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*Ján Zožulák and Michal Valčo***Byzantine Philosophy of the Person and its Theological Implications¹**

Abstract: This article analyzes both the historical roots and anthropological/ethical implications of the Byzantine, Eastern Orthodox interpretations of the *imago Dei*. Byzantine anthropology is contrasted with other anthropological approaches and emphasis is laid on the notion that, by integrating all cognitive concepts of the main currents in Greek philosophy, Orthodox theology in Byzantium rejected autonomous anthropology. Byzantine thinkers give the human being great value because he is the crown of creation, initiated into the mysteries of the invisible creation and the king of the visible creation – due to his being created in God's image. It is, however, not only the common origin that unites people into one family, but also the purpose of their existence which is the activation of their potential to achieve God's likeness with the help of God's grace. This means that the goal of the human being is to rise from plain biological existence into a fellowship of people in harmony with the whole creation. The participation of humans in the condition of a transcendent Fall is considered in conjunction with the danger of Gnosticism with which the Byzantine fathers had to come to terms with.

Key words: Byzantine philosophy, person, anthropology, Eastern church fathers, God's image

Povzetek: **Bizantinska filozofija osebe in njene teološke implikacije**

Članek analizira zgodovinske korenine in antropološko-etične implikacije bizantinskih, pravoslavnih interpretacij človeka kot božje podobe (*imago Dei*). Bizantinska antropologija je primerjana z drugimi antropološkimi pristopi, pri čemer je poudarjena predstava, da je bizantinska pravoslavna teologija, potem ko je vse spoznavne (kognitivne) pojme prevzela iz glavnih tokov grške filozofije, zavračala avtonomno antropologijo. Bizantinski misleci človeškemu bitju pripisujejo veliko vrednost, saj je – ker je ustvarjen po božji podobi – krona stvarstva, vstopa v skrivnosti nevidnega stvarstva in je kralj vidnega stvarstva. Božja podoba ni zgolj skupni izvor, ki vse ljudi združuje v eno družino, temveč tudi njihov bivanjski smoter, ki je prebuditelj njihove možnosti, da s pomočjo božje milosti dosežejo bogupodobnost. To pomeni, da je cilj človeškega bitja dvigniti se iz golega biološkega

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bivanja v občestvo s človeštvom, ki je v harmoniji z vsem stvarstvom. Udeležnost ljudi v stanju transcendentnega Padca je razumljena v povezavi z nevarnostjo gnosticizma, s katerim so se spopadali bizantinski cerkveni očetje.

Ključne besede: bizantinska filozofija, oseba, antropologija, vzhodni cerkveni očetje, božja podoba

1. Introduction

Byzantine anthropology is based on drawing closer to the human being in all dimensions of his being. The problem while studying this topic is the relationship of the human being to God on the one hand and to the world on the other hand. People have been addressing these relationships in ancient Greece, in the Byzantine Empire, in the medieval West, and continue to do so also today. Those who believe in God accept the natural life of the human being as God's gift. For those who do not believe in God but view the human being as the creation of nature with abilities and laws that are inherent in nature, the life of the human being is enclosed in nature which is subject to certain dynamics of development. The Byzantine understanding of anthropology assumes dynamics that gives the human being the possibility to grow. It is this dynamics that leads the human being to his final goal. Otherwise it is not possible to explain how the human being knows about the good and desires it. These deep desires for good suggest that the human being has had an intuition about some kind of greatness that is awaiting him from of old.

The ancient Greeks, especially Socrates, said that they are memories from some other world from which the human being has fallen. Humans can generally accept the thesis that they remember the state in paradise; however, this nostalgia does not quite correspond to reality since there is not only a primal, but also an eschatological (final) nostalgia of the human being. From the perspective of Byzantine anthropology, this nostalgia exists because it is something that has been given by God in the beginning of creation of the human being in God's image, but at the same time it is something dynamic and meant for fulfilling God's image, i.e. for the human being to become like God in the process of *theosis*.

While studying anthropological topics the question emerges: How does the human being understand God and what does he expect from Him? When the human being understands God within the bounds of his limits, he creates Him (God) according to his ideas. However, there is the risk that God created in this manner will not meet the expectations of the human being and he will reject and repudiate such a God at the end. Then he will naturally cling to the created world and seek his own origin and goal in it. Subsequently, he will adapt the teaching about himself, i.e. anthropology, to this endeavor. Thus he can arrive at a belief that the human being is a part of this world, he originated from it and will return back to it. However, if the human being understands God as his Creator, his understanding of anthropology changes.

2. Byzantine anthropology in contrast to other approaches

In cosmological terms anthropology assesses the human being either based on the criterion that the human being is the measure of all or based on the criterion that God is the measure of all. For Byzantine thinking both of these views of the human being are too closed and limited because Byzantine anthropology implies a relationship of the human being to God and of the human being to the human being. In this perspective Byzantine philosophical thinking also analyzes the goal of the life of the human being.

The cosmological understanding of the human being stands in contrast to the reality of the Christian revelation through God's Son who became a human being. The incarnate Jesus Christ is true God and true human being, i.e. both God and a human being are in one person, which then necessarily implies that God-man Christ is the measure of all. Based on this criterion both the statement that God is the measure of all and the statement that the human being is the measure of all are partially true. This means that the Byzantine view of the human being entails such anthropology that does not bind or judge the human being only as part of this world and its history or as someone dependent on an abstract god. Byzantine anthropology emphasizes that the human being is temporary in this world; hence it leads him to be rid of every clinging to perishable things. At the same time, it encourages him to experience God's truth eschatologically and to desire to live for eternity already now. In this view it is not the beginning, but the end determined for the human being by God that clarifies the goal of the life of the human being. It is not only a historical perspective, but especially an eschatological one, as Byzantine philosophers claim. The final point, Omega, at which we will arrive sheds light upon our original beginning, the point alpha, which is shown in the words of the Holy Scripture. Here Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 1,8; 22,13). And so Christians while turning their faces to the future are progressive people in the first place and in this sense future people as well. They do not focus on the past, even though we cannot speak of the human being without the past, without the beginning of the creation of the world by God's Son and the creation of the human being in God's image. The past is illuminated by that which awaits the human being, the promised eschatological greatness, and this explains how the human being thinks and desires a better life, a fulfilled life. They are not only memories from the past, but the experience and perspective, the desires and the promises given by the Creator for the future.

Christian life is based on an open type of anthropology, open especially in relation to the goal of the human being since the human being is an open being.² He has been created as a specific being with specific elements so that he can live, so that he can live even enclosed in his nature, autonomously because God gave the human being freedom and independence. In fact, the human being, if he

² Here we agree with Charles Taylor's emphasis on the porosity of the human being (1999; 2007). All Bible references are from: Bible 1999.

wants, can freely reject even the relationship with God. The human being exists ontologically because God created him and because he does not withdraw His Creator's will, decision, energy that sustains beings, the human being, and the whole creation. God does not regret his gifts (Rom 11,29). He has given the human being life and will not take it back. God did not create the world or the human being just to exist, but to live according to Christ's words, »I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly« (Jn 10,10), i.e. so that people live in fullness or as apostle Paul says it, »so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God« (Eph 3,19). This means that God created the human being not just to exist and to scrape along. Only biological existence is not sufficient for the human being. He also needs to live spiritually in unity with the Triune God.

Spiritual life is communion with God, perfect growth and development, »continual progress« (Hierotheos 1998, 258), life and work of the human being as a God-like being. In Christian terms the same value is ascribed to both the soul and the body because the human being is neither just the soul nor just the body. Idealists (Plato) only value the spiritual – the soul and they scorn the body, while materialists only value the body. According to Byzantine intellectuals the human being is the personal unity of the soul and body in Christ's image who is both God and a human being. Christian faith and life according to the Gospel are based on two commandments: Love God and love your neighbor. This is the measure of a true life that offers great opportunities to act, develop, and to come to a fellowship with God and other people. With love the human being overcomes everything, but he may not shut himself into his own egoism that »is dangerous and destructive for man, for it separates him from community which is why he then cannot live in love because genuine life is a community in love«. (Gievtits 1991a, 118)

Byzantine authors have elevated the human person and his value to a higher level than the one understood by ancient Greek philosophy and therefore they did not look at any differences between people. The first one to lift the dignity of the human being to this level was John Chrysostom in the fifth century. P. Chrestos has expressed this as follows: »The kind of value that John ascribed to the human person cannot be encountered in previous years of the empire; he therefore showed a touching sympathy for the afflicted.« (1989, 239)

According to Byzantine thinkers every human being has the same value regardless of race, profession, gender, age, and social status because every human being has the same nature and is understood as a human being even though there is a great number of persons. According to Byzantine authors for whom God's revelation is the basis, the human being is a person and lives and lives like a person. A person is much more than an object or a subject as it is usually referred to in the philosophical language in both ancient and modern philosophy so N. Matsoukas points out that Orthodox theology in Byzantium, »though integrating all cognitive concepts of the main currents in Greek philosophy, rejects autonomous anthropology« (1999, 501). Every human being belongs to a community of people, but at the same time maintains his relationship with God who is his Creator. The human being depends on this relationship. He is a living personal being in

fellowship with other persons and only in this fellowship with other persons does he live and develop, exist and function properly. Perfect fellowship of a person with other persons is called love and it is the only fellowship that transforms the human being not only as a being, but also as a personal life, as a person, as God's human being.

God is a person, and the human being created in His images is also a person. There is a certain analogy between the human being created by God and his Creator, the Triune God. In the human being, similarly also in God, there is a distinction between the essence (οὐσία) and *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις) (or the person) because as in the Holy Trinity there is only one essence and three hypostases (persons), so in the human being there is only one nature, but in a number of created human persons. The unity of the human nature and human persons is the basis of Byzantine anthropology. (Gregory of Nyssa 1972a, 30.46) Its basic principle is based on the fact that the human being created in God's image and called to carry out God's likeness is the true and authentic human being and he lives a true and authentic life only if he becomes one with his original, God, of his own free will.

3. Microcosm

Byzantine thinkers give the human being great value because he is the crown of creation, initiated into the mysteries of the invisible creation and the king of the visible creation. The human being is not great before God, but he is not small before the world either. He is great in the small (εν μικρῷ μέγαν). (Gregory the Theologian 1972a, 164) The human being is the summary (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις) of creation and in relation to this some Byzantine authors do not hesitate to borrow and use the stoic expression microcosm (μικρόκοσμος)³ for him which loses any trace of pantheistic understanding in their thinking (1972b, 224). »The human being is a microcosm in the sense that he constitutes a boundary that unites the sensually perceptible and the spiritual categories of being, helping their reunification after the fall.« (Chrestos 1991, 14) But he is more than all of this, he is a creation that has the strength to extend his hypostasis beyond the categories of place and time, beyond the beginning and the end so that he arrives at God's throne.

Byzantine thinkers had no problem to admire the ancient Greeks who called the human being a microcosm with which they are saying that the human being includes the whole world in himself. In regard to this Gregory of Nyssa says the following:

»But let us remember God's word again: »Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.« How small and unworthy a conception of the genius of man some wise men outside of Christianity had come to

³ The expression small world (μικρός κόσμος) or microcosm (μικρόκοσμος) is an expression of the stoics who wanted to emphasize that the human being has all elements of the world in a small extent.

hold when they hyperbolized man, as they surmised, by comparing him to this world. For they say that man is a micro-cosmos (*μικρόν εἶναι κόσμον*) because he consists of the same elements as the world.« (1972c, 112)

Byzantine authors complement the stoic expression microcosm with the thought that the real greatness of the human being does not lie in his being the highest biological being, rational being, but in the fact that he is a »deified being« (1972a, 164), that he is a created being, »who has received the command to become god« (1972b, 210).⁴

The greatness of the human being is not only in the fact that he is a microcosm, but in the fact that he is called to become the »mysterious Church« as Maximus the Confessor puts it: »Man is the mysterious Church who, with his body as with a temple, beautifies the practical ability of the soul by virtuous asceticism of the commands in accordance with ethical philosophy.« (1865, 672B) In a different place he says: »The Church is a spiritual man and the man is a mysterious Church.« (684A) The human being is called to become a big and new world in the small and old one. Symeon the New Theologian expresses it this way: »Each one of us was created by God as a second cosmos, great in this small and visible cosmos, according to the witness of a certain theologian.« (1865, 410) Symeon was referring here to Gregory the Theologian. Gregory of Nyssa asks the following question: »What does man's greatness consist in?« (1972c, 114) And he gives the following answer: »It does not consist in his likeness with the created world but in the fact that he was created in the image of the Creator of nature.« (114)

4. Spirit, Soul, Body

The functioning under boundary conditions between the material and spiritual world clearly testifies of the value of the human being. The contribution of two heterogeneous components ended with the creation of synthesis with remarkable perfection and harmony. These components in the human being are the soul and the body. Influenced by the thinking of Aristoteles and the stoics some authors, distinguish between three integral components – body, soul, mind or spirit or they keep to the thinking of apostle Paul and his one-sided interpretation (1 Cor 15,44). In contrast with this interpretation Byzantine authors do not regard the mind (*νοῦς*) as a separate component, but sometimes they identify it with the soul. On other occasions they consider it the highest part of the soul. We can say that the mind represents a forming power of the human being that makes him into a human being (Meyendorff 1983, 142), even though it is part of the soul, thus at the end there are two components and two terms – soul and mind that can be used interchangeably (Chrestos 1991, 15).

⁴ Saint Basil the Great is the original author of this sentence.

Harmony was finished by creating the body in a shell appropriate and adjusted for the mind and by placing the mind as the ruler of the body. The body (σάρξ) is the precious good and God's Son became a human being »so that he would honor the body, that is, this perishable body« (Gregory of Palamas 1972, 448). In this synthetic (united into a whole) wholeness the functioning of the soul is extended to the body in such a way as to lead all its parts to unity and fellowship. And not only does the strength of the soul go into the body, but also the passion of the body into the soul. (Basil the Great 1972b, 176; Gregory the Theologian 1972a, 50–52) The body receives life from the soul, but the soul also receives passion from the body. The preconditions for such an interpretation that look Aristotelian at first sight were created gradually and in the fourth century they formed the common basis of Byzantine anthropology. Nemesius of Emesa describes them with impressive completeness in his work *On the Nature of Man*. (1863) Cappadocian theologians have modified these preconditions and adapted them to Christian thinking.

This phenomenon, i.e. that two different things, the soul and body, are harmonically interconnected in such a way, is naturally one of the miracles of creation. However, it needs to be taken into account that both of these integral components have been created and thus in terms of causality they belong to the same category of being. There is also another connection, a different and much more important one, which does not unite two created things, but a created one with an uncreated one, the creation with the Creator. Based on his distinctive dialectic thinking Gregory of Nyssa distinguishes between two pairs of being in which one component – the spirit is the common part. On the uncreated side is God and the spirit and on the created side is the soul and matter. (1972d, 194) Basically there are three, not for components, from which one is common for both sides and it is also connected with both God and the matter. Gregory of Nyssa explains it as follows:

»The nature of beings is divided into two parts: the first one perceptible by the senses and material, the other one invisible and immaterial. Perceptible by the senses is everything that is understandable by the senses, while invisible is everything that goes beyond sensory perception. Invisible is infinite and unlimited, while the other one is certainly included in some limits. Every matter is expressed in terms of quantity and quality, volume and form, surface and shape, and everything we understand, therefore, it becomes a milestone for its understanding so that one who studies matter does not imagine anything else in his fantasy. On the other hand, invisible and immaterial, since it is free from these limits, exceeds them and ends nowhere. But the invisible nature is also divided into two parts: the first one is uncreated and creating beings, it is still the one that is, and still is the same, higher than any addition, and not accepting the lack of good; the second one is the one that came into being by creation, it is still observing the first cause of beings, it is still maintained in good by participation in the highest and in a certain way it is constantly being developed, while by growing in good it changes to better one.

Thus, no end can be observed in it, nor its growth in good can be described by any limits, but good is still and continually present, however great and perfect it would seem to be, the beginning of the higher and the greater.« (194)

It is hard to accept this third component, the soul, into the theological concept that is based on a strict distinction between the uncreated and the created, but it becomes easy when the differentiation between essence and energy in God plays a deciding role in this concept. This means that what Gregory of Nyssa calls the spirit here is not the Holy Spirit, but God's uncreated energy that moves between God and the human being and transfers Divinity from God to the human being and in a certain way humanity from the human being to God. (Chrestos 1991, 17) If we continue in the thinking of Cappadocian theologians it is important to say that apart from the body the human being also has a mind and thus he unites the rational and irrational part of creation in himself. At the same time, he also has a spirit and thus he also unites the whole creation with the Creator.

This whole process of various mixing of components is closely connected with the goal for which rational beings have been created. This goal is their becoming perfect to such a degree that they duly glorify God and participate in His blessings. The purpose of connecting the invisible soul with the body is for the soul to win over the earthly body, however, not in such a way that it ruins the body, but for it to pull the body to itself through gradual progress till it spiritualizes it, which Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) expresses as follows:

»The soul comes from God and is of God, it is a participant of heavenly courtesy and it is rushing to submit to it, even though it was united with a lower body. The causes for which this unification took place are known only to God who united them, and the one who received wisdom from God and understands these mysteries. Depending on what I and those around me know, it happened for two reasons. On the one hand, to inherit heavenly glory by striving and struggling (Eph 4,12) against earthly things, when it will be tested by earthly things like gold by fire, and when it gains virtues as a reward and not only as God's gift that it hopes for. And this was an example of the extreme goodness that he did so that the good depended also on us and that it was not only sown in the nature, but that it could also be fostered by the intentions and the opposite favor of the free will. On the other hand, so that it could also carry the lower (the body) and place it in heaven, when it gradually releases it from its earthly matter. So that the soul became for the body the same thing that God is for the soul, when it will bring up its servant matter, and will unite with God the body which is the same servant than the soul is.« (1972a, 94–96)

In such a case the whole human being will be able to achieve God's glory and reach his goal. This success cannot be accomplished in any other way than through kinship that must exist between the human being and God. This kinship is

imaginary as is clear from the reality of God's image. God's image is that which the human being has in himself and every effort to find an exact definition of that where the image is hidden will be in vain. In addition to this imaginary kinship according to God's image there is also organic kinship. The effort of both the Cappadocian theologians and also of other thinkers who follow their example to emphasize the existence of a close relation of the human being with God can be explained with their conviction that only this close relation offers the possibility of fellowship of the human being with God.

The ancient statement »similar by means of the similar« (διὰ του ομοίου το ὁμοιον) is the main indicator in their effort to define their anthropology correctly. (Basil the Great 1972c, 348) When Saint Basil the Great explains Psalm 48,13-14 which states that God has given the human being reason and free will and that He has given him the same honor as to the angels, but the human being has rejected his high calling and joined the unwise animals when he has become the slave of his passions, he says,

»Which of the creatures on earth were made in the image of the Creator? (Gen 1,27) To whom was the primacy and power given to rule over everything on the land, in the sea, and above the birds in the sky? (Gen 1,28) He is a little smaller than the angels (Ps 8,6) because he is united with the body from the earth. So he formed a man from the ground. (Gen 2,7) But all men have the ability to think and understand their Creator, because he breathed into his face, so he put a part of his blessedness (grace) into man so that similar knew similar. But although he had such a great honor, because he was created in the image of the Creator, he was more valuable than the sky, or the sun, or all the stars (What is called the image of the supreme God in the sky? What image of the Creator does the sun have? Or moon? Or all the other stars? They are soulless and material; they have only lucid bodies without minds, without free movements, or freedom of free will, but they are subjected to a necessity that threatens them, according to which they turn around in the same way); though man has more value than this, he did not understand it, but when he ceased to follow God and resemble the Creator, he became a slave to the passion of the body, ended up an animal and resembled one (Ps 48,13).« (346–348)

The two components through which the original is in the human being and really works in him and that create the human being are clearly emphasized by Gregory of Nyssa:

»Just as the eye participates in the light by virtue of a natural radiance existing in it, when it [the eye] by innate capacity attracts that which is akin to it, it was also necessary that the element akin to the divine would mix up with human nature so that through this proper element it could have desire towards that which is akin to it.« (1972e, 404-405)

Further Gregory of Nyssa explains that the eye is able to come in contact with light because it has the ability in itself to receive light. In the same way the fact that the human being can come in contact with God is ensured through his kinship with Him which is set into human nature in such a way that the desire for the intimate, for God, is formed via the suitable component. »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.« (406) He concludes saying: »In truth this has been shown in the comprehensive utterance of one expression, in the description of the cosmogony, where it is said that man was made ›in the image of God‹.« (406) This text clearly shows the theological structure of the human being on the one hand (»For this end he has been furnished with life, with thought, with skill, and with all the excellences that we attribute to God«) and the desire caused inside of the human being by the original (»in order that by each of them he might have his desire set upon that which is not strange to him«).

The human being consists of the soul and the body, he stands on the boundary of creation, and includes in himself both matter and the spirit because Christ through whom and in whom he has been created is the incomprehensible, hypostatic, inseparable and at the same time unmixable unity of the uncreated Divinity and the created nature. In this regard Anastasius Sinaita says: »For his divinity acted in a divine-human way /... / so also his soul, existing in accordance with the image and likeness of the invisible Logos-God, acts /... / as spirit and matter, that is, body and soul together, following the divine-human example of Christ.« (1865, 1148D-1149A) Along the same vein John Damascene points out: »Body and spirit were created concurrently and not one before the other as follows from the unwise teaching of Origen.« (1865, 921A)

5. Conclusion

The whole humanity comes from a human pair created by God. This means that all people regardless of race, color, tongue or education have been gifted with having a Divine origin (Giannoulatos 2004, 79). God is not only the Creator, but also the Father of all people, which is repeatedly emphasized in the New Testament. Related to this is the conviction that all people without exception are His children and thus brothers. The common origin of all people was also emphasized by Apostle Paul when he said in Athens: »The God who made the world and everything in it. /... / From one ancestor he made all nations.« (Acts 17,24-26) And thus the whole humanity is one great and inseparable unity the center of which is the Triune God, »one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all« (Eph 4,6).

It is not only the common origin that unites people into one family, but also their goal which is the activation of their potential to achieve God's likeness with

the help of God's grace. This means that the goal of the human being is to rise from plain biological existence into a fellowship of people in harmony with the whole creation. (Giannoulatos 2004, 80) On the outside it seems that the human being is only a biological existence similarly to other living creatures – the animals. Naturally, he is a created being, »a being who dwells on earth but then moves into another world and, according to the final mystery, becomes god« (Gregory the Theologian 1972a, 324A). He is the only creation that differs from the whole creation; the only being that can become god.

In addition to a common origin and a common goal there is also another basic sign of the homogeneity of humanity: the participation of people in the same transgression that resulted in the fall into sin. Instead of going to the Triune God and partaking in His love in order to achieve the goal of his existence – deification, the human being asserted his own person, rejected God's love and decided to go to deification⁵ based on his own criteria and on the initiative of the devil. The prophet David describes the moral fall of the human being and emphasizes that God gave the human being clear directions that the human being did not understand and he became like dumb animals (Ps 48,21). At creation God gave the human being freedom. The human being was free to reject even God and his love, which happened. He fell into sin and his journey to God was disrupted. The human being fell into an unnatural status – into decline and sin (Gievtits 1991b, 82), but in spite of this he has still kept all the characteristics given to him by God. The reality of the Fall thus in no way impinges on the value and dignity of every human person who can never be reduced to a mere object studied by empirical sciences. Empirical methods of natural sciences are never »sufficient to disclose man's being, something that is eminently human because man's being surpasses any aspect of empirical subjectivity« (Malović 2007, 56). From this premise of theological anthropology follows that »every epistemological experience is at the same time an axiological experience« (Klimsza 2018, 147).

P. Chrestos notes (1991, 13) that Theophilus of Antioch⁶ presents the first human being in a state of a child's innocence, as someone who is childish both spiritually and morally, who does not have a clear awareness of the good and the bad. In relation to this Theophilus of Antiochia says: »According to his actual age this Adam was merely a child, thus being unable to receive fuller knowledge.« (1986, 410) Gregory of Nyssa⁷ has an opposite starting point and presents the first

⁵ As is stated in Gen 3,5: »You will be like God.«

⁶ Theophilus of Antioch was most active between 169 and 188. Around 169 he became the sixth bishop of Antioch, but we know nothing of his activities in this office. He is classified as an apologist but differs from them because his works are mostly encouraging with apologetic elements. To a great degree his thinking is based on morality.

⁷ Gregory of Nyssa lived in the fourth century. He has drawn up an anthropology that forms the basis for ascetic and hesychastic thinking later on. Almost in all his works we find the connection of triadology and Christology with the theology of the human being as God's image. The main contribution of Gregory of Nyssa and the new element that he consistently introduces into Christian thinking is a completely clear distinction between God's reality as the uncreated one and the earthly reality as the created one. According to him, God's reality really exists and the earthly reality only exists as long as it is connected with God's reality. Based on these analyses he talked about the human being as about a being

human being in a state of perfection when he says that God created the human being in God's image,

»Then God said, ›Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.« (Gen 1,26); So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them (Gen 1,27); /... / humankind, its general nature, God's agent, was created according to an image. He was created by omnipotent wisdom not as a part of a whole but as the complete fulfillment of human nature.« (1972c, 156)

Childishness and perfection are two extreme opinions about the status of humankind in the beginning of the creation of the human being. They are not foreign to the philosophical hypotheses of these two men. Between these two views there is a broad variety of terms used by other authors who describe the first human being. However, in this variety a uniform line of thinking is visible that follows the human being from the moment of his creation and fall to his rise into God's reality.

While evaluating the human being both Theophilus and Gregory arrive at an unexpected agreement at the end. The fact that Gregory of Nyssa considers the human being to be perfect, resembling God and »God's matter« (το θεοείκελον χρέμα), is clear from the text stated above. It is remarkable that Theophilus ascribes to the human being such a value, that along with the three persons in the Holy Trinity he puts the human being in a passage where we find the term trinity (τριάς)⁸ for the first time: »The three days that came prior to the lights represent a type of Trinity: God, His Logos, and His Wisdom. Needing light, the humankind came in the fourth place, so there exist God, Logos, Wisdom, humankind.« (1986, 392) Placing the human being as if on the par with the divine persons of the Godhead points to the influence of Gnosticism, which was the greatest danger for Christian thinking.

Abbreviations

EPE – *Ellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*. 1972–.

PG – *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*. 1857–1866.

in God's likeness that should continuously come into fellowship with God, go from not-being into being.

⁸ Thoughts about the Trinity had existed already earlier, but the Greek term Trinity (Τριάς) appeared in the writings of the Christian apologist Theophilus of Antioch for the first time. Up till then this term had probably been used orally. (Zozul'ak 2005, 161)

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