son*, 138).

¹⁰⁹ N. R. STAN, *Human Person as Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son*, 139.

¹¹⁰ CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Dialogue on the Trinity*, 344.

¹¹¹ Unlike many Christian thinkers of the time, Duns Scotus held the opinion that the Son of God would have been made man even if humanity had not sinned. He affirms in his *Reportatio Parisiensis*: “To think that God would have given up such a task had Adam not sinned would be quite unreasonable! I say, therefore, that the fall was not the cause of Christ’s predestination and that if no one had fallen, neither the angel nor man, in this hypothesis

- ii. The goal of the first man always remains the same and every man created in the image of God is called to become an 'image' in Christ.¹¹² Christ opened up the way to the attainment of this goal. "Christ accomplishes the salvation of man not only in a negative way, liberating him from the consequences of original sin, but also in a positive way, completing his iconic, prelapsarian 'being'. His relationship with man is not only that of a healer. The salvation of man is something much wider than redemption; it coincides with deification".¹¹³
- iii. The doctrine of deification should not be isolated as an independent strand of spiritual teaching but be fully integrated into Christological and anthropological thoughts.¹¹⁴ Nellas emphasizes the Pauline roots of the doctrine: it is not accidental that Paul hymns Christ as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). He calls on every person to become 'mature in Christ' (Col. 1:28), and to attain fullness of life in Christ (Col. 2:10). While urging the faithful to show that they are attaining "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), and to acquire "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), the heart of Christ (Eph. 3:17) and so on, Paul does not do so for reasons of external piety and sentiment; he speaks ontologically. He is not advocating an external imitation or a simple ethical improvement but a real Christification. Thus, the real anthropological meaning of deification is Christification.

The Fall of Man and the Fear of the Other: The awareness of a 'fall' which has brought man down to a level of existence different from that for which he feels he was shaped is not exclusively a part of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It is a universal human experience that we are not at present in the ideal state of existence. This situation of man is expressed in myths and symbols in almost every religion.¹¹⁵ Christian anthropology explains the distortion by

Christ would still have been predestined in the same way" (cf. as quoted in POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Great Christian Thinkers*, 302). With same vein Maximus the Confessor asserts, "For it is plainly evident to all that the mystery effected in Christ at the end of the age is without doubt a proof and fulfillment of what was set forth at the beginning of the age in our common ancestor" (Cf. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 73).

¹¹² Gregory of Nazianzen writes (*Orations*, 1. iv): Let us transform into "the image what is made after the image" (Cf. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, "Select Orations", 203).

¹¹³ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 39.

¹¹⁴ In this way it can define the human goal and the means of attaining the same, i.e., the whole of the ecclesiastical and spiritual life, relating to its elements intimately to Christ.

¹¹⁵ According to Hinduism, we are in the state of *Avidya* (ignorance), *tamas* (darkness) and *mrthyu* (death). This is the state of *asat* (unreality) out of which man has to be liberated. Hinduism traces the cause of this negative situation back to the *aniidi karma* (Cf. A.

the help of the doctrine of original sin, because it has to do with the origins of human history. However, for the Christian tradition the reference to the fall of man is not simply a particular twist to its anthropological theorizing, but the key to understand human person, the world and history. On the one side the truth of the fall and on the other the truth of the deification of man defines the fact of the Church itself and provide meaning to its existence and mission.

In this section, to have a deeper understanding of the fall of the first man and its significance, we analyse the accounts of theologians such as John Zizioulas, Joseph Ratzinger, and Alexander Schmemmann. Quoting the French philosopher J. P. Sartre - the other is my enemy and my 'original sin' - Zizioulas states that we are forced and even encouraged to consider the other as our enemy before we can treat him or her as our friend. Communion with the other is not spontaneous; it is constructed upon fences which protect us from the dangers implicit in the other's presence. We accept the other only in so far as he or she does not threaten our privacy or in so far as he or she is useful for our individual happiness. According to Zizioulas, this is a direct result of what in theological language we call the 'fall of man'. There is a pathology built into the very roots of our existence, inherited through our birth, and that is the fear of the other.¹¹⁶

This is a result of the rejection of the Other *par excellence*, our Creator, by the first man - and before him by the demonic powers that revolted against God. The essence of sin, according to Zizioulas, is fear of the other, which is part of this rejection. Once the affirmation of the 'self' is realized through the rejection and not the acceptance of the Other - this is what Adam chose in his freedom to do - it is only natural and unavoidable for the other to become an enemy and a threat. Thus, reconciliation with God is a necessary precondition for reconciliation with any 'other'. The fact that the fear of the other is pathologically inherent in our existence effects in the fear not only of the other but of *all otherness*. When the fear of the other is expressed to be the fear of otherness we come to the point of identifying difference with division.¹¹⁷

RAMBACHAN, *A Hindu Theology of Liberation*, 72-73). According to Buddhism, we find ourselves in the unsalvific, unhappy situation of *dhukha* or suffering (Cf. D. KEOWN, *Buddhism*, 25).

¹¹⁶ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Communion and Otherness*, 1.

¹¹⁷ This complicates and obscures human thinking and behaviour to an alarming degree and the moral consequences in this case are very acute. We divide human beings according to difference: we organize clubs, fraternities, even churches on the basis of difference. When difference becomes division, communion is nothing but an arrangement for peaceful co-existence. It lasts as long as mutual interests last, and may easily be turned into conflict and

Now, if this confusion between difference and division were simply a moral problem, ethics would suffice to settle it. But it is not. Citing Maximus the Confessor, Zizioulas affirms that this involves not only universal but even cosmic dimensions.

The entire cosmos is divided on account of difference, and it is different in its parts on the basis of its divisions. This makes the problem of communion and otherness a matter organically bound up with the problem of death. Death exists because communion and otherness cannot coincide in creation. Different beings become distant beings: because difference becomes division, distinction becomes distance.... We cannot solve this problem through ethics. We need a new birth. This leads us to eschatology.¹¹⁸

Almost in the same vein, Cardinal Ratzinger gives an explanation on original sin and its transference to the progeny.¹¹⁹ According to him, finding an answer to this requires nothing less than trying to understand the human person better. No human being is closed in upon himself or herself and that no one can live of or for oneself alone. Human beings have their selves not only in themselves but also outside of themselves: they live in those whom they love and in those who love them and to whom they are 'present'. So, they are relational, and possess their lives - themselves - only by way of relationship. I alone am not myself, but only in and with you am I myself. To be truly a human person means to be related in love, to be *of* and *for*.

But sin means the damaging or the destruction of relationality. Sin is a rejection of relationality because it wants to make the human being a god. Sin is loss of relationship, disturbance of relationship, and therefore it is not restricted to the individual. When I destroy a relationship, then this event - sin - touches the other person involved in the relationship. Consequently, sin is always an offense that touches others, that alters the world and damages it. To the extent that this is true, when the network of human relationships is damaged from the very beginning, then every human being enters into a world that is marked by relational damage. At the very moment that a person begins human

confrontation as soon as those interests cease to coincide. Our societies and international situation as a whole so amply witness to this today.

¹¹⁸ J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Communion and Otherness*, 3.

¹¹⁹ "The account [Genesis story] tells us that sin begets sin, and that therefore all the sins of history are interlinked. Theology refers to this state of affairs by the certainly misleading and imprecise term "original sin." What does this mean? Nothing seems to us today to be strange(r) or, indeed, more absurd than to insist upon original sin, since, according to our way of thinking, guilt can only be something very personal, and since God does not run a concentration camp, in which one's relatives are imprisoned, because he is a liberating God of love, who calls each one by name" (Cf. C. J. RATZINGER, *In the Beginning...*, 71-72).

existence, which is a good, he or she is confronted by a sin-damaged world. Each of us enters into a situation in which relationality has been hurt. Consequently, each person is, from the very start, damaged in relationships and does not engage in them as he or she ought. Sin pursues the human being, and he or she capitulates to it.¹²⁰

But from this it also becomes clear that human beings alone cannot save themselves. According to Ratzinger, their innate error is precisely that they want to do this by themselves. We can only be saved - that is, be free and true - when we stop wanting to be God and renounce the madness of autonomy and self-sufficiency. One can only be saved - that is, become oneself - when one engages in the proper relationship. But our interpersonal relationships occur in the context of our utter creatureliness, and it is exactly there the damage lies. Since the relationship with creation has been damaged, only the Creator Himself can be our saviour.¹²¹

It is opportune to analyse the Creation-Fall-Redemption paradigm of Alexander Schmemmann at this juncture. In the Genesis account of the creation story, explains Schmemmann, God creates man as a hungry being and places him at a banquet table, the created world.¹²² Man takes the world into himself in the form of food and becomes a microcosm, a representation of the universe in miniature. Thus, he becomes what he eats. There is no dichotomy between man and the world. Man recognizes the world as God's gift. The whole world is the sign and means of God's presence and wisdom, love and revelation – a sacrament. It is not to be confused with pantheism, identifying God with the world, but panentheism – God is in all things yet also beyond and above all things. Adam is to name the creatures, that is, he is to know them as they mean to God. The world is given to him as knowledge of and communion with God.¹²³ His hunger is for God. Consciously and with deliberate purpose, he can do two things that the animals can only do unconsciously and instinctively:

¹²⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹²¹ Ibid., 73-74.

¹²² Christos Yannaras gives a beautiful description on the Garden of Eden: "The image of the garden in all middle eastern religions functions as a symbol of ideal happiness - perhaps in contrast with the aridity and the bareness of the deserts which abound in these regions. Certainly, the drought of the desert is a symbol of death, while the rivers which irrigate the garden of Eden and the wealth of vegetation which adorn it give the picture of fulness of life. Within this "garden of luxury", as the Scripture characterizes it, God places the first formed man "to work it and keep it" (Gen 2:15). Work in this first phase of human life is not "labour" - a slavery to the need for physical survival - but the organic continuation and extension of the creative work of God, the flowering of the creativity which characterizes man as the image of God, as a person" (Cf. C. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 75).

¹²³ A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World*, 14.

first, man is able to bless and praise God for the world¹²⁴ and secondly, man is able to reshape and alter the world. He is a creative animal.¹²⁵

Schmemmann presents the forbidden fruit as an image of the world loved for itself. The fall of man was his decision to consider the world as an end in itself, instead of seeing it as a means of communion with God, the Life. This disregard for God, Schmemmann calls the original sin. Man became a consumer and considered the world as belonging to him by right,¹²⁶ to be grasped and exploited. The world became a dying world. In it, food bears the impression that it offers life, but in reality, it offers a mere survival which is subject to decay and oriented towards death.¹²⁷ Man began to look at others only in terms of pleasure and satisfaction which they could give him. Original sin was his turning from God-centeredness to self-centeredness. Having taken its distance from God, the world lost its true meaning and value as communion with God and life in Him. Evil entered the world due to the misuse of free-will. In consequence of the fall, men and women also became subject to the separation of soul and body in physical death. God allowed death so that sin might not become eternal. And through the loss of Paradise man came to know the goodness of God better and received the call to become worthy of return. Human beings are interdependent. Any action, performed by any member of the human race, inevitably affects all the other members. No one falls alone, no one is saved alone. Man is conditioned by the solidarity of the human race in its accumulated wrong-doing and wrong-thinking, and hence wrong-being. Redemption is the restoration of human beings and the world from the state of the fall. Cut off from his Creator, separated from his fellow human, inwardly fragmented, fallen man lacked the power to heal himself. Since man could not come to God, God has come to man.¹²⁸

The kernel point highlighted by Zizioulas, Ratzinger, and Schmemmann regarding the fall is the lost equilibrium of communion and otherness and its manifold dimensions. Now, how is the relation between communion and

¹²⁴ K. WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, 68. In this sense, he is a Eucharistic, thanking, animal. He can give back to God only what he has received from Him and he offers it in thanksgiving. Through offering the world back to God in thanksgiving, man transforms his life that he receives from the world into life in God, into communion with Him (Cf. M. KADAVIL, *The World as Sacrament*, 204).

¹²⁵ It is a call to co-operate with God, and in this function, he becomes a king. The world is not only a gift, but a task for man. His vocation is not to dominate and exploit the world, but to transfigure and hallow it (Cf. K. WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, 69).

¹²⁶ M. KADAVIL, *The World as Sacrament*, 205.

¹²⁷ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 128.

¹²⁸ K. WARE, *The Orthodox Way*, 59, 68, 89; A. SCHMEMMANN, *For the Life of the World*, 16.

otherness realized? What is the place of the other in ecclesial communion?¹²⁹ Zizoulas proposes paths for the restoration of communion and otherness. First of all, the essence of Christian existence in the Church is *metanoia* (repentance). We all share in the fall of Adam and we all must feel the sorrow of failing to bring creation to communion with God and the overcoming of death. Holiness in the Church passes through sincere and deep *metanoia* and all the saints weep for the sufferings of innocent creation. The second implication concerning the holiness of the Church is that repentance can only be true and genuine if the Church and her members are aware of the *true nature* of the Church. We need a model by which to measure our existence; and the higher the model the deeper the repentance. According to Zizoulas, there is no model for the proper relation between communion and otherness either for the Church or for the human being other than Trinitarian God. For the Church to be faithful to her true self, she must try to mirror the communion and otherness that exists in the Triune God. The same is true of the human being as the ‘image of God’.¹³⁰ “The baptized throughout history have been invited to live such a life ‘in the image of Christ’” (V C 14).

2.3. Garments of Skin in Panayiotis Nellas’ Perspective

We have been trying to analyse the origin, structure, destiny, and in general the nature of human person through a theological and anthropological lens, by exploring the meaning of “in the image”. However, it does not offer

¹²⁹ The Church is a community that lives within history, and therefore within the fallen state of existence. All our observations concerning the struggle of reconciling communion with otherness in our culture are applicable also to the life of the Church. Sin as fear and rejection of the other, states Zizioulas, is a reality experienced also within the Church. The Church is made up of sinners, and she shares fully the ontological and cosmic dimension of sin which is death, the rupture of communion and final *diastasis* (separation and decomposition) of beings. And yet, we claim that in her essence the Church is holy and sinless. On this, Orthodox theologians differ from those of other confessions, principally from those of Protestant family (Cf. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Communion and Otherness*, 3-4).

¹³⁰ What can we learn about communion and otherness from the doctrine of the Trinity? The first thing that emerges is that otherness is *constitutive* of unity, and not consequent upon it. It is expressed through the unbreakable *koinonia* that exists between the three persons, which means that otherness is not a threat to unity but a *sine qua non* (essential condition) of it. Secondly, a study of the Trinity reveals that otherness is absolute. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are absolutely different, none of them being subject to confusion with the other two. Thirdly, and most significantly, otherness is not moral or psychological but *ontological*. We cannot tell *what* each person is; we can only say *who* he is. Each person in the holy Trinity is different not by way of difference of natural qualities (such qualities are all common to the three persons), but by way of the simple affirmation of being who he is. As a result, finally, otherness is inconceivable apart from *relationship*. Father, Son and Spirit are all names indicating relationship. No person can be different unless he is related. Communion does not threaten otherness; it generates it (Cf. *Ibid.*, 5).

a complete answer, since experience proves that the historical reality of human person is different from that which we have seen to be defined by the phrase “in the image”. In the Christian perception of things this is to be ascribed to the fact that the historical reality develops within the unnatural situation in which man has found himself since the fall. Therefore, we need to study this situation.

Fundamentally, the central quests of modern man for knowledge, inventions, development, justice, freedom and the rest, justify them as quests for his iconic nature, and shed light on them in a positive way. Experience, however, confirms again that humanity does not find today what it seeks. This, in the Christian view of things, affirms Nellas, “is not because it is impossible for humanity to find these things, or because they do not belong to it, but because it begins from a false starting point and a mistaken orientation. The false starting point is the failure to appreciate the unnatural condition in which we find ourselves, and the mistaken orientation is that we are searching for something which is natural in the midst of what is unnatural”.¹³¹ In fact, what is naturally good for human person can be found if it is sought at its actual source, and if human person in order to find it makes full use of his natural powers.

The teaching of the Fathers on human nature contains two fundamental theses: first, the understanding of what is “in the image”, and the second, the deeply significant notion of “garments of skin”, which makes possible an interpretation of the postlapsarian state of man. However, the “garments of skin” have a wider meaning than this. In fact, their purpose is not merely to guarantee man’s survival within the unnatural state which he has obtained in one way or another and his return to what is “in the image”, but also to bring to fulfilment the inherent impetus of the latter, whereby man attains to the image itself. Such are the true implications of the second fundamental thesis in the revealed teaching of the Bible on the creation of man, namely, that after the fall Adam, God in His compassion, in order to enable them to survive, “clothed them ... in garments of skin” (Gen 3:21). We make a detailed study on this topic.¹³²

¹³¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 43.

¹³² To analyse the implications of “garments of skin”, apart from the patristic teaching, we refer chiefly the works of Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, and N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*.

2.3.1. The General Anthropological Content

The Genesis narrative clearly states that the “garments of skin” were put on man after the fall (Gen.2:25-3:24) and thus they do not form one of his natural constituent elements.¹³³ Therefore, that which empirical observation calls “human nature” is, in biblical and patristic teaching, a later nature, a state which originated after the fall, and not the original and therefore, true human nature. Gregory of Nyssa states: “For the life which has been made similar to the divine nature is that which is proper to men and in accordance with nature”.¹³⁴

Secondly, Nellas views that the expression of the “garments of skins” is not to be identified with the human body. The Fathers of the Church found themselves forced to stress this at an early date,¹³⁵ so as to counter the gnostic heresies which devalued the human body. However, for Nellas, it is not surprising that Origen, influenced by his mistaken concept of the pre-existence of souls, should have been in some doubt as to whether or not the scriptural expression “garments of skin” should be understood as signifying the body.¹³⁶ Regarding such doubt, the Fathers were strongly critical: their criticism arising from their concern not only to underline the positive value of the body, but also to stress the central Christian truth that the body and the soul together constitute the natural man.¹³⁷ Nellas further quotes Epiphanius of Salamis, “The natural man is correctly said to be neither soul without body nor conversely body without soul, but the single form of beauty constituted from the combination of soul and body”.¹³⁸ This truth is not only central to the patristic tradition but is also clearly articulated.

Just as the Fathers employed the phrase “in the image” to explain the reality of the natural man without constructing a system around this truth, so also, they were frequently helped by the idea of ‘garments of skin’ to express and interpret the postlapsarian state of man. They believed that the ‘garments of skin’ express the mortality which man put on as his second

¹³³ See GREGORY OF NYSSA, “The Lord’s Prayer”, v, 76.

¹³⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “Homilies on Ecclesiastes”, 50; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 45.

¹³⁵ See METHODIOS OF OLYMPUS, “Discourse on the Resurrection”, 153.

¹³⁶ ORIGEN, “Homilies on Genesis”, 91; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 45.

¹³⁷ METHODIOS OF OLYMPUS, “Discourse on the Resurrection”, 153-155; Nellas quotes Fathers like Methodios, Epiphanius of Salamis and Jerome to substantiate his argument. At the same time he acknowledges as well their mention about certain points in Origen which imply that the “garments of skin” is not the body: thus Origen observes that Adam says before the fall, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (ORIGEN, “Homilies on Genesis”, 91). For more details see, L. THUNBERG, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 159-164.

¹³⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 46.

nature after the fall. This fact is affirmed by Gregory of Nyssa that before the fall man was naked of the covering of dead skins, but afterwards “he was clothed with dead skins”.¹³⁹ Methodios adds: “God made the garments of skin for this reason, as if clothing man in mortality”.¹⁴⁰ “Therefore, mortality”, states Gregory of Nyssa in *The Great Catechism*, “derived from the nature of beings lacking intelligence, was by God’s dispensation imposed on a nature created for immortality”.¹⁴¹

So, the discussion is not about death; rather, about mortality. It is about a new situation in which man finds himself, a situation of life in death. Nellas clarifies that man no longer has life in the way that he had previously, as a characteristic proper to his being. There is now no grace in the life welling up naturally within man. Therefore, life continues only so long as death is postponed. That which exists now in the proper sense is death and *life* has been transmuted into *survival*. Nellas substantiates his arguments, based on the teachings of Maximus, telling that the first human being hastened to create within himself in a counterfeit manner the attributes of God, so as to create autonomously “without God and before God and not in accordance with God” that which is the exclusive characteristic of God, namely, self-subsistent life. Thus, man deserted the divine food which accorded with his nature, and in order to establish his independent life chose as food the fruit of the forbidden tree, in spite of having already been taught that it was the fruit of death, that is, the fruit of constant flux, mutation and change. As a result, in conformity with the fruit that he chose, he also made his life subject to decay and created a living death within him. For,

death exists as the corruption of that which is being all the time created, and the body with the intake and excretion of food constantly decays in a natural manner; and so it is clear that the very things with which Adam thought life was created have in fact created death within him and within us, and have kept it flourishing ever since. Thus, Adam

¹³⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On Virginity”, 43.

¹⁴⁰ METHODIOS OF OLYMPUS, “Discourse on the Resurrection”, 140; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 46. According to *The New International Commentary on Old Testament*, verse 21 of chapter 3 of Genesis should not be interpreted as doublet of verse 7, the covering of fig leaves (v.7), versus the covering with tunics of animal skin. The first is an attempt to cover oneself, the second is accepting a covering from another; the first is manmade and the second is God made. The first parents are in need of a salvation that comes from without. God needs to do for them what they are unable to do for themselves. In fact, the clothing precedes the expulsion from the garden. That is, God’s act of grace comes before his act of judgement. Similarly, Cain is marked before he is exiled (4:15), and God announces the post-Flood Covenant even before the flood commences (6:18) (Cf. V. P. HAMILTON, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 207).

¹⁴¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “The Great Catechism”, 483.

handed over the whole of nature as food for death. And “death lives throughout this whole space of time, having made us its food, but we never truly live, for we are always devoured by death through decay”.... That is why a little further on he [Maximus] calls “the termination of this present life not death but deliverance from death”.¹⁴²

Mortality is characteristic of a nature which is not endowed with intelligence. Man clothed himself with mortality coincides with the fact that he clothed himself with irrational nature¹⁴³, and henceforth he lives the life of such a nature and is characterized by its attributes. Nellas quotes Gregory of Nyssa who speaks of “that dead and ugly garment in which we are clothed, formed from the skins of unintelligent beings.... When I hear the word ‘skin’ it conveys to me the form of irrational nature, with which, having become familiar with passion, we have been clothed”. And Gregory defines it with even greater clarity: “It is those things which [man] took in addition to irrational skin: sexual union, conception, birth, pollution, the nipple, food, excretion, gradual growth to full stature, adult life, old age, sickness, death”, that is, what we call today biological life.¹⁴⁴

Nellas clarifies that it would be a mistake to think that this text is concerned exclusively with the body and that the idea of garments of skin is restricted to the body. Sexual union, birth, the nipple and the other stages of human person’s development are not restricted to bodily activities; rather they also indicate functions or activities of the soul, which likewise dress themselves in the “irrational form”, losing their freedom and intelligence and degenerating into instincts. In short, the whole psychosomatic human organism suffered with the fall a kind of stunting; it has been constricted within the boundaries of the “irrational form”. The result of this constriction is a life which is non-rational (irrational). The deiform features and tendencies of the “in the image” have fallen away from their natural state, from their orientation and function which harmonized with their inner principle or innate reason; and have been perverted and submitted to the non-rational nature and have clothed man in the attributes of this nature as if in non-rational garments. Thus, the attributes of non-rational nature were commingled with man.¹⁴⁵

The life with which the garments of skin clothe man is dead or biological or non-rational because in the last analysis it is material. The body has

¹⁴² P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 48.

¹⁴³ The meaning of the union with the non-rational or irrational form will be explained later in our study.

¹⁴⁴ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 48-49; GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Soul and the Resurrection”, 466.

¹⁴⁵ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 49.

definitely dressed itself in garments of skin. As a result, it has become coarse and solid, characterized by heavy composition. Certainly, affirms Nellas, that at the resurrection, it will recover its prelapsarian nature in a perfected form and will be “respun” into something lighter and more aerial, re-establishing its attractive beauty. As already mentioned, the functions of the soul have also become corporeal along with those of the body. They form together with the body, observes Gregory of Nyssa, “the veil of the heart... the fleshy covering of the old man”.¹⁴⁶ In a concise formulation of Gregory, the garments of skin are “the will of the flesh”.¹⁴⁷

Before man dressed himself in the garments of skin, he wore a divinely woven (attributes to prelapsarian human attire) clothing; that is, his psychosomatic dress had been woven with grace, with the light and glory of God. According to John Chrysostom, our first parents “were clothed in glory from above... [and] the heavenly glory covered them better than any garment could do”.¹⁴⁸ This refers, explains Nellas, to the attire of the “in the image”, the prelapsarian human nature formed by the breath of God and endowed with a deiform structure. This attire shone with “the likeness to the divine” which was constituted, not by a shape or a color, but by dispassion, blessedness and incorruption, the characteristics by which the divine is contemplated as beauty.¹⁴⁹

The first man, according to the expression Gregory Nazianzus in his Oration, was “naked in his simplicity and inartificial life; and without any covering or screen”.¹⁵⁰ This means, his body did not contain within it the mutually contradictory qualities, which now pull it in different directions, scourge it with corruption and make it decay. On the contrary, the body possessed another temperament which befitted it, a temperament maintained by simple qualities compatible with each other. That means, says Nellas, that it was without flux or wastage, free from constant change depending on which quality was predominant, and for this reason was not bereft of immortality by grace. “If we understand the “nakedness” as transparency, we can say that the body of Adam was so simple that it was in reality transparent, open to the material creation without resisting it in any way, and without the world offering any resistance to the body - the world had been surrendered to it. The

¹⁴⁶ Paul invites to strip off and put away the old self, corrupt and deluded by its lust (Eph. 4:22), that is, the man that the Apostle calls carnal or natural as opposed to spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:22).

¹⁴⁷ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On Virginity”, 359; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 50-51.

¹⁴⁸ J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Genesis 1-17”, 196.

¹⁴⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 52.

¹⁵⁰ GREGORY NAZIANZUS, “Select Orations”, 429.

human body, while maintaining its own peculiar constitution and separate identity with regard to the world, was nevertheless not divided from it at all".¹⁵¹ Moreover, the human soul was open to the angelic powers and to God, and it offered no resistance and communicated with ease alike with the angelic spiritual world and with the Spirit of God. Due to the fall, man's union with the angels was shattered, so also with the material creation.

2.3.2. Displacement from 'in the Image' into 'Garments of Skin'

In this section we try to analyze in greater detail how the prelapsarian, deiform and divinely-woven attire of man was transformed into garments of skin. Referring to Maximus the Confessor, Nellas views that the central characteristic of man in his natural state is a relative, or more accurately, a potential unity. Through the right use of his natural faculties, man is called to transform this potential unity into a full unity of himself and the world in God realized in actuality. In fact, this potential unity already exists between the material world and the human body, between the body and the soul, between the soul and God. The soul lies midway between God and matter and has faculties that unite it with both. It was Adam's vocation to effect, affirms Nellas, through the correct use of these unifying faculties, the actual realization of the potential unity, unifying and thus abolishing the five great divisions of the universe: the division of mankind into male and female, the division of the earth into paradise and the inhabited land, the division of sensible nature into earth and sky, the division of created nature into spiritual and sensible, and finally the fifth, highest and ineffable division between creation and Creator.¹⁵²

We have explained the reality that man is separated from God not only by nature but also by will, creating thus a new existential mode of being, that of sin. For, as Gregory of Nyssa explains, sin is an invention of the created will. The infinite distance between the created and uncreated, the natural separation of man from God which ought to have been overcome by deification, became an impassable gulf for man after he had willed himself into a new state, that of sin and death, which was near a state of non-being. In order to attain that union with God, to which the creature is called, it was then necessary to break through a triple barrier of sin, death and nature. The way to *theosis*, which was planned for the first man, will be impossible until human nature conquers over sin and death. The way to union will henceforth be presented to fallen humanity as *salvation*. This negative term stands for the removal of an obstacle, that is, one is saved from something its root (sin

¹⁵¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 52-53.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 53-54.

and death). The divine plan was not fulfilled by the first man; instead of the straight line of ascent towards God, the will of the first man traced a path opposing to nature, and ending in death. Thus, emerged a situation, where in God alone can endow men with the possibility of deification, by liberating him at one and the same time from death and from captivity to sin. So, as Vladimir Lossky states, what man ought to have achieved by raising himself up to God, God achieved by descending to man. That is why the triple barrier (death, sin, nature) which separates us from God is broken through by God in the reverse order, beginning with the union of the separated natures, and ending with victory over death.¹⁵³

Kavasilas comments on this subject: “The Lord allowed men, separated from God by the triple barrier of nature, sin and death, to be fully possessed of Him and to be directly united to Him by the fact he has set aside each barrier in turn: that of nature by His incarnation, of sin by His death, and of death by His resurrection. This is the reason why St. Paul writes: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Cor. xv, 26)”.¹⁵⁴ For Maximus, states Lossky, the incarnation and deification correspond to each other; they mutually imply. God descends to the world and becomes man, and man is raised towards divine fullness and becomes god, because this union of two natures, the divine and the human, has been determined in the eternal counsel of God, and because it is the final end for which the world has been created out of nothing.¹⁵⁵

Examining the teaching of Maximus on creation, Lossky further affirms that, Adam was destined to unite in his own being the different spheres of the cosmos, in order that deification might be conferred upon them, through union with God. If these unions or successive syntheses that surmount the natural divisions are brought about by Christ, it is because Adam failed in his vocation. Christ achieves them successively by following the order which was assigned to the first Adam.

By his birth of the Virgin, He suppressed the division of human nature into male and female. On the cross He unites paradise, the dwelling place of the first men before the fall, with the terrestrial reality where the fallen descendants of the first Adam now dwell; indeed, He says to the good thief, ‘today thou shalt be with Me in paradise’, yet he

¹⁵³ V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 135-136.

¹⁵⁴ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 106.

¹⁵⁵ V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 136. The observation of Duns Scotus, which we have referred to earlier, coincides at this point: if original sin had not taken place, Christ would have become incarnate anyhow, in order to unite created being and the divine nature in Himself.

nevertheless continues to hold converse with His disciples during His sojourn on earth after the resurrection. At His ascension, first of all, He unites the earth to the heavenly spheres, that is to the sensible heaven; then He penetrates into the empyreum, passes through the angelic hierarchies and unites the spiritual heaven, the world of mind, with the sensible world. Finally, like a new cosmic Adam, He presents to the Father the totality of the universe restored to unity in Him, by uniting the created to the uncreated.¹⁵⁶

In this conception of Christ, as the new Adam, observes Lossky, who unifies and sanctifies created being, redemption appears as one of the stages in his work, a stage conditioned by sin and the historic reality of the fallen world, in which the incarnation has taken place.¹⁵⁷

Nellas further describes, in greater detail the original, natural, potential unity of man with the help of the teachings of Maximus in *Ambigua* and clarifies more specifically the way in which it is brought to fulfilment.¹⁵⁸ There is a “natural” correspondence between the faculties of the soul and the senses of the body, between, for example, the noetic faculty of the soul, the intellect, and the sense of vision, between the appetitive faculty and the sense of taste, between the life-preserving faculty and the sense of touch, and so on. It is upon these bodily senses, explains Nellas, which are manifested externally through their corresponding sense organs, that the soul “depends through its own faculties” in an organic way, and it is through the intermediary of the bodily senses that the faculties of the soul are “conveyed” to the sensible material world. Thus, not only can the soul, if it uses the senses correctly, through its own proper faculties organize and govern the world (by keeping the world external to itself), but also has the power to convey wisely to itself everything visible in which God is concealed and proclaimed in silence.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 137.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 137. For a detailed analysis of the teaching of Maximus on this topic, see L. THUNBERG, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 351-459.

¹⁵⁸ At this point I like to add a personal note. The following explanations gathered from Nellas and Maximus are so dense and not easy to penetrate through. Nellas himself admit the same (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 59). The difficulty basically arises from the fact that Maximus’ thought is so compact and so rich in different layers of meaning that it seems as if every word pulls one simultaneously in two or three directions and demands that one moves, at the same time, on two or three levels. Therefore, the following explanations under this head are taken both from Nellas and Maximus without much editing.

¹⁵⁹ MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 216-217; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 55.

In this manner the four cardinal virtues are created. These virtues are not merely properties of the soul but actualized embodied states, since they are created by the interweaving of the faculties of the soul with the corresponding senses and sense organs of the body, and with the operations of the senses by means of which the soul embraces sensible things. The first virtue is moral judgment. This virtue comes into being through the interweaving of the rational and intellective faculties of the soul not only with the bodily senses of sight and hearing but also with the corresponding operations or energies - the cognitive, which is the operation of the cognitive faculty, and the epistemic, which is the operation of the intellective faculty. Through moral judgment the soul concentrates within it the inner principles (*logoi*) of sensible things and thus unites them with itself. In a similar way the other three cardinal virtues such as justice, courage and self-restraint are also brought into being.¹⁶⁰

As a consequence of the conjunction of the first two virtues, moral judgment and justice (each of which already contains interwoven with it the relevant faculties of the soul, the corresponding bodily senses and the operations of the senses on things), the more general virtue of wisdom is brought into being. This is composed of all the cognitive faculties and senses (of the cognitive psychosomatic functions of the human person) together with the operations of these faculties or with the fruits which are engendered by the meeting of the cognitive functions with things, these fruits being termed cognitions. And through the interweaving of the other two general virtues, courage and self-restraint, the more general virtue of gentleness is brought into being. This, since it effects the harmonization and combination of all the active faculties of the soul, and likewise of the corresponding bodily senses and the operations of the senses, is also called dispassion, because it is nothing other than the total cessation of the movement of the incentive and appetitive aspects of the soul towards things contrary to nature. These two more general virtues, adds Nellas, which could also be called “pneumatohylic” states or psychosomatic functions of man, are united in the virtue which is the most general of all, namely, love. Love, as the unifying virtue, draws together all things, that is, not only the fundamental elements (soul and the faculties of soul, body and the bodily senses, the action of the senses on things and the inner essences of those same things) but also the movement of these towards their goal (the cardinal and more general virtues which we have seen to be actualized states); and it brings them to a unified synthesis, a final and simple

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 55.

unity which takes place in God. Love does this because it is a virtue which is ecstatic and unlike the others capable of deifying.¹⁶¹

Thus, the soul, summarizes Nellas that, by using the senses as intelligent vehicles of its faculties, apprehends sensible objects through them and makes their inward principles its own. And it unites its own faculties, along with all that these now contain, with the virtues and the deiform principles hidden within them; for the virtues are not merely human states - they are theanthropic states. And the spiritual intelligence which lies in the deiform principles urges on the soul in the midst of all this and presents it wholly to the whole of God. And God embraces it wholly together with the body natural to it and makes it like Himself in an appropriate manner. In this way the multiplicity of created things, drawing together around the one nature of man, can be gathered together into one, and the Creator of all things is manifested as one, reigning over created beings proportionately through the human race; and so God Himself becomes all in all, embracing all things and giving subsistence to them in Himself. This is man's natural state in the image of God; this is his natural function, his natural work and goal. When he turns aside from this orientation, he falls into what is contrary to nature.¹⁶²

According to Nellas, that is what happened in the case of the first man. Adam did not move towards God, the Archetype, but in the opposite direction. This was something which naturally reversed the way in which his psychosomatic organism performed. Since man's point of attraction or reference was displaced, the faculties of the soul no longer used the operations of the senses but were used by them. The soul, instead of using the senses to concentrate and unite in itself, and consequently in God, all the things that are separated by their nature, was drawn away by sensible things and through these things was made utterly captive by means of the senses. Thus, fragmentation prevailed. Man, who was like some workshop holding all things together in the closest way, who was like some natural bond uniting all things, by his withdrawal from his natural work and by his unnatural submission to the sensible world also shattered the relative or potential unity which his existence as an image of God created within the universe. Having abused the natural power given to him for the union of what was divided, he brought about instead the division of what was united.¹⁶³

But when the soul is taken captive by sensible things, then the operations of the senses (the senses themselves), and within them the corresponding

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁶² Ibid., 56-57; MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 218.

¹⁶³ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 57; MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 219.

faculties of the soul, put on the form of sensible things, seeing that they submit to them and are shaped in conformity with them. When the soul is moved towards matter by means of the flesh in a way contrary to nature, it puts on the earthly form. That is what was labelled above, in our analysis of Gregory of Nyssa, union with the non-rational or irrational form. The result of this union is the non-rational life, which is characterized by the passions, as explained by Gregory (Maximus explains in addition how the passions are brought into being).¹⁶⁴

When the intellect, Nellas writes commenting to Maximus, denies its natural movement towards God, since there is no other direction in which it can move, it gives itself over to the senses, and these delude it ceaselessly, deceiving it by the superficial aspects of sensible things through which the soul grows forgetful of natural goods and perverts the whole of its activity with regard to sensible things, becoming subject to unseemly fits of anger, desires and pleasures. For, pleasure is nothing other than a mode of sensory operation constituted by irrational desire. Irrational desire, when it gains a hold on sensation, transforms it into pleasure, adding to it a non-rational form. Moreover, when sensation, moving in accordance with irrational desire, attaches itself to the sensible object it creates pleasure. Nellas quotes Maximus with direct reference to Adam: “Thus, having become a transgressor [having changed direction] and having become ignorant of God, and having closely mingled the whole of his intellective faculty with the whole of sensation, he embraced the knowledge of sensible things, which is composite and destructive and oriented towards passion. So, he came to resemble the dumb beasts, doing, seeking and desiring the same things as they do in every way and, moreover, cleaving to irrationality”.¹⁶⁵ This quotation provides us with a satisfactory answer to the question, how the union of man with the form of non-rationality took place, how the natural iconic powers and potentialities of man (the prelapsarian deiform and divinely-woven attire of man) were transformed into garments of skin.

With reference to garments of skin, we have already introduced Gen. 3:21: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them”. However, if the garments of skin are the result of the natural process through which the sinner comes to be united with the non-rational form and in consequence to be dressed in dead skins, how can it be

¹⁶⁴ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 57-58; MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua*, 219.

¹⁶⁵ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 58-59.

that it is God who dresses fallen humanity in these skins? In this seeming contradiction is hidden a great truth which deserves further inquiry.

2.3.3. The Binary Character of the Garments of Skin

We have already discussed that the fundamental content of the garments of skin is mortality, the transformation of life into survival. Certainly, it is not a creation of God, rather is indeed a physiological consequence of sin, for, as Basil state in *The Hexaemeron* (Homily II), “evil is not created by God”.¹⁶⁶ However, God tolerates (that is, accepts by consent, holds and supports) within His infinitive love even this new situation and transforms it into a blessing. He transforms that which is the result of denial and therefore is negative into something relatively positive, if we take into account its final metamorphosis. For God operates in a loving way even towards those who have become evil, so as to bring about our correction.¹⁶⁷ Evil, which by itself is not even a being, explains Nellas, much less productive of beings, can, under the dissolving and reconstituting love of Him who is Good, become both a being and a good productive of goods.

Thus almighty God uses the new situation as one of the many paths which, His compassionate and multifaceted wisdom recognizes, can lead humanity to the greatest good, which is Christ, who will realize in us in a new manner, a manner more paradoxical and more befitting God, the original destiny which Adam by misusing his natural powers failed to attain. And He offers this relatively positive condition of the “garments of skin” as a second blessing to a self-exiled humanity. He adds it like a second nature to the existing human nature, so that by using it correctly humanity can survive and realize its original goal in Christ. “For the garment is something put on us from the outside, lending itself for use by the body for a time but not becoming part of its nature.

¹⁶⁶ “Evil is not a living animated essence; it is the condition of the soul opposed to virtue, developed in the careless on account of their falling away from good” (Cf. BASIL THE GREAT, “The Hexaemeron”, 61).

¹⁶⁷ God clothing them signifies His care even of fallen man, and to encourage his hopes of God’s mercy through the blessed Seed, and there by to invite him to repentance (Cf. M. POOLE, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 11). According to David Cotter’s commentary, the garment given them is special. A *kuttonet* is always worn by one in authority (Gen. 37:3, 23, 31-33; Exod. 28:4, 29-30; 2 Sam. 13:18-19, 15:32; Is. 22:21; Job 30:16; Cant. 5:3) showing that, however diminished their standing, they still act with divine authority (D. W. COTTER, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry*, 35-36). It is an act symbolizing God’s forgiveness. To be forgiven by God does not spare men or their descendants the consequences of their sins upon the earth. Yet by the grace of God they may find forgiveness even while they are paying the penalty for their thoughtlessness (F. PASCHALL – H. HOBBS, *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, 17). It is a “remedial result” (D. GUTHRIE, *The New Bible Commentary*, 85).

Therefore, from the nature of irrational things mortality was providentially put on a nature which was created for immortality”.¹⁶⁸

The reality of the fall, apart from the natural character, has also a moral content. Sin is rebellion and “hubris” against the righteousness of God. Sirach 10:13 explains that the reservoir of arrogance is sin. “An attack on God’s majesty is human hubris”.¹⁶⁹ Kavalas teaches that the righteousness of God is His “supreme loving-kindness and goodness towards mankind... the bestowal of His blessings upon all in abundance and the sharing of His blessedness”.¹⁷⁰ In line with Kavalas, about the righteousness-goodness of God, Nellas explains that the Love which is God (1 John 4:8) created contingent being freely *ex nihilo*. The same act of creation, being good, had as its outcome a world (cosmos), that is, an order and harmony, which constitutes the righteousness of creation. Accordingly, between the righteousness-goodness of the Creator and the righteousness-order-harmony of creation there exists a genuine interior iconic relationship. Therefore, the rebellion of man against God, unable to touch the righteousness of God, wounds the image of divine righteousness within creation, shattering and throwing into disarray the iconic psychosomatic constitution and liturgical character of man and the order and harmony of creation. The “hubris” is in truth a “trauma”.¹⁷¹

Since the fall comprises a real “hubris”, there must also be a real and corresponding penalty. For it was necessary that sin should be eliminated by some penalty and that we, by suffering a fair punishment, should be freed from the offences we have committed against the Creator. The penalty, however, which is naturally inflicted on the committer of “hubris” comes not from the righteousness of God (which was neither wounded nor seeks satisfaction), but from the righteousness of creation. The laws of the latter continue to function, affirms Nellas, but now in a disorganized and disordered way, and they involve man too in this disordered operation with the result that they draw him into misery and anguish. From this point of view, then, the union of man with the form of non-rationality, and the transformation of his natural functions into passions, (that is, the garments of skin), constitute the “penalty” which the very righteousness of creation enforces on man.¹⁷² It is for this reason that man finds pain while seeking for pleasure, and death while

¹⁶⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 61.

¹⁶⁹ G. FRIEDRICH, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 301.

¹⁷⁰ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 52-53.

¹⁷¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 61-62.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 62.

searching for life. The *how* of it was explained earlier analyzing the teachings of Maximus, now Nellas explains the *why* of the same:

The penalty which the implacable righteousness of creation imposes on man would have been eternal, if the righteousness-goodness of God had not intervened to correct the righteousness of nature, transforming in a compassionate and interior manner the “penalty” into a “remedy”, and thus healing the “trauma” and punishing or abolishing the “hubris” which is sin. “Wound and pain and death were from the beginning devised against sin.... For this reason, after the sin God immediately permitted death and pain, not inflicting a penalty on the sinner but rather applying a remedy to the patient”.¹⁷³

Thus, it becomes clear that in the single and unique reality of the “garments of skin” we are to discern two aspects or binary character: to the repulsive form which man created when he acted with “hubris” towards God and traumatized himself, to this God, using the same material, adds a second form, and thus creates the positive aspect of the garments of skin. That is, “On the one hand, the garments of skin are the physiological result of sin, constituting an obscuring of the image, a fall from what is according to nature, and introducing “hubris”, “penalty” and “trauma”; on the other they constitute a “remedy” and blessing, introducing a new potentiality which God gives to man, enabling him, since he has forfeited life, to survive in death and even to survive in the right way so as to reach the point of finding again the fullness of life and the beauty of form that belongs to his nature in Christ”.¹⁷⁴

2.3.4. The Anthropological and Cosmological Dimensions of the Garments of Skin

We try to analyze the truth of the two-fold reality of the garments of skin in a more concrete way with an aim of making clearer and specific the essential content of the notion of the same. It is achieved by examining four notions such as: death, law, marriage, and function of life.

2.3.4.1. Death

As explained above, the final physical result of the fall and its greatest penalty is death. Referring to Methodios of Olympus, Nellas further adds that, “By allowing man to dress himself in biological life, the fruit of sin, He [God] redirected death, which was also the fruit of sin, against biological life, and thus by death is put to death not man but the corruption which clothes him. Death destroys the prison of life-in-corruption, and man, by abandoning

¹⁷³ Ibid., 62-63; N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 58-59.

¹⁷⁴ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 63.

to corruption what he received from it, is liberated through death”.¹⁷⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (no. 12), reiterates the same idea: “... [I]t is through death the soul is raised up, for if it does not die, it remains for all times dead and incapable of life, but by dying it emerges into life once it has put off all its deadness”.¹⁷⁶

The devil traps man and casts him into the chasm of corruption, where he keeps him bound by death. However, God permits death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and to sin. In this way, God limits evil and relativizes the fall. God’s original plan for human person’s eternal and blessed life in Him remains intact. God tolerated death and allowed it to exist, affirms Gregory of Nazianzus, “in order that evil may not be immortal”.¹⁷⁷ The devil succeeded in covering man in the form of non-rational matter by contriving to subordinate him through the fall. He planned to eliminate man through death, affirms Gregory of Nyssa, dissolving him in matter. To certain extent he succeeded, since after burial the body submits to the earth the constituent elements which it received from it and is dissolved into it.¹⁷⁸

Through the intervention of God at this point, death becomes the means by which the human body penetrates into the interior of the earth, reaching the inmost parts of creation. Man touches the boundaries of the universe with death and becomes air, water and fire, matter and energy, an element of space. Ecclesiastes (12:7) states, “The dust returns to the earth as it was”. However, this “dust” is no longer only matter, it carries in actual fact the “principle” and the “form” of man. So, the material creation which, explains Nellas,

clothed man in its corruption in an organic way, is now dressed, it could be said, from within, once more in an organic way; thanks to the other aspect of the two-fold reality which death itself constitutes, it is dressed with a new element which, as the human body, is receptive of incorruption. For this reason, along with the final resurrection of bodies which He will bring about at His second coming, Christ will also bring about the transformation of the universe into a “new earth” and a “new heaven”. Creation “will then be manifested to us with an incorrupt beauty, since we will receive incorrupt bodies, and will finally be transformed into something better.... “And heaven and earth and the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 64; METHODIOS OF OLYMPUS, “The Banquet of the Ten Virgins”, 94-95.

¹⁷⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “Homilies on the Song of Songs”, 367.

¹⁷⁷ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, “Select Orations”, 434.

¹⁷⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, “The Great Catechism”, 483.

whole of creation will be changed along with our own bodies”.¹⁷⁹

The eschatological transformation of the universe cannot be accomplished in a mechanical or magical way through the simple act of an external power - since God does not accomplish anything in this way - but only from within, organically and naturally, within the human person.

2.3.4.2. Law

We have already analyzed the understanding of Gregory of Nyssa regarding the biological man (person united with the non-rational form), whom Paul labels as ‘old man’. Gregory identifies the ‘garments of skin’ in terms of the ‘will of the flesh’ and in Rom. 7:14, Paul suggests this ‘will’ as regulating the old carnal man, who is sold under sin. He understands it as the “law of sin” as existing in the “members” of the old man, as holding him imprisoned like a second nature from which he cannot be liberated: “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24). Even though Paul does not use the phrase from Genesis about the “garments of skin”, explains Nellas, the teaching of the Fathers on the content of this expression is merely a development of Paul’s teaching on the postlapsarian state of man. “The “garments of skin,” the irrational, impassioned, dead “life,” are truly the “will of the flesh” (cf. Rom. 8:5-8), the life “according to the flesh” which leads to death (Rom. 8:12-13), “the law of sin and death” from which “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” liberates us (Rom. 8:2)”.¹⁸⁰

The law of sin stem from the fall and is put into practice by the non-rational part of the soul and the law of the Spirit came with Christ. Between these two laws stand the Jewish law, which Paul calls “spiritual” (Rom. 7:14). Referring to the remark of Paul, Chrysostom comments that, “It is the Spirit he [Paul] is here calling the law of the Spirit. For as he calls sin the law of sin, so he here calls the Spirit the law of the Spirit. And yet he named that of Moses as such, where he says, “For we know that the Law is spiritual.” What then is the difference? A great and unbounded one, for the latter is spiritual, the former the law of the Spirit ... the latter was merely given by the Spirit, the former supplies the Spirit Himself in abundance to those who receive Him”.¹⁸¹

According to Paul, “it [the law] was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made” (Gal 3:19). The phrase “it was added”, comments Nellas, points to its later

¹⁷⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 65-66; J. CHRYSOSTOM, “An Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall”, 100.

¹⁸⁰ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 67.

¹⁸¹ J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles”, 85.

character; it was not originally present. The term “because of transgressions” should not be difficult to understand if we regard as “transgressions” the many postlapsarian sins or even original sin itself.

At this juncture, it is important to identify whether a relationship exists between the law which was given (added) to the Jews and the “law of sin” which was created as a state in man after the fall. Certain indication to this concern is given in the passage which ends the long discussion of the resurrection of the dead in the First Letter to the Corinthians (15 :35-58). To the questions how the dead are raised and what kind of body they come to have, Paul explains that “it is sown a physical body” and “is raised a spiritual body”. Paul appeals to creation and re-creation: “The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit”. He affirms that, with the resurrection, the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?””. And Paul concludes: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law”. Certainly, he is referring to the Jewish law here. But, to the question, how the law which God gave comes to constitute the power of sin, Nellas answers: “Perhaps the position of the passage, its connection with death and resurrection, with the first Adam from whom death came and with the second who abolished the “sting” of death which is sin, can illuminate the sense of the passage. Perhaps the law constitutes the power of sin because in some way it has its roots in sin, because it is given to man when in a state of sin, and is related to this state precisely in order to be able to correct it”.¹⁸²

Nellas continues further, referring to the teachings of John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus,

When the law which is “added” after the fall as a “condescension” is viewed in this way, it may be said to constitute another aspect, a positive aspect, of the law of sin, which is the sorry state to which man has been reduced and has a purely negative quality. “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin” (Rom. 7:7). The second, positive aspect of this reality, the law which was “added” by God illuminates the first, the “law of sin,” and shows it to be negative so that it can thus be corrected. The law which was “added” by God could not have corrected the law of sin justly if it did not have an internal relationship with it, if it did not have its roots within it. Without such an internal relationship the law which God gave would have been unjust; it would have operated

¹⁸² P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 68-69.

externally or of necessity, and God never acts unjustly.¹⁸³

The letters of Paul to the Romans and the Galatians are to be understood from this perspective of the two aspects of this reality simultaneously. The law is “holy” (Rom. 7:12), but at the same time it is also a “curse” (Gal. 3:13). We have been freed from the law (Gal. 4:5), however, it should not be thought that by faith in Christ we abolish the law, rather, we uphold the law (Rom. 3:31). Galatians 3:19 affirms that the law exists “till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made”. And the love which Christ brings is not an abolition but a “fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). In his first letter to Timothy Paul states that the law is good but the law is not laid down for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the unholy and profane.... (1 Tim 1:8-9). Thus, it becomes clear that it is designed for those in whom the law of sin is operative and the goal of the law is Christ, “for Christ is the end of the law” (Rom. 10:4). Therefore, its character is purely preparatory, so that as the letter to the Galatians exhorts (3:24), “the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came”.¹⁸⁴

Thus, we conclude affirming that the law is “added” or given, so that each person individually and society as collectively can survive morally in the situation created by the fall.¹⁸⁵ Its content is positive and useful, since it balances the law of sin, and holy, since it leads to Christ. Finally, together with the law of sin, the Jewish law will be transcended in Christ, that is, the law of sin will be abolished, and the other law will be fulfilled (will be transformed by the love which is the new life in Christ). Love, as “the fulfilment of the law” (Rom. 13:10), surpasses the limits of the law, and it leads man to the place of freedom, where there is no limit except for the limit implied by the concept of freedom itself. Freedom, opposite to individual independence, is complete personal harmony and concord with God, mankind and the world and has love as its precise content and actually functions as love. Love is freedom, because both are human functions and states with an identical content. Therefore, for this reason, clarifies Chrysostom, that freedom does not fight the law but regards it with love; it broadens the law with love, clarifying its limits and transforming it.¹⁸⁶ The moral content of freedom is marked by the bonds of love.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 69.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 70; also see J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Galatians”, 80.

¹⁸⁵ Chrysostom compares this to a doctor’s prescription which prescribes for the patient not the full diet of a healthy person but that which allows him to survive and recover his health (Cf. J. CHRYSOSTOM, “On Virginity”, 36; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 70).

¹⁸⁶ J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Romans”, 68; also refer for more details on the idea of freedom, J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on First Corinthians”, 16 -19.

Consequently, explains Nellas, “the law as a “garment of skin” is good and precious and constitutes as a gift given by God to man. But love exercised in freedom is superior to the law. Love alone, properly speaking, represents true humanity in the image of the Creator... for it persuades the will to advance in accordance with nature, in no way rebelling against the inward principle of its nature”.¹⁸⁷

2.3.4.3. Marriage

As we have already analyzed, in man’s prelapsarian life in accordance with nature, his aim was to concentrate all sensible things within himself and offer them to God in order to unite creation with its Creator. This would have brought about a universal integration in God, also of man himself in all his dimensions which were transcended definitively in Christ, including the division of male and female. We have discussed, how by reversing the natural movement of man’s psychosomatic functions he became enslaved to unnatural pleasure, and how the righteousness of nature in his ceaseless quest for pleasure constantly revenges him with pain in an unjust manner. It is a vicious circle in which the sinner is imprisoned. It can be labelled as an irrational and deadly cycle, because the more intently one seeks pleasure the more bitterly will one taste pain, which finally reaches its climax in death.

Therefore, through pleasure, which was introduced into nature in a manner contrary to reason, pain, which is in accordance with reason, entered in its turn. Realizing that every pleasure is followed by pain, man acquired an impulse towards pleasure as a whole and an aversion to pain as a whole. He fought with all his strength to attain the one and struggled with all his might to avoid the other, thinking that in this way he could keep the two apart from each other, and that he could possess only the pleasure that is linked to self-love and be entirely without experience of pain, which was impossible. For he did not realize that pleasure can never be received without pain; the distress caused by pain is contained within pleasure.¹⁸⁸

This new reality of the sinful union of pleasure with pain, was used by God, with an attitude of compassion, after the fall, to grant the human persons biological survival. In one and the same act, God limited both pleasure and pain decisively and neutralized them completely in the person of Christ.

At this juncture, we analyze two things: first, the view of the Fathers of the Church that before the fall there was no use of marriage, as we understand it today, for the purpose of reproduction; and secondly, the truth of the

¹⁸⁷ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 71.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

compassionate intervention of God after the fall of man.

In his homilies, *On Virginity*, Chrysostom explains: “When he was created, Adam remained in paradise, and there was no question of marriage. He needed a helper and a helper was provided for him. But even then, marriage did not seem to be necessary.... Desire for sexual intercourse and conception and pangs and childbirth and every form of corruption were alien to their soul”.¹⁸⁹ The opinion of Chrysostom resonates with the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa on the concepts of sexual union, conception, birth etc. as aspects of the “garments of skin” (which we have explained earlier). Analyzing the teachings of Chrysostom and Gregory, Nellas concludes that the sexual intercourse, conception, pangs, childbirth and remaining forms of corruption were added to man as “garments of skin” after the fall.¹⁹⁰ In fact, the body existed, and male and female existed separately, each with his or her special psychosomatic make-up. However, there is no doubt, affirms Chrysostom, that the first human beings were not subject to bodily needs, and although they had bodies, they needed nothing that concerns body. Thus, they lived in paradise like angels, neither set on fire by desire nor overwhelmed by other passions.¹⁹¹ For the same reason, states Nellas that we do not know how the prelapsarian “increase and multiply” (Gen. 1:28) was realized. However, in this connection too, he refers to both Maximus and Gregory of Nyssa. Maximus talks in a general manner about the “spiritual increase” of the human race. Gregory of Nyssa speaks in terms of the “first creation” of man in which there was no division into sexes, and a second creation in which the division into sexes was already devised by God before the fall, with a view to making possible the multiplication of the human race after the fall, which God had foreseen, whereas without the fall the human race would have multiplied “in the same way as the angels increased in number”.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ J. CHRYSOSTOM, “On Virginity”, 34.

¹⁹⁰ However, what the phrase, man “cling to his wife and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24) implied before the fall, to what form and quality of union or marriage it led, Nellas do not given an answer but explains that we do not know precisely what the human body was like before the fall (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 72-73).

¹⁹¹ J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Genesis 1-17”, 182, 209; J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Genesis 18-45”, 5.

¹⁹² GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Making of Man”, 407; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 73-74 (The Fathers of the Church confine themselves to stating that the forms of corruption (pleasurable attraction, sexual union and biological birth) did not exist in the prelapsarian state. Since, however, their intention is not to offer an answer to a purely speculative question, they refuse to give positive support to any specific view about the state before the fall. It is an application of the apophatic method to anthropology. The aim of the Fathers is, through continual negations, to create a dynamic state which will not allow man to stop at any point short of God, but will push him constantly towards his final end (Cf. *Ibid.*, 73).

However, Methodius of Olympus argues that it is not possible for the body to constitute the “coats of skin” because the expression “male and female” (Gen 1:27) and the verse man “cling to his wife and they become one flesh” (Gen 2 :24) refer to the situation before the fall.¹⁹³ Nellas refers to the argument of Chrysostom, that after the fall God refashioned the human body, which was originally superior to what it is now, so that it would be useful to us in our new situation. It is typical that Chrysostom does not refer to a second creation, either before or after the fall, but of a “refashioning”. In his description of the workings of the eye, Chrysostom writes that tears are a postlapsarian function, something parallels in respect of other organs. Nellas further considers the teaching of Maximus, that the whole functioning of the psychosomatic human organism was real before the fall but spiritual, and in particular devoid of the pleasure which disorients, cripples and finally reverses - and in this sense refashions - the psychosomatic functioning of man.¹⁹⁴

We explore more on Chrysostom’s comments on the role of marriage:

Since they disobeyed God and became earth and dust, after losing that blessed way of life, they lost the beauty of virginity too.... For when they had become prisoners, they put off this royal dress, and rejected the heavenly world, and accepted the corruption and the curse and the pain and the life of toil that come from death. Then marriage entered in with these things.... Do you see from where marriage took its origin, the reason why it seemed necessary? ... For where there is death, there too is marriage; if there had not been the one, the other would not have followed.... Tell me, what kind of marriage gave birth to Adam? What kind of pains produced Eve? ... Ten thousand times ten thousand angels serve God... and none of them came into being by arising from one that came before, nor by births and pains and conception. Therefore, He

¹⁹³ METHODIOS OF OLYMPUS, “Discourse on the Resurrection”, 139-140.

¹⁹⁴ According to Nellas, all the above views do not constitute cataphatic positions for the Fathers, but rather constitute hints, which, in the last analysis, are denials of any clear and final position whatsoever. This is precisely because any positive position in this field would be in danger of interpreting man, who is by nature a theological being, simply in terms of biological categories. In the Fathers, however, man is always understood iconically, a fact which signifies that for the views mentioned above to be understood rightly they should be situated in the context of anthropological apophaticism. “The sure general framework which was believed everywhere at all times and by everyone, and within which the Fathers always conducted their investigations, is summed up in epigrammatic form by St John of Damascus: “But since God, who knows all things before they come into being, knew in His foreknowledge that humans would transgress and be condemned to death, He made them male and female in anticipation and ordered them to increase and multiply”” (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 74-75). Gregory of Nyssa asserts that in providing man even in paradise with the requisite sex organs, God was merely anticipating the coming fall into sin (Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, “On the Soul and the Resurrection”, 465).

would much rather have made men without marriage.... And now it is not the power of marriage that keeps our race in being but the word of the Lord, who said at the beginning, 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth' (Gen. 1:28).¹⁹⁵

Gregory of Nyssa is of the same opinion: "If we had not changed for the worse and lost the dignity that made us equal to the angels, we would not have needed marriage in order to multiply. Rather, the same mode of increase that is proper to the angels - a mode, that does indeed exist, however unutterable and incomprehensible by human conjectures - would also have enabled those who are 'but a little less than the angels' to increase mankind to the measure determined by the wisdom of the Creator".¹⁹⁶

To the question, how the human race would have multiplied except by creative acts like those of Adam and Eve, Chrysostom replies characteristically, "Whether in this way or in another I am unable to say; what should be observed now is that marriage was not necessary to God in order to multiply men on earth". Interpreting the verse in Genesis 4:1, "Now, the man [Adam] knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cane", he writes, "Observe when this took place - after the act of disobedience, after the fall from paradise; that is when he began to cohabit with Eve. For before the act of disobedience they imitated the angelic life and there was no question of sexual union".¹⁹⁷

The marriage, as we understand it today, is a postlapsarian phenomenon, that it constitutes an element of the two-fold reality of the "garments of skin", does not at all imply any contempt for it, not even the slightest depreciation

¹⁹⁵ J. CHRYSOSTOM, "On Virginité", 245.

¹⁹⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, "On the Soul and the Resurrection", 465. Referring to Maximus, Hans Balthasar states, "In fact, it was the original will of God that we should not be born out of the fleeting pleasure of bodily union; it was the transgression of the law that caused marriage to be introduced" (Cf. H. U. V. BALTHASAR, *The Christian State of Life*, 128. Verify this with the book). St. Jerome affirms the same thing: "... as regards Adam and Eve we must maintain that before the fall they were virgins in Paradise: but after they sinned, and were cast out of Paradise, they were immediately married" (Cf. JEROME, "Against Jovinianus", 16). John of Damascus expressed the opinion that the first human had been created "as male", but since "God in His prescience knew that man would transgress and become liable to destruction, He made from him a female to be a help to him like himself; a help, indeed, for the conservation of the race after the transgression from age to age by generation. For the earliest formation is called 'making' and not 'generation'. For 'making' is the original formation at God's hands, while 'generation' is the succession from each other made necessary by the sentence of death imposed on us on account of the transgression" (Cf. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, "An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith", 43). Hans Balthasar makes a detailed study on this topic. For more details refer H. U. V. BALTHASAR, *The Christian State of Life*, 138-170.

¹⁹⁷ J. CHRYSOSTOM, "On Virginité", 282.

of it. That which is from one point of view truly the result of sin, is from another turned by God into a blessing, into “a great mystery”, which according to Paul, manifests the union of Christ with the Church, a union which the prelapsarian relationship between Adam and Eve also prefigured. “This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:32). This Pauline affirmation forms the basis of the marriage service. In reality, the Fathers expressed themselves eloquently on the theme of the man-woman relationship, not only on the dogmatic and ontological level, but also on the practical pastoral level.

Now, we focus on the second element, the truth of the compassionate intervention of God after the fall of man. By intervening precisely in the vicious circles of pain and pleasure, God in His compassion redirected pleasure towards the goal of the reproduction of the human race, and thus limited it and tamed it and even gave it the power to transcend itself by transforming it from an end to a means.¹⁹⁸

In the same vein of compassion, God also moderated the pain which is created by corruption and death. Citing Chrysostom, Nellas writes that bearing of children is our greatest consolation in the face of death. Death being an inconsolable evil, he adds, God in His compassion swiftly and at the outset, “stripped off the fearful mask of death and granted to men children to take their place, giving a glimpse, in this life, of the image of the resurrection”,¹⁹⁹ and making provision for others to rise up in place of those who have fallen. At this point, referring to the Nativity of Jesus, Nellas adds, “So that both pleasure and pain could be destroyed in their entirety by the birth of the Lord, this took place not only without pleasure and pangs of childbirth, but with a radical renewal of the laws to which sin had subjected nature; for it took place through a conception “without seed” and a birth “without corruption”, without the destruction of his mother’s virginity”.²⁰⁰

Since the Lord had a generation, continues Nellas, an entry into life, which was radically different from the familiar biological generation which we call birth, he was certainly free from all postlapsarian biological laws and definitely also from death.

When he accepted them voluntarily, together with his actual birth - which was nevertheless free and outside the postlapsarian law of

¹⁹⁸ Nellas gives examples in which pleasure is transcended, as in the case of the blessed couple Joachim and Anna whose child was not the fruit of pleasure but of prayer. Pleasure, a product of self-love, is transcended within marriage by being transformed into spiritual pleasure and joy in those cases where self-love gives way to love.

¹⁹⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 80.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 80; J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Genesis 18-45”, 4-5.

generation, that is, outside “the conception through seed and the birth through corruption which nature embraced after the transgression” - He did this in order to destroy them. “The generation from Adam in pleasure”, whereby the human race increases and multiplies, so St. Maximus explains, ruled tyrannically over nature, providing it with the “food of death” which it deserved. But “the birth of the Lord in the flesh, which was the result of His compassion for men, brought about the destruction of both, namely, of the pleasure that derives from Adam and of the death that has come through Adam, wiping out the penalty imposed on Adam together with the sin committed by him”. In this way the vicious circle of pleasure and pain was broken and human nature was liberated. More generally, with this new method of His generation the Lord not only brought human nature back to its prelapsarian state, but also rendered it complete. Adam’s goal was to “shake off” the division into male and female “from the whole of nature through a relationship with divine virtue utterly free from passion”. This was brought to pass by the Lord: He realized and manifested the true essence (*logos*) of human nature, free from the characteristics of male and female, at its deepest and most unified level, which is common to both sexes.²⁰¹

Furthermore, explains Maximus, by becoming truly man the Lord endowed human nature with a fresh start, with the beginning of a second form of generation, that is, with spiritual birth through baptism, which is not only a liberation from the consequences of original sin but is also for each believer a fulfilment of the work which Adam failed to achieve.²⁰²

Adam was made in the image of God, clarifies Nellas by referring to Maximus, in order that through the Spirit he might be born in God by his own free will, that the same man might thus be on the one hand a creature of God by nature, and on the other a son of God and a god through the Spirit by grace. However, it was not possible for this to be brought about except by his being born through the Spirit, himself, cooperating freely with the self-moving and autonomous power which in a natural manner existed within him. But Adam exchanged this deifying and divine and incorporeal birth for a bodily birth which is involuntary, material, impassioned, servile and subject to necessity. “This bodily birth, “in which existed the power of our condemnation”, was accepted by Him who alone is free and sinless, “because He is good and compassionate” - with the sole exception... [of being free] of seed and corruption - and thus, loosening the bonds within Himself for our sake, “He gave us who believe in His name authority through the birth which is spiritual

²⁰¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 80-81.

²⁰² MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, “On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios”, 450.

and freely chosen to become children of God instead of children of flesh and blood””²⁰³.

It becomes clear that the Fathers of the Church, within the very broad natural dimensions wherein they set man as a theological being by virtue of his god-like beginning and his theocentric end, do not hesitate to declare unmistakably what is the greatest hurdle to the rational viewpoint of biological man. They disclaim the most fundamental sign of self-determination which he possesses, his biological birth. The disintegration and dissolution - the stripping off the old self (Col. 3:9) - of the “garments of skin”, or more accurately, of one aspect of them, the one which was created by sin, is in fact the first obligatory step which a human person must take in order to be guided to a life which is not subject to decay, but bears within it the signs of resurrection.²⁰⁴

Biological birth in this perspective, writes Nellas, is not condemned but becomes intelligible and thus acceptable in the way God intends it to be, that is, as the great gift of generation, entry into existence. Upon proper use, this gift, that can lead a human person once again to the true spiritual birth can clothe one’s biological being in the blessed and eternal being which is found in the person of Christ. (“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” – Col. 3:27). So that, every human person may become, of one’s own free will, that which Adam refused to become - on the one hand a creature of God by nature, and on the other a son of God and a god through the Spirit by grace. Thus, in an ocean of divine love, sin can be transcended and there by proving that “in reality the great tragedy of the fall is only a small incident in time”.²⁰⁵

2.3.4.4. Function of Life

The consequences of the fall of man was not limited to the human race alone but extended to reasonless animals and reasonless nature. The degradation of human condition by the power of evil is also reflected in the degradation of the cosmos by decay (illness) and deterioration (death). The sin, which led to the abasement of man has infected the universe, compromising its structure and hindering its purpose. The cooperation of the human beings and the subsequent subjugation with Satan and his powers are at the root of imperfection in all the creation:

²⁰³ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 82.

²⁰⁴ As Paul scripts: “... and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal, there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:10-11).

²⁰⁵ Ibid., *Deification in Christ*, 83-84.

Despite the fact that marvelous order and harmony prevail in the cosmos, clearly demonstrating that all things are governed by God, nevertheless, there exists in it a kind of parasite that is manifested by death and consequently by disharmony in the societal relations of man. The evils that are produced by death are not from God.... As a result, this world which is in subjection to death and corruption cannot be considered natural, if by natural we mean the world as God intended it to be. In other words, the world is abnormal, but this is not because of its own nature but because a parasitic force exists in it at present. According to the later testimonies of Judaism and earliest ones of Christianity, the devil and his demons are not only the cause of death, they are also agents of illness.... As created by God the visible and invisible world is very good... because that is how God wanted it. This is precisely why death is the tragic outcome of man and the work of the devil.²⁰⁶

Thus, the disruption of man should have brought about the disruption of the “essences” and the “natures” of beings and of the creation. To explain this comprehensive change which was caused within creation, Nellas takes the help of Gregory Palamas and his expressive phrase: *we have changed our abode*.²⁰⁷ “For through this sin we have put on the garments of skin... and changed our abode to this transient and perishable world, and we have condemned ourselves to live a life full of passions and many misfortunes”.²⁰⁸ Palamas gives a clue to the cosmological dimension of the “garments of skin”. In the prelapsarian stage, the world was relatively unified within man, and through him the movement of matter naturally followed its course towards the End. Through man this movement too was, to a certain extent, spiritual. However, the transgression of the first man also made the movement of matter to run off course.

Since the relationship of matter with the human body, and therefore with the soul and with God, has been overturned, matter has become enclosed within itself; its movement has become blind and futile. Materiality is that state in which matter is characterized exclusively by its own elements, in which it is deprived of its development or movement towards spirit. Within the fall there thus exists a fall also of matter itself. So, the imprisonment of man in materiality transformed a world that was “very good” into one that was “perishable” and man who has dressed himself in materiality - because of this materiality, that is, because of the “garments of skin” - lives “a

²⁰⁶ A. CHRYSOSTOMOS, *The Sculptor and His Stone*, 32-33.

²⁰⁷ This phrase does not mean a change of place, because even before the fall man was not outside the world. It signifies a change of relationships.

²⁰⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 85; G. PALAMAS, *The Homilies*, 247.

life full of passions and many misfortunes”.²⁰⁹

Referring Maximus, Nellas makes the theme clearer. Before the fall man enjoyed a life without artifice, without any kind of cover or shelter, for such was it fitting that he should be from the beginning. That is, Adam lived without artifice, without arts and skills, because the natural well-being with which he was endowed in his essential nature was not dissipated, and thus he was not disturbed by those needs which today have to be met through human arts and skills. He was without need of covering because of the dispassion he possessed which kept him from feeling shame, and also because he was not then subject to extremes of cold or hot weather, to combat which men invented houses and clothing. Furthermore, human life rotates today either around the deceptive impressions which the irrational passions create of the external world for the sake of sensual pleasure, or around the arts and skills in order to satisfy the necessities of life, or around the natural principles of created things for the sake of learning. In fact, none of these things, influenced man before the fall, because he was above them all.

Adam, being dispassionate by grace, had no contact with the delusory fantasies created by the passions for the sake of sensual pleasure. Being self-sufficient, Adam was free from the obligation to use arts and skills in order to satisfy his needs. Being wise, he was superior to the study of created things, whose investigation demands scholarship and learning. Between man and God nothing interrupted itself which man needed to explore, which obstructed his free movement in love towards God and his relationship with God which this movement created. Due to this reason, man was called “naked by virtue of simplicity”, because he was above every natural need. Man lived a life without arts and skills, lacking every pretense because his life was pure. He had no covering and protection against anything, because he was free from the impassioned interweaving of the senses with sensible things. He was justly made subject to these things later on, when he had suffered loss, and had passed of his own free will from the fullness of being to total emptiness, and had become inferior to those things to which he had naturally been made superior.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 86.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 88. Chrysostom speaks on the same idea that, before the fall man had no need either for cities, or for arts and skills, or for the covering of clothing. However, afterwards they became necessary because of our infirmity; not only these things did become but everything else, the whole throng of remaining necessities (Cf. J. CHRYSOSTOM, “On Virginity”, 84). Gregory of Nyssa adds that, with our eyes blindfolded we walk round the mill of life (like animals turning the mill), always treading the same circular path (appetite, satiety, sleep, waking up, emptiness, fullness) and returning to the same things (Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, “Funeral Oration on Placilla”, as referred in P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 86-

Thus, it becomes clear that the familiar central functions of life (those which relate to the search for satisfactions, learning and professional effectiveness), are postlapsarian singularities, that is, as the content of the garments of skin. The functions stated and those that flow from them are a consequence of the disruption which the fall has brought to the order and harmony of creation. The hard cultivation of the soil, the professions, the sciences, the arts, politics, all the operations and functions by which man lives in this world, make up the content of the garments of skin and bear their aforementioned two-fold character. On the one hand they add up to the aftereffect of sin and constitute a misuse of various aspects of our creation ‘in the image’. On the other, they are a gift (new clothing), a result of the wise and compassionate intervention of God, through which human beings are able to live under the new conditions created by the fall. That is, God did not permit the characteristics belonging to man’s creation “in the image” to be destroyed in their totality. Rather, intervening in the process of decay, God changed these characteristics into “garments of skin” and made them into a gift which enable man to survive. God did not deprive man of all the authority which he had over the world. God left him authority over those animals which were vital for his nourishment, and also a certain authority over the rest, and over the earth generally, through the skills which he has developed through the reason which God gave him originally and did not withdraw totally after the fall. Through these skills, which have been developed gradually over the period of time since the fall, the constitution of the world is providentially ordered.²¹¹

2.3.5. Garments of Skin: Some General Observations

- a. In our analysis of the anthropological dimension of sin we have seen how autonomy is the source and the content of sin,²¹² since it constitutes a counterfeit of the truth about man, his mutilation and his restriction to the biological level of existence. This offence becomes even greater when man, dressed in the ‘garments of skin’, as a consequence treats even these as autonomous. Under such conditions the ‘garments of skin’ appear in their negative aspect alone; they

87).

²¹¹ Ibid., 89-90.

²¹² In choosing to live, not with the life given to man by the breath of God, but in an autonomous way, he endowed sin with existence and life, although essentially it has no existence. Having been made in the image of God, man has a theological structure, and to be a true man he must at every moment exist and live theocentrically. When he denies God, he denies himself and destroys himself. When he lives theocentrically he realizes himself by reaching out into infinity; he attains his true fulfilment by extending into eternity.

function as the will of the flesh and, according to Paul, lead inevitably to death. This means, for us today that the making autonomous of the law, of sexuality, of technology, of politics and so on, is in danger of leading humanity to ultimate self-destruction on the moral, political and even biological levels. Christian theology has the responsibility to announce this truth most emphatically because we are in genuine reality living at the eleventh hour.²¹³

- b. However, to carry out this task, contemporary Christian theology needs to return to the source and recover its authentic evangelical and patristic voice. It is almost impossible for its message to be heard by any reasonable modern person at all, laments Nellas, when it explains sin as disobedience to a set of external rules, or even severer, as disobedience to an enshrined social or political establishment.²¹⁴
- c. The Church tends to forget her ontological bond with the world; and the world, perceiving that its positive aspects are not appreciated within the Church, feels a sense of separation and breaks off relations with it. The theology of the image and of the garments of skin overcomes these concerns and others like them and can be of immense help. Considering human person and the world as an image, it respects the image and the matter which makes up the image. When the matter desires to turn out to be autonomous, to desert not the archetype but itself, this theology does affirm that by such an action the matter put an end to itself. Even though in a fundamental way, the theology of the image condemns the action of seeking autonomy, it also continues to love the matter, wounded and corrupt as it is, after the example of God. Because God accepted the matter, and in His

²¹³ Ibid., 93-94.

²¹⁴ An even greater problem is generated by the basic distortion of the biblical and patristic teaching about man by Christian theology. The view that the first man's original nature lay in his biological constitution, to which grace was added by God as a supernatural gift, has led thoughtful inquirers into the authentic nature of man to reject God's existence altogether. Alike consequences followed, clarifies Nellas, also from Augustine's teaching that if man had not perished, the Son of Man would not have come. It is like, there was no other cause for the Lord Jesus Christ to come into the flesh, except to save those suffered death due to sin. This confined Christ, and by extension the Christian life and the realities of the Church, the sacraments, faith and the rest, within the bounds defined by sin. Sadly, Christ in this perspective, continues Nellas, is not so much the creator and recapitulator of all things, the Alpha and Omega as Scripture says, but merely the redeemer from sin. The Christian life is not considered so much as the fulfillment of Adam's original destiny, as a dynamic transformation of man and the world and nor as union with God, but as a simple escape from sin. The sacraments are not fulfilments here and now of the kingdom of God and the manifestations of the same, but meager religious duties and means of acquiring grace (Cf. Ibid., 94-95).

love gave it the new powers and functions of the garments of skin. It respects the garments of skin, marriage, science, politics, art and the rest, with an affirmation that, when these are made autonomous, they bring about the final consolidation of sin and the annihilation of human person. Thus, in this way the theology remains faithful to the Biblical and Patristic teaching on the two-fold nature of the garments of skin.

- d. The garments of skin, under their positive aspect, are a blessing and a gift from God. Conversing precisely on technical skills of human beings, Chrysostom, for example, explains that these skills were developed on earth in a gradual manner after the fall. “Consider for a moment, my friend, how the constitution of the world is providentially ordered. And each person became an inventor of some art originally by virtue of the wisdom of God hidden in nature, and thus introduced into human life the practice of technical skills. First, one man discovered the cultivation of the land, another after him the art of shepherding flocks, another that of raising cattle, and another music, another the working of copper, and Noah invented viticulture through the teaching hidden in nature”.²¹⁵ Human person’s natural ability to subjugate and use the powers of non-rational nature is a gift and blessing from God. By virtue of the technical skill offered to them by God, human beings utilize the energy of steam, of electricity, or of the atom, for the use most suitable to them. The achievements of modern science, the triumph of technology, the discoveries of psychology and the researches of philosophy are not evil; they are positively good and valuable.²¹⁶

2.4. Recasting of Human Nature in Christ from ‘in the image’ to ‘the Image’/ Likeness

In this section, Nicolas Kavalas will be our guide. Physical life needs a progenitor in order to exist, so also, spiritual life. “For this reason,” explains Kavalas, “it was possible for anyone at all to live the spiritual life before this blessed flesh [the progenitor of the human race] had come into being [in

²¹⁵ Cf. J. CHRYSOSTOM, “Homilies on Genesis 18-45”, 200; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 99.

²¹⁶ However, with regard to the use of the garments of skin, through the exercise of our free will present at any given moment can set in motion either its negative abhorrent aspect or its positive aspect. It is to be noted that even when human beings present their negative aspect the garments of skin are not themselves to blame; it is rather their exercise of free will which is at fault. For example, Noah planted a vine and drank from the wine and became drunk (Gen. 9:21). However, the plant is not evil, nor is the wine vicious, but its abuse, the corrupt use of free will. In fact, the work of our salvation is accomplished through it (Eucharist).

the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit]”.²¹⁷ In reality, such a power did not even belong to Adam in the prelapsarian stage. For his created nature was different from the nature of God and totally distinct from it. “Our nature was separated itself from God by being different from Him in everything that it possessed and by having nothing in common with Him”. The precise reason for it was because “God remained Himself alone; our nature was human and nothing more”.²¹⁸

Being made “in the image” of God, certainly, Adam received in the measure appropriate to being “in the image”, the breath of the Spirit and had truly proved to be a “living soul” (Gen. 2:7). However, Nellas makes it clear that, Adam’s life was not yet fully spiritual, that is,

it was not yet the very life of the Holy Spirit, with which the blessed flesh of the Lord lives, and which was given to mankind in the flesh of Christ, the Church, at Pentecost. Unfallen man ... had still to be made capable of receiving the hypostatic union, and thereby of finding his true being and full spiritual life. The distance separating human nature from the divine took on tragic dimensions with the fall. In choosing to live, not with the life given to him by the breath of God, but in an autonomous way, man endowed sin with existence and life, although essentially it has no existence.²¹⁹

As a consequence of setting up such an autonomy, which is the basis of all sin, every sinful act has with it two elements: the act itself and the trauma. The act makes the trauma-passion, and this zealously hunts for the satisfaction of pleasure, which is the result of sinful action. In this way the habit of sin is created. According to Kavalas, “the habit of sin arises from evil actions, like a disease introduced by tainted food. It is permanent and chains souls with unbreakable fetters. It enslaves the mind, and brings about the worst effect of all by inciting its captives to commit the most wicked actions”.²²⁰

The habit of sin, in effect, becomes in man a second nature and sin, like a second nature obscures man with its darkness, drowns him in the depths of forgetfulness. Thus, the image is obscured, the shape and distinguishing form of man perish and human nature crumples, like matter without form or shape.

²¹⁷ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 124.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

²¹⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 109-110. The fact that “unfallen man had still to be made capable of receiving the hypostatic union”, substantiate the argument of Duns Scotus (refer footnote number 111) that the Son of God would have been made man even if humanity had not sinned.

²²⁰ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 76.

Repeated sinful acts²²¹ create a series of events in the external world and of emotions in the human person, and thus give the impression of life, although in reality they do nothing but hide the absence of true life. Nellas calls this state as “spiritual death”. The habit of sin, states Kavasilas, forms a vicious circle. “Accordingly, sin has no end, since the habit gives rise to actions and the accumulation of actions aggravates the habit. Thus, the evils are mutually reinforced and constantly progress, so that “sin came to life, but I died” (Rom. 7:9)”.²²²

Gifted with soul and reason, the matter of humanity continued even after the fall to be organized and alive in itself, because that is how God created it, and no one can wipe out what God creates. Regarded in this way, human person continues to be real, to live, to move, to create within creation. However, his life and movement are henceforth biological functions. The powers aiding him to live, with which he had been gifted and which were to a degree spiritual, were coarsened, were imprisoned in matter, and instead of being raised into spiritual senses lapsed into simple psychosomatic, biological functions, into garments of skin. “Thus, when physiological fatigue supervenes and when the biological cycle of the human organism is completed, the body ceases to assimilate the food and air with which life has been maintained in the fact of corruption, is no longer strong enough to sustain the human person, and dies”.²²³ Nellas calls this process as “natural death”.

In short, we can affirm that there are three things which separate man from God and create hurdles to the spiritual life, namely: nature, sin and death. And the good news is, explains Kavasias, “though men were triply separated from God - by nature, by sin, and by death - yet the Savior made them to attain to Him perfectly and to be immediately united to Him by successively removing all obstacles. The first barrier He removed by partaking of manhood, the second by being put to death on the cross. As for the final barrier, the tyranny of death, He eliminated it completely from our nature by rising again”.²²⁴ Thus, Paul in 1 Cor. 15:16 says: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death”. And when the barriers have been removed there is nothing which prevents the Holy Spirit from being poured out upon all flesh.

Kavasilas further explains with greater clarity the manner in which Christ

²²¹ Needs are followed by satisfaction of needs through sin; passions are followed by satisfaction of passions through sensual pleasure.

²²² Ibid., 76; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 110.

²²³ Ibid., 111.

²²⁴ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 106.

conquered these three hurdles, and the significance of this conquest for the expression of the true nature of humanity, its true life and real dimensions. Through the incarnation, the union the two natures - the divine and the human - was achieved, which until then had been separated from one another. As a result, the distance between them is eliminated, since the common hypostasis, being a term common to both natures, "removing the separation between Godhead and the manhood".²²⁵ The hypostatic union recreates and makes man's prelapsarian iconic being whole again. Thus, incarnation solves the ontological problem. Through Incarnation, the Lord introduces a new human ontology, and Christ constitutes the real progenitor of a new humanity.

Jesus revealed God to the world through his created human nature; through his holy life, compassionate works and supernatural wonders. The cross becomes Christ's means to defeat sin and evil. By his death on the cross, Christ defeated and destroyed sin and devil, which had reigned over humanity. The humanity is healed, restored to its original beauty and justified. The wound of the Lord becomes the means of healing for humanity.²²⁶ Finally, the resurrection of the Lord redeems the human nature from the problem of corruption and death. Through Christ conquering death, humanity conquers death.²²⁷

Christ's death was not only a consequence of the cross; it was also the final result of the incarnation.

By descending, however, to death the Logos renewed humanity in general and made it incorrupt along with the human nature which He had assumed and by means of it. Just as on the cross, human nature was purified from sin by the blood of the Lord, so in the tomb it was purified in an organic manner from the state of death by laying aside the earthly "garments of skin", that is to say, by laying aside mortality. For through His lying in the tomb until the third day the Lord made reparation precisely in the earth for the debt which Adam himself had incurred from the earth through his fall - the debt that takes the form of the "body which casts a shadow", the "garments of skin", the body's bio-logical composition and structure. And recasting human nature as if it were a shattered and ruined statue, He raised it up new, spiritual and

²²⁵ Ibid., 105.

²²⁶ "It was when He mounted the cross and died and rose again that the freedom of mankind came about, that the form and the beauty were created" (Cf. Ibid., 78).

²²⁷ Christ, on the one hand became "the first-born from the dead" (Col. 1:18) and, on the other hand, entered for us as a forerunner in to the Holy of Holies (Heb. 6:20). He has slain sin and reconciled us to God and destroyed the dividing wall (Eph. 2:14) and consecrated himself for us (Jn. 17:19), in order that we too might be justly freed from corruption and from sin who have both will and nature in common with him.

imperishable. The truly human body of Jesus became after the resurrection an immortal and spiritual body, free from the limitations of time and space, naturally endowed with new spiritual senses and functions, and it was manifested as such. “From the beginning our nature has as its aim immortality; but it only achieved this later in the body of the Savior who, when He had risen from the dead to immortal life, became the pioneer of immortality for our race”. Thus, the resurrected and blessed flesh of the Lord in which the new theandric spiritual senses function - spiritual vision, spiritual taste, spiritual hearing and so on - becomes the new “type” of humanity. The resurrected blessed flesh of the Lord is the realization and manifestation of the perfect man, the Theanthropos or God-Man. The Savior was the first and only person to show us the true humanity which is perfect in manner of life and in all other respects.²²⁸

Thus, in the three acts of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, the human problem of nature, sin and death are resolved. Human participation in redemption happens through participation in the person of Christ, principally within the ecclesial community. Because, the blessed flesh of the Lord is nothing other than the Church.²²⁹ Nellas names it as the “dominical body”, in which the Spirit dwells and it has been manifested as ecclesial communion, and henceforth constitutes the place in which the new spiritual life is lived by the faithful and in which salvation becomes concrete. In this organism of the dominical body, the spiritual life of the Head springs down to the members and gives them life. In this sense, according to Nellas, the creation of the Church constitutes the second presupposition of the spiritual life and the Church itself the second aspect of salvation. Christ is not a mere liberator who deserts human persons to their own devices after liberation, after entrusting them with his wise teaching. Rather, he creates a new place for them in which to live, his body.²³⁰ In fact, the knowledge of God lights up human persons and the love of God gives them life. Through right knowledge and the free exercise of love, one can be transcended in Christ from being “in the image” to being the Image itself, that is, one can arrive at the likeness.

Becoming Fully Human: From Adamic Type to Spiritual Human Life: To analyze the true nature of human persons, in this section, we examine the real meaning of spiritual life. The spiritual life, according to Nellas, is not a life

²²⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 112-113; Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 74-78.

²²⁹ Christ’s body is the Church (Col. 1:24). “The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, was first taught us by the Redeemer himself” (Cf. POPE PIUS XII, [Encyclical], *Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 1).

²³⁰ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 113-114.

of laws and precepts but a life of participation, affection and love, a life of mingling and mixing with God. Paul says (1 Cor. 2:14), “Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”. Thus, from an ontological point of view, man is not yet a full and true man, precisely because “union with God is not some additional element but actually constitutes man. For a man to be a man he must become that which he was created to be”.²³¹ That is the reason, Emil Bratos calls deification as a process in which “man still retains his full personal identity and integrity and becomes more fully human”.²³² The basic presupposition of any theology of *theosis* (Eastern or Western) is that deification makes us more fully and authentically human and grace does not destroy or diminish humanity but rather perfects it. In and through the sharing in the divine life, we become fully human.²³³

In the Scripture, as we have discussed earlier, Jesus is presented as the *eikon* (the image) and very representation of God (Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15). If Christ is God’s image and human beings are made in that image, then they are created in the image of Christ. Therefore, to find out who human beings essentially are, and to what they are called, we must look at Jesus – who is both God and man. “He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15). Kavalas explains with clarity that Jesus is the archetype and goal of Adam and subsequently of humanity. Although Adam was temporally the first man, even he was made in the image of Christ, the second Adam. Only in Christ do we know what true humanity is.²³⁴ Human nature was created in the image of Christ so that the Logos could receive his mother from it and enter as a man into the human world, so that God could become a real God-man, and man in turn a real god-man too by grace and participation. This is the concrete realization of the true humanity.

Adam was the natural “type” of his descendants. Through their biological birth human beings bear the Adamic form, the Adamic shape and life, which are their biological psychosomatic functions. But the Creator Logos through his incarnation, burial and resurrection melted

²³¹ Ibid., 116.

²³² E. BARTOS, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 10. “Divinization is the epitome of “transcendent selfhood”. The human person is made more fully human by being taken, whole and entire, into the Triune *Communio Personarum*. Deification establishes and secures the integrity of true human ‘being’” (Cf. P. KRILL, *Deified Vision*, 417).

²³³ “The Greek patristic *theopoiesis* or divinization at the same time denotes the full extent of humanity. To be human is in the last resort a grace” (Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, 896).

²³⁴ L. HALL – M. RAE – S. HOMES, *Christian Doctrine*, 297.

down and recast the Adamic “type” within Himself and created a new spiritual human “type”. He was the new Adam, the new progenitor of the human race, the Father of the age to come. The former [Adam] introduced an imperfect life which needed countless forms of assistance; the latter [Christ] became the Father of immortal life for men.²³⁵

Kavasilas compares the present life with the “dark and fluid life” which the foetus lives in its mother’s womb while being prepared for its birth. “In short, it is this world which is in travail with that new inner man which is “created after the likeness of God” (Eph. 4:24). When he has been shaped and formed here, he is thus born perfect into that perfect world which grows not old. As nature prepares the foetus, while it is in its dark and fluid life, for that life which is in the light, and shapes it, as though according to a model, for the life which it is about to receive, so likewise it happens to the saints”.²³⁶ This is what Paul said in his letter to the Galatians, “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).

According to Kavasilas, the life in Christ originates in this life and arises from it. “It is perfected... in the life to come”, and the preparation for it cannot be accomplished except through our being incorporated into Christ, through our receiving his life and his senses and functions. “Just as it is impossible to live this natural life without receiving the organs [senses] of Adam and the human faculties necessary for this life, so likewise no one can attain that blessed world alive without being prepared by the life of Christ and being formed according to his image”.²³⁷

The logical line of the argument is clear: The biological birth of a human person constitutes a preparation for the real birth which is in Christ. That is, through being born in Christ, the true human person come into existence. In the physical birth of a person, explains Kavasilas, the progenitor gives the “seed” and “principle” of life to his child. However, the life of each person tends rather to differentiate the child from his progenitor than to unite it with him, whereas in the spiritual birth of the persons, Christ gives his life to them and this life of Christ becomes the new and true life of them. The physical birth separates the child from the mother, but the spiritual birth brings the person to an enduring union, and separated from Christ, the person dies. Therefore, “the blood by which we live now is Christ’s Blood”, and “the flesh [by which we live] is Christ’s Body, and further, that we have members and life in common with him”.²³⁸ This contemporaneous occupation of our own

²³⁵ Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 190; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 117.

²³⁶ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 44.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43, 81.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

members and our own life generates a real communion, for there is no certain communion when “one [who] alone possesses is not present with both parties in the same way. Thus, they neither share with each other nor have they anything really in common. In other words, when something belongs to one party at one time and to another at another time, it is merely a semblance of sharing. One does not live with a person merely by living in the same house after he has left”.²³⁹

Nellas explains the teachings of Kavasilas more clearly: Communion with our physical progenitors is no more than an image of authentic communion. Real communion is communion with Christ, since we always possess body, blood, members and all things in common with Christ. In fact, Christ did not give us life so as to be separated from us afterwards like our parents, rather he is with us at all times and united to us. By his presence he gives us life and keeps us in being. A splendid synthesis thus takes place in which each person is unique and self-determining, yet simultaneously an indivisible member of the body of Christ, functioning with the functions of Christ.²⁴⁰

There is nothing of which the saints are in need which He is not Himself. He gives them birth, growth, and nourishment; He is life and breath. By means of Himself He forms an eye for them and, in addition, gives them light and enables them to see Himself. He is the one who feeds and is Himself the Food; it is He who provides the Bread of life and who is Himself what He provides. He is life for those who live, the sweet odour to those who breathe, the garment for those who would be clothed.²⁴¹

Through physical birth parents give their child an organism capable of living this mortal life. However, through spiritual birth, Christ creates in human beings a new spiritual organism with spiritual eyes and ears by which they live the spiritual life. This spiritual organism, which is none other than the new man and which as a spiritual entity is not subject to decay, will survive after death and will keep human life in being in eternity. If we do not possess such an organism with the appropriate senses, clarifies Nellas, we will not be able to see the Sun of righteousness [Mal 4:2] who will shine in the age to come. Without such an organism our human existence would be dead. That is, we “would be dead and miserable living in that blessed and immortal world”.²⁴²

Union with Christ transcends any other union that we could conceive and

²³⁹ Ibid., 128.

²⁴⁰ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 118.

²⁴¹ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 47-48.

²⁴² P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 119; N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 43.

cannot be represented by any analogy.²⁴³ The communion with Christ delivers the believer from dead life and dead existence. It saves him, as Nellas terms, from “formlessness”, “obliteration” and “ignorance”. God knows His own; that is to say, the Father knows the Son and whatever belongs to him. That which does not exist in Christ is “neither manifest to God nor known by Him. But that which is unknown to God is also objectively unknown; it does not exist in reality. Whatever is not visible to Him by that light is in reality entirely without existence”.²⁴⁴

Through the reception of the sacraments such as baptism, chrismation and Eucharist, we are incorporated into Christ and receive a Christlike or Christocentric being. We also receive a form and life which corresponds to it. In this way, clarifies Kavalas, the Father “finds the very form of the Son in our faces” and recognizes in us the members of the only begotten Son.²⁴⁵ “Thus, “having become known to Him who knows His own”, we emerge from invisibility and oblivion into truth. Man “who was once darkness becomes light; he who once was nothing now has existence. He dwells with God and is adopted by Him; from imprisonment and utmost slavery he is led to the royal throne””.²⁴⁶

So, the words of Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), becomes true. From the above-given analysis, it becomes clear that the true nature of man consists in his being like God, or more accurately, in his being like Christ and centered on him. Since an authentic human person is the one who is in Christ, and obviously the spiritual life is the life in Christ, the living of such a life can be achieved only by the communion and union of human persons with Christ. And this communion in its fullness, according to the Fathers of the Church and of tradition, is named as deification or *theosis*. Highlighting the content of Christological anthropology, Kavalas, and later Nellas, label it as Christification.

2.5. Channels to Attain Christification

In this concluding session of the second chapter, we try to study the five pathways to attain Christification, proposed by Kavalas in his work *The Life in Christ*, and the subsequent interpretation and explanations offered by Nellas in his book *Deification in Christ*. Kavalas explains that the union and communion of man with Christ is realized by man’s “being”, by the

²⁴³ That is the precise reason, saints and martyrs preferred to lose their physical body rather than Christ.

²⁴⁴ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 119-120; N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 68.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁴⁶ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 120.

movement which makes this being active, by life, by knowledge and by the will. “Union with Christ, then, belongs to those who have undergone all that the Saviour has undergone, and have experienced and become all that He has experienced and become”.²⁴⁷ We try to examine how holy mysteries lead a person to holy life. Since the life in Christ means to be united with him, we try to explain how each sacred rite unites a person who has undergone it to Christ.

2.5.1. The Christification of Human Person’s Being (Baptism)

Human participation in redemption happens through the participation in the persons of Christ, principally within the ecclesial communion. The process of Christification begins through the initial sacrament of baptism. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ’s death, is buried with him, and rises with him” (CCC 1226). That is, through the sacrament of Baptism, the human person’s biological being truly participates in the death and resurrection of Christ. “The baptized have put on Christ” (CCC 1226).²⁴⁸ So, this sacrament becomes truly and “literally a new birth in Christ and in this sense a new creation of man. This new creation, however, is not brought into existence *ex nihilo*, nor as in the case of the first man out of pre-existing biological life, but out of the pre-existing biological being of man. Apart from Christ, the biological being of man - man on the biological level - does not possess... either “form” or “name” but is shapeless “matter””.²⁴⁹

Kavasilas explains this process of new birth with an example:

For until gold, silver, and bronze are softened and melted by fire, they are mere materials to the onlooker, so that they are called merely by the name of the material, “gold” or “silver” or “bronze”. But when each acquires a shape from the blows of the iron tools it is no longer the material only but the shape which appears to the onlookers, just as clothes become apparent to them before the bodies which they cover... Perhaps this is why the saving day of Baptism becomes the name’s day

²⁴⁷ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 65.

²⁴⁸ “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:37); Cf. 1 Cor. 15:53; 2 Cor. 5:3. “Baptism is the means by which we begin to avail ourselves of the divine life of the Son. Through his divine sonship a human being is “mingled with the Logos” and becomes a dwelling place of God.... He recovers the likeness to God, which brings him both the freedom to do good and communion with the immortal and incorrupt life of God” (Cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 109).

²⁴⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 121.

for Christians. It is then that we are formed and shaped, and our shapeless and undefined life receives shape and definition.²⁵⁰

The structure and mode of functioning of the deified human nature of Christ is assumed by the nature of man. In fact, God created within the human organism, which Jesus assumed, those new dimensions and function by which man is able to assimilate the divine life. Through baptism every believer is united with these new spiritual senses and functions of the body of Christ and makes them his own. The sacred washing of Baptism joins our organs and faculties to those who have been washed. As Kavasilas puts it, "Like formless and shapeless matter we go down into this water; in it we meet with the form that is beautiful.... When we come up from the water, we bear the Saviour upon our souls, on our heads, on our eyes, in our very inward parts, on all our members - Him who is pure from sin, free from all corruption, just as He was when He rose again and appeared to His disciples, as He was taken up, as He will come again to demand the return of His treasure".²⁵¹

It is to be noted that, the union and the succeeding change of the biological dimensions and functions of man into functions of the body of Christ happens through their transformation and not through the destruction of the former. Nellas explains the interpretation of Kavasilas with clarity: Christ enters into us in a real manner, a bodily manner, through the biological functions by which we introduce air and food to assist the life of the body. He makes these functions his own, that is, assimilates them. Christ mixes and mingles himself with all our psychosomatic faculties, in a real way without confusion, and in the midst of this natural sacramental mixing, under the most effective influence of his resurrected flesh, he transforms, refashions and renews our psychosomatic functions, turning them into functions of his own body. When an energizing power coming into contact with an inferior one, it does not leave it to retain its own characteristics. For example, the iron in contact with fire, it no longer retains anything of the property of iron.²⁵² Among those things which have similar powers, the stronger affect the weaker. Therefore, it is evident that when Christ (supernatural power) enters into us and becomes one with us we are transfigured, we are immersed in him as a single drop of water is lost in a vast ocean of perfume.²⁵³ The soul and

²⁵⁰ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 68.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 79, 62; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 122.

²⁵² When earth and water are thrown on fire, they exchange their properties for those of fire.

²⁵³ In another place Kavasilas writes: "As He [Christ] blends and mingles Himself with us throughout He makes us His own body and He becomes for us what a head is for the members of a body. Since, then, He is the Head, we share all good things with Him, for that which belongs to the head must need pass into the body" (Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 79).

the body and all their faculties forthwith become spiritual, for our souls, our bodies and blood, are united with his soul, body and blood. What is the conclusion drawn from this? The more excellent things overcome the inferior, things divine prevail over the human, and that takes place which Paul says concerning the resurrection, “what is mortal is swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4), and further, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).²⁵⁴

The rebirth and refashioning of the man in baptism is not only a refashioning of the man’s nature, of physical dimensions and functions, but also a rebirth of the human person. Man’s being in its totality, both as nature and as person, is born again and in this sense is created anew. Man is born again spiritually, that flesh did not take its origin from blood, nor from the will of flesh, nor of the will of a man, but from God (Jn. 1:13), from the Holy Spirit, for that which was conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:20). In short, the biological being of man discovers through its incorporation into Christ its true spiritual hypostasis.²⁵⁵

Nellas identifies the multiple functions of Baptism. According to him, it cleanses man from his personal sins, it frees him from the bonds which original sin forged for the human race, but even more fundamentally, it enhypostatizes him in Christ;²⁵⁶ and it is this that is the cause of all the other blessings which the sacrament bestows. The sacrament of Baptism constitutes an ontological event for man; it refashions and perfects his created being. For this reason, it constitutes the root, source and foundation of the spiritual life.

2.5.2. The Christification of Movement (Chrismation)

We have analysed that a human person receives a “new being in Christ” through the sacrament of baptism. The same person acquires the new movement and activation of this being in accordance with Christ through the

²⁵⁴ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 123; Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 79, 116.

²⁵⁵ “Birth is the beginning of life for a person, so that to be born is to begin one’s life, and Christ is the life of those who cleave to Him, then they were born when Christ entered this life and was born into it” (Cf. *Ibid.*, 130).

²⁵⁶ “Created human nature, within which is housed the human person that is incomprehensible without the nature, is enhypostatized in Christ, and finds in Him its truth, its integral wholeness, its health and its correct mode of functioning which stretches out to infinity. By the same act the created human person, within which human nature, which is incomprehensible without the person, becomes concrete, is enhypostatized in Christ and discovers its true eternal “Christian mode of being”, which constitutes the unique dignity of man’s being. Thus, it may be said literally, and not just by way of exaggeration, that Christ truly becomes “another self” to man” (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 124).

sacrament of chrismation. According to Kavasilas, it would be fitting, then, that those who are thus spiritually created and have been born in such a manner should obtain an energy or activity suitable to such a birth, and a corresponding movement. This can be accomplished for us by the sacred rite of the most divine myrrh. Kavasilas connects the Christological and the Pneumatological dimensions of the mission of the divine economy in an inseparable mode to explain the way in which this activation is realized.

Christ the lord was Himself anointed, not by receiving chrism poured on the head, but by receiving the Holy Spirit. For the sake of the flesh which He had assumed He became the treasury of all spiritual energy. He is not only Christ [the Anointed One] but also Chrism [anointing], for it says, “Your name is as ointment poured forth” (Cant. 1:3). The latter He is from the beginning, the other He becomes afterwards. As long as that by which God would impart His own did not exist, He was the Chrism and remained in Himself. Afterwards the blessed flesh was created which received the entire fulness of the Godhead (Col. 1:19). To it, as John says, “God did not give the Spirit by measure” (Jn. 3:34), but He infused into Him His entire living riches. It was then that the Chrism was poured forth into that flesh, so it is now called the Anointed. By being imparted to the flesh the divine Chrism Himself was poured forth.²⁵⁷

By His incarnation the Lord chrismated human nature with the divine nature. The Holy Spirit, explains Nellas, thus entered into human nature at this point not as in the first creation but in a personal manner. According to the Scripture, “Then the Lord God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), but now He communicates His Spirit to us (Cf. Jn. 20:22). He is that which moves and vivifies the blessed flesh of the Lord and is poured out over every human person who has been created anew and grafted onto Christ. For, the Scripture says, “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Gal. 4:6). The sacrament of chrismation constitutes the Pentecost of each particular human person. And, in this sacrament the Spirit activates and vivifies the new functions which the baptized have acquired in Christ. He activates the spiritual energies, one energy in one person, another in another, or even several at the same time, depending on how each person is prepared for this sacrament.²⁵⁸

Kavailas makes reference to the gifts or charisms of the Spirit, which in the early years of the Church were given to the baptized by the imposition of the apostles’ hands and are now bestowed by the holy oil of chrism, and which

²⁵⁷ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 104.

²⁵⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 125-126.

empower the Church to organize its life under the inspiration and guidance of God. He refers, furthermore, to the virtues, which are the reflections of the divine rays, the fruits of the energies of the Spirit, who comes to dwell in us through the sacrament. “Therefore”, expounds Nellas, “the gifts, and likewise the virtues, can be understood as the new transformed manner in which our psychosomatic senses and functions operate when they are grafted onto Christ and are moved by the Spirit”.²⁵⁹ For Kavasilas, virtues are divine “which surpass human convention when God Himself moves a man”.²⁶⁰

2.5.3. The Christification of Life (Eucharist)

The Holy Eucharist is the source of divine life in its fullness.²⁶¹ “After the Chrismation”, describes Kavasialas, “we go to the table [altar]. This is the perfection of the life in Christ; for those who attain it there is nothing lacking for the blessedness which they seek. It is no longer death and the tomb and a participation in the better life which we receive, but the risen One Himself”.²⁶² That is, here we do not merely participate in the death and resurrection of the Lord as newly created persons, nor do we simply take the movement of our new being. In the Holy Eucharistic celebration, all these are recapitulated and completed since we receive the risen Lord himself. “Nor do we receive such gifts of the Spirit as we may, but the very Benefactor Himself, the very Temple whereon is founded the whole compass of graces”.²⁶³

It is exactly the body of Christ, i.e., the Logos together with the flesh which he assumed and with all the works which he brought about, who is present and is offered in the Eucharist. That of which we partake is not something of His, but is his very self. “It is not some ray and light which we receive in our souls, but the very orb of the Sun. So, we dwell in Him and are indwelt and become one spirit with Him. The soul and the body and all their faculties forthwith become spiritual, for our souls, our bodies and blood, are united with His”.²⁶⁴ As a result, the more excellent things overpower the inferior; the divine triumph over the human as Paul teaches concerning the resurrection: “... what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4),

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 126.

²⁶⁰ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 108.

²⁶¹ Eucharistic sacrifice “is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life” (LG 11). “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324).

²⁶² N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 113.

²⁶³ Ibid., 113. By the “compass of graces” or the “cycle of grace” Kavasilas means the liturgical and sacramental cycle, the whole structure and the life of the Church as the body of Christ. For this reason, the Eucharist “enables the other sacraments to be perfect” (Cf. J. CHERIVUKALAYIL, “Eucharist: The Source and Summit of Christian Life”, 4).

²⁶⁴ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 115-116.

and in addition, “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

As mentioned above, since the Eucharist is the centre of the spiritual life in Christ and its source, the union with Christ is complete and full. That is, the human person with all dimensions, with all psychosomatic senses and functions, is joined in a deep union with Christ, and is transformed and Christified. This is the celebrated marriage by which the most holy Bridegroom espouses the Church as his bride. It is here that Christ feeds the choir that surrounds him; by this mystery alone we become flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones (Cf. Gen. 2:21).²⁶⁵ The Holy Eucharist makes the person of Christ our supreme good, superior to everything in us that is inherently good.

How great are the Mysteries! What a thing it is for Christ’s mind to be mingled with ours, our will to be blended with His, our body with His Body and our blood with His Blood! What is our mind when the divine mind obtains control? What is our will when that blessed will has overcome it? What is our dust when it has been overpowered by His fire?²⁶⁶

This Christification of man, agrees Nellas with Kavasilas, is not just an impression which the believer creates for himself in his own mind. A person does not become a member of Christ just in a manner of speaking; he becomes it in reality. It is with this conviction that Paul claims he has neither his own mind nor will nor life, but that all these have become Christ’s for him. Paul states, “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16), and “you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me” (2 Cor. 13:3), and “I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:18).²⁶⁷ From this it is clear that he has the same will as that of Christ. To sum up Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Commenting on John 6:57, “whoever eats me will live because of me”, Kavasilas refers to the fact that man, as a higher being, can assimilate natural

²⁶⁵ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 127. These are the terms in which the Evangelist describes the marriage. John the Baptist, speaking as “the friend of the Bridegroom” (Jn. 3:28), points out Christ as the Bridegroom and as possessing the bride.

²⁶⁶ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 116.

²⁶⁷ In fact, we find two orthographic errors in the English translation of Kavasilas’ work, with regard to the references he made to Paul. The above quoted texts, 1 Cor. 2:16, Kavasilas refers as 2 Cor. 2:16 and Phil. 1:18 as Phil. 1:8. It is less likely that Kavasilas made a mistake while quoting Paul, because after referring to the original text of Kavasilas, Nellas doesn’t make a reference to these errors in his book. Most probably, the errors are caused by the person who translated the original text to English.

food he eats. Since natural food does not of itself have life, it does not infuse life into us, but it offers a mere survival which is subject to decay and oriented towards death. But the Bread of Life, who is Christ living, and through him those to whom he imparts himself truly live. That is, the Eucharist is able to offer life in a true sense. Certainly, absolutely transcendent as he is, he is not himself transformed when he is offered as food to man but transforms man into what he is himself. As Christ is the Head and the Heart, we depend on him for moving and living since he possesses life. So, man is transformed into a real member of the body of Christ, which is nourished and vivified by the Head.²⁶⁸

The Cosmic Significance of the Divine Eucharist: The celebration of the Eucharist has also a more general and cosmic implication, as it rearranges not only human life but also the whole universe. It constitutes, explains Nellas, the final reality, the “end” of all beings, the goal of life on earth, the content of the heavenly life, the transformation of history. The “time of the Eucharist” unites the past, the present and the future; it reveals eternity and activates it in actuality in the midst of daily life. The “space of the Eucharist” is the space of the Kingdom, the real Christian homeland.

As an assembly of the faithful around the altar, the eucharist is a reconstitution of our ancient home in paradise. As a full communion of the faithful with God and with each other, it perfects that home and unites humanity entirely, making it the body of God. As a sacrifice and an offering, it creates once again the relationship that man had with creation before the fall and at the same time completes it. The creatures which constitute man’s wealth are offered by him with love to God. Thus, creation becomes the means by which man is united with God.

²⁶⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 127-128; N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 125-126. CCC 1212 explains that “the sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the foundations of every Christian life. “The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity””. According to the Code of Canons of Eastern Churches (*Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium - CCEO*), “Sacramental initiation in the mystery of salvation is perfected in the reception of the Divine Eucharist, and thus the Divine Eucharist is administered after baptism and chrismation with holy Myron as soon as possible according to the norms of the particular law of each Church *sui iuris*” (CCEO 697). “In the most ancient liturgies, preserved in the Eastern tradition and now renewed in many Western churches, Baptism, Confirmation and first Eucharist form one unified sacrament of initiation” (R. D. HUGHES, *Beloved Dust: Tides of the Spirit in the Christian Life*, 329-330).

Matter comes to be filled with the Spirit, and the spiritual life functions within the eucharist unhindered and in its true fullness. All these things take place because the eucharist is Christ, who constitutes the past, present and future of the saints, which is the real past, present and future of the world. The divine eucharist, as a celebration, as an act of transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and also as a communion of the faithful with this body and blood, represents and makes active in the present that which Christ did in the past for the salvation of mankind - His birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and giving of the Spirit. "This point [of the eucharist] represents that moment in time [of the economy]". Thus, the celebration of the eucharist makes present for us events which constitute the past and the future of sacred history, and our participation in this takes us out of the cyclic course of history and brings us into the new time of the Church, in which the eternal enters into time and functions as everlasting present.²⁶⁹

The historical person (body) of Christ, as he lived, died and rose again, and as he stands out glorified at the right hand of the Father, is found in reality on the altar and is offered to the believer as a meal. In eating him, the believers become members of his body and within this body, contemporaries of the historical persons of Jesus, and participate even in this present life in the blessings to come. In reality, this Eucharistic body is the body of the Church, the body of the faithful, the salvation of creation, the glory of God and of men, the freedom, the joy and the food of the saints. This body, as Eucharist, as communion, as a meal, as the body of Christ and the body of the faithful, is the true "space" and "time" of the Church, for, as the Scripture testifies, "in him we live and move and have our being" (Act. 17:28).

2.5.4. The Christification of Mind

In the preceding three points, we have analysed the process of Christification by appropriating the new birth (Baptism), movement (Chrismation) and life (Eucharist). In the subsequent two points, we discuss the manner in which a person can, by appropriating the abovementioned sacraments, work to accomplish the Christification of his faculties of intellect and will. Since God offers everything in the sacraments, it is necessary for a person to appropriate the treasure which he has received from them by his personal cooperation. The sacraments do not attain their full effect automatically, that is, without human cooperation with God's grace.

A human person is fundamentally what he thinks and what he desires. Therefore, it is not viable for him to be considered united with the person of

²⁶⁹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 129.

Christ, unless his higher functions are also united with him. If that doesn't take place, he is still a child and member of Christ, since he communicates with Christ through the body and the blood, but he is blameworthy and dead. On the contrary, when his thoughts are united with the thoughts of Christ and his will is made to conform to the will of Christ, it is natural for the whole man to follow, and the union is then complete.

The study of the works of the divine economy fills the human intellect with the majesty and beauty of Christ and does not allow it to be attracted by evil. A person who understands the frenzied love with which God has loved us, can never advance towards evil. According to Kavasilas, when we recognize how great is our own worth, we shall not readily betray it. We will not bear being slaves to a runaway slave when we have found out that a kingdom is ours. We shall not open our mouth in evil words when we recall the sacred banquet and that Blood which has enflamed our tongue. We shall not move our feet nor stretch forth our hands to any evil thing if the "recollection of these things is active" in our souls.²⁷⁰ Since we are members of Christ, we are sacred. We are "wholly clothed with the Saviour himself, not like a garment which we wear or the skin with which we are born, but much more, in that this clothing is far more closely united to those who wear it than their very bones. One could amputate our members without our consent, but as for Christ, no one, man or demon, can separate Him from us".²⁷¹ So, Paul says, "neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

To clarify his view-point, Kavasilas explains that "it was for the new man [Christ] that human nature was created at the beginning, and for him mind and desire were prepared. Our reason we have received in order that we may know Christ, our desire in order that we might hasten to Him. We have memory in order that we may carry Him in us, since He Himself is the Archetype for those who are created".²⁷² So then, due to these reasons man strives for Christ by nature, by his will, by his thoughts, not only because of his divinity, which is the goal of all things, but because of his human nature as well. He is the resting place of human desires; he is the food of our thoughts. Therefore, to love anything that is not Christ is a manifest aberration

²⁷⁰ Nicodemos the Hagiorite says, "know that if your mind is not deified by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for you to be saved" (as quoted in J.D. GARR, *Christian Fruit – Jewish Root*, 202).

²⁷¹ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 165-66.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 190.

from duty and a turning aside from the first principles of our nature. This is because, Christ is the subject of our thoughts.²⁷³

Concurrently Kavasilas underlines that a purification and transformation of the intellect based on this same ontological principle can be achieved progressively (through the concentration of the thoughts on Christ) by all the believers living among the concerns of the world and can lead all of them to the fullness of the spiritual life. Thus, he proposes a kind of spiritual life conducive for the faithful. We have different conditions of life and thus different forms of virtue as well. “No one would claim”, affirms Kavasilas, “that the same virtues are needed by those who govern the state and those who live as private citizens, or by those who have made no further vow to God after the baptismal washing and those who live the monastic life and have taken vows of virginity and poverty and thus own neither property nor their own selves”.²⁷⁴ However, there is one obligation common to all who are named after Christ, that is, the concentration of the thoughts on Christ, which is made complete in prayer.

According to him, one need not find special circumstance to pray. “There is no need whatever of special formalities for prayers, nor need those who call upon him have any special places or a loud voice. There is no place in which He is not present; it is impossible for Him not to be near us. For those who seek Him He is actually closer than their very heart”.²⁷⁵ Further, he points up that we do not call upon the Lord in order that he may reward us or bestow any favour upon us, but that he may have mercy. So, all have the obligation to pray and the sacraments and prayer are the common freeway for all, the common content of all forms of the spiritual life.

Through the act of prayer, all human thoughts jointly with their referents such as persons, things, situations, and concepts are offered to Christ and he is implored to enter among them. Pure prayer illumines the intellect and all that the intellect understands by the light of God, and thus leads human person to truth.²⁷⁶ The perpetual, incessant communion of the human intellect with the intellect of Christ leads the former to see reality from the point of view of God, to think with an intellect closely attuned to the intellect of Christ. This *koinonia*, when fully accomplished, establishes an authentic transformation and Christification of the intellect and bestows supreme knowledge. The

²⁷³ Ibid., 191; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 132-133.

²⁷⁴ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 160.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 192.

²⁷⁶ For this reason, states Nellas, “prayer, as the whole patristic tradition teaches, bestows real knowledge, and the art of prayer constitutes the true science and philosophy” (Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 133).

Father recognizes in our intellect, the intellect of his Son, and we, through the mind of the Son, achieve the recognition of the Father. In fact, it is this that constitutes the content of eternal, as affirmed by the Evangelist John: “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

2.5.5. The Christification of the Will

“The will” too plays a fundamental role for the union and communion with Christ. According to Kavasilas, the will is activated and expressed through the medium of “desire”. However, the speciality of human desire is that it never gets contented with anything created. However nearer the human person might get ahead in attaining what is good, yet the desire always presses on him farther. “Though our desire is limited by being in proportion to human nature, yet among created things we see nothing which is adequate to Him, since all things are inferior to Him and fall below Him. Were we even to attain to all good things in existence, we would still look beyond them and seek what we do not have while ignoring what we have. Nothing created will cause our desire to be at rest or make us perfectly content or give full scope for the soul’s faculty of joy”.²⁷⁷

In the opinion of Nellas, this does not happen because the desired good is infinite, whereas man’s appetitive faculty, his function of wanting and desiring, is finite. If this were so, the finite would not have been able even to seek the infinite. On the contrary, it occurs because man’s appetitive faculty itself is in proportion to that infinity and has been prepared accordingly. And this human function is not bound to any limit because the Creator has shaped it with a view to Himself, so that human beings may be able to desire and enjoy Him alone with complete delight.²⁷⁸ In fact, this reality coincides with the function of the fundamental principle of the creation of man in the image of God. Man’s will lean towards infinite good because that is how it was formed from the beginning and the same tendency is an essential component of its being. Kavasilas develops his teaching regarding the Christification of the human will on this foundation.

The will, explains Kavasilas, is the central moving power in the human person. “All that is ours follows the will and moves where it is borne by it; whether it is the effort of the body or the movement of reason, any action or

²⁷⁷ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 213-214. Human desire is not simply acquisitive desire, but is metaphysical desire: that is, it is not even the thing that the other has that one desires, but what the other is. In other words, one desires the being of the other (Cf. P. VELIYANNOOR, “Consecrated Life as Eucharistic Corrective to Culture”, 13).

²⁷⁸ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 135.

anything else that is proper to man. In short, it is the will which, as far as we are concerned, leads us and carries us. If it is in some way restrained all things are impeded thereby, and when anything gains possession of the will it has control over the whole mind”.²⁷⁹

Now, human person ultimately desires to be happy. Therefore, all the movements of his soul urge towards an authentic happy “being”. As Kavasilas puts it, “we wish to exist because, we wish to be happy”, for one cannot “bear to exist and be in misery”. Man’s true “being” is found in Christ, continues Kavasilas, “therefore, for those whose will is altogether captured by the will of Christ and belongs to Him entirely, He is all that they desire and love and seek. All their being and life is with Him, since their very will cannot live and be active unless it abides in Christ where all good resides”.²⁸⁰ They find their authentic completion and true happiness in Christ.

Within this perspective Nellas interprets the “spiritual life” as a life guided not by laws external to man but by “the radical existential demand of man” for happiness. Since spiritual life guides the human person’s “being” towards “well-being”, it is the highest significance and value for man. Its content is not moral, but ontological. If this were not so, explains Nellas, “Christ would not have been something essential for man that “unity in which there is nothing lacking”. And the Christian Church would not have been the catholic truth of man and of the world, but the religious expression of the outlook, culture, society and so on of one or another people”.²⁸¹

Besides, the spiritual life is revealed as the full advancement and activation of the faculties and functions of the human person. With a full sense of the reality of the matter, Nellas claims that the will has been shaped in order to go after the good, the font of which is God. Outside the good, the will, which is the organ for arriving at happiness, is subject to necessity and functions below its capacity or in a distorted way. For example, the eye, which is the organ of sight, operates below its capacity when there is no light. Just as the human eye was created for the light, so also the human will for the good. The eye devoid of the light and the will deprived of the good are kept apart from their nature and act opposite to nature. “Therefore”, teaches Kavasilas, “for those whose will is altogether captured by the will of Christ and belongs to Him entirely, He is all that they desire and love and seek. All their being and life is with Him, since their very will cannot live and be active unless it abides in Christ where all good resides... just as it is impossible for

²⁷⁹ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 225.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 215, 225.

²⁸¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 136.

the eye to fulfil its function without making use of light”.²⁸² The ear was designed for sound, the eye for light, and each is adapted to its purpose. Similarly, the longing of the soul presses on towards Christ alone, for he is its home; he alone is goodness and truth.

In truth, the call of Christ is to all people regardless of age, occupation, prosperity or adversity, and regardless of whether one resides in the desert with its remoteness and solitude or in the city with all its tumults. “Nothing prevents anyone; all have the ability not to oppose the will of Christ, but instead to keep in every way the laws which derive from that will and to govern their lives in accordance with that which pleases Him”.²⁸³ The response to this invitation is the content of the spiritual life in its first stage and in the later stages the invitation is to participate in the will of God. However, in all the stages and all the forms of the spiritual life its content is the same: the participation of the human will in the will of Christ.

Since the will plays a fundamental role in the spiritual life, explains Nellas, God seeks out to assimilate this human function to Himself ahead of any other. Having created heaven and earth, and all the beauty of the visible and invisible worlds, God displays His wisdom, goodness and skill to man, in the way that ardent lovers display their finery, in order to inspire us to love Him. However, man, instead of giving his love, fled far from Him. Thus, God put on human nature and suffered limitless evils that He might attach Himself to the beloved, that He might turn us to Himself and persuade us to desire Him and to love him alone. And He did not restrict Himself to this alone but extended Himself as a redeemer on the cross, so as to purchase man’s will from him because “only from within his will could He offer him happiness”. Likewise, He was our Master and had control over our whole nature; but it was by our free will that we escaped from His service, and He did everything to win it. Due to the fact that it was our will which He was seeking He did no violence to it nor took it captive, but “purchased it”. Thus, the very act of anyone accept Christ as Saviour is an equivalent act of offering his will absolutely and completely to Christ. Therefore, the will of those who

²⁸² N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 225-226; P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 136-137.

²⁸³ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 160. We may not claim that these things are beyond human ability, for then there would be no punishment for those who transgress.

are saved by Christ does not belong to them but to the Saviour.²⁸⁴ It is the handover of the will from ourselves to Christ that constitutes salvation.²⁸⁵

The Christification of the will, that is, the total participation of the human will in Christ, is the content of the spiritual life at its highest stage; it functions as love and is termed holiness. Kavasilas testifies that the saints long not for their own self but of God. They leave self behind and “hasten to God with all their will”, and forget their own property and look with eagerness to these riches. The power of love, then, is able to make those who love partake of that which belongs to the objects of their love. Since in the case of the saints all the power of their will and desire spends itself for God, “they regard Him alone as their proper good”. The body cannot delight them, nor can the soul nor its good things, nor yet anything else that is innate and proper to nature, since they are to love none of these things for its own sake. They have, as it were, “once for all gone out of themselves and removed their life and all their desire elsewhere, and so lost knowledge of self”.²⁸⁶ Thus, the saints rejoice in whatever Christ rejoices in and lament over whatever he laments over. That is, they express and make active within history the will of Christ. They become the spokespersons of Christ and manifest the truth and perform miracles. “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16). Life is more fittingly be called love. “Love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:8). In conclusion, Kavasilas affirms that the blessed life (a stable, permanent and complete happiness) is created through the human will and dwells within it. “Therefore, if we examine the will of him who lives in accordance with God, we shall find the blessed life shining forth in it”.²⁸⁷

Kavasilas explains that the union and communion of man with Christ is realized by man’s “being”, by the movement which makes this being active, by life, by knowledge and by the will. Union with Christ, then, belongs to those who have undergone all that the Saviour has undergone, and have experienced and become all that He has experienced and become.

In the last section of this chapter, we have been analysing the five pathways to attain Christification, originally proposed by Nicolas Kavasilas and further developed by Panayiotis Nellas. This analysis enables us to uncover the truth that communion with Christ renews the human person. His new being (Baptism), new activity (Chrismation), life (Eucharist), knowledge and will,

²⁸⁴ Paul’s words: “...you are not your own.... For you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

²⁸⁵ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 137-138.

²⁸⁶ N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 214-215.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

the whole transformed and Christlike organism with the spiritual senses and graces of the Spirit which constitute his new modes of functioning, make up the new person in Christ. Norman Russell supports: “We cannot achieve *theosis* on our own. We need the ecclesial community in which we are re-created in the image of God through Baptism and Eucharist”.²⁸⁸

I do not deny, however, that there are other methods practiced by saints to attain union with Christ. For example, the early precursors of the deification doctrine merely sought to imitate God by fulfilling His will in their lives, as best they could discern it. In due course, the concept developed into a view that ascetic spirituality would enable one to acquire the likeness of God. The process included *katharsis* (purification of mind and body), *theoria* (contemplation), and *apatheia* (freedom of the will from the passion).²⁸⁹ The ascetic prayer called *hesychasm* (acts of self-abnegation which were designed to overcome the flesh and directs the heart on higher spiritualities)²⁹⁰ focuses in particular on *theosis*. An inquiry into these and other methods lie outside the immediate scope of this research study.

Conclusion

All the way through much of Christian history, the link made in Scripture between *imago Dei* and humans has aided as the basis for the task of forming a Christian notion of the human person. The ultimate purpose of human person is to explore the process of recasting the human nature in Christ, that is, transcendence of the human person from “in the image” to “likeness”, labelled as Christification. Having analysed the pathways to attain Christification, let us sum up this chapter with the following conclusions.

- i. Human person is created in the image of God after His likeness. ‘Image’ (representation) is interpreted to be the basic natural form of the human being and likeness (imitation) as the supernaturally gifted function of existing in right relation to God, the Creator. That is, the image characterizes the ontic imprint of God on the human character,

²⁸⁸ N. RUSSELL, *Fellow Workers with God*, 41.

²⁸⁹ For details see JOHN D. GARR, *Christian Fruit – Jewish Root: Theology of Hebraic Restoration*, 199-206; E. BARTOS, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, 178-186; J. H. NGUYEN, *Apatheia in the Christian Tradition: An Ancient Spirituality and Its Contemporary Relevance*, 1-78; R. L. WILKEN, “Maximus the Confessor on the Affections in Historical Perspective”, 412-421.

²⁹⁰ See T. SPIDLIK, *Prayer: The Spirituality of the Christian East*, 319-338; J. MEYENDORFF, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 71-167; G. A. MALONEY, *Russian Hesychasm*, 103-123.

while likeness is the original state (*iustitia originalis*) of God-likeness which was lost in the fall.

- ii. The creation of Adam in the *imago Dei* had as its original goal of leading human nature to hypostatic union with the divine Logos in Christ. Man was formed after the archetype of Christ and thus his essence is found not in the matter from which he was created but in the archetype towards whom he tends. The archetype comprises the ontological content of the phrase *imago Dei*. And the ontological truth of man does not lie in himself conceived as an autonomous being rather it lies in the Archetype. The two elements by which the Archetype comes to be present and truly operative in man, and which constitute the essential reality of man are: first, the theological structure of man and the attraction which the Archetype exercises on him in an interior way.
- iii. The proposition that Adam was created in the image of Christ implies that it was his vocation to be raised up to the Archetype. More precisely, he was to be purified and to love God so much that God would come to dwell within him, that the Logos would enter into a hypostatic union with man, and thus appear in history as the Christ, be manifested as the God-man. This was the destiny of man, and in consequence, his physiological path and his goal. In relation to Christ, man was created in the beginning as if to a standard or pattern, so that he could receive God. Therefore, the phrase 'in the image' implies not only a gift within man, but also, at the same time, a goal set before him, not only a possession but also a destiny, since it really does constitute man's *being*, though only in potentiality. Man's straying from this path constituted the fall.
- iv. The central characteristic of man in his natural state is a relative, or more accurately, a potential unity. Through the right use of his natural faculties, man is called to transform this potential unity into a full unity of himself and the world in God realized in actuality. In fact, this potential unity already exists between the material world and the human body, between the body and the soul, between the soul and God. The soul lies midway between God and matter and has faculties that unite it with both. It was Adam's vocation to effect through the correct use of these unifying faculties, the actual realization of the potential unity, unifying and thus abolishing the five great divisions of the universe: the division of humankind into male and female, the division of the earth into paradise and the inhabited land, the division of sensible nature into earth and sky, the division of created nature

into spiritual and sensible, and finally the fifth, highest and ineffable division between creation and Creator.

- v. In fact, Adam failed in his vocation of unification. Christ achieves it successively by following the order which was assigned to the first Adam. By having been born of the Virgin, he suppressed the division of human nature into male and female. On the cross he unites paradise, the dwelling place of the first humans before the fall, with the terrestrial reality where the fallen descendants of the first Adam now dwell. At his ascension, first of all, he unites the earth to the heavenly spheres, that is to the sensible heaven; then he penetrates into the empyreum (heavenly sphere), passes through the angelic hierarchies and unites the spiritual heaven, the world of mind, with the sensible world. Finally, like a new cosmic Adam, he presents to the Father the totality of the universe restored to unity in Him, by uniting the created to the uncreated.
- vi. The triple barriers that separate man from God are nature, sin and death. However, God has set aside each barrier duly: that of nature by his incarnation, of sin by his death, and of death by his resurrection.
- vii. Just as the Fathers employed the phrase “in the image” to explain the reality of the natural man without constructing a system around this truth, so also, they were frequently helped by the idea of “garments of skin” to express and interpret the postlapsarian state of man. The fundamental content of the garments of skin is mortality which man put on as his second nature after the fall, the transformation of life into survival. It is not a creation of God, rather is indeed a physiological consequence of sin. However, God tolerates (that is, accepts by consent, holds and supports) within His infinite love even this new situation and transforms it into a blessing. He transforms that which is the result of denial, and therefore is negative, into something relatively positive. He offers this relatively positive condition of the “garments of skin” as a second blessing to a self-exiled humanity. He adds it like a second nature to the existing human nature so that, by using it correctly, humanity can survive and realize its original goal in Christ. For, the garment is something put on us from the outside, lending itself for use by the body for a time but not becoming part of its nature. Therefore, from the nature of irrational things mortality was providentially put on a nature which was created for immortality. For, God acts in a loving way even towards us, who have become evil, so as to bring about our correction.

- viii. The penalty which the implacable righteousness of creation imposes on man would have been eternal, if the righteousness-goodness of God had not intervened to correct the righteousness of nature, transforming in a compassionate and interior manner the “penalty” into a “remedy”, and thus healing the “trauma” and punishing or abolishing the “hubris” which is sin. “Wound and pain and death were from the beginning devised against sin.... For this reason, after the sin God immediately permitted death and pain, not inflicting a penalty on the sinner but rather applying a remedy to the patient”.²⁹¹
- ix. Christ restored the lost likeness and Holy Spirit is the agent that establishes the likeness. Man having been created in the image of the infinite God, is called by his own nature to transcend the limited boundaries of creation and to become infinite.
- x. The basic presupposition of any theology of *theosis* (Eastern or Western) is that deification makes us more fully and authentically human and grace does not destroy or diminish humanity but rather perfects it. In and through the sharing in the divine life, we become fully human. Jesus is the Archetype and goal of Adam and subsequently of humanity. Only in Christ do we know what true humanity is.
- xi. Union with Christ, then, belongs to those who have undergone all that the Savior has undergone, and have experienced and become all that he has experienced and become. Thus, the human task is to acquire the perfection of likeness (Christification) by his own diligence in the imitation of God (virtues of Christ), with in the ambience of the Church through the medium of the sacraments such as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

The patristic tradition tries to explain the process of restoring the mystery dimension (image and likeness of God) of man to its original state mainly by means of spiritual processes: Christification of human person's being, movement, life, mind and will. Since God offers everything in the sacraments, it is necessary for a person to appropriate the treasure which he has received from them by his personal cooperation. The sacraments do not attain their full effect automatically, that is, without human cooperation with God's grace. It necessitates the examination of the workings of the inherent psychological baggage of the person which can hinder the whole process of the recovery of the mystery dimension. So, in addition to the spiritual aspects,

²⁹¹ P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ*, 62.

it is important to take into consideration the psychological elements of the human condition in his efforts to become a son in the Son. This consideration, the kernel contribution of this thesis work, paves the way for the third chapter. In fact, an approach that integrates both spiritual and psychological elements in a balanced manner in the effort to help recover the diminished mystery dimension becomes necessary if we are to avoid a skewed approach to the subject under examination. Franco Imoda's pedagogical approach seems to remedy this defect.

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