

Nicolae Răzvan Stan

# Human Person as a Being Created in the Image of God and as the Image of the Son: The Orthodox Christian Perspective

## Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the particular significance of the doctrine of the image of God in man in Orthodox anthropology. In order to accomplish this task, the author focuses, first and foremost, on the fact that from an Orthodox perspective, the human person cannot be conceived outside the teaching regarding the image of God. As an ontological attribute, the image involves man's psychosomatic elements and thus, it can be inferred that the image is never wholly lost. The image stands for everything that man is and this particular attribute gives man a special dignity and statute. Man was created in the image of God; he did not achieve this quality later on.

The latter part of the present article points out the main distinction between "the image" and "in/after the image of", both defining different doctrinaire realities. Therefore, while "in/after the image of" alludes to the human being, the term "the image" is strictly and solely confined to the Son of God. Whereas the Son solely is the Image of the Father, as He is equal with the Father, man appears to have been created in the image and likeness of God, or as the image

## THE AUTHOR



Assist. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Răzvan Stan, Theological Faculty of the University of Craiova, Romania

of the Image. Man is the image of the Image according to his Christological dimension and constitution, or, to put it differently, man was made in the image of the Only-Begotten Son of God.

### Keywords

image of God, ontological reality, soul, body, creation, communion, likeness.

---

## I. Introduction

The Holy Scripture describes man according to the reality he represents. It does not alter or misrepresent man, but it describes him according to the word of God. The psalmist confesses that God has endowed man with glory and honour, while man, as the master of creation, was diminished in comparison with God even to the slightest degree (Ps. 8.4-6).<sup>1</sup> According to the translations of the Septuagint, man was diminished in relation to the angels. There is no doubt that man plays a special role in the divine creation and organization, and the fact that he was created in the image of God sets him apart from the rest of creation (Gen. 1.26): "God's image brings humans closer to the Absolute and it provides an ontological structure of absolute uniqueness within creation: the fundamental anthropological axiom of the divine similitude points out that even from the very beginning, man has been made deiform and has been endowed with the ability to receive God (man as «*pati Deum*»). It is only from the theandric viewpoint that the problem of man can be defined in its plenitude. Only by this theandric reality, the problem of man can be solved [...] and can explain the concept of God's image, a fundamental concept used in the comprehension of human essence and outside of which man cannot be conceived of".<sup>2</sup> If orthodox anthropology had not been founded on the teaching concerning the fact that man was created "after the image of God", it would neither have been able to continue to exist within the

---

<sup>1</sup> Dumitru Abrudan, "Aspecte ale antropologiei Vechiului Testament" ("Aspects of the Old Testament Anthropology"), *Studii Teologice*, no. 3-4/1978, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> André Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică (The Apophatical Anthropology)*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 56. "It is not man's adaptation to his exterior nature that lies in the very mystery of the human being, but man's creation in the image and likeness of the Creator... The human being can be understood only in relationship to God" (*Ibid.*, p. 165).

authentic borders entailed by divine revelation<sup>3</sup> nor understand the dignity, potentiality, and mission ascribed to the human being.<sup>4</sup>

## II. Human existence in the image of God

The fundamental text concerning the teachings about human creation after the image of God is: “Then God said, «Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth». So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1.26-27).<sup>5</sup>

The Eastern Fathers contributed to the development of the doctrine of the divine image in man, concluding that the image points to the ontological abilities to accomplish the communion with God, whom man received at creation.<sup>6</sup>

### 1. The human being cannot exist outside the doctrine of the divine image

The doctrine of the divine image in man lies at the very root of Christian anthropology. Unless it follows the path of these teachings, Christian theology is unable to clearly put forward man’s dignity and mission. Central to St. Gregory of Nyssa’s argumentation is the notion of creation of man after the image of God. St. Gregory of Nyssa states that divine and human coexist in man<sup>7</sup> and that man was made and “moulded” in his Creator’s image and likeness.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Despre menirea omului (The Destiny of Man)*, Romanian translation by Daniel Hoblea, Aion Publishing House, Oradea 2004, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Emilian Vasilescu, “Valoarea omului” (“The Value of Man”), in the volume: *Biserica și problemele vremii (Church and the Problems of the Times)*, Sibiu, 1947, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> “Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come” (Rm. 5.14); “For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man” (1 Co. 11.7) etc.

<sup>6</sup> Ioan G. Coman, “Spirit umanist și elemente de antropologie în gândirea patristică” (“Humanitarian Spirit and Anthropological Elements into the Patristical Thought”), *Studii Teologice*, no. 5-6/1970, p. 358.

<sup>7</sup> St Grigorie de Nyssa, *Despre facerea omului (On the Making of Man)*, 2, Scrieri (Writings), second part, PSB 30 (PSB = Colecția “Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” – “Fathers and Church Writers” Collection), Romanian translation by Teodor Bodogae, The Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church (IBMBOR) Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, PSB 30, p. 53.

God created man “after His image”. No other creature enjoys such honour. The Holy Scripture says that man is the only being created in the image of God. Having been made in the image and likeness of God, man solely was anointed by God Himself to carry out three functions (prophet, priest, and king).<sup>9</sup>

Also, being made after the image of God, man has been standing in direct relationship with God ever since he was created. Of all creatures, man carries God’s image within himself and reveals it by the way he lives. The Holy Fathers and Church Writers say that, being made in the image of God; man is “related” to God, thus becoming a “portion” of God. As such, St. Clement of Alexandria says that man is the “most important work” of creation and the only one whose soul was endowed with intelligence and wisdom and whose body was adorned with beauty and harmony.<sup>10</sup> Man is the only being who has been aware of the existence of God ever since he was created.<sup>11</sup> However, all these splendours are nothing but consequences of God’s image, after whom man was created.

According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, man and God are “related” to the point that man was made in the image of God,<sup>12</sup> which means that all the divine qualities, or properties and works were transmitted to the new created being in order that man, their main owner, should long after God even more: “Thus, then, it was needful for man, born for the enjoyment of Divine good, to have something in his nature akin to that in which he is to participate. For this end he has been furnished with life, with thought, with skill, and with all the excellences that we attribute to God, in order that by each of them he might have his desire set upon that which is not strange to him. Since, then, one of the excellences connected with the Divine nature is also eternal existence, it was altogether needful that the equipment of our nature should not be without the further gift of this attribute, but should have in itself the immortal, that by its inherent faculty it might both recognize what is above it, and be possessed with a desire for the divine and eternal life. In truth this has been shown in the comprehensive utterance of one expression, in the description of the cosmogony, where it

<sup>9</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii (Woman and the salvation of the world)*, Romanian translation by Gabriela Moldoveanu, Christiana Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Christ, the Educator*, I, 2, 6, “The Fathers of the Church”, a new translation, volume 23, translated by Simon P. Wood, Fathers of the Church, Inc., New York, 1954, p. 8; *Ibid.*, Scrieri (Writings), first part, PSB 4, Romanian translated by D. Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Stromatele (The Stromata)*, VII, Scrieri (Writings), second part, PSB 5, Romanian translation by D. Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 480.

<sup>12</sup> Vasile Răducă, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigorie de Nyssa. Căderea în păcat și restaurarea omului (The Anthropological Teaching of Saint Gregory of Nyssa. Fall and Restoration of Humankind)*, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 109-113.

is said that man was made «in the image of God». For in this likeness, implied in the word image, there is a summary of all things that characterize Deity”.<sup>13</sup>

Being anchored to such anthropological notions, St. Macarius the Egyptian eventually concludes that the greatest familiarity and kinship subsist between man and God: “But in none of them does God find rest. All the creation is governed by Him; and yet He did not fix His throne in them, or establish communion with them, but was well pleased with man alone, entering into communion with him, and resting him. Seest thou the kinship of God with man, and of man with God? Therefore the sagacious and prudent soul, after going the round of all created things, found no rest for herself, except in the Lord; and the Lord was well pleased in nothing except in man alone”.<sup>14</sup>

Man cannot earn God’s image by virtue and cannot lose it by sin, either. God’s image is an ontological gift<sup>15</sup>, “an ontological reality permanently inscribed in man’s very nature”,<sup>16</sup> “an inalienable attribute and everlasting characteristic of human nature”.<sup>17</sup>

The image belongs to everybody and to each of us, separately. St. Gregory of Nyssa is of the opinion that Adam and Eve are not the only human beings created in the image and likeness of God. In fact, each and every person was created in God’s image that man bears within his ontological structure: “the man that was manifested at the first creation of the world, and he that shall be after the consummation of all, are alike: they equally bear in themselves the Divine image”.<sup>18</sup>

The human being cannot exist outside the image of God. There would be no difference between man and other animals if weren’t for the image. For that very reason, the Holy Fathers, mainly St. Gregory of Nyssa and St.

---

<sup>13</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, 5, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 5, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Massachusetts, 1995, p. 479; *Ibid.*, 5, PSB 30, p. 294.

<sup>14</sup> St. Macarius the Egyptian, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, Homily XLV, 5, translated by A. J. Mason, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1921, p. 284; *Ibid.*, XLV, 5, Scrieri (Writings), PSB 34, Romanian translation by Constantin Cornițescu, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 266.

<sup>15</sup> Dumitru Radu, “Mântuirea, a doua creație a lumii” (“Salvation, the Second Creation of the World”), *Ortodoxia*, no. 2/1986, p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> André Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică (The Apophatical Anthropology)*, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolai Ozolin, *Chipul lui Dumnezeu, chipul omului. Studii de iconologie și arhitectură bisericească (The Image of God, the Image of Man. Iconographical Studies and Ecclesiastical Architecture)*, Romanian translation by Gabriela Ciubuc, Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, 17, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 5, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Massachusetts, 1995, p. 406; *Ibid.*, 16, PSB 30, p. 51.

Maximus the Confessor, leaving no room for interpretation, state that ever since the creation, Adam has reflected the very image of God. Likewise, all those who were born after the fall, through bodily union, bore the image of God when they were created.<sup>19</sup>

God does not rectify Himself in His work. God gave man all that is good at the very moment of our birth in order to bestow His love upon us and offer the most valuable gift which enabled man to open to Him. Man was not chosen from among other creatures in order to receive the image; he has been moulded since times immemorial and precisely created as existence “in the image of God”.

Being thus created “in the Image of God”, the human being enjoys a different status from other creatures. Of all creatures, man is the only one who owns the image. Not even the sky, or the earth, is entitled to this mission. St. Gregory of Nyssa expresses this teaching in his poetic language, mentioning that the divine gift of the image involves assuming the responsibility for being similar with God: “The sky was not made in God’s image, not the moon, not the sun, not the beauty of the stars, no other things which appear in creation. Only you were made to be the image of nature that surpasses every intellect, likeness of incorruptible beauty, mark of true divinity, vessel of blessed life, image of true light, that when you look upon it you become what He is, because through the reflected ray coming from your purity you imitate He Who shines within you. Nothing that exists can measure up to your greatness. God is able to measure the whole heaven with his span. The earth and the sea are enclosed in the hollow of His hand. And although He is so great and holds all creation in the palm of His hand, you are able to hold Him, He dwells in you and moves within you without constraint, saying that «I shall live and walk for them» (Lev. 26.2)”.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Claude Larchet, *Etica procreației în învățătura Sfinților Părinți (The Ethics of Procreation in the Teaching of the Holy Fathers)*, Romanian translation by Marinela Bojin, Sofia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 179-198.

<sup>20</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Tâlcuire amănunțită la Cântarea Cântărilor (Commentary on the Song of Songs)*, II, Scrieri (Writings), first part, PSB 29, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae and Ioan Buga, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 143.

## 2. At the moment of his birth, man was created in the image of God and the image is related to the psychosomatic structure of the human being

Having been created by God out of pure love, man represents a paradoxical gift. Neither he, nor his body and soul had had any existence of their own before being brought into existence. Man received himself and started knowing his own self at the moment of his creation. Man sees in himself God's "fingerprints" and feels the warmth of God's "mouth". These are ontological realities one can neither avoid, nor relinquish. These realities keep man alive and reveal new perspectives on his life, for they reflect and behold God's image in us. *Man has been carrying God's image within himself ever his creation.*<sup>21</sup>

God's breath transmits both biological and spiritual life, and thus God gives man the special quality of being created after God's image: "This inbreathing of God implants more than just biological life within man (for animals also have this and they do not receive the divine inbreathing); it bestows the life of understanding and also of communion with God, that is to say, spiritual life. To the extent that the understanding is developed, so, too, is communion developed, and vice versa. Herein lies the image in its wholeness. Through God's inbreathing, the free and intellective soul is placed once and for all within man, while God, through his breathing, enters simultaneously also into communion with the soul implanted in man. Once breathed into humans, the communion of humans with God springs forth from the soul and from that communion begun by God – which is identical with His grace – the communion of man with God... Through the breathing of God a «Thou» who belongs to God and is the «image of God» appears in man for this «Thou» is able to say «I» in its own right and can also address God as «Thou». Out of nothingness God provides himself with a partner for dialog, a partner who exists in a biological organism. The spiritual breathing of God produces an ontological spiritual breathing of man, namely, the spiritual soul, which has its roots within the biological organism and is in conscious dialogue with God and with its fellow human beings".<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Boris Bobrinskoy, "Chipul lui Dumnezeu în centrul tainei persoanei" ("Image of God in the Center of Person's Mystery"), in the volume: *Bioethics and the Mystery of Person*, Romanian translation by Nicoleta Petuhov, Bizantină Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 73; Christos Yannaras, *Abecedar al credinței. Introducere în teologia ortodoxă (Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology)*, Romanian translation by Constantin Coman, Bizantina Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 84; Idem, "Principes anthropologiques", *Contacts*, tome XXXVII, année 1985, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, volume two, *The World: Creation and Deification*, translated and edited by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barriger, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, 2000, pp. 84-85; Idem, *Teologia*

God created man with a rational faculty which enables him to become aware of and reciprocate God's love. The human being is God's interlocutor with whom God engages in a dialogue. St. Gregory of Nyssa considers that man was not only brought to life by the breath of God, but he was also adorned and endowed with the most wonderful divine qualities.<sup>23</sup> Every human being carries a personal imprint of the divine. As such, having been created in God's image, every human being expresses in a limited manner the infinite attributes of God's beauty.<sup>24</sup> God is Absolute Beauty, Love, Existence, and Wisdom, etc., and consequently, He creates us as a reflection of His image and love: "Thus, the human being mirrors and reflects all that God is: existence, knowledge, love. God possesses all these attributes in His infinite plenitude, while man owns them inasmuch as he obeys God and learns how to know them by listening to God's word".<sup>25</sup>

After he had categorized and synthesized patristic thought, Father Stăniloae concluded that the ontological gift of God's image identified with the subject, or the human person: "God's image in man refers mainly to the idea of person, or personal being that imitates God".<sup>26</sup>

Most of the Orthodox theologians have reached this conclusion. Accordingly, Father Ion Bria asserts that: „*Imago Dei* is the personal uniqueness of each human being who is called to be deified: humans are given responsibility to speak for and mirror God in nature”.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Father André Scrima maintains that human nature itself highlights God's image.<sup>28</sup> In conclusion, all the attributes of the human being reflect God's

---

*Dogmatică Ortodoxă (Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, volume 1, the second edition, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 268-269.

<sup>23</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic sau Despre învățământul religios (The Great Catechism)*, 6, PSB 30, p. 299; *Ibid.*, 8, p. 305.

<sup>24</sup> "... just as in a minute particle of glass, when it happens to face the light, the complete disc of the sun is often to be seen, not represented thereon in proportion to its proper size, but so far as the minuteness of the particle admits of its being represented at all. Thus do the reflections of those ineffable qualities of Deity shine forth within the narrow limits of our nature" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogul despre suflet și înviere [On the Soul and the Resurrection]*, PSB 30, p. 360).

<sup>25</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, "Omul și Dumnezeu" ("Man and God"), in the volume: *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă (Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, Mitropolia Olteniei Publishing House, Craiova, 1991, p. 284.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, "Starea primordială a omului în cele trei confesiuni" ("The Primordial State of Man in the Three Confessions"), *Ortodoxia*, no. 3/1956, p. 327.

<sup>27</sup> Ion Bria, *Tratat de Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică (Compendium of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology)*, România Creștină Publishing House, Bucharest 1999, p. 109. See, also, Tomáš Špidlík, *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului Creștin IV. Omul și destinul său în filozofia religioasă rusă (The Spirituality of the Christian East, vol. 4: Man and His Destiny According to Russian Religious Philosophy)*, Romanian translation by Maria-Cornelia Ică jr, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> André Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică (The Apophatical Anthropology)*, p. 185.



image. *Everything that man is represents the image of God after man was created.*

There is no distinction between the image and the person who bears it and the image cannot be organized according to the attributes of the person, as the whole being is the image.<sup>29</sup> It is for this very reason that man represents and was created as a unitary whole. The image, which stands for the whole being, contributes to the union of all these parts in the same unique life and movement of the person. If one part comprised the image and the other did not, it would mean that the latter was ignored by God, which would lead to a permanent war inside man's soul concerning his moral nature and his biological life. *The image is the theological principle that keeps alive in man his longing after God.* Man in his entirety reflects God's image and his ontology is iconic.<sup>30</sup> *There is no distinction between the image and the person, because the person is the image.*

Taking into consideration the notion of the image in patristic tradition, we observe that it is not only the soul that possesses the image, but also the body. St. Irenaeus, as well as the Syrian exegetical tradition, includes the body in their definition of the image.<sup>31</sup> According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, divine and rational attributes, on the one hand, and human and earthly

---

<sup>29</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, "Starea primordială a omului în cele trei confesiuni" ("The Primordial State of Man in the Three Confessions"), p. 326; Christos Yannaras, *Abecedar al credinței. Introducere în teologia ortodoxă (Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology)*, p. 77; Idem, *Principes anthropologiques*, p. 9; V. V. Zenkowsky, "Problemele antropologiei creștine" ("Problems of the Christian Anthropology"), Romanian translation by Stelian Iliescu and Paraschiv Angelescu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 1935, p. 454; Remus Rus, "Concepția despre om în marile religii" ("Thought about Man in the Great Religions"), *Glasy Bisericii*, no. 7-8/1978, p. 747; Olivier Clément, *Trupul morții și al slavei. Scurtă introducere la o teopoetică a trupului (Body of Death and the Body of Glory. Short introduction to a body théopoétique)*, Romanian translation by Eugenia Vlad, Christiana Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 9; Isidor Todoran, "Starea paradisiacă a omului și cea de după cădere, în concepția ortodoxă, romano-catolică și protestantă" ("Paradise State of the Man and His State after the Fall According to Orthodox, Roman-Catholic and Protestant Conceptions"), *Ortodoxia*, no. 1/1955, p. 31; Ioan Bude, "Antropologia Vechiului Testament" ("The Anthropology of the Old Testament"), *Studii Teologice*, no. 3/1989, pp. 35-36.

<sup>30</sup> Panayotis Nellas, *Omul - animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă (Man - Deified Animal. Perspectives for an Orthodox Anthropology)*, third edition, Romanian translation by Ioan Ică jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2002, p. 69. "The human person as it was divinely created; man in his integrity is understood ontologically as a divine being, as he was created in the image of God. His ontology is iconic. He finds his integrity, harmony, beauty, and happiness in God. God's grace - that is love, life, glory, in a word, God's uncreated energies - is given and exists according to God's principles and the structure of the human being" (*Ibid.*, pp. 179-180).

<sup>31</sup> P. Tomáš Špidlík S.J., *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului creștin. I. Manual sistematic (Spirituality of the Christian East, volume 1: A Systematic Handbook)*, second edition, Romanian translation by Ioan I. Ică jr, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2005, p. 94.

characteristics, on the other hand, are to be ascribed to man, while all these attributes reflect the divine image.<sup>32</sup>

Being a harmonious mixture of intelligible and sensitive natures, man plays as mediator between the seen and unseen worlds. All the elements that his ontological structure comprises of are brought together by the divine image God imprinted on the human being.<sup>33</sup>

St. Maximus the Confessor follows the same path. The fact that he constantly opposes those who support the idea of the non-simultaneity between body and soul concerning their creation, and mainly react against Origenism, can lead us into thinking that to St. Maximus the Confessor, the image represents the wholeness of man as psychophysical existence. St. Maximus could not have mentioned the soul only, in defining the image and likeness of God. On the contrary, he demonstrates that the human being is composed of both soul and body, for soul and body are indissolubly perceived to be parts of the whole human species. In his opinion, the image and creation came into being at the same moment and they represent the theological means through which man gains familiarity with God: "In the beginning humanity was created in the image of God in order to be perpetually born by the Spirit in the exercise of free choice, and to acquire the additional gift of assimilation to God by keeping the divine commandment, such that man, as fashioned from God by nature, might become son of God and divine by grace through the Spirit. For created man could not be revealed as son of God through deification by grace without first being born by the Spirit in the exercise of free choice, because of the power of self-movement and self-determination inherent in human nature".<sup>34</sup>

St. Gregory Palamas specifically points to the fact that the body of man shares in the character of the image, being created in the image of God: "The word man is not applied to either soul or body separately, but to both together, since together they have been created in the image of God".<sup>35</sup> According to St. Gregory Palamas, there is a strong ontological relationship between body and soul, neither of these being able to function without the other. The soul communicates 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. Thus, as St.

---

<sup>32</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Despre pruncii morți prematur (On Infants' Early Deaths)*, PSB 30, p. 416.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, *Marele cuvânt catehetic sau Despre învățământul religios (The Great Catechism)*, 6, PSB 30, pp. 296-297.

<sup>34</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 116, PSB 80, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1983, p. 294.

<sup>35</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Prosopopeiae*, PG 150, col. 1361C.

Gregory Palamas points out, the angels are not more to after image of God than man: "Since the noetic and intelligent nature of the human soul alone possesses intellect, thought-form and life-generating spirit, it alone – more so than the bodiless angels – is created by God in His image. This image the soul possesses inalienably, even if it does not recognize its own dignity, or think and live in a manner worthy of the Creator's image within it".<sup>36</sup>

It is true that over the centuries, some of the Church Fathers described the divine image in man according to various constitutive elements of the human soul. Consequently, St. Athanasius the Great insists to a large extent on the divine image in man, defining it as man's rational ability to know God.<sup>37</sup> However, he wants us to understand that man's creation "in God's image" refers to the body as well, since the latter is, according to St. Paul (I Cor. 3.16,19), a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, did not ignore the body. On the contrary, He consented to being born of the human body of the Virgin Mary in order that He might bring man, who was made in God's image, into familiarity with Himself. We can conclude that, according to St. Athanasius the Great, the notion of the image defines man in the integrity of his psychosomatic structure: "[...] the human body has a great value. He 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 [...]. From both points of view, man carries within himself the image of the Logos".<sup>38</sup>

St. Basil the Great holds that God's image in man is sometimes dominated by rational behaviour<sup>39</sup>, while other times it focuses on freedom of the human will and the dignity conferred by the name of master of the world

---

<sup>36</sup> Idem, "Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts", 39, in: *The Philokalia*, The complete text compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth, translated from the Greek and edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, volume IV, Faber and Faber, London, 1998, p. 363; *Ibid.*, 39, *Filocalia (The Philokalia)*, volume 7, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 409.

<sup>37</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Cuvânt împotriva elinilor (Against the Heathen)*, XXXIV, Scrieri (Writings), first part, PSB 15, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 68-69; Idem, *Tratat despre Întruparea Cuvântului și despre arătarea Lui nouă prin trup (On the Incarnation of the Word)*, XI, PSB 15, p. 104; *Ibid.*, XIII, p. 106 etc. See Michel Stavrou, "L'anthropologie de Saint Athanase d'Alexandrie dans le «De Incarnatione» et les «Discours contre les ariens»", *Contacts*, tome XLIV, année 1992, pp. 188-192.

<sup>38</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *note 30*, to St. Athanasius the Great, *Tratat despre Întruparea Cuvântului și despre arătarea Lui nouă prin trup (On the Incarnation of the Word)*, VIII, PSB 15, p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii și cuvântări (Homilies and Sermons)*, VIII, 5, Scrieri (Writings), first part, PSB 17, Romanian translation by D. Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986, p. 428.

or by his creative power.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, these statements do not deprive the image of the other significant qualities and neither do they limit it to the above-mentioned element. On a different occasion, St. Basil the Great states that apart from man, no other creature enjoys such a dignity as that of having been created after God's image. The image does not stand for an attribute which followed creation; it involves the very ontological reality which emerged from God's "hand" moulding the earth and the breath of His "mouth": "Rather, turn your thoughts to the blessings already granted you by God and to those reserved by promise for the future. First of all, you are a man, the only one of all living beings to have been formed by God (Gen. 2:7)... having been made according to the image of the Creator, you are able to arrive at a dignity equal to that of the angels by leading a good life. You have been given a mind capable of understanding, through which you gain knowledge of God. You investigate, with the aid of your reason, the nature of existing things. You pluck the fruit, exceedingly sweet, of wisdom. All the animals on land, wild and tame, all those that live in the waters, all that fly through the air of this earth serve you and are subject to you. Have you not invented arts and founded cities, and devised all the tools which minister to necessity and luxury? Has not your rational faculty made it possible for you to sail the seas? Do not earth and waters yield nourishment for you? Do not air and sky and wheeling stars show forth to you their array?"<sup>41</sup>

According to St. John Chrysostomos, the image involves reason,<sup>42</sup> dominion over other creatures,<sup>43</sup> consciousness,<sup>44</sup> as well as other faculties of the soul. St. John Chrysostomos thinks that the image is closer to the soul, since he does not desire to be considered by those who believe in the anthropomorphic attributes of God as a defender of the idea that man's body is created in the image of God's would-be body. They contend that God has body parts and limbs just as man has, and the text from Gen. 1.26 is used in support of their belief: "Here again, however, other heretics arise assailing the dogmas of the Church; they say, Look: he said, «In our image» – and from these words they want to speak of the divine in human terms, which is the ultimate example of error, namely, to cast in human

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, "Că Dumnezeu nu este autorul relelor" ("That God is not the Author of Evil"), 7, pp. 442-443.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, "Homily on the words: Give heed to thyself", in: Saint Basil, *Ascetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church, a new translation, volume 9, translated by Sister M. Monica Wagner, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1962, pp. 441-442; *Ibid.*, PSB 17, p. 372.

<sup>42</sup> St. John Chrysostomos, *Omilii la Facere – I (Homilies on Genesis – I)*, IX, 3, Scrieri (Writings), first part, PSB 21, Romanian translation by D. Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 110.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 4, pp. 110-111.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII, 1, p. 189.

form him who is without shape, without appearance, without change, and to attribute limbs and forms to the one who has no body".<sup>45</sup>

It is in this very context that St. John Chrysostomos affirms that the quality of man as having been created in God's image should be seen in relationship with the dignity of the name of master of the whole universe: "So «image» refers to the matter of control, not anything else, in other words, God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls".<sup>46</sup>

Despite all these facts, St. John Chrysostomos does not intend to say that the body is by any means inferior to the soul. On the contrary, man is both body and soul, and both are strongly related to each other. Not only the soul, but also the body reflects the Creator's wisdom and beauty: "After all, if the visible beauty of heaven prompts a well-disposed onlooker to praise of its Creator, much more readily will this rational being, the human person, be able to reason from the manner of its own formation, the eminence of esteem and greatness of gifts accorded it, and thus come to celebrate unceasingly the provider of such ineffable kindnesses and give praise to the Lord for his power".<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, St. Cyril of Jerusalem locates the divine image in the soul and explains that the soul solely was made after the image of its Creator: "learn further what thou thyself art: that as man thou art of a two-fold nature, consisting of soul and body... Know also that thou hast a soul self-governed, the noblest work of God, made after the image of its Creator: immortal because of God that gives it immortality; a living being, rational, imperishable, because of Him that bestowed these gifts".<sup>48</sup> However, he expressly asserts that the whole body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in man.<sup>49</sup> Everything that was made by God is good, but man spoiled God's gift by evil doings. Even genitals are good, since

---

<sup>45</sup> Idem, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, Homily 8, 8, translated by Robert C. Hill, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 74, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1999, p. 109; *Ibid.*, VIII, 3, PSB 21, p. 101.

<sup>46</sup> Idem, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, Homily 8, 9, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 74, p. 110; *Ibid.*, VIII, 3, PSB 21, p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, Homily 14, 21, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 74, p. 192; *Ibid.*, XIV, 5, PSB 21, p. 164.

<sup>48</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 4, 18, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, volume 7, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Massachusetts, 1995, p. 23; Idem, "Cateheze către cei care au să se lumineze" ("Catechetical Lectures for those who are to be enlightened"), IV, 18, in the volume: *Catechetical Lectures*, Romanian translation by Dumitru Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 58-59.

<sup>49</sup> Idem, "Cateheze către cei care au să se lumineze" ("Catechetical Lectures for those who are to be enlightened"), XVI, 16-22, pp. 281-286.

they were made by God's "hands" as well.<sup>50</sup> As such, the body is not inferior to the soul; on the contrary, both the body and the soul share the same dignity.

There are other similar examples given by the Holy Fathers, but we consider that the above-mentioned ones are sufficient to support our premises and argument. After looking into these aspects, 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 signify precisely the complexity of the human being, who was 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 (*ἡγεμονικόν*) part of his being, in the mind (*νοῦς*), in the higher faculties such as the intellect, the reason (*λόγος*), or in the freedom proper to man, the faculty of inner determination (*αὐτεξούσια*), 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".<sup>51</sup>

Nowadays, the Orthodox theologians unanimously agree upon the belief that man in his perfected entirety (i.e body and soul) was made in God's image: "The creation of man after the image of God does not refer only to the soul, but also to the body, for the body also has assumed the image of the incarnate Christ".<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 26, p. 180.

<sup>51</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1976, pp. 115-116; Idem, *Teologia Mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit (The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church)*, Romanian translation by Vasile Răducă, Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, f.a. (without year), pp. 144-145.

<sup>52</sup> Nicolae Arseniev, *Mistica și Biserica Ortodoxă (Mysticism and the Eastern Church)*, Romanian translation by Remus Rus, Iri Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, p. 26. See also John Meyendorff, *Teologia Bizantină. Tendințe istorice și teme doctrinare (Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes)*, Romanian translation by Alexandru I. Stan, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 189; Christos Yannaras, *Abecedar al credinței. Introducere în teologia ortodoxă (Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology)*, p. 74; Idem, "Principes anthropologiques", p. 7; Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul, *Chipul lui Hristos în viața morală a creștinului (The image of Christ into the Christian's moral life)*, Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, pp. 12, 33; Ioan C. Teșu, *Omul – taină teologică. Studii de spiritualitate filocalică (Man – Theological Mystery. Studies on Philokalic Spirituality)*, Christiana Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 156-157.

Archimandrite Placide Deseille emphasizes the apophatic aspect of the image and is convinced that it represents the human ability to take part in the divine work. Even if it is “formally located in the soul”, the image cannot be separated from the body and it does not have any significance without the latter. The image helps both body and soul, in the organic union of the whole person, open to the Infinite, that is, to God Himself.<sup>53</sup>

### III. Man as an image of the Image

According to the Orthodox Church, the following phrases “to be in/after the image of God” and “to be or to identify with God’s image” are not similar.<sup>54</sup> Each phrase is employed with a different meaning. There are two phrases and two different meanings, which should not be mistaken for either of the other meanings. The Holy Fathers have determined that it is only the Son Who dwells in God’s “image” (Phil. 2.6) and only “He is” the Image of God (2 Cor. 4.4). “In/after the image of God” refers to how man was made. Man was made in the image of the Son, as a living image of the Son, and therefore, man is the image of the Image.<sup>55</sup>

Being aware of the complexity and delicacy of these theological aspects discussed at large by the Holy Fathers, Father Stăniloae states 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 represent 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”.<sup>56</sup>

#### 1. Son – The Image of God

The Son is the Image of the Father inasmuch as He is His Word. He is not represented as His Father’s double, as a replacement, or as an imitator of Father. He is not a different image of the Father either, according to Patripassianism, and He is the real Image of Father. Being the Image of

---

<sup>53</sup> Placide Deseille, *Ce este Ortodoxia? Cateheze pentru adulți (What is Orthodoxy? Catechetical Lectures for the Adult People)*, Romanian translation by Liviu Marcel Ungureanu, Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2004, pp. 49-50.

<sup>54</sup> P. Tomáš Špidlík S.J., *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului creștin. I. Manual sistematic (Spirituality of the Christian East, volume 1: A Systematic Handbook)*, p. 90.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*; Michel Stavrou, “L’anthropologie de Saint Athanase d’Alexandrie dans le «De Incarnatione» et les «Discours contre les ariens»”, p. 189.

<sup>56</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea (The Holy Trinity or in the Beginning there was the Love)*, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 61.

Father means existing as an independent, distinct person equal with the Father,<sup>57</sup> since the Father cannot take on a distorted image, unable to mirror His beauty. The Son is His Image (He is not an ordinary image, or one of the many images; He is *the* Image), because He is the Only One who represents the Father and makes Him visible. The Father overflows His Son with the fullness of His love, while the Son, in His humble love for God the Father, changes this overwhelming love into God's image. The Son loves God the Father to such an extent that in His love that He transmits to the Holy Spirit, He reveals only the Father. He does not reveal Himself, He only reveals His Father. He is the Image of Father since His love for Father permanently dwells in Himself: "The Father is the source of existence, the source of our being, He is the ultimate ἀρχή, which cannot be impersonal and restricted, otherwise He might be preceded by something superior to Him. The origin without origin, or beginning communicates the dynamism of giving. He is God the Father alone. As such, He is felt as ultimate giving love. He has a Son, to Whom He entirely devotes Himself, since a dedicated Father devotes himself entirely to His Son. In His relationship with His Father, the Son lives as a perfect Son, as the One Who receives everything. The Father fully reveals Himself in the Son. In His turn, the Son fully reveals the Father Himself. He is the One Who highlights God the source, He is the proof of God the beneficial Source. Owning everything that the Father owns, the Son and the Word represent not only the meaning, but also the power, life, and God's complete work which expresses God's full love".<sup>58</sup>

While debating the Pauline perspective on the Son as the Image of the Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa states that the word "image" does not necessarily involve inferiority to the Father. It shows both the relationship between Father and Son and their equality. God in Himself has no name, but in relationship with the Son He is the Father. He is not a father in an impersonal and general manner, but the True and the Only Father.<sup>59</sup> He is the Father of the Son, but He is our Father as well. The Father dwells in the Son and thus, the Son can say: "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (Jn. 14.10). No one else, except for the Son is entitled to utter these words.

---

<sup>57</sup> "God, Our Lord's Word, was born of the Father, the Son who is timeless. He is Icon of the Archetype and One and the Same with the One Who made Him, since the great Son is glory to the Father" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, "Poeme Dogmatice" ["Dogmatic Poems"], II, 6-9, in the volume: *Opere Dogmatice [Dogmatic Works]*, Romanian translation by Gheorghe Tilea, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 134).

<sup>58</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, "Fiul și Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu, prin care toate s-au făcut și se refac" ("Son and the Word of God, Through Everything Were Created and are Rebuild"), *Ortodoxia*, no. 2/1983, p. 171.

<sup>59</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Despre desăvârșire, către monahul Olimpiu (To Olympius the Monk, On Perfection)*, PSB 30, pp. 462-463.



St. Basil the Great points to the fact that in the Holy Trinity, God the Father is the singular principle and reality and further comments that the Father born the Son equal to Himself, while the Holy Spirit is similarly equal and in the same order with the Father. Father and Son share the same attributes and the Son possesses all that is the Father's (except the capacity of giving birth and proceeding) and that is why He is the Image of the Father.<sup>60</sup> The Father gives Himself to the Son, and the Son, by being illuminated by the Spirit, reflects not only love, but also the Father. The Son represents the permanent living Image which shows the Father in the plenitude of His love.

Long before St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil the Great, the doctrine of the image had been differently analyzed by St. Athanasius the Great. In fact, the ideas shared by both St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil the Great had been inherited from the Great Alexandrian theologian. It is very well known that most of St. Athanasius's writings were directed against the heresy of Arius. St. Athanasius employs the phrase "Image of the Father" when he mentions the Son, since this clearly shows that the Son is the perfect Image of the Father, possessing a likeness or similarity to the Father, as well as the distinction between Them: "For as the Father is ever Father and never could become Son, so the Son is ever Son and never could become Father. For in this rather is He shewn to be the Father's Expression and Image, remaining what He is and not changing, but thus receiving from the Father to be one and the same. If then the Father change, let the Image change; for so is the Image and Radiance in its relation towards Him who begat It. But if the Father is unalterable, and what He is that He continues, necessarily does the Image also continue what He is, and will not alter. Now He is Son from the Father; therefore He will not become other than is proper to the Father's essence".<sup>61</sup>

As the Father is the Only One, the Image that reflects the perfection of the Father is Singular, as well. The Son should necessarily be perfect person, just like His Father, so as to be the pure Image of the Father. If the Son were inferior to the Father, he would not be able to mirror the perfect divine beauty of His Parent. The Son might look like a colorless stamp and might need other people's help: "For there is One God, and not many, and

---

<sup>60</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omiliile și cuvântări (Homilies and Sermons)*, XV, 2, PSB 17, pp. 510-511.

<sup>61</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Discourse I, 6, 22, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, volume 4, Athanasius: Select Works and Letters, second series, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 1995, p. 319; Idem, *Trei cuvinte împotriva arienilor (Three Discourses Against the Arians)*, I, 22, PSB 15, pp. 182-183.

One is His Word, and not many; for the Word is God, and He alone has the Form<sup>62</sup> of the Father”.<sup>63</sup>

The Son has always been the Image of the Father. Nothing new has ever been attached to His everlasting attributes and dignities. The Son has always considered Himself as being His Father’s Image. Unless He had had an everlasting Image, the Father would have felt alone at times. He would not have been Existence, Love, and Beauty. According to this argument, St. Athanasius the Great, in response to the Arian controversy, replies that in order to be the Image of the Father, the Son is begotten of the Father, and not made, as the Arians consider: “For to say that God is in this sense Unoriginate, does not shew that the Son is a thing originated, it being evident from the above proofs that the Word is such as He is who begat Him. Therefore if God be unoriginate, His Image is not originated, but an Offspring, which is His Word and His Wisdom”.<sup>64</sup>

## 2. Man – The image of the Son

Considering that the Son is the True and Only Image of the Father, the Holy Fathers have rounded up the teaching regarding the divine image in man; thus, in their opinion, being made after the image of God means being made in the image of the Son.<sup>65</sup> The Son is the essential support of the construction of the divine image in man. Man would not receive the image without the help of the Son. *The Son is the support of the human subject, his ontological underpinning.* It is also with the help of the Son that the relationship of the creature with the Holy Spirit comes to life. If man exists through the Son, it is through the Holy Spirit that he receives the power to move towards God, the Father: “The Word of God is the essential foundation of existence and the creation of beings, while the Holy Spirit is Who strengthens their subjective bias and their work in relationship with both the divine Subject and the human subjects. As such, the Holy Spirit reinforces and deepens human subjectivity. The Son of God embraces a human image in order to reinforce this image in its indefinite subjectivity, as He created and supported it; the Holy Spirit does not become hypostatically incarnate, as He did not create an image Himself and by this,

<sup>62</sup> In Staniloae’s translation is Image of the Father.

<sup>63</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Discourse III, 26, 16, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, volume 4, p. 403; Idem, *Trei cuvinte împotriva arienilor (Three Discourses Against the Arians)*, III, 16, PSB 15, p. 342.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Discourse I, 9, 31, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, volume 4, p. 325; Idem, *Trei cuvinte împotriva arienilor (Three Discourses Against the Arians)*, I, 31, PSB 15, p. 194.

<sup>65</sup> Olivier Clément, *Întrebări asupra omului (Questions on man)*, Romanian translation by Iosif Pop and Ciprian Șpan, Alba-Iulia, 1997, p. 50; Dumitru Radu, “Mântuirea, a doua creație a lumii” (“Salvation, the Second Creation of the World”), pp. 46-48.

He restores it in a practical and active manner [...]. Both prove an ontological efficiency”.<sup>66</sup>

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos distinguishes between the phrases “to be the image of” and “to be in/after the image of”, and further states that the Son is the Archetype of man, which means that man was made “in/after the image of” God, as the image of the Image, that is, of the Son. In no way should we consider that man is the image of the Holy Trinity, as this is an incorrect definition which works against patristic teaching. Man should be named the image of the Son. The trichotomic structure, in the psychological sense, of man as mind, word, and spirit does not necessarily convey the idea that man is the image of the Holy Trinity, since the three elements are not individual hypostasis, but energies of the soul, which only by assembling together with the body, can they make up the human person as a whole. Man is the image of the Son and of the Divine Logos after Whose reason was made.<sup>67</sup>

Despite these arguments, it can be said that man is made after the image of the Holy Trinity. He is the image of the Son, but he is made in the image of the Holy Trinity. The Supreme Trinity takes part in the creation of man and we can obviously infer from the statement “Let us make humankind in our image, according with our likeness” (Gen. 1.26) that God refers to the creation of man after the image of the Holy Trinity.

Orthodox theology has understood this attribute in two ways. On the one hand, this attribute is perceived as a special relationship with God, that man received at creation (an ability to receive the work of the Holy Trinity). On the other hand, this attribute represents the principle of the communal dimension of his ontological constitution, which tells man to love his neighbour. These attributes can be fulfilled by man only if he pulls himself together and gather all the elements of the image in the construction of the same work. Being made in the image of the Holy Trinity means living in peace and love, according to the way the Three Divine Persons live: “The Trinity is simple unity, unqualified and uncompounded. It is three-in-one, for God is three-personed, each person wholly interpenetrating the others without any loss of distinct personal identity. God reveals and manifests Himself in all things in a

---

<sup>66</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, “note 3”, to Nikitas Stithatos, “Cele 300 de capete despre făptuire, despre fire și despre cunoștință” (“On the Practice, on the Inner Nature of Things and on the Knowledge: Three Hundred Texts”), III, 6, in: *Filocalia (The Philokalia)*, volume 6, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 269-270.

<sup>67</sup> Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, *Persoana în tradiția ortodoxă (The Person in the Orthodox Tradition)*, Romanian translation by Paul Bălan, Bunavestire Publishing House, Bacău, 2002, pp. 160-162.

threefold manner. In Himself He is undetermined; but through the Son in the Holy Spirit He sustains and watches over all things. And wherever He expresses Himself, none of the three Persons is manifest or to be perceived apart from or without the other two. In man there is intellect, consciousness and spirit. There is neither intellect without consciousness nor consciousness without spirit: each subsists in the others and in itself. Intellect expresses itself through consciousness and consciousness is manifested through the spirit. In this way man is a dim image of the ineffable and archetypal Trinity, disclosing even now the divine image in which he is created".<sup>68</sup>

Man is made in the image of the Holy Trinity, but, through the work of the Son, he receives the filial dignity. He is made as the image of the Son, so that he might lift himself to the love for the Father<sup>69</sup> 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 involve the idea that man is the natural son of the Father. It means that man is offered the ability to work on his own filiation by cooperating with the divine grace. The image enables us to accomplish this work, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Is it true that we were all called to receive the filiation through the Son, we who received faith in Him and were not moulded in His image as images of the Archetype?"<sup>70</sup>

The biblical text that supports the teaching regarding man as the image of the Son is from St. Paul from Col. 1.15-17: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together". We can easily infer from this quotation that it is not man, but the Son, Who is the image of God.

From St. Irenaeus to Clement, from Origen to St. Athanasius the Great and the other Fathers of the Church, a clear-cut distinction has been made

---

<sup>68</sup> St Gregory of Sinai, "On Commandments and Doctrines, Warnings and Promises; on Thoughts, Passions and Virtues, and also on Stillness and Prayer: One Hundred and Thirty-Seven Texts", 29-31, in: *The Philokalia*, The complete text compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth, translated from the Greek and edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, volume IV, Faber and Faber, London, 1998, pp. 217-218; Ibid., *Filocalia (The Philokalia)*, volume 7, p. 96.

<sup>69</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, "note 403", to St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Despre Sfânta Treime (Dialogues on the Trinity)*, Scrieri (Writings), third part, PSB 40, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, p. 283.

<sup>70</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Despre Sfânta Treime (Dialogues on the Trinity)*, IV, PSB 40, p. 158.

between the Image of God [i.e., the Son] and the image of the Image [i.e., man].<sup>71</sup> In consequence, a new concept was born, the idea of *the Christological constitution of both man and the world*. St. Nicholas Cabasilas considers Jesus Christ as the Archetype of man. Man was not created in the same manner as other beings were created; he was made in the image of the Son. The *Christological stamp* dwells inside man's own self. According to the divine paradox, the old Adam is created in the image of the New Adam, that is, in the image of Jesus Christ: "It was for the new man 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. It was not the old Adam who was the model for the new, but the new Adam for the old".<sup>72</sup>

In conformity with this argument, we can definitely assert that man was created as a theandric being. He does not belong entirely to either the sky, or the earth. He is their meeting point. His vertical posture determines the existence of somebody who is looking for the sky, and this person is the only one capable of lifting the creation up to communion with God. Even if man lives on earth, in immanence, his existence can be traced back to a primary transcendent origin.<sup>73</sup> Man in his primordial state was meant to carry out his Christological constitution into a theandric state. In other words, man should have attained his union with God at that very moment of his existence, following the example of the union of Christ to God.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Panayotis Nellas, *Om̃ul – animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă* (*Man – Deified Animal. Perspectives for an Orthodox Anthropology*), pp. 61-62.

<sup>72</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, VI, 12, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1974, p. 190; Idem, *Despre viața în Hristos* (*The Life in Christ*), VI, Romanian translation by Teodor Bodogae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 195-196.

<sup>73</sup> André Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică* (*The Apophatical Anthropology*), p. 253.

<sup>74</sup> "The fact that Adam was created in the image of Christ implies that it was his vocation to lift up to the Archetype or, to be more exact, to purify himself and love God to such an extent that God should come and dwell in him, the Logos and man should hypostatically unite and, consequently, Christ should come down into history, to show Himself as God-Man (*ho Theanthropos*) [...] this means that he was thus created so that he, by his nature and human constitution, might lift his heart up to the One Who is His Divine Image. This means that He gave him gifts and He really gave them to enable man to actively participate in the embodiment of the Logos, which is «the perfect Image» or «the perfect Icon» of «the Father». «The image of God» is a real possibility, a pledge and an engagement guarantee that eventually leads to the event of the wedding, the hypostatic union, the unmixed, though real, mixture, of both divine and human nature [...] Man finds his ontological dimension in the Archetype" (Panayotis Nellas, *Om̃ul – animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă* [*Man – Deified Animal. Perspectives for an Orthodox Anthropology*], pp. 71-72).

The words of St. Maximus the Confessor perfectly reflect this idea: “This is the great and hidden mystery, at once the blessed end for which all things are ordained. It is the divine purpose conceived before the beginning of created being. In defining it we would say that this mystery is the preconceived goal for which everything exists, but which itself exists on account of nothing. With a clear view to this end, God created the essences of created being... The Logos, by essence God, became a messenger of this plan (cf Isa 9:5, LXX) when he became a man and, if I may rightly say so, established himself as the innermost depth of the Father’s goodness while also displaying in himself the very goal for which his creatures manifestly received the beginning of their existence. Because of Christ – or rather, the whole mystery of Christ – all the ages of time and the beings within those ages have received their beginning and end in Christ. For the union between a limit of the ages and limitlessness, between measure and immeasurability, between finitude and infinity, between Creator and creation, between rest and motion, was conceived before the ages”.<sup>75</sup> Thinking of His union with man, God created man. The Fathers of the Church say that man is a mystical church, a living temple where God comes to rest.

Through the Son, every man is endowed with the constitution of divine communion. The created image reflects the features of the One who created it, while the Son accepts to mirror Himself in man in order to help him grow in his love for the Father. This is not long-distance analysis, it is an innermost help that the Logos transmits to His image. The Son is both the origin and the aim of man, as there is an undistorted “communicative relationship” between them. This relationship, however, is based on the freedom and love of the Son. Man was not created on the grounds that the Son might need an image of His own. The Son is the absolute God and does not need any creature or being to exist as such.<sup>76</sup>

The existential relationship between body and soul is another proof that man is the image of the Son. The Logos communicates the two elements the reason for staying united. Body and soul intertwine and together they represent man as the image of the Son. All the same, this existential union requires a more intimate union, the one with the Archetype that made

---

<sup>75</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, “Ad Thasassium 60”, in: *On the cosmic mystery of Jesus Christ: selected writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, translated by Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York, 2003, pp. 124-125; Idem, “Răspunsuri către Talasie” (“Answers to Thasassium”), 60, in: *Filocalia (The Philokalia)*, volume 3, Romanian translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, pp. 304-305.

<sup>76</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, “Note pe marginea unei cărți de antropologie ortodoxă” (“Notes regarding to a Book by Orthodox Anthropology”), *Ortodoxia*, no. 1/1988, pp. 149-150.

possible the union of the elements.<sup>77</sup> As the body depends on the soul, man sees that he is dependent on the Son. He finds it impossible to seclude himself from the Creator, or to relinquish his attribute as image of the Son. The image is man himself, “it is part of the definition of human nature”.<sup>78</sup> As a person, man is endowed with the ability to enter into dialogue. God gives Himself to man and man, in his turn, receives Him, but, at the same time, man gives himself to God. This is how the image and the Prototype communicate. As a created being, man receives “the spiritual basis” of the image through which he can give himself to God and receive Him in his heart.<sup>79</sup>

St. Symeon the New Theologian says that we can see God as long as we “relate” to the Son, as we are made in His image. Unless we have a deiform structure, we are not able to search and receive God.<sup>80</sup>

The Son keeps alive His relationship with the image in order to help the latter discover the rich life provided by Father through the uncreated energies. The Son mirrors Himself continuously in His image, and thus, He awakens the longing of image for God. In this struggle, the images invoke each other in the same breath of love: “The image of God in man calls to the image of man in God; it demands the Incarnation... Once God has kindled the flame of love within the human heart He will never again be able to extinguish it, for it is directed towards Him; human love for God is of the same nature as the love He has for us. Love immortalizes, and conforms only to eternity”.<sup>81</sup> Divine love kindles human love and they both become one<sup>82</sup>, in order for man to become love by taking part in the divine

---

<sup>77</sup> “Man is the image of the Word as well, since there is an internal relationship between his rational soul and his body, similar to the one that can exist between the Divine Logos and humanity and, furthermore, that is created between He and the whole material universe. However, the relationship between the rational soul and the body is compulsory to both of them, as both were created for each other. Both were able to fully unite with the Logos, which, as Creator, is free to unite with them” (Idem, “Hristologia Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul” [“Christological Teaching of Saint Maximus the Confessor”], in the volume: *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă* [Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology], p. 104).

<sup>78</sup> Alexander Golitzin, “Simeon Noul Teolog: viața, epoca, gândirea” (“Symeon the New Theologian: His Life, Time and Thought”), in: Sf. Simeon Noul Teolog, *Scrieri (Writings) I*, Romanian translation by Ioan I. Ică jr, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2001, p. 499.

<sup>79</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, “Omul și Dumnezeu” (“Man and God”), in the volume: *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), pp. 270-271.

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Golitzin, “Simeon Noul Teolog: viața, epoca, gândirea” (“Symeon the New Theologian: His Life, Time and Thought”), pp. 499-500.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the salvation of the world: a Christian anthropology on the charisms of women*, translated by Anthony P. Gythiel, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York, 1994, p. 204; Idem, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii (Woman and the salvation of the world)* [Romanian edition], p. 210.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii (Woman and the salvation of the world)*, p. 233.

project, since God is Love in His Own Self.<sup>83</sup> In order to reach this spiritual aim, man should continuously work to his likeness with God.

#### IV. Conclusions

Orthodox Christian anthropology is founded on the premise that humanity was created to participate in divine life. Thus, with the help of the Holy Scripture, man succeeds in discovering himself, finding out his own nature and who he really is, and what his mission is in relationship to God, his neighbour, and the whole universe around him.

The focus of the Orthodox Christian anthropology is the notion of the image of God. The text of Genesis (1, 26-27) particularly stands for the clear evidence that man received a special and valuable gift from God. Being created in the image of God, man enjoys various ontological attributes and moral abilities that no other being in this world possesses. Subsequently, after reevaluating and cultivating the doctrine regarding the image of God in man, Orthodox Christian anthropology successfully explained and emphasized on who the human person truly was. Orthodox Christian anthropology also determined the dignity and good quality of the human person and showed how the human person could live in complete harmony and fundamental communion with God.

After consulting and considering various Biblical texts, Orthodox Christian anthropology points to the fact that man was made in the image of God, as the image of the Image, since only the Son is the Image of God as such. This terminology distinguishes, on the one hand, between man as a created and limited being who never identifies with God, and, on the other hand, man as participating in the divine life and enjoying the filial relationship with the Father.

By defining man as the image/icon of the Son, Orthodox theology emphasizes the divine-human dimension that characterizes man's existence. Jesus Christ is both divine and human. Likewise, man, following Christ, lives his life according to the precepts of Christ and in communion with Christ. In order that he might live forever in communion with the Holy Trinity, in Whose image he was made, man should receive the divine life from God.

---

<sup>83</sup> "The statement «God is love» (I Jn. 4:8) does not designate an attribute or a relation, but the divine nature itself. Likewise, man, made in the image of God, is invited to bring about love in his very being" (Idem, *Woman and the salvation of the world: a Christian anthropology on the charisms of women*, p. 257; Idem, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii [Woman and the salvation of the world]*, p. 265).