

The reduction to the eighth day and the sight of God as the eschatological thread of the teaching of Saint Symeon the New Theologian

By Andreas Karatzas*

1. Introduction

According to Symeon the New Theologian's teaching, reduction from darkness to the eighth day is the first step to salvation. Without it, man can't be led to purification, apathy, and ultimately to the vision of God¹. Understanding darkness and the reduction of man to the light of the eighth day reveals another dimension of God's creative work, through which our understanding of the eschatological understanding of the Fathers of the Church is broadened. This exclusive link between salvation and the reduction from the darkness to the eighth day makes it necessary for us to explore *the eighth-day* concept within an eschatological context that encompasses Creation, its course, and its passage into eternity.

As K. Patronos has aptly put it, theology lies somewhere "in-between" protology [«πρωτολογία» = the branch of theology about origins and first things], which speaks of Creation's timeless time, and eschatology, and refers to eternity's timeless time². However, we should not escape from noticing that, as a discourse on the first and the last things, both protology and eschatology are located in eternity's encountering with

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1. *Ἔγνωνος* 54, 124-136, SC 196, pp. 246-248.

2. G. Patronos, «Ἀπὸ τὴν πρωτολογία στὴ "λειτουργικὴ ἐσχατολογία"», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 85, 2 (2014), p. 7.

history. Protology begins from eternity, defining Creation's space-time, and eschatology ends in eternity, defining the passage of space-time creation into eternity. Their common factor is the mystery of the coexistence of the created and the uncreated, history and eternity, this eighth day.

According to Symeon, God is eternally the same and perfect; He created the beings and things to envision Him as eternal. However, for them to enter into God's eternal theory/vision they must achieve perfection. Thus, the creation ex nihilo by God is on the way to perfection. But Creation's *being* [εἶναι], which can accept *perfection* as a predicate, concerns the eternity within which God acts. The Creation will be perfect in its last phase when it will have been completed according to God's eternal will. From the point of view of the finite time within which things created and man exist, as beings created ex nihilo, this εἶναι is perceived in linear sensible/tangible time, having as the point of departure the creation's beginnings and moving in succession to the *Last Things* (τὰ ἔσχατα), the recapitulation of all things, according to the Apostle Paul, and their passage to eternity. The Creation's *being* is continuously formed from the beginning of its creation to the Last Things, with the reduction of man to the eighth day. This determines the creation's beginning, course, and entrance into eternity.

The teaching of Symeon the New Theologian presents the *last things* as the thread that runs through history and weaves its path to eternity. The *last things* in Symeon's theology refers to the "facts" connected with God's vision of Man – someone who has been created but he is also the Creation's king. But these "events" are not purely and solely historical. They are "facts" concerning history and eternity, Creation's now and forever. They are "facts" experienced by believers who participate in the eighth day, who, while they live in the present, have transcended historical and sensible time and entered eternity's timeless time. They are "facts" for those who, while remaining part of the creation and its historicity, thus shaping its historical becoming and its course towards the Last Things, transcend created nature and time by envisioning God's glory. They are "divine-human facts", which begin in history and are completed at the end of history, making them eternal. They are, in other words, "theandric" facts that have a historical beginning because of the

entrance of the uncreated into the created but have no end because of the entrance of the created into eternity.

2. The eighth day

Understanding the “*eighth day*” is one of the most difficult tasks for the Fathers of the Church. It has not gone unnoticed that very few of them have referred to it in trying to define it. Among them are St. Gregory of Nyssa, for whom the eighth day is Life³, and St. Maximus the Confessor, who considers it a supernatural state⁴. Although he does not write systematically, St. Symeon manages to offer us the meaning of the eighth day within the framework of his teaching.

2.1. *The eighth day as eternally the same time*

The eighth day is understood by Symeon to be an eternally the same time. In the answer he gives as to why the Holy Spirit does not connect the eighth day with the previous seven, he points out that it was not fitting to make such a connection with the days of Creation, because the eighth day, unlike the other seven ones, has no beginning or end⁵. In describing the succession of days and weeks, Symeon points to both the start (the beginning) of the creation time and the temporal progression as the main characteristics of the creation’s temporality, to contrast it with the eighth day⁶. Creation has a temporal beginning, the start of the first day, and the days as alternating time intervals, having a beginning

3. Gregory of Nyssa, *Κεφάλαια*, Β' βιβλίον εἰς τοὺς ψαλμούς, 5, PG 44, 505A: «ἡ ὀγδόη ... ἣτις ἐστὶν ὁ ἐφεξῆς αἰὼν, ὅλος μία ἡμέρα γενόμενος, καθὼς φησὶ τις τῶν προφητῶν, “μεγάλην ἡμέραν”, τὴν ἐλπίζομένην ὀνομάσας ζωὴν. Ἐπειδὴ οὐχ ὁ αἰσθητὸς ἥλιος φωτίζει τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς, ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιος, ὅς “Ἀνατολή” ὑπὸ τῆς προφητείας κατονομάζεται, διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε δυσμαῖς συγκαλύπτεται».

4. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια Περί Θεολογίας καὶ τῆς ἐνσάρκου οἰκονομίας τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, PG 90, 1101C: «Ἡ ἕκτη κατὰ τὴν Γραφὴν ἡμέρα, τὴν τῶν ὑπὸ φύσιν ὄντων εἰσηγεῖται συμπλήρωσιν ἢ δὲ ἐβδόμη, τῆς χρονικῆς ιδιότητος περιγράφει τὴν κίνησιν ἢ δὲ ὀγδόη, τῆς ὑπὲρ φύσιν καὶ χρόνον ὑποδηλοῖ καταστάσεως τὸν τρόπον».

5. *Ἠθικὸς* 1, α', 123-128, SC 122, p. 182.

6. *Ἠθικὸς* 2, γ', 5-10, SC 122, p. 340.

and an end, determine the linear temporality of the whole creation. This perception of the Creation's time is formed in man by the sense of the succession of days and can therefore be described as sensible time⁷. Creation, material and immaterial, and tangible time have a common beginning as simultaneous creations from non-beings. There is no creation without sensible time and vice versa. The time of creation or space-time, according to our present understanding of the relationship between space and time, is not eternal, because it has a beginning.

On the contrary, the eighth day, as the eternally the same time, does not have the same characteristics as the days, the sensible time of creation. The eighth day is presented as a day without beginning or end: «Οὐδὲ γὰρ νῦν μὲν οὐκ ἔστι, μέλλει δὲ γενέσθαι καὶ ἀρχὴν λήψεσθαι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἦν πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἔστι νῦν καὶ ἔσται εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων»⁸. This day is one, it is not now, but it was before the ages, is now, and shall be forever. The eighth day as one has no beginning and no end. That is, it has no preceding or following time period. This apophatic way in which Symeon presents the eighth day identifies it as a time without beginning and end, endless, eternal, which has no relation to the finite, linear, and sensible time of creation.

However, the eighth day, according to an important passage of the *2nd Ethical Discourse*, while concerning eternity, remains closely connected to the creation, including the portions of what has been built in a creation that takes place within it and indicates the world to come beforehand: «ἵνα τὰς ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μερίδας τῶν κτισθέντων ἐν ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἡμέραις μὴ ἐν αὐταῖς αὐτὰς ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ὀγδόῃ λαβών, τὸν μέλλοντα αἰῶνα διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ δημιουργίας προὑπογράψῃ»⁹. According to Symeon, the creation that takes place on the eighth day is no other than the union of the created and the uncreated. Thus, on the eighth day, the portions are taken from the creation and constitute the beginning of the world to come¹⁰. In this way, the eighth day succeeds the sensible time

7. Gregory of Nyssa, *Κεφάλαια. Β' βιβλίον εἰς τοὺς φαλμούς*, 5, PG 44, 504D.

8. *Ἠθικός 1, α'*, 128-133, SC 122, p. 182.

9. *Ἠθικός 2, γ'*, 42-45, SC 122, pp. 342-344.

10. *Ἠθικός 2, γ'*, 62-65 καὶ 74-78, SC 122, pp. 344-346; See also Basil the Great, *Ἐξηγητικά*, PG 29, 52A: «ἀνέσπερον καὶ ἀδιάδοχον καὶ ἀτελεύτητον τὴν ἡμέραν...ὀγδόη».

and becomes the beginning of the world to come, as Gregory of Nyssa characteristically mentions: «Πρὸς τὸν ἐφεξῆς αἰῶνα βλέπει, ᾧ ἡ ἀρχὴ ὀγδὴ λέγεται, τὸν αἰσθητὸν διαδεξαμένη χρόνον, τὸν ἐν ἑβδομάσιν ἀνακυκλούμενον»¹¹. If the day, as sensible time, is understood as a specific period concerning the created world, the eighth day, as the transcendence of the tangible time by the created man, is understood as the eternal time in which created man participates.

The eighth day, though eternal, will have a beginning when it will come and revealed itself to man: «ἀρχὴν δὲ λαβεῖν λέγεται, ὅτε πάντως ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἡμῖν ἐσχάτως ἀποκαλυφθῆ ἀνέσπερος μία ἡμέρα καὶ ἀτελεύτητος ἐν τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς γινομένη»¹². The eighth day itself, while eternally existing, comes and is revealed to man. Thus, while it has no beginning, it takes its beginning in our time and space with its revelation to man. Man, though created, enters the eternally same eighth day. His entrance takes place with the revelation to him of the eighth day in a way that approximates how man perceives time, i.e. as the beginning of the day, a rising light, with the difference that this light is immaterial, unfading, and unending. From the text's context, it appears that the revelation of the eighth day, the beginning of the eighth day for man, makes him realize the end of perceptual time, «ἐσχάτως», which he perceives up to that moment. The moment of the rupture of the sensible time from the eternally the same one, which the revelation of the eighth day inevitably creates, extracts man from the sensible time, acting as *the eschaton*, the end of the world in which he lived, and introduces him into another world, in a creation that starts from the created world and directs itself towards eternity. The beginning of this other world for man takes place with the reduction of man by God himself on the eighth day. Thus, according to Maximus the Confessor¹³, the beginning of the eighth day related to man could be understood as the beginning of the life of the created psychosomatic man in eternity's and eternal light's context, as the transcendence of sensible time and his created nature.

11. Gregory of Nyssa, *ibid.*, 504D.

12. *Ἠθικός 1, α'*, 128-133, SC 122, p. 182.

13. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια Περὶ Θεολογίας καὶ τῆς ἐνσάρκου...*, PG 90, 1101C.

2.2. *The eighth day: a time of the Holy Spirit's action/operation*

In his *First Ethical Discourse*, Symeon poses a rhetorical question: why God did not count the eighth day with Creation's previous seven days? He characteristically asks: «Τίνος οὖν ἔνεκεν τὴν ἡμέραν, ἣτις ἐστὶν ἡ ὀγδόη, ταῖς προλαβούσαις ἑπτὰ οὐ συνῆψε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον;»¹⁴. Both the question itself and Symeon's answer, which immediately follows, are particularly important for realizing the saint's understanding of the eighth day and the role of the Holy Spirit in creation and, by extension, in man's salvation. By formulating the question, Symeon clearly states that the person of the Triadic Divinity who acts on the eighth day is the Holy Spirit; it is the One who does not conclude the eighth day with the previous seven. The eighth day is thus presented as the day, the time when the Holy Spirit acts. That is, on the eighth day the actions of the Holy Spirit are especially manifested.

In *Genesis*, the numbering of the creation's days gives the sense of movement: *first day...*, *second day...*, *third day...* The movement of the material world is activated by the Triadic God's creative word and is strengthened by Adam's creation. Creation was not only built by God but was set in motion by the creation of sensible time. This movement is not limited or confined to the Creation's time frame. It continues with God's actions on the eighth day, which involve the continuation of the movement of the creation beyond its temporal material framework, appearing under the prism of His own "time", of eternity, as the Holy Spirit's actions during the eighth day. God, acting on the eighth day, appears not only as the universe and man's creator during the six days of creation but also as the latter's reduction to a new state, where a different world is formed, transcending nature and time. In this state, God includes man as a part of the creation, to extend their course from their very good state on the first day of creation to the perfection of the eighth day. God acts through the Holy Spirit always on the eighth day. The result of the Triadic God's actions on the eighth day is, on the one hand, the creation ex nihilo of all things and man and, on the other hand, the movement of all Creation towards another reality, which

14. *Ἠθικός* 1, α', 121-123, SC 122, p. 182.

transcends creation and sensible time, raising all creation to eternity and eternal life, bringing it to the eighth day. This other reality, this other “place” is known to man first as Paradise, where part of creation and man is wrapped in divine glory, and is called by Symeon the *αἰσθητὸς καὶ ὕλικὸς Παράδεισος*¹⁵, and then as the Holy Spirit, and is called «*νοητὸς καὶ νοερός Παράδεισος*»¹⁶. This new reality includes creation and man in the eternity of God’s glory. The material creation and man’s dual nature entering into the glory of God, which exists on the eighth day, transcend their nature and perceptual time.

2.3. *The eighth day as God*

The eighth day for Symeon is finally the beginning of God’s appearance in the created world, who is the «*ἡμέρα καλεῖται ἀνέσπερος*»¹⁷. It identifies the eighth day with God Himself. But how does he arrive at this identification? One could say that he simply follows Gregory of Nyssa, who identifies the eighth day, *τὴν μεγάλη ἡμέρα*, with Life¹⁸. However, we find in Symeon’s writings another passage, which suggests that Symeon proceeded to make this identification because he could not accept any distinction in God, including eternal time. Perceptual time presupposes the distinction of beings, i.e. the existence of distance between them that creates space. This time, the days as intervals of time with a beginning and an end, are created by the movement of each distinct being in the space they define. On the contrary, the understanding of eternal time necessarily requires the transcendence of perceptual time and space. The concept of time that we can form for God cannot be the same as the concept of sensible time, because there is no separation (space) and alteration/corruption (change) in God, as there is in creation: «*Οὐχ ὡς τὰ ὁρώμενα δὲ τοιοῦτον κάκεινό ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ἀσυγκρίτως καὶ ἀρόρητως*

15. *Ἠθικός 1, β’, 34*, SC 122, p. 186.

16. *Ὑμνος 47, 1-6*, SC 196, p. 120: «*Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, Κύριε, εὐλογητὸς εἶ, μόνε, / εὐλογητὸς εἶ, εὐσπλαγχνε, ὑπερευλογημένε, / ὁ δοῦς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου τὸ φῶς τῶν ἐντολῶν σου / καὶ ἐμφυτεύσας ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς σου ξύλον / καὶ δεῖξας με παράδεισον ἄλλον ἐν ὁρώμενοις / ἐν αἰσθητοῖς μὲν νοητόν, νοητὸν δ’ ἐν αἰσθήσει*».

Ἠθικός 1, ε’, 98, SC 122, p. 220.

17. *Ἠθικός 3, 141-147*, SC 122, p. 400.

18. Gregory of Nyssa, *Κεφάλαια, Β’ βιβλίον εἰς τοὺς ψαλμοὺς*, 5, PG 44, 505A.

ὕπερ ἅπαντα τὰ ὁρώμενα οὐδὲ καθ' ἓν τούτων ὡς ταῦτα καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐκεῖνο κεχωρισμένως εὐρίσκεται, ἀλλ' ἐν μένον ἀναλλοιώτως καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πανάγαθόν ἐστι καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ἀγαθόν»¹⁹. In God, there is no separation, and there is no space; furthermore, God's actions do not bring about any alteration or corruption in the deity.

However, if the concept of “day”, i.e., sensible time, is how man perceives his presence and actions in the created being after his creation ex nihilo, i.e., his existence in the succession of days, then in a similar way, i.e., as a day, he can perceive God and His actions. The time, during which God's actions take place, can be perceived by man as a “day”, as the presence of light, and called a day, which, however, cannot have a beginning or an end, since God is eternally the same. But at the same time, man must also overcome this way of understanding the time of God's existence and divine actions, since there is nothing, not even time, separate, differentiated from God. Thus, concerning our conception of the day, of sensible time, of the existence in the being of the creation's beings, God is eternal light, He is the eighth day.

3. The vision of God: Creation as purpose and as ultimate thing

The purpose, the end, and the perfection of God's creative work is for Symeon the vision of God's Logos/Word; hence, the discourse concerning the ultimate is understood as the discourse concerning the vision of God's Word and all the events connected with it. Symeon, in his 53rd Hymn²⁰, complaining to God's Word that He hides Himself and does not allow to be seen by him, presents the God-Word Himself as exposing all the actions He has done since the beginning of the World's creation to be envisioned and seen by man. In Symeon's teaching, Protology, History, and Eschatology are inextricably intertwined, manifesting the dynamic realization of God's vision.

19. *Ἠθικὸς* 3, 148-152, SC 122, p. 400.

20. *Ῥυμνος* 53, 1-319, SC 196, pp. 212-234.

For Symeon, the vision of God presupposes the one who sees and the one who is seen. More specifically, it presupposes a) the existence of *the Other*, b) the capacity of the Other to envision, to see, and c) the appearance of the one who is envisioned/seen, God. Thus, *Genesis* presents *the creation of the Other* in three successive stages – milestones towards the vision of God. The last things –God’s vision from the Other–, as Creation’s *τέλος* (goal/end), encompass and define Protology and History.

3.1. *The world’s creation as the first precondition of the vision of God*

Initially, God began the creation of this Other from the material world and the lower life forms that have no resemblance to Him. The material world is created, sensible, and finite in time. It completely differs from the eternal, uncreated, invisible, and eternally the same God. The material world as the Other, is *ab nihilo* reality, absolutely different from God, with which begins the creation of the first precondition for the vision of God. This Other, completely different from divinity, does not occupy a “place” in which God is not, because God is everywhere. The eternally the same and immaterial light, God, penetrates every aspect of the material world, rendering any dualism impossible. God’s Word was light before the world’s creation and as light was and is everywhere after creation: «Ἦμην φῶς καὶ πρὸ τοῦ κτίσαι / τὰ ὁρώμενά σοι πάντα. / Πανταχοῦ εἶμι καὶ ἤμην / καὶ τὴν πᾶσαν κτίσας κτίσιν, / πανταχοῦ εἶμι κ’ ἐν πᾶσιν»²¹. God is one and that one is everywhere. There is no second element, or second pole on the level of eternity. The material creation, which bears no resemblance to God and is characterized by sensible time and space, does not displace God, who continues to be everywhere, but neither does it unite with Him, remaining separated from the divinity²².

This distinguished coexistence of God and the world, uncreated and created, does not render God visible. The world, although it now exists as the Other, and although it is entirely penetrated by God’s eternally the same light, cannot envision God. The total and absolute difference

21. Ὑμνος 53, 71-75, SC 196, p. 216.

22. Ὑμνος 53, 76-89, SC 196, p. 218.

between created and uncreated does not allow the created to know, see, and united with God²³. Symeon thus firmly holds the dividing line between God and the visible creation. As God's creatures, material and immaterial, have no union, knowledge, and communion with each other, so God, as immaterial light, while seen in all visible creation, is separated from it as to the deity's nature and glory. For the Church Fathers, whose teaching Symeon follows, after the creation of the world, there are two completely different realities: the eternally the same deity and the ab nihilo creation. However, the Triadic God, as immaterial light, is not locally separated from the sensible world; He is inseparable from everything and omnipresent. Because He is separated from creation as far as Godhead's nature and glory are concerned, nothing from the things or beings that have been created can approach or understand Him. Only the Son and the one to whom God wants to be revealed can gain knowledge of His presence²⁴.

The impossibility of envisioning the light of God's Word turns visible creation into darkness. Symeon, explaining the preamble of *John* 1:1-5, points out that the Triadic God, as light, is seen in the visible creation, because the latter cannot hinder him; but at the same time, because of the physical distinction between uncreated and created, the visible nature cannot know Him, find Him, see Him and unite with Him. God's separation from the visible creation, as eternally the same and immaterial light, as nature and glory, is a consequence of the deity's natural separation from the material creation, from the sensible world, the distinction between the created and the uncreated²⁵.

The inability of the creation to know, see, and be united with God is a deficiency in divine perfection, to which every creation is compared in the mind of *Genesis*'s author. Thus, in *Genesis*, God is shown at the end of each day of creation evaluating the result of His creative actions by

23. Ὑμνος 38, 63-74, SC 174, p. 472. See A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος στήν περί σωτηρίας διδασκαλία τοῦ ἁγίου Συμεὼν τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου*, PhD dissertation, Theology Department, Theological School, NKUOA, p. 42 et seq. in: <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/frontend/file/lib/default/data/2914984/theFile>.

24. Ἠθικός 10, 396-403, SC 129, p. 288.

25. Ἠθικός 10, 374-382, SC 129, p. 286.

using the adjective “good”^{26, 27}. First of all, we must emphasize that God’s own evaluation of the results of His creative acts with the adjective “good” [«καλός» (καλ, τον)] is not done in opposition and distinction with “evil”, since the latter has no ontological substance, is not created by God, but does not exist during creation. Also, we know that in the language adjectives are used to specify a property that we perceive belonging to the noun. Therefore, in *Genesis*, every creature using the adjective “good” is shown to have a property, which arises as a finding («εἶδεν») of God and positively characterizes it («ὅτι καλόν»).

What are these qualities that God recognizes by envisioning his creatures and therefore attributes to them the quality of goodness? In our article “The Essentiality of Beings and the Immortality of the Soul”²⁸ we pointed out that every created thing exists because of God’s expressed eternally same will. This God’s will and –likewise– God in His totality, the all-good One as the eternally the same light, continuously illuminates creation. The creation is penetrated by the Triadic Godhead’s eternally same light and exists as the divine will’s permanent result. Consequently, the existence of the creation reveals its Creator’s existence. Whoever sees the creation sees God’s visible works and glorifies the Creator: «ὅπως βλέπη μου τὰ ἔργα / καὶ δοξάζη με τὸν κτίστην»²⁹. The vision of the creation draws its beholder into the existence of the Creator, and this quality, directly contributing to the vision of God, can only be positively evaluated. The creation is only good because it implicitly declares its

26. The linguistic formatting or realization (spoken or written speech) of a mental representation (idea, mental schema) of the author does not constitute in most cases the complete presentation, rendering, or transcription of the idea. The speech, whether spoken or written, cannot fully convey the meaning generated in the mind. Always in a text, there are gaps and implied meanings, which, although they are inextricably linked to the author’s mental representation, are not transcribed, not explicitly presented. These must be discovered and completed by the reader based on specific clues provided by the text to approach, as far as possible, the mental representation (thought, idea) that caused the production of the specific text. One such clue is the use by the author of *Genesis* of the verb *εἶδέναι* and the adjective «καλός» in the positive and comparative degree («καλὰ λίαν»).

27. *Gen.* 1, 4-5; 1, 8; 1, 10-13; 1, 14-19; 1, 20-23; 1, 24-25.

28. A. Karatzas, «Ἡ οὐσίωση τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἡ ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 93, 2 (2022), pp. 157-185.

29. *Ἔγμος* 53, 125-126, SC 196, p. 220.

Creator's existence. It is neither very good nor perfect because it cannot know, see God, and be united with Him.

3.2 *Man's creation as the second presupposition for the vision of God*

The possibility of seeing God's Word from the other began to exist with the creation of man. On the last day of creation, God made man "in the image and likeness of God", blessed him, and gave him all the flora and fauna of creation, making him the king of all creation. At the end of the last day, God inspects all creation and declares that all is "very good": "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day"³⁰. At this point, it is reasonable for every reader to ask what it was that made creation better.

Symeon, referring to man's creation, emphasizes that man, because of his nature's duality –he is both material and rational–, can envision the world and God³¹. With the creation of man "in the image and likeness", the world in the person of man acquires the ability and the will for vision. Man's nature, as it was created by God, is double: material (body) and rational (soul). The image of God is engraved on his soul, giving him likenesses of God. The man at creation bears resemblances to God, in soul (image) and body (incorruption). He has a soul (mind, reason, and spirit) which gives him the capacity to envision the divinity's eternally the same light, that is everywhere, and free will³², the will to know, to see, to unite, as God does. Man's creation as a dual-nature³³ elevates creation, from good to very good. As a sentient being, man could consider visible created things and glorify their creator, a reason why creation is good. Man, being rational, could see God's face, behold His glory, and contemplate with Him³⁴. Thus, the second condition of God's vision is completed with man's creation.

30. *Gen.* 1, 26-31

31. See A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος...*, *ibid.*, p. 33 et seq.

32. See A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος...*, *ibid.*, p. 155 et seq.

33. *Ἔμνος* 53, 96-131.

34. *Ἔμνος* 53, 132-139, SC 196, pp. 220-222.

3.3 Thus, the second condition of God's vision is completed with man's creation

If with the creation of the material world and man the two first conditions of the vision of God have been met, which constitute the good and the very good, there was still another stage, the perfect one, for the completion of God's goal, i.e. His projection. Thus, God places man on the eighth day, in Paradise, and before His image³⁵.

According to Symeon's teaching, the central role is played by the taking of a portion of each created thing or being and its preservation on the eighth day, with the aim first of all of creation's moving towards perfection and then of regenerating God's creative work. God, being eternally aware of Adam's transgression and having predetermined his "re-creation/regeneration" («παλιγγενεσία») joined «τοὺς τῆς ἀναπλάσεως ἀρόραβῶνας» on the eighth day³⁶. The transfer of the portions of Creation on the eighth day indicates the creation of another world, with the regeneration and renewal of the one that already exists, which takes place in the future age, in the time eternally the same, on the eighth day. Thus, the eighth day is the day on which God appears to man. In particular, according to Symeon, God took the perceptual Paradise as a portion of the earth and Adam's side as a portion of man. These portions and their preservation on the eighth day, before His image, constitute the beginning of creation's reduction to perfection, in a state of communion between the created and the uncreated God. As portions, the sensible Paradise and man participate in the glory of God. The preservation of these portions aims at the renewal through them «τῶν συγγενῶν καὶ συμφυῶν», i.e. of all material creation and humanity and their connection with the spiritual world.

35. *Ἠθικός 2*, γ', 78-84, SC 122, p. 346.

36. *Ἠθικός 2*, γ', 41-45, SC 122, pp. 342-344: «οἶονεὶ ζύμην καὶ σπóρον καὶ μερίδα ἀφ' ἑνὸς ἐκάστου τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὕστερον ἔλαβεν, ἵνα τὰς ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μερίδας τῶν κτισθέντων ἐν ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἡμέραις μὴ ἐν αὐταῖς αὐτάς ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ὀγδόῃ λαβῶν, τὸν μέλλοντα αἰῶνα διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ δημιουργίας προὔπογράφῃ».

4. The reduction on the eighth day

According to Symeon, eschatology, or the doctrine about the Last Things, does not constitute a separate section or part of his theological discourse, as is the case with the doctrinal textbooks. The eschatological perspective of his faith and theological thought is inextricably intertwined with his discourse on the creation of the world (Cosmology) and man (Anthropology), his teaching on Christ (Christology), and the Holy Trinity (Theology), the Church (Ecclesiology), the sacraments (Mysteriology) and the salvation of man (Soteriology). The eschatological thread that connects all the individual areas of his teaching is the way he conceives the eighth day: it transcends created nature and sensible time, it provides the believer with the state of perfect life in Christ, communion with God the Father in the person of Christ through the Holy Spirit, communion with the Triadic deity, which, by grace, renders the created man into a god and makes him perfect, and brings all creation into this state of perfection.

For Symeon, everything begins with the will of God's Word to be envisioned and be in communion. The creation of the World and man, regardless of the course they take, has an end, an *eschaton*, and that is none other than the vision of the Word of God. Everything that happens in the created world depends on this *eschaton*, the sight of the Word of God. The creation has potentially within it the ultimate things, its consummation within its communion with God's Word. The *eschata* (Last Things) constitute the Creation's entelechy [potentiality]; to bring all creation to the eighth day, to the vision of God's Word, and communion with the Holy Trinity, God creates the whole universe incorruptible, molds man *in His image and likeness*, making him immortal, takes portions from the creation (earth and Adam) and places them on the eighth day in front of His image, the *wood* (ξύλον) of life. What remains on man's part is the free acceptance, continuation, and intensification of communion for the transition of the whole created universe from the very good to the perfect state, to its completion, its end, its *eschaton*.

The failure of the first-created [Adam and Eve] to contribute freely to the consummation of their perfection and the perfection of creation

could not negate the will of the Word to be visioned. The will of God's Word, the common will of the three one-in-essence persons of the Triadic divinity, continues to be realized. It is the vision of God's Word in the *eschata* that determines the history of mankind and all creation. God intervenes in history by continually shaping and preserving a «λειμμα» (*residue*) determined by the Creation's eschaton, the future and endless vision of God's Word. The Father sends His Son and He is incarnated; He also becomes a man, so that men can see Him and know His divinity. At the same time as His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, the Word of God abrogates the corruption and death created by the failure of the first-created, which has always been the insurmountable obstacle for the reduction to the eighth day, reduction to perfection, to the ultimate, provided by communion with the true Life - God. The Holy Spirit reveals Itself in Christ's divine-human body, the Church, and reveals the divinity of Jesus Christ to those who believe and keep the commandments of God, unites them to the body of the God-man, makes them the whole of the God-man, and through the sacraments reduces them to the eighth day, where they vision God's Word and become gods by grace.

However, although the believer reaches his eschaton by entering the eighth day, he does not attain the full sight of God and full perfection: his corruptible nature and body are still part of the darkness. The body's materiality does not allow man to fully participate in the splendor of the Word of God; there can be no knowledge, communion, and union between the material and the mental world. With the incarnation of the Son of God, as the First Presence, the believer can now, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, ascend to the eighth day and proceed to the eschaton of his perfection. He nevertheless needs to wait for the Second Coming, when the renewal of the creation, as all Creation's ultimate, will provide him with a spiritual body capable of sharing in the full glory of God's Word. Thus, every believer's personal eschaton, with his entrance into the eighth day, is inextricably linked with the Creation's eschaton at the Lord's Second Coming, the age to come, of which the eighth day represents the beginning. While it begins with the believer's entry into the eighth day as a dim light, it ends with the sun of righteousness, the Lord, in midheaven, at the Creation's eschaton.

4.1 *The first reduction on the eighth day: the tangible/sensible Paradise*

After the seventh day, during the eighth, God is shown planting Paradise and placing man in it³⁷. By placing man in the sensible Paradise, the third condition of God's vision, His appearance, is realized. God shows man His image, which, according to Symeon, is the wood (tree) of life in the center of Paradise³⁸. The man was placed in Paradise so that he could gradually ascend to God's total vision by using God's image as print and shadow. Outside of the tangible Paradise and without the glory of God, created man could not see God.

According to the author of Genesis anthropomorphic discourse, to which Symeon draws attention, on the eighth day God did not make heaven, nor did he say and become heaven, but he planted heaven. The image of the seed suggests that Paradise was planted in creation as a seed introduced into the earth. God is thus presented in the Bible as Creation's farmer and cultivator, transforming it into something better. At the same time, it is implied that the eighth day is for creation a dynamic process towards perfection, a process beginning with the planting of Paradise and is expected to continue with its growth and the inclusion of all creation.

Paradise is presented by Symeon as another world, which is not the same as the one built in the six days. This paradise, being within the eighth day and connected with the glory of God, cannot be just a part of creation, but a qualitatively different world, wrapped up with the glory of God and where the Holy Spirit is active. It is into this "place", which radiates the glory of God, that man enters, wrapped up by God with divine glory at the time of his creation *in the likeness of God*³⁹.

Thus, the planting of Paradise by God during the creation is understood as the entrance of God's glory into creation, through the actions of the Holy Spirit, as the beginning of the communion of the uncreated with the created, the timeless with the temporal, the creation's incorruptible material element with divine glory. This connection procures a new

37. *Ἠθικὸς* 1, α', 108-113, SC 122, p. 180.

38. *Ἠθικὸς* 2, γ', 82-84, SC 122, p. 346: «Τὸ δὲ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς τὸ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παραδείσου εἰκὼν ἦν τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, ἣτις ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός».

39. See A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος*...., *ibid.*, p. 71 et seq.

way of being for the creation, transcending nature, and tangible time. It elevates part of creation to the eighth day, the eternally the same time, to a different mode of existence from the material one. In this “place”, where the glory of God, earth, and man, the created and the uncreated coexist, God rises and brings forth from the earth every plant that is beautiful to the sight and good to eat. The fruits of these plants are of every kind and variety. They neither decay nor die, but remain young and pleasant at all times, offering a sweet smell and softness («τροφήν») to the first-created⁴⁰.

For Symeon, the first reduction of man to the tangible Paradise was because man’s incorruptible body needed incorruptible⁴¹ food⁴². The above passage initially raises an interpretative difficulty since, as stated elsewhere by Symeon, the creation was already incorruptible, and its interpretation obliges us to initially examine the difference between the incorruptible creation and the sensible Paradise. Both creation and the «ἐν Ἐδέμ κατὰ ἀνατολάς» (“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed”)⁴³ are presented in his teaching as imperishable. However, we can discern a distinction between them. By contrasting the description of the world functioning as Paradise with the description of Paradise planted by God, as presented by Symeon, we notice that the purpose of Paradise was, among other things, to provide man with *incorruptible food immediately*; this suggests that creation apart from Paradise does not provide incorruptible food.

40. *Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 134-141, SC 122, p. 182. Let it be noted here that Paradise is incorruptible and its fruits preserve this quality. Immutability is a divine property, as mentioned above. Thus, the existence of plants in Paradise seems to be different from the existence of plants outside of It. The differentiation is presented as transcending the nature of created beings and creation’s tangible time.

41. According to Symeon, the body’s incorruptibility is the first form of spirituality; see A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος....., ibid.*, p. 110 et seq.

42. *Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 141-146, SC 122, p. 182-184.

43. Edem refers to *Genesis 2, 8*. *Edem* is the Greek translation of the Jewish (עֵדֶן – pleasure, enjoyment); See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. If we were to translate this phrase literally, “in the enjoyment at sunrise”, it would mean that God introduced man into that state in which he would feel the same enjoyment that one feels at sunrise.

An incorruptible world that functions as Paradise was given to Man⁴⁴. Symeon emphatically underlines the fact that the world molded during the five days of creation functions as Paradise, which was given to man *for his enjoyment* («εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν»)⁴⁵. Adam was given a world that provided “automatically”⁴⁶ the same food for both him and the animals⁴⁷. But this food does not appear to be incorruptible, since it is produced by the recycled process of the fruiting of plants that have been substantialized *ab nihilo* without the substantialization principle⁴⁸. Thus, it seems that according to Symeon, the world’s incorruptibility is explained by its initial essentialization by the Word of God, while the food it provides for man is understood as the result of its creation without the *ab nihilo* substantialization of plants. This qualitative difference between the incorruptible world, which includes Adam, and corruptible food makes this food incompatible with the needs of man’s incorruptible body, which is destined for immortality. But what is it that makes the Paradise food incorruptible and unchangeable, and man immortal?

The sensible Paradise as the connection between the glory of God and creation, and especially man, is not differentiated from the rest of creation locally but qualitatively. The sensible Paradise is where God’s glory shines. What differentiates creation from the sensible paradise is not space but the presence of the glory of God and its consequences in terms of how creation exists. Symeon invites his audience to reflect on man’s life and conduct in this imperishable world which receives the glory of God and becomes a sensible paradise if it were kept imperishable and immortal⁴⁹. The sensible Paradise is the creation itself as the recipient

44. *Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 34-37, SC 122, p. 176.

45. *Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 42-45, SC 122, p. 176.

46. *Ἡθικὸς 1, β'*, 41-43, SC 122, p. 186.

47. *Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 34-45, SC 122, p. 176.

48. See A. Karatzas, «Ἡ οὐσίωση τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἡ ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς», *ibid.*

49. The explanation that Symeon gives regarding the incorruptibility and immortality of man is important for understanding his teaching. The life (biological life) of the incorruptible and immortal man is sinless, without pain, free of care, and without toil (*Ἡθικὸς 1, α'*, 52-57, SC 122, p. 176). In this particular passage, it seems that the explanation concerns sinlessness, the absence of pain, toil, and care – elements which

of the Holy Spirit's divine actions, the glory of God, which render the material creation unchanging, partially spiritual, and man immortal: «Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἐπλάσθη σῶμα μὲν ἔχων ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἄφθαρτον, ὑλικὸν μέντοι γε καὶ ὄλον οὐπω πνευματικόν, καὶ ὡς βασιλεὺς ἀθάνατος ἐν ἀφθάρτῳ κόσμῳ, οὐ λέγω μόνῳ τῷ παραδείσῳ, ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ τῇ ὑπὸ οὐρανόν, κατέστη ὑπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ Θεοῦ»⁵⁰. Apart from being incorruptible, man is made by the Creator in Paradise partially spiritual and immortal. Thus, the eighth day, the other world, where the Holy Spirit is active and the glory of God is given to the creation, is presented as the cause of creation's partial spiritualization and man's immortality.

Apart from being incorruptible, man is made by the Creator in Paradise partially spiritual and immortal. Thus, the eighth day, the other world, where the Holy Spirit is active and the glory of God is given to the creation, is presented as the cause of creation's partial spiritualization and man's immortality.

He presents the progressive observance of God's commandments and the labor of good concepts as a condition of this state. This progressive development of man's ability to keep God's commandments and cultivate good meanings would function as a gradual reduction to man's further glory and alteration. By gradually drawing nearer to God and the dawns that spring from the divinity, man would be altered both in soul and body. His soul would become more and more brilliant, while his sensible and material body would be transformed and changed into an immaterial and spiritual body. This transformation of the body would result in transcending all sensation⁵¹ and intercourse with other people would provide unparalleled and incomprehensible joy and exultation⁵².

point to the results of incorruptibility and immortality rather than their causes, leaving open the question of what sustains man as incorruptible and immortal within Paradise. 50. *Ἠθικός 1, β', 1-5*, SC 122, p. 184.

51. *Ἠθικός 1, α', 57-63*, SC 122, pp. 176-178: «ὅπως τε κατὰ προκοπὴν τῆς φυλακῆς τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐργασίας τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐννοιῶν εἰς τελειότεραν ἔμελλον ἀνάγεσθαι κατὰ καιρὸν δόξαν τε καὶ ἀλλοίωσιν, πλησιάζοντες τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ταῖς πηγαζούσαις αὐγαῖς τῆς θεότητος, τὴν μὲν ψυχὴν λαμπροτέραν ἐκάστου γίνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ αἰσθητὸν καὶ ὑλῶδες σῶμα εἰς ἄυλον καὶ πνευματικὸν ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν πᾶσαν μεταποιεῖσθαι τε καὶ μεταβάλλεσθαι».

52. *Ἠθικός 1, α', 64-66*, SC 122, p. 178.

We notice that for Symeon the body of man, participating in God's glory, is nourished and transformed from material to spiritual. The incorruptible nourishment, that man needs to partake of immortality, sensible time's transcendence, and his participation in the divinity of the eighth day, is God's glory. If incorruption in Symeon's thought is a form of spirituality⁵³, then we can consider the eighth day, the day of the Holy Spirit, when He wraps Adam with the glory of God, to be the day when the incorruptible man clothes himself with God's divine glory as the food of immortality.

Since the eighth day is eternally the same, the reduction of man to the eighth day is perceived as a rupture and transgression of Creation's sensible linear time. In *Genesis*, for example, Adam is shown on the sixth day of creation to be alone without Eve's physical presence and especially without communicating with God. Symeon explicitly underlines the fact that Eve and Paradise were not created on the sixth day but on the eighth⁵⁴. On the sixth day of creation, God molded Adam alone and made him king of the visible creation⁵⁵. On the last day, there is neither the sensible Paradise nor Eve, but only the incorruptible, material, and sensible Adam. Thus, man's wrapping with the divine glory and his placement in the tangible Paradise constitute the "*in the likeness*" completion of man's creation which, while it takes place on the eighth day, appears to have taken place on the last day. Moreover, while Adam's transgression occurs after his entrance into the eighth day and his fall from Paradise constitutes his exodus from it, these events are part of human history. Consequently, God's actions concerning creation are always carried out by the Holy Spirit on the eighth day, in eternity; at the same time, they appear as transcendence of the historical present – man's present.

According to Symeon's teaching, the tangible and material Paradise was man's first reduction to the eighth day, to communion with God. Man could be completely identical to God if he remained in the

53. See A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος....., ibid.*, p. 111.

54. *Ἠθικός 1, α'*, 6-12, SC 122, p. 174.

55. It is highly characteristic that God made psychosomatic man king only of the visible creation. The invisible creation is not subject to the reign of man.

sensible Paradise, on the eighth day, wrapped in divine glory. However, by transgressing God's commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, man was exiled from the sensible Paradise. He lost the possibility of being completely like God; in addition, having stripped of the divine glory, he lost the likeness with God, which is manifested in incorruption and immortality. Henceforth the sensible Paradise, as the portion of the earth, functions only as a print of the future indissoluble life⁵⁶ and as an image of the eternal kingdom of heaven⁵⁷. The side of Adam, as the portion of man built up in womanhood, now exists as a print of the Church. Lastly, he notes that God did not take a portion of the tangible time; this is going to cease to exist because of the eighth day, the endless time when all creation is going to be joined to the heavens⁵⁸. The creation of the re-creation, regeneration, and gathering together of God's work with the heavens takes place on the eighth day and begins with the placing therein of the portions of the earth and man as yeast and seed. The taking of the portions marks the beginning of a journey to the eschaton. According to St. Symeon, this is the beginning of the Orthodox teaching's eschatological discourse.

4.2 Human being's permanent reduction to the eighth day: the victorious Paradise

Adam was blinded in the tangible Paradise, and lost the rational ability to envision the glory of the deity; therefore, he was voluntarily deadened⁵⁹ and he was expelled from Paradise. Now, he could only see the sensible and he became material, a condition that separated him from the immaterial things⁶⁰. The sight of the glory of God provided Adam with life itself and the loss of the ability to behold the glory of God resulted in the loss of life. Adam's blindness and the loss of "in the likeness" and of life were for Symeon the cause of the incarnation of God's Word. Adam's soul, having lost the ability to consider God –Life

56. *Ἡθικὸς* 1, β', 37-38, SC 122, p. 186.

57. *Ἡθικὸς* 2, γ', 78-82, SC 122, p. 386.

58. *Ἡθικὸς* 2, γ', 51-61, SC 122, p. 344.

59. *Ῥυμνος* 53, 228-231, SC 196, p. 228.

60. *Ῥυμνος* 53, 173-179, SC 196, p. 224.

itself—, led to the loss of life itself: «θανεῖται θάνατον εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα»⁶¹. The man fell from the state of perfection not into the state of “very good” but into an inferior state: now, as a non-rational creature, he lost the ability to see mentally. The Divine Word, however, could not overlook that He resides within the divine glory, and the descendants of Adam, His creatures, are not. Thus: «... ὅμοιος ἀνθρώποις / ἐγενόμην κατὰ πάντα, / αἰσθητὸς τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς γε, / καὶ ἠνώθην τούτοις θέλων. / Βλέπεις, πόσον πόθον ἔχω / τοῦ ὁρᾶσθαι παρ’ ἀνθρώπων, / ὡς καὶ ἄνθρωπος γενέσθαι / θελῆσαι καὶ ὁραθῆναι»⁶².

Man’s inability to mentally see and his ability to see only the sensible led to God the Word’s incarnation. With His incarnation, the Word of God is seen by all men with the only ability left to them, the sensible vision, and is seen sensibly: «ἀνωθεν ἐγὼ κατήλθον / ἀόρατος ὢν πάντη / πάχους καὶ σαρκὸς μετέσχον / καὶ ψυχὴν ἀνελαβόμεν, / Θεὸς ὢν ἀναλλοιώτως / ἐγενόμην σάρξ, ὁ Λόγος. / Ἐκ σαρκὸς ἀρχὴν λαβὼν δὲ / ἄνθρωπος ὠράθην πᾶσιν. / Διὰ τί οὖν ὁλως τοῦτο / ἠνεσχόμεν τοῦ ποιῆσαι; / Ὅτι ἐπὶ τούτῳ πάντως / ἔκτισα, καθὼς καὶ εἶπον, / τὸν Ἀδάμ τοῦ καθορᾶν με»⁶³. By His incarnation, God the Word revealed Himself and the Father to men, but at the same time, He poured out the Holy Spirit revealing His name to all men, and showing by His works what they should do⁶⁴. The Holy Spirit reveals the glory of Jesus Christ’s divine nature⁶⁵. According to Symeon’s teaching, the purpose of the incarnation was that the Word should be seen in the person of Jesus Christ, thus revealing the Father and diffusing the Holy Spirit to every man, enabling him to be reduced on the eighth day, to God’s vision⁶⁶. For Symeon, the incarnation of the Word was done in

61. Ὑμνος 53, 189-190, SC 196, p. 224.

62. Ὑμνος 53, 216-223, SC 196, p. 226.

63. Ὑμνος 53, 195-207, SC 196, p. 226.

64. Ὑμνος 53, 308-319, SC 196, pp. 232-234: «Ἐφανερώσα τῷ κόσμῳ / ἐμαυτὸν καὶ τὸν Πατέρα / καὶ ἐξέχεα πλουσίως / τὸ Πανάγιόν μου Πνεῦμα / ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ὄντως σάρκα, / καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου πᾶσιν / ἀπεκάλυψα ἀνθρώποις, / καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις, ὅτι κτίστης / καὶ δημιουργὸς ὑπάρχω, / ἔδειξα καὶ νῦν δεικνύω / πάντα, ἃ ποιῆσαι ἔδει, / ἀμήν».

65. Ἠθικός 10, 294-296, SC 196, p. 229: «ἀλλὰ παραυτίκα ἀποκαλυπτομένην μοι διὰ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου δόξαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» and Ἠθικός 3, 512-524, SC 122, p. 426.

66. Ἠθικός 2, γ’, 84-91, SC 122, p. 346.

such a way as to lead to human salvation. Thus, the Word: «Σαρκοῦται δὲ τοῦ Πνεύματος ὄντως τῇ ἐπελεύσει / καὶ γίνεται ὅπερ οὐκ ἦν, ἄνθρωπος ὁμοίος μοι, / πλὴν ἁμαρτίας καὶ πάσης ἐκτός γε ἀνομίας, / Θεὸς ὁμοῦ καὶ ἄνθρωπος ὁρώμενος τοῖς πᾶσιν, / ἔχων τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Θεῖον αὐτοῦ συνὸν τῇ φύσει, / μεθ' οὗ νεκροὺς ἐζώωσε, τυφλῶν ἤνοιξε κόρας, / λεπρούς τε ἐκαθάρισε δαίμονας ἀπελάσας». Having restored man “in his likeness”, Christ becomes the gate between the created and the uncreated through which the Holy Spirit enters and reveals Itself to the Church, raising the faithful before the Tree of Life, on the eighth day⁶⁷. The reduction of believers to the eighth day is accomplished by their being drawn by God to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit⁶⁸. Man’s awareness of Christ’s divinity is realized through the Holy Spirit’s revelation, by which the believer enters the eighth day.

The reduction to the eighth day takes place through repentance and the Holy Spirit’s illumination within man: «Τίς μοι ὑπέδειξεν ὁδὸν μετανοίας καὶ πένθους, / ὅθεν ἡμέραν εὕρηκα, τὴν μὴ ἔχουσαν τέλος;»⁶⁹. «Ἐλαμψας, ἐξέφρανας φῶς τὸ τῆς δόξης, / φῶς ἀπρόσιτον τῆς σῆς οὐσίας, Σῶτερ, / καὶ κατηύγασας ψυχὴν ἐσκοτισμένην, / μᾶλλον δὲ σκότος οὖσαν ἐξ ἁμαρτίας / ὡς τὸ φυσικὸν ἀπολέσασαν κάλλος, / ὡς ἐξ ἄδου τε ἀνήγαγες κειμένην / καὶ φῶς ἰδεῖν δέδωκας θείας ἡμέρας / καὶ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτίσιν ἐλλαμφθῆναι / καὶ φῶς γενέσθαι ταύτην, ᾧ μέγα θαῦμα!»⁷⁰.

Pentecost is therefore not the beginning of man’s eschatological course, but one of the latter’s important milestones, during which the Holy Spirit as the Comforter/Advocate is continuously present in Jesus Christ’s divine-human body – the Church. God at Pentecost introduces

67. Ἠθικός 2, ζ', 47-56, SC 122, p. 370: «Ἐκεῖ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παραδείσου ἦν, ὃ καὶ φαγεῖν οἰκονομικῶς οὐ συνεχωρήθη ὁ Ἀδάμ, ἀλλ' ἐξεβλήθη τοῦ παραδείσου, διὸ καὶ φυλάσσειν ἐτάχθη τὴν τούτου εἴσοδον ἢ φλογίνη ῥομφαία ἐνταῦθα λόγῃ τὴν πλευρὰν ἐνύγη Χριστὸς καὶ τὴν ῥομφαίαν ἐκείνην ἀπέστρεψε καὶ τὴν εἴσοδον ἤνοιξε καὶ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς ξύλον ἐφύτευσε, μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν καὶ καθ' ἡμέραν τοῦτο φυτεύειν ἐξουσίαν ἡμῖν δέδωκεν, ὃ καὶ ἀθρόον αὐξάνει καὶ ζωῆς αἰωνίου πᾶσι τοῖς ἐσθίουσιν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πρόξενον γίνεται».

68. Ἠθικός 3, 464-472, SC 122, pp. 422-424.

69. Ὑμνος 18, 128-129, SC 174, p. 84.

70. Ὑμνος 21, 1-9, SC 174, p. 130.

believers to another way of being, where, wrapped with the Holy Spirit, they can behold God. In this state, they have a dim vision of the deity and anticipate the eighth day's divine attributes of the eighth day.

It seems that the main qualities of the new way of being, which believers enter upon the eighth day, are four: light, spirituality as a first taste of incorruptibility, endless time, and knowledge of truth. We would say that, on the eighth day, the Holy Spirit initiates believers into a course of continuous development of their ability to see, to behold, to experience more and more of the divine light, into a course of alteration from materiality to spirituality and into an existence that transcends the creation's sensible time and makes man aware of the truth. This course's endless meditation is projected by Symeon as the sight of the sun of righteousness, the risen Christ in the day of the Lord, that is, at the Son of God's Second Coming.

However, the Holy Spirit's coming and revelation does not completely unite the faithful with the Triadic God, but as a morning light, as dawn, it prepares them for the coming of the Lord's meridian. That day will come suddenly⁷¹ and «ή κτίσις ἀνακαινισθήσεται καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατασταθήσεται κάλλος». Nature's *renovatio* is referred to by Symeon to its transformation from the state of corruption, in which it had drifted due to man's disobedience, to incorruptibility: «πάλιν πρῶτον τὴν κτίσιν ἀπὸ τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν χρὴ μεταποιηθῆναι εἴτ' οὖν ἀλλαγῆναι, καὶ οὕτω σὺν αὐτῇ καὶ ἅμα αὐτῇ καὶ τὰ φθαρέντα σώματα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνακαινισθῆναι, ἵνα καὶ αὐθις πνευματικὸς καὶ ἀθάνατος ὁ ἄνθρωπος γεγωνῶς ἐν ἀφθάρτῳ χωρὶ καὶ ἀϊδίῳ καὶ πνευματικῷ κατοικῆ». While the eighth day's morning light is experienced only by believers, its meridian, the day of the Lord, will be experienced by all creation. Man will become spiritual and immortal and the creation will become incorruptible, eternally the same, and spiritual. The creation will acquire these characteristics by partaking in «τῆς ἐκεῖθεν λαμπρότητος»⁷².

71. Ἠθικὸς 1, γ', 120-149, SC 122, p. 344.

72. Ἠθικὸς 1, δ', 5-11, SC 122, p. 206.

The Believers' reduction to the eighth day through the coming and revealing of the Holy Spirit takes place during the seventh century⁷³. Through this century God receives believers as a portion and unites them with Heaven. No one knows how much portion God will take and when the seventh century will end⁷⁴.

4.3 *The reduction to the eighth day as a personal and collective eschaton*

The personal reduction to the eighth day is accomplished by the believer's append to Christ. This reduction takes place in the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Triadic God wraps the believer through baptism with the first garment, the Holy Spirit, the robe of the Lord, and reduces him to the eighth day. The Holy Spirit raises believers and those who keep God's commandments to the eighth day⁷⁵. For Symeon, the raising is accomplished "*by faith and the working of the commandments*" («*διὰ πίστεως καὶ τῆς τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐργασίας*»). The love of Jesus Christ is actively expressed through faith, and the keeping of the commandments; participation in the Church sacraments unites believers with the body of Christ, the Church, and the portion from Adam's side. In the Church, the Comforter is sent from God and remains forever by the faithful's side⁷⁶. In this way, every believer can know, can now see the day of the Lord, speak and write about it. He reveals Himself to believers, and by surrounding them, He divinely corrupts/alters them,

73. According to the Church Fathers' perception, the sensible time is prefigured in the seven days of creation and will last for seven centuries. The seventh century is, according to Simeon, the century from which God receives the portion and attaches it to the eternal and endless time. It is about the sensible time in which the portion is reduced to the eighth day.

74. *Ἠθικός* 2, γ', 62-71, SC 122, p. 344.

75. *Ἠθικός* 4, 807-815, SC 129, p. 66: «*Ἴστω πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων ὅτι, ὡσπερ ἀπὸ νυκτὸς ἡμέραν καὶ ἀπὸ ἡμέρας πάλιν νύκτα γινομένην ὁρώμεν, οὕτω πιστεύειν χρεῶν καὶ πεπεισθαι ὅτι οἱ ἐν σκότει τῆς ἀμαρτίας ὑπάρχοντες καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἀπὸ γεννήσεως διατελοῦντες δυνάμεθα διὰ πίστεως καὶ τῆς τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐργασίας εἰς ἡμέραν θείαν καὶ φωτισμὸν πνευματικὸν ἀναχθῆναι, καθὰ ῥαθυμία πάλιν καὶ καταφρονήσει καὶ ἀμελεία τοῖς προτέροις κακοῖς περιπίπτομεν καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν νύκτα τῆς ἀμαρτίας γινόμεθα*».

76. *Ἠθικός* 5, 404-407, SC 129, p. 108.

making them like the Son of the Lord. He also gives to the believers a mind akin to Christ and new senses, by which they participate in the revelation of mysteries that human language cannot express. The reduction of believers to the eighth day reveals in them the sun of righteousness and alters them into an immaterial day, a new creation, and a new Heaven⁷⁷.

The believers' reduction to the eighth day is completed by the indwelling of the Triadic God⁷⁸ and the transcendence of the sensible time frame. The believers, though a created and finite being, by their reduction to the eighth day, they wrap on the Holy Spirit and, through It, encompass the whole of the Trinitarian Godhead: «οἱ τὸ Ἅγιον ἔχοντες Πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον ὁμολογουμένως ἔχουσι τὸν Θεὸν μένοντα πάντοτε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν»⁷⁹; they transcend the limits of their created nature, and participate in eternity, learning from the Holy Spirit “the whole truth”, regardless of the time constraints imposed by sensible time⁸⁰.

Thus, the adverb «ἐσχάτως» (“ultimately”) used by Symeon in the passage quoted above, which at first reading was not clear whether it referred to the time of a personal or a collective revelation of the eighth day, which concerns all mankind, is illuminated by the way he perceives the day of the Lord. The believer's entry into the eighth day consists of the beginning of his/her *eschaton*, related to the material impure world and sensible time, his/her reduction to the eighth day. Instead, the collective revelation of the eighth day will take place at the end of creation, that is when the whole creation will be renewed in

77. Ἡθικὸς 4, 826-829, SC 129, p. 66: «Οὕτω γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ πάλιν ἡμεῖς ἡμέρα ἄυλος καὶ γῆ καινὴ καὶ καινοὶ οὐρανοί, τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον λάμποντα ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχοντες».

78. Ἡθικὸς 4, 586-615, SC 129, pp. 50-52: «Οἱ γοῦν ἀξιωθέντες αὐτῶ συναφθῆναι καὶ κεφαλὴν αὐτὸν κτήσασθαι, πρόσεχε τῷ λόγῳ, παρακαλῶ, γίνονται καὶ οὗτοι θέσει θεοί, ὅμοιοι τῷ Ἰῶ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὡ τοῦ θαύματος! Ἐνδύει γὰρ αὐτοὺς ὁ Πατὴρ τὴν πρώτην στολήν, τὸ τοῦ Κυρίου ἱμάτιον ὃ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου ἐνεδιδύσκειτο».

79. Ἡθικὸς 5, 398-399, SC 129, p. 108.

80. Since the revelation of the Holy Spirit and the reduction to the eighth day, in perpetuity, provides believers with all truth, understanding John's Revelation takes a whole new dimension. The eschatological events presented there must not be understood in the narrow context of sensible and linear time, but in the context of the eighth day, the meeting of the created and the uncreated, of history and eternity.

the day of the Lord. The creation's eschaton will also bring about the consummation of every man's eschaton, for which all believers keep their hope intact. Consequently, while the believer in historical time begins to experience his/her personal eschaton, he/she keeps alive the hope of the Lord's Second Coming, at which he awaits the completion of his communion with the Holy Trinity⁸¹.

In the prayer that Symeon quotes, he summarizes his teaching on the reduction of man to the eighth day: «Ἐλέησόν με, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ διάνοιξόν μου / τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς, ἵνα ἴδω τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου, / σὲ τὸν Θεόν, καὶ γενήσομαι υἱὸς ἡμέρας θείας καὶ γὰρ / μὴ ἄμοιρον, ὡς ἀνάξιον, τῆς σῆς θεότητος καταλείψης με, / Ἀγαθέ. Ἐμφάνισόν μοι, Κύριε, σεαυτὸν, ἵνα γνῶσωμαι ὅτι / ἠγάπησάς με, ὡς τὰς θείας τηρήσαντά σου, Δέσποτα, / ἐντολάς. Πέμψον τὸν παράκλητον, οἰκτίρμον, καὶ ἐπ' ἐμοί, / ἵνα αὐτός με διδάξῃ τὰ περὶ σοῦ καὶ τὰ σὰ ἀναγγείλῃ μοι, / ὦ Θεὲ τοῦ παντός. Λάμψον ἐπ' ἐμοὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, / εὐσπλαγγνε, ἵνα ἴδω τὴν δόξαν τὴν σὴν, ἣν εἶχες πρὸ τοῦ / τὸν κόσμον γενέσθαι παρὰ τῷ σῷ Πατρὶ. Μείνον, ὡς / εἶπας, καὶ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα καὶ γὰρ μείναι ἐν σοὶ γένωμαι ἅγιος / καὶ γνωστῶς εἰσέλθω τότε ἐν σοὶ καὶ γνωστῶς σε κτήσωμαι / ἐν ἐμοί. Μορφωθῆναι θέλησον, ἀόρατε, ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα βλέπων / τὸ ἀμήχανον κάλλος σου, τὴν εἰκόνα, ἐπουράνιε, φορέσω / τὴν σὴν καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄρατὰ ἐπιλάθωμαι. Δός μοι τὴν δόξαν / ἣν σοὶ δέδωκεν, εὐσπλαγγνε, ὁ Πατήρ, ἵνα ὁμοίός σοι ὡς / πάντες οἱ δοῦλοί σου γένωμαι κατὰ χάριν θεοῦ καὶ συνέσομαί / σοὶ διηνεκῶς νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ καὶ εἰς ἀπεράντους αἰῶνας, ἀμήν»⁸².

The reduction of the believer to the sight of God functions as a portion of all creation's reduction. The believer, like Adam, is placed before the image of God, before the incarnate Word of God, and bathed in the Holy

81. Symeon's conception of the eschata, as presented here, provides the basis for a liturgical eschatology of the Orthodox Church, as presented by G. Patronos, with the caveat that the eschatology does not begin with Pentecost but with the taking of the portions and their placement in the sensible heaven. With Pentecost, the Holy Spirit continues the reduction of men to the eighth day, but now through their attraction and their incorporation into the God-man body of Jesus Christ, creating a dynamic acceleration towards the eschaton.

82. *Ἠθικός* 5, 442-460, SC 129, p. 112.

Spirit. In this way, he participates from now on (now) in the sight of God (eighth day) and experiences the last days by being a historical person. The reduction of the believer to the eighth day connects historicity (now) and eternity (eternal), altering the only thing that can be altered, namely history. The course of man on the eighth day, as the ever-increasing view of divine splendor, alters man, leading him to catharsis and the absence of passions. The sanctified man continues to be a historical person who acts in human history, but his action is now determined by his participation on the eighth day and his likeness to God, which is conferred on him by the divine glory, the robe of the Lord.

God is eternally the same and perfect and his creations were created to be eternal. However, to enter into God's eternal vision they must attain perfection "ye are perfect" («τέλειοι ἔσεσθε»)⁸³. Thus, God's creation *ex nihilo* is on the way to perfection. But that *being* that can accept *perfection* as a predicate concerns the perpetuity in which God acts. The creation will be perfect in its *eschata*, in the completion of its creation by God's divine will. From the point of view of finite time, in which the creation and man exist as beings created *ex nihilo*, this *being* is understood as linear time, having as its starting point the beginning of creation and a successive movement to the end, the ultimate, the recapitulation of all things, according to the apostle Paul, and their passage to perpetuity. The *being* of the creation is continuously formed from the beginning of its creation to its end, with the end being its perfection. The *eschata* determine the creation's beginning and course. This concept of creation is preserved and expressed by the Church in the *νῦν καὶ ἀεί*. The *νῦν* (*now*), as the conception of creation's historical becoming, which proceeds in the glory of God, and the *ἀεί* (*forever*), as the conception of creation's perfect being in perpetuity, which is united by grace with the divinity, are intertwined and constitute for the Church the message it brings to the world. God's creation is heading towards eternity and whoever communes with God in the eighth day from now on co-shapes with Him creation's historical course towards perfection. The man of the eighth day, the sanctified created man, is the last things' historical manifestation.

83. *Matt.* 5, 48.

Man, in particular, as the crown of creation, had the office and responsibility of ruling the latter during the continuous march to eternity. God created the creation and with the creation of man made it “very good”. But from that point until the perfection of creation, which is none other than participation in eternity in the vision of God, God makes man “in His image and likeness” co-responsible, for beholding God presupposes another person with an autonomous will, which only man has as the image of God. In this march towards eternity, God directs His creation towards its consummation, His Kingdom; man is called upon to cooperate in this work and become, by God’s grace, His beholder, a gate of God’s glory into creation. At the same time, every failure of human synergy is corrected by God’s eternally the same will, culminating in the incarnation of His Son, God the Word, and the Holy Spirit’s sending. Gregory of Nyssa presents the creation of the two sexes as the first correction of man’s course towards the eschaton of creation and the sight of God, due to the foreknown fall of man from Paradise and the loss of incorruptibility and immortality⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the creation of the sexes resulted in humanity’s exuberant hypostatic presence. Man from one, the first Adam, becomes the humans who lived, are living, and will live until the end of creation. Humanity now appears in the historical persons who share in human nature.

Thus, while the incarnation of the Word of God brings human nature to its eschaton in the person of the God-man Jesus Christ, and man, in God’s “in the image and likeness”, becomes perfect and participates in the eternal vision of God, the Holy Spirit addresses human persons who share in Jesus Christ’s God-man nature, enabling them to enter the Kingdom of God. Human nature has reached its eschaton in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ within the historical becoming from which the Holy Spirit receives portions (persons) for the eighth day already from Adam’s reduction to the eternal Paradise. The eschaton of human nature, God-man’s resurrection, constitutes a historical event and marks every human person’s historicity of its eschaton. Within creation’s historical event, all humans touch their eschaton, either entering the Kingdom of God or losing forever the possibility of sharing God’s vision *ad aeternitatem*.

84. A. Karatzas, *Ἡ σχέση ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος...*, *ibid.*, p. 38, note 19.

The believer, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, poured out through the Church's Holy Sacraments, is reduced to the Kingdom of God on the eighth day and beholds the glory of God. Although he is composed, as a dual nature, of a visible, material body, he is not occupied by the darkness of his material nature, and therefore he is not prevented from beholding God's glory. However, as part of the darkness due to his material body, he cannot behold the glory of God in all its splendor. Thus, while in his personal historical event, he reaches his eschaton, enters the eighth day, and becomes a godly man, as part of the visible and material nature he follows the course of the creation towards its eschaton, its renewal at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the day of the Lord when the creation will cease to function as darkness.

Consequently, Symeon's eschatological discourse distinguishes two *eschata*: the *personal eschaton* within the historical becoming, whereby man enters or does not enter the eighth day, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the *Creation's eschaton*, whereby every man is stripped of the darkness of creation, acquiring a spiritualized body that allows him either to be in the light and to behold God in all his glory for eternity or to be eternally in darkness. Biological death ceases to be man's personal eschaton; now, every human being's eschaton is its reduction to God's vision.