

**THE THEOSIS OF MAN
IN THE WRITINGS
OF SAINT MAKARIOS OF EGYPT**

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The incarnation of God the Word as a precondition of salvation

Although Saint Makarios does not make frequent mention of the incarnate Christ, his whole teaching on the union of the soul with God presupposes the mystery of the incarnation.

The fact of salvation commences with the incarnation of the Son of God, '*the wondrous work of the ineffable power of God*¹'; it is the incarnation which constitutes the precondition for the *theosis* of man.² In one of his Homilies Saint Makarios states, '*It is neither allowed nor possible for man to uproot sin by his own power. Yours it is to wrestle, to resist, to flay and be flayed; but to uproot is of God. If you could do this, what need would there be for the coming of the Lord?*³ It was precisely this

1. P. Trempeles, 'The doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* III no. 2 (1957) p. 163.

2. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Κατὰ τῶν Νεστορίου δυσφημιστῶν* 1. 1 PG 76. 20 in: Ioannis Karmiris, *Σύνοψις τῆς δογματικῆς διδασκαλίας τῆς ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Athens 1957, p. 52. Cf. *ibid.* 48, 6; 5-17. According to Kyrillos Katerelos, *Esse est Deus*, Thessalonica 2002, p. 151. '*Only in the Messiah and Saviour is human nature raised to its union with the divine in the one person of the Only-begotten Son*'.

3. Hom. 3. 4. 6-10. The incarnation of the Son and Word of God constitutes the third act in the great drama of humanity (primeval state-fall-restitution to ancient beauty / *theosis*) and for this reason it does not belong only to the past, but to the present and future. Saint Athanasios the Great devoted one of his finest writings to the descent of the Word in the flesh: *On the Incarnation of the Word*, PG 25. 104 A.

need that the Word came to meet with His incarnation. It was never possible for man on his own to be freed and redeemed from the state of slavery and captivity to the Devil. The weight, burden and guilt of sin were and are beyond mankind's capacity to bear. *'We were wounded by such an incurable wound that only for the Lord was it possible to bring healing. On this account and through himself he came, because none of the ancients, neither the law itself nor the prophets were able to bring healing. He alone with His advent healed that incurable wound of the soul.'*⁴ Accordingly, however good his intention, however fervent his desire or virtuous his life, no man, infected himself by pre-ancestral sin, could ever, or can ever, redeem another sinner from even one single sin. *'To uproot sin and the attendant evil can be achieved only by divine power.'*⁵ Since evil has its source in a personal being above man, it could never and can never be conquered and abolished by man. *'A brother is not redeemed; shall man be redeemed?'*⁶ Saint Makarios asserts accordingly that, *'no one can be saved without Jesus'*.⁷ Only God is able to redeem his creature, because God alone is without sin and all-powerful⁸ and *'he through himself appeared on earth to intercede for you and redeem you'*.⁹

The Son and Word of the Father voluntarily became man, manifesting in this way his infinite love for mankind. *'So great is God's love for mankind.'*¹⁰

4. Hom. 30. 8. 1-5. Cf. also Hom. 44. 4. 30. *'A sheep is not able to cure a sheep'*.

5. Hom. 3. 4. 5-6. Cf. also Hom. 45. 3. 30-31: *'Only the epiphany of Christ is able to purify soul and body'*.

6. Psalm 48. 8.

7. Hom. 3. 4. 12-13. The intimate connection between incarnation and *theosis* in the Fathers is noted also by the late Prof. Andreas Fytrakis in his book, *Ἡ ἀξία τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης προσωπικότητος κατὰ τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχας*, Athens 1958, 22.

8. Neither angel or archangel can free man because they are 'finite' beings and their holiness and their power do not depend on their will but on the grace of God.

9. Hom. 15. 43. 4-5. Cf. also Vasileios L. Kostits, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ μεγάλου Βασιλείου*, Athens 1936, 94-98.

10. Hom. 15. 44. 10-11.

The fact that the Redeemer had to be sinless and therefore God can be seen as logical and comprehensible, but why did he 'have to be' man?¹¹

For God, who is infinitely perfect and absolutely free, there is, of course, no 'has to be', nor does anything that relates to the divine energies occur out of any necessity.¹² God, as all powerful, could and can save man with a single word.¹³ On God's part accordingly, it was not necessary for Him who is infinite to become man to save mankind. Nor, for his part, can man set 'conditions' concerning the mode of his redemption and salvation. It suffices for him to desire and seek redemption and salvation.

The fact that God freely willed to become man is accordingly something that he did out of infinite 'condescension'¹⁴ towards his creature.

11. In theology the question *Cur Deus Homo?* is answered in terms of the 'conditional' or 'unconditional' incarnation of the Word.

The 'conditional' incarnation of the Son and Word of God means that the Word became man to save mankind from the corruption of sin and death. The precondition for the incarnation was the fall of man. '*God becomes man to save fallen man*' (Maximos, *Περί διαφορών ἀποριῶν*, PG 91. 1308 D).

The 'unconditional' incarnation means that the Word would have become incarnate irrespective of the fall, that is, whether Adam had sinned or not, the Son of God would have become flesh – to crown thus the work of creation, for man to enter God and God to enter man, for man to be assimilated to God. For more on this subject, however, see Florovskij, *Cur Deus Homo?*, in *Θέματα ὀρθοδόξου Θεολογίας*, Athens 1973, 36-37, to which we refer those interested for further bibliography. Certainly, in the West, as opposed to in the Patristic theology of the East, the pre-ancestral sin was regarded as the centre of the whole history of the divine incarnation on account of the predominance of the Augustinian view: '*si homo non periisset, filius hominis non venisset*'. See N. Matsoukas, *Δογματική καὶ Συμβολική Θεολογία*, vol. 3, Thessalonica 2001, p. 215 ff, and *Ὁ Προτεσταντισμός*, Thessalonica 2001, pp. 14 and 88.

12. See P. N. Trempeles, *Δογματική*, vol. 2, Athens 1979², p. 38, where he discusses Anselm of Canterbury's theory concerning the necessity of the Incarnation. See also N. Matsoukas, *Ὁ Προτεσταντισμός*, Thessalonica 2001, p. 89.

13. See Andreas Theodorou, *Ἀπαντήσεις σέ ἐρωτήματα δογματικά*, Ἀποστολική Διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 1977, pp. 77-9.

14. See the Hymn for the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord, '*The Saviour, condescending to the race of men*', *Menaion* 1st January. Certainly for the Gnostics the idea that God could become man was scandalous, just as for the Arians of Makarios'

Since man, in the state in which he found himself, could not approach God, God himself freely and out of infinite love became 'Son of Man'¹⁵ to make man 'son of God' by grace.¹⁶ This truth is confirmed over and over again by Holy Scripture so that there be no doubt about it. Saint John the Evangelist asserts emphatically: *'To all who received him (the incarnate Word of God), who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.'*¹⁷ And Saint Makarios pronounces: *'He alone worked this mercy on those who believe in him that he redeems from sin, and he effects this marvellous salvation on those who ever expect and hope and entreat unceasingly.'*¹⁸

Man's salvation means, on the one hand, the stemming and turning back of the tide of sin, and, on the other hand, his rebirth and raising to full union with God. Man, however, fails in this goal. He fails because he chooses to become himself the source of life; he chooses to conquer on his own that potential death inherent in his creation 'from nothingness'. He believes that he can himself become God, that is, himself a source of life, and herein lies man's failure. Thus man, who is invited to deification, fails. And this failure reveals in history what we in the Church call the *'mystery of Divine Economy'*.¹⁹

time the reverse was a scandal, namely that a creature, and one subject to passion, could be God. For more on these matters see R. Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, London 1952, vol. 1, p. 129 and A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchaman, New York 1961, vol. 4, p. 15.

15. See P. Demetropoulos, 'Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς γνησιότητος τῶν Περὶ σαρκώσεως τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κατ' Ἀπολιναρίου λόγων δύο τοῦ Μ. Ἀθανασίου', *Θεολογία* 24 (1953) pp. 442-461.

16. The formulation of Saint Athanasios the Great is well known: *'Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν'* ('He became man in order that he might make us God') PG 25, 192B. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Homily* 37, PG 45. 97.

17. Jn 1. 12-13.

18. Hom. 2. 3. 17-20.

19. Saint Makarios speaks of the *'mystery of divine Economy'* in the following way: *'Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his concern for man's salvation, exhausted all economy and ardour'*, Hom. 30. 2. 1-3. And elsewhere he states: *'...a mystery truly hidden from eternity and from the generations and in the last of times revealed through the epiphany of Christ'*, Hom. 1. 2. 1-3. And again: *'And through the renewal of the mind, the stilling*

When we say 'Divine Economy', we mean the way in which God arranges and dispenses things so that the world and man be saved.

The mystery of Divine Economy, '*truly hidden from eternity and from the generations and revealed in the last of times*',²⁰ is manifested in history because man failed to lead himself and creation to deification. The counter-movement is termed the mystery of Economy, the movement which proceeds from God towards man for the Son and Word of God to be united with man. Saints Makarios asks: '*What is the need for the advent of the Lord?*'²¹ and replies: '*It is not possible for anyone to be saved and to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven without Jesus*'.²² There is no other possibility for the *theosis* of man and of all creation. Christ must take on the matter of creation. And the only being through which he can assume the matter of creation – both of invisible and visible and of spiritual and material creation – is man, because man participates both in invisible and visible creation and in spiritual and material nature. This movement of self-emptying (*kenosis*) of the Son of God towards the world, of the Incarnation of the Word of God, is called the '*mystery of divine Economy*'.²³

of turbulent thoughts, the love of the Lord and heavenly fervour the new creation of the Christians comes about... Wherefore also the advent of the Lord took place.' Hom. 5. 5. 7-10. On the concept of the '*mystery of divine Economy*' see below n. 23. On the term '*Economy*' see P. N. Trempeles, *Δογματική*, vol. 2, Athens 1979², pp. 21-22. The subject of divine Economy has been studied by many scholars. What is surprising is the wide use of the term among the Church Fathers, even though it is found only twice in the Old Testament and nine times in the New Testament. See Wilhelm Gass, '*Das Patristische Wort Οἰκονομία*', *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 17 (1874) pp. 465-504, and Felix Christ, *Οἰκονομία, Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie*, Hamburg 1967.

20. Hom. 1. 2. 1-3.

21. Hom. 3. 4. 9-10.

22. Hom. 3. 4. 12-13. Here Saint Makarios echoes Saint Athanasios the Great: '*Now that the Word has become man and has made his own all that is of the flesh... men no longer in accordance with their own passions remain sinful and dead, but in accordance with the power of the Word, arising, remain forever immortal and incorruptible*'. *Against Arians* 3, PG 26, 393B. This position of Saint Makarios concerning the purpose of the Incarnation of God the Word, recalls the soteriological sense and meaning of the mystery of the Incarnation as expressed clearly by Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (see PG 7, 936 B), but this is developed and supported theologically by Saint Gregory of Nazianz (see PG 36, 365 B and PG 35, 397 C – 400 A).

23. Saint Paul speaks of the '*mystery of divine Economy*' in his Letter to the Ephe-

Referring to this mystery of divine Economy in a *'discourse delicate and deep'*, Saint Makarios says: *'God, infinite, unapproachable and uncreated, made himself incarnate out of infinite and incomprehensible goodness, and as it were reduced himself from his unapproachable glory so that he might be able to unite himself with his invisible creatures (namely, with the souls of saints and angels), so that they might be able to participate in the life of divinity.'*²⁴ For such a work, however, the natural powers of man were inadequate and infirm. Accordingly, only God who *'created the body and the soul'*²⁵ can act as Creator and Maker of man and of all creation, since he is now also *'Christ the true Redeemer'*.²⁶ God alone could impart into corruptible human nature new divine powers capable of overcoming the human will *'corrupted by sin'* and the infirmity of human nature, that is, the natural passions. God alone could save man, not only from sin, but from corruption and lead him to union with Himself, for which union he was created.²⁷

sians (2. 4-10). Interpreting the words of the Apostle Paul we could say this: We call 'divine Economy' all the events enacted by God to save man. The reason which moves God to save man is his love towards mankind. Nothing compels him to do what he does for the salvation of mankind apart from his mercy and his love, from which grace flows as an inexhaustible river. Above all God exists, and what he does, he does on his own. Thus, following the rebellion of his creature, God as a loving father, full of mercy and love, contrives the mode of man's salvation through the incarnation of God the Word. The Son of God becomes Son of Man; he assumes human nature without sin and without ceasing to be God. The human nature, united with the divine nature, suffers. The divine nature, united with the human, rises. God the Word ascends to heaven and sits, henceforth God-man, at the right hand of the Father. With the incarnation and assumption of human nature, the God-man comes to earth. With the Resurrection and the Ascension the God-man rises to heaven. All these real events enacted by God for the salvation of man constitute the 'mystery of divine Economy' as it is expressed by Saint Paul.

24. Hom. 4. 9. 37-39 and 1-3. See also Hom. 4. 10. 12-21; 4. 11. 32-35; 4.12. 13-14; 4. 13. 31-35; 48. 5. 35-6 and 5-16.

25. Hom. 11. 6. 28.

26. Hom. 11. 6. 34.

27. See Hom. 2. 2. 20-38. He further notes: *'Christ alone is able to take sin from us, because those who have taken us captive and hold us in their thrall are stronger than us.'* Hom. 2. 2. 30-32.

The salvation of man presupposes the Incarnation of the Word whereby the principle of incorruption is introduced into man and his salvation effected. The salvation of human nature had to come about in the same manner in which sin, corruption and death first entered. These were transmitted from Adam to all men, so that, according to Saint Paul, '*Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin*'²⁸ so through one man, Jesus Christ, there enters life. '*Just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience the many shall be made righteous.*'²⁹

Thus in the person of Christ, the new Adam, corruption is abolished. According to Saint Makarios, corruption means that man is enslaved to the mode of conceiving characteristic of things created.³⁰ He is unable to

28. Rom. 5. 12.

29. Rom. 5. 19. Cf. Athanasios the Great, *Against Arians* 1. 51, PG 26. 117-120 A: *Just as when Adam transgressed, sin came to all men, so when the Lord became man and overthrew the serpent, suchlike power shall be imparted to all men.*

30. See Hom. 11. 3. 25-37 and 6. 28-41. The word 'corruption', according to Saint John of Damascus (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 3. 20, PG 94, 1220 A), has two meanings. The first denotes the so-called '*irreproachable passions*' free of sin, i.e., hunger, thirst, sleep, weariness, death, that is, separation of the soul from the body. All these Christ assumed voluntarily and for that reason and in this sense we can say that Christ's body was subject to corruption, namely, Christ was hungry, thirsty and weary and was subject to the '*irreproachable passions*'. There are, however, two necessary provisos: the one is that he assumed these passions voluntarily and the second is that in Christ they did not act compulsively, but whenever he so allowed. Thus Christ '*willingly hungered, willingly thirsted, willingly experienced fear and willingly died*'. The second meaning of the word 'corruption' denotes the dissolution of the body after death. In this sense we cannot speak of corruption, because Christ's body remained incorrupt in the grave. Consequently, it is an impiety to call the body of Christ incorruptible before the Resurrection in the first sense, since he willingly assumed and suffered the so-called '*irreproachable passions*' - otherwise it would not be a real body but an illusory one and salvation would then be impossible. The body of Christ, however, is said to be incorruptible after the Resurrection and thus it is an impiety to speak of corruption in the second sense, namely that the body of Christ underwent corruption or dissolution in the tomb. In conclusion one could say that these analyses constitute the mystery of man's salvation. The incarnate Christ is the summation of man's salvation. See Konstantinos Papapetrou, *Ἡ οὐσία τῆς θεολογίας*, Athens 1970, pp. 21-22.

In relation to these matters, Professor Papapetrou writes: '*For the Church Fathers the Fall is not the complete destruction of the 'image', but rather its blackening and*

conceive the uncreated and enter into relation with the uncreated. This inability is overcome with the incarnation of the Word.

Instead of man in the course of his spiritual development coming to resemble his prototype, the Word of God, now it is the Word which takes flesh, which becomes man, in order to bring about that which was the aim from the beginning, namely, for man to become God by grace. The Word of God with his incarnation assumed human nature in its entirety (soul and body) and assimilated it to God.

This *theosis* of human nature did not come about over a period of time, but at the moment of its assumption by divine nature in the womb of the Most Holy Theotokos. Saint Makarios speaks in the following terms: *'For the body which he took from Mary, this he raised up on the cross and hung and nailed on the tree... and the Lord made a new work from Mary and put this on as a garment; he did not take the body from heaven.'*³¹ And emphasizing the freedom of the body from sin he says: *'Until the Lord, no new and sinless body had appeared in the world.'*³² Saint Makarios thus always agrees with the teaching of Church Fathers that the body which Christ assumed from the Virgin was utterly pure, new and sinless. Accordingly, with his incarnation the Word of God did

inactivation, and for this reason even fallen man is not entirely incapable of working good. The Prodigal Son who through his free decision departed from Paradise to a far country, inhospitable and vengeful, does not cease to be a son of God. The prodigal son is not only a prodigal but also a son. The conception, however, of sonship in fallenness, of the holiness of the sinful man, needs to be secured from the excesses of a Pelagianism which, overlooking the seriousness of the pre-ancestral sin, is thus unable to recognize the significance of the incarnation of God and of man's repentance. Pelagianism, not recognizing the corruption which has already taken place in the realm of man's nature, and regarding sin as something taking place only in the realm of personal realization, thus appears as a forerunner of certain modern person-centred tendencies.' (Προσβάσεις, Athens 1979, pp. 87-88).

31. Hom. 11. 9. 34-40 and p. 202.1. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apolinarios*, PG 45, 1256 AB.

32. Hom. 11. 9. 5-6. In the early Church there was a group of heretics who championed so-called 'Dynamic Monarchism'. They claimed that the one power (*dynamis*) of the one God is called *Logos*, and this dwelt in the man Jesus and gradually deified him. See John Romanides, *Δογματική και Συμβολική Θεολογία της Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. 1, Thessalonica 1999⁴, pp. 203-205.

not assume an apparent heavenly human body,³³ for then it would not be incarnation but illusion; nor did he assume all human *hypostases*, for then on the moment of assumption all human *hypostases*, all humans, would have been assimilated to God. The Word assumed the principle of the stuff or our being, that is, true human nature, in the specific *hypostasis* and in this way bestowed the possibility to all people who have the same nature to be saved and to be assimilated to God.³⁴ Accordingly, if there were not that person (Christ) in which the divine and human natures were united, man could not be made God.³⁵ For this reason the Son of God became man with a view to making man God by grace and son of God.³⁶ The salvation of man is thus to be found in man's union with God and not simply in the liberation from sin and corruption. This means that only that person who is united with God is saved. In this regard Saint Makarios states: *'It is not possible for anyone to be saved or enter into the kingdom of heaven without Jesus'*.³⁷ And elsewhere: *'...God (= the Word of God), infinite and inconceivable, in his goodness contracted himself... and he takes on the holy and well-pleasing and faithful souls and becomes one Spirit with them and accordance with Paul's words; as it were soul to soul and hypostasis to hypostasis, so that the soul may be able to live in divinity and sense life immortal'*.³⁸

33. *He did not take the body from heaven'*: Hom. 11. 9. 1. The Gnostic Valentians regarded the body of Christ as heavenly and in appearance material. See Konstantinos Logothetou, *Ἡ φιλοσοφία τῆς Πατέρων*, Part 1, Athens 1930, pp. 188-189. It is clear that by emphasizing that Christ's body was not heavenly, Saint Makarios is refuting the heresy of the Gnostics which undermined the doctrine of salvation.

34. See Ioannis Karmiris, *Σύνοψις τῆς Δογματικῆς διδασκαλίας τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Athens 1957, pp. 52-55.

35. See Hom. 26. 2. 38: *'Αποθεοῦται γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος'* (*Man is made God*).

36. See Hom. 24. 3. 24-33. Cf. Athanasios the Great, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54, PG 25, 192 B: *'God the Word became man that we might be made God'*.

37. Hom. 3. 4. 12-13. In this text of Saint Makarios the influence of Saint Athanasios's theological interpretation of the mystery of the Incarnation is very evident. Cf. Vasileios L. Kostits, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ μεγάλου Βασιλείου*, Athens 1936, p. 108.

38. Hom. 4. 10. 12-20. It must be noted that according to Saint Makarios, God, once united with the human nature of Jesus Christ, was simultaneously united with the whole of mankind. Certainly the existence of the individual human nature of Christ had not yet been called into question, in order for the holy father to develop this theme more fully.

It becomes apparent that discussion of the marvellous mystery of the *hypostasis* of the God-man Christ only becomes intelligible when it is illuminated by the teaching on man's salvation. The fact that man's salvation and his deification could not have been effected in any way other than by the Son and Word of God, leads to the necessity of the advent of God the Word, the incarnation and his union with us.³⁹ It also becomes apparent that our salvation was made possible with the assumption of the whole of human nature by the incarnate and sinless God the Word: '*What is not assumed is not healed; what is united with God, this also is saved*',⁴⁰ says Gregory of Nazianz. And this Saint Makarios repeats: '*...The Word was sent, putting on flesh and concealing his divinity, so that through the like he might save the like*'.⁴¹ The influence of the

39. See Megas Farantos, *Tò ἐνυπόστατον*, Athens 1972, p. 92.

40. Gregory of Nazianz, *To Kledonios*, PG 37, 181 C. Cf. Hom. 15. 44. 6-11 and Heb. 4. 15: '*we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin*'.

41. Hom. 15. 44.. 8-9. Christ was consubstantial with the Father in his divinity and consubstantial with us in his humanity. Christ became like to us in everything, except for sin. We do not, of course, here mean the ethical dimension of sin, the possibility of assent or dissent to a sinful act. When we say 'sin', we mean the impossibility of union with God. Christ, as united with divinity, takes away sin in this sense. For this reason there is no 'confusion' in Christ, nor is there death, because life is relation with God. Creation does not have life in it: it came from nothingness and returns to nothingness. For creation to overcome nothingness it must enter into relation with that which is outside nothingness, that which we call life, eternal life. This is God, the creator of creation. Moreover, it must be said that Christ before the ages is begotten of the Father according to divinity. '*In the last of days*', however, he was born for our sake as man in order to save us ('*for us and for our salvation*') from the Virgin Mary according to humanity. One and the same, Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten (unique), revealed in two natures, the divine and the human, which are united unconfusedly (the two natures are not identified nor confused), unchangeably (the divine is not changed towards the human, nor the human towards the divine), indivisibly (they are not divided), and inseparably (they are not separated). And indeed this union occurs in such a way that the peculiarity of each nature is preserved and encountered in the unified person / *hypostasis*. He is not separated or divided into two persons, but remains one and the same Only-begotten Son, God Word, Lord Jesus Christ. From this union, not only does no difference in the natures arise, but on the contrary, on account of this union the peculiarity of each nature is preserved intact. And the peculiarity of each nature is preserved because there exists the one person and the one hypostasis. The one hypostasis, the one person, preserves the integrity of each nature. In regard to the divinity we

Greek and Cappadocian view of man's salvation on Saint Makarios is evident. For Saint Makarios God becomes man in his Revelation to man and man in his *theosis* becomes God by grace. The Egyptian saint employs in relation to man's salvation the gnosiological principle of ancient Greek thought: 'Like is known by like'.⁴² This principle also pervades Cappadocian thought. Saint Basil the Great observes: '*He breathed into*

cannot speak of integrity or non-integrity. The great heresies of Monophysitism and later of Monothelitism and Monoenergetism nonetheless spoke in this way of the humanity. They could not accept this gift of the *theosis* of the human nature. This gift is acquired by man only through freedom. But man, in his inability to be free, seeks for other solutions. And he finds as an answer to this inability the judicial approach to salvation. He wishes for salvation to be bestowed on him, but also to have sacrificed something himself – to have sacrificed freedom, joy and other things. Thus his salvation is based on a kind of giving in return. It seems that this gives man psychological comfort. In every divine Liturgy, however, it is proclaimed that the gift that is bestowed on us is without any giving in return. It is unneeded and we can give nothing back to God in return for that which he bestows on us. If there is a giving back, it is from God to us. We offer creation to God through the elements of bread and wine, and he bestows grace on us in return. We offer the gifts and he returns them to us as his body and blood. He does not simply return them to us having been blessed, but he returns them to us as his own Son. And this is achieved because, as we have said, '*in the last of days*' '*the Word became flesh*'. For this reason Saint Makarios states characteristically: '*The Lord makes himself body also as food and drink*'. Hom. 4. 12; 13. 9. 2-3. See also P. Christou, '*Ελληνική Πατρολογία*', vol. 3, p. 200.

42. See among the multitude of pertinent passages: Homer, *The Odyssey* Book XVII, 218: '*like ever guides what is like, just as a god does*'. Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 108: '*How like sourced are gods and mortal men*'. The Pythagorians: '*like is understood by like*' (Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII 92 in H. Diels-W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 1, 11th ed. 1964, p. 406). Aristotle, *Metaphysics* B4 1000b: '*knowledge is of the like by the like*'. Aristotle, *On the Soul* A, 405b: '*like, they say, is known by like; as the soul knows everything, they construct it out of all the principles*'. In the Symposium, Plato accepts the ancient principle of knowledge: like through like – not only in relation to human affinity ('*the old saying is good that like always clings to like*' *Symposium* 195b) since according to Hippias '*by nature like is kin to like*' (*Protagoras* 337c), but also in relation to the encounter of God with man. In the Republic Plato says that '*for by the gods assuredly that man will never be neglected who is willing and eager to be righteous, and by the practice of virtue to be likened unto God so far as that is possible for man*' (Book X 613a). Similarly, Aristotle sees the concept of likeness in its connection with the concept of virtue when he speaks of the '*friendship through equality and likeness, and especially likeness in virtue*' (*Nicomachean Ethics* Book 9. 10).

his face - that is, he placed a portion of his own grace in man so that by the like he might know the like'.⁴³

Accordingly, man's salvation, that is his union with God and his *theosis*, constitute precisely the saving work of Jesus Christ for which he came to the world.

As is evident from what has gone before, the incarnation of the Word of God is his first and decisive action in the work of the Economy of our salvation. '*For he came through himself on your behalf so that he might recall you*',⁴⁴ writes Saint Makarios, because he knows clearly that man '*is called to immortality, to adoption as a son, to brotherhood*'.⁴⁵

And so Jesus Christ '*in his coming on earth*'⁴⁶ manifested to men the saving mode of spiritual life, but at the same time he made revelation '*in Himself*' and gave to them full spiritual knowledge. For Saint Makarios the Word became man because: '*All the philosophers... and the law and the Apostles and the advent of the Saviour speak of purity. For all men, whether Jews or Greeks love purity, even if they are unable to purify themselves. It is thus necessary to seek how and by what means purity of heart can be achieved. In no way other than through Him who was crucified for us; for He is the way, the life, the truth, the door, the pearl, the living and heavenly bread. And without that truth he does not permit anyone to know truth or be saved*'.⁴⁷

43. Saint Basil the Great, *Homily on the Psalms*, PG 29, 449C. This passage is mentioned in the *Synodikos Tomos* of 1351 A 42. See I. N. Karmiris, *Tà Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, 1950, p. 399. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Homily* 4. 5, PG 45, 20-21: '*to see the like as by the like*'. Gregory of Nazianz, *Homily* 38. 13, PG 36, 325BC.

44. Hom. 16. 13. 24-25. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection*, PG 46, 280 B.

45. Hom. 16. 13. 21-22. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Holy Pascha: First Homily*, PG 46, 688 A.

46. Hom. 24. 3. 24. Professor P. K. Christou writes in this regard: '*The theological edifice concerning divine Economy, that is, concerning the saving action of God for the raising up of the human race, did not rest on any philosophical speculation, but was constructed as an answer to a real demand and as the fruit of a deep religious experience flowing from participation in the Resurrection of Christ*.' P. K. Christou, *Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου*, PIPM, Thessalonica 1983, pp. 39-40. See also Elias D. Moutsoulas, *The Incarnation of the Word and the theosis of man according to the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa*, Athens 1979, p. 161.

47. Hom. 17. 15. 15-19. See what is written in this regard by Ioannis Karmiris in his study, *Τὸ δόγμα τῆς σωτηρίας*, Athens 1956.

The Theosis of man as the fulness of salvation

The concept of the union of man with God or of 'theosis' occupies a central place in the neptic writings of the 4th century.⁴⁸

Saint Macarios in his writings describes in detail the path of the ascetic method which aims at perfection and leads via the purification and illumination of the mind to the union of man with God or to the vision of the glory of Christ. *'Little by little man grows and becomes a perfect man in stature.'*⁴⁹

According to the orthodox tradition of mystical theology and to Saint Macarios, the aim of all spiritual and bodily exercises is the theosis of man, which means that man becomes God, not by nature, but by grace.⁵⁰

The union of man with Christ the Bridegroom takes place in stages. The first stage is the continuous purification of the mind from sinful content. At the second stage, the 'purified mind' is able to rule the whole man in accordance with the will of God. Finally, at the third stage, the 'illuminated' mind becomes 'all eye' and beholds the inexpressible mysteries of the divinity.⁵¹ Nonetheless, in this path towards perfection and union with God these spiritual stages need to be understood not so much as a temporal sequence but existentially.

According to Saint Macarios, only those who possess illumination of heart are raised to the final stage which is the vision of the glory of God,

48. See Stylianos Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Β'*, Athens 1990, pp. 690-699 (Athanasios the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, Evagrius of Pontus).

49. Hom. 15. 11-13. In relation to perfection Saint Macarios notes: *'To speak of freedom from the passions and perfection is easy, but to attain to the state of perfection by experience is something reserved for few'*.

50. See Hom. 2.5.12. Many ancient ecclesiastical writers and Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasios the Great and others, posit the theosis of man as the ultimate aim of salvation in Christ. See, I. Karmiris, «*Ἡ παγκοσμιότης τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ σωτηρίας*», *Θεολογία* 51-52 (1981) 79.

51. See Hom. 8.1. 23-33. Father Artemios Radosavljevich defends the view that all the Fathers agree *'that man's aim is theosis and that the means to attaining this is ascetic practice. Beyond this they speak of three stages on man's road to perfection, which are: purification from the passions and from impassioned thoughts, illumination through spiritual knowledge (theoria) and theosis in mystical union with God'*. Artemios Radosavljevich, *Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητήν*, Athens 1975, p. 25.

because 'those who have been illuminated behold the image of the soul'.⁵² 'Therefore whoever wishes to become participant in the divine glory and to behold the figure of Christ as in a mirror in the ruling faculty of his soul, must seek succour in power from God night and day with insatiable love and unquenchable desire from his whole heart and power; and it is impossible to participate in this glory unless one first removes oneself from the pleasure-loving of the world and from the desires of the hostile power.'⁵³

The vision of the figure of the Lord is attained in the mind (in the ruling faculty of the soul – τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) as if in a mirror, once the mind has been cleansed. The cleansing from the 'pleasure-loving' of the world constitutes the fundamental precondition for the appearance of the figure of Christ in the mirror of the mind. The engraving of the divine image in the inner man is absolutely essential if man is to communicate in divine truth – to be saved. Just as a gold coin that does not bear the image of the king cannot be used in trade and is rejected, so also the soul that does not have 'Christ stamped upon' it is discarded in the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁴ Indeed it is the Lord himself who stamps the image of Christ on man.⁵⁵ Man's task is to keep his gaze fixed steadily on Christ without averting his face from Him, so that the Lord can paint His image on man.⁵⁶ The appearance of the divine beauty in the mirror of the soul – so

52. Hom. 7.6. 37-38. Athanasios the Great also knows and employs the metaphor of the soul as a mirror. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία Β'*, p. 267. P. Christou, in regard to Saint Macarios's spiritual teaching, observes: 'The soul which has been counted worthy to become a dwelling place of the spirit of light and to enter into communion therewith and which has been irradiated by the beauty of its ineffable glory herself becomes light... and indeed heavenly light', *Ἑλληνική Πατρολογία*, vol. 3, Thessalonica 1987, p. 200.

53. Hom. 25.3. 14-20. See Justin Popovich, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς προσωπικότητος καὶ τῆς γνώσεως κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Μακάριον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον*, Athens 1926, p. 91.

54. See Hom. 30.5. 6-12. Cf. J. Stoffels, *Die mystische Theologie Makarius des Aegypters*, Bonn 1908, 127.

55. See Hom. 30.4. 30-35. Cf. H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarius/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978, p. 324.

56. Macarios's example of the soul as a painting has the same theological import as the example of the soul as a mirror. Both examples are variations of the divine image in the soul.

that the soul can form its own beauty – results in the union (re-mingling – ανάκρasis) of man with God. *‘The soul that is united and re-mingled with the Advocate Spirit... is assimilated to Christ’.*⁵⁷

Man’s whole concern and attention should therefore be turned towards his inner self and not be dispersed elsewhere. Saint Macarios wishes to emphasise the importance of vigilant care to be turned inwards by saying that the inner man, the soul, possesses an inconceivable value as being a mirror-image of God.

Some thousand years after the death of Saint Macarios, Saint Gregory Palamas will speak analytically about man’s ‘incoiling’ or concentration within his inner self, in his heart, because God reveals himself within the inner man. Saint Macarios had prepared the ground for the Hesychast theology of man’s inner concentration in speaking about the inner man as a mirror of God and about the liberation of the mind (or of the heart) from thoughts and passions, so that the mind (or the heart) may become an instrument receptive to the vision of God.

In order to express man’s perfect union with Christ and the holy Spirit, Saint Macarios employs the following terms: ‘mingling’ (κράσις),⁵⁸ ‘co-mingling’ (σύγκρasis),⁵⁹ ‘re-mingling’ (ἀνάκρasis)⁶⁰ and ‘mixture’ (μίξις).⁶¹ Certainly, in the history of the Church these terms have also been

57. Hom. 18.10. 15-21.

58. Hom. 46.3. 9 and Hom. 9.12. 31.

59. Hom. 18.10. 16.

60. Hom. 48.10. 15. See Gregory Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, PG 44. 772 A: ‘in which what is outlined is a kind of sub-stratum but what is intended is the re-mingling of the human soul to the divine.’

61. Hom. 45.1. 3-4. Elias Moutsoulas, in his work, *The Incarnation of the Word and the theosis of man according to the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa*, Athens, 2000, discusses all these terms in footnote on page 227 thus: ‘By the term ‘confusion’, the creation of a third nature was meant through the union of the two elements, in which the original attributes are no longer found; while the by term μίξις ‘mixture’ and κράσις ‘blending’, the union of the two elements are without loss of their own attributes. (The term ‘mixture’ refers to solid bodies, and the term ‘blending’ to liquids). It is not a matter of simple παραθέσεως ‘setting side by side’, by ἀντιπαρεκτάσεως ‘mutual coexistence’ This teaching came from the Stoics and from Philo. (Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, p. 380). Certainly, the Fathers of the Church by no means

used by heretical writers, but always with a different content. The Fourth Ecumenical Council abolished the use of these terms.⁶²

Certainly all these terms are used by Saint Macarios somewhat loosely. We need to emphasise that Macarios gives them an orthodox content, wishing thereby to signify the mutual co-existence and mystical union of God and man. What, however, he wishes to stress particularly is the theosis of man through his union with God. Just as the theosis of human nature in Christ was not an absorption or transsubstantiation of the human into the divine, but a sanctification and likening to the divine, thus the theosis of man consists in his becoming like to God through union with him. In this union man is not lost in God, but retains his nature.

Saint Macarios preserves for us his own orthodox description of the experience of divine vision, avoiding the extreme Messalian conviction that the beholder of the divine light attains thereby ultimate and lasting freedom, perfect freedom from the passions.⁶³ He asserts that for all his visions and irradiations with light, the praying ascetic does not acquire ultimate and perfect freedom except in the age to come.⁶⁴ The vision of light, nonetheless, is a foretaste of the blessedness of the *eschata*. '*Just as in the consummation when the firmament is drawn away, then the righteous will live in the kingdom and in the light and the glory... so these too from the present are caught up into that age... and see the beauties thereof.*'⁶⁵ A precondition for divine vision here too is purification: '*The mind which has been purified beholds the glory of the light of Christ.*'⁶⁶ Divine vision is the awesome event of the dawn of the sun of the right-

accepted the pan-theistic beliefs of the Stoics. They simply used their terminology. (According to H.A. Wolfson, p. 386, the terms 'mixture' and 'blending' have in the Fathers of the Church the sense of 'predominance', i.e., the dominance of one element over the other, to fortify and clarify the Christian dogma. The terms therefore, μῆξις, κράσις, σύγκρασις, used by the Fathers as well as the term ἀνάκρασις, being synonyms, must not be understood as Monophysitic.)

62. See Pheidas, 'Εκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία, vol. 2, 1990, p. 50.

63. H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarius/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978, p. 27.

64. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, p.430. See Hom. 8.3. 27. Cf. Hom. 17.14. 38.

65. Hom. 17.4. 6-11.

66. Hom. 17.4. 15-16.

eousness of Christ, when the eyes of the soul will open and will see the true light.⁶⁷ Then in prayer the person senses in his heart and in his whole being a flood of light and a 'fire' of varying intensity which fires and burns him with ineffable sweetness and radiance.⁶⁸ This light is an 'enhy-postatic'⁶⁹ power of the holy Spirit; it is the surpassing divine beauty which irradiates the entire soul so that the whole soul is light, all countenance, all glory, all spirit, all dwelling-place of Christ – free.⁷⁰ The whole man floats on light and is bathed in light. This charismatic state does not last. At some point it abates, the light diminishes, the euphoria lessens, the divine fire becomes barely perceptible. The ascetic then lives with the memory of the ineffable gift of grace and seeking to find it again. Even more, the demon may attack him once again after the abeyance of the di-

67. Hom. 28.4. 29-31.

68. Characteristically Saint Macarios writes: '*Now the fire is ignited and burns more fiercely, then more calmly and more mildly. And the light itself at certain times breaks out and shines radiantly, then again diminishes and abates.*' Hom. 8.2. 1-4.

69. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 430. Saint Macarios characterized the power-energy (ἐργασία) of the holy Spirit as 'enhypostatic' (ἐνυπόστατον) *New Homilies* 18. p. 95.3 (H. Berthold (ed.), *Neue Homilien des Makarios/Symeon*, III, E. Klostermann, p. 98. 15) The irradiation of this power he calls 'according to hypostasis' (καθ' ὑπόστασιν) – 'On the freedom of the mind', [Hom. 23, p. 247. 20]. He also mentions the term 'hypostatic light' (ὑποστατικὸν φῶς) [Hom. 22, p. 247. 6], which is precisely the light of the Spirit. He employs these terms to underline the reality, the active power and the effectiveness of the illuminating energy of the Spirit – though this terminology was employed by the Cappadocian Fathers in relation to the theology of the Holy Trinity, as Prof. Stylianos Papadopoulos (*op. cit.*, p. 426) points out. The illuminating energy of the Spirit conveys to the beholder the inner certainty of the reality of his experience of divine light. See H. Berthold (ed.), *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, Teil II (GCS), Berlin 1973, Hom. 58. 2. 1, p. 183, 14-16: '*The illumination of grace is thus not only a revelation of meanings and knowledge, but an eternal radiance shining within the soul the certainty of hypostatic light.*'

70. Saint Macarios writes in this regard: '*For the soul that has been counted worthy to communicate with the Spirit of his light and to be irradiated by the beauty of his inexpressible glory – for he has prepared the soul as a throne and dwelling-place for himself – becomes all light and all countenance and all eye... as with fire the light of the fire itself is entirely like to fire... so also is the soul that is perfectly irradiated by the ineffable beauty of the glory of the light of the countenance of Christ.*' Hom. 1.2. 5-20.

vine grace.⁷¹ The author of the Spiritual Homilies describes here with honesty the harshness of ascetic realism, banishing the Messalian utopia of the absolute perfection and freedom of the person who beholds the divine light.

Saint Macarios presents the vision of God as the highest end of man. Man was created as a beholder of the divine light.

The mind that has been purified and illuminated beholds '*the Master*', it beholds that glory which it saw '*before the disobedience of our father Adam*'.⁷² Those who have been purified and illuminated by the holy Spirit, '*are caught up towards that age and behold the beauties and marvels therein*'.⁷³ '*With their illumined and purified mind they behold the inaccessible radiances of the Lord*'.⁷⁴

What man '*beholds*', however, is that which surrounds the nature of God: the light and the glory of God, the beauty of the vision, the goodness and all the other things that belong to the sphere of divinity,⁷⁵ but not to the nature of God. And this is because the divine nature itself surpasses man's visionary capability and is of itself unseeable. In an exceptionally important Homily, Saint Macarios says that the divine nature is invisible, indescribable and inconceivable, whereas what becomes visible are the energies of God: '*God is indescribable and appears everywhere inconceivable*'.⁷⁶ Certainly here there is no clear distinction between

71. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 429-30. We read specifically at 8.3. 18-25 of the Spiritual Homilies: '*At another time this light shining in the heart opened the innermost and deepest and hidden light, so that the whole man desirous of this sweetness and vision no longer possesses himself... so that the man at that time having been freed may attain to the perfect measure and be pure and free from sin. But after these things the grace abated and the veil of the hostile power supervened; the light shines as it were partly and stands at a degree below that of perfection.*'

72. Hom. 45.1. 3-4.

73. 'On the raising up of the mind', Hom.13. 26-27.

74. Hom.13. 26-27. Thus is interpreted the Psalm verse, '*in your light we shall see light*'. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, PG 44. 897 B: '*From its own labours through continence and watchfulness (the soul) attained beauty.*'

75. Hom. 5.6. 4-5: '*the marvels of God*'. Hom. 25.10. 2, Hom. 34.1 36: '*the beauties of the divinity*'.

76. Hom. 16.5. 30 and Hom. 17.10. 20-22.

‘essence’ and ‘energies’, because whether divine energies are created or uncreated was not a problem that engaged the theology of the 4th century. Some thousand years were to pass before we reach the time of the renowned hesychast disputes when the teaching concerning the uncreated energies of God was to be founded on the visionary experience of the earlier ascetics.

Saint Macarios, the desert ascetic, seeking to explain participation in the energies of God, states that ‘*the beauties of the divinity are apparent and visible to those of purified mind*’⁷⁷ and they see the inexpressible beauty of Christ in this life because Christ is ‘*seen by the eyes of the soul in truth up until the day of resurrection*’.⁷⁸ The uncreated and ‘*eternal light*’⁷⁹ of Christ is not perceptible to the senses or to reason, nor does it become visible through the air, but ‘*it illuminates and holds sway in the soul of the saints*’.⁸⁰ The man who is exalted above the bounds of createdness and is filled entirely with the presence of the holy Spirit attains great measures of perfection because ‘*the things worked by the Spirit of great measures belong to those who are close to perfection*’.⁸¹ At the same time Saint Macarios refers to the spiritual path of Moses as a type and paradigm for the spiritual perfection of Christians and for participation in the uncreated glory of God: ‘*He (Moses) ascended a man; he descended having God*’.⁸²

The highest degree of man’s perfection, according to Saint Macarios, is the unmediated vision of the uncreated glory of God, which is equivalent to the theosis and union of man with God. At this point we can locate the reason why Saint Macarios resorts to the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai, that is the participation of the whole man in the uncre-

77. Hom. 34.1. 36.

78. Hom. 2.5. 19-20.

79. Hom. 2.5. 24.

80. Hom. 2.5. 17.

81. Hom. 18.10. 9-10.

82. Hom. 12.14. 33. See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Life of Moses*, PG 44. 300 D. Saint Gregory developed the teaching of Moses’ spiritual journey and perceived the three stages of spiritual perfection in the various ways in which God appeared to him. Namely: the burning bush (*purification*), the cloud (*illumination*) and darkness (*theosis*).

ated glory and kingdom of the worshipful Holy Trinity. It must be noted that for Saint Macarios the god-making, uncreated grace of God is the same uncreated glory and kingdom that was revealed to Moses and to prophets of the Old Testament, to the Apostles and to the Saints of the Church and is the same as that of the age to come. Here, moreover, it must no less be emphasised that participation in the uncreated glory of God is understood not only as spiritual but on the basis of the concept of the body as both spiritual and corporal. Man is seen as a unity. The concept of communion with God as life, '*for with you is the fount of life*', makes clear the affirmation of the psycho-somatic unity of man. The psycho-somatic unity of man demands a psycho-somatic participation and communion with God.⁸³ For this reason, according to Saint Macarios, Moses, the beholder of God, '*was fed by God and his body was cared for, but with heavenly food*'.⁸⁴ This took place because he dwelt within the light of God and saw and bore on his countenance the uncreated glory and the unapproachable light of the Triadic divinity.

The vitalisation of the flesh is its spiritualization, without this spiritualization thereby negating the material nature of the flesh. Thus we speak '*of a "holy materialism" which runs through traditional Orthodoxy*'⁸⁵ and is founded on the theosis of the human body.⁸⁶ Of this theosis the relics of the saints constitute the brightest 'glory'.

83. See Hom. 12.14. 34-40. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Life of Moses*, PG 44. 373 B. In this work man's path is presented in three stages. These three stages (freedom from passions – faith – love) could be replaced by the light, the cloud and the darkness, that is, by the various ways in which Christ appeared to Moses.

84. See Hom. 12.14. 35-37. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Life of Moses*, PG 44. 385 B.

85. Konstantinos Papapetrou, *Ἡ οὐσία τῆς Θεολογίας*, Athens 1970, p. 99.

86. The consequences of the theosis of the body may be summarized as follows:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a. Radiance of the countenance: | Exodus 34. 29-35. |
| b. Transmission of sanctification through touch: | Acts 19. 12. |
| c. Flow of myrrh: | Saint Demetrios and others. |
| d. Incorruption of relics: | Saint Spyridon and others |
| e. Miracles worked through holy relics: | Saint Nectarios and others. |
| f. ' <i>The glory of the body both during the present life and after the common resurrection</i> '. | |

See Father Meletios Kalamaras (now Metropolitan of Nikopolis), *Ἀγιολογία*, Athens 1972, p. 35. Cf. Panagiotis I. Boumis, *Ἡ καύση τῶν σωμάτων*, Athens 1999, p. 12.

According to Saint Macarios, that glory which Moses bore on his countenance before the bush that burned and was not consumed now shines '*within the hearts of the Christians*'.⁸⁷ Here there appears very clearly the unity of God's revelation through the '*mystery of the law*'⁸⁸ and '*the mysteries of the life according to the Gospel*'.⁸⁹ For the chosen people of God from the Old Testament and for the Christians there is a unity of spirituality and of soteriological experience.⁹⁰ The late Professor John Romanides writes in relation to this: '*The same grace (glory) is at work in both the Old and the New Testament, with the difference that now it works in Christ and can be, for the righteous man and for the penitent, before and after the earthly life of Christ, a constant gift for the soul that is not lost at the death of the body. Only in this sense does God dwell in Christ in a new way for Christians through the grace of the holy Spirit. That this is the correct approach of the theology of Palamas is shown clearly by the fact the Saint Gregory takes very seriously the friends of God and the reconciliation with God in the Old Testament.*'⁹¹

According to Saint Macarios, God acts perfectly whensoever he wills the theosis of those who are worthy 'according to their power'. '*Thus he appeared to each of the holy Fathers as he willed and as was expedient. He appeared in a different way to Abraham, in a different way to Isaac and in a different way to Jacob; in a different way to Noah, to Daniel, to David, to Solomon, to Isaiah, and to each of the holy prophets. In a different way to Elijah and in a different way to Moses. And I believe that Moses at all times on the mountain during his fast of forty days on entering into that spiritual table delighted in and enjoyed [the divine presence]. To each of the saints therefore as he willed he was seen in order*

87. Hom. 12.14. 38-39 '*henceforth the souls of the saints and of the faithful are counted worthy to possess this glory within the inner man*', Hom. 5.10. 11-13.

88. P. Christou, Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, Συγγράμματα, vol. 2, Thessalonica, p. 567.

89. P. Christou, *op. cit.*, p. 567.

90. See Hom. 12.14. 38-39.

91. J. Romanides 'Notes on the Palamite controversy and related topics' *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10:1 (1964-65) p. 249. For Saint Macarios, for someone to become God by grace means that he is able to see God through God – '*in your light we shall see light*' – not only in the age to come, but also in the present life.

to give rest, to save and to lead to knowledge of God. All things that He wishes are easy for Him and as he wills, contracting himself, he makes a body and is transfigured, being seen by those who love him in unapproachable glory of light, manifesting himself in great and inexpressible love to those worthy according to his power.⁹² Certainly he does not omit to stress that 'most people wish to obtain the kingdom without toil, struggles and perspiration, and this is impossible.'⁹³

The person who in this life attains the ultimate spiritual degree of *theoria* or of his union with God does not find himself always and continually in a state of divine vision, which, according to Saint Macarios, is the perfect measure. 'And when your soul communicates with the Spirit and a heavenly soul enters your soul, then you are a perfect man in God and both heir and son.'⁹⁴ In another Homily the holy father says: 'Thus the perfect measure was not given so that he would be able to have time to devote to care for the brothers and the minstry of the word, but the dividing wall has been broken down and death has been vanquished.'⁹⁵

92. Hom. 4.13. 23-35. In the work of man's salvation, Saint Macarios's words hold good: 'If the will is not present, not even God himself does anything, even though so able on account of his freedom. The effective action of God thus lies in the will of man.'

93. Hom. 5.6. 91-11.

94. Hom. 32.6. 5-7. See Hom. 8.3. 8-27. The following passage from Saint Irenaeus relating to man's theosis is of pertinence: 'Just as those who see the light are within the light and participate in its radiance, so those who see God are within God, participating in his radiance... those who see God thus participate in life, And for this reason he who cannot be contained, conceived or seen gave himself to the faithful as seen, understood and contained, so that he might give life to those able to contain him and see him in faith. Just as his magnitude is unsearchable so that goodness is inexplicable whereby being seen he grants himself to those who see him. Since to live without life would not be possible, the existence of life comes from participation in God; participation in God is to know God and to enjoy his goodness.' Irenaeus, *An examination and rebuttal of what is falsely called 'Gnosis'*, PG 7 1035 B – 1036 A.

95. Hom. 8.4. 38-41. Here we might insert a parenthesis to bring us up to present-day concerns and present-day preaching. The text that follows belongs to Saint Macarios and is quoted directly as it stands from his Homily 18. 'Thus also those who are rich in the holy Spirit, having the heavenly wealth in truth and communion of the Spirit in themselves, whenever they speak the word of truth to people and whenever they communicate spiritual words to people and wish to bring joy to souls, from their own wealth and from their own treasure that they possess in themselves, from this they speak and from this they bring joy to the souls of those who hear the spiritual word and they

The defeat of death '*for those souls that who seek him (Christ)*'⁹⁶ is a necessary precondition for the vision of the glory of God, the experience of which surpasses all rational knowledge. '*The perfect Christians*' become worthy to '*enter into the measure of perfection*'. Only the '*perfect Christians*' are '*vanquishers of the devil*'⁹⁷ and defeat him, the cause of sin and of death. The advent of our Lord Jesus Christ aims to free us from Satan and '*to make us victors over death and sin*'.⁹⁸ There are no limits to the process of perfection of Christians, because '*the Lord has neither limit nor point of "capturing the citadel" and Christians do not presume to say that "we have captured the citadel", but in humility they seek night and day*'.⁹⁹ '*This humility is the sign of Christianity*'.¹⁰⁰ The '*perfect Christians*' become '*unfalling*', not when they acquire all the gifts of the holy Spirit,¹⁰¹ but when they attain '*perfect love*' in which lies the '*bond of perfection*'.¹⁰² '*The perfect Christians... are sons, lords and gods*'.¹⁰³

do not fear their hearers will be left wanting; because they possess in themselves a heavenly treasure from which they offer to those who feast at their spiritual table. The person who is poor and neither possesses anything of the wealth of Christ nor has in his soul spiritual riches from which flow all goodness of words and of deeds, of divine desires and of ineffable mysteries, even if he wishes to speak a word of truth and to bring joy to some of his listeners, but not possessing in himself the word of God in power and truth, but only having learnt by rote and borrowing words from Scripture or hearing from spiritual men and recounting and teaching, behold, he appears to bring joy to others and others take delight in his words; but after his talking is over, each word returns where it came from and he remains once again naked and bereft, having no treasure of the Spirit of his own from which he offers and gives benefit and brings joy to others, since he first is not gladdened or joyous in the Spirit.' Hom. 18.5. 13-34.

96. Hom. 11.11. 21.

97. Hom. 3,5, 34.

98. Hom. 26.22. 35-36.

99. Hom. 26.17. 21-23. According to Gregory of Nyssa: '*The person who desires to see God sees the object of his yearning in that he ever follows him and the vision of his countenance is the unceasing path towards him.*' *On the Song of Songs*, PG 44. 1025 D.

100. Hom. 15.37. 40-41. Venizelos Christoforides, '*Ἡ πνευματικὴ πατρότης κατὰ Συμεὼν τὸν Νέον Θεολόγον*', Thessalonica 1977, pp. 70-71.

101. See Hom. 26.16. 4-18. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Interpretation of the Psalms*, PG 44. 433 C, 457 C.

102. Hom. 27.14. 23-32. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, PG 44. 968 C.

103. Hom. 17.1. 5. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, PG 46. 320 D.

But for someone to speak about the acquisition of ultimate and inalienable perfection is an overweening claim. For those overweening Messalians who arrogate to themselves a didactic role in order to speak of perfection, Saint Macarios says very characteristically: *'Those who speak spiritual words without having tasted are like a person crossing the desert in the heat of the day and who when fainting from thirst sketches a well gushing with water showing himself drinking while his lips are utterly parched... or like someone who speaks of the sweetness of honey, but who has not tasted honey and does not know the power of sweetness, such are those who speak of perfection but do not possess these things in active force and full experience.'*¹⁰⁴ For someone to speak of perfection in an apt and pertinent way he needs to have experience of what he is taking about. The extreme Messalians speak of *'things'* that they do not possess and do not know *'in active force and full experience'*. Saint Macarios's comment presupposes perfection as a state which one can taste like the *'honey'* and *'water'* of his examples. Man even in the present life has a possibility of an experiential approach to the infinite and mysterious depth of the age to come. It is possible, even in this earthly life, to sense the *'perfection'* of the Spirit as a state of purification from all the passions. This is the experience unique in its profundity of an ineffable *'communion'*, *'union'* or *'co-mingling'* of soul and Spirit when the *'inner man'* becomes spiritual, participates in the Spirit, and, without losing his otherness, his uniqueness, since he remains always *'inner man'*, he finds himself as it were *'assimilated to Christ'*,¹⁰⁵ that is, profoundly united with the Lord.

Man thus, *'through the power of the Spirit and of spiritual rebirth, attains to the measures of Adam of old and becomes greater than him. Man is deified'*.¹⁰⁶ Participation in the divine energies which leads man to

104. Hom. 17.12. 4-12.

105. Homily on Love, 7.8. 25-27.

106. Hom. 26.2. 36-38. And according to P. Christou, *'from the 4th century onwards the central idea of Greek theology became the Athanasian: "He became man that we might be made god"'* P. Christou, *'Η έννοια της σωτηρίας κατά τους Καππαδόκας'* *Κληρονομία* 5 (1973) p. 361. See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Life of Moses*, PG 44. 373

theosis, constitutes the perfection of his salvation. The perfection, however, does not constitute a static state, because Christ is the Way and also because man, for his part, strives continually to acquire ever more good things in a journey that is without end.¹⁰⁷ *'Ascend, ascend, ascents with fervour'*, urges the later neptic father, John of Sinai (+649), recapitulating the sense of the words of Saint Macarios that *'the Lord has neither end nor point of "capturing the citadel"'*.¹⁰⁸

Man, yearning for his salvation, ever moves towards the infinite Creator.¹⁰⁹ The divine path of man's salvation is luminous but without end, and the fount of blessings is inexhaustible.

The salvation of man, of every man, has as its highest degree the theosis which is achieved with the full union of man with God. Theosis, which is attained through ascetic endeavour and participation in the sacramental life of the Church as of the present life constitutes but a pale image of the theosis of the age to come in which God will become *'all in all'*.¹¹⁰

B. Father Artemios Radosavlievich, in his book, *Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητὴν*, Athens 1975, p. 201 n. 4, notes: *'Theosis is not simply the restoration of man to his 'natural state', because it surpasses the 'natural state' even of human nature before the fall, for which reason theosis was set as the aim of creation; it was not, namely, something given at the creation.'*

107. See Philip. 3.14: *'I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Jesus Christ.'*

108. John of Sinai, *The Ladder*, PG 88. 1160 A. See Tomas Spidlik, *La spiritualité de L' Orient Chrétien. Manuel Systematique*, Rome 1978. See also P. Christou, *Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, Thessalonica 1983, 6.15.

109. Hom. 26.17.21.

110. 1Cor. 12.6. See Hom. 4.10 and 1Cor. 15.28: *'so that God may be all in all'*.