

Short course in theology

Faith, hope and love as theological virtues

THEOSIS

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The Theological Virtues

1812 The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature, # for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a **relationship** with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.

1813 The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.

Footnote

His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power.

Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to **share in the divine nature**, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.

1 Peter 1:3-4.

Faith

1814 Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, **because he is truth itself.** By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God." For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work(s) through charity."

1815 The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it. But "faith apart from works is dead": when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

Truth is a Person

“Truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. Moreover, the fullness of truth received in Jesus Christ does not give individual Christians the guarantee that they have grasped that truth fully. In the last analysis, truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. **This is an unending process.** While keeping their identity intact, Christians must be prepared to learn and to receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue, they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow that understanding of their faith to be purified.”

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in *Dialogue and Proclamation* (May 1991), 49,

Hope

1817 Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. . . .

"The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and **purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven**; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

1820 Christian hope **unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching** in the proclamation of the beatitudes. the beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus.

Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.



Edward Schillebeeckx

- “negative experiences of contrast” as fundamental pre-religious experiences.
- “the principle of the interpretation of reality is not what we take for granted, but the ‘stumbling block’ of a reality which resists us”.
- It is “experiences of meaninglessness, of injustice and of innocent suffering that have a revelatory significance *par excellence*”.
- The good can never be positively defined
- “The human inability to give in to the situation offers an illuminating perspective. It discloses an openness to another situation which has the right to our affirmative ‘yes’.”
- **THE PROPHETIC PRINCIPLE as attention to the human experience of suffering**

Charity

1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

1823 Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end," he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." and again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

1824 Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the commandments of God and his Christ: "**Abide in my love.** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."

1825 and 1826 cite Paul, 1 Corinthians

1826 "If I . . . have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I . . . have not charity, I gain nothing." Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity."

Charity

1827 The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which "binds everything together in perfect harmony", it is the form of the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. **Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.**

1828 The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the **spiritual freedom of the children of God**. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us".

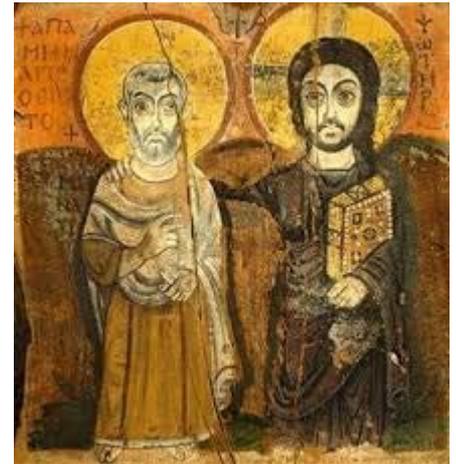
1829 The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion:

Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.

Faith and its formulation

relational at its heart

- Lex orandi lex credendi -
- formation of the NT canon involved reciprocal recognition
- First great challenge/heresy: Gnosticism – salvation through knowledge. (and denying the incarnation)
- But doctrine does matter, the doctrinal formulations of the creeds were about safeguarding the central intuition of Christian faith.



Dei Verbum:

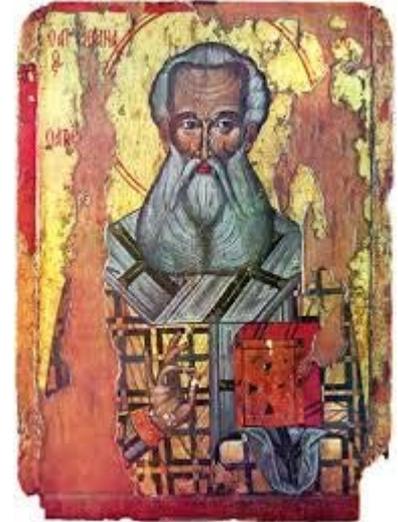
The Teaching of Vatican II on Divine Revelation

- Revelation is the self-communication of God to people in salvation history which reaches its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ
- The new knowledge which results in doctrine is consequent to God's self communication in Christ
- Out of the abundance of divine love, God communicates God's self to people through Christ in order to give a share in the divine nature (Salvation)
- Revelation is a personal invitation to enter into a new life of fellowship with God.

Christological Controversies

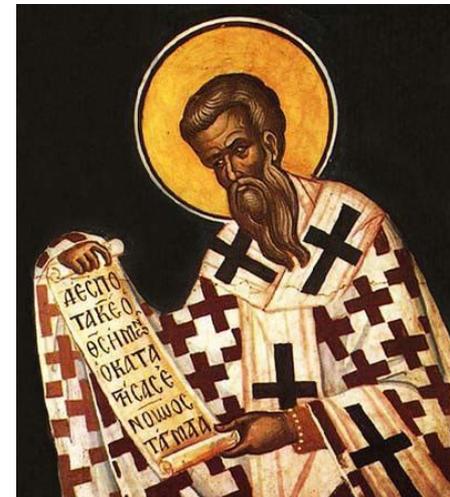
“the Son of God became human so that we might become God”

Athanasius, *On The Incarnation*, 54. 3.



“What has not been assumed has not been healed”,

Gregory Nazianzen, *Letter 101*, to Cledonious.



THE TRINITY

How to account for difference in unity?

According to Athanasius:

“all that is said of the Father is also to be said of the Son except that the Son is the Son and not the Father.”



The distinction that makes the three is not one of substance or nature, but relationship.

“Father”, writes Gregory Nazianzen, “is not the name of a substance or an activity, but of relationship”

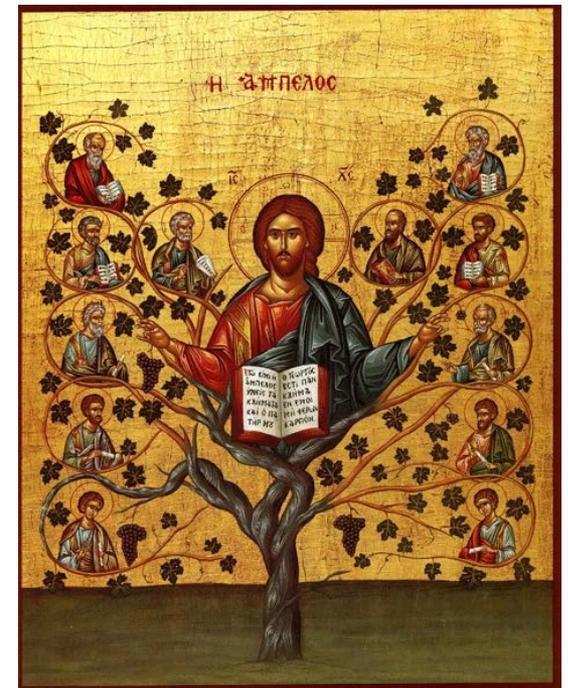
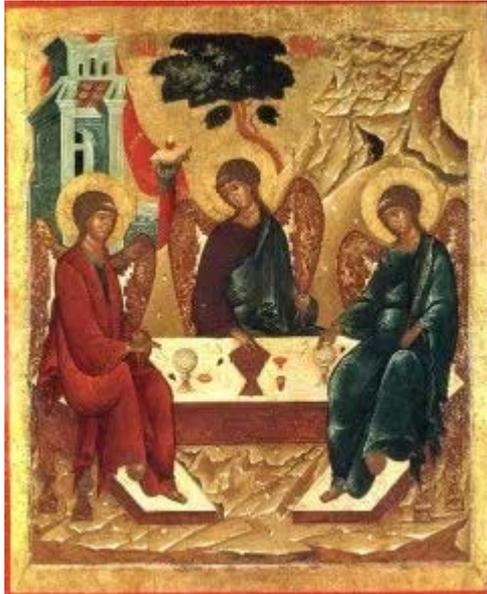
This entailed a major shift in thinking away from a focus on the uniqueness and solitariness of God - towards the idea of Fatherhood as a term of relation.

While the Father is the principle of unity, the unity of God was more and more understood to reside in the mutual interdependence of three persons in each other, in their relationality.

Shift from **hierarchical** to a **relational** understanding of God

To be a person is to be in relation.

Marriage and Family as the Great school of Divinisation

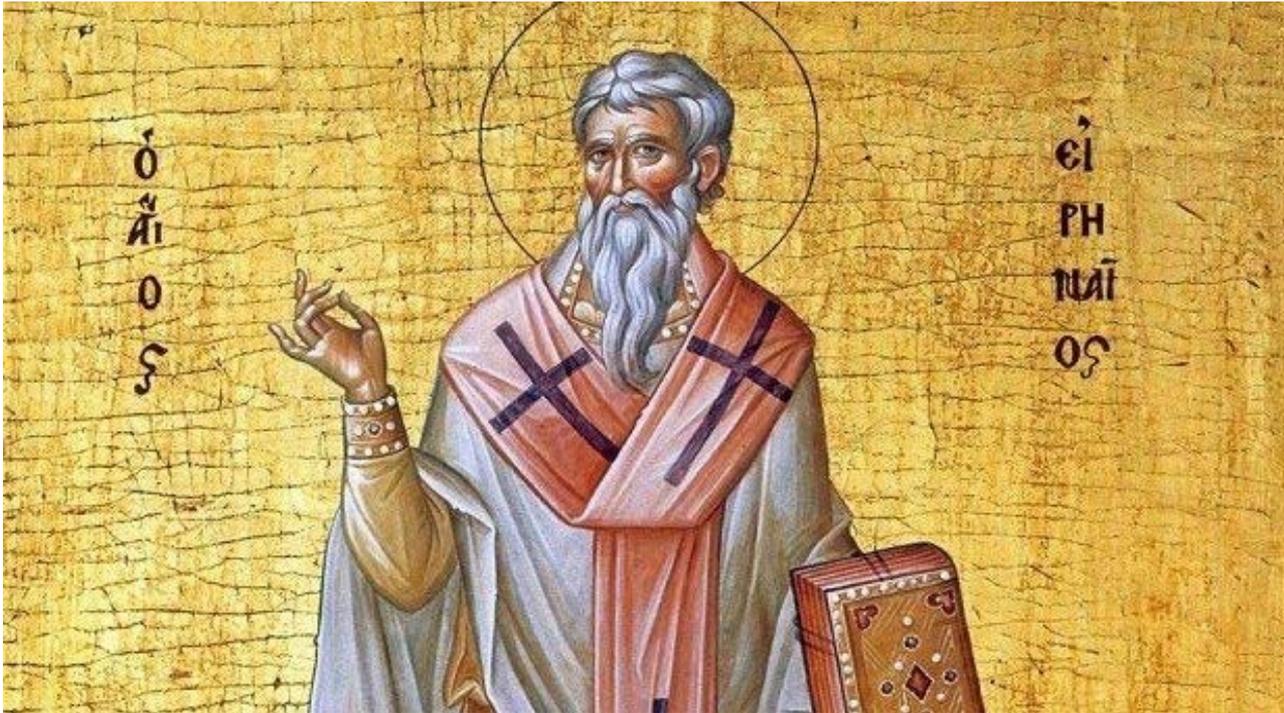




Short course in theology: The Theological Virtues

IRENÆUS of Lyon

130 – c. 202 AD



For the glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God

Against Heresies, 4.34.7

“One of the things revealed by the doctrine of original sin is that it is our capacity to receive gratuitously that was damaged in the fall: not our capacity to *receive*, because we have to receive in order to exist, but our capacity to receive gratuitously, which is the only way we can ever share in divine life, because that life can never be other than gratuitous.”

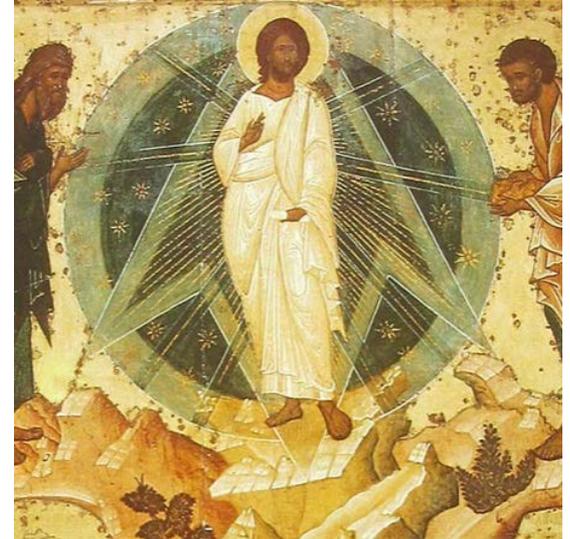
James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*



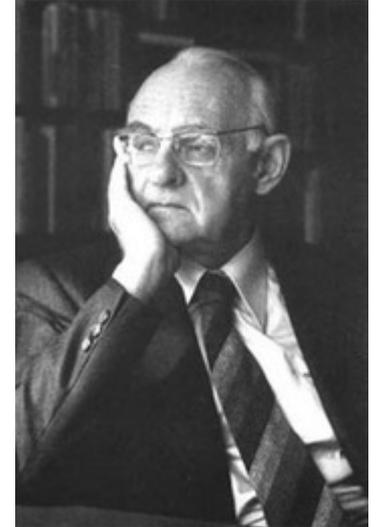
If, however, anyone says, "What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from the beginning?" let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten with respect to himself, all things are possible to him.

Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.38.3



- God intended man to have *all* good, but in his, God's time; and therefore all disobedience, all sin, consists essentially in breaking out of time. Hence the restoration of order by the Son of God had to be the annulment of that premature snatching at knowledge, the beating down of the hand outstretched toward eternity, the repentant return from a false, swift transfer into eternity to a true, slow confinement in time.'
- Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius, 1994), 37.



Irenaeus on Recapitulation

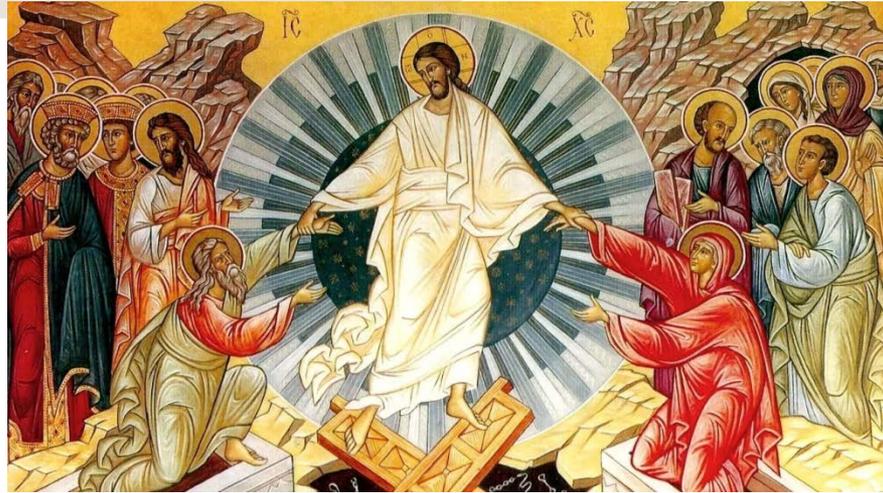
“He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.

AH 3.18.1

“He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying those who are of this age” and so on until “at last he came on to death itself”

- AH 2.12.4.



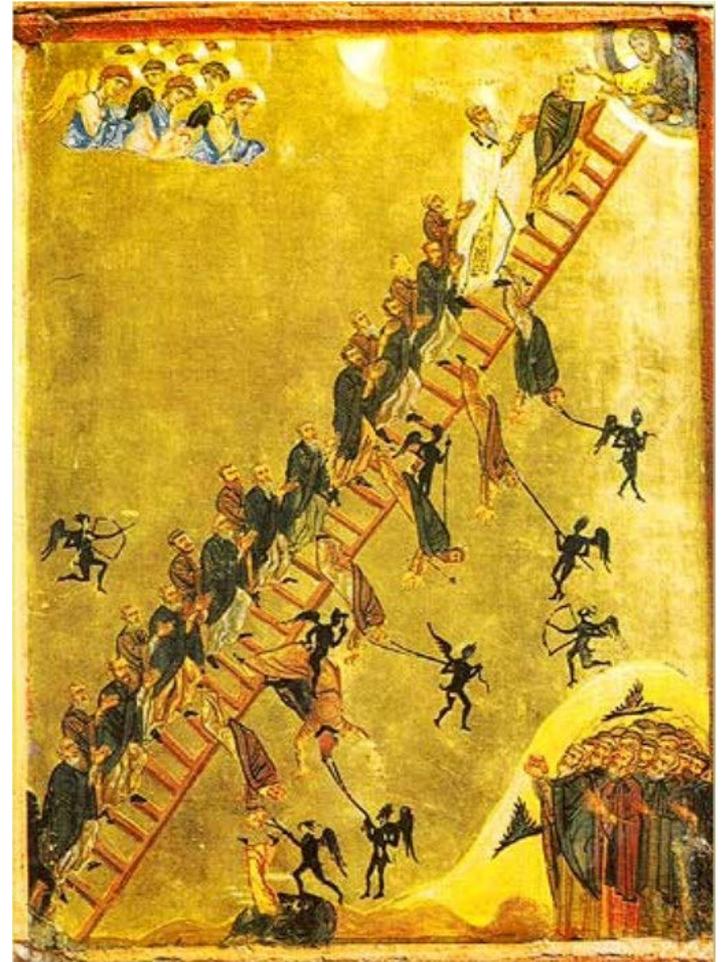


Having recapitulated the whole of our sinful history on the cross and transforming it by his sacrificial act of love, the resurrected Jesus becomes the first man to obtain the perfect image and likeness of God, for it is the risen humanity of Jesus that most fully manifests the Son's divine likeness to the Father.

Through faith and baptism the Christian comes to partake of this risen life through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that molds and fashions us into the image of Jesus, and in this way we take on the likeness of Father as his children.

"For as God is always the same, so the human person in God will always progress towards God. God will never cease to benefit and enrich the human person, and the human person will never cease from receiving benefit and enrichment from God"

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.11.2.

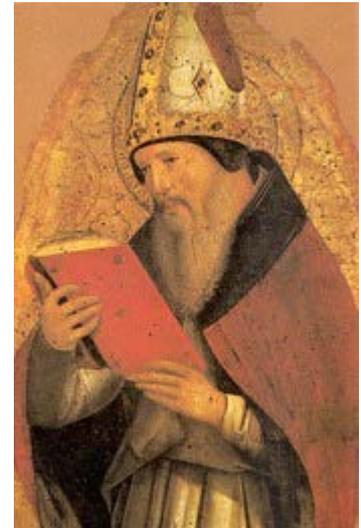


- Salvation as process
 - Gospel parables depict the kingdom of God in terms of organic growth.
 - “this life is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming”. – Martin Luther
 - Eucharist

Eucharist

The bread is Christ's body, the cup is Christ's blood....If you, therefore are Christ's Body and members, **it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving!** Be a member of Christ's body then, so that your Amen may ring true! Be what you see; receive what you are.... All who fail to keep the bond of peace after entering this mystery receive not the sacrament that benefits them, but an indictment that condemns them.

Augustine *Sermon 272*



Divinisation in Paul

All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. ... you who are all partners with me in grace.

Philippians 1:6-7

For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

2 Cor 5:17, 21

Self-emptying for our sake

“For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:9

“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him ”

Philippians 2:5-9

Adoption as heirs

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Galatians 4:4-7

Salvation as Divinisation

According to Irenaeus in the 2nd century:

“The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through his transcendent love, become what we are, that he might bring us to be even what He is Himself.”

Against the Heresies, V. Preface.

Athanasius in the 4th century:

“For the Son of God became human so that we might become God.”

On The Incarnation, 54. 3.

Salvation as Divinisation

Augustine in the 5th century:

“In order to make gods of those who were merely human . . . one who was God made himself human.”

Sermon 192.1.

Maximus the Confessor in the 7th Century:

“We lay hold of the divine to the same degree as that to which the Logos of God, deliberately emptying himself of his own sublime glory, became truly human.”

On the Lords Prayer (PG 90:877A)

Aquinas in the 13th century:

“The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.”

Opusculum, 57. 1-4.

Theosis in Luther

Just as the word of God became flesh, so it is certainly also necessary that the flesh become word. For the word becomes flesh precisely so that the flesh might become word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless. The Logos puts on our form and manner”.

Christmas Sermon of 1514

This life is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming.

Table Talk



Even Calvin

“This is the wonderful exchange which, out of His measureless benevolence, Jesus Christ has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, He has made us sons of God with Him”

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.xvii.2.

SIN

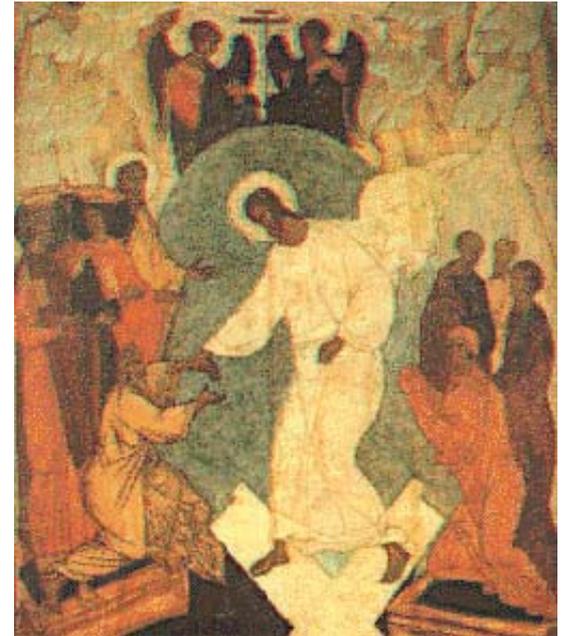
- *amartia* - = “missing the mark” /going astray.
 - failure to achieve the purpose for which one is created.
 - In juridical terms: it is the transgression of a moral code.
 - existential terms: it is a failure to be one’s true self.
- Question of ORIGINAL SIN
 - Salvation is communal and relational

Communal Nature of Sin

- Why practice infant baptism.
 - Augustine’s answer was “original sin.”
 - Theodoret of Cyrus “baptism is more than the remission of sin” but a “promise of greater and more perfect gifts”.
- Augustine’s answer was individualistic.
- Other answers suggest that our common guilt is more a matter of the solidarity of all human beings. If sin is a breakdown of relationship, it is never purely individual.
- Cf. Ephesians 4:25, “We are members of one another”.

How are we saved?

- Faith in Christ
 - Not a hypothesis
 - Not adherence to propositions
 - But a personal (not individualistic) relationship.
- Not *what* is salvation but *who* is salvation?
- “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee?” – St Augustine



God is our Salvation

- It is God who is our ultimate “end” (eschaton)
- To be saved is to be divinised, to participate in the life of God.
- salvation is much more than an alteration in our juridical status,
- it is more than imitating Christ in moral conduct.
- Salvation is nothing less than the all-embracing transformation of our humanness.

Salvation is Communal

we are created in the image of God, this means the image of the Holy Trinity

- which is not merely personal but interpersonal,
- not a unit but a union,
- shared love.

Because God is Trinity my salvation is bound up with the salvation of my neighbour

Salvation is also ecclesial : there is no salvation outside of communion

Salvation is Cosmic

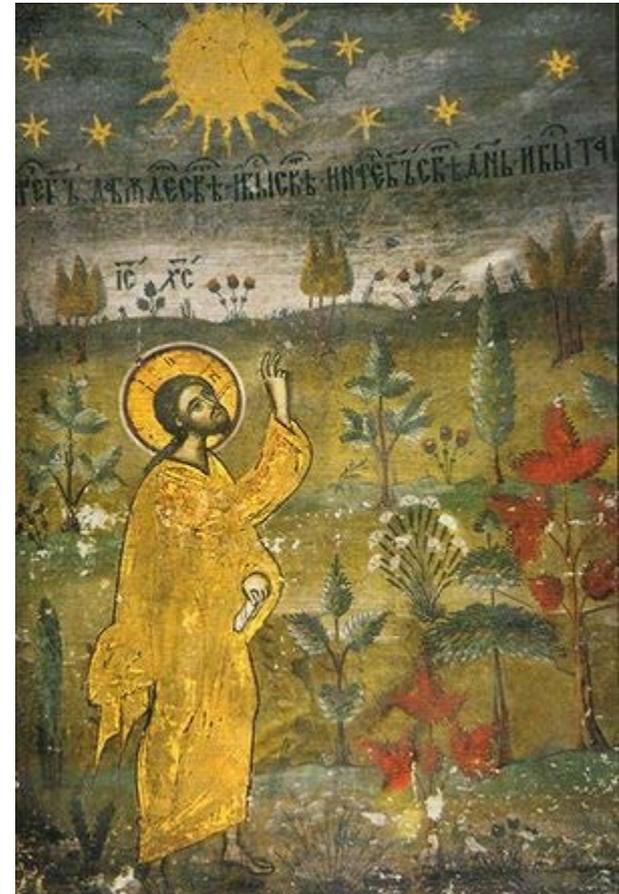


There is to be a “new earth” as well as a “new heaven” (Rev. 21:1)

Our human salvation leads in this way to the redemption of the whole created order, which through us “will be set free from its bondage to corruption and will enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”. (Rom. 8:21)

All things are reconciled in Christ

According to Maximus the Confessor, the human person in Christ is the priest of creation, This priestly task is fulfilled in Christ by whom and in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17) Saved in Christ, we share in his cosmic mediation. In Jesus all things material and spiritual are linked intimately.



Will all be saved? Apokatastasis

God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”.

1 Tim 2.4



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