



IMAGO DEI AND THE ONTOLOGICAL CRISIS OF CONTEMPORARY MAN: A PATRISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The ontological crisis of contemporary man from the patristic perspective of the doctrine of Imago Dei—the belief that man was created in the image and likeness of God—is argued by the fact that the erosion of the theological understanding of the human person has led to a profound existential disorientation in modernity and postmodernity. The paper analyzes how technological progress, transhumanism and gender ideology have transformed the traditional conception of man, from a being in communion to a self-referential project of self-constitution. In contrast, the patristic tradition, represented by authors such as Irenaeus of Lyons, Athanasius the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa, defines man not as a self-sufficient entity, but as a dynamic and relational being, called to deification. The present research highlights that this crisis of modern humanity is essentially a crisis of theological memory – the loss of awareness of man's divine origin and vocation. It is argued that the true restoration of the human person is not achieved through technological self-transcendence, but through spiritual transfiguration and communion with God. In a world where the human face is being replaced by digital simulacra and artificial intelligence, Imago Dei theology reaffirms the sacred dignity of man as a being of love, reason and relationship. The study concludes that the rediscovery of the divine image in man is the only true way to overcome ontological alienation and to achieve the authentic fulfillment of the human being in Christ.

Keywords: *Imago Dei; ontology; transhumanism; patristic theology; deification; anthropology; contemporary man; spiritual transfiguration;*

INTRODUCTION

The problematic of contemporary man, faced with the temptation of technological self-deification and the loss of consciousness of transcendence, constitutes one of the most acute ontological crises of late modernity. From Renaissance anthropocentrism to today's transhumanism, humanity has traveled a winding path of emancipation from the sacred order, gradually replacing the theology of creation with an anthropology of self-constitution. At the heart of this mutation is the forgetfulness of the fundamental truth of biblical revelation: man was created "in the image and likeness of God" (Genesis 1:26–27). This formula, which underpins the whole of Christian anthropology, defines the human being not by biological functionality or rational performance, but by the vocation to participate in divine life.

The contemporary crisis of man, manifested in multiple forms – spiritual alienation, loss of meaning, moral disintegration, identity confusion – is essentially a crisis of the imago Dei. It does not concern only the relationship between man and God, but the very capacity of man to understand



himself as a person, as a being created in relationship, open to communion and calling. Technology, science and digital culture have amplified this ontological rupture, establishing a new form of idolatry: the worship of man by himself. In an age when the algorithm promises immortality, and the body is reduced to an object of optimization, theological anthropology becomes the last refuge of an authentic reflection on the meaning of being.

The patristic tradition offers, in this context, a privileged hermeneutical horizon for understanding man. The Fathers of the Church did not conceive of the divine image as a static feature, but as a dynamic vocation to deification (*theosis*). Man, in their view, is not an entity closed in on himself, but a being in the making, called to realize himself through participation in divine grace. From St. Irenaeus of Lyons to St. Gregory of Nyssa, Christian anthropology has been articulated as an ontology of communion: man becomes complete only in relation to God and neighbor. This vision contrasts radically with the modern paradigm, in which freedom is understood as absolute autonomy, and technological progress tends to substitute transcendence for computing power. In the face of the challenges generated by posthumanism, identity ideologies and the instrumentalization of technology, theological reflection on the imago Dei imposes itself as a vital necessity. It makes it possible to reconstitute an integral anthropology, capable of restoring to man the consciousness of his original dignity and the meaning of his soteriological vocation. Only by rediscovering the divine image within himself can man overcome the materialistic and constructivist reductions that define him today as a "performative subject" or "digital entity".

The return to patristic anthropology is not an exercise in theological archaeology, but a spiritual necessity of the present. In a world in which the image of man is fractured between biology, technology and virtuality, imago Dei theology brings the ontological dimension of the person back to the fore, affirming that human existence has its ultimate meaning not in self-improvement, but in communion; not in autonomy, but in love; not in programming, but in grace. This is, after all, the essential challenge of our time: the rediscovery of the face of God in man as the only way to restore the being and to save the world.

1. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY: IMAGO DEI AS THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE PERSON

Man, according to the original plan of creation, was called to be the image and likeness of God – the visible manifestation of a spiritual reality that goes beyond the limits of the material world. In the Book of Genesis, Scripture records: "God made man in His image; in the image of God he made him; male and female" (Genesis 1:27). This fundamental affirmation confers on man a unique ontological dignity: he is not only a biological being, but a theandric being, bearer of reason, freedom and creativity who reflects, in a participatory way, his Creator. From this vision flows the whole of biblical and patristic anthropology: man is imago Dei, a living icon of God in the world, a microcosm that unites matter and spirit, time and eternity.¹

However, in the context of modernity, this understanding has eroded. Contemporary man, a prisoner of the illusion of absolute autonomy and fascinated by his own technological creations, has lost consciousness of the divine image and has distanced himself from his very ontological essence.

An in-depth theological interpretation of the creation narrative shows that in Genesis 1 man is created equal—male and female—both sharing the same spiritual nature and the same cosmic calling: to administer creation in the name of God, not to despotically subjugate it. The sacred text reveals a synergy between human reason and divine energies, between the freedom of man and the

¹ John BEHR, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 38.



will of the Creator. Genesis 2, on the other hand, proposes a more existential perspective, highlighting the primordial loneliness of man, the need for communion and the complementarity between masculine and feminine. This complementarity does not express subordination, but mutual relationship and ontological communion. Man is, by his very being, a dialogic being – called to enter into dialogue with God, with his neighbor and with the whole of creation. In the patristic vision, this capacity for communion represents a participation in the life of the Holy Trinity: man becomes a being in relationship, the image of a personal and loving God.²

The Church Fathers interpreted the *imago Dei* not as a static feature, but as a dynamic call to deification. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons said: "The glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God".³ This perspective introduces an anthropology of spiritual growth: man is not only the image of God, but is called to become like Him through communion and participation in divine grace. St. Athanasius the Great will express this reality in a synthetic and prophetic formula: "God became man so that man might become God".⁴ Therefore, the image of God in man is not a simple biological date, but an existential call, a vocation to transfiguration. Man, truly becomes *imago Dei* only to the extent that he lives in truth, love and freedom – that is, in communion with God. The contemporary crisis of man consists precisely in the substitution of this transcendent call for purely immanent ideals. Modernity and postmodernity have desacralized the divine image, transforming it into a projection of the self. Instead of a spiritual anthropocentrism, a self-referential humanism has been installed which, in recent decades, has evolved towards transhumanism. The latter proposes a radical redefinition of human nature through technology, presenting itself as a Promethean myth of overcoming the biological condition. Man, dissatisfied with his creative limits, is now seeking technological salvation – through artificial intelligence, bioengineering, augmented reality or the loading of consciousness into cybernetic systems. This attempt at "self-resurrection" is the ultimate expression of the break with God: man, no longer wants to be the image of God, but the creator of an artificial world in which he himself becomes the idol of his own imagination.⁵

In its essence, transhumanism constitutes a secularized form of eschatology. He promises a "salvation" through algorithm and an "immortality" through digitalization. He no longer speaks of sin, but of limitation; it no longer seeks deification, but optimization. In this technological utopia, man is reduced to a laboratory object, and the body becomes a simple experimental support. The soul is evacuated from the discourse about humanity and replaced by a simulated consciousness. Thus, there is a disintegration of the person and a loss of the ontological meaning of existence.⁶

Patristic theology, however, offers a prophetic response to this paradigm. For the Fathers of the Church, the dignity of man does not derive from his capacity to produce or innovate, but from his capacity to love. True knowledge does not consist in the accumulation of data, but in participation in the divine life. Man is not saved by technological perfection, but by spiritual transfiguration.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, saw in man a being in a continuous movement towards God – an incessant spiritual growth (*epektasis*). For him, perfection did not mean reaching

² John BEHR, *Asceticism...*, p. 39.

³ ST. IRENAEUS of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, IV, 20, 7, in *Church Fathers and Writers (PSB)*, vol. 7, trans. by Rev. Prof. Dr. Olimp Căciulă, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1995, p. 345.

⁴ John BEHR, *Asceticism...*, p. 40.

⁵ John BEHR, *Asceticism...*, p. 41.

⁶ IRENAEUS of Lyon, *Saint Irenaeus of Lyons: Against Heresies*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012, p. 216.



a final state, but the infinite thirst for communion. This vision radically contradicts the transhumanist ideology, which identifies progress with domination and perfection with control. In patristic thought, man can only be complete in God, and the attempt to eliminate suffering and death outside communion with Christ is not a liberation, but a form of alienation. True victory over death is achieved only through the Resurrection of Christ, not through the virtualization of consciousness or genetic manipulation.⁷

The crisis of contemporary man is, in essence, a crisis of theological memory. In a world driven by technology, man has forgotten his origin and purpose. He seeks the infinite, but refuses the personal Infinite. Instead of a theological anthropology, an anthropology of the machine has been installed: man worships his own artificial intelligence, which he invests with messianic attributes. This digital idolatry, which the Fathers would have recognized as a new form of Luciferic pride, marks a "fall from the grace of the face", a substitution of divine grace for the technological algorithm.⁸

However, in the depths of this crisis lies a possibility of spiritual rebirth. The transhumanist desire for immortality, although hijacked, expresses an authentic nostalgia for eternity. The thirst to overcome the human condition is, after all, the expression of the longing for God. The mission of contemporary theology is to recover and reorient this desire – from the technological to the theandric, from the artificial to the spiritual. The Church is called to restore to man the consciousness of his original dignity: that of a being created for communion, love and holiness.⁹

To look at man as an *imago Dei* is to look at him as a mystery, not as a project; as a person, not as a program. In an age in which identity becomes fluid and the body an object of manipulation, theology must remember that true freedom is not autonomy, but participation in divine love. From the patristic perspective, the restoration of the divine image in man is achieved through asceticism, prayer and the Eucharistic life. Man, truly becomes himself when he assumes finitude as a place of encounter with the infinite. In opposition to the transhumanist utopia, which seeks to overcome death through technology, theology affirms victory over death through communion with Christ.

Thus, the *imago Dei* should not be understood as an archaic theological concept, but as the paradigmatic expression of the Christian response to the ontological crisis of contemporary man. In a cultural context dominated by the promise of "digital immortality" and the myth of unlimited technological progress, Christian theology reaffirms that the ultimate meaning of existence is not born of performance, efficiency or technological self-construction, but of love—fundamental ontological reality and manifestation of divine communion. In an age in which perfection is identified with efficiency, and the value of the person is reduced to biological or algorithmic parameters, the Church recalls that man is not exhausted in his material or cognitive dimension, but is a theandric being, bearer of the image of the Invisible One (*imago Dei*), a living mystery that transcends the determinations of nature and technology.¹⁰

The crisis of modern man – a crisis of identity, meaning and finality – cannot be solved by multiplying artificial intellectual capacities, but by rediscovering spiritual intelligence, that is, by restoring man's capacity to know through communion and to live in relationship with God. Only by reorienting one's gaze towards the Creator and by recognizing oneself the divine image can man restore the lost ontological balance and participate in the original harmony of creation.

⁷ GREGORY of Nyssa, *On the making of man*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013, p. 84.

⁸ GREGORY of Nyssa, *On the...*, p. 85.

⁹ GREGORY of Nyssa, *On the...*, p. 86.

¹⁰ GREGORY of Nyssa, *On the...*, p. 87.



Man's authentic vocation does not consist in substituting God through technology or self-deification through science, but in deification by grace – in personal and synergistic participation in divine life. This is ultimately the essence of the patristic response to the existential drama of modern humanity: the *imago Dei* is not a mythological relic of archaic thought, but the foundation of Christian anthropology and the only true way to restore the person and regain the meaning of history. In the rediscovery of the face of God in man lies, therefore, the key to the transfiguration of the world and to the overcoming of the secularized paradigm of existence.

2. THE DEGRADATION OF THE DIVINE IMAGE: MODERN MAN BETWEEN SECULARIZATION, TECHNOLOGY AND POSTHUMANISM

Theological reflection on man as a created being *ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei* (Genesis 1:26) constitutes a fundamental hermeneutical tool for understanding the ontological crisis of contemporary humanity, confronted with global technological expansion and the growing tendency to self-define outside any transcendent landmark. In the context of posthumanism and emerging biotechnologies, human identity seems to be undergoing a radical resizing, oriented not towards the *Imago Dei* – the theological paradigm of the person created in relationship and openness to God – but towards the *imago machinae*, the technological image of the self-projected through algorithms, performativity and instrumental efficiency. This anthropological mutation, specific to the digital age, can be interpreted as a new form of ontological alienation, analogous to the fall from Eden, in which autonomy becomes idolized and the personal relationship with the divinity is replaced by a technical pseudo-transcendence, devoid of the dimension of communion.¹¹

The patristic tradition has grasped since the first centuries the danger of an autarchic anthropology, in which man claims his ontological self-sufficiency. For Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, man is not an entity closed in on himself, but a being in the making (*homo in fieri*), called to perfection through participation in the divine life. The Irenaeus distinction between *imago* and *similitudo* – between the image conferred by the act of creation and the likeness that is acquired through the work of grace – expresses one of the most profound insights of Christian anthropology. "Man," says Irenaeus, "was created a child, so that, through growth, he might become like God."¹² In this perspective, freedom and reason, as constitutive dimensions of the divine image, are not expressions of absolute autonomy, but premises of a spiritual maturation that culminates in communion with the Creator.

By contrast, the current technological paradigm redefines freedom as radical independence from all transcendence, substituting *capax Dei* for *capax machinae*. Contemporary man, who has become the artisan of his own artificial "creation", tends to transform himself into a secularized demiurge, losing the consciousness of participation in the divine work of creation. In the Irenaeus conception, the true becoming of man is theandric in nature, the result of a synergy between divine grace and human freedom. What contemporary technology presents as "self-fulfillment" represents, from a patristic perspective, a subtle resumption of the Edenic temptation to become "like God" (Genesis 3:5), but without God – an apparent self-transcendence, which hides a spiritual self-denial.

Blessed Augustine will deepen this intuition in an anthropology of interiority and divine illumination. In the treatise *On the Trinity*, he identifies the image of God in the trinitarian structure of the soul – memory, intellect and will – an analogical reflection of intra-trinitarian communion.

¹¹ Fr. John BRECK, *Beyond These Horizons, Quantum Theory and Christian Faith*, St. Sebastian Press and Kaloros Press, 2019, p. 63.

¹² St. IRENAEUS of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, IV, 20, 7, in *Church Fathers and Writers (PSB)*, vol. 7, p. 347.



This image, however, is degraded by sin and restored only through the intervention of Christ's saving grace. In his polemic with Pelagius, Augustine affirms that human freedom is real, but insufficient for self-transcendence, since man cannot rise by his own strength to communion with God. Its famous formula – "Qui creavit te sine te, non iustificat te sine te" ("He who created you without you will not save you without you") – expresses the dialectical tension between the divine initiative of grace and the responsible cooperation of human freedom.¹³

Consequently, Christian anthropology is not one of self-constitution, but of ontological participation. Man is not called to produce his being, but to receive it, to cultivate it and to fulfill it in the relationship of love and communion with God. The digital age, through its emphasis on self-design and performativity, tends to substitute the vocational dimension of existence for a constructivist one, reducing ontology to technique. The promise of an "algorithmic immortality" – a secularized form of eschatological hope – constitutes a pseudo-soteriology of efficiency, in which communion is replaced by connectivity and grace of optimization.

From the perspective of the Fathers of the Church, this substitution is equivalent to the passage from *Imago Dei* to *Imago Sui*: the idolization of one's own image, the narcissistic reflex of the self-referential self, which substitutes transcendence for self-projection. In this new technological anthropology, man ceases to be *homo adorans* – a worshipful and dialogical being – and becomes *homo fabricans*, the builder of his own simulacrum of being.

Patristic reflection therefore offers not only a critique, but also a coherent alternative to the technological anthropology of late modernity. In the Christian view, authentic freedom is not the freedom to be without God, but the freedom to be in God; not the freedom to create the self, but the freedom to participate in the life of the Creator. Only the recognition of the *Imago Dei* as the foundation of human dignity makes it possible to restore the ontological meaning of the person, restoring to man his original vocation: that of being the image of God through love, reason and communion, not through technological domination or algorithmic self-projection.

Thus, in a world marked by the temptation of a "fabricated transcendence", theological anthropology recalls that the essence of man does not consist in the power to produce, but in the ability to give oneself; not in self-preservation, but in communion; not in performance, but in participation. Only to the extent that the *Imago Dei* is recognized and assumed as the ontological axis of existence can man rediscover the fullness of his being, overcoming the illusion of graceless freedom and recovering the theandric meaning of his own humanity.

Karl Barth revalued, in a critical and profoundly theological manner, the ethos of man's ontological dependence on God, proposing a reconceptualization of the doctrine of *Imago Dei* in terms of a relational vocation, not of an inherent ontological property. In its interpretation, *imago Dei* does not designate a substantial quality of human nature, but a call to relationship, to communion and responsibility towards the other. Barth explicitly states that "man is the image of God insofar as he is for the other"¹⁴, thus defining humanity through the theological categories of encounter and mutuality. Consequently, he rejects any form of the *entis* analogy, which would imply an ontological continuity between the Creator and the creature, considering it a form of metaphysical idolatry. In its place, Barth proposes the «*analogia relationis*», through which the interhuman relationship becomes the theological site of the manifestation of the divine image. Thus, man reflects the divine reality not by his nature, but by his capacity for communion, by his openness to otherness

¹³ St. AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, New City Press, 1991, p. 142.

¹⁴ Dominic ROBINSON, *Understanding the 'Imago Dei': The Thought of Barth, von Balthasar and Moltmann*, Routledge Publishing, 2011, p. 42.



and by his willingness to be "for" the other. In the context of contemporary technological society, characterized by the atomization of the person and the substitution of authentic communion with instantaneous forms of communication, Barthian anthropology offers a radical corrective: humanity cannot be defined in terms of autonomous individuality, but only in terms of the horizon of relationship and mutual self-giving, which constitutes the foundation of the personal being.¹⁵

Hans Urs von Balthasar deepens and expands this vision into a dramatic and theological horizon of great amplitude, by integrating the doctrine of Imago Dei into dramatic theology (Theo-Drama). In the Balthasarian vision, the divine image is actualized in man through active participation in the drama of salvation and through the vocational correspondence between human freedom and divine initiative. The dynamics of the relationship between God and man is, in Balthasar, both descending – the revelation and descent of divine love – and ascending – man's free and responsible response to God's call. Thus, the Imago Dei becomes a dramatic and soteriological category, expressing man's participation in the economy of salvation. Man is not the face of God statically, but to the extent that he assumes his role as an "actor" in the drama of divine love, playing out his existence not as master of creation, but as its servant. "Man," says Balthasar, "can only be understood in reference to Christ, the perfect image of the Father"¹⁶. In this framework, the theology of the image takes up and develops patristic anthropology, restoring to man his status as a relational and vocational being, oriented towards communion and transfiguration in Christ. This vision responds in an exemplary way to the challenges of the post-metaphysical world, in which being is replaced by functionality, and meaning is dislodged by efficiency: man is not a technological construct, but an ontological call open to transcendence.

Against this hermeneutical background, it becomes evident that the loss of the being in the technological age is equivalent to the loss of the face, that is, of the relational dimension that gives meaning to human existence. The digitized man, caught between virtual reality, algorithmic technologies and genetic engineering, experiences a form of profound ontological alienation, as he substitutes the relationship of love and communion with relationships of control, efficiency and domination. This anthropological mutation expresses the shift from a theology of participation to an ideology of self-constitution: where the Fathers of the Church spoke of theosis, deification through grace and communion, the postmodern technological world promotes a form of autotheosis without transcendence – an artificial and self-referential divinization, based on the logic of dominion and competition with the Creator. Instead of the spiritual ascent to God, we are witnessing a Promethean self-proclamation of man as the demiurge of his own condition, a phenomenon that denotes a profound ontological and theological error.

In the light of these considerations, the patristic perspective on the Imago Dei proves indispensable for the rereading of the contemporary anthropological crisis. Patristic anthropology affirms that true humanity is not constituted by autarky, but by communion, not by technological self-improvement, but by participation in the divine life. In opposition to the modern paradigm of the "man-code", defined by performance, productivity and algorithm, the Fathers propose the figure of the "man-face", defined by relationship, love and openness to transcendence. The theology of the image, thus understood, becomes a true theological critique of technological idolatry, denouncing the transformation of man into an object of technical optimization and restoring his dignity as a theological being, bearer of the image of God. The restoration of the being is not achieved, therefore,

¹⁵ Brendan MCINERNEY, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: An Introduction*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2020, p. 83.

¹⁶ B. MCINERNEY, *The Trinitarian...*, p. 84.



through the accumulation of power or instrumental knowledge, but through the reintegration of man into the dynamics of communion and grace. Only by rediscovering this ontological and relational dimension can humanity rediscover its true identity – that of *imago Dei*, called to participate in the fullness of divine love, not to replace it with technological simulacra of divinity.

CONCLUSION

In the light of theological reflection on the doctrine of *Imago Dei*, it becomes evident that the drama of contemporary humanity is not strictly social, technological or moral, but ontological. Modern man, seduced by the promise of salvation through knowledge and power, has lost the consciousness of his divine image and, with it, the meaning of his own existence. Under the guise of progress, contemporary civilization is experiencing a subtle form of metaphysical exile: a separation from God, from others, and ultimately from itself. Technology, science and globalized culture, although legitimate expressions of human creativity, have become, in the absence of transcendence, instruments of a new idolatry – the cult of the autonomous man, of artificial consciousness and of fluid identity.

In opposition to this paradigm of self-constitution, the Fathers of the Church understood man as a participatory and relational being, created not for domination, but for communion. Patristic anthropology affirms that the image of God in man is not a static reality, but a dynamic call to deification (theosis). In this perspective, human dignity does not derive from reason, autonomy or performance, but from the creative love that unites the Creator with his creature. Man cannot be perfected by himself, but only by participation in the divine life. This theandric vision restores the ontological order of existence: authentic freedom is realized only in truth, and full truth is revealed only in communion.

The contemporary crisis of man – whether expressed through transhumanism, gender ideology, radical individualism or spiritual nihilism – represents a continuation of the Edenic temptation to become "like God, but without God". Behind the Promethean aspiration for self-improvement hides an unfulfilled nostalgia for eternity. The desire for immortality and perfection that animates posthuman projects expresses, in a secularized form, man's longing for deification. The problem, therefore, is not the desire for the infinite, but the direction in which it is oriented. Patristic theology offers the authentic response to this thirst for transfiguration: man is not called to virtualize himself, but to sanctify himself; not to load his conscience into a computer system, but to enlighten it by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the *Imago Dei* is not only a dogmatic category, but a universal hermeneutical key to understanding man. In a world in which identity dissolves in digital networks, and the person is reduced to a social profile or algorithm of behavior, the theology of the divine image reaffirms the irreducible character of the human being: man is not a sum of biological, psychological or symbolic functions, but a living mystery, a face of the Invisible One. The true restoration of humanity will not be achieved through technological evolution, but through metanoia – by turning the heart to God.

Far from rejecting progress or knowledge, patristic theology proposes an integrative wisdom, in which science is illuminated by faith and freedom is transfigured by love. In this horizon, salvation is not accomplished through the accumulation of information, but through communion with the personal Truth, Christ. He is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), in which man finds his true identity. In Christ, man discovers that freedom does not mean independence, but



self-giving; that dignity does not mean self-assertion, but participation; that perfection does not mean performance, but love.

By rediscovering the *Imago Dei*, Christian anthropology offers a radical alternative to the posthumanist worldview. It restores to man the status of a vocational being, oriented towards transcendence, capable of communion and sacrifice, not of competition and autarky. In this sense, the Church is not an archaic institution in a modern world, but the theandric space in which the face of man is restored by grace. The Eucharistic life, prayer, asceticism and love of neighbor are not mere religious practices, but acts of ontological restoration, through which the person returns to the source of his being.

In a culture dominated by the illusion of self-deification, the Church remains the witness and confessor of the incarnate Truth: humanity is not saved by itself, but by Christ; it is not deified by technology, but by grace; it is not liberated through autonomy, but through communion. Only this vision can restore the lost harmony between spirit and matter, between body and soul, and between humanity and God.

Thus, the answer to the ontological crisis of the modern world does not lie in perfecting machines, but in sanctifying human hearts. Instead of “digital immortality,” theology proclaims eternal life in communion with God; instead of an “artificial consciousness,” it affirms the living face of the other; instead of a “posthuman society,” it points toward the Kingdom of those who have rediscovered their true humanity in Christ.

In conclusion, the *imago Dei* is not a relic of the theological past, but a prophetic concept of enduring and saving relevance. Within it lies the antidote to modern alienation and the key to the restoration of the world. As long as humanity continues to contemplate itself in the light of its own image rather than in the light of God, it will wander through the labyrinth of its own creations. Yet wherever human beings rediscover the divine image within themselves and in their neighbours, they rediscover not only the meaning of existence but also the joy of communion – the beginning of a Kingdom that is not of this world and yet is already revealed in the depths of every heart open to love.



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ICOANA CREDINTEI

Icon of Faith. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Religious Studies

IFIJISR- IISSN 2501-3386; ISSN-L 2393-137X| <https://doi.org/10.26520/icoana>

Frequency: 2 issues/year, with possible supplementary issues.

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