

Theology and Ecology. Hermeneutical Insights for a Christian Eco-Theology

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Abstract

Nature has always "longed for salvation", nowadays more than ever, as man has abused Nature, separated it from God and used it for his own selfish purposes. It is a tragic fact that this autonomy has not contributed in any way to the freedom of man, but to slavery, to his submission to nature and the laws of necessity. Consequently, general belief defines our time as dominated by a deep spiritual crisis which distorts the relationship between man and the environment.

We consider that reestablishing patristic thought - based on a Christocentric vision of Creation - could be essential for the understanding and resolution of the present state of crisis. This vision doubles the faith of several contemporary humanists in restoring the sense of "logos" or of "history in Christ" for our history, meant to give transcendent freedom to human freedom where all Creation could rest. Therefore, in the present article I would like to outline a few hermeneutical insights for a possible dialogue between contemporary ecology and Christian theology.

I. Preliminaries

It is well known that, even from 1961, numerous theologians actively involved in the ecumenical movement started to ask themselves questions about nature, science, technology and the impact of the technological society on human dignity.

The third World Conference on Church and Society (1966) discussed the issue of providing an answer for the

social technological revolutions that had determined new structures of spiritual experience. The fourth Conference, held in Uppsala in 1968 broadened the same problems debated on at Geneva in 1966.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) shared the increasing concern of Churches for ecology¹.

Finally, the seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches², meeting in Canberra was centered on rediscovering an integrative vision of creation that would determine a new attitude of the modern man towards environment.

These strong concerns were born because Nature “longed for salvation”, nowadays more than ever, as man had abused Nature, separated it from God and used it for his own selfish purposes. It is a tragic fact that this autonomy has not contributed in any way to the freedom of man, but to slavery, to his submission to nature and the laws of necessity. Consequently, general belief defines our time as dominated by a deep spiritual crisis which distorts the relationship between man and the environment.

We consider that reestablishing patristic thought – based on a Christocentric vision of Creation – could be essential for the understanding and resolution of the present state of crisis. This vision doubles the faith of several contemporary humanists in restoring the sense of “logos” or of “history in Christ” for our history, meant to give transcendent freedom to human freedom where all Creation could rest. Therefore, in the present article I would like to outline a few hermeneutical insights for a possible dialogue between contemporary ecology and Christian theology.

¹ Paix et justice pour la creation entière. Intégralité des textes et documents officiels édités par la Conférence des Eglises européennes et le Conseil des Conférences Episcopales Européennes, avec une introduction de M. Jean Fischer et de Mgr. Ivo Fürer, Paris, 1989, p. 264.

² Held in February 7-20, 1991.

II. The Theological Vocation of Creation

The whole patristic theology states that God the Father creates the world through His Son in the Holy Spirit³. The world or “the cosmos” is ontologically based on God, not on itself. The world does not exist since the beginning, in coeternity with God; on the contrary, it is created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) as a proof of God – the Trinity in his creative love and freedom. Hence the world bears the icon of Trinity in its inner self, its structure is a Trinitarian and a communitarian one.

In order to transfer the aforementioned theological statement to conceptual language, the Church Fathers used two concepts from the Gospel According to Saint John and the Letters of Saint Apostle Paul, i.e. λόγος and πνεῦμα which have been translated in Romanian by **Cuvânt (Word)** and **Duh (Spirit)**.

Saint Irenaeus considers the Word (Logos) and the Spirit as the “hands” of God the Father that brought the world to being from non-being. Thus the world is “animated” and “spiritual”. In other words, the world has a “logical” rational structure with a message for man and a divine finality.

The logical structure of our world has been accepted even by the Ancient philosophers. For instance, the Stoic philosophers considered λόγος to be a cosmological principle, synonymous with the human being (ουσία)⁴.

The concept of λόγος is also employed by Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher who stated that the world had been created by God’s λόγος. His conception draws on the text of Genesis in order to establish a link between the Greek cosmology and the one present in the Old Testament.

³ St. Athanasius, Ο γαρ Πατρις δια του λογου εν τω πνευματι κτιζει τα παντα (Letter III, S.P.G., XXVI, 632 B.C.), apud Părintele Galeriu, *Jertfă și răscumpărare* [Father Galeriu, *Sacrifice and Deliverance*], Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, p. 52.

⁴ Deacon Prof. Dr. Nicolae Balca, *Istoria filosofiei antice* [The History of Ancient Philosophy], IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 246.

It was only natural for the Christian theologians to make use of this concept, in their turn, both to bring arguments for the teachings of the Holy Trinity and its relationship with the created world.

The first scholars engaged in this argumentative path were the Christian apologists living in the centuries 1-3 AD. However, their purpose was not to clarify the precepts on the Holy Trinity, but to bring arguments for the relation of equivalence between God and Truth before the Greeks – a very perilous enterprise, indeed. The starting point of their reflection corresponds to the *Prologue of The Gospel according to Saint John* in which Jesus Christ our Savior is identified with God's eternal Logos and "all things were made by him" (John, 1, 3). If Christ is Logos, he is also Truth, according to the Christian apologists.

By identifying Christ with Truth because he is the Logos, the apologists did not succeed in completely surmounting the static ontology of the Greeks. Such is the case of Saint Justin Martyr who defines God as supreme Truth: "That which always stays the same, and... is discernible to the mind alone (νοῦς)"⁵.

Thus, the divine truth is an immovable object in the Platonist sense of the word, being related to the world through the mind or the human spirit (νοῦς)⁶.

⁵ Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, *Dialogul cu iudeul Trifon*, în *Apologeti de limbă greacă [Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew in Greek Apologists]*, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 95-96. See http://www.piney.com/EathJustinDiaTrypho.html#P4044_787343 for the English version of the dialogue.

⁶ Saint Justin agrees with Platon when it comes to the mind-νοῦς – "the mind's eye is of such a nature, and has been given for this end, that we may see that very Being when the mind is pure itself, who is the cause of all discerned by the mind, having no colour, no form, no greatness-nothing, indeed, which the bodily eye looks upon; but It is something of this sort, he goes on to say, that is beyond all essence, unutterable and inexplicable, but alone honourable and good, coming suddenly into souls well-dispositioned, on account of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him". Cf. Sfântul Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, op. cit., p. 96 [Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, *Ibidem* for the English translation].

This relationship between God and the world leads us to the understanding of the concept of λόγος belonging to Him. There is an ontological connection (σύγγενετα) between λόγος and human spirit, therefore, according to Saint Justin, Christ as λόγος becomes the link between God and the world, between God and human spirit.

It is important to notice that the distinction between the divine λόγος and the human νοῦς is not clearly made, either in Saint Justin's works or in the ones of the other Logos theologians such as Saint Clement of Alexandria or Origen as they continued to pay tribute to philosophy. However, they have shown the way to Christian theology for the philosophers to follow but they could not elucidate well enough the relationship between God and creation. As a result, their ideas indirectly led to the emergence of a series of heretical deviations, both theological and in relation with spiritual life. Their ideas were corrected later by other Church Fathers, especially Saint Athanasius the Great and Saint Maximus the Confessor.

Saint Athanasius threw light on the Logos theology in its intellectualism that identified God, the incarnate Logos with God's Son the Father, i.e. the second person of the Holy Trinity.

This relation of equivalence between Christ – the Logos with God's Son the Father was possible due to another theological movement, not epistemologically based or intellectually relating God with humanity, but which emphasized an existential relationship with Christ, the Logos of incarnate God as “in him was life” (John 1, 4).

Identifying λόγος with life was unacceptable for the Ancient philosophy which considered that life was a value added to being and not the being itself⁷. Therefore, the definition of λόγος as life belongs to the Holy Scripture. Saint Irenaeus stated that the tree of life in the Garden of

⁷ Aristotle, *De anima*, 402 a-b; 431b; apud Ioannis Zizioulas, *Ființa eclesială [The Ecclesial Being]*, The Byzantine Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 77.

Eden represented Christ – the Logos and if Adam had tasted one of its apples, he would have become immortal⁸.

For Saint Irenaeus, Christ – the Logos is not an epistemological principle that explains the mysteries of the universe, but a second person of the Holy Trinity who created the world and brought the promise of eternity for it.

It is important to mention that this belief of Saint Irenaeus was not intellectual, but rather developed from the Eucharistic epiclesis of Church which does not separate the work of Christ – the Logos from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Genesis clearly expresses the identity between the work of Logos and of the Holy Spirit in the act of creation that spreads the love of God the Father: “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (Gen. 2, 3).

The blessing of the world is the work of λόγος, and its sanctification belongs to the Holy Spirit, yet the two actions are not separated, but united in a “whole” as works of God – the Trinity. This fact is also underlined by Origen: “The Holy Trinity is the beginning of all beings”⁹.

Consequently, all beings, i.e. the creation in its whole originate in God – the Trinity.

Nonetheless, theology distinguishes between the concepts of beginning and origin. While the former is only temporal, as time itself begins with the creation, the latter is eternal.

The Holy Trinity is origin and beginning of the creation at the same time: it is origin because “the logical paradigms” of the entire creation in God exist since forever, on the one hand and beginning as the same paradigms became “plastified reasons” due to the creative will of the Holy Trinity¹⁰.

⁸ Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus haeresis*, 5, 20, 2; apud Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme*, Cerf, Paris, 1952, p.150.

⁹ Origen, In Psalmum, XVII, 16 P.G., XII, 1229 B; apud, Fr. Galeriu, *ibidem*, p. 51.

¹⁰ The expression “plastified reasons” belongs to the terminology of Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae and defines the “logical” structure and the Christological vocation of the creation in its whole. See

The Holy Trinity does not only stand for the origin and the beginning of the creation, but also for its end, the final “rest” as presented in Genesis when God “is resting” in His creation and the creation, in its turn, is resting in God.

God Almighty the transcendent is now to be felt by means of the uncreated energies and He becomes the “center” or the “heart” of the creation. Therefore, in its inner self, the entire creation is oriented towards the God-Trinity communion.

Saint Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite captured this theological vocation of the creation in its whole: “Towards God all beings turn and desire Him. The ones with wisdom (νοῦς) and reason (λόγος) call Him through knowledge, whilst the sensible beings through their sensibility; the creatures lacking sensibility call Him through their life instincts and the inanimate ones that possess only their being call Him through their attitude of participation to all being (...) Light brings together and attracts all beings with sight (wisdom) and all that move, all in light and warmed by light, together with the ones existing only owing to the rays of light. All beings want it, either to “see”(know), move or receive light and warmth by its rays, or to continue their existence in light”¹¹.

As noted above, Saint Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite regards creation as a Church and the movement of this creation towards God as a “cosmic liturgy” that comprises all beings.

Therefore, the creation does have a theological vocation but the way in which it is put into practice is not highlighted well enough by Saint Dionysius. It was Saint Maximus the Confessor who broadened Saint Dionysius’ theological reflections and he was considered by many theologians to be the authentic Father of Eastern theology as he showed how the theological vocation of creation was fulfilled truly and completely in Christ.

Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă (Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 369.

¹¹ Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, translated in Romanian by Rev. Cicerone Iordăchescu and Theofil Simensky, Iași, 1936, p. 30.

According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, Christ, the incarnate Logos is the centre and the sense of the entire creation, its final aim for which it completed the journey from non-being to being. "This is the greatest and most concealed mystery of all, writes Saint Maximus, the joyful aim and in its virtue of which all have been created; this is the divine goal established **before the beginning of all things**, and by defining it we say it is the ultimate aim thought before time and for which all exist, whilst for it nothing was made. Contemplating this final aim, God brought to life the beings of creatures (...) to be announced by God's existing Word (λόγος) that became human. So He revealed, if allowed to call in this way, the eternal deep of fatherly goodness and showed in Him the end for which the creatures were offered the beginning of existence. As for Christ, or for the **Mystery of Christ**, they received all centuries from the beginning of existence to their end in Christ"¹².

It is obvious that starting with this text, Saint Maximus the Confessor adjusted the intellectual conception of creation sustained by Origen, replacing it with a Christocentric vision drawn on the incarnation of Logos.

The act of incarnation is explained by the existing relationship between the "logical" structure of creation and the divine hypostatic Logos because in Him the reasons of the created beings subsist even before time and in the era meant for creation "he gave birth to the seen and the unseen from nothing as One who made all in reason and wisdom"¹³.

The divine reasons (λογoi) of creation mentioned by Saint Maximus are not "pre-existent-spirits" as the ones in the Origenist doctrine, but "thoughts" or "paradigms" that God used to create the world according to his will and his uncreated energies.

This adjustment brought to the Origenist doctrine was possible due to the choice of Saint Maximus the Confessor, when establishing his theological reflection, for the Biblical distinction between created and uncreated, rather than the

¹² Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Răspunsuri către Talasie* (*Questions to Thalassius*), translated in Romanian by Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Filocalia, Sibiu, 1948, vol III, p. 327.

¹³ Idem, *Ambigua*, translated in Romanian by Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Bucharest, 1980.

duality intelligible-sensible on which the entire Platonist philosophy rests.

God – the Trinity is uncreated and immortal; on the contrary, His creation appeared in time with a vocation to fulfill: take part in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity. According to Saint Maximus, this task had to be carried out by **Adam**, the last element of the creation, a culmination of it as conscious and free being, responsible for the creation before God – the Trinity.

III. Man: Icon of God on Earth and Conscious Hypostasis of Creation

The idea of “icon” (εικων) of God forms the nucleus of the Old Testament anthropology. Still, Genesis does not clearly establish the character of the icon of God which was transferred only to the human being, mentioning only the fact that man was created in a different way than the rest of the creation by means of God’s special intervention. He took dust of the ground with his hands (Logos and Spirit), modelled him after His image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 2, 7).

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus gives his own interpretation for the instance of Genesis described above: The Word (Logos) of God modelled us with his immortal hands, by taking dust from the newly created Earth, and breathed the breath of life upon us: the spirit born is a part of the unseen divinity. Thus, from **dust** and **spirit**, man was given the image of God that lies both in body and soul and rules over the spiritual nature. This is precisely why in my relation to dust, I am submitted to my life on Earth and I also bear inside me the wistfulness of life to come”¹⁴.

An overview of the way in which the other Church Fathers interpreted the notion of “icon” or “image” of God

¹⁴ *Poemata Dogmatica*, VII, Despre suflet [*On the Soul*], 70-75, P.G., t. 37, col. 4521; see also Olivier Clément, *Întrebări asupra omului* [*Questions about Man*], Alba-Iulia, 1997, p.44 .

would reveal different connotations that complete one another without revealing the mystery of human person.

Some Church Fathers have seen God's reflecting image in man due to his imperial dignity, i. e. his ability to "reign" over the sensible creation and control his own body, others believed that his wisdom (νοῦς) or reason (λόγος) is the image of God, while others attributed to him the three faculties of the soul: mind, will and feeling or his specific freedom (αὐτεξουσία) that justifies his acts.

Apart from the diversity of opinions already presented, two essential things must be pointed out: firstly, man is an indefinite being because it bears the image of the "indefinite" One; secondly, the Church Fathers proved freedom of thought at the highest creative and innovative level without contradicting the Revelation. They did not try to "marginalize" man, but "unmarginalize" him in the horizon of God's vocation. The Church Fathers did not depart from the image of God in man in order to form a misconception about God derived from a psychological analogy. On the contrary, they followed the Revelation and what it says about God so as to find in man the correspondent of the divine image that was given to him.

By adopting this theological method, the Church Fathers succeeded in overcoming the dilemmas of Ancient anthropology and the dualism between body (σῶμα) and spirit (νοῦς) or soul (πνεῦμα) in particular. They especially underlined the positive content of the "image", i.e. the communion with God in which human nature – both body and soul altogether – lies in the moment of creation in the **Logos** and **Spirit** of God, that is in the Son of God and the Holy Spirit respectively.

Due to a proper interpretation of the Biblical anthropology, a series of Church Fathers such as Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, Saint Gregory of Nyssa or Saint Gregory Palamas clearly emphasized that not only the soul, but also the human body shares the quality of being the "icon" of God. Saint Gregory Palamas writes that "the name of God is not given to the soul or the body separately, but to both

altogether as they have been created as one in similitude with the image of God”¹⁵.

There are some general aspects related to the “image” of God in man that concern directly the present subject of debate, therefore some clear specifications must be made.

The first chapter of Genesis, line 27 reads: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”.

An interpretation of this verse from the Trinitarian perspective highlighted above would lead to the conclusion that the notion of “image” or “icon” does not stand for the sexual polarity of human nature, but to the quality of man as person (προσωπον), comprising the entire human nature in its ontological content, either as man or as woman.

The man as person does not take part in the human nature as the Persons of the Trinity are not parts of the Divinity in their turn. Man is the “person” of nature; thence he is free before any determinism or natural necessity.

The notion of man – **Adam** – which appears in the text of Genesis, as quoted above, can also be interpreted as a general notion encompassing the entire humanity, the **Universal Man** that incorporates both the masculine and the feminine principle. This is one interpretation provided by Saint Gregory of Nyssa who was definitely inspired by Saint Paul’s *Letters*: “the name given to the man created (Adam) is not the particular, but the general name: thus we are led by the employment of the general name of our nature to some such view as this—that in the Divine foreknowledge and power all humanity is included in the first creation (...) For the image is not in part of our nature, nor is the grace in any one of the things found in that nature, but this power extends equally to all the race: and a sign of this is that mind is implanted alike in all: for all have the power of understanding and deliberating, and of all else whereby the Divine nature finds its image in that which was made according to it: the man that was manifested at the first creation of the world, and he

¹⁵ Prosopieae, P.G., t. 150, col. 1361; apud VI. Lossky, *Théologie mystique de l’Église d’Orient*, Aubier, 1944.

that shall be after the consummation of all, are alike: they equally bear in themselves the Divine image. (...) **Our whole nature**, then, **extending from the first to the last**, is, so to say, one **image** of Him Who is”¹⁶.

As quoted above, there is an ontological unity of the humanity in its whole, but it is precisely this unity that does not exclude the persons’ plurality or does not have a logical priority regarding it, in the same way in which the persons’ plurality must not divide its ontological unity.

From this point of view, the identity of being and the personal alteration form a way of existence to be shared by both God and man. The only distinctive feature lies in the eternal existence of God as opposed to man’s life which is a gift of God who blessed the human existence with the ethos of Trinitarian communion¹⁷ in the act of creation.

Besides the ontological unity of the entire human race, the first chapter of Genesis illustrates the ontological unity between man and creation. This unity was also underlined in the Ancient philosophy that considered man to be a “microcosm”, a “small-world” that bears within itself the “macrocosm”¹⁸, the big-world.

The Church Fathers borrowed the idea of “microcosm” from the Book of Genesis, nevertheless they highlighted that it was not this quality that offered man the position in the “center” of creation, but his similitude to God as “icon” of His.

This specific feature gives birth to another relationship of man with cosmos. Thus, he is not solely a “gratification” of creation, but its priest and poet altogether with the mission to bring the entire sensible creation to complete unity with God – the Trinity.

¹⁶ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Despre crearea omului* [*On the Making of Man*], 22 P.G. 44, 204-205; apud Henri de Lubac, op. cit., p. 330. See <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm> for the English version.

¹⁷ Christos Yannaras, *La liberté de la Morale*, Génève, Labor et Fides, 1982, p. 14.

¹⁸ The Stoic philosophers emphasized the central position of man in the cosmos as a synthesis of it as the cosmos becomes through man “logical” and reasonable.

From this perspective, taken by the Church Fathers from chapter two of Genesis, creation does not stand for a simple “cosmos”, i.e. “an organized chaos”, one of the demiurge’s works, but a “Church to become”¹⁹, that is a place where man is to celebrate the Liturgy of God – the Trinity with the other beings. Precisely for this reason Genesis advocates that Adam has been invited to “name” all beings, i.e. to discover their “logos” and their dynamic orientation towards the supreme “Logos”.

The gathering of beings created by God before Adam (Gen. 2, 19-20) equals his investment with a sacerdotal vocation. In other words, the **onto-logical** Doxology of beings must become a conscious one in the person of man.

The doxological and ecclesial dimension of creation, fulfilled consciously in man and ontologically related to the cosmic nature, can be clearly distinguished from the way in which Genesis presents the relationship between nature and person.

Not only does the cosmic nature have an ecclesial vocation, but the human nature itself also, because it is ontologically related to the cosmic nature which appears in Genesis as church and the human person as its priest.

The human couple, man (iṣ in Hebrew) and woman (iṣa) form “a single body” (Gen. 2, 23), i.e. a single nature that is separated in two persons. Man is the one who admits this identity of nature and personal alterity: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman (iṣa in Hebrew), because she was taken out of Man (iṣ)” (Gen. 2, 18).

The fact that, in his dialogue with woman, man proves to be the leader, must be understood in an ecclesial, Christological and theological sense which could be rendered as follows: God – the Trinity creates the world out of love and the world gives him love for an answer, in

¹⁹ Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă* [*Spirituality and communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*], Craiova, 1986, p. 19.

its turn; Christ gives birth to the Church, through His crucified Love and the Church gives Him love for an answer; man has to love his woman as much as Christ loved the Church and the woman must give him love for an answer.

Therefore, the lines in Genesis do not express a subordinate relationship of woman to man; on the contrary, they establish a divine order in the human community through which the communitarian life of the Holy Trinity reveals itself to humanity and from humanity to the entire creation. In fact, the text overtly states that God presented the woman to her man putting her in front of him (“I will make him a help meet for him”, **eter kenegdo**) (Gen. 2, 18).

In Hebrew, the preposition **eter kenegdo** does not express a subordinate relationship, as many interpretations in the history of culture have shown, but a special work of God meant for the single man²⁰.

Moreover, this preposition refers to the reality of an interpersonal dialogue, a “face to face” one and not a simple physical and objective recognition of the other. In the centre of this dialogue lies the vocation of “naming” the creation, i.e. the poetical and sacerdotal vocation of human person.

This poetical and sacerdotal vocation was especially emphasized by Saint Maximus the Confessor in the first seven chapters of his *Mystagogy*. The work is closely related to the ontological relation between man and creation and to the five polarities that it comprises:

1. the distinction between God’s creation and His uncreated energies;
2. the distinction, within creation, between the intelligible nature and the sensible one;
3. the distinction between sky and Earth within the sensible nature;

²⁰ Francine Carrilo - Cvetbert, *Une seule chaire: L’imaginaire à l’épreuve du réel*. In Bulletin du Centre Protestant d’Etudes, Genève, nr. 1., février, 1983, p. 25-26.

4. the distinction, on Earth, between Paradise and the rest of the Earth;

5. the distinction, in Paradise, between man and woman.

Starting from these distinctions, Saint Maximus the Confessor articulates the original vocation of man to overpass any aggressive dualism existing between the aforementioned categories in order to share the divine life of the Holy Trinity and turn the entire cosmos in a “Trinitarian based” Church, if we were to employ Origen’s terminology²¹.

Yet, this vocation, as I will prove in the following parts of my study, did not succeed because of “the fall of man into sin”, a failure which led both to the historical and existential exile of man, and the decadence of the entire creation.

IV. Man in Exile and the Decay of Creation

a. Man: center of all things?

In order to understand the historical and existential exile of man, the Church Fathers used the symbolic image of universal man, the first Adam who virtually contained the entire human condition.

The inspired text of the Holy Scripture shows us how man had to be subjected to the exercise of his personal freedom so as to complete his vocation of poet and priest of creation. This exercise was meant to take place in the horizon of calling, of communion with God and the whole creation.

Calling and liberty are, according to Saint Maximus the Confessor, “the two wings of man”²² which help him fulfill

²¹ Fr. Galeriu, *ibidem*, p. 51; see also VI. Lossky, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă* [*Orthodox Theology: An introduction*], translated in Romanian by Lidia and Remus Rus, Enciclopedica Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p. 101.

²² Cf. Paul Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, Paris, 1965, p. 102.

his vocation. However, calling is never to replace freedom because it represents the medium that secretly hosts God's calling and the answer of man. Consequently, in the exercise of Adamic freedom, the Church Fathers distinguish two main steps: the freedom of choice, a hypostasis of the person as element of nature and the freedom in Truth that arises on the way, every time good is chosen in the virtue of the similitude with God.

So the real freedom of man lies in the horizon of God's calling, yet man has to accept freely the communion with Him. In other words, "God created a free man so as to call him to deification, to have a divine-human condition. This calling is based on a free answer from the part of man (...) Adam was submitted to the exercise of freedom in order to obtain a conscious love. Thus, man cannot truly love God if he can also refuse Him"²³.

In the symbolic language of Genesis, free will, called by Saint Augustine "libertas minor"²⁴, is a very important part of man's condition as only empowered by it, man can defend himself against constraints and proclaim his personal identity. In Genesis, it is this freedom that led man to sin, i.e. to the separation from God, to exile and death. In Blaise Pascal's terms, the Adamic man was "nothing" in relation to the infinite, all in relation to "nothing", a mean between nothing and everything, between being and non-being in his right to free will.

In Genesis, this possibility of choice is expressed in a concrete-intuitive language impersonated by the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2, 9).

The Church Fathers provided different interpretations for this tree from the midst of the Garden of Eden. Interesting for our debate is the interpretation given by Saint Maximus the Confessor in his book, *Questions to Thalassius*: "if one argued that the tree of knowledge of good and evil represented the creation of what could be seen, one would not

²³ Olivier Clement, *Questions sur l'homme*, Paris, 1965, p. 45.

²⁴ *De libero arbitro*, 1, III, C. XIX; P.L. t. XXXII, col. 1297; apud Constantin Pavel, *Problema răului la Fericitul Augustin [The Problem of Evil in Saint Augustine's Works]*, Bucharest, 1937, p. 58.

be far from the truth (...); creating what could be seen had its own ecclesial reasons of bringing food to the mind and giving a natural power to please the senses, on the one hand and corrupting the mind, on the other hand. Thus, spiritual contemplation of what could be seen leads to the knowledge of good, whether the physical one results in sin and oblivion of the divine. Hence God forbade physical contemplation, delaying it to man – as before, in the truly awareness of his cause through communion with it in calling and by means of this communion, man had to exchange his given immortality for righteousness and immovability through calling – until he became worthy of appreciating it without hurting himself in **freedom** with God due to sublimation of his spirit and senses through deification²⁵”.

Thus, according to Saint Maximus the Confessor, the tree of knowledge of good and evil stands for the sensible world in which we live. Assumed in God’s Spirit, it leads us to the knowledge of good; on the contrary, accepted only from a psychological or biological perspective, it induces a false knowledge that mixes good with evil.

Saint Maximus provides this symbolic interpretation in order to shed light on man’s possibility of choice between the two existential paths: communion with God which is the equivalent of life and separation from God that brings death. Accordingly, the biblical terms of “good” and “evil” are not just moral, social or legal categories, but also ontological and existential ones.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil lies in the center of Paradise, i.e. in the center of human existence. Good has eternal life as his only goal, that is life in communion with Christ, while Evil, according to Saint Maximus the Confessor, does not have an ontological status in existence. However, on account of the failure of freedom of choice, it can appear as a tragic reality in human life, leading it to separation and death.

²⁵ Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassius*, translated in Romanian by Rev. Prof Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Filocalia, vol III, Sibiu, 1948, p. 12.

Although evil does not have either an ontological status delivered by God, or the command to refrain from the tree of knowledge of good or evil, the issue is not centered on the act of knowledge itself, because as we have already seen, Adam was called to name all beings, i.e. to get acquainted to them in the divine sense.

Tempted by a “Luciferian” knowledge, “Adam got the wrong idea about God. He believed that God is self sufficient as an independent, autonomous being and, in order to become like God, he disobeyed Him and fell into sin. But when God revealed himself, it happened in love (...). Believing that he was to become like God, Adam was totally moving from Him...deepening himself in singleness while God remained in communion”²⁶

Therefore, the Adamic sin does not consist in the act of knowledge, but in the will to know and become a god, even though without God’s calling. Knowledge of good is not a sin, but the knowledge of good mixed with the knowledge of evil as product of man’s egocentric orientation is.

Man proclaimed himself center of all things, center of knowledge of good and evil and thus his axiological conscience became corrupted, “Evil was placed along good and the heart of Adam was converted into a “laboratory” of justice and injustice”²⁷.

Thence God does not restrain man from knowledge, which in the biblical sense is to be identified with the true life, only its corruption and the corruption of human existence by means of a false understanding and practice of freedom.

The **restriction** in Genesis was only a warning as man was not allowed to eat without God’s “blessing”, i.e. not “have a relationship with a thing before being prepared for a proper relationship with it. However, contravening this command given by God is determined by the devil, a spiritual being that freely disobeyed God, reads the Book of Genesis. The devil is the one who first brings doubt to the soul of man, rephrasing God’s command by means of restrictive “logics” in which the stress falls on the part (Yea,

²⁶ Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. I, p. 12.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden – Gen. 3, 1) and not on the whole (Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat – Gen. 2, 16)²⁸. This holistic vision determines the fall and man is tempted to live on his own. He discovers his ego, becomes selfish, “falls in love” with himself and forgets about God and his kind.

Becoming autonomous in his relationship with God, man has the tendency to put himself in the absolute center of the world, reduce everything to him, even the ones of his kind. Yet, sooner or later, the world is to take revenge on man and as an unreal, non-absolute center, he will be sentenced to bear the weight of his own rebellion through the mists of history.

b. The corruption of creation and of human existence in the state of exile

Exile is synonymous with the fall of human existence from the order of spiritual values and it also corresponds to a radical change in the way of “living” in the world. The Holy Scripture employs the same symbolic terminology in order to express this reality.

The first consequence of his fall gives man a sensation of inner emptiness and a feeling of shame arises in his conscience.

The “nakedness” felt by Adam in the state of fall is not of biological, but of spiritual order. In the external paintings of medieval churches in Bukovina, one can notice that Adam and Eve were not “naked” in Paradise, as reads the text of Genesis (2, 25). In fact, the painters transferred

²⁸ Christos Yannaras, when interpreting the moment of God’s temptation, specifies that “The devil first tempts the woman because in archetypal terms, she is the image of **nature** whilst man impersonates **logos**. The distinction between nature and logos, between the **feminine** and the **masculine** principle is not an axiological, but an existential one; nature is available for the incarnation of a life event, yet it needs the seed of **logos** for this incarnation to come into being”; see Christos Yannaras, *La foi vivante de l’Eglise*, Cerf, Paris, 1989, p. 104.

the patristic interpretation to iconography, according to which in Paradise, man was “dressed”, i.e. he was wearing the blessing God’s – the Trinity in his being²⁹. The painters, most of them monks, grasped the theological and ecclesial significance of the Biblical notion of “nakedness” and illustrated Adam and Eve “naked” after their sending forth from the Garden of Eden when they have already been deprived, i.e. “undressed” by the divine blessing.

The feeling of shame and fear that accompanies the sensation of ontological “emptiness” also expresses a state of corruption in terms of interpersonal relations. God who searched man in the “cool of the day” (Gen. 3, 8) is no longer felt by man as the one who loves him, but the one who “punishes” him. He is no longer felt as man’s intimate “friend”, but as “another” being, a stranger who threatens man’s individual autonomy by his simple presence. Therefore, Adam stays hidden and it is this “hiding” that expresses the corruption of his moral responsibility in the state of sin. He “hid” when God called unto him (Gen 3, 9) and when he was discovered he brought arguments for accusing God: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen. 3, 12).

Hence the fall into sin has as primary consequences a **spiritual crisis** (a false representation of God and a corrupted relationship with Him) and a **moral** one (corruption of freedom and responsibility). The two instances of crisis are followed by a **social crisis** (the conflict between Cain and Abel).

Indeed, in the state of sin, freedom no longer stands for giving as it comes to denote egocentrism and possessive self affirmation. After being sent forth from Paradise, according to Genesis, man (iș) did no longer recognize his woman as **ișa**, but he started calling her Eve, i.e. the mother of all living (Gen. 3, 20). Sin which “objectified” their bodies (and made them realize they were naked) also turned the two biological hypostaseis into two individual

²⁹ Fr. Galeriu, op. cit., p. 56-57.

beings guided by a possessive instinct: “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3, 16).

The same instinct of possession will also guide the relationship between man and creation by determining a serious “**ecological crisis**”, if we were to employ the contemporary terminology. Creation is no longer transparent, a medium of communion for God and man because the latter exiled the former from the creation, thus opening the way to exile for him and the entire creation. Man feels lonely and abandoned in the middle of a hostile creation: “cursed is the ground for thy sake (...) Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee” (Gen. 3, 17-18). In other words, Earth becomes a place that tears apart and imprisons and which God no longer keeps in His blessing. Thence, this is now man’s burying place: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3, 19).

It is obvious that man’s soul falls prey to despair due to this state of crisis, Yet, in order for man not to be torn apart by despair, God interferes once more: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen, 3, 21).

The “coats of skins” mentioned in Genesis were not part of man’s original outfit. Therefore, there are several possible interpretations regarding them. Some scholars considered that these coats symbolically stood for the biological hypostasis of man and were hiding his personal alterity, thus orientating man towards death, as boundary established by God so that man’s state of ruin which he entered did not have to be eternal³⁰.

This interpretation of the “coats of skins” can be found in the works of Methodius of Olympus and Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

³⁰ Panayotis Nellas, Omul, animal îndumnezeit,[Man - Deified Animal], Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1994, p. 40.
op.cit., p. 191-192.

Saint Methodius believed that “God made the coats of skins so as to dress man in **mortality** for all evil in him to die when his body opened”³¹.

According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the tragic horizon of exile, biological death actually brings a ray of hope since “the soul arises from death and is brought to life by means of it (if man had not died a biological death, he would have remained dead forever)”³².

As a result, the horizon of death replaces the “tree of life” in the center of existence after the fall into sin and man’s auto exile. Man enters a process of decay due to the empowerment of his soul by the seed of separation, instead the one of communion; man dies because he has become an isolated being in cosmos, fighting for survival; he dies because he has ignored God’s love and justice.

The Church Fathers claimed that God’s justice did not have only an ethical or legal content, but also an ontological one. Justice is synonymous with love and is displayed in creation by the order and the harmony it contains.

The fall into sin ruined this order and harmony, that is “the righteousness of creation”, yet the punishment does not come from God as a legal act that calls for termination, but from “the righteousness of creation” itself. This can be clearly noticed in the dialogue between God and Cain after having murdered his brother: “What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.” (Gen. 4, 10-12).

Consequently, it is sin that corrupts “the righteousness of creation” due to man’s disregard of its order and beauty, pursuing only the satisfaction of his pleasures which will finally lead him to pain and death.

³¹ Cf. Panayotis Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 191-192.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 292.

Through death, man arrives again at the “deeps” of creation where he was brought to life: his body becomes water, air, dust and light. Through death, man touches the limits of cosmos, “the light of day one”, hence death becomes the “antidote” of death, space of renewal and restoration for the entire creation when a new Adam will enter our history.

The Holy Scripture tells us that starting with the fall into sin, biological death was guided by God to a Messianic future: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3, 15)

This line has been interpreted by the whole patristic theology from the perspective of redemption, of salvation from death meant for humanity and of its restoration in the horizon of communion with God³³.

V. The End of Human Exile and the Beginning of Innovation for Creation

Christian theology, in its faithfulness to Revelation, sustains that the end of human exile and the beginning of restoration for the entire creation in the horizon of communion have taken place at the same time with the incarnation of Logos: “God, why did you descend on Earth if not for the race of man spread all over its face? (...) Proceed to the ascension of your man now, welcome the one you **sent forth**, regain your image, Your Adam”³⁴.

Thus, the incarnation of God’s Logos followed by His crucifixion, death and resurrection restored creation in its original vocation, the theological one. The reinforcement of these three main events of history crosses the limits of the

³³ The Septuagint mentioned that one of the woman’s sons will smash the serpent’s head, yet Vulgata attributed this act to the woman. In a way, the two translations are complementary as the former centers on the figure of Messiah, while the latter on the figure of Virgin Mary.

³⁴ *Sermo de anima*, P.G., XVIII, 602; apud Fr. Galeriu, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

present study; therefore, I will make reference only to the aspects that regard the relationship between God, man and creation.

a. Creation and incarnation

The Church Fathers considered creation and incarnation as two complementary realities. Creation announces incarnation whilst the incarnation of creative Logos completes creation, restoring and orienting it towards its original vocation. “The personal acceptance of human nature in its whole by the Son of God, the eternal and transcendent Logos born from Virgin Mary, is an act that recreates and restores the world”³⁵, writes a contemporary theologian that remains faithful to patristic theology.

As a result, incarnation does not only stand for an answer given to Adam’s rebellion, but also for the beginning of man’s conversion and radical innovation extended to the entire creation³⁶.

Christ, the Son of God incarnated becomes the beginning and foundation of the creation’s process of innovation, when accepting human nature in His divine Hypostasis, altogether eliminating its tendency to autonomy so as to bring instead a complete opening and giving movement towards God.

Once more, it must be mentioned that when the Church Fathers discuss human nature, they have in view its dual unity: body and soul as a whole. By the act of incarnation, Christ united Himself with the body and soul as unifying and innovating principle. In this sense, Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes: “Becoming a part of both the sensible and the reasonable part of human component, by His unspeakable

³⁵ Rev. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă [Dictionary of Orthodox Theology]*, p. 228

³⁶ Boris Bobinsky, *Le Mystère de la Trinité*, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1986, p. 11-12.

power and this union, i.e. body and soul, He will see to their eternal unseparation”³⁷.

Therefore, Christ ontologically repairs human nature by the act of incarnation, reestablishing “the divine image in its greatness that leads the soul to transformation in consent with its free will so as to acquire similitude with God”³⁸.

As already mentioned, since the image of god regards man’s entire being, its rebuilding and ontological renewal also concerns his body which becomes a transparent temple for God and a medium for the Holy Spirit in His manifestation of love and transfiguring power. On this account, Saint Athanasius the Great writes: “Who is so mad as to tell God: break yourself from the body and we will pray to You? (...) Was not the leper praying to God inside His body? He recognized Him as God hoping that his invocation would cure him and did not consider God as creature due to the body, i.e. the Logos, Creator of all beings or feel disguise for Him, therefore he got well”³⁹.

Thus, by the incarnation of Logos, the resent against body, specific to the Ancient thought can no longer find a theological base. According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, “Logos is not interested in tearing apart the righteous life due to a dualism, but rather see to the unification of body and soul in superior harmony when the wall of evil collapses”⁴⁰.

³⁷ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, P.G., 44, col. 28AB-129A; apud Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 3, Bucharest, 1978, p. 144.

³⁸ Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Filocalia Românească*, vol. II, Sibiu, 1947.

³⁹ Epistola către Adelfie [*Letter to Adelfi*], P.G., 26, col. 1076-1077, Cf. Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Radu, *Mântuirea, a doua creație a lumii* [*Redemption, the second world creation*], in *Ortodoxia*, year XXXVIII (1986) n° 2, p. 56.

⁴⁰ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, P.G., 44, 28AB-129A; apud Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 3, Bucharest, 1978, p. 455. PP.

Owing to the ontological relationship between human body and the rest of the sensible creation, enriching the value of the former through the act of incarnating God's Logos is synonymous with enriching the value of the latter, as the ontological rebuilding and innovation of human nature extends its process to the rest of creation.

However, incarnation is only the beginning of this rebuilding and innovation for the world. In order to actively restore His creation, Christ had to accept freely His death by crucifixion, so as to reestablish the communion of love between man and God, on the one hand and between God and the whole creation, on the other hand. God's sacrifice is closely related to incarnation and resurrection, being essential for man and the entire creation which was doomed to despair and death because of man⁴¹.

b. Death and Resurrection

Without Christ's crucifixion, the end of human exile and the possibility of the prodigal son to "return home" could not have been completed.

This aspect was particularly underlined by Saint Cyril of Alexandria who borrowed this idea from Saint Apostle Paul and enriched it. In his opinion, we can only be received by God the Father in a state of truthful offering.

Man in a state of sin, exiled in the horizon of death, i.e. in God's absence or man who fell prey to false representations of Him cannot offer himself to God. "Therefore, Christ as man sacrificed Himself to God the Father in truthful offering, not to provide Father with a legal equivalent, but to transfer us the powerful state of sacrifice by his union with us, so we can enter, along with Him, the world of the Father. Hence we are brought to Father by means of Christ's Cross and his crucified body"⁴².

⁴¹ Rev. Prof. Dumitru Gh. Radu, *Characterul ecleziologic al Sfintelor Taine și problema intercomuniunii* [*The Ecclesiological Character of Sacraments and the Issue of Intercommunion*], doctoral thesis, in *Ortodoxia*, year XXXVIII (1986), n° 2, p. 56.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 47.

So Christ's death means renunciation at every form of selfishness, as instance of sin for truthful offering to God. Nevertheless, Christ accepted death not for Himself, but for us and Saint Maximus the Confessor and Saint Athanasius the Great especially underlined this issue.

Since Christ's death equals truthful offering to God the Father, death cannot control Christ because the cure for death is love and all that is involved in an offering for love's sake in its supremacy is separated from death and kept for eternal life. Consequently, Christ's death virtually comprises His Resurrection, too.

As an expression of supreme love for God, Christ's death represents a painful experience that marks the passage to another way of existence. On account of Christ's status as Son of God incarnated, different from every other human individual, along with His death, an entire world emerges, the world born from Adam's rib, but also the world prepared by God for Adam who was tempted and fell into sin. The ancient world, the one of the exile, separation and death dies; it evaporates like a "small drop in the abyss of love"⁴³ and communion of God with His creation.

Owing to this love, Christ's death actually stands for the death of death itself and the beginning of another eternal life. Thus, death becomes Easter, a passage to Resurrection and in this way, humanity and the entire creation take back their place according to the original rhythm and orientation of creation towards the infinite happiness of communion felt in the morning of Resurrection.

When considered from this perspective, the Resurrection of Christ is not a "final" act for humanity, but the beginning of His Ascension in blessing. The divine gift of Holy Spirit will bless men and cosmos altogether starting with the Pentecost, thus leading "the entire creation to incorruptibility and transparency, i.e. a complete transformation and communication between

⁴³ O. Clement, *L'Orthodoxie*, p. 42; apud Fr. Galeriu, *op. cit.*

persons and Spirit and to a total personalization of cosmos in Christ and human beings”⁴⁴.

c. Creation, renewal and deification

Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man are all historical events and Sacraments of His Person⁴⁵ that enlighten from the inside both the general sense of history and man’s particular existence in the middle of creation.

Incarnation of this sense supposes an ontological and moral conversion. In its turn, this conversion is not a work of man as human individual, but of Christ, through the Holy Spirit in collaboration with man as a liturgical and ecclesial person.

The Conversion that took place on the day of Pentecost clearly expresses this fact. The question that arises in the soul of the ones that participated at the event is a consequence of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and of the inspired discourse belonging to Saint Peter. According to the Acts of Apostles, the witnesses, when “(were) pricked in their heart” (2, 37), asked: “what shall we do?” And Peter gave them the answer: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2, 38)

Thence, on Pentecost, a deep conversion, a crucifixion, a death and a resurrection take place in the conscience and life of the Saint Apostles and of the witnesses to this main event. The same conversion is to take place in the life of Saint Apostle Paul when meeting God in the Holy Spirit on the road to Damascus. After this encounter, “he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” (Acts 9, 9)

In the theology of Church Fathers, the Pentecost represents the ultimate moment of salvation, coinciding with the beginning of conversion, renewal and deification

⁴⁴ Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol 2, p. 180.

⁴⁵ Rev. Prof. Dumitru Gh. Radu, *op. cit.*, p. 41

of every human person who becomes member of the sacramental body of Christ, i.e. of Church through the Holy Spirit⁴⁶.

To conclude, the Pentecost stands for the historical beginning of Church and for the commencement of revision for man's original vocation to become Church of God the Logos, i.e. a place of communion with God-the Trinity together with the entire creation.

When entering the Church in Holy Sacraments, man's being becomes a church in its turn. The Church Fathers particularly insisted on the point that man can become a church, his being converted, deified and renewed only in relation to Church⁴⁷.

Not only man, but also "cosmos in its whole cannot find renewal and transfiguration outside the relationship with Church, the liturgical center of the entire creation⁴⁸".

VI. In guise of Conclusion

The communion of man with Christ realized in Church by means of the blessing of the Holy Spirit completely changes the attitude towards creation. For man, creation is no longer to be identified with a neutral datum, an objective nature he can submit to his selfish wishes and pleasures.

The spiritually renewed man, through communion with Christ becomes the priest of creation, while a part of the same creation becomes body of Christ by means of the Eucharistic elements. Owing to this fact, man no longer identifies creation with pure "essence" or a "substance" (ουλη) coeternal with God, but identifies it as a "gift" which

⁴⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *Prezența Duhului Sfânt în Tradiția Ortodoxă*, [The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Tradition], Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 109.

⁴⁷ Rev. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Biserica în sensul de locaș și de largă comuniune în Hristos*, [Church in the sense of shelter and large communion in Christ] in *Ortodoxia*, year XXXIV (1982) n°3, p. 341.

⁴⁸ Olivier Clement, *Le Christ, Terre des vivants, Essais théologiques*, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1976.

must be received with a contemplating attitude and not a possessive one.

It is a well known fact that the contemplating attitude of man determines one state of creation and the possessive attitude another one. In other words, the balance of creation and its harmony is a consequence of man's spiritual state. The balance of creation is maintained thanks to man's rest in God.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian grasps this fact in his sensitive poeticism: "When they saw Adam expelled from Paradise, all the creatures showed rebellion towards him; neither the sun, nor the moon or stars accepted him; springs refused to end his thirst and rivers continued their course; winds no longer flew to bring coolness for Adam the sinner; wild animals and all creatures on Earth were ready to attack man at the sight of his decay following the previous blessing; sky was almost to fall and crush him while Earth could not bear his sight anymore".

Yet God who created all things and man, altogether, what did He do? He did not let their forces release against man, but ordered the whole creation to stand still and depend on man, become mortal, serve him in his mortality as it was for man that He created the other beings; and this state is not to end until the renewed man becomes ecclesial (πνευματικός), incorruptible and eternal. Only in that moment to come the entire creation will be freed from submission so as to become as renewed, incorruptible, and ecclesial as man himself⁴⁹.

Therefore, the egocentric and selfish man cannot release creation from separation and death. Creation becomes for him "opaque materiality, mirror of his spiritual death in a place where God is absent and where the Earth "deprived" of Him becomes a "grave" for Oedipus, the blind"⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ Saint Symeon the New Theologian, *Traité éthique I*, ch. 2, 29-90; Sources chrétiennes, 122, p. 189-190.

⁵⁰ Olivier Clement, *Le Christ, Terre des vivants, Essais théologiques*, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1976.

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