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**THE SYNTAX OF CREATION OR THE
PLASTICIZATION OF DIVINE THOUGHTS**

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ABSTRACT

God is a Presence in which we can participate, not merely an abstract idea or concept. We cannot assert the existence of a God to be enjoyed from a distance, by delegation, or through intermediaries. Through His grace, the Triune God Himself is imparted to us, and we become partakers of God. The uncreated energies spring forth from the Being of God, yet they are not His Being. We cannot penetrate the Being of God with our reason. If we, as humans, are inexhaustible in our experiences and in the depths of our souls, how much more so is God. We cannot know His Being, but we can feel His presence and His work in our lives through the uncreated energies. The uncreated energies are God's love manifested toward creation. A person who allows themselves to be permeated by the uncreated energies of God, by His grace, by His love, and by His presence, is a person who becomes light themselves.

Keywords: *Holy Trinity; Logos; grace; creation; human being;*

INTRODUCTION

The term syntax (*σύνταξις*) originates from the Ancient Greek language, from the words *σύν* (together) and *τάξις* (arrangement, order), referring to the way words are ordered and combined to form clauses, and clauses to form sentences. This term, in turn, derives from the verb *τάσσω* (to arrange, to order). This aspect of arranging or ordering words in a clause or clauses in a sentence constitutes the fundamental principle of syntax as a linguistic discipline. The analogy between philological syntax and cosmic syntax is by no means accidental. In what follows, we shall see why.

The first book of the Holy Scripture, Genesis, begins with two distinct presentations of God, the Creator and Provider of the entire creation. Thus, from the very first chapter, the initial signal transmitted to the reader is the word God. This is found in the very opening verse: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (*Genesis* 1:1). In this verse, the word God is placed towards the middle of the sentence and highlighted by the strongest accentuation in traditional liturgical



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chanting, with the aim of emphasizing the importance of God. The passage regarding creation proclaims, therefore, God's role as the maker of all things visible and invisible.

Thus, this first presentation depicts God as situated at an infinite distance from people, as the transcendent God – *Elohim* – whose name conveys His supremacy. This theophoric name denotes superiority and strength, and the use of the plural form expresses the idea of the Trinity. The second scriptural paragraph regarding the creation of the world (*Genesis 2:4-25*) presents God as a proximate and personal God, the immanent God – YHWH – whose name many believe conveys the idea of closeness and relationship.

Overall, the passage on creation is, therefore, an implicit exhortation to adore God; to be conscious of God's majesty and infinite power and, at the same time, to acknowledge our dependence on Him, for "He made us, and not we ourselves" (*Psalms 99:2*). For this reason, many psalms frequently associate the worship offered to God with the contemplation of creation (*Psalms 94:1-6; Psalms 139:13-15*). The same occurs in the last book of the Holy Scripture, *Revelation 14:7*.

This dual perspective on God, Who is so majestic and omnipotent, yet also close and loving, existing in a special and unique relationship with us, contains an important message about how we should approach our Creator. The fear of Him, that is, the profound respect we accord Him, goes hand in hand with the joy of His close presence to us, of His forgiveness and love (see *Psalms 2:11*). Even the order of these two hypostases of God is significant: closeness to God and the intimacy of His presence come after the realization of the distance at which He stands.

Creation belongs *de jure* and *de facto* to the Holy Trinity, and the Church confesses the Father as Creator of all things invisible and visible, yet He is the builder through the Son in the Holy Spirit. The Son and the hypostatic Word of God is presented, from the very beginning, as the cause of creation¹, because the Father creates together with the Son and through the Son, Who is His Logos and infinite Reason, thus imprinting rationality and purpose upon creation. Due to its rationality, the world is inexhaustible light², for the world is illuminated in its relationship with God, but equally, the rationality of the created world makes possible the deification of man and the transfiguration of the universe through the uncreated energies of the Logos. Therefore, in its modes of existence, creation can be changed, but in its inner rationality, it remains unchangeable.

1. THE SEMINAL LOGOS AND THE PLASTICIZATION OF DIVINE REASONS IN CREATION

The revealed doctrine concerning the seminal Logos in creation refers to the Word or Divine Reason (the Logos) Which, being interiorized in every form or subunit of creation, confers upon it value, beauty, and order, acting as an ordering principle that gives meaning to the entire universe. Thus, every created structure bears within itself a seed of the Logos, a kernel of divine reason that makes it unique and harmonious. In what follows, we shall see that the doctrine of the Logos and His implications in creation can be considered the "central pillar of Christian thought".³

The word logos comes from the Greek *λόγος*, based on the verbal root *λέγω*, which means to say, to choose, to count, etc. The noun *λόγος* carries a wide range of meanings, from word and

¹ John MEYENDORFF, *Teologia Bizantină. Tendințe istorice și teme doctrinare* (Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes), translation by Alexandru I. Stan, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 173.

² Gheorghe ȘCHIOPU, *Învățătura despre Treime, cunoaștere și antropologie în viziunea lui Clement Alexandrinul* (The doctrine of the Trinity, knowledge and anthropology in the vision of Clement of Alexandria), Emia Publishing House, Deva, 2006, p. 150.

³ Ioan G. COMAN, *Probleme de filosofie și literatură patristică* (Problems of philosophy and patristic literature), IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 35.



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discourse to reason, logic, calculation, and cosmic order. In ancient Greek culture, logos means both reason and word, having rather a combined meaning of word-reason, implying a structure and an activity inherent in the cosmos, similar to human reason which can be articulated and described at least to some extent.⁴

Therefore, every word has a thought inserted within it, in the sense that the thought generates the word. Thus, reason or thought is inserted within the mind. Throughout history, ancient philosophy, represented by Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoic current, and Plotinus, and later Patristic Theology, through certain Church Fathers and writers such as St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, and others, brought the doctrine of the Logos to the center of their concerns. Thus, two different analytical typologies are placed in reflection: Christian thought and speculative thought.

Influenced by Stoic thought, St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher is the first Father of the Church to operate with the concept of *Logos spermatikos*.⁵ According to his statements, the seminal Logos was in the world before His incarnation, because He sowed His seeds (information scattered through the logoi in creation), which shows the logosity of creation or the imprint that the divine Logos places upon the entire creaturely environment. One observes a highlighting of the Christological status of the Logos, Who is not an impersonal reality or, in other words, the impersonal instrument through which God resorts to creating everything.

"God begot from Himself a certain rational principle and power, which is also called by the Holy Spirit the Glory of the Lord, sometimes Son, sometimes Wisdom, sometimes Angel, sometimes God, sometimes Lord and Word, and sometimes He calls Himself Commander-in-Chief when He appeared in human form to Joshua, son of Nun. For He always has His appellation according to the manner in which He serves the Father's will and from the fact that He is begotten of the Father, by will".⁶

The Fathers of the Church speak unanimously that, before the world was created, the latter existed in God's loving intention to forge it, that is, in the immaterial thought of God. Man and the cosmos pre-existed, before they existed, in the thoughts and counsel of the Most Holy Trinity, Who loved the world before bringing it into being.

"Even if there was a time when creation did not yet exist, there was not a time when God did not love it; for even if it was not yet, there was nevertheless not a time when God did not know His creation. And even if He had not made Himself known to it, because it was not yet created, God nevertheless knew it from always in all its various parts and natures. For He caused it to exist when it seemed a good thing to Him".⁷

When we refer to creation, His intentions go much further. Thoughts higher than earthly ones were His starting point and His goal. He had before His eyes invisible things, and visible things became their representation. Man is the *image of God*, and the relationship of intimate love between man and woman, consecrated in the Garden of Eden in the image of the Holy Nuptials, was meant

⁴ Iulian IACOB, *Conceptul de Logos în literatura filosofică și creștină* (The concept of Logos in philosophical and Christian literature), in magazine „Pleroma”, nr. 1/1999, p. 57.

⁵ Bogdan TĂTARU CAZABAN, *Sfântul Iustin Filosoful. O introducere* (Saint Justin the Philosopher. An introduction), Deisis Publishing House, Stavropoleos, 2010, p. 66.

⁶ St. JUSTIN THE MARTYR AND THE PHILOSOPHER, *Dialogul cu iudeul Trifon* (Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon), LXI, translation, introduction and notes by Teodor Bodogae, Olimp Căciulă and Dumitru Fecioru, in the „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” anthology, vol. 2, IBMBOR Publishing House, București, 1980, pp. 162-163.

⁷ St. ISAAC THE SIRYAN, *Cuvinte către singuratici* (Worlds to the lonely), The third part, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2007, p. 63.



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to be an image of what was the highest thing for God. Adam and Eve becoming one Flesh speak to us of God's boundless love for His creation, and later of that of the Savior Jesus Christ for His Church. The holy confessor priest Dumitru Stăniloae promoted this truth fully expressed by Eastern patristic thought, formulating it thus: "the world is the plasticization of God's thought".⁸ He also stated: "The personal Word [Christ God - n.n.] placed before us His thought, or the created image of His plasticized thought, at the level of our reason and ability to express".⁹ Mathematicians, physicists, but also theologians, discover divine rationality in things. Remarkable philosophers such as René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Leibniz, and others distinguished between the order of ideas and the order of things.

Therefore, God is not an abstract idea, but a tri-personal Reality, Who imparts to us His light and love through which we move, live, and have our being.¹⁰ The world is understood as the work of the Word, as emerges from the words of St. John the Apostle: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made".¹¹ The verse cited previously shows us that the making of the world is the foundation of an intimate bond of love between the Word of God, the Beginning and Purpose of the entire universe, and creation.

"In this beginning, O God," continues Augustine, "You made heaven and earth, in Your Word, in Your Son, in Your Power, in Your Wisdom, in Your Truth".¹² In this same direction lies the plea of the great Alexandrian Father, St. Athanasius, who affirms: "the same almighty, all-perfect, and holy Word of the Father, dwelling and extending His powers in all things and everywhere and illuminating all things visible and invisible, holds and binds them, leaving nothing void of His power, but giving life to all and guarding them all together and each one individually... unites the parts with the whole and governing them all with His command and will, constitutes a single world and a unique harmonious order of it, He Himself remaining unmoved, but moving all things, through their creation and ordering, according to the Father's good pleasure".¹³

2. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN CREATION. FORMS AND MANIFESTATIONS

"God is sovereign. He devises His plans and brings them to fulfillment at the time appointed by Him and in the manner appointed by Him"¹⁴ noted St. Athanasius of Alexandria. At the center of cosmic order and harmony stands God-Elohim, that is, the creative and unifying Trinity of all things invisible and visible, worshipped by angels and men. The evidence of His presence in creation has been affirmed since the beginnings of the world both through the testimonies of the prophets and through the external manifestation of surrounding nature, alias natural revelation: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork".¹⁵

⁸ St. Father Confessor DUMITRU STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. 2, The second edition, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 9.

⁹ IDEM, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 9.

¹⁰ See *Acts* 17, 27-28.

¹¹ *John* 1, 3.

¹² Blessed AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Confesiuni* (Confessions) XI, 9, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1962.

¹³ St. ATHANASIOS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Cuvânt împotriva elenilor* (Against the Hellenes), XLII, translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, in the „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” anthology, vol. 15, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 79.

¹⁴ Marian NIȚĂ and Teclu CODREȘI, *Ecoteologie și dezvoltare durabilă* (Ecotheology and sustainable development), Sim Art Publishing House, Craiova, 2008, p. 99.

¹⁵ *Psalms* 18, 1.



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These ideas become more pronounced especially when we consider the issue of the divine environment of creation. One of the most profound definitions of creation is this: "Creation is the miracle in which God calls us to a feast, to the table of a reciprocal love. If we could imagine what is happening at this moment: all creation, from the smallest grain of sand to man – the most complex in the entire universe – comes out of non-being and conceives its own existence, becomes conscious of the fact that it lives... How great must be this miracle, when creation is called from non-being and placed face to face with God's love!"¹⁶

One of the key elements in the area of Orthodox protological research is creation from nothing. "If He is not Himself the cause of matter, but forms things from pre-existing matter, being unable to build anything of what is needed without matter, He is weak, just as the carpenter proves to be weak, being unable to fashion anything of what is needed without wood".¹⁷ According to Christian thought, creation is not based on any necessity, that is, it is not implacable, but concerns the result of God's benevolence. He wants to make the world and wants it to be capable of partaking of His goodness. The Orthodox teaching of faith states that man himself was brought into existence by God out of the moving freedom of His love, with a view to communion with Him.

"It was necessary that light should not be unseen, glory should not remain without witness, goodness should not be without another person to enjoy it, and the other gifts seen around the divine nature should not remain without effect, there being no one to partake and enjoy them".¹⁸ Also in this spirit of understanding, St. Augustine uses the expression "quia bonus, quia voluit"¹⁹ (because He is good, because He willed it). For St. Maximus the Confessor, man and the sensible world represent God's creation, *ex nihilo*. More precisely, "all created things, according to their being and making, are contained in their reasons and in the reasons of those contained around them" and the very "reasons of existence pre-exist in God".²⁰

The uncomprehended reasons of creation "pre-existed as 'thoughts' or 'willings' of God, are stable in Him, and preserve communion with the unique, supravital divine Logos".²¹ The same Holy Father observes that, in Greek metaphysics, "the being of things exists together with God from eternity and only the qualities around the being do they have from Him," whereas, in Christian thought, the whole world, with its things "stands in the power of Him who truly is, that it may exist forever or not exist. [...] it stands in His will that it be or not be".²²

Invoking especially St. Maximus the Confessor, Christian theology affirms that, since it was made through the Word of God, the entire Universe is a *discourse* of God with people, in which He

¹⁶ Antonie BLOOM, Metropolitan of Suroj, *Despre întâlnirea cu Dumnezeu*, translation by Mihai Costiș, Cathisma Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ St. ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Tratat despre Întruparea Cuvântului (On the incarnation of God)*, I, 2, translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, in the „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” anthology, vol. 15, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p. 91.

¹⁸ St. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catechetica magna* (The great catechetical word), in the „Migne” anthology, *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 45, col. 21.

¹⁹ Marie-Anne VANNIER, *Creația în viziunea Sfinților Părinți* (Creation in the vision of the Holy Fathers), in vol. „Creația” (Creation), in the „Sfinții Părinți pe înțelesul tuturor”, Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 73.

²⁰ St. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Ambigua* (Ambiguous), 7, translation, introduction and notes by Dumitru Stăniloae, Bucharest, 1983, pp. 84-85.

²¹ John MEYENDORFF, *Teologia bizantină. Tendințe istorice și teme doctrinare* (Byzantine theology. Historical trends and doctrinal themes), translation by Alexandru I. Stan, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 177.

²² St. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Capete despre dragoste, A treia sută*, (Headings about love, The third hundred), 28, translation by Dumitru Stăniloae, in the „Filocalia” collection, vol. 2, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 112-113.



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reveals Himself to us, as in a kind of sensible *Scripture*. In a manner specific to the natural sciences, chemistry, physics, or biology have proven in recent decades that, indeed, the Universe opens itself to human scientific explorations and that it allows itself to be discovered.

Not least, St. Maximus, in an exceptional theological and philosophical manner, asks: "Who, knowing through reason and wisdom that things were brought from nothing into existence by God and directing with judgment the contemplative power of the soul towards the infinite difference and variety of things and distinguishing with a searching reason the reason according to which all things were created, would not know the One Reason, as many reasons, which stands divided in an undivided manner in the variety of creatures, as their characteristic of referring to one another and yet remaining each itself in an unmixed manner shows? And would not know again the many reasons as one, through the reference of all towards it, which exists for itself in an unmixed manner, being the essential and hypostatic Word of God the Father, as the origin and cause of all?"²³

After making the heavens and the earth (cf. *Genesis* 1:1), God did not leave the world, abandoning it on its existential path, but continues to be present in the lives of His human creatures and in the care for His Creation. The Providence and Power of God encompass the entire human race from the moment of creation, and this work extends over all humanity.²⁴ God's presence is continuous in all creation, although it may not be revealed in the same way and at the same moment to people everywhere.

"In God's creation there is no repetition; it seems that not even snowflakes, however many billions there may be, are two alike: how much more does each person have their own way! [...] I would take a step further back, into the beginnings of God's makings. For God there is no repetition, but in no way and nowhere. God makes once for eternity, and the word of God does not repeat"²⁵. In other words, "providence is the care God has for existences, it is the will of God by virtue of which all existences receive appropriate guidance. But if providence is the will of God, it is necessary that according to right reason, all things done through providence be done in the best manner".²⁶

God knew that man, at some point, would fall into sin, for which reason in His omniscience and goodness He had decided before creating him the means by which man's mistake would be repaired. Therefore, the severity of the punishment given to man for disregarding the divine command was softened by the promise of the coming of a Savior.²⁷ Sometimes, He can be actively present in a situation, while He may not reveal the fact that He is present in another circumstance in another place. Holy Scripture develops the idea that God can be present both for a person or a group of people, in a manifested manner²⁸, and in different situations, in all creation and at any moment.²⁹

When man was brought into existence, he found a planet full of hospitality, with all necessities: a fertile earth, bathed in sunlight, an exceptional atmosphere, crystalline waters, and much greenery. Could all this be the fruit of hazard, or were all these, in order to exist, thought out

²³ IDEM, *Ambigua* (Ambiguous), 7, translation from ancient Greek, introduction and notes by the St. Priest Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, pp. 79-80.

²⁴ See St. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio* (The Making of Man), XVI, in the „Migne” anthology, *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 44, col. 134.

²⁵ Rafail NOICA, *Cultura Duhului* (Culture of Spirit), Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2002, pp. 155-156.

²⁶ St. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dogmatica*, translation by D. Fecioru, Apologeticum Publishing House, 2004, p. 76.

²⁷ See Ioan (Irineu) MIHĂLCESCU, *Dogmatica iubirii* (*Dogmatics of Love*), România creștină Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 8.

²⁸ *Psalms* 45:1 and *Isaiah* 57:15.

²⁹ *Psalms* 32:13-14.



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from the initial conditions, before the appearance of the Universe? We are assured that the Holy Fathers were right when they stated that our entire planet is a laboratory that was thought out by God in such a way that after billions of years since the creation of the Universe, planet Earth would look like this.

Omnipresence is God's attribute of being found in the entire sphere of time and space. Although God is present in all time and space, He cannot be circumscribed to any particular place or tributary to the moment. God is everywhere and actual in every moment. No molecule or subatomic particle remains unpenetrated by the force of divine omnipresence, and no stellar agglomeration is so vast that God cannot encompass it. But, even if we remove the veil of creation, God cannot be known entirely due to His incommensurability and lack of kinship with the created environment. And if God is Spirit and is invisible, then the means He uses to reveal His presence are inadequate to material realities. Even if we cannot see the face of the Creator, God's omnipresence confirms the fact that He watches continuously over humanity. Adam and Eve tried to hide from the face of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (*Genesis* 3:8). The prophet Jonah tried to flee from God, and in a moment of great revelation, King David realized: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (*Psalms* 139:7-10). Nowhere in the entire creation will we find a place to hide from God. His presence extends into every corner of the universe, but also into the hearts of people: "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men" (*Psalms* 11:4). Despite the fact that the God of revelation is a hidden God, He makes Himself known to people in post-Adamic creation through its pulsations: catastrophes or calamities, lightning, flames of fire, and gusts of wind.³⁰ Also, He reveals Himself in human form.³¹ Therefore, God, who cannot be seen, chose several special ways to unveil His transcendence. Thus, one of the means by which God manifests His presence in the era of the Old Testament is the Angel of the Lord. The Angel of the Lord was God's envoy to help and protect the people of Israel.

After the Angel of the Lord appears to Hagar and gives her promises regarding her son, she says: "She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, 'Have I also here seen Him who sees me?'"³². In Jacob's case, he equates the Angel of the Lord with God: "And the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' ... I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family"³³.

Another means by which God manifests His presence in the Old Testament is His glory. God's glory is a concrete form of His boundless presence. The heavens or the spiritual world of the incorporeal powers are a visible form of God's presence. Also, the material elements that are part of the *architecture* of the visible world: the sky, the sun, the earth are witnesses of the glory of the Eternal One.³⁴ Not least, the glory of the Lord appears to the people of Israel in a consuming fire on

³⁰ *III Kings* 19:11-12.

³¹ *Genesis* chapter 18 and 32:22-32.

³² *Genesis* 16:13.

³³ *Genesis* 31:11 and 13.

³⁴ *Psalms* 18, 1-6.



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Mount Sinai, which filled the Tabernacle of Meeting.³⁵ Through His glory, God consecrated the Tabernacle of Meeting as the place of the presence of His Name – Messiah.³⁶

Also, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, the glory of God appears as an expression of the divine presence. In the acceptance of Old Testament terminology, the term presence is used to represent the Hebrew word *face*, and when the word *face* is united with a preposition, it means in the presence. In the first book of the Old Testament, the episode in which the patriarch Jacob saw God "face to face"³⁷ is made evident. A person's personality and character are visible on their face. *The Evangelist of the Old Testament* states: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old".³⁸ Therefore, the face of God is the presence of God that liberates and gives rest to the children of Israel. The Lord replied: "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest".³⁹ To pray in a holy place means to "seek the Face of God".⁴⁰

Other forms by which the presence of God was manifested in the Old Testament are: the Name of God, the Spirit of God, the place of God's presence. God's presence in the midst of the people qualifies the sons of Israel as the people of God. If in the Old Testament the "Name of God" or the "Glory of God" speak of God's majesty, power, and dominion, in the New Testament, the incarnate Son of God, the Savior Jesus Christ, testifies about God's work and will; therefore, in connection with the Name of God, we can also identify a Christological interpretation. That is, the Name of God refers to the Person of the Son of God, of the divine Logos, who, just as in New Testament times, also in the latter times revealed God within the chosen people.

A Christological interpretation of the Name of God is also supported by other eloquent episodes of the Old Testament. At the oak of Mamre, the patriarch Abraham sees three Men, but one of them distinguishes himself in particular. Following an older interpretation, based on the prophetic book of the prophet Isaiah⁴¹, the "Angel of Great Counsel" at the oak of Mamre who speaks with Abraham is the Son of God in an unincarnate state. Patriarch Abraham is the one who hosts God-the Holy Trinity Himself. St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher develops the biblical concept

³⁵ *Exodus* 29:43.

³⁶ According to biblical tradition, the glory of God filled the Tabernacle, sanctifying it as the place of His presence. This act symbolizes the descent of the divine presence to dwell among the people, foreshadowing the incarnation of the Messiah as "God is with us" (*Isaiah* 7:14) – *עִמָּנוּאֵל* (Yma-nu-El) – thus fulfilling the purpose of the Tabernacle to be the dwelling place of His Name on earth.

³⁷ *Genesis* 32:30.

³⁸ *Isaiah* 63:9.

³⁹ *Exodus* 33:14.

⁴⁰ To seek the face of God means to seek His blessing-bringing presence. A "shining face" symbolizes mercy and goodwill, while "hiding the face" represents the withdrawal of divine grace. Our faith teaching proposes a unique perspective through Jesus Christ, considered the visible "Face" of God the Father. Through Him, the presence of God becomes accessible to all people. The place called *Peni-El* literally means "Face of God", marking the moment when the biblical patriarch Jacob-Israel felt the personal presence of God. In Eastern theology, seeing the "face of God" represents the ultimate goal of life in Christ — the state of communion and supreme happiness achieved in eternity. Shekinah designates the atmosphere of divine presence, *Ymanuel* the certainty that "God is with us", that is the incarnate presence and *Peniel* the direct and personal experience of man with God (the "face-to-face" encounter).

⁴¹ "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he is called the Angel of Great Counsel, for I will bring peace upon the nations, and health to him." (*Isaiah* 9:5). The title "Angel of Great Counsel" emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the bearer of the plan/counsel of salvation and Wisdom incarnate. This designation also appears in church hymns (such as the *Irmos* from the Canon of the Nativity), where believers glorify the "God of Peace" who has appeared as a messenger/envoy of divine mercy.



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of the Angel of Great Counsel. He presents three factors of analysis: subordination of mission, not of essence, identity of name, and the argument of the pre-existence of the Logos.

The first factor reveals the fact that the "Lord on earth" (the Son/Angel) fulfills the work received from the "Lord in heaven" (the Father). This confirms His role as Messenger/Angel of the divine will. The secondary factor highlights the following aspect. The fact that both bear the holy name YHWH/Kyrios proves that the Son is not an inferior divine person or a creature, but shares the same authority and divine nature with the Father. Ultimately, regarding the argument of pre-existence, for St. Justin, Jesus Christ is "another God and Lord," numerically speaking, existing before the incarnation, Who appeared to the patriarchs to familiarize them with the divine presence⁴². The Latin writer Tertullian⁴³ translates the Greek *ἄγγελος* by the Latin *nuntius* (envoy, messenger). He shows that Christ the Savior is "magni consilii Angelus" only because He announces the Father's plan, and not because He belongs, in any way, to the species of angels. In support of this statement, Tertullian mentions that Christ "did not bear the nature of angels" (*nullius angeli suscepit naturam*), but took human nature. Angels are servants, whereas Christ, even in the hypostasis of "Angel of Great Counsel," remains the Son of God and the Master of creation.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, speaking about the incarnation of the divine Logos, specified the following: "This is the reason why the Word of God became flesh and the Son of God, Son of Man: so that man might enter into communion with the Word of God and, receiving adoption, might be a son of God. Indeed, we cannot participate in immortality without a close connection with the Immortal One. How could we have united with immortality if it had not become what we are, so that the mortal being might be received into it and thus we might be adopted and be sons of God?"⁴⁴. He calls Him "Angel of Great Counsel" because Christ is the only one capable of communicating to man the Counsel (the hidden will) of the Father. The Lord said, "no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him".⁴⁵ The decisive semantic distinction regarding the rendering of the phrase "Angel of Great Counsel" belongs to St. Athanasius the Great and is found in the dogmatic work *Oration I Against the Arians* (in sections 55-63). Here, the illustrious Alexandrian father analyzes the relationship between the Son of God and His angels, starting from the text in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 1. Here is how he structures this distinction. First, he directly addresses the problem of names and functions. He explains that the name "Angel" (from *Isaiah* 9:6) does not indicate the divine essence, that is, what Jesus Christ is according to His divine nature, but His work or mission, that is, what He does in the world. For if He is also called Angel, it is because He announces God's will to people; but by this He does not show Himself to be from the ranks of angels.

Through the logic of office, our erudite hierarch emphasizes that while angels are by nature servants and creatures, the Son receives the title "Angel of Great Counsel" because He is the only one capable of communicating the Father's will. Thus, the name indicates "oikonomia" (the economy of salvation), while the title of Son indicates "theologia" (the divine nature). Also, St.

⁴² St. JUSTIN THE MARTYR AND PHILOSOPHER, *Dialog cu iudeul Trifon* (Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon), LVI, in the „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” anthology, vol. 2, translation, study, notes and comments by Teodor Bodogae, Olimp Căciulă and Dumitru Fecioru, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, pp. 152-157.

⁴³ „... ergo iam non unus deus nec unus saluficator, sed duo salutis artifices, et utique alter altero indigens. an vero ut per angelum liberaret hominem? cur ergo ipse descendit, ad id quod per angelum erat expediturus? si per angelum, quid et ipse? si per se, quid et angelus?” (in *De carne Christi*, 4, Edited and translated by Ernest Evans, 1956).

⁴⁴ St. IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Împotriva ereziilor* (Against heresis) III, 19, 1, în Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies. Livre III*, I. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau (eds), coll. *Sources chrétiennes*, vol. 210, Éd. Cerf, Paris, 1974, p. 368.

⁴⁵ *Matthew* 11:27.



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Athanasius emphasizes that Scripture calls Christ "Angel" precisely to show that He is the One through whom God speaks to people, but immediately calls Him "God" and "Lord" so that we do not confuse Him with a created being. Through this method, it is shown how the Arians commit a grave error, confusing terms that highlight the area of divine economy (Angel of Great Counsel) with terms used to highlight divine ontology (Son of God).

Eusebius of Caesarea begins his ecclesiastical history with the moments of glory of the "Angel of Great Counsel".⁴⁶ This is the Logos Himself in His unincarnate state, who guides the people of Israel and writes the history of this nation. Therefore, theophanies are nothing other than manifestations or appearances of the Most Holy Trinity-God through the medium of the incarnate Logos. The Holy Fathers spoke of a prehistory of the Son of God before the incarnation, which can be read from creation and was preserved throughout the biblical history of the Jewish people, until the coming into the world of God the Word.

In the New Testament, the presence of God is seen fully in the Savior Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. Thus, those who believe in Him and remain faithful to His commandments have God present in their midst. The Lord Jesus Christ revealed the presence of God in the midst of the people through His life and word. The revelation of God's Name is expressed in the name Jesus – the Lord is my salvation. So, we see God's presence in the person and work of the divine Logos in the world. And if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose unbelieving minds the god of this age has blinded, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The Name of God active in the Old Testament was the hidden form through which the Son of God revealed Himself to people. The Name of God and divine glory seem to be capital realities in monastic spirituality and even in lay spirituality. The monk bases his own life on the prayerful invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ, and the believer is aware that they cannot achieve anything good without calling upon the Name of God for help. All things of Creation, from its very beginning, spoke of God, mirroring in them the creativity, intelligence, and care of the Creator. All were icons of God, and after the fall they became shadows.

From an Orthodox perspective, the entire Creation is a message directly addressed to man. The created world is the language that expresses the (natural) law, revealing God's will, and this because it is made through the Word of God, Christ – the Logos. Creation was the first Scripture. It was prepared to speak to us about God. "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him".⁴⁷ After the fall of our protoparents, the bodily part of man becomes more evident than the spiritual part. Man sees his nakedness, a sign that he has stripped himself through disobedience of the garment of divine grace, which helped him perceive all the mysteries of Creation. St. Maximus the Confessor considered the entire creation as being the first Scripture, and Scripture as the second law, the written one, given to man to clarify it, making the first one more distinct. It is worth mentioning that the Alexandrian father identifies three laws, corresponding to the three Incarnations of the Logos: in Creation, in Scripture, and in Christ, namely: the natural one, the written one, and that of grace. God prepared so many gifts for humanity. After the fall, however, God anticipates man's departure from Him with two other great instruments of support: Scripture as part of divine Revelation and the Incarnation of His Only-Begotten Son.

⁴⁶ See *Istoria bisericească* (Church History), First Book, II, in the „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” anthology, vol. 13, translation, study, notes and comments by Teodor Bodogae, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 31-37.

⁴⁷ *Colossians* 1:16.



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The history of the world is the history of God's love for man. Just Creation and Scripture would not have been enough to save man. Only God's incarnation as man reduces the distance between man and God, placed by Adam. God's closeness to man through His Only-Begotten Son, the Savior Jesus Christ, is maximal, and union with Him, fully, is now possible. Creation is in itself shareable, that is, we can see the mysteries placed by God in it, provided that He reveals them to us and we desire this fact. Here is what St. Basil the Great tells us about the world in which we live: "This world – was brought into existence first as a school and as a place of instruction for human souls, then as a suitable dwelling for all those subject to birth and corruption".⁴⁸ In the end, in Jesus Christ is everything: Both God, and Man, and Creation, at the same time.

CONCLUSION

Christ is the Logos or the creative Word through Whom all things were made and are maintained in existence. From a patristic perspective, He is present in the world through the "reasons of things" (*logoi*) — the seeds or divine reasons that give order, meaning, and beauty to the universe. Thus, all nature becomes a revelation of God, a description intended for man about the Creator and creation.

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