

# SECULAR AND CHRISTIAN IMAGES OF HUMAN PERSON\*

BY  
NIKOS A. NISSIOTIS  
Professor of the University of Athens

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## III THE IMAGE OF GOD

### Christian Anthropology in Dialogue with Secular Images of Man

The scientific and secular understandings of man do not constitute clear concepts. There is no scientific exact theory on what man really is. It is only by reference to some conclusions of scientific research that one can guess their impact on the possible understanding of the human person when one raises this question with scientists. Certainly, anthropological sciences, like psychology, and especially that which deals with the origin and function of the sub-conscious in order to promote introspective methods in their methodology, are closer to a probable construction of an image of the Self. But this «image» is still an analytical and descriptive diagnosis of the function of psychic life and not a systematic synthesis of a concept about the human person. Psychoanalysis does not suffice to produce an adequate basis for systematic anthropology. Only a «psychosynthesis» could approach the possibility of the construction of a consistent theory about human person, operating on the main issues and conclusions of a scientific anthropology, i.e. the origin, function and growth of «consciousness» in man. And yet, whatever «synthesis» exists in this connection is not what a systematic theologian dealing with the human person understands and tries to conceptualize.

Science in this case also will apply the method of gathering data derived from the analysis of psychic phenomena, experiences and evidence. In the realm of introspective psychologies these data shall be simply used towards the construction of a more comprehensive image of the psychic function in order to gain more efficient therapeutic techniques integrating into a new system of application scattered data derived from diagnoses. This is an extremely complicated process which

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\* Συνέχεια ἐκ τῆς σελ. 989 τοῦ προηγουμένου τόμου.

does not enable scientists to arrive at a notion of man as a whole. The passage from the sub-conscious through conscience to consciousness in operating this synthetic process is possible but never total and adequate. Because, at the final stage, consciousness can be everything relating to hereditary givenness: conscious growth together with esoteric traditions, physiological particularities of an individual, special environmental influences and particular undetectable reactions. The determination of the selfhood of man in science is the most uncertain goal of investigation on the basis of «consciousness» which can be everything from biological and physiological to the most conscious actions including also the para-normal faculties of human being. Awareness of the Self and experience of identity of the «I» transcend human knowledge as another «genos» in cognitive operation. Conscious will and desire also cause this «awareness of Self» to change its center of reference by unforeseen measures and unpredictable developments.

The scientific approach to man by a «psychosynthesis» would be a riddle for science itself. This attitude however does not imply anthropological agnosticism. In the contrary this humble position includes the category of mystery, which is becoming more evident, when scientific way attempts a «synthetic» knowledge out of the analytical data. In this direction biology will specifically define the characteristics of the biological organism and out of the scattered results of observation shall reach more synthetic global visions which accept the human being as an organism in universalistic holistic dimension, rendering thus the definition of man as a biological organism more complex and beyond precise conceptualization. In this sense it will be proved that «(a) the organism is a complex of elements in mutual interaction (b) the behaviour of an individual element is influenced by the state of the whole organism (c) the Whole exhibits properties absent from its isolated parts and (d) a biological organism is a basically active system. It has an autonomous activity, and is not basically reflexive or basically receptive»<sup>1</sup>. For psychology this broader vision of man in biology would signify the inclusiveness of all acquired observations of behaviour and unconscious trends into a whole synthesis of psychical and mutual interaction with the environmental influences and autonomous, inner psychical movements proper to every individual but at the same time com-

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1. Arthur J. Deikman quoted I. Bertalanfy in «The Nature of Human Consciousness», edited by Robert E. Ornstein, New York (The Viking Press, p. 320.

municable on a universal scale. As in physics, the term «complementarity» is used «to account for the fact that two different conditions of observation yielded conclusion that were conceptually incompatible, i.e. light behaved like a particle on one occasion and like a wave on another»<sup>2</sup>. Similarly in the whole process of self-consciousness and identity, psychosynthesis has the impossible task of uniting elements of psychic behaviour which prove not to be intrinsically incompatible but which are incompatible in scientific observation.

On this basis, science operates in a pre-anthropological area and prepares the anthropologist to admit the difficulty of conceptualization of the human person for the sake of a more comprehensive investigation of human life. In this sense one does not simply speak of «Man, that unknown being» but of «an extended concept of man»<sup>3</sup>, which has tremendous implications for scientific epistemology in human sciences and opens the way for the beyond-ness and transcendence of man within his immanence, as a biological, mental and psychological organism. Post-scientific epistemology introduces the categories of «universalism», «complementarity-communalism» and «organized scepticism» and affords human sciences the possibility of new points of contact — the most difficult thing in all dialogues especially in anthropology — with psychological, philosophical but especially theological approaches to the understanding of the human person.

Christian anthropology, dealing with this new type of epistemology, would have committed a great error if it had conceived an image of man by an exact theory with rational self-sufficiency. Facing probable contemporary secular images of the human person, Christian anthropology, especially today, has to confess its incapacity to respond fully to their challenge, realizing that it is beyond its power to produce a rational, systematic interpretation of its own image of man. Its first duty would be to proclaim honestly its limitations in face of the «extended concept» of the human person. The first point of contact with scientific models of man has to be established on this new category both of theology and of contemporary epistemology.

1. *The Imago Dei: Love, communion and humbleness.*

Following these remarks we have to be careful not to fall into any kind of triumphalistic speculation describing man as the Image

2. Ibid., p. 319.

3. Robert E. Ornstein, *ibid.*, p. 313 ff.

of God, because this anthropological affirmation of Christian faith is the highest and the boldest statement ever made in anthropology. Christians risk falling into all kinds of hidden «isothēia», theories of equality with God which is precisely what Christian theology should avoid doing by all means.

It is fundamental and imperative to focus our approach to the Christian notion of man in God, because of the affirmation that his image is of God. In this connection God is the Creator of man. There is an infinite difference between «creating» and «being created». The Church Fathers will insist on this notion by the term «diastēma» signifying «distancing», as we find it expressed in Gregory of Nyssa.

Further, following the biblical text we are not allowed to speak directly of man as the Image of God, as we usually do. The biblical expression relates to the act of God as Creator. Man is created «after» or better «according to the image of God». It is the act of Creation qualifying man as image of God and not man in himself directly. The image denotes the relationship of dependence of the created man on the creating God.

It is not, therefore, man as such, who is the Image of God, but it is the act of God placing him in the inseparable God-man relationship, offering him the freedom to grow and become «after His Likeness». The act of Creation is — as we already said — to be understood only christologically; «In and by him all things were created» (Col. 1,16). That is why the only one, the unique one called directly «the image of God» is Christ (II Cor. 4,4), who contrary to all possible triumphalistic temptations, as the unique Image of God, «thought it is not a thing to be grasped to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant» (Phil. 2,7). His glory, as the Image of God, is shown in his self-humiliation as a human person.

The Christian image of man is definitely theocentric (God-centered). We cannot escape including this reference to God in the dialogue with the secular images of man. We cannot, however, ignore the fact that we have to deal with an ontological affirmation of His Being and qualify His creative action as transcendent. But all of these references in the realm of anthropology have to be made in Christ, in the person of the historical Jesus in this world, in this history. The difficulty in dialogue is that Christians propose him as the realized relationship of communion with God, the Creator, and therefore, the One and Unique Image of man. But, again, this is not an abstract ontological

affirmation of the absoluteness of God but of the uniqueness of the Person of Christ. Unique signifies universal while absolute refers to the transcendence of Being. Christ, because he is unique, can have a universal presence. The nature of uniqueness is relationship on a universal scale.

Eikon, image, denotes the presence of a prototype or archetype. It is a representation, faithful to its original without absolute identity with the prototype. It is a «likeness», a «resemblance» which establishes a relationship with the prototype and its characteristic traits. Eikon indicates that an object is related with what precedes it, revealing the relationship between created and non-created. It is in this sense that Christ as the image of God has said to his disciples: «he that has seen me has seen the Father» (John 14,9). But it is evident that here the resemblance does not refer to the external traits of the prototype, but to essential elements of identity between Father and Son, and the accomplishment of the will of the Father by the Son in this world, in this history.

The verb ὁρᾶν (to see) in the Bible has a deeper dimension in many cases. «To see», on the part of man, signifies to know, to participate, to communicate, to coexist in agreement and to follow the will of God. St. Matthew makes use of this verse in one of these senses in one of the beatitudes: «Blessed are the pure in heart-for they shall see God» (5,8). «To see God» does not mean visionary contemplation of his glory only, but principally and primarily the desire of man to participate in his grace dynamically and existentially. In other words, mystical contemplation and union with God has to be interpreted by the existential decision of man to think and act according to the Image of God, i.e. in Christ and his involvement in history in the form of a servant and on the Cross. This is the Image of God in its uniqueness and universality in Christ. This implies for all human persons the need to relate with him, sharing through him in the holiness of God and acting accordingly in history.

It is, perhaps, through this approach to the notion of man as the Image of God, in Christ acting in history and its tragedy that we can suggest a dialogical image to the scientific and secular world. Certainly on the Christian part faith in the incarnation of the Logos of God is required. Without this presupposition agreement is not possible with the non-Christian images of man. But, if agreement is not possible the dialogue with them is fully possible and can become fruitful for both sides faithfully serving humanity together and the whole creation in

its movement towards continuous recreation. This christological and historical interpretation of the Image lays emphasis on historicity and facticity, leading to a dynamic involvement of man in Christ in the ongoing operation of the Spirit of God towards the new man in a new Creation.

There is no strict ontological and philosophical abstract notion of the Imago here, something which could equally divide and frustrate positivist scientists or activist secularists and adherents of political theology and «contextualists». Of course, there is the unavoidable reference to the act of the Creator which is transcendent and presupposes also an ontological reference to the nature of God acting as love in Christ and in the Spirit. But this ontology is grasped and experienced by faith, i.e. through a personal existential decision comprising the whole of the human condition in history. It is this kind of existential ontology and ontological existentialism which though a paradox in the eyes of a philosopher is however the authentic cognitive approach to the image of man of Christian anthropology establishing a point of contact with the secular images of the human person.

This realistic and dynamic approach to the Imago Dei underlines the means employed by the creating act of God: Love which is his essence, and therefore communion on a universal scale (which is the result of his essence) with the whole creation and all men; and finally humbleness and selfhumiliation which is the application of both in a concrete way in history for the sake of the transformation of the old man to a new creation.

Epistemologically also, this approach to the understanding of the Imago Dei can afford us the possibility of engaging in dialogue with the modern scientific image of the human person. Instead of philosophical, ontological abstract categories of thought, the Imago Dei notion expounded in this existential way can meet the epistemological and existential notions of the new scientific outlook comprising «universalism», «communalism», «disinterested and organized scepticism» respecting at the same time the «mystery» as the final option of cognitive operation in the realm of anthropology. For a better dialogical exchange on these notions, especially regarding the scientific «disinterested and organized pessimism» the «tragic traumatism» and the «existential anxiety» of scientists, as well as the Christian notion of «humbleness» and the need to grasp the human person in Christ which is always in need of a continuous transformation from the old to the new man, we have

to interpret the Imago Dei in connection with the fall and the sinfulness of man.

2. *Imago Dei: a hopeful and repenting sinner.*

The complementarity between the ontological and existential approaches to the interpretation of the Image of God is given in the biblical narration of the creation of the human person. There is no possibility of interpreting the image without the likeness of God. That we are the image of God means that we are created after his likeness also. There is a givenness, a constitutive element of man in God, which however depends on whether we are ready to put it into action by our free choice and will. Imago Dei means a reciprocity between the gift of God and our conformity to it through our free decision. The essence of God and the vehicle of his creative act is love, which includes both the constitutive element of the Image and the freedom of the bearer of this Image to live in accordance with it, «after his likeness».

This dialectical situation of the Image explains to us why it is never lost, because it is the creative constitutive element of the human being. But it can be seriously shaken, darkened, perverted. The Image of God is a gift of grace of God without which man cannot be constituted as a person. It is not a supernatural additional grace. The Image itself is both the basic constitutive substance of man and a gift of grace, because creation by love of God places man in a state of grace. One cannot lose entirely the Image as something «superadditum» or as «*justitia originalis*», something created by a second special act, which one can lose and still exist as a natural man. The grace of the Image constitutes the Image itself, identical with the being of man. He cannot lose it and still exist. But the existential side of the Image is expressed by the «after our likeness». This becomes almost a condition for the real presence and function of the Image. The «likeness» stands for the dynamic interpretation by life and existence of the Image, which cannot be lost — as the constitutive basis of man — but can be corrupted. To the constitution of man belongs the static being but its full realization and activation depends upon the existence in freedom of man and his choice.

The main property of man's nature is that he can live towards his likeness to God, which includes the possibility of his dissociation from God for «recovering» a fascinating independence which is given as possibility in his constitutive basis: the Image of God. A human being

is truly human only when he realizes his communion with God which is already given as his basic being, but even when he fails to keep himself fully in this communion he does not cease to be human. From a state of grace man is reduced to a state of expectation of a new manifestation of the grace of God who shall restore his Image by reestablishing his broken communion with man in Christ.

In the Greek patristic tradition we are given this dialectic between the ontological and the existential interpretation of the Image. On the one side one has the impression that sinful man has entirely corrupted and destroyed the Image of God in himself. But the same Fathers, on the other hand, defend the thesis that sin is not an ontological reality because God has not created it. It is the sin which made man lose almost everything that he was given with his creation («immortality... the conaturality with the divine life, the divine virtues, the fruits of the Spirit etc<sup>4</sup>) and still he remains within the framework of the grace of God which cannot be entirely negated by man. At the basis of this paradoxical dialectics there is an existential approach to the Imago Dei through the «likeness», and the Christological and pneumatological understanding of the Image<sup>5</sup>.

The fallen man can be defined in the following three stages:

a. He is the Image of God but has deviated from his main purpose. He is the living manifestation of the love of God, his Creator, but he is deprived of full communion with him.

b. The sinful man reveals the power and the transcendent nature of his self-determination. Freedom as of the essence of the Image of God qualifies the creating act of God operated by his love.

c. The fallen man makes manifest a perverted will, which changes his freedom as gift or grace to a false autonomy, resulting in alienation from God, egocentricity, false self-sufficiency, carnal spirit, the judgement of the law awakening the feeling of his guilt. Sin is broken relationship with God and with the other men, and the Creation. It is the absence of the grace of God which operates only through communion with man.

4. St. Gregory of Nyssa, P.G. 44,800 c.

5. Paul Evdokimov writes: «It is the source which is poisoned, because the ontological norm has been transgressed by the evil spirit... but as St. Gregory of Nazianzen writes (P.G. 37,2) by Christ the integrity of our nature is restored, because he represents in figure (archetype) that which we are» (P. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxie*, Paris 1959, p. 92).



The state of sin is neither a total negation of man's nature nor a definite fall. The existential «side», i.e. the «likeness» of the Image, at the same qualitative level with the ontological, defines the fallen man, following the manifestation of the Image in Christ, as a human being who by his appropriate use of freedom is on the way to repair this state of sin. To the decision of the first man to guarantee his autonomy by using the existential possibility of independence given to him by the Image corresponds now in Christ the new decision accorded again by the Image and the likeness of God arising from a completely different attitude, a change of heart and mind, the metanoia, as a new beginning towards recovering the broken Image. Repentance is also not a *status originalis* but a new direction within the state of fallen man, who is now defined by what he can become through a progressive change towards his full restoration. This is possible only in the reestablished full communion with God by sharing in Christ's body.

Within this same attitude of Christians towards recovering the full Image of God through repentance as the initial state towards the end, there are different emphases by different theologies and forms of praxis, which have a particular importance when we encounter Christian and secular images of man. Generalizing easily for a moment, I would risk making the remark that, while in the East we insist on the recovery of the Image through repentance in the communion of God (that is why Church, liturgy, Eucharist, and resurrection are at the center of the Eastern spirituality), in the West the emphasis is more on the redemption and justification of the fallen man (that is why prophetism, judgement and the Cross are at the center of Western Christian spirituality). Both theologies, the one of the Logos and the redemptive, are equally legitimate, but they are complementary and equally constitutive of an authentic approach to the interpretation of the Imago Dei today.

These two different emphases, dissociated from each other, risk inspiring two different types of spirituality of hidden, unconscious and latent triumphalism — with many variations for each one of them — which can, if professed in a radical onesided way, isolate Christian images of human persons from possible secular ones. The Logos theology though everything in it is entirely dependent upon the will and the energy of the Trinitarian God and the broken heart of the self-humiliated sinful man is always tempted to disregard the historicity and facticity of the Imago Dei. There is a tendency to spiritalization, to sanctification

of all things without reference to a consistent involvement, oriented towards the world, in the struggle with and for the secular. The Logos theology as more reflecting upon the mystery, mystically experiencing and liturgically celebrating Christ's victory, is bound to inspire a more transcendent spirituality with a cosmic vision resulting in a contemplation of eschatological fulness, which is already symbolically here in the liturgy. The Imago Dei in this case can become a detached reality from the world. It can be expressed by esoteric language and celebrated liturgically rather than worked out ethically by intense activity in the realm of secular powers. The activists in the realm of social revolutions as well as the scientists in their organized pessimism and their «traumatic anxiety» cannot find here an easy partner for action and discussion in anthropology.

Redemptive theology, on the other hand, can inspire an exaggerated expectation of salvation, which might concentrate our interest on receiving grace for justification while man still remains an unchanged sinner. To escape from the Eastern «deification of man» it falls back into a justified humanism, which might camouflage another type of self-sufficiency, superiority and individual enjoyment of salvation. While the East sees in the Imago Dei a «supernaturally natural reality», the West by professing as the supernatural element the created «*justitia originalis*» introduces a juridical term into anthropology and builds a theology of justification. Certainly, this approach makes the Image of God more world oriented and realistically linked with the human condition. But the «*justus*» idea dominates the «*peccator*» in a juridical scheme and the idea of salvation becomes too individually centered. The danger here is that a justified sinner is inclined to create in himself, though everything in this theology depends on the grace of God, too great a confidence in his self-justification.

The well-known psychoanalyst Alfred Adler criticizes this tendency as a probable danger of a superiority complex which is the permanent result of the reaction of the individual against his own feelings of inferiority<sup>6</sup>. He suggests an alternative term, which better corresponds to the whole of the Christian heritage, i.e. «repentant sinner», because «he is the type of man, in whom not only our times, but also the times of the greatest development of all religions have recognized the greatest value, as his position is far higher than that of thousands of justi-

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6. Adler A., *Menschenkenntnis*, Frankfurt (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag) 1980<sup>15</sup>, p. 189.

fied people»<sup>7</sup>. Alfred Adler, in the end, does not spare his criticism of an easy and superficial teaching about the biblical term «Imago Dei» given to young pupils attending catechetical classes, because of the possibility that young people easily — unconsciously — can create a false tendency to regard themselves as equal imaginary to God and fall into the complex of an imaginary superiority<sup>8</sup>. It is only the permanent state of repentance as a sinner that can help man to understand the Imago Dei concept in the appropriate way.

On the other hand, Christian anthropology dealing with the image of the human person should not insist on the sinfulness of man in a unilateral, onesided direction. In many cases, theology has confined itself to the problem of interpreting the how all men have sinned and are guilty because of the act of disobedience of the first man, Adam, according to the biblical verse Romans 5,12: «for that all have sinned». Christian anthropology has not equally emphasized that much more the grace of God in Jesus Christ «has abounded into many» (5,15). Repentance, therefore, has meaning only in the perspective of the hopeful expectation of man to be delivered from the bondage of sin. There is not only a solidarity or identity of all men as sinful but also a solidarity in hope. Perhaps the Christian message has to insist more on this dimension of the recovery of the benefits of the image of God, restored in Christ, than on the destructive effects of the fall. Otherwise theology risks offering an image of the human person threatened by all kinds of neurosis.

Christian anthropology should not forget that Sigmund Freud has focussed his theory about the origin and function of religion on the universal unavoidable consciousness of guilt, which is the result of the assassination of the «first father» by his four sons. This myth explains the solidarity of guilt of all human beings and it is for him at the root of all religions, which can be interpreted as a transformation of man's guilt complex and the sublimation of the libido. Religion in this sense should be characterized, according to Freud, as a universal necessarily imposed neurosis by which man escapes from his individual neurotic status<sup>9</sup>. This approach to the guilty conscience betrays a certain kind

7. Adler A., *ibid.*, p. 27 «der reuige Sünder» is the expression and the quoted phrase. We have to remind ourselves, however, that Martin Luther has not only spoken of «*simul justus et peccator*» but in one case he adds appropriately («*et penitens*»).

8. Adler A., *ibid.*, p. 190.

9. Freud: Moses und Taboo: assassination of Urvater: Totem und Tabu,

of influence from an onesided Judeo-Christian anthropology centered exclusively around the fall and the sin of man and the identity in sin of the whole human race. It is possible that a traditional Christian anthropology, which has not equally emphasized the dynamic aspect of repentance and the hope of man for sharing in the restored image of God in Christ, can offer a desperate deterministic image of man (fall — sin — redemption—justification) which provides the reasons for such a psychoanalytical, deterministic and mechanistic interpretation of the origin and function of religion and can create various complex situations in some believers. Together with the generalized sinfulness of the whole human race, which is right and fundamental according to the biblical message Christian anthropology, avoiding all kinds of absolutization of sin, has to focus its image of man also and equally or perhaps more in the positive side of salvation in Christ which is the hopeful continuous process of fulfilment of man's aspirations and expectations of realizing a more human life in this history.

The Christian image of man, on the basis of the «Imago Dei» doctrine, has to be professed against both of the possible deviations which have tempted theology in the past, against the idealistic, heavenly oriented doctrine divorcing it from its historicity and facticity, and against the pessimistic doctrine of the image oriented only towards the world and destroyed by sin, divorcing it from its higher original purpose and fulfilment. So to be faithful to its biblical basis, the Christian image of the human person, interpreting the «Imago Dei» concept of man, has to be focussed at the same time on the solidarity in sin but also on the solidarity of salvation as fulfilment in hope of the human expectation of overcoming in Christ his sinful state, and thereby feating all kinds of guilty concience.

Especially today, the reinterpretation of the «imago Dei» through an existentialist approach and at the same time through the ontological affirmation of its essence as communion with God, as it has been revealed in history in the Person of Christ, the image of the human person that Christians suggest points both to the tragic aspect of human existence as well as to its God-given origin and its higher purpose. The misery of sin has to be grasped in the glory of God's realized communion in history. Repentance is a continuous change of heart and mind operated within the sure hope of the final fulfilment in realising authentic

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IX, S. 175, 1961<sup>3</sup>-Religion as universal Zwangrhandlungen und Religiousübungen; Gesammelte Werke. Frankfurt (Fischer) 1966<sup>4</sup> S. 139,

humanity as the image of Christ, who is the unique «Imago Dei». Now, we can say of man in existentialist terms that he is what he has to become. Definition of the human person is impossible, because it can be understood only as a continuous process of change through repentance and self-humiliation in the light of Christ's exaltation and glory. Neither sinfulness nor glorification are the permanent status of the human person. If there is something permanent in man, that is his continuous struggle to overcome the status of misery in order to share gradually and progressively in the new reality of the new man in Christ.

Solidarity in sin and contemplation and sharing in the revealed glory of the unique «Imago Dei» in history should make us in East and West understand and profess the repentant sinner as an alternative to the man of pessimism and anxiety. It must be understood as a hopeful and repentant sinner. The Christian image of man, without being superficially optimistic, has to be a model of sober joy and dynamic hope, which is the motive of faith. Hope is the other name of faith exercised in love. Hope is the power moving man towards the future with vision, perseverance and joy. Without hope there is no faith, and love remains a sentimental, emotional reaction. The hope of the Christian model of man is a link with the hopes of the world, but it is also their critical justification and restoration.

The Christian image cannot exist without repentance. It is necessary that secular images of man should be challenged on this difficult point of contact. Metanoia, as a continuous change of heart and mind after a serious self-criticism, is always relevant for the secular models, especially today. Modern secular images of man are the fruits of pragmatism and immanentism in science and philosophy and of the submission of all ideologies to society acting as a detached machine in which politics dominate by seeking to secure a welfare state without cultural and moral dimension. Leslie Paul, commenting on atheistic existentialism and popular pragmatism, makes the remark that «the positivist or empiricist's hypothesis would necessarily be that one arrives at the concept man as one arrives at the concept house by the accumulation of a series of atomic sensations about them which upon reflection are united into a single concept, as with Locke's theory of how we arrive at the notion of substance—an idea, which is a kind of mental shorthand to save one from repeating additive processes»<sup>10</sup>.

10. Leslie Paul, *Alternatives to Christian Belief*, London (Hodder and Stoughton) 1967, p. 109.

This concept of man indirectly refuses normal communication with other human persons in love and mutual self-limitation and forgiveness. It is an horizontal view which makes all transcending values disappear in face of a confident pragmatist development. No wonder that the new pro-communal trends in science and society are in danger of being deprived of mutual deep appreciation of the other persons. Utilitarianism applied to persons and to society has replaced the value of the distinctive person, deriving from an ontological and existential principle. These new humanistic pragmatist images of man based on simple egalitarian principles of biological, social and behaviourist similarities disregard the dialectics of freedom and unify human persons in one simple organic and mechanical function in the name of justice and progress. Freedom as a one-dimensional quality for achieving independence in this context is becoming a negation of personal values. It lacks the deeper dimension of responsibility vis-à-vis the other distinct persons, since there is no reference to the transcending person qualifying freedom's essence as communion.

It becomes evident, however, that these inherited models of pseudo-social man begin to crack and shatter in the consciousness of modern man, especially amongst the young generation. The liberal, bourgeois, democratic welfare society, as well as the directed, collectively egalitarian society, have proved to be problematic equally for today's model of a free human person in a free society, conceived by a simple functional humanism. In the anthropology of today there is too much uncertainty, confusion and disappointment undermining by frustration the remains of an optimistic humanism. The question is how the Image of God, i.e. the Christian Image of the human person, can contribute to clarifying some basic issues and remind the present generation of a missing basic dimension in contemporary secular anthropology in the understanding of man as a «hopeful repentant sinner».

### *3. Imago Dei: a Challenge to Immanentist Human Identities.*

The scientific image of man comprising existential categories of universalism, communalism, organized pessimism and traumatic anguish, together with the psychosocial model, present a challenge to any unilaterally conceived transcendental concept of the Imago Dei. This recent development is causing a new attention to be paid to the historical facticity and the humane aspect of the Christian Image which is usually neglected in our theologies.

It is a paramount duty, now, that the reverse challenge of the *Imago* should become a factor in a broader concept of man in the secular realm. Though we again risk to easy generalization in our conclusions about the characteristics of some of the secular models of man in today's confused anthropology given above, we can remark finally that man in this new situation of disillusionment remains a man of courage and of adventure, enjoying his autonomy and his well-being, living in the affluent, abundant society of north-western hemisphere of our globe. Satisfaction and pleasure as well confidence in progress continue in spite of all kinds of deceptions, frustrations and suffering, and in face of the rise of uncertainty in public security, terrorism of all kinds and abuse of drugs. The archetypes of Prometheus and of Dionysos are still valid behind most of the models of secular anthropology in today's crisis. Secular anthropocentricity can survive even in the most tragic revelation of human limitation, solipsism and despair. Man can be paradoxically happy and selfsufficient in his own appreciation of happiness and momentary satisfactions within the most contradictory human situations. The immediacy of the experience of life of the autonomous human enterprise has kept its priority over any concept of a theoretical, philosophical and religious nature. The need of changing in the sense of biblical «metanoia» can appear as absurd today as during the prevalence of optimistic models of man which is definitely over. We have to be conscious of this fact and not produce any kind of easy apologetics based on the manifold frustrations of modern disillusioned man.

There is, however, an evident reaction against this anthropomistic satisfaction in today's human secular models from within this contradictory anthropology. Dramatists, writers, radical politicians and sociologists as well as the new revolutionaries in political theology are becoming more and more aware of the human person without escape, caught up within his solipsism. To this contradictory experience corresponds a radical opposition which cannot be expressed otherwise than as a scheme opposing frustrating disillusioned human reality inherited from the past with an utopian extended concept of man which is extended to the future. Utopianism is a substitute for the new natural theology of our days in the area of secular anthropology, social radicalism and revolutionary, political theology. Utopia is for man the necessary breathing-hole for seeking a false transcendence as he deceives himself suffocated by the totalitarianism of technocracy and material welfare within impersonal modern society.

The Imago Dei approach can only demythologize this new extension into horizontal utopian humanism by debating the question of identity as it is expressed in the secular models of man. Personhood and selfhood can be the missing fundamental elements in the secular image, while the image of God is precisely a model of reference and relationship which seeks human identity in man as a being-in-personal-and-communal-relationship. If there is a single determinism in anthropology it is that man as individual has to pass from individuality to personhood in order to find his identity in himself as a free, responsible, communal being. Wayne Oates defines self-hood as «the habitual center of focus of man's identity»<sup>11</sup>. We can say this center is always a center of interpersonal relationship. It is an encounter with another person who determines my free choice of freedom not seeking independence but always returning back to the original nature of freedom as communion having its origin in God as a plurality of persons in identity of essence which is love. The Imago Dei approach in anthropology is also anthropocentric, because of human freedom, but only when it reveals to man its theocentric origin and purpose. It is the outcome of encounter with the historical Jesus as the Image of God, i.e. as the incarnate Word of God.

The dialogue with utopianism of today centers in this sense on the issue of identity. If «personhood is an ethical concept»<sup>12</sup> then it is inevitable that to seek identity means to create models of life and action beyond subjective limitations. Ralph Ruddock remarks «man develops as a person in so far as personhood is imputed to him by others and by himself», and he continues that this person is socially conditioned, so that the term person has two distinguishable meanings. One is the complex of rights and duties imputed to the human individual, embodied in ethical prescriptions and cultural value systems. The meaning is in principle universal. The other is the freely acting participant in a social system, whose capacity for such action has developed on the same basis of some attribution of personhood<sup>13</sup>.

This is the meaning of selfhood in a pure consistent immanentistic line. There is nothing against it. But there is a question about the

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11. Wayne Oates, *Christ and Selfhood*, New York (Associated Press) 1961, p. 21.

12. As Ninian Smart maintains in «The Six Approaches to the Person» Edited by Ralph Ruddock, London (Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1972, p. 13 ff.

13. Ralph Ruddock, *ibid.*, p. 203.



universal principle of cultural value systems and ethical prescriptions. The *Imago Dei* would never admit a pure anthropocentric autonomy as a unique source of such universal concepts. Especially when selfhood relates to the anxious seeking by man of his identity, «universal validity» in the area of culture and ethics cannot be referred to or conceived without the uniqueness of a principle of transcendental order or, better, a person who by his uniqueness has universal value. It is true, precisely, as Ralph Ruddock, in the end, admits, that «religious writing informs us that 'identity-in-the-world' is itself transient and contingent, and requires the individual to live in the awareness proper to his 'real self' within a cosmic frame of reference»<sup>14</sup>. It is not simply a matter of «writing in» cosmic reference, but of a Person realizing communion between God—since he speaks of religion — and the whole Creation. The *Imago Dei* is called upon to play precisely this role in the search for identity of modern man by recapturing his selfhood in relationship with the historical event of the personal relationship realised between God and man as the pivot event in history.

It is in this sense that contemporary Christian theologies are trying to expound new identities with the Image of God within the limits of historical facticity. We can detect a twofold identity in these theologies, first, the one that God himself in Christ established by the humanity of Jesus and his appearance in the form of a servant; and second, the identity of man with this Image as he has to conform himself to this form and act accordingly. Christ as the Image of God in Jesus realizes God's identity with these who are in the state of a servant, in the sense of self-humiliation but also in the act of service to the one and paramount duty, that man by his effort has to realize this identity of servanthood in order to become more human and also to serve the process of humanization of other men who are also created at the Image of a servant and suffering God.

This double realistic identity is implied by the emphasis on the historicity and facticity of the Image of God as it can be conceived by stressing the human nature of Christ and by the christological affirmation of the inner inseparable unity between anthropology and cosmology, man and creation in a renewed *ktisis*. The radical appreciation of the historicity and humanity, following also the critical attitude towards metaphysics and transcendental notions in anthropology, have resulted in an anthropocentric and activist attitude of Christians and the affir-

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14. *Ibid.* 205.

mation of the identity of the Image of God in this immediate and realistic manner. In the liberation theologies God's Image is to be found as identical with the suffering man, the disadvantaged black person and man exploited by the forces of injustice and repression<sup>15</sup>. God acting in Christ as Saviour can be grasped in the person of the oppressed as «God of the oppressed»<sup>16</sup>, and his Image in the same way can be grasped in the person of poor people<sup>17</sup>.

This implies a consistent action of man sharing in the salvation given by God in Christ by an ethical conformity to his image in the historical person of Jesus who liberates from the manifold slavery, or heals of sick, helps the poor, the prisoners and the afflicted following the biblical appeal addressed to all men as the main sign of the messianic role of Jesus (Luc. 4,18-19). The humanity of Christ is the main feature of the Image in this world, identical with those who suffer and also with those who share in this suffering in the name of Jesus for man's liberation from all kinds of bondage in the unjust world-wide community. The humanity of Christ is professed here as not only the point of contact with the human condition in general but concretely with man in the state of bondage. The *Imago Dei* is reflected in this condition and in the struggle against it<sup>18</sup>. History renewed as part of the new Creation of the cosmos has its own main purpose in the liberation of the oppressed people as the Image of God and his children. The fundamental traits and constitutive element of the Image of God is love and freedom and therefore the Christian image of man cannot be conceived without his identity with the oppressed and those who are denouncing it by consistent action. The love and freedom of the Christian Image of man has to become liberation of the human person. The *Imago Dei* must be interpreted as continuous liberating action by human persons who are professing and preaching it as it has been revealed in the historical Jesus.

This understanding for a Christian Image of the human person today must be accepted as a consequence of the inseparable link be-

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15. For this notion of identity see the book of James Cone: *Black Theology and Black Power*, New York (Seabury Press) 1969.

16. The book of James H. Cone: *God of the Oppressed*, New York (Seabury Press) 1975.

17. The book of Julio de Santa Ana: *Towards a Church of the Poor*, Geneva (W.C.C) 1979, especially chapter IX: *Theology from the Perspective of the Underdogs of History*, p.p. 114-139.

18. The book of Gustavo Gutierrez: *A Theology of Liberation*, Mary-Knoll (Orbis Books) 1973.

tween cosmos, history and man. It arises from a Christology of nature as a new *klisis* and as a corrective against the traditional unilateral, sometimes pro-monophysite way of thinking in Christian anthropology which emphasized the divine nature of the Image of God only. Certainly, the contextual theologies of liberation are betraying also an oneness, perhaps because of their effort to call upon a more practical and active approach to Christian faith. It is necessary, therefore, now to try to construct the Christian Image of man by referring also to the missing transcendent and existential element of the Image of God, focusing it more in an inductive method on the humanity of Jesus and its implication as the necessary final reference for Christian anthropology, as seen especially from the tradition of Eastern Christianity.

## IV

## BECOMING HUMAN — BECOMING DIVINE

*Deification: a process towards achieving  
authentic Humanum in Christ*

The secular images of the human person, though deprived of an immediate and direct reference to a transcendent model of humanity are however persuasive in that they envisage man in his development towards becoming more authentic in his nature as a distinctive human being. Science, technology or social and political ideologies project an image of the maximum possible perfection within this world. Man has to develop his natural capacities and to improve human conditions. It is true that general anthropology contributes towards broadening and deepening our understanding of man, and «explores the range of man's capacity to build cultural systems»<sup>1</sup>.

The secular humanists betray a desire to serve the dignity of man. Regardless of special presuppositions in each field of knowledge and action they all converge in a desire to serve a process of humanization. We can detect common characteristics, therefore, which sum up all particular insights, visions and efforts towards the same end: a better humanity achieved by scientific knowledge and stewardship of nature, by facing diseases and hereditary deficiencies, by elevating cultural standards through art and creative imagination, by professing ethical norms for action and by attacking destructive and evil forces in unjust structures of society.

Humanization, in this sense, is a continuous process of improving the quality of life imposed on all men at all times and in all places on account of their humanity, which implies development, progress, growth, improvement of human conditions. There are not definite criteria of this almost natural effort, which constitutes the backbone of human history, but we can assert that no human being escapes this effort.

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1. Margaret Mead: «The Quest for the truly human». In «Study Encounter», Vol. II, No. 1, Geneva (W.C.C.) 1966, p. 2.

A human being has its definition as a person taken into a process of humanization and as sharing actively in this process by a personal contribution. No glorious theory about man nor any negative position regarding his nature because of his failures, moral deficiencies and his existence threatened by death can affect and hinder this humanization process as the main purpose of human life.

Certainly, this humanization process is a risky affair. It includes inevitably also dehumanizing acts. It causes confusion, since its criteria are, in most cases, not entirely clear. It can cause divisions amongst man because of the competitive nature of all human enterprises. There is the danger of self-denial and offence against the dignity of the person and humanity as a whole and at the same time of a catastrophe, due to excessive technical progress that man cannot master. But in all of these negative instances humanization remains the first and dominating feature of human history.

The debate is, therefore, not whether secular images of man have a value but what that value is. The image itself of man as a model humanization, an object of debate and possibly of negation, but in what way this image does not allow probable negative powers to operate against human dignity and offence humanity. The secular images of man in the understanding of a Christian are not false alternatives of the *Imago Dei*, but they can become ambiguous both in their impact on humanity and by the application in some of their models.

The missing element of a transcendent of theological nature in the secular Images of the human person does not disqualify the Image as such a priori. The mystery of the Creation of man implies that all human beings work unconsciously as collaborators with their Creator for promoting and fulfilling this Creation. Creativity is the common characteristic of all models of secular images. It is the deepest qualification of the nature of man which can be regarded as an indirect manifestation or as of the ontological depth and transcendence of human being. Further the fact that one reflects on the human existence reveals that man has as his purpose in life the achievement of the fullest possible self-consciousness and the fulfilment his inner impulse to recreate his deepest Self and his concrete identity as a distinctive person. In all kinds of scientific research or social and political activities, regardless of their individual or collective nature, the quest of, search for and experience of this personal distinctiveness is inherent in man's being and his value, and in almost all possible secular images of man constitutes

the basic element of his intrinsic value and worth. Creativity and self-consciousness and therefore the sense of ethical consistent judgement and action comprise the unavoidable basic elements of the secular images of man.

1. *Humanization as a God-given Process in the Service of Humanum.*

The understanding and appreciation of secular images of the human person depends on the value we ascribe on the part of Christian faith to these human efforts to make man more human. It seems to me that the impact of Christology on nature and the relation between anthropology and cosmology should lead us to acknowledge that humanization is one of the main purposes of Creation. This world and human history as a whole are means of man's struggle towards perfection and salvation. It is man's being and life work which is at the center of the historical process towards humanization. It is in this process that man proves himself to be a responsible creature in the midst of history bearing the marks of an intelligent and meaningful Creation.

There is, indeed, an evident obligation of man as an intelligent being to act for his further development as man in this history without external intervention. The structure of man's consciousness of being and possession of a deeper Self with a prescribed plan of his continuous transformation is the first thing that he experiences in all phases of his involvement in history. Without concerning himself with great philosophies about the intrinsic value of nature and the historical process, a human person, as by his nature, tries to respond to plans of life, value systems and a deeper meaning of what he has decided to do at every moment in his daily life, which are all already prescribed for him.

Involvement in history signifies sharing meaning and serving purpose in history as it moves towards its fulfilment. Nothing is meaningless and vain in nature and cosmos. It is this truth that compels us to define man as a creature-in-hope looking always forward to his development and nature manhood. Without any immediate sense of God's calling to act according to a given plan of humanization in Creation, man inevitably becomes an actor of this plan by a simple conformity to an existing order and purpose that he finds subjectively structured in himself and objectively present in history. Not only as religious but as a secular man, even in his radical agnostic position, a human person is defined as a self-predetermined being in process of be-

coming more human, i.e. more conformed to his nature and purpose as a thinking creature in an intelligent Creation. Everything in the world demands that man shall work for promoting human development and his fulfilment by consistent action, and everything in human effort is subject to evaluation according to the corresponding attitude he has taken in answering this demand from the world and from his consciousness that he is a human person. Without referring to a transcendent Being, a human person transcends himself everyday by his unavoidable actions as one involved in the process of his humanization and fulfilment.

It is inadmissible on the basis of a consistent Christology of nature to maintain that history is meaningless or entirely corrupted because of man's fall and sin. This approach represents the most Promethean attitude in this Creation, if one at the same time accepts that human efforts are decisive in giving meaning and purpose to life. The fact that we cannot define what is «humanum» as the purpose of the process of humanization does not mean that history has no meaning. It means that humanum cannot become one ideology amongst many and that there is no repressive obligation for a man to become what he should become, negating thus his freedom, the main element of the humanum.

Certainly, one can attempt a description of the distinctive characteristics of a human person within Creation, making him able to speak and act in the service of humanum. David Jenkins makes the comment: «Humanum should not be considered as if were a collective adjective treated as a man designed to point towards what is distinctively necessary for our existence to be a human existence»<sup>2</sup>. This is due to the fact that one cannot make an exhaustive and adequate analysis of these particularities which construct the essence of humanum. If there is something resisting logical and systematic analysis it is precisely the qualitative essence of humanum as it is clearly grasped, and especially as it is experienced, as a process in which we are involved. Together with apophatic theology there is apophatic anthropology, which does not really mean ignorance, agnosticism or abstraction. On the contrary it means personal involvement and relationship with an undefinable object.

By the «humanum» as the final stage of the process of humani-

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2. David Jenkins, *Towards a Purposeful Study of Man*. In «Study Encounter», Vol. V, No. 4. W.C.C. (Genève) 1969, p. 154.

zation in this sense, as an unavoidable involvement of man in history, we are obliged as Christians to recognize man as created according to the Image of God permeating the natural order of man's Creation. By the study of the humanum as the particular, the undefinable characteristic of the secular image of man and as a result of the incarnation of the Logos in this history and world reality, anthropology is a theology of the process of humanization. To consider the humanum in the secular realm means to do a theology of man involved by God in the world struggle in order to fulfil his God-given purpose as a human person.

If there is a glory in man's enterprise this is the glory of the deeper purpose of Creation reflected in the human process of making man more human, i. e. after the image and likeness of God. All human beings are to be seen within this struggle to become human, as they reveal God's glory in becoming human in this history. Therefore all events in history manifesting man's effort to become more human are elements of doing the appropriate theology of the human person. The context of theology of man is the process of humanization because man can only in this context realize his calling to become more human as a God-given reality in Christ.

A human person in the process of humanization becomes meaningful in so far as he is creative. Creativity is a sharing in God's image as Creator. Humanum is precisely a sharing in God's deepest essence and grace. Creativity does not only unite all men as one of the common characteristics of humanum. It is more important that it makes becoming humanum a sharing in divine nature. Man's process of humanization is in itself a process of being on the way to the maximum possible end, purpose, and fulfillment of man's nature and life, which is God's communion and love. We should not minimize this God-given dynamic sharing in the Image of God because of the sinfulness of man and especially the tragic element represented by the existence of death in history. Humanization is a process of making the glory of God, as Creator and regenerator of human history, manifest in this world. But of course, it is a glory of the Cross in the light of resurrection. It is the drama resolved by the victory of God in this world. Death is not simply an annihilating element but also and principally in the light of the resurrection a positive one of human existence.

The process of humanization reveals in human life and world history that God's image in man is the reality of God's being acting in history and Creation through an inner personal and unbroken relation-



ship with the human person. Man's sin cannot break this link. It can damage it but never destroy it without losing entirely man's humanness. Within this process of humanization a Christian approach to the secular models of man recognizes God's being in solidarity with the human process towards the achievement of full manhood as it has been revealed in Christ. His Being becomes in this way communicable as new life. Any static concept of God as Being-in-itself, absolute and unapproachable in his essence, is defeated by his self-communication in the God-created humanum, his sharing in it finally in Christ.

Therefore, humanization is also and finally a sharing in the divine life. Becoming human is equal to sharing in the divine nature.

*2. Deification: a sharing in God for achieving authentic humanization.*

It is in this direction that we can approach and try to understand the central meaning of the Image of man in God according to the Eastern Orthodox Tradition, i.e. the *«theosis»* of the human person. It is too easy to make an interpretation of this notion as signifying a cryptic, ecstatic, mystical and visionary attitude of Orthodoxy in connection with the reality of human person. *Theosis* is not entirely what I understand that the term «divinization» might signify as pointing to the change of human nature and assumption of another being. *Theosis* is not *«theopoiesis»* in the sense of being made divine, though St. Athanasius use the verb also<sup>3</sup>. Deification is closer to the Greek term as pointing to a deified nature, which does not lose its identity though it has passed through a transformation of the existential qualities of a being.

This inner change is the stumbling block for human reason because it cannot admit a change within a substance which cannot be objectively detected and analyzed. The appropriate appreciation of this anthropological Eastern doctrine has been made more difficult by the radicalization of sin in the West resulting in the idea of the immense and unbridgable gap between God and man. But it is well known that many Church Fathers in the West have defended deification as the culminating point of Christian anthropology. E. L. Mascall reminds us of the phrase of St. Augustine: «God wishes to make you a god, not by na-

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3. St. Athanasius sums up the whole purpose of the incarnation in the act of man's deification. «He (Christ) assumed human nature, so that we might be divinized» («αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηθρώπησεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν»), P.G. 25, 192.

ture, but by adoption. Thus the whole man is deified»<sup>4</sup> and sees the difficulty as lying in the Western teaching that man has a created natural order and another supernatural order by additional grace without communication between them<sup>5</sup>.

The Eastern Orthodox Tradition does not hesitate on the basis of the incarnation to operate a Christological anthropology of «deification». The permanent guide in Christian theology is the hypostatic union between the two natures, divine and human, in Christ without change or confusion. There is a kind of «*mixis*», mixture, between the two operated by the Spirit which cannot be similar to any other mixtures we know in the natural order or in philosophy. It is not a totally new being resulting out of this mixture but there are not too separate things remaining after it either. As in the hypostatic qualities amongst the three persons in the Holy Trinity, so it is with the two natures in Christ and so it will be with the possibility for man of union by the same Spirit with God in Christ without losing his identity as man. There is a reciprocal communication of essential qualities without personal identity and nature being changed or affected on each side<sup>6</sup>.

Behind this notion of «mixture» there is the reciprocal movement between the Persons of the Trinity and the communication with man on the basis of distinction between essence and energy in the triune divine Being. This is not a speculative doctrine but a reflection on the nature of the dynamic movement in God as it is given in the Bible because of the incarnation. We shall never understand «deification» in the appropriate God-initiated movement unless we focus it in the Trinity and in the communion of God and man realized in Christ.

God is love. That means that God in his ineffable and incomprehensible nature is reciprocal personal movement because love as identity in essence signifies and creates a movement towards other persons of the same essential identity. God as identical with his essence as love is One but he is never alone. He creates persons identical with himself and therefore in communion with himself. The One-ness of God in the identity of love excludes the loneliness of God.

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4. Serm. 166, 4. E. L. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human*, London (Oxford Univ. Press) 1959, p. 65-66.

5. *Ibid.* p. 57-58.

6. Gregory of Nazianzus: P.G. 36, 140, 93, 165, 168. On this subject about «mixis» see Harry A. Wolfson: *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Cambridge 1964, p. 372-386.

God therefore incomprehensible in his essence becomes more immediately accessible as communicable, because his essence as love becomes a dynamic movement out of which Creation is possible, bearing the same sign in its substance: communication. There is, apart from objective knowledge acquired by observation and analysis, a knowledge caused by the reciprocal movement of persons. This knowledge is the one that God has first of us (Gal. 4,9) so that we can know in Christ communicating by his grace with his nature. It is this knowledge as movement person-to-person (*prosopon-pros-prosopon*) (I Cor. 13,12) which is the outcome of the essence of God, as love, in communion with man, effected by the Spirit.

It is this kind of movement in God manifested in Christ and actualized by the Spirit, that the Bible speaks about, as the presupposition of being able as human beings, created «according to their Image and after their likeness» (the plural is very significant in this case), to become «partakers of the divine nature» (II Pet. 1,4), because of Jesus who «has given to us all things through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue» (II Pet. 1,3). Divine essence as love, movement as energy implying personal communion and knowledge resulting from this communion: these are the categories prescribing the nature and function of theosis as the supreme *telos* of the Christian Image of man manifesting the fact of man's Creation after his Image and after his likeness. Theology and anthropology are interpenetrated and interdependent areas of knowledge and there is no demarcation line between *divinum* and *humanum*.

This esoteric, mystical language should not create, therefore, the impression that we are detaching ourselves from the human reality and condition. «Deification» is the strange term for the most immediate reality (consistent with Christology) and experience of life in Christ and in the world, because «theosis» is never meant in the above given interpretation to indicate a hidden transcendental reality. If it is regarded as a mystical trend then mysticism must be understood as the most natural experience of reciprocity and relationship, i.e. knowledge through intrinsic communion with another person. Deification is, in the Orthodox Theology, the initiative of God communicating with man out of his sovereign will and outcome of his love and concern for man. It is not another super-nature of man added by a special transcendent act. Certainly, because the movement originates in God, it is revealed in Christ and realized by the Spirit, it can be characterized as super-natu-

ral in a special sense. But it is connected with man's nature as it is in the process of transformation without losing his identity as a human being. His change is within human nature because of the human deified nature of Christ, in which he is called to share by faith and in a concrete way by sacrament and word. The deification of man is ontologically the sharing in Christ's human nature but a nature which is deified. Therefore, deification is an operation in natural man, here and now in history. The nature is conceived as a movement towards a super-naturally natural being in continuous, inner transformation from his manhood to his real and authentic humanity restored in Christ.

Deification is finally in this sense a process of reaching out to authentic humanization. It is the implication that Christ does not reveal only the *Verus Deus* but he is also the *Verus homo*. He does not only reveal by his incarnation the movement of God towards man but also that of man towards God. He does not make God known by reason, but he initiates personal communication between God and man, elevating man as participant of divine nature. Becoming really man means becoming divine within a process of deification that remains within the limits of human nature and condition. Human life is permeated by the deified humanity of Christ. As really human, man has his definition in the possibility of becoming partaker of the divine nature.

The process of the humanization towards the humanum is the same process for recovering it in the divinum; by deification, therefore, is a process towards authentic humanization. This exchange of qualities between divine and human does not alter essentially human nature but it restores it to its appropriate order after the image of Christ, who is the Image of God, appearing in the form of a man.

E. L. Mascall can express with the Western precision and clarity what happens in deification in this context. «First», he writes «the supernaturalization which grace produces operates in the very substance of human nature far beneath the level of observable behaviour... second, while it works by transforming man's natural being, grace is directly concerned with his supernatural end and makes his natural end ancillary and contributory to it and, third, intimate as it is, the activity of God at the ontological root of our being by which he keeps us in existence and energizes our nature far more intimate is his activity in us in the supernatural order»<sup>7</sup>.

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7. E. L. Mascall, *ibid.*, p. 65.

### 3. *Authentic Humanness in Humanizing Divinity.*

This interpretation of deification as the purpose both of the process of humanization and of the Incarnation of the Logos has a particular bearing on the interrelationship between secular and Christian images of the human person conceived on the ground of interdependence of secular cosmology and Christian anthropology. Certainly, within the church life and Orthodox spirituality deification has definite and clear implications first in the area of personal ethics, initiating total conformity to evangelical virtues and the imitation of Christ in the mystery of transfiguration from glory to glory; second, in the liturgical life as the climactic manifestation in worship of the deified nature of man and his elevation in his supreme order of collaboration with God in his creation; third, in the broadening of salvation to cosmic dimension including nature and all things in the process of theosis; and, fourth, and most evident and important, in opening the vision towards the glorious final end and fulfilment in history by anticipation as a realized eschatology. This definite deification, clearly bound up with inner church life, should not be regarded as a transcendental vision detached from the world situation, which unfortunately is the case very often. In reality, this should be a reminder of the centrality of deification for historical facticity, for man's immanent relationships as they are now re-evaluated by Christ's incarnation and the right understanding of the Image of God implied by the manhood of Christ.

«Secular» and «Christian» are related as the areas of humanization and deification mutually exchangeable, complementary and interdependent. You cannot speak of the one without the other. Humanization and deification become the two perspectives of the one movement of immanence within transcendence and vice-versa. Humanness is possible only by its reference to its divine origin and purpose and deification is the paramount reality of humanness. Man as the *Imago Dei* is the link between the two and therefore he has his proper definition as a man in the process of change from being human to being really humanized through his deification. Everything now becomes a flow of inner, deeper, invisible transformation within humanity which is transformed into the receptacle of divine grace for its own fulfilment, through the infinite movement towards achieving God's likeness.

In this context transcendence in anthropology is the ontological reality of the deepest humanum in God, as he is acting in Christ by the Spirit. Transcendence according to this concept of the Christian Image

as the outcome of the Imago Dei and the likeness is the process of man's transfiguration from natural humanity to the movement of deification. Transformation in man's nature is a far more vital, difficult act and notion than what is meant by the term transcendence in the realm of reason and philosophy. It is more difficult to change human nature from sin to sanctity, from meaningless creativity to responsible *synergia* with God than to create something *ex nihilo*. That is why it is only God with the consent of human freedom, who can work this kind of transformation. Deification has always its origin in God like the Incarnation. There is always a priority for God's humanizing process over the human act of accepting and operating it out of man's free will.

This type of transcendence permeates all human enterprises. More and more science realizes that knowledge in its manifold application bears an ontological, essential, deeper movement of personal relationship. Every new discovery in the realm of science is a new discovery of the inner interdependence of things with man's mind accompanied by a profound involvement of change of one's own person-in-communion with a transcending power of transformation. Research is revealing the three-fold reality behind things and human reason: personal interpenetration as a real intercourse of male and female, mutual exchange of roles between nature and human mind, and finally reference to a supra-individual focus, which are all inherent within these relationships. For Michael Polanyi: «a discovery is always creative. As man discovers, his personality changes. If man refuses to grow and evades change, his thinking becomes schematized. Unwillingness to change leads man to do violence to facts,... he quenches the spirit of inquiry which issues from the depths of existence»<sup>8</sup>.

Though science requires individual concentration and operation and the objective field of research is clearly objective, the essence and the character both of knowledge and objects are more deeply connected in existential terms, representing an interpenetration of transcendence and immanence. John Macmurray accepts that an impersonal science is an impossible notion and writes in this connection that the terms «transcendent and immanent refer to the persons as agents and they are strictly correlative. Pure immanence like pure transcendence is meaningless. Whatever is transcendent is necessary immanent, and immanence in turn implies transcendence. God therefore, as the infinite

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8. Aarne Siirala comments in this way on M. Polanyi's philosophy in his work; *Divine Humanness*, Philadelphia (Fortress Press) 1970, p. 137,

Agent is immanent in the world which is his act, but transcendent of it»<sup>9</sup>.

In all realms of intellectual or cognitive, volitional and emotional life all kinds of dualisms should be defeated if one thinks of man as created after the Image of God uniting dynamically humanization and deification. Man is coming slowly into an age of maturity by conceiving reality and himself as a bi-polar unity. All kinds of splits in all areas of reason, will and feeling are slowly being understood as necessary challenges for communal thinking and action. Life takes its deeper sense as divine humanness and humanness in process of deification in man's effort to realize unity and equality between spirit and matter, individual and personal, subject and object, body and soul, divine and human.

The greatest challenge, perhaps, in this respect is man himself as a total human person at risk and under trial in his bi-sexual being as male and female. This is indeed, from the natural point of view, the most fundamental split and striking division in himself as the Image of God. It is the encounter in transcendental dimensions, indeed, because man-woman does not constitute a simple relationship but a full interdependence. The more any kind of undue imbalance and inequality is overcome the more a human being is in the process of his deification. Humanness entirely depends on the continuous reconstruction of the Image of God as an interchange on an equal footing of full complementarity and communal interpenetration of man and woman as the one whole human being in the making within the Trinitarian God. Male and female are rooted inside the Trinitarian communion of personal relationships based on the identity of essence which is love. The perversion of this relationship is a pure and direct negation of the Christian triune God as fulness of communion.

It is not the fundamental role of maternity which is decisive for creativity as external rapport to the Trinity which makes the psychiatrist C. Jung profess the necessity of «Quarternity» instead of the Trinity. But the maternity as it appears in the Person of Mary, not as Christotokos but as Theotokos, is inherent to the Fatherhood, the Sonship and the Procession inside the Trinity. The «maternity» archetype is the manifested outcome of the essence of God as love and is implied in the Fatherhood. Christ, therefore, as the Word incarnate represents as male historical person both aspects of creativity of the new man as

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9. J o h n M a c m u r r a y, *Persons in Relation*, London (Faber) 1961, p. 223.

deified in full identity and complementarity of male and female. Discrimination against either sex is not a simple negation of ethical order but a refusal of the humanization process and humanizing act of God, in other words it is inherent in the full acceptance of authentic deification as the basis of realizing full manhood. The Image of man according to the *Imago Dei* is recognized only in the full identity and reciprocity of communal being reflecting the divine essence. The question of equality and reciprocity here is the basic anthropological issue for a Christian model of man in dialogue with secular images.

The Eastern Orthodox approach to the human person as created in the Image of God lays, in other words, its emphasis in the effort of man to realize the Image by actualizing the «*similitudo*» (after God's likeness). It is the sense of «*existential ontology*» which has priority over rational transcendentalism. With this presupposition Christian and secular images of the human person might enter into fruitful encounter without discriminating between secular and sacred. Becoming human is possible through becoming divine by participation and deification. This is to be attempted only within the process of humanization, which is also a God-given order and possibility.

Certainly, this concept of the human person presupposes faith in the event of the incarnation and the Christology of nature. Without it there is no possible exchange of views for the sake of a fuller understanding of humanity. But, there is from the Christian point of view an open possibility of appreciating the secular movement of humanization as sharing in ongoing fulfilment of the purpose of the whole creation: to create a new man together with the world. Eastern Orthodoxy has on this point its main and crucial standpoint facing the secular images of human person as valid partners of dialogue and action within the one Creation.

Perhaps, this presentation of the Christian Image of the human person has to a certain extent failed to appreciate the reality of fallen man as sinful, in the eyes of a Western Christian. It is possible. It seems to me, however, that Orthodoxy faces this aspect of humanity in its full negative ontological content and significance by the image of the «*hopeful repentant sinner*». The human person created after the Image of God and «*after his likeness*» should be grasped principally in his movement towards his prototype and not through its negation. Sin should not remain the abstract «*substratum*» of guilt, preventing all efforts of transfiguration, discouraging all dynamic attempts of a person as member of the *Ecclesia* to fulfil his calling. The calling of God for Or-



thodoxy will be always understood as an imitation of acquiring the things which are given from above and a movement forward to the future in eschatological anticipation. Sin as a permanent «guilt-conscience» can hinder this perspective. Christology of the Image of God in the human person signifies a total affirmation of authentic humanity as rooted and determined in the divinity. It is the way of the resurrection. Without the latter the Cross is deprived of its entelechia for the human person, and history becomes a meaningless circle under the domination of death. The Christian image of man on the contrary has to be understood as an appeal to all men to share in the glory of God and his victory in history, here and now.