

Courses 6-9. Apocalyptic Theology

Location:

6. Courses from 1990 to 1993

- 6.1. Elements of Philosophy of Thought and Methodology, 1990-1991, (EDM1-EDM71, 97p.)
- 6.2. Elements of hermeneutics 1990-1991, (EH72-EH201, 157p.)
- 6.3. Elements of Logic, 1990-1991 (EL202-EL321, 351p.)
- 6.4. Elements of Methodology, 1990-1991 (EM322-EM363, 334p.)
- 6.5. Elements of Platonism, 1991-1992 (EP1-EP117, 147p.)
- 6.6. Elements of Platonic Psychology, 1991-1992, (EP1-EPS114, 150 p.)
- 6.7. Elements of Rhetoric, 1991-1992 (ER1-ER300, 356p.)
- 6.8. Soloviev Cosmology, 1991-1992 (SK1-SK65, 78p.)

6.9. Apocalyptic Theology, 1992-1993 (AT1-AT71, 79p.)

- 6.10. The Healing of a Man Born Blind, 1992-1993 (GB1-GB85, 104p.)
- 6.11. Elements of thinking, 1992-1993 (logic) (ED1-ED79, 91p.)
- 6.12. Elements of Rhetoric, 1992-1993 (R1-R61, 70p.)
- 6.13. Elements of Philosophy of Culture, 1992-1993 (CF1-CF84, 92p.)

Remark: *This course has been provided with larger spacing than the text of the original course. References in the older version of this text therefore do not correspond to the current pagination of 'Word'. For this reason, the original pagination is displayed each time with the letters 'AT'. They stand for 'Apokalyptische Theologie', and are derived from the old page number.*

Introduction: *In the Bible, the Old Testament, we find priestly, prophetic, and apocalyptic texts. The priestly texts concern the historical events, more or less. In the prophetic texts, the prophets point out the shortcomings of the priests. Apparently, a number of them are sometimes led astray by intermediaries who dare to act in a deceptive manner. In both the prophetic and the priestly texts, the clergy plays a leading role. Israel is the chosen people there. It is different in the apocalyptic texts. Here, all nations belong to God's chosen people. The people of Israel are an ordinary people among the others. Paranormal gifts and clairvoyance are discussed much more clearly in these apocalyptic texts.*

Content : Click on the text you wish to read

Course 8.8. Apocalyptic Theology.	2
1. The concept of God.	2

2. The concept of 'lordship'.	5
3. Peter's 'hermeneusis',	8
4. Theophany (Epiphany).	9
5. Jesus on the throne of glory. (12/17).	13
6. The mystery of the economy of salvation.	20
7. The mystery.	34
8. The Mystery of the Trinity.	36
9. The Angel Mystery.	43
10. The Marian Mystery.	55
11. The Christ Mystery.	60
Note: -- Apocalyptic theology.	75

AT1

Course 8.8. Apocalyptic Theology.

The term may inspire wonder! 'Apo.kalupsis', in ancient Greek, means “to expose, to reveal” (which is hidden, 'occult', and 'esoteric').

At its core, 'theo.logie' is the bringing into question of the hidden deity. And, therefore, theology is essentially 'apokalupsis' or the revelation of what God (deity) entails in terms of hiddenness.

The theology of the Byzantine liturgy (which means: “consecrated service of the people”) is essentially apocalyptic theology. We wish to clarify this in the following samples. We do not say 'proofs' in one scientific sense or another, for anyone who is not already familiar with (as a human being open to) apocalypticism will not allow themselves to be convinced by any 'proof' and will always evade the evidential truth. Here we go.

1. The concept of God.

Let us begin with the quintessential preposition of the Byzantine liturgy.

Library st.: *P. Kilian Kirchoff, OFM, Osterjubiläum der Ostkirche (Hymnen aus der fünfzigjährigen Osterfeier der byzantinischen Kirche), Münster (Wf.), sd.*

In the second part of the *Pentekostarion* , 220, the text reads as follows: “Moses saw on the mountain—in the fire—the one who is.” This is the translation of “I am,” by which Yahweh designates Himself as an 'eternal,' omnipresent, and supremely active reality.

186: “He sees the One who is, - he is immediately initiated into the doctrine concerning the Spirit”. When the One who is reveals Himself - apokalupsis, self-

revelation - , then the one who 'sees' Him is immediately an initiate, a 'mustès', a 'myst' or initiate.

He or she, after all, has direct access to the 'mustèrion', the mysterious being, of God. To the 'mystery' that God is and... remains, even for the initiate. This is called 'apophatic' theology, a type of speaking about God that respects the ineffable nature of God.

We listen.

“Hail, Mary, seal of the prophets, you, message of the apostles, of the proclaimers of God. For God—the truly existing—you have brought into the world for us—in an incomprehensible and ineffable manner—in “the flesh” (as an ordinary mortal). Thanks to Him, we received back the 'old' (originally willed by God) nobility and may enjoy the joy of paradise.

AT2

Therefore we praise You who grant us such glory, in hymns, -- You, the pleasing Mediatrix, -- You, the utterly holy: for we are so rich in possessing a Mediatrix of eternal life, for Your Son distributes great mercy.”

Explanation.

a. Maria ,

The Mother of God (of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) stands central, viewed from “the One who is”, for thanks to her consent “the One who is” became an ordinary mortal, 'flesh' in, Biblical language.

b . The term 'old'

This one is "Already present in Plato" does not mean—what we understand by that—"belonging to the past" or, even worse, "worn out"! It means "all that was already present from the beginning thanks to the one who is" (and thus 'old' after all those centuries).

c . “A mediatrix of eternal life”.

'Eternal' means practically the same as 'old' from just now! 'Century' means—as a translation of the ancient Greek 'aion', 'eon'—"a duration that has ended." For example, an entire—note 'whole'—human life. Or an entire era. Not infrequently, the secret, apocalyptic emphasis lies on the longevity of such an entire era. For instance, the eras of astrology are 'centuries', those long-lasting, cosmic times that constitute a whole.

But in a biblical context, there is even more: 'eternal' is the hallmark of the One who exists! He is simply 'eternal', meaning his era is so 'whole' (entire, all-encompassing) that there is neither beginning nor end to it!

Well, that is precisely what Mary, as Mediatrix and Mother, provides us with! A share in the “eternal life” of the one who is eternal and inexhaustible life. Therefore, Mary cannot be absent from any prayer (certainly not in the Byzantine liturgy). She is the gateway to eternal life.

d . “The great compassion”.

God is not a terrifying deity. Unless for all who cynically—sin against the Holy Spirit—reject Him. He is essentially—not by chance—love in the sense of tenderness. Tenderness for all that is wretched and sinful.

'Great' does not merely mean 'extensive'! In the salvation-historical perspective that always predominates in the Bible (and thus in the Byzantine liturgy), the end times are central: it is precisely then that great mercy is revealed.

AT3

So that 'great' in the apocalyptic sense means both 'extensive' and 'eschatological' (bound to the end times): for the great compassion is provoked by the end-time degree of wrath in the universe.

Something that is emphasized in the strictly apocalyptic texts of the Bible, for example (especially from Daniel onwards): evil, ethical (lack of conscience) and physical (the damage to all that exists), will be so 'great' that only an even 'greater' mercy on God's part will be able to save the universe and humanity (the flesh or wretched humanity). *That* is then – in those end times – the great mercy. Understood by “pre-eminently”.

The ethical (concerning conscience) and physical (concerning the nature of things) suffocation of the universe and 'flesh' can only be saved by that great compassion par excellence.

e. 'Lordship'.

'Kebod', Greek 'doxa' (Latin: gloria). The radiance emanating from a sovereign is glory. Since God invariably regards Him as the sovereign par excellence (as a

transcendent or all-transcending being), His radiance is 'glory' in the all-transcending degree. It is also the source and origin of all possible glories within the framework of the world created by Him. The term 'glory', in that sense outstanding above all possible forms of glory ('being lord'), is therefore one of the constant attributes of God.

Note -- “Axiomatic prayer”,

'Axiom', in ancient Greek, means “anything so valuable that it elicits assent”. The prayers of the Byzantine liturgy, in particular, are structured in such a way that which represents value is mentioned first, in order to immediately mention the assent to that valuable thing.

Thus bvoc, 27. -- “Since your son has killed death (preface, value), he, Mary, wholly and entirely Immaculate, has today bestowed the life that “endures for ever and ever” (second part of the value). He is therefore the God (....) who alone is praised and glorified above all (assent)”.

Reread the prayer, *Rev. th. 01/02* , and you will notice exactly the same structure: note the 'therefore' recurring twice, which express the assent to the valuableness of what God did through Mary.

In other words: first the premise, then what follows from it, the evaluation: that is “axiomatic prayer”.

AT4

This implies that prayer is 'situational': it situates itself within a context or 'situation' to which it is a response. An answer that addresses the value (or potential lack thereof) of the data. That is the inherent 'rationality' of prayer, its justification.

2. The concept of 'lordship'.

A clear understanding of what 'glory' is is essential if one is to understand anything of the Byzantine liturgy. -- Hence what follows.

Let us begin with a text, Oc, 7: “You are and you were and you have ‘appeared’ as a man, God. Have mercy on us then.”

The term 'to appear', to be understood as “to show oneself”, “to make oneself seen” (in more than one way, incidentally), occurs with clockwork regularity in the Byzantine liturgy. It is therefore important to grasp it properly.

2.1. -- Mark on Jesus' glory.

Mk. 9:2/8 . -- “Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them into solitude on a high mountain. -- He changed his 'form' before their eyes: his clothes began to shine, -- white as no bleacher (fuller) on earth can make them white. -- Elijah appeared to them, -- with Moses. They had a conversation with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus: “Rabbi, staying here sounds good; let us then set up three tents—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not quite know what he was saying. After all, they were greatly surprised.

A cloud passed over—like a shadow. From it came a voice: “This is my beloved son. Listen to him.”

Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one anymore. Unless only Jesus in their vicinity. The Byzantine texts will mention the transfiguration or 'metamorphosis' as “an appearance” of Jesus, as the secretly glorious Son of God.

'Appearance' is therefore, here, not to be interpreted as a 'vision', -- let alone as a 'hallucination'. It is a real historical event, -- even though it is a paranormal event.

The scope . -- Jesus 'reveals' his deeper personality by showing (allowing to come through, shine through) his 'aura' or radiance.

AT5

People with paranormal abilities today know this very well as a—let's just say—daily phenomenon: they see the colors surrounding an object or a person, for example. This can be interpreted as the ability to see “a vision” ('sight').

In the case of the Transfiguration, the situation is different: Jesus isolates himself from daily life on a high mountain (mountains, like hills, were easily regarded as “sacred places” where revelations of hidden realities are more readily forthcoming) in order to let his deeper aura or radiance be 'seen' through the exercise of power. For the time of the 'Transfiguration', the three apostles then possess the ability to 'see' that very special aura.

That is, of course, 'apokalupsis', the uncovering of what is hidden, in a very well-defined sense.

An 'appearance'! It is interpreted by *Matthew 7:1/8* as the fact that Jesus thus emerges as a new Moses.

Through *Luke 9:37/42*, it is interpreted as the fact that Jesus strengthens the three apostles, among others, for the day when he, as “the suffering servant of Yahweh” (Isaiah), will repel more than he attracts.

According to Mark, the event is the historically verifiable fact—although there is a paranormal aspect to it, it nevertheless 'marks' Jesus' entire ministry—the entire economy of salvation—in a very remarkable and 'prognostic' (anticipating the end times) manner: for this is what the angel of the resurrection looks like; this is what the saved will 'appear' (look like) at the end, at the resurrection.

Note well: the three evangelical interpretations are by no means mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary. But Mark's interpretation seems to us the most thorough: through such a radiance, Jesus comes across as the founder of the new covenant, the new Moses, and he puts all his apostles first and foremost at ease when “the hour of darkness” (of his suffering and death) is about to arrive. In that sense, an 'apokalupsis' always 'marks' those who experience it.

2.2. -- Peter's interpretation.

This text is extremely interesting because it is interpreted by Peter himself.

2 Peter 1:16/18. -- “It is not by appealing to cleverly devised myths that we proclaimed to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but on the basis that we have been eyewitnesses of His majesty ('glory').

AT6

Indeed: from God the Father he received honor and glory when the glorious splendor addressed him with these words: “This is my beloved son who is of all my favor.” This voice: we, we have heard it! It came from heaven! After all, we were with him—on the holy mountain.”

Let no one claim, therefore, that people at the time of Jesus did not make a radical distinction between “invented myths” and “historical facts experienced by eyewitnesses.” Peter's entire argument stands or falls on this observation. We therefore did not need to wait for the era of modern 'criticism' to learn the distinction between 'spirits' (invisibly operating energies and beings)!

a. Late antique – patronizing – thinkers and religious leaders of the 'theosophical' type (who derived their wisdom from 'theoi'/'theai', gods/goddesses), such as the Gnostics, reinforced the proclamations of their doctrines by casting them in the form of some myth or other, i.e. sacred stories that became charged with power. Cf. 2 *Peter* 3:4/5 ; -- 1 *Timothy* 1:4 (“myths and genealogical stories”); 1 *Timothy* 6:20 (“gnosis or paranormal knowledge”).

b. Peter, however, regards the content of his 'teaching' as something thoroughly distinguishable from such contrived myths. He reinforces his proclamation by appealing to historical facts—experienced as an eyewitness.

He is not alone in this:

1. The facts of Jesus' public life are recounted in *Luke* 1:2, *John* 15:27, *Acts* 1:22, -- 10:39ff., *Rom.* 1:1 as historically experienced events;

2. The resurrection, in particular, is thus the object of proclaiming 'stories': *Luke* 24:48; *Acts* 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 13:31. -- From this it appears that—think of the transfiguration (which is actually of the same order as the resurrection)—thanks to such historical facts, the Son of Man (*Dan.* 7:13/14) belongs to a heavenly reality as a man (and not an animal), but ... has 'appeared' on this earth, who has shown himself to be perceptible, observable. Which is 'Apocalypse' in the strict sense.

What ***was hidden from the foundation of the world*** ”

(*Matth.* 13:35; -- *Ps.* 78 (77)), which is the true object of every real Apocalypse, is revealed in Jesus' transfiguration “on the high mountain.” “Because God stands above and outside of time — is 'eternal' —, his kingdom is the exercise of being outside of time.

AT7

God’s princely power, present” (*Luke* 7:28; *Matthew* 11:11; *Luke* 17:20ff.) and also future. It already exists now but is also still becoming, for it will only reach its perfection at the end of the present world (*Matthew* 13:39ff.; 3:49; 24:3; 28:20). (*P. Van Imschoot, Jesus Christ* , Roermond / Maaseik, 1941, 36).

3. Peter's 'hermeneusis',

'Hermeneusis', lat.: interpretatio, interpretation, processing.

2 *Peter* 1:19/21 -- “It was precisely through this (by witnessing the transfiguration) that the authority of the word of the prophets was strengthened (...).

Understand this above all clearly: no prophecy of Scripture allows for arbitrary interpretation, for 'prophecy' never originated from a human plan. Driven by the Holy Spirit, men have spoken from God.

Indeed: the Old Testament already spoke of the glory of the Son of Man as the Messiah: the Transfiguration is one of its realizations. This is how Peter sees it.

La Bible de Jérusalem states in this regard: the manner in which the inspiration of the holy books by the Spirit of God— *2 Timothy 3:15/16* —is interpreted by Peter implies, clearly and distinctly, that the meaningful interpretation of sacred texts also presupposes an inspiration from the same Holy Spirit.

Otherwise, one falls—instead of into meaningful interpretation that is true to reality—into merely meaning-creating, because arbitrary, earthly, indeed secularist interpretations of all kinds.

This implies that modern biblical criticism—as a fundamental, and thus methodological (or even ideological) premise, it takes no account of the inspirations of God's Spirit when reading and interpreting scriptural texts; quite the contrary: only what science can grasp 'rationally' (meaning: rationalistically) is true interpretation worthy of 'criticism'—that—we say—modern biblical criticism can indeed provide solid background information for a correct understanding of the Bible (the historical-critical method applies here in particular), but threatens to misunderstand the actual message of God: *where* God speaks, biblical critics see 'merely' cultural products from a pre-modern (primitive, classical), outdated period. That God can already be “of our time” in this, thus escapes them.

AT8

4. Theophany (Epiphany).

The terms “theo.fania, theofaneia” as well as the plural “ta theofania” mean, in ancient Greek, the fact that a deity reveals itself.

Liturgically speaking: the Christmas cycle and the Easter cycle—though distinguishable, yet inseparable—are the diptych of the Theophany, the object of the celebrations.—The celebration of the birth of Jesus and that of the arrival of the Magi from the East are, in the Eastern Church, one celebration. Immediately the greatest feast of Mary, of course. “Christmas is the celebration of the Theophany, the appearance of God among men so that they are divinized”.

Dr. Josef Casper, *Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche*, Freiburg i. Br., 1939, 31, states: “The Eastern Church does not cease to show the mystery of theophany in the Christmas celebration”.

Besides the celebration of circumcision, what we in the Christian West call 'Epiphany' (the arrival of the Eastern Magi) also belongs to the Theophany, but this time not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles, “the nations”.

The term 'epifaneia', epiphany (also the plural 'ta epifaneia') is common here: “(...) The two main ideas of the Eastern Church (...): God appears as man, -- to deify man. Incarnatio/ deificatio (Incarnation/ deification). That is why the Feast of Theophany (our Epiphany) is also among the highest celebrations of the year”. (Dr. J. Casper, *oc*, 35).

Casper immediately adds: “The Eastern Church celebrates the Feast of the Theophany one more time in the cycle of the year: (...) on the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Savior (“hè metamorfosis tou sotèros”). (Ibid.). As a prince, God makes his entrance into creation,-- 'Epiphany'.

“The Logos, Jesus as universal wisdom from God, became flesh and set up his tent among us. And we saw his glory—the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father—full of grace and truth” (*John 1:14*).

Behold the summary—according to Casper—of the entire Eastern liturgy! -- The Easter cycle is merely the full elaboration of the Christmas cycle: the Son, Jesus, is born of Mary ... to divinize us through Cross Easter and Resurrection Easter, to let us share in God's glory.

AT9

4.1. -- Epiphany: to appear (to show oneself/to be seen).

Let us consider a few basic concepts: 'appearing' and 'seeing'.

“Today you make your epiphany, your royal entry, into the world. Immediately we are marked by your light, as with a seal, for having come to insight (of your true essence) we call out to you in praise: “You have come! You made your royal entry. You, the unapproachable light!”

Let us keep this firmly before our eyes all the time, for both Jesus' life and his ministry throughout the liturgy (if correctly understood) and his life in our individual and social lives (if likewise correctly understood) are summarized in that liturgical

text. Whether it concerns the historical Christ, described in the Biblical texts (present in and through those texts, actually), the liturgical Christ (present in and through the rites of the liturgy), or the mystical Christ (present in us and through us), it is actually one and the same reality that appears and is seen. Already in the Old Testament, there is the pairing of “appearing / seeing”.

K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubiläum, II, 81: “God who revealed himself on Mount Sinai and immediately gave the God-seeing Moses a law (the Ten Commandments), which God who ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, in the flesh (as the Incarnate), let us all sing to his glory. For as a glorious one she made herself known”.

Indeed: on both Mount Sinai and the Mount of Olives, God reveals Himself in His 'glory'. He appears, is seen, and acts decisively. Theophany! Epiphany!

The Incarnation in Mary.

“Immaculate Mother of God, turn as a suppliant to God who appeared from you in the flesh and yet did not leave the womb of the Father—suppose without ceasing that He may save those whom He has made from every danger.”

Note -- One is perhaps familiar with the disputes concerning the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human modes of being: here we examine the Biblical-liturgical reason for that assertion:

a. Jesus, as the second person of the Trinity, is essentially, unchangeably, “in the bosom of the Father” (in the essential unity of life with the Father);

b. man, flesh, having become he remains what he was but became what he was not, namely, in one and the same person simultaneously god, what he was, and 'flesh' (man).

AT10

The Incarnation in Mary's womb is merely the prelude to the entire work of redemption. -- Oc, 87: “As atonement, as salvation, Christ, you appeared to us, radiant, from the virgin, -- to, just as the prophet Jonah from the depths of the whale, so also completely snatch Adam, who had fallen with his whole lineage (into sin) from destruction”.

Yes, the Incarnation is the prelude to the return in glory, at the end of time: “In the flesh you appeared, while you” as God, remained unchanged. Thus you look

forward to the goal, the completion, since you will appear on earth to subject the whole world to your judgment.” Oc, 83.

Since the Ascension.

The 'appearance' in the flesh lasts until death. After that, the glorified Jesus 'appears' again. But differently.

Oc, 21. -- “Christ, whom you, Pure One, brought into the world, you were allowed to see: how he, radiant in beauty, had risen from the dead. You, glorious, Immaculate, beautiful among women, Mary, sing with the apostles today (fifth Sunday after Easter) with a joyful heart a hymn of praise to his honor, -- with a view to the salvation of all”.

Indeed: the term 'radiating' is synonymous with 'appearing'. Jesus appears as a radiant figure.

Oc, 21. -- “To lend credibility to your resurrection from the grave, you, Christ, appeared for many days to those who loved you, to their and her great joy.”

Conclusion: the term 'appear' (so that 'seeing' as an eyewitness becomes possible) signifies both the birth from Mary and the 'appearances' after the resurrection.

But the Ascension marks an era with a new dimension. - Yet this era had already begun, immediately after the death on the cross.

E. Mercenier, La prière des églises de rite byzantin, II (Les fêtes), Chevetogne, 1948, 225. “What joy, what delight of the soul resembles that which you, Christ, caused the dead to experience in the prison of Hades (the underworld) by letting the light shine into their somber depths!”

Oc, 237.-- “The whole dreadful hell trembled when it saw you, immortal sun of glory: hastily it released those who were imprisoned in her dungeon.”

Jesus' theophany extends to the underworld in which souls are bound—to appear there as a savior, as St. Peter reports (1 Peter 3:18/22).

AT11

The Petrine text actually encompasses the second half of Christ's 'age' (aion): his death (1 Pet. 3:18), his descent into hell (3:19), his resurrection (3:21), his sitting “at God’s right hand” (as glorified) (3:22), his return in power as judge (4:5).

K. Kirchhoff, oc, 82. -- “When the hosts of angels, Savior, saw how mortal nature ascended to heaven with you, they were deeply impressed and sang hymns incessantly. -- The angels were terrified, Christ, when they saw how you ascend with the body (...). You have resurrected the nature of men, which were given over to destruction, and by your Ascension you have exalted them and glorified us with you.”

Or again, oc, 82: “Open the gates of heaven! Look on: Christ appeared as prince and lord, -- in an earthly body!” Thus said the lower heavenly spirits to the higher ones.” This while the apostles looked on 'below': “At your Ascension the apostles saw you, God, the world-savior, as divinely inspired by God. In deep reverence they rejoiced and sang praises to you.” Cfr. oc, 91.

Sitting on the throne.

Oc, 92. -- “In a clear manner the princely majesty of the One who appeared as a poor man in the flesh was exalted. With the Father our fallen nature is honored on the same throne.”

This is reminiscent of *Matthew 25:31* : “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, surrounded by all his angels, then he will sit on his throne of glory.”

Yet that co-ruling, as a glorified human on the throne of the Father, is not a slow process. Jesus acts! “You who have ascended into heaven—from where you previously descended (in the Incarnation), do not leave us behind as orphans: let your Spirit come and bring peace to the world. Show people the works of your power,—you who are a loving Lord.” (Oc, 94).

This text demonstrates that the glorified one who ascended to heaven is not an inert figure but present, in a new theophany! Specifically: Jesus acts by means of works (as during his earthly life). Works that show that he possesses 'pneuma', 'spirit', life force, or power, with which he continuously 'appears' (reveals himself), at least to those who possess the seeing of faith.

AT12

5. Jesus on the throne of glory. (12/17).

From a salvation-historical perspective, we find ourselves between the Ascension, with our seating at the right hand of the Father, and the Second Coming. Let us now see how the Eastern liturgies—not only the Byzantine—interpret that glory.

Let us return to the main motif.

K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubel, I, 10.-- “With the body you were in the grave, -- with the soul in Hades, the underworld, as God. You were in paradise -- together with the robber (the converted fellow cross-bearer). You accomplish everything, on the throne, Christ, as in your being ('self') unbounded, -- with the Father and the Spirit”. Thus summarizes the liturgy. Cosmically broad, indeed, unbounded is Jesus' redemption. When Jesus reflects on his earthly task, the accusation inevitably arises.

E. Mercenier, La prière de église byzantin, II (Les fêtes), 202. -- “Lifted up on the cross—which entails your glorification—, Lord, you have articulated your accusation: for what reason have you, Jews, decided to nail me to the cross? Was it because I restored the nervous system of the paralyzed man? Because I raised the dead from their sleep? Because I healed the woman who suffered from a hemorrhage? Because I was moved by the Canaanite woman? For what reason do you, Jews, wish to kill me? -- Yet, yes, amidst your unscrupulousness you will (in time) look up to him whom you have pierced with a spear”.

The end of Mark's Gospel.

Rationalist Bible interpreters will likely grope endlessly in the dark regarding the ending of the text as foreseen by the evangelist himself. After all, there are more than one tradition on the matter.

But let us read *Mark 16:9ff.*, as the churches usually read the text. -- “Here are the signs that will accompany those who have come to believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak 'new' (unknown) tongues; (without hindrance) they will take up snakes; if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick: these will be healed.

Now, the Lord Jesus, after having spoken thus, was taken up into heaven. He sat at God's right hand, -- They, -- they went everywhere as preachers.

AT13

This, while the Lord appeared with them and reinforced “the word”—Jesus' message—by means of signs that accompanied it.” -- The Byzantine and other Eastern liturgical texts proclaim precisely the same doctrine.

Let us begin with a text from the Oktoèchos, Rome, 1886, 98.

“Christ, “*mou dunamis*”, my life-giving force, God and Lord”. Thus sings, with a loud voice, the exalted church as befits God’s glory, from a heart pleasing to God, while she celebrates “in the Lord”.

It is clear: not only natural life force (as is naturally present in and around us), nor merely supernatural life force (as is present in non-Biblical occult practices), first and foremost—and substantiating the two previous—supernatural life force is at work in the church, insofar as it is 'exalted' ('septè', worthy of true reverence).

Therefore she is “in the Lord”, bathing in one and the same life-force with the Lord, on the throne of His glory since the Ascension.

The same can be said of the Chaldean Church.

Jos. Molitor, Chaldäisches Brevier, Düsseldorf, 1961, 88.-- The text of the East Syrian prayers for each hour reads as follows.

“Our Lord and God, strengthen our weakness by Your grace: Make, through Your goodness, the wretchedness of our soul strong and build it up.

Illuminate the darkness of our insights. Shake us awake from the sleep-drunken state of our thoughts. Remove the leaden burden from our limbs.

Cleanse away the stain of our debts and sins and wash it away. Stretch out Your mighty hand and lay it upon us for our protection. So that we, thanks to it, ... rise up. And confess and praise You, without ceasing, all the days of our lives.

Lord of the universe for all eternity.”

Note terms such as “your grace” (which consists in the bestowal of supernatural life force) and “your mighty hand” (metaphor for 'power' or 'life force'). The dynamism underpins the text, but instead of natural or extra-natural, it is interpreted as supernatural.

AT14

Mariological.

Mary, as the Virgin Mother of Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity, plays a remarkable role in the dynamism of the New Testament.

K. Kirchhoff, I, 87. -- “The joy of all who are in a distressed situation, the assistance of the poor, the comfort of strangers, the staff of the blind, the help of the sick, the protection and help of the overburdened, the refuge of orphans, -- that art thou, mother of the Most High God, pure (...)”.

It is established: all kinds of earthly situations, preferably the difficult or even unbearable ones, belong to her 'sphere of influence'! In that sense, the title 'co-redeemer' is indeed justified. If anyone can say that "Christ is 'mou dunamis', my life force", then surely it is she thanks to whose pregnancy Jesus only became possible.

As is beautifully expressed in the Marian hymns (K. Kirchhoff, oc, 35): "You, Immaculate One, carry within yourself the abyss of miracles and the fountain of healings. Wash away, then, from my soul all the filthiness of sin."

Sin.

Modern man, and perhaps even more so postmodern man, does not like to hear of 'sin' (sin since virtue, along with all other values, has been devalued since Nietzsche's declaration of decay)!

And yet: where sin is the ethical (moral, conscience) evil, there, for example, illness or an emergency situation (after all: anything that deviates from God's ideas regarding the cosmic course) is the physical (or natural) evil that ultimately springs from sin (according to the explicit teaching of the Bible). Both forms of evil, the moral and the physical, are inseparable in their hidden or even occult foundation.

That is the reason why, for example, the Byzantine liturgy begs for forgiveness (ethical evil) where healings or deliverances (physical evil) are at stake.

Sin, with its aftermath of physical ailments, amounts after all to a weakening of our natural, extranatural, and above all supernatural life force or power.

Oc., 37. -- "God, who appeared from you, delivered nature from its curse and healed the ailments of all".

Indeed: the original sin (first sin) of "Adam and Eve" and the original sin springing from it weigh as a curse of an ethical-physical nature upon humanity, indeed, upon the entire non-human nature (as St. Paul says). This 'mysterious' curse, not so clear in itself, appears in "the ills of all".

AT15

A basic text.

K. Kirchhoff, Ueber dich freut sich der Erdkreis (Marienhymnen der Byzantinischen Kirche), Munster (Wf.), sd, 55, states it clearly: “Our sick nature, Lord, you have healed. In the Virgin, indeed, you brought to her—as the most effective remedy—your Immaculate Divinity, Logos (All-Wisdom)”.

What traditional theologians call “Unio hypostatica”, the personal unity (of both natures in Jesus, the divine and the human) -- which is precisely the supporting foundation (premise) of all miracles — 'signs', says S. Jan — of Jesus as the glorified ruler “at the right hand of the Almighty Father”.

The two 'natures',

The result of centuries of disputes within the churches! Upon closer inspection, Jesus displays, first and foremost, a human nature—the 'flesh', that is, wretched humanity, which he 'assumed' (and which has been 'glorified' since his death). Yet whoever delves deeper into the phenomenon of Jesus discovers in time that he is God, the second person of the Trinity.

K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, 11, 91 : “You, Mother of God, who—exalted above (earthly) thought and (earthly) words—in time brought into the world the one who is timeless, in an ineffable way, we praise in all unity.” Jesus is both “in time” (human, embodied nature) and at the same time 'super-temporal', 'timeless' (divine nature). In one person (personal unity).

Oc, 89 . -- “What a surprising number of wonders! How could you, who were graced by God (Mary), offer God space that is enclosed by no space? Him, who became poor in the flesh and with rich glory ascended to heaven today (Ascension Day) and gave life to mankind?”

Once again the two natures in one and the same person: “poor in the flesh” / “rich glory” ('spirit') and “space / no space”.

Oc, 91 : “On high (at the Ascension) the angels saw your deified flesh. Turning toward one another, they said: “Truly this man is our god.” -- “This man” ('flesh')/“our God” ('deified'). –

The glorified God-man, whom we, if we look with the eyes and the light of faith, can still see at work today—with his divine mother—is capable of continuing his earthly task in Israel because he has, once and for all, united “two natures” “in one person.”

“Heavenly theology”.

The renowned theologian Scheeben once maintained that true theology ought to be mystical theology practicing theology from God—on pain of becoming 'unreal' theology.

The expression “heavenly theology” appears in a kontakion (sixth Sunday after Easter) – *K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, 11, 130* –. Its object is “the great mystery”. This is: that which, from the foundation of the cosmos onwards, God has preserved as the secret – the mystery – for the salvation of humanity and the cosmos, when these, at the end of time, have become stuck “in extreme distress”. Hence the name ' *mystery theology* '. -- Now, let us look at how “the great secret” is worded.

K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, 11, 86 . -- “He who, after being brought into the world by you, preserved your virginity unchanged, Christ, ascends, Mother of God, to the Father whom he never forsaken. -- Nor at the moment when he, in unspeakable mercy, living and endowed with understanding, received flesh from You”.

Or again, *Mercenier, La prière, II , 236*. -- “Without ceasing to dwell ‘in the bosom of the Father,’ you, gracious Christ, decided to become man and descended into hell, as a compassionate one.”

Do you see the personal unity of the two natures at work again, in other forms? Jesus, as God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, remains what he is, divine by nature, but, while he is conceived in the womb of the Virgin, he becomes what he was not before, human by nature. So that, while he dwelt on this earth alienated from God, he could act as a heavenly being. 'Heavenly' theology!

“ *Similia similibus* ”.

Those familiar with ancient magic know this basic spell very well. It means: “If one wishes to get a grip on (natural and supernatural) problems, one must attune oneself to what the problem is.” In modern French: “être branché(e)”.

Traditional theology was very familiar with this law. - *Marienhymnen , 174f.* : “To save the world, the one who rules over us all appeared, placing himself at our disposal, and, since he is God as shepherd - prince - he appeared - out of love for us - as a man. For by means of the like (model) - *similibus* - he calls forth the like (original) - *similia* - (...)”.

In other words: the necessary reason for the personal unity of the two natures in Jesus is that he, as God, wished to align himself thoroughly and definitively—for ages upon ages—within the ages—within the problem to be solved, namely humanity in extreme distress,—simultaneously with the Cosmos in equally extreme distress. By making both natures one in one and the same person, the divine nature becomes a 'remedy' for all eternity.

At least, if humanity is willing to pray, living in that sense! Only if one 'knows' God (interacts with Him in intimate prayer) and if God likewise 'knows' us (interacts with us intimately), does God's glory come through in Christ-on-the-throne-of-glory. One becomes divinized, with Christ (as Eastern thinkers so love to say).

Religion as a solution to life's problems.

Religion is often dismissed by contemporary thinkers of a 'rationalist' style as outdated primitivism. At best, “secular belief” is put in its place.

Believing that then entails 'engagement' in the world. Strongly politically colored, incidentally (“political theology” in the recent sense, not in the ancient Greek sense).

Rationally speaking, that is one of the many possible interpretations of the Bible, of course. Yet from what precedes, it is abundantly clear that 'heavenly' or 'apocalyptic' theology is just as 'earthly' engaged, but from a mystical unity with the glorified Christ on the throne of glory, as *Mark 16* puts it.

“I, who rightfully confess You, Pure One, as the Immaculate Mother of God—with soul and mouth—in faith, beseech You: save me from uncanny dangers, from defects and transgressions.” (*Hymns to Mary*, 48).

Or: “Should I—thanks to your interventions—a completely blameless bride, escape every rage, deadly passions,—unscrupulous people and malicious adversaries,—the harsh glow of Gehenna (hell) (...)”. (Ibid. 61).

Whoever prays in this way bears witness that he knows “life”! That he is 'engaged' in it!

In other words: heavenly theology is anything ... except otherworldly figments of the imagination!

Everyday life —as the Byzantine liturgy views it—is the terrain within which Jesus' glorified existence can manifest, if we take it seriously in faith.

AT18

6. The mystery of salvation economy.

To express what—precisely Jesus, in the Spirit, as one sent by the Father—accomplished, the Byzantine liturgy—like the entire Patristics (33/800)—uses terms such as 'mystery' ('secret') and 'system of salvation' ('economy of salvation'). Since they are so summarizing and fundamental, we will now briefly examine them.

Hell as the baseline.

Jesus appeared in response to a well-defined situation. That situation is called 'hell' (Sheol, the underworld). Think of the 'descent into hell' which invariably belongs to the Creed of the Apostles. It is situated between his death on the cross and his appearance as the risen one.

Peter says in *1 Pet. 3:18ff.*, as follows: “Jesus was put to death, at least insofar as he was 'flesh' (wretched man). He was made alive insofar as he was 'spirit' (divine life). In that 'spirit' he even went to proclaim (the good news) to the spirits in prison, -- to those who at that time had refused to believe all the time that God's patience waited on and on (...).”

In *Matthew 16:18*, Jesus, through Matthew, situates the 'church'—the small group around him that will eventually come to full development—in relation to “the gates of hell”.

These are the power of evil spirits that, from the beginning of salvation history, tempted earthly people. - *Gen. 3* (The 'serpent' tempts Eve (and Adam)) - into sin, with death and imprisonment in the 'dungeon' (underworld, 'hell') as the aftermath.

We know it: the evil spirits—Satan at the head—are 'animalistic' (*Dan. 7:1ff.*). The Son of Man—who is not an animal but a man—will eventually eliminate them.

End result : a resurrection that, for some, leads to eternal divine life, while for others it leads to eternal horror (*Dan. 12:2/4*). This in the perspective of the end times: “Many will—in the meantime—turn away here and there, and unrighteousness—unscrupulousness—will increase” (*Dan. 12:4*).

This unscrupulousness results in 'powerlessness' ('refaïm') and imprisonment (Ps. 88(87): 13 (*Darkness and forgetfulness*), -- in the depths of the prison (*Deut.* 32:22; *Isaiah* 14:15; Ps. 86(85):13) .

Let no one think that “the dungeon” is an alien concept: *Proverbs* 7:1-27 (*The Temptress*) demonstrates it: “Her dwelling is the way to the dungeon, -- the ramp to the courtyard of the dead.”

AT19

Thus the inspired writer concludes that is what “a night of sex in all taboo-free ways” leads to! In other words: precisely where unscrupulous behavior takes place, there lies “the gate of hell”. Only current, earthly biological life covers—conceals—the true situation. The sacred writer reveals that true situation—'apokalupsis'!

Many people today refuse to take “those fairy tales about hell” seriously, in the name of 'demythologization' (as if that demythization represented the truth without further ado). Yet the Bible texts are formal! What Scripture calls – at least in the strictly pejorative sense 'world' (*1 John* 2:16/17) – is the anteroom of the dungeon. Whoever enters that world, by virtue of “liberation from the bonds – taboos – of the Ten Commandments,” enters ipso facto into the dungeon.

The Easter Mystery.

E. Mercenier, *La prière, II (Les fêtes)*, 260, reads as follows: “The great Moses foretold the present day (Passover Sunday) when he said: “And God blessed the seventh day” (*Gen.* 2:1/4a; -- *Exod.* 31:12ff.; -- *Exod.* 20:11; 31:17).

Indeed: this day is the blessed 'Sabbath', -- the day of rest during which the only Son of God rested from all his works by celebrating, in his flesh, the Sabbath provided for in the order of his death, -- the day of rest during which he returned to what he was (before his incarnation).

Through his resurrection he granted us eternal life - *Dan.* 12:2/4 . After all, he is the only 'good' (conscientious) and benevolent one.

In other words: faithful to the principle of “similia similibus” but in the reverse sense, Jesus died, carried by the life-force of the Father who sent him and by the Spirit whom he sends with the Father, the death-in-prison caused by sin—understand: the conscienceless life—(the like (model) by means of the like (original)).

But in the reverse sense: he rose to eternal life and not to eternal horror! That is the surprising twist—the reversal to the opposite—at least for those who wish to believe in him as the one sent by the Father.

For by incarnating in Mary's womb, Jesus enters the chain of descent ('tôledôt' (*Gen. 2: 4a: descent*)) since the fallen Adam and Eve. But in such a way that the turning around becomes possible.

AT20

Note: The Hebrew term for 'descent and descent history' – tôledôt – means: **a.** descent, **b.** ancestral or genealogical history.

In *Gen. 2:4a* , the term is broadened—as in many myths—to the 'descent history' of “heaven and earth” (a primordial couple that appears in many myths), “insofar as they were created (by Yahweh)” (which is then typically Biblically corrective_is).

For God creates—not like a maker of a pan 'creates' an object outside of himself, but “from himself” (if only because God exists alone in the beginning and nothing exists outside of him). In that sense, “heaven and earth” originated from him, through a free act of creation, and there is a 'history of origin', comparable to the histories of descent in non-Biblical myths.

Well then, Jesus, by “descending” from Mary—biologically this time—becomes a historically definable part—a link—in the endless—in the ages upon ages—lasting history of becoming and creation of the cosmos and humanity. But in his re-creating way: he endures death, the effect of sin, understand: of unscrupulousness, but survives that death gloriously. Thanks to his life force ('dynamis', Latin: *virtus*), derived from his Father and shared with the Spirit.

Incidentally, there is mention of the lineage of Noah (*Gen. 6:9*), -- of Isaac, the son of Abraham (*Gen. 25:19*), -- of Jacob (*Gen. 37:2*). To such an extent the sacred writer thought “in terms of tôledôt”!

Jesus' incarnation, the embodiment, must certainly be commemorated in those terms. The Bible reveals the true history of descent—both of “heaven and earth” and of mankind (and of the invisible spirits).

In that history of descent, sin is interwoven, almost from the very beginning, with its aftermath, all possible 'physical' and 'moral' ills—all ultimately leading to the prison. In that sense, very precisely, the prison is the prefigurement of Jesus' 'appearance' (his theophany). With the works, the miracles, which bear witness to his typical glory. Which invariably anticipate the end times (object, *stricto sensu*, of every Apocalypse or end-time revelation).

AT21

The key role of Mary, the Virgin.

E. Mercenier, La prière, 11, 260 (Thetokion).

A song to Mary, the Virgin, in honor! She is all-encompassing glory: daughter of men and mother of the Lord. The gate of heaven! She is sung by the invisible spirits and is the showpiece of the faithful.

For she appeared as a heaven, as the temple of the deity. She broke down the chasm of hatred and brought peace in its place. She opened the royal dwelling of the King (Jesus).

In her we possess the anchor of faith: thanks to her, for we have the Lord—he was born of her—as an ally. Cherish therefore trust, cherish trust, people of God, for the Lord will deal with your adversaries as Almighty.

Note -- The term “gate of heaven”

This is only fully understood against the background of the presupposition of her motherhood: the gates of the dungeon! 'Heaven' means, here, God's mysterious, transcendent life that, through her motherhood ('tôledôt'), becomes interwoven into the history of becoming of humanity and the creation whole, the cosmos.

“He was, after all, born of her,” the text of the Byzantine liturgy rightly states. This is: he integrated himself into the 'tôledôt' of cosmos and humanity.

In it—let us recall from just now—is the order of Jesus' death; an all-encompassing turn for the better, a “happy ending.” At least for those who see clearly in faith! In the clairvoyance of faith, which 'sees' the revealing value of Mary and her virginal motherhood.

With that, the start of our exposition on 'secret' ('mystery') and '(salvation) order' ('salvation economy') has been initiated!

Mystery as “sufficient reason” for God’s or another’s intervention.

'Mystery' has more than one meaning. *K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubiläum, II (Pentekostarion)*, 158.

“I must weep and lament whenever I think of death, -- when I see the beauty that you, creating according to a divine model, have allotted to us, lying in the graves: formless, inglorious, devoid of ornament”!

What kind of 'mystery' unfolded before us? How did it come about that we were surrendered to dying, that we are married to death? In all truth: because God imposed it (as punishment) (as is written in scripture),

God, however, who makes liberation from their fate available to the deceased.” –

AT22

The convergence of “fulfilling a mystery” and “how did it come about” clearly demonstrates that 'mystery' and 'explanation' (from mysterious factors) coincide.

'Mystery' is therefore a “mysterious presupposition” (which only becomes known through revelation, apokalupsis). In order to detect such a factor explaining a phenomenon, a fact ascertainable by everyone or at least by earthly people, it is advisable—if one wishes to do so oneself—to possess a sufficient 'observer' (*Isaiah 21:6/10*), that apocalyptic or power of uncovering situated in our deeper soul.

If not, one must learn it from others (*Jer. 31:29/34* , where the two methods of disclosure are mentioned) -- From 'disclosers' ('revealers').

In short: 'mystery' is “a mysterious event” that, if sufficiently known, explains something—makes it understandable.

Another little example.

K. Kirchhoff, id., 84. -- “The Virgin, Mary, brought a child into the world. Yet she did not know the mystery of mothers, -- yet she remained mother and virgin at the same time.

In her honor we sing hymns of praise, -- we call out to her: “Hail, you, Mother of God”. -- “The mystery of mothers” here is clear, the fact that motherhood arises from sexual intercourse with a man.

That term still resonates

a. the mysterious nature of the fertilization process (for anyone unfamiliar with modern biology),

b. even more so the respect for such a mating act, fundamentally experienced as sacred. This twofold content—the unknown and the awe-inspiring—is—incidentally stated—present in all liturgical texts where 'mystery' is mentioned.

“Apophatic theology”.

'Negative' (Lat.) or 'apophatic' (Gr.) theology has as its primary object “the unknown that inspires awe and awe”.

Consider what Plato of Athens (-428/-347), who hangs like a shadow over the Byzantine thinkers, says about desire. It is like a hudra lernaia (the water serpent of Lerna), a multi-headed monster! Desire can never be eradicated and never reveals its true face!

For every head that is cut off, two grow in its place! More learnedly: desire is 'polymorphic'. It is a 'mystery', something that, through its secretiveness, is ambiguous, poly-interpretable.

AT23

The 'mystical' deification.

The term 'mustikos', mystical, recurs like clockwork. It means 'mysterious' or “that which is not so immediately clear or discernible”.

Thus in the following kathisma (*K. Kirchhoff, Osterj., 11, 80*): “The primordial-eternal and beginningless God, after he had mystically divinized the nature of the men he assumed, ascended to heaven today (...)”.

Or (*E. Mercenier, La prière, II , 274*) further: “The women with the ointments, guided by divine wisdom, seek you out: before you, whom they sought with tears in their eyes, believing that you were dead, they fell down full of joy, -- worshipping the living God. Of this mystical Easter, Christ, they brought your disciples the glad tidings”.

The term 'mystical' appears in both texts: the work of redemption as a whole entails a 'mystical' deification of mankind; Easter, the turning point, is a 'mystical' Easter—the heart of the work of redemption. The most obvious translation reads 'mysterious', 'hidden', “escaping the earthly, indeed, every created intellect”.

In other words, 'apophatic' is the word for the approach or method, while 'mystical' is the word for the object of apophatic theology, which reveals and exposes the mysterious.

The 'mystical' designation and/or description.

a. Mercenier, oc, 252. -- “The great Moses mystically indicated the present day—Peace Saturday—when he said: “And God blessed the seventh day.” (...).

b. Mercenier, oc, 260. -- “The great Moses described the present day beforehand—Passover Sunday—when he said: “And God blessed the seventh day.” (...)

Apparently, Moses' text is 'mystical' to the extent that it means or indicates something “in a veiled manner”.

The paradox.

In this case, one can speak of “concealing disclosure”:

1. Moses—the sacred writer of the Old Testament text—reveals, for he speaks a language concerning something;

2. He conceals, for he speaks in such a way that one must decipher exactly what he means.

Such, incidentally, is the entire conduct of God in the Old and New Testaments. Let us consider *Matthew 13* (*Mark 4:1/2; Luke 8:4*). Jesus speaks a language, but it is a parable language that reveals, though in a veiled manner. As *Matthew 13:10/17 clearly states* , following *Isaiah 6:9/10* (cited).

AT24

Just as *John 9:39/41* (regarding the 'seeing' in faith of the blind man) very explicitly connects to the prophet *Isaiah*, so too does *Matthew 13:13/15* .

“(...) Because it has been given to you to know “ta mustèria tès basileias”, the secrets of the kingdom (of God), while it has not been given to them. For whoever has, more will be given to him; whoever does not have, what he has will be taken away from him”.

Incidentally: this is the so-called Matthew effect! -- “That is the reason why I speak for them in parables, because while they 'see', they do not 'see', and while they 'hear', they do not 'hear' and grasp. In this way the prophecy of *Isaiah* is

fulfilled: “With hearing you shall hear and not grasp, and while you look, you shall see and not understand. For the heart—the power of interpretation—of this people is hardened ('fattened')”.

With the years and the epochs—the 'ages'—(*thus Daniel 12:4*) many will stray here and there; immediately 'iniquity' (unscrupulousness) grows. When Jesus 'appears' on earth, that straying—and unscrupulousness—is already further advanced than in Daniel's time.

The result is the Matthew effect: voluntarily, indeed, shamelessly cynically, many have 'strayed' and become 'conscienceless'! When confronted with Jesus' 'mystical' appearance, they fall for it: they believe they can correctly interpret him and his 'glory' (his works) (they think they 'see'), whereas they are—tragic—into misinterpretation.

Whereas “those who are like infants” (*Matt. 11:25*) actually point out and come to faith—whereas they are dismissed by the “wise and intelligent”—the expert upper class among the Jews—as being misled by Jesus. It is against this background that the term 'mystical' must be interpreted and translated.

The mystery of your economy (system of salvation)”.

We are beginning to know the language of the Bible and, immediately, of the Byzantine liturgy. Let us now consider the coupling concept of 'order' ('bikonomia').

E. Mercenier, La prière, 11, 58 . -- We are “Lazarus’ Saturday”.

“Lord, I have understood the mystery of your economy of salvation. I have reflected on your works—think of the resurrection of Lazarus. I have therefore granted Your divinity the glory it deserves.”

AT25

“Although you could have dispensed with any assistance—but according to the ineffable order willed by yourself ('oikonomia')—you prayed with a view to raising Lazarus, who had already lain in the tomb for four days, Almighty. (...). Your voice, Savior, leveled the entire power of death to the ground and, thanks to its divine power, drove the foundations of the prison into destruction.

A song to the Virgin, Mary! After having borne a child, she remained a virgin and brought Christ, the God who has freed the world from its deviations, into the world.”
-- Behold, in a context, the term 'order': Jesus, by virtue of the “*unio hypostatica*”,

the unity in one and the same person of two natures, the divine nature and the human nature, was the one to whom the entire conscious universe prays and the one who, like the most ordinary person in need, prays to his heavenly Father. The one, in other words, who is just as 'eternal' as the Father and the Spirit, prays as the 'Incarnate' a prayer “for an important work” (as our old catechism said).

This paradox—both almighty God and, as it were, powerless man—is the content of Jesus' order, insofar as this term refers to his two natures in one and the same person.

Divine wisdom (Logos).

The sapiential or also 'sophiological' books and texts—the wisdom texts—revolve around this order. -- That divine cosmic wisdom or Logos which is Christ reveals itself in the one-personal two-natures order: “Someone among you will betray me, after he has sold me to the Hebrews this night! (...).

For our sake you humbled yourself, -- you who possess everything: you rose from the table, took linen, and girded yourself. You, with bowed your head, washed the feet of your disciples as well as those of the betrayer (Judas)! Who would not be struck with wonder at the sight of the incomprehensibly high nobility of your ineffable wisdom?

Jesus, you are the creator of all that exists and you venture into the midst of “the mud”! You have washed the feet of the traitor and dried them with the linen!

He who possesses everything and is 'rich' strips himself of his glory and bows his head to wash and dry even the feet of the one who is betraying him—straying (Daniel) and conscienceless, he does not realize exactly what he is doing!

AT26

It is clear: 'paradox' is one of the characteristics of the behavior of divine universe wisdom (Logos)! Indeed: “By initiating Christ, our Savior, into wisdom—concealed from the very beginning of the universe—you revealed it to all your apostles—including the betrayer Judas—in the course of a Last Supper. Which the apostles bearing within themselves—theophoroí—passed on to the later Church”. (*E. Mercenier, La prière, II, 136* (Great Thursday).

New Testament wisdom realizes the true order at work—God who remains God but becomes 'flesh' to deify the 'flesh'—and thoughtfully penetrates to the mystery or 'secret' that is being revealed.

These three concepts—together with apocalyptic or apophatic theology—form one logically coherent whole. -- Which we will explain further in the following pages using the liturgical texts.

1. -- *E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 47.*

“Who ever heard the report that a dead person who was already giving off a foul odor was raised from the dead? Elijah (*1 Kings 17:17/24* (The widow's son)) performed a resurrection, as did Elizeus (*2 Kings 4:8/37* (The son of the Shunem woman)), but not of a buried person—not of someone who had already been dead for four days.”

“We sing, Lord, of Your power. We sing of Your suffering, Christ. Thanks to Your power You perform miracles, -- as one who is merciful. You have endured Your suffering, -- according to the divine order as a man, You are “God-and-man”. You confirm the truth of this name by Your works.

"Although Logos, cosmic wisdom, you have proceeded in a body to Lazarus' grave and, as a god, caused the one already buried for four days to rise." - Here we tentatively grope for the power aspect!

'Dunamist (Latin: *virtus*), power—thanks to—life force is pre-eminently an attribute of Jesus as Logos, universal wisdom. Suffering is pre-eminently an attribute of wretched humanity—'flesh,' to put it in Biblical terms. Yet the paradox is that precisely in that suffering humanity the divine, all-transcending life force shows its power—reveals it. As we saw above—Rev. th. 12.

Elijah and Elizeus indeed prepared the way. But they were merely a shadow—compared to the New Testament life-giving power of Jesus!

AT27

2. -- *E. Mercenier, La prière., 11, 43s..*

The first ode of the canon of Andrew of Crete, on Lazarus Saturday, speaks of the fact that the voice of the Lord Jesus destroyed the realm of hell, thanks to “the word of his power” (oc, 42). Which was the prelude to Jesus' own resurrection and to ours in time.

“Let us all sing a song of victory in honor of the god who “with his mighty arm” (**note:** thanks to his life-giving force) has performed admirable deeds of might and saved Israel (from the grip of the Egyptians). For he has “clothed himself with glory” (**note:** he has made himself shine like glory).

You raised up Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, my savior, by delivering him from decay “with your mighty arm.” Immediately you revealed your power, for you are mighty!

To Lazarus You turned and immediately raised him from the grave. But in the depths (A.th. 18) Hell raised a sorrowful lament and—sighing—she trembled, Savior, before Your power.

You wept, Lord, for Lazarus, -- immediately showing Your bodily existence according to Your order, -- to reveal that You, God by nature, made Yourself man, like us by nature. (...).

In accordance with your human nature, Lord, you have asked: “Where is Lazarus buried?” Thus, you have revealed to all, Savior, the true existence of your plan concerning us.

You shattered the gates of hell when you called out to Lazarus. You shook the power of the enemy to its foundations. You instilled terror and trembling in hell—even before you, the only savior, were lifted up on the cross.

As God You came to Lazarus, who was held captive in hell, Lord, and broke his chains. For everything yields to Your commands, Mighty One.

Let us glorify the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, -- Trinity, indivisible in the unity of nature. With the angels, we sing of the Holy Trinity as the only uncreated God.

After all that preceded, this ode is crystal clear:

a. the presupposition of the divine display of power is the tragic situation of the cosmos and humanity “in the depths of hell”;

b . It is precisely in this that the 'glory'—the princely life-force in power of Jesus, the Incarnate—is expressed.

AT28

3. -- **E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 71s.**

The small vespers of Palm Sunday. -- The messianic entry - Epiphany - of Jesus (*Matt. 21:1/17 John 12:12*) is celebrated - as eternally present. -- “Christ, of innocent children (*Ps. 8:3; Matt. 21:16* ; - especially *Matt. 11:25*) you accepted the song of victory when you made your entry on the back of a young donkey, - to meet your suffering, - you who are celebrated in the 'trisagion', the thrice holy, of the angels.

Look! Your prince, Zion, comes as a gentle savior on the back of a donkey's foal (*Isaiah 62:11* ; -- especially *Zechariah 9:9* ; -- *1 Kings 1:38; John 12:15*), -- seeking out his adversaries to strike with might. -- Rejoice and shout it out in this celebration with palms.”

One sees it: the sifting of judgment—for the immature children Jesus is a “gentle savior,” for the adversaries he is “striking hard”—continues! The order—two natures in one person—comes through: on the one hand, Jesus is the one celebrated by the highest angels and, at the same time, on the other, he is the man seated on a donkey's foal.

Note that 'children' means **a.** unpretentious, **b.** those who live conscientiously, **c.** with a view to the final judgment “on the last day”. Which *Matthew 11:25* underscores.

“I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden “those things” (the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, those of God’s action) from “the wise and the intelligent” (the intelligentsia) and have revealed them to “the very little ones”. It is from these very little ones that he accepts the waving of palms! The sifting of judgment! The Matthew effect!”

The text immediately following confirms what we say: “Let us, in unity, believers, wave the palms of our virtues (our conscientious conduct). In our turn, as the 'little ones', we offer them to Christ. Let the sails of our good works (our conscientious conduct) flutter and let us welcome him in a mystical manner.”

The liturgy is indeed the 'mystical' (hidden-mysterious) re-presentation of the historical Jesus at his entry into Zion.

The text, further on, concludes: “I sing in deep reverence of your awe-inspiring order; I sing the 'hosanna' (*Ps. 118 (117): 25ff* .: “Grant salvation”) for you come to save me, blessed Lord”.

With the dungeon as the pretext, Jesus reveals himself to carry out the sifting of judgment.

AT29

4. -- K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, 11, 19.

The text comes from the liturgy of the Sunday of the Blind. -- *John 9:1/41* .-- He is cast out of the community because of his faith in Jesus as a healer, led by God, yes, sent by God.

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out, met him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (*Dan. 7:9/14*) He: “And who is this, Lord, so that I can believe in him?” Jesus: “You see him: the one who speaks to you—he is the one.” He then: “I believe, Lord.” He threw himself down before Jesus.

Jesus then said: “I came into this world for the purpose of making a distinction (*1 John 2:16/17*), so that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” (...). Again: the judgment selection!

Let us listen for a moment to the Byzantine text: “A man born blind who turned to you, you at that time—as a wholly merciful God—healed him who praised your plan of salvation and works that commanded your admiration.”

It is clear: the order of Jesus' ministry encompasses **a** . his two natures in one person, **b** . expressing themselves in his admiration-commanding works, -- his 'miracles' , -- signs of his all-transcending glory. The acts of salvation—the small (his miracles, -- healings and exorcisms) and the great (his Easter of the Cross and his Easter of the Resurrection)—are an inseparable part of the order of salvation.

5. -- K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, 11, 88.

Ascension Day. -- “After you, Lord, had worked out the plan of salvation for us, - - made the earthly one with the heavenly, you lead, Christ, -- you, our God, in glory to heaven. Yet you have not at all distanced yourself from us: you have remained undivided! To those who love you, you call out: “I am with you and no one is against you”.

Here, the term 'order' is restricted to everything that took place before the Ascension. Calling a part is for the whole (metonymic language). There is, however, a reason for this: Jesus' Passover was the turning point to the opposite! From the

prison to the divine glory of the resurrection into eternal life (*Dan. 12:2/4*). The 'part' that is identified with the order is indeed the decisive part that can stand for the whole. Liturgically, therefore, Easter is the core feast of the entire year.

AT30

6. -- K. Kirchhoff, Osterj., 11, 186.

Pentecost Sunday. -- “Since he had attained the goal, the true Logos (universe wisdom) grants the fullness of peace of heart. For, since he had completed the work, Christ made his friends glad by, as he had promised, distributing the spirit amidst a mighty blowing of tongues of fire.”

If we compare this with the previous text, we see a striking analogy: “after you had worked out the plan of salvation” and “since he had completed the work”! The plan of salvation—the programming that regulates salvation from God—is worked out by the work, the work of salvation or work of redemption.

It appears that the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is understood as the result of “the work.” However, one can also maintain that Pentecost is “the seal” (the sealing) or completion of Jesus’ work of salvation. It is a matter of wording.

Oc, 217. -- Tuesday of Pentecost week. -- “Today your Spirit, the Almighty, who is like you, is sent to the earth in tongues of fire from the Father. Spread over each of those present, he equipped your apostles for the proclamation of your great deeds. -- Therefore we praise your saving plan of salvation, Jesus, the Almighty, the savior of our souls. -- Here the term 'salvation economy' seems to encompass the Pentecost event.

The summary.

Let us summarize this first part. -- *K.Kirchhoff, Osterj., II, 78* . -- Ascension Day. - - “As you yourself decided, you were brought into the world. As you yourself decided, you 'appeared' on earth. You suffered “in the flesh” (as a wretched man). After you had trampled death, you rose from the dead. You ascended to heaven in glory as the one who 'fills' the universe (permeates it with your life force). You sent us the divine spirit so that we may sing and praise your divinity in hymns of praise.”

Behold the 'creed'! As the New Testament already expresses it in due time. That is the content of the work provided for in God's plan of salvation.

So much for the meaning of the term 'salvation system'.

The liturgy essentially entails a theology of prayer and biblical interpretation. Instead of reasoning 'critically' or 'rationally,' the liturgist prays! It is in this way, and only in this way—according to the New Testament—that one understands God's message.

AT31

7. The mystery.

We already know more or less what 'mystery' means. Yet let us, in prayer, delve deeper into this mystery.

1. -- The Old Testament and the mystery.

E. Mercenier, La pr., 11, 97. -- “He who was glorified on the holy mountain (Sinai) and who in the flame of fire of the burning bush revealed to Moses the mystery of the Virgin Mary, the Lord, -- let us sing of him and exalt him throughout all ages”.

Other texts show that, just as the burning bush did not burn, so too the Virgin Mary “did not burn” (remained a virgin). Hence the analogy (partial similarity) between both 'mysteries' or mysterious events. The burning bush serves as a 'model' for the original it refers to, Mary's bringing into the world “the fire,” the deity, whom she left unharmed.

One encounters such analogical reasoning frequently: the Old Testament is viewed as a body of data that, in a 'mystical' (mysterious) manner, provides information regarding the New Testament. Among other forms, in the form of such analogical reasoning. An Old Testament 'mystery' is considered a light shed upon a New Testament 'mystery'—based on some parable or other.

2. -- The rock.

E. Mercenier, oc, 82. -- “The Israelite people drank from the hard rock (*Numbers 20:1/13* (The waters of Meribah), -- opened at your command that it caused water to flow. You were, Christ, this rock and the life. On that rock was founded the church which cries: “Hosanna! You who come! You are blessed!”

In *1 Corinthians 10:4*, St. Paul says: “All our fathers drank the same spiritual drinking water. Indeed, they drank from a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”

According to a rabbinic tradition, the rock that yielded water followed the Israelites. In Paul's interpretation, the pre-existing Christ—the second person of the Holy Trinity—is already at work in that rock.

The historical Jesus is the same mysterious rock upon which the church community was founded (from which it derives its life force).

In other words: the Old Testament reveals the same Christ as the New Testament.

AT32

3. -- *Groping in the dark into a distant future.*

E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 141. -- Holy or Holy Thursday. -- “In a distant future the prophet groped for your awe-inspiring mystery, Christ, and he foretold: “You have shown your mighty and strong love, compassionate Father, for in your goodness you have sent your only son into the world as an atoning sacrifice”.

The context speaks of the suffering for which Jesus is directly preparing himself. Presumably, the liturgist refers to *Isaiah 42:1/9, 49:1/7, 50:4/11, 52:13/53:12* (the Songs of Yahweh), where the (suffering) servant of Yahweh is discussed. Indeed, *Matthew 12:15/21* confirms: the evangelist cites *Isaiah 42:1/4*, applied to Jesus as a discrete figure.

The Suffering—Cross-Easter—is an integral part of Jesus' mystery. The Old Testament predicted this tentatively into the distant future.

E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 96. -- “As a prefigurement of the master, Jesus, Joseph was hidden away in a well. Meanwhile, he is sold by his brothers. Joseph—he deserves our songs—suffers all this so that he truly prefigures Christ”.

Gen. 30:22/24 (Joseph born of Rachel); *Gen. 37:2/50:26* (The 'tôledôt', history of descent, of Joseph).

Genesis 45:5/8 and especially *50:20* express the structure of Joseph's life: “The evil that you intended to do to me” (he says to his brothers), -- God's plan (salvation) has turned it into good, -- with the intention of working out what is becoming reality today: saving the life of a numerous people”.

This lesson regarding providence, together with the element of “being sold by relatives,” is the parable that shows in Joseph a prefigurement—an image—of Jesus.

Note: -- Seeking such prefigurations, tentative predictions, etc., is merely one application of *1 Peter 10:12*.

There, the first pope explains that the role of the prophets—the Old Testament figures—consisted in announcing and revealing the mystery that is Christ (pre-revelation). The salvation of souls in a distant era that they vaguely suspected was their primary concern. Moreover, they were already inspired by the spirit of Christ.

AT33

8. The Mystery of the Trinity.

1 Peter 1:2 speaks of “the foreknowledge of God the Father, the (sacrificial) blood of Jesus Christ, the sanctification of the Spirit”.

That is a Trinitarian text. There are more in the New Testament. The Trinity is the pre-eminent prerequisite of all that the Bible, New and even Old Testament, reveals. -- Let us briefly touch upon that.

1. -- The Seraphic Tris.hagion as a prefigurement.

K. Kirchhoff, Osterjubil, I, 163 . -- “When Isaiah saw the incomparable Lord in a prefigurement—the God praised in three persons by the pure voices of the seraphim—he received as an immediate commission the proclamation of the threefold radiant being, the three-solar unity”.

Let us first get used to the many—sometimes seemingly poetic—terms with which Greek-Eastern theologians refer to the Holy Trinity!

The text referred to is *Isaiah 6:1/13* . -- “(The divine calling of the prophet). -- In the year (-740) of the death of King Ozias (Uzziah), I saw the Lord seated on a magnificent and exceedingly exalted throne. His mantle train filled the sanctuary.

Seraphim (seraphs) 'burning ones' - held themselves over him, each with six wings (...). They called out to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth (the Lord of hosts). The earth is full of His glory.” (...).”

Reference is made to *1 Sam. 1:3 (4:4)*: the expression “Yahweh Sabaoth” probably refers to 'armies' of either cosmic forces (around celestial bodies) or 'angels' (whether or not connected with those forces; compare *Ps. 58 (57)* and *82 (81)*), where earthly judges are connected with supernatural entities).

Once again: the thrice-holy (Greek: tris.hagion or even trisagion) is interpreted from the perspective of the belief in the Trinity in the later New Testament, -- for the sake of a parable: the deity is called 'holy' three times. In which one sees a 'mysterious' (retrospective) indication of the dogma of the Trinity.

2.-- Abraham and the three angels

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 164. -- “Abraham was, - when he was abroad, deemed worthy to receive the one Lord in three persons as guests in an image, -- the Lord who transcends every being, -- in human manifestations”.

AT34

This connects to *Gen. 18:1ff.* (The appearance at the oak of Mamre).

“Yahweh appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre (...). He lifted up his eyes: behold, three men standing beside him!” -- It became clear to Abraham (and Sarah) only gradually—apokalupsis—who they were. That they were Yahweh and two 'angels' becomes apparent gradually (*Gen. 18:14; 18:22, -19:1*).

The scene is world-famous thanks to Rublev's beautiful Trinity icon. -- Based on the fact that the Trinity of the New Testament in fact coincides with the God of the Old Testament, one can see in the appearance of Yahweh and his two angels a kind of 'prefiguration' of the Trinity that only reveals itself in the New Covenant.

Meanwhile, it appears that the Byzantine liturgies clearly prioritize the fundamental unity of both covenants.

3. -- The Mystery of the Trinity.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 163. -- Sunday of the Paralytic. -- “You have enchanted us to your love, God’s merciful Logos (universal wisdom). Out of love for us, You appeared in “the flesh” (wretched human existence) without becoming anything else, and initiated us into the mystery of the threefold radiant divinity. Therefore we praise you.”

E. Mercenier, La pr., 11, 80. Palm Sunday. -- “Thanks to the Holy Spirit every soul lives. Thanks to purification it rises up. It acquires its nobility thanks to the threefold unity (the Trinity) in a sacred mystery.” This “sacred mystery” is apparently Jesus’ saving action—Easter and Pentecost—made present in the mysteries—the signs—of the liturgy.

Note: -- The mystery can also already be creation. -- *K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 163* . -- “Three-sun unity, you have created the nature of invisible and visible beings out of nothing and delivered those who praise you in faith as the one God from manifold dangers. - Therefore deem them worthy of your glory”.

4. -- *The primordial couple “Jesus/Mary”.*

Jesus is inseparably bound to his Virgin Mother, Mary. These two people, one the God-Man, the other his mother, bear the revelation of the Trinity mystery. Let us examine this for a moment.

AT35

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 162 . -- “As a benevolent being by nature, you adopted the mode of being of men, God’s Logos (universal wisdom), and thereby allowed the threefold, unlimitedly reigning light of the one deity to shine. In doing so, you showed the universe the pure virgin who brought you into the world as the praised one”.

Or again (*K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 163f.*) “As the one who have become God’s light-bringing pure bridal chamber, we sing of you, Virgin Mary, lovingly in hymns of praise and praise you blessed. For from you Christ was born in two natures and volitions, -- he, the one of the Trinity, the lord of glory”.

Note: -- Jesus is conceived by the great tradition as endowed with two faculties of will, -- his divine will and his will as a man. Again, one of the manifestations of the personal unity in two natures (the “ability to will” belongs to both the human and the divine nature) in Christ, the basis of his saving incarnation.

Or again (*K. Kirchhoff, Ost., I, 93*): “Our nature was once fallen when it succumbed to delusion and slid into ruin, immaculate one. Now, however, He who became an earthly man from you, God, the Logos (universal wisdom), has benevolently restored our nature and initiated us into the mystery of the threefold light of the primordial-eternal divinity.”

Note this: no arbitrary thinking or expanding of consciousness leads into the mystery of the Trinity! Rather, it is God's initiative, which exposes Himself—reveals Himself—initiates us. It concerns a true initiation or 'initatio', in which Jesus and Mary, each in their own way, play a key role. Hence the enormous veneration of Jesus, as the incarnate second person, and of Mary, who is invariably mentioned in all liturgical acts.

5. -- *The Trinitarian life.*

It must not remain a mere dead faith, a faith without works (James): so *K. Kirchhoff teaches us, Ost. II, 114*.

“Form me with divinizing rays and show me incessantly the manner in which I please Your tripersonal Divinity, Sun of Glory, and make me partaker of the Divine Realm.”

The Kingdom of God, the primary premise of the Old and New Testaments, comes into being within us, who were abandoned to delusion (unreality) and corruption, thanks to continuous enlightenment by the Trinity within ourselves.

AT36

Man, 'image' of God.

K. Kirchhoff, 11, 159. -- “You have honored, Savior, the creation of your hands by vividly portraying, in the form of a body, an 'image' (likeness, representation) of your spiritual mode of existence.

You have allowed me to partake in Your spiritual mode of existence by appointing me, thanks to Your free perfection of power, as ruler over earthly things, Logos (universal wisdom).

The way in which man is an image of God—by virtue of creation by God—shows the task of that man! It shows the domain in which he must be continually formed and guided by God Himself. Earthly things—these are what we ought to deal with. According to the Ten Commandments (Sinai Theophany), the code of conduct of the universe in a summarized and popular form.

This refers to Gen. 1:26ff. -- “God said: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. Let man rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creeping creatures that crawl on the ground.” God created man in his image. In the image of God he created him. As male and female he created them. -- God blessed them and said: “Be fruitful. Multiply. Populate the earth and subdue it (...).”

The terms “image, likeness” recur in *Gen. 5:3* : “When Adam was one hundred and thirty years old, he begat a son in the likeness of him, in the image of him.”

Because God designates man as an image and likeness, man rises above the animals. Adam apparently passes this quality on to his descendants.

In the terms of the Byzantine liturgy, this is due to the 'spiritual' character of man, which he owes to God's spiritual essence, of which he serves as a model.

Incidentally : *Daniel* 7:9/28 tells us that the 'Son of Man' (with whom Jesus identifies himself) exalts himself above the animals. "The Kingdom of God resembles a man just as the empires of the world resemble animals" (*A. Bertholet, Die Religion des alten Testaments, Tübingen* , 1932, 131).

Conclusion. -- Man as the image, or likeness, of the ruling deity (the 'kingdom' or princely exercise of power by God) is apparently a theme present from the beginning to the end of the Bible (of salvation history).

AT37

Note -- Let us note in passing that the 'tôledôt' or history of descent - Rev. th. 20 - includes, besides the spiritual aspect that elevates man, as a descendant of Adam and Eve, above the animals, the first sin. (*Gen. 3:1/24*).

The Fall is also part of what Adam and Eve pass on in terms of likeness and image "of Adam and Eve." "Yahweh God sent (man) out of the Garden of Eden" (banished him from his intimacy). Thus *Gen. 3:23* . And *Job 9:29ff* . says: "And if I have done wrong, what purpose would it serve for me to weary myself? To wash myself with soapwort? To cleanse my hands with lye?" Furthermore (*Job 14:3/4*): "You look at this creature (man as he is). You summon it before you: to judgment! But who will bring out the clean that is unclean (sinful)? No one!"

The Book of Job, following in the footsteps of *Genesis 3:23* , recognizes profound sinfulness ('uncleanness') (although it still expresses it very incompletely—strongly ritualistic—(let us think of *Leviticus 15* (The sexual impurities)). Yet for the Book of Job, man is 'unclean' from his conception and immediately his birth—the prelude to an ethical or conscience impurity, i.e., sinfulness, wickedness, lack of conscience.

As *Ps. 51(50: Miserere)* says: "Look: I was born an evil being, -- my mother conceived me as a sinful being" (v. 7).

Up to when St. Paul, *Rom. 5:12*, formulates the so-called 'dogma of original sin': "Just as sin 'entered into the world' through one man—and, through sin, death—and just as death was passed on in this way to all men, since all have sinned (...)"

Death reigned—as St. Paul states further on—since Adam (and Eve)! It cannot be stated more clearly: the 'tôledôt' or history of descent encompasses, besides the element "spirit of God," the element of sin (unscrupulous behavior with all its consequences). Both 'elements' are passed down through the history of descent. Hence the duality of actual human beings as we are:

a . image, likeness of the (triune) God,
b. caricature (distorted image or likeness) of the same (Triune) God! Good and evil in 'harmony' (merging).

"Knowledge of good and evil" (*Gen. 2:17*), -- as with the deities (*Gen. 3:5* : "You shall be like deities that are at home ('know') in good and evil").

AT38

That this insight—and what an insight!—belongs to the body of ideas of the Byzantine liturgy is evident from K. Kirchhoff, Ost., II, 158 (All Souls' Day).

"I must weep and lament when I think of death and attentively observe the beauty that you—creating according to divine image—have allotted to us, lying in graves: formless, inglorious, devoid of ornament. What a wonder! What mystery took place within us? How did it come about that we are ready to die—that we are married to death? The truth (regarding the matter): God commanded it, as it is written (*Gen. 3:19*),—he who, however, also gives refreshment to those who have passed away."

Genesis 3:19 is set forward here: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread, until you return to the ground, -- since you were drawn out of it. For you are clay, and to clay you shall return."

The man (human) named his wife 'Eve' because she was "the mother of all living beings". -- Behold "the commandment" of Yahweh God regarding the doomed, conscienceless situation of man since the first sin (except for Jesus and Mary as 'immaculate', i.e., without original sin).

We said— *Rev. th. 18* —that "hell (underworld, dungeon) functions as a precondition (in a negative sense, of course)" when one wishes to understand the

mystery or secretive process of the plan of salvation (⌞God's decree) from what it preconditions.

Let us therefore listen to *K. Kirchhoff, Ost., 11, 158*. -- "Since you, Christ, have risen from the dead, death no longer exercises power over all who have died in faith.

Therefore we beseech with outstretched arms: "Grant refreshment to your servants/handmaids in your paradises and 'in the bosom of Abraham' (in the paradisiacal company of Abraham) to those who – from Adam to the present – have served you purely (conscientiously). (...). God, deem them worthy of your heavenly kingdom."

It is clear: the (triune) God left man to his autonomy or self-will (*Ekklesiastikus* 15:14 ("He has left man to his own counsel"); *Galat. 6:7/8* ("Whatever one sows, that is what one reaps")), but the mystery of his incarnation in Jesus, through Mary, the Virgin Mother, is the counter-process that also governs the history of humanity (tôledôt) -- from Adam and Eve to the present.

AT39

An extra. -- To immerse ourselves more deeply in what the Byzantine liturgy offers us regarding the story of paradise.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., II, 160 . -- "You have creatively given the universe its radiance. As a mixed living being, You have situated me, man, between insignificance and greatness. Therefore grant refreshment to the souls of Your servants/handmaids".

Ibid., 159. -- "Your creative word granted me beginning and existence. For, since You willed to compose me from what is invisible and what is visible, You formed my body "from earth" and gave me a soul through Your "divine and life-creating breath." (...)".

This connects to *Gen. 2:4b/25* (The Paradise Story). *Gen. 2:7* -- "Then the Lord God molded man from the soil of the ground. He breathed a breath of life into his nostrils, and immediately man became—'adam'—a living being." -- With this story, the term "man" ('adam') becomes the collective name for "what is human." Yet the meaning merges with the first man, Adam.

K. Kirchhoff, oc, 159. -- You conceived "my dignity" as distinct from the life of other creatures. Therefore You planted in Eden a garden made radiant by a colorful

abundance of trees, -- free from sorrow and care. At the same time You placed me on earth as a hybrid being resembling angels, who partakes in divine life.

This connects to *Gen. 2:8* . -- “Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden ('somewhere'), in the east, and he placed the man whom he had formed in it”.

K. Kirchhoff, ibid., 162. -- “Life-creating by nature you alone are, -- you the truly unfathomable sea of goodness”.

Ibid., 163. -- “You are the source of life. You set the prisoners free, Lord, with your divine power.”

In other words: God, the Triune, is the only absolute presupposition of “all that lives”, including man.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., II, 160. -- “In the beginning you appointed me as a citizen and caretaker of paradise. But when I transgressed your command, you sent me into exile.”

Ibid., 163. -- “To earth we returned, for we trampled God’s divine rule of conduct underfoot. But thanks to you, Virgin, we were lifted from earth to heaven, shaking off the degeneration of death.”

9. The Angel Mystery.

The concept of 'angel' – messenger, mediator, etc. – is present very early in the Bible. *Gen. 18:2* (“three men”), *18:22* (“men”), *19:1* (“the two angels”), *19:15* ('angels').

“They speak, or are addressed either in the plural, ‘angels’, or in the singular, ‘angel’, insofar as they are representatives of God -- in which God Himself does not intervene directly.” (*La Bible de Jérusalem* , Paris, Cerf, 1978, 48, c).

Job 5:1 says: “Call now! Will there be an answer? To whom among the ‘saints’ shall you turn?” Here, ‘saints’ is another name for ‘angels’.

Job 4:17/18. -- “Even in his 'servants' God places no trust. He catches his 'angels' in deviation.” -- The term 'servants' here stands for 'angels'. The argument is “a fortiori”: God’s angels—so 'close' to God—are already subject to deviation! How much more so Mortals, people! This text teaches us not to be naive about 'angels'. Anything that is not God is fallible! Even if it is 'higher' or, so to speak, “closer to God”.

Job 1:6. -- “On the day when the ‘ sons of God ’ (“sons of God”) announced themselves to God, ‘Satan’ also came along with them.” The term ‘sons of God’ is apparently identical with ‘angels’.

With this nuance that 'sons of God' perhaps emphasizes:

- a . the fact that they are higher than humans, in rank, and
- b. the fact that they belong to “the council of God” (and co-govern the universe with God).

See also *Job 2:1* . -- “Satan” - see also *Zakar 3:1/2* (“Satan” as the one who incites feelings of guilt, -- acts as an accuser “before God”) - is here rather a generic term (“an evil spirit that accuses”): the 'adversary' at the judgment of God accuses!

According to biblical scholars, 'Satan' is only a proper name, designating exactly one person, in *Chronicles, b. 1, 21:1* (“Satan took up against Israel and incited David to count the Israelites”), -- where he represents “the wrath of Yahweh”.

Satan or satan (one evil accuser or another) is one type of 'angel', an 'unclean' or alienated angel, apparently.

AT41

1 Kings 22:19. -- “I saw Yahweh seated on his throne. The whole 'army' (= 'host' or 'lord') of heaven was present, on the left and right of God.”

The 'angels' – “heavenly spirits” – apparently constitute God’s counsel or court, once again. That is: they are involved in ruling with him in the universe.

See also *Ps. 82 (81):1* (“the divine counsel”), where the angels are called 'deities'. Compare with *Ps. 58 (57):2* ('deities' or “divine beings”). Also *Ps. 82 (81):6* .

It appears that the angels deviate to a very high degree! They act alongside God, even in his name, as 'judges' (*Ps. 82 (81):2*; *Ps. 58 (57):2*) or 'princes' (*Ps. 82 (81):7*), but do not do it well, -- to such an extent that God threatens destruction.

Viewed in this light, they join “the many who will turn aside here and there,” while the 'iniquity' (unscrupulousness) will increase (*Daniel 12:4*).

A. Bertholet, *Die Religion des alten Testaments* , Tübingen, 1932, 130, e, adds: “Those addressed in *Ps. 82* and *58* are the old pagan deities, -- in a reinterpretation from Jewish monotheism (the belief in one God)”.

Note -- Reference may be made to *O. Keel/Chr. Uehlinger, Gottinnen, Gotter und Gottessymbole (Neue Erkenntnis zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels)*, Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 1992, which shows that in Israel the worship of the one Yahweh was accompanied by the worship, on a smaller scale, of their own deities in the family, clan, village, city.

See also *M.-Th. Wacker/ E. Zenger, Hrsg., Der eine Gott und die Göttin (Gottesvorstellungen des biblischen Israel im Horizont feministischer Theologie)*, Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 1991, which discusses the typical female sense of religion and the 'mother goddess'.

Dan. 10:13ff. -- "The 'prince' of the Persian empire resisted me for twenty-one days. But Michael, one of the 'first princes', came to my aid."

Dan. 10:20. -- "I must again engage in battle with the prince of Persia. When this work is finished, then the prince of Yavan (Ionia, Greece) will come."

Let us read *Matthew 4:8/9* (Jesus' temptation).-- "Again the devil took Jesus up a very high mountain, -- showed him all the riches of the world with their glory and said, "All this I will give you, if (...)"

The 'princes', or "first princes," apparently sometimes play a very high role. Satan is the first and most powerful among them, since he controls "all realms" of this world.

AT42

Indeed: *John 12:31* says that "the prince of this world"—Satan is apparently meant—will be cast out by the judgment of God,—judgment that consists in Jesus' death (Pass of the Cross) and glorification (Pass of the Resurrection).

Dan. 12:1 . -- "At that time (*note*: a time in which God reveals his glory in a remarkable way) Michael, the great prince, who keeps the children of your people, will stand up (to protect). It will be a time of fear, -- such as has not been since the existence of nations." At that time" your people will be saved: all those, at least, who are recorded in "the book".

Incidentally: “the book” is the book of the predestined or the book of (eternal) life (*Exod. 32: 30 ff.* : the book in which the deeds of people are 'recorded' by which their fate is determined, as *Ps. 69 (68):29* says).

Conclusion regarding the folk angels.

Deut. 32:8. -- “When the Most High assigned the nations their inheritance, -- when he divided the sons of men (“children of men” is 'people'), he determined the territories of the nations according to the number of the sons of God”. But—so the text continues—the portion of Yahweh was his people. The pagan nations are thus, with Yahweh, ruled by 'angels', 'princes'. Yes, by Satan, as *Matt. 4:8/9* says. As *John 12:31* says. “The angel of Yahweh” (“the angel of God”).

Gen. 16:7. -- “The angel of Yahweh found Hagar, the slave of Sarai, at a certain spring in the desert”.

In many ancient texts, “the angel of Yahweh” is simply Yahweh himself insofar as he 'appears', reveals himself, in a form adapted for created beings, humans on earth in particular. After all, God is so all-transcending, so transcendent, that he adopts the mode of appearance of “an angel” as a means of communication. As is clearly evident from *Gen. 16:13* , where instead of “the angel of Yahweh” simply 'Yahweh' appears. -- That this is the case must be apparent from the context.

Note -- “The elements of this world”. -- *Galat. 4:3; 4:9;* -- *Col. 2:8; 2:20.* -- 'Stoicheion', Latin: elementum, meant, in antiquity, everything that governs something and thus makes it understandable, explains it.

AT43

Thus, 'stoicheiosis', Latin elementatio, factor analysis, is the fact that one seeks out, seeks out, and analyzes the factors, internal and external, that constitute something. Something that one must prioritize in order to understand something—that is what 'element' is.

The expression, in Paul, therefore means “the things one must put first to understand this world.” And specifically “this world” in its good and evil aspects! In Paul’s case, however, this is more limited: for example, the Law of the Jews! The system of the law regulated Jewish life in detail insofar as this life involved interaction with “this world.”

Thus *Galat. 4:8/10* . -- “At that time, because of your ignorance concerning God, you were subject to deities—which, in reality, are not 'deities'— But now—now that you have come to know God—or rather: now that he has 'known' you (has taken you into his intimacy)—: how can you return to those 'elements' without power or value? To which you wish to subject yourselves again—as ever before! Anxiously taking into account 'days', 'months', 'seasons', 'years'!”

So much for the Galatians regarding their pagan deities.

Galat. 3:19. -- “To what end then is ‘the law’ (of the Jews)? It was added for the sake of deviations. Until the coming of the posterity for which the promise was intended. It was issued through the ministry of the angels and the intervention of a mediator.” Jewish traditions maintained the presence of angels on Mount Sinai (*Exod. 19:16ff.*), where Moses, the mediator, received the law from Yahweh’s hands.

The New Testament, on the other hand, knows God himself, without a mediator in the style of a Moses, as the revealer of “the new law”.

The deities in paganism and the angels in Judaism are (a very important part of) the elements of this world. They were either eliminated or subdued by Jesus' work of salvation.

As *Col. 2:15* says: the angels, who mediated the law, have placed themselves between God and men (the worship of angels shows it, as *Col. 2:18* says).

That abuse of power was nullified by Jesus' cross and resurrection. The law which they—according to a tradition—imposed on people “from God,” they themselves have not, at least partially, observed! Which once again demonstrates that being naive regarding 'angels' is misplaced!

AT43

Anyone who might still harbor doubts regarding the pagan deities—whether they really apply such double standards—can read *WB Kristensen, Collected Contributions to the Knowledge of Ancient Religions* , Amsterdam, 1947, - *Cycle and Totality* , oc, 231/290!

An excerpt: “In Anu, the Babylonian cosmic god, all divine energies were united. He was the universal determiner of destiny: salvation and doom emanated from him. Thus Labartu, the demon of sickness, was called ‘the daughter of Anu’. Human

ideals and desires were no 'law' for the world leader! His nature was 'demonic' – in the religious sense of the word – : i.e., unfathomable and unpredictable, supra-rational and supra-ethical.” The latter means that, when it came down to it, Anu paid no heed to reason and conscience.

(Oc, 272). -- “This type of conception of God was known to most ancient peoples and asserted itself especially in relation to the highest deities. The god of Job, the Greek Zeus, the double Fortuna in Rome, the Indian Varuna, once even Ahura Mazda who encompassed both heavenly spirits, -- all display - as sovereign determiners of fate - the nature of the Babylonian Anu. Salvation and calamity originated from them, -- downfall and rise, -- the contradictions that constitute the enduring life of the world (...). The will of these deities was fate, the 'maira', divine but inhuman”. (Oc, 273).

Kristensen, a connoisseur, speaks plainly! -- “The deities were not just in the ordinary sense of that. By their conduct they denied “the laws” which they had nevertheless established for men. And the ancients were fully aware of this contradiction in the 'divine' essence.” (Ibid.).

It is not without reason that the Bible begins with: “The day you eat (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), your eyes will be opened and you will be like deities that know good and evil” (*Gen.* 3:5). Whereby 'know' means “to deal intimately with”, “to feel at home in”!

As Bertholet notes, the Bible designates the pagan deities as 'angels' who constitute God's court council, who help govern the universe with him, and occasionally against him. Because they help determine the universe and our fate within it, they are “the elements of the universe”. Ambiguous!

AT45

Tobias' 'traveling companion'.

Tobit (Tobias) is the story of Sar(r)a and Tobias. -- However, the story of the angels concerns Tobias first and foremost, while a story of the demons concerns Sar(r)a.

The story demonstrates the influence of the invisible ones. -- let us pause at the essential. Tobias' traveling companion. -- 5:4ff. -- “Tobias, son of Tobit, went out of the house in search of a good guide who was able to get with him to Media.

As soon as he was outside, he found Raphael the angel standing before him—without suspecting that it was “an angel of God.” He said: “Where are you from, friend?” The angel: “I am an Israelite, one of your brothers! I have come here to seek work.”

Tobias: “Do you know the way to get to Media?” The other: “Of course! I have been there many times (...)” -- Perhaps it would be better to translate – instead of “an angel of God” – “an angel by God” (for it is not a mode of appearance of God, but a truly independent being that does fulfill a divine mission).

From *Tob. 5:14/21* it appears that Rafael “will experience the journey with Tobias so that, just as the beginning goes safely, the return will also go just as safely.”

The angel Raphael as determiner of destiny.

Tob. 3:16/17 . -- “This time the prayers of both Sarah and Tobit were deemed acceptable to the glory of God. Immediately Raphael was sent to 'heal' both of them.

a. He had to remove the white spots from Tobit's eyes (*Tob. 2:9/10*) so that he would see God's light with his own eyes.

b . He had to deliver Sarra, Raguel's daughter, to Tobias, Tobit's son, as a wife and immediately free her from Asmodeus, the most wicked of the demons.”

The healing, one physical (the blindness caused by dirt in Tobias's eyes), the other psychological (Sarah's marital obsessions), is simultaneously a restoration of one's fate. Without that twofold intervention by the mighty angel who is Raphael, the fate of those involved would have been nothing but sad.

At that moment.

Traditional religions are familiar with the concept of “holy time”. Here, God, through his angel as determiner of destiny, shows his glory by allowing the two destined for each other to meet physically, as it were, “at that moment”.

AT46

Where 'meeting' is more than just seeing each other by chance or something like that: a deep encounter entails a change of destiny! It is an introduction, but with more than ordinary involvement from both parties.

Well then, Sarra and Tobias meet “at that moment”: just as “in those days”, “at that time”, indeed, “in the beginning” indicate sacred, power-laden times, so too “at that moment”.

Matthew 11:25/27, a 'wisdom text' according to some biblical scholars, says: "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden 'those things' (the mysteries of God's 'kingdom', God's intervention) from 'the wise' and 'the intelligent' and have revealed ('disclosed') them to 'the very little ones'."

This wisdom or apocalyptic text applies here.

a. The critical rationalist, a typical modern and postmodern representative of "the wise and the sensible," will call "at that moment" mere coincidence.

b. The apocalyptically minded person will admittedly call it a 'coincidence', but nevertheless a 'striking' or 'remarkable' coincidence! Especially when one takes the entire context into account.

In other words: the wise and the intelligent "do not see"; the "very small ones" see! Invariably the same phenomenon when it comes to sacred and occult matters. Not without reason is it called, in Scripture, God's 'counsel' (which helps determine our fate) "fathomable to no one." Unless one opens oneself to His unveiling and arrives at 'faith,' which sees clearly in His miraculous works.

It is immediately abundantly clear that Rafael plays the role of 'assistant', 'helper' -- a skilled guide. And in matters of marriage at that! Yet another one of those 'everyday' things! In which "God's glory," the source of miracles, intervenes directly -- at least if one prays, living in intimate contact with that glorious God.

Let us reread *Genesis 24:1/67* (The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah). Abraham's servant must seek a 'God-willed' wife for his son: "Yahweh, with whom I, Abraham, am always intimately involved, will send 'his angel' with you."

Even then, people lived in such a way that they expected guides from God, especially in important life matters. Such as marriage.

In addition, the companion is also a 'paraclete', someone who provides (legal) assistance, as *Tob. 12:12* says: "Know therefore that when you were praying, you and Sarrah, it was I who brought your supplications before the glory of the Lord (...)"

AT47

Therefore, when we pray—for each of us possesses, in principle, a guide—there is at least our personal angel (usually, among the more Christian people, referred to by the term “guardian angel”) who prays with us.

Even if the thought and knowledge of the Book of Tobias were limited to this one fundamental truth—if we pray truly and sincerely, then we are never alone—then the so-called (post)modern 'loneliness' would be banished from the world forever! In the system of Biblical, correctly understood revelation—unveiling or apokalupsis—we are never 'lonely' or 'alone'!

Note -- Before we conclude this chapter, one more thing: *Ezek. 40:1/4* (Vision and interpretation of the vision) teaches us that, in activities of revelation ('prophecies', 'revelations', 'unveilings'), the angel or angels sometimes play a key role. Which *Dan. 8:16*, -- *9:20/23*, -- *10:5/12*; -- *Zakar. 1:7/9*, -- *2:1ff.*; -- *Rev. 1:1*, -- *10:1ff.*, confirm.

Which is not so surprising, for the prophets friendly with God pray incessantly and therefore have at least one praying power—an angelic power—with them.

Conclusion . -- *Ephesians 1:20/21* teaches us that the glorified Christ subjects everything to Himself -- that He far surpasses the principalities, powers, forces, and dominions (all contemporary names for those who control the cosmos as 'elements' (controlling factors))!

Colossians 1:16 repeats: Jesus, as Logos, as the second person of the Holy Trinity, is co-creator of all that ever existed, exists, and will exist! “Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers—everything was created by Christ and for him (out of nothing).”

Col. 2:10 repeats: “(Jesus) is the 'head' of every dominion and every Power”. *Col. 2:15*: “He has stripped the dominions and the powers of their power”.

Philippians 2:10 summarizes: “Everything kneels in Jesus’ name (in his essence), -- from the highest peak of the heavens, on earth and in the underworlds (dungeons)”. This is the 'three-tiered worldview' (which rejects the critical-rationalist mentality).

AT48

“Heaven, earth, underworld” stands for the dimensions of the entire cosmos! This is: the entire creation! Beneath our feet is reality. Around the earth lives everything

that deserves the name 'life'. Surrounding our atmosphere is the sidereal world with its 'aura' or radiation belt.

The critical rationalist has never provided any proof—conclusive proof, that is—of the fact that these three to four dimensions (we take the aura as something separate) are occult and sacred and cannot be reduced to anything. Not even the semblance of proof. Yet "the wise and the intelligent" feel compelled to ridicule this classification as belonging to an "obsolete or outdated mythical stage".

As if that “evolutionary notion” were without any criticism. Biological beings evolve. But in and through that evolution, constants also remain. So too in the rest of total reality—beyond the purely biological.

Moreover: especially St. Paul, -- *Galat. 5:3* (“the cosmic elements”), -- the already mentioned *Coloss. 2:15* (“the cosmic elements, indicated by some names of that time, are subjects”), -- *Eph. 2:2* (“The prince of the realm of the air, that is, the sphere where demons of all kinds reside, is invariably at work in those who oppose the figure of Jesus and his message (*John 8:41/44* confirms this regarding the Jews of that time)”).

Ephesians 6:12 states it more than clearly: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the universe in the darkness, against the spirits of evil that ‘dwell in the heavenly realms’.”

This shows that what *Genesis 3:5* says—the knowledge of good and evil, inherent to the (evil) spirits—still applied in Paul's eyes and will continue to apply. Which *Genesis 3:15* indicates in a vague, tentative manner.

As *Job 4:18* already said: “God catches (even) his 'angels' (executors of tasks) in deviation”.

Daniel 12:4 says that “many will turn away here and there, while unscrupulousness increases.” “Then comes the end when Christ will hand over the dominion to God the Father, -- after having destroyed every dominion, domination, and power” (*1 Cor. 15:24*).

Conclusion. -- We are heading towards the bitterest final battle! Like Paul: let us not be naive!

The Byzantine liturgy in this regard.

The angels—good (conscientious), good—and—evil, evil—guide the entire sacred history from the serpent in the beginning to the archetypal evil one at the end of time.

Here are a few texts.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., 11, 113. -- “Once you formed, God, an idea and, with wisdom, you caused the assemblies of the angels to come into being, so that they might surround your goodness, your three-person divinity, in service”.

One can see it: the radical Biblical doctrine! What stands out is the emphasis on us as matter—or bound beings—in contrast to matter-free spirits.

“Father, Son, together with the Holy Spirit, look down upon us who, in faith, ... praise You and Your power. Look down upon us, created from the dust of the earth, with Your spirits of fire. For we know no other deity besides You, and call out to those who praise You in songs of praise: “I am (*Exod. 3:14* (“I am” is God’s name); *John 8:24*) with You, and no one is against You.”

There is no question, in the Byzantine liturgy, of false deification—idolatry of angels—however immaterial and spiritual, however close to God they may be (in power and capacity)! Quite the contrary: “I am” with you and no one—not even the fire or divine energy spirits—is against you! Cf. *K. Kirchhoff, oc, 115.*

The enemy.

We just saw it: *Ephesians 2:2* : “the prince of the sky” at work in all who oppose Christ’s message is “the enemy”.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., 11, 246. -- “Since my youth, ‘the enemy’ has seduced me and set me ablaze with his lustful feelings. Yet, when I place my trust in you, Lord, I drive him to flight.” -- In this sentence, the liturgist summarizes an entire experience of seduction.

Indeed: woe to him who thinks that the 'lustful feelings' of a demonic-satanic nature arising in his unconscious and subconscious soul can be overcome by mere created forces!

Let us not be naive regarding the invisible! It is not the Bible. Neither were the pagan mythologists and theologians.

The final battle.

K. Kirchhoff, Ost., II, 246. -- “He whose hope is directed toward the Lord will not fear Him even when He judges the universe in the fire and subjects it to 'vengeance' (rectification of injustice)”. -- One thinks one hears Paul speaking!

AT150

Mary and the angelic world.

The angel Gabriel, already mentioned in *Dan. 8:16, 9:21/23* , announces to the Virgin Mary “the good news” (*Luk. 1:19*).

K. Kirchhoff, Ueber dich freut sich der Erdkreis (Marienhymnen : Münster (Wf.), sd, 27. -- “Gabriel was granted the honor of knowing the counsel (of God) transcending all reality, wholly and utterly immaculate virgin. He brought you uncommonly joyful news. It clearly revealed the conception of the Logos (Jesus as cosmic wisdom) in your womb and announced your ineffable bringing into the world”.

The high angel stands in the service of God and of the Virgin Mary. K. Kirchhoff, *ibid.*, 28. -- “In hymns of praise we sing of your great and awe-inspiring mystery. For in a way—hidden even from the heavenly angelic choirs—“the one who is” (*Exod. 3:14* : “I am”) has descended upon you like dew on the fleece, so that, celebrated everywhere in hymns of praise, salvation may become ours and a new way of being”.

It is clear: Mary's motherly mystery surpasses even the high intelligence of the angels! Gabriel was therefore first initiated through divine intervention (a pure grace) before he could convey the good news.

Once the secret penetrated the choirs of angels, their state of mind changed: “Rejoicing because they come to know—that is what the heavenly powers do! Rejoicing with those heavenly powers—that is what the armies of mortals do! For in your child, Virgin and Mother of God, they were made one. As is fitting, we praise your child.” (*Ibid.*).

“Serving the heavenly powers approach your bringing into the world, -- rightly astonished at the miracle of your virgin motherhood, who remained a virgin forever. For you are pure before your bringing into the world, and you are pure after Jesus' birth.” (*Oc, 28f.*).

“The enemy” and “his prison” too are destroyed! Oc, 29. -- “Killed by your life-giving fruit, God-graced Jesus, the enemy and immediately the underworld were crushed before all eyes, We, prisoners, were therefore also set free. Therefore I cry: “Destroy the passions in my heart!”

We know it: the hell experience teaches that the passions in the depths of our heart can be the gateway to “the enemy” and “the dungeon”. Yet in that realm too, Mary’s mystery of motherhood is the saving power.

AT51

10. The Marian Mystery.

We have established this on numerous occasions: Mary, because she “brought into the world” (caused to ‘appear’) Jesus, the Logos, the divine wisdom encompassing the universe, stands at the center.

E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 97 . -- “He who was glorified on the holy mountain (Sinai) and who, in the burning bush, made known the mystery of the Virgin, the Lord, -- let us sing of Him and exalt Him throughout all ages”.

What analogy, or partial similarity, does the Byzantine liturgist find between the burning bush and Mary's mystery? The fact that the burning bush did not burn up—indeed, it did not even burn. Likewise, the Logos 'appearing' in Mary's womb did not burn his mother: even her virginity remained radically intact. The intactness in the bush serves as a model for the intactness in Mary's bringing into the world.

On Maundy — 'Great' — Thursday (E. Mercenier, oc, 137), the liturgy explains this further. “When, during the Last Supper in the course of which you rested with your own, you revealed the great mystery of your Incarnation to the initiates — 'mysts,' — of the Spirit, you said: ‘Eat the bread of life — this is my body — and the blood of imperishable life’.”

But the final result, at that moment, of what happened in the womb of the immaculate Mary, was the fact that Jesus, as it were, embodied himself in the bread and the wine.

The embodiment in Mary serves as a model for the essential embodiment in the Eucharist, which is its extension. Yet another example of analogical thinking.

E. Mercenier, oc, 137. -- “Your birth as the fruit of a conception without a sperm cell is inexplicable. The bringing into the world of a human being by such a mother is free from all decay.

This implies that the birth of God makes the whole of nature new. -- Therefore we, all races, praise you as mother and also bride of God, -- according to orthodox doctrine”.

'Nature' is here:

a. human nature, which, in Mary, possesses a member that brings into the world virginally (which is truly 'new'),

b . the entire cosmic nature that is involved therein. The mystery of the Virgin renews the entire cosmos.

AT52

Whoever might still harbor doubts about this, let him listen (*K. Kirchhoff, Ost., II* , 245):

“For your sake, favored one, Mary, the whole creation rejoices, -- the host of angels and the race of men. For you are the hallowed temple and the spiritual paradise, -- you, the glory of the virgins; for from you God ‘appeared in the flesh’ and our God who is before the ages became a boy. For he made your womb the throne, -- made your body larger than the heavens. -- For your sake, favored one, the whole creation rejoices. Glory be to you.”

One feels, in the repetition of “for your sake, the blessed one, the whole creation rejoices,” the immeasurable and immeasurable Biblical veneration for that girl, that woman who was once Mary. If ever there can be talk of a 'cosmic' figure, then first and foremost in the case of Mary. That, yes, that is her mystery. *Her* mystery. In its entire breadth, length,—depth and height.

Mary's beauty . -- 'Beautiful' in ancient Greek means “anything that commands admiration and wonder”.

K. Kirchhoff, Ueber dich, 86. -- “You were called the prophet Isaiah (*Is. 11:1*) ‘the branch from which the beautiful flower springs’, Christ, God, -- with a view to the salvation of those who, in faith and love, entrust themselves to your protection”.

Oc, 44: “As glorious” as exceedingly beautiful, as entirely undefiled among women, God has chosen you and dwelt in your immaculate womb. (...)”.

Oc, 78. -- “As exalted above all the beauty of the angels, -- so you were seen, for you, bride, brought their Maker and Lord into the world from your immaculate blood in the flesh, him who saves all who praise him”.

The reason.

Mary's secret is her son.

Oc, 85. -- “The mystery that was once predetermined and known by the omniscient God before the ages, is now shown in the fullness of time in your bosom, exalted above all spot, as reaching its realization”.

O. c., 118. -- “As the chosen one and exceedingly beautiful you appeared before God, before creation, you, celebrated everywhere in hymns of praise, -- in the splendor of your stream of light. -- Let those who sing of you in hymns of praise shine with joy.”

In other words: Mary – long before the creation of the universe – was an idea of the Trinity.

AT53

After the idolatry, the true deification.

K. Kirchhoff, *Ueber dich*, 163f . -- “The mystery of the primordial beginning, -- today it is revealed: God’s Son becomes the child of a man in order to—by sharing in our wretchedness—communicate His glory to us.

Adam was once deceived: although he desired it, he did not become 'god'! God, however, becomes man in such a way that Adam becomes 'god'.

Rejoicing is the duty of creation, and nature performs a tightrope walk because the Archangel Gabriel appears before the Virgin in deep reverence and brings her the “Rejoice” that dispels sadness. -- You have appeared out of the deepest compassion, our God, in the garment of a man. Glory be to You.” --

In the liturgy, the 'present' (which is emphasized here) still continues. Why? Because the Incarnation, with all that it entails (the work of redemption), comes from God's eternity, existing for all ages, accompanying all ages, continuing after all ages,

That 'present' is there again and again in the liturgy and in daily life, such that we are contemporaries of Mary's motherhood and what flows from it.

It is clear: God's idea existing for every creation, namely that the second person becomes human to divinize man, dominates all Biblical and Byzantine liturgical thought and life.

Note: that pre-existing or pre-existent in God's spirit is simultaneously actual and future.

It is the source of past, present, and future: thereby, it is an eternal present that encompasses and establishes our time-bound past, present, and future.

That is the correct meaning of the term 'primeval beginning', better described as "eternal origin" (in which past/present/future, as we, mortals-in-a-course-of-time, experience them, are suddenly encompassed).

Queen of the universe.

K. Kirchhoff, Ueber dich, 144. -- "We call you Ruler and Master of the universe. For you have brought him who is truly God into the world in an unspeakable manner, -- him who created the universe and controls and sustains it, -- you are the One exalted above every spot".

Oc, 49. -- "You carry the Maker of the universe in your arms, Pure One. Through your intercessions make us favorable to Him, -- us who take refuge in you with full conviction."

AT54

Mediatrice of all graces.

Problem-solving is the essence of God's counsel for all ages, throughout all ages, after all ages.

K. Kirchhoff, Ueber dich, 43 . -- "Accept your mother whom you have chosen, Lord, as mediatrice in your love for us. May, at once, the universe be filled with your goodness (**note:** you, the source of all that is truly valuable and sound) so that we may all exalt you as "the gracious Lord"".

Oc, 57. -- “You have given us your mother, Christ, as a Mediatrix who never disappoints. Thanks to her prayer, graciously impart to us the 'goodness' (**note** : all that is truly valuable) distributing Spirit that comes forth from the Father through you.”

Mary, as Mediatrix, is the gate through which the Triune God—Father, Son, Spirit—enters into this world and into our lives.

This acting as an intercessor amounts to very practical problem-solving. Oc, 182: “The dead came to life through you, for you received life-without-further into your womb. Those who were mute were given speech. Lepers were healed. Diseases depart. The throngs of spirits in the heavens were overcome, -- Virgin, you, the salvation of mortals.”

In other words: the miracles of her divine Son were made possible by her motherhood. If you will: the incarnation from the Virgin created the necessary condition for the miraculous appearance of Jesus. In that sense, Mary is truly “Meditrix of all graces”.

Update

Mary was not only a Mediatrix in the 'evangelical' past!

Oc, 151. --”Deliver the vulnerability of the body and the powerlessness of the soul, Mother of God, from those who in love take refuge in you who brought Christ, the Savior, into the world for us”.

Oc, 148. -- “By severe weakness, by morbid passion I am put to the test, maiden. Be my 'helper'! For as a treasure of salvation that never perishes, I know you, wholly and utterly pure, -- a treasure that can never be exhausted.

Or even more vividly: Oc, 150. -- “I now lie on the bed of the sick, beaten! For my 'flesh' (**note** : wretched humanity) there is no longer any salvation in prospect. -- You, who have received God in your womb, the savior of the world, the liberator from sickness -- you, the 'good one', I beg: “Save me from the ruin of sickness.” Even what we now call “burnt out” (literally: “burned out, totally despondent”) falls under Mary’s authority.

AT55

Oc, 147. -- “The storms of the life of passions howl around me. With great despondency it overwhelms my soul. -- Grant peace, bride, through the deep tranquility of your son, your God, -- you, the one exalted above every spot”.

Oc, 148 .-- “Bring to rest the confusion of my passions and the tossing and turning of my missteps, -- you, the bride of God, who brought Christ, the one who is truly the guide, into the world”.

Oc, 148 . -- “As a suppliant I turn to you, virgin: “My confused state of mind, the storms of despondency, -- drive them away!”. For you, bride of God, have conceived Christ, the prince of peace, in your womb, -- you, the only immaculate one”. “Refuge of sinners / female sinners”.

O. c., 1 38 .-- “As the good thief I call out to you: “Friend of mankind, think of me!”. As the sinner I have tears in my eyes and cry: “I have sinned, -- like the prodigal son, once. Receive me, who is given over to despair, in my repentance, -- thanks to the Mother of God. So that I sing joyful songs (...)”.

Oc, 139 . -- “I spent my life in carelessness: I paid no attention to your holy laws and your high commandments! But now have mercy on me and save me -- thanks to Him who brought you into the world, -- as a gracious and merciful God”.

O. c., 139 . -- “As a frivolous man I have squandered my life, -- I have remained a tree without fruit. Immediately I become fearful because of the (last) judgment, because of the unquenchable fiery glow of Gehenna (hell). -- But You have brought the unmasked 'fire' (**note** : divine life energy) into the world! Preserve me, then, from the glow of hell, -- thanks to Your mediation”.

As OCR 137 states: even those who, “in folly” (i.e., lack of divine insight), have strayed very far from God—even such people are not without hope! Mary is the deliverance of the hopeless! Of those mentioned in the parable concerning the workers “of the eleventh hour” (who have lived carelessly). Absolute despair does not exist in a Marian context. The absolutely despairing inflict that cursed state of the soul upon themselves.

AT56

11. The Christ Mystery.

We first discuss the individual parts of the mystery or mysterious event that represent the person and salvific work of Jesus, the Christ.

1. March 25. -- The Good News. -- The Conception of Jesus.

K. Kirchhoff, *Ueber dich*, 41. -- “The power of the Most High, the wisdom of God, - as a person in its fullness it took on 'flesh' (wretched human existence) from you, Immaculate One, and lived together with mortals. For that power and wisdom made themselves known in its glory.” -- This language is that of the books of wisdom: Jesus as the power and wisdom of God, on a cosmic scale moreover, becomes human - among - humans.

Note -- Julius Tyciak, **Die Liturgie als Quelle ostlicher Frommigkeit **, Freiburg i. Br., 1937, 17f., explains. -- “Today the mystery foreseen from all eternity is revealed (...). God becomes man such that he deifies Adam (*note* : metonymically for “mankind”). Yet the (*note* : non-human) creation also immediately has reason for joy and the (*note* : non-human) nature may rejoice. For the archangel (Gabriel) enters the Virgin, full of trembling, and brings her the greeting which is the opposite of sorrow”.

It is clear: this excellent connoisseur and sensitive to Eastern piety and liturgy that Tyciak is, emphasizes this! It concerns a reversal into the opposite of a broad cosmic nature. Just as the Old Testament wisdom books think broadly cosmically, so too do the Byzantine liturgies.

About You, 183. -- “The hidden mystery—which even the angels did not know—was entrusted to the Archangel Gabriel. -- And now he shall come to you, the only immaculate and glorious (...), -- to you, the recreation of the race (of men). And he shall say to you “rejoice, wholly holy! Prepare yourself—by the (yes) word—to receive God, the Logos (universal wisdom), into your womb”.

Ibid. -- “A language which she, Mary, did not understand, -- she, the Mother of God. For the archangel spoke to her the words of the good news. -- Accepting the “Rejoice” in faith, she conceived you, the God of the ages, in her womb.

AT57

Immediately we too rejoice and call out to You: “God, You have – without changing – taken on 'flesh' (= wretched human existence) from her. Grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.”

Two remarks.

a. Note the 'present' or 'now': the divine decree (or 'programming') regarding the problem of the degeneration of creation enters into the history of Mary from the eternal now of the divinity itself.

The modernization exhibited by the text is, therefore, anything but a literary artifice! That modernization is 'mythical' or 'apocalyptic': what neither angels knew nor Mary immediately understood enters (sacred) history by sheer surprise.

b. The term “the great mercy”—in ancient Greek “to mega eleos” (“magna misericordia” in Latin)—is radically Biblical: *Ps. 51(50):3* (“in your great mercy wipe away my sin”), -- *Nehemiah 13:22* (“Have mercy on me according to your great mercy”).

The Parable of the Workers of the Eleventh Hour,

This embodies pre-eminently that great, end-time mercy: even ... those who, throughout the entire sacred history, “did nothing” (“they stood there idle”), receive, just before the end of “the day”—before “the night” (of the full end time) sets in—that share in the end-time happiness.

With the good news, the great prelude to the full end of times indeed breaks through. And thus also “the great mercy”—of which we— *Rev. th. 55* (“the workers of the eleventh hour”)—have seen the Marian, far-reaching degree. Every absolute despair—so typical of a number of contemporaries—is inflicted upon the individuals concerned! God’s offer remains valid.

About you, 103. -- “The savage horde of those so wicked that they do not, in clear words, confess you as the pure mother of God, will be weeping. -- For us, at least, you are indeed the gate of the divine light that dispels ‘the night’ of the unscrupulous life.”

Ibid., 108. -- “Show me, Virgin, the right way so that I—along that way—can find the gate that grants access to the heavenly realms,—to the divine dwelling places of paradise,—to the true, eternal blissful life”.

This text reminds us of the 'late' faith of the—precisely because of that late faith—good murderer.

AT58

2. Christmas. December 25.

K. Kirchhoff, ost., 11, 136 . -- “To the dead resurrection has now been granted through your unspeakable and ineffable motherhood, Mother of God, Ruler. For life—clothed in 'flesh' (earthly human existence)—has emerged from you radiantly and has visibly driven away the night of death”.

From this the radical unity of the entire Christ mystery becomes apparent: Christmas, Jesus' birth, is already Easter—and—resurrection! The 'dead'—that is us! We, as those alienated from God by virtue of original sin, are 'dead' to God, that is, deprived of divine glory and life. Life in the radical sense reveals itself only in Mary's child. Only then can we truly conceive of life-in-the-true-sense.

Over you, 105 . -- “In an inexpressible and inexpressible way you have today given birth to a son, wholly and utterly pure mother of God. Through which resurrection has been granted to the dead. For life, surrounded by 'flesh' (earthly humanity) from you, has appeared radiantly before all and has visibly destroyed the fear of death”.

You can see it: the same theme in endless variations!

Virginity.

Many modern and postmodern contemporaries cannot believe that Mary was a virgin mother! They never provide conclusive proof of this opinion—though they do offer biological indications which they never prove apply entirely to Mary's motherhood.

Ost., II, 84.-- “The Virgin bore her child while she did not know the mystery of mothers. And yet: she is mother and remained a virgin! In her honor we sing hymns of praise! We cry out to her: “Mother of God, joy be to you!”

Once again a theme that returns in endless praying variations.

About you, 102 . -- “Grace has blossomed open. Thanks to you the law has vanished, wholly holy. For you, pure one, brought the Lord into the world who grants us the forgiveness of sins, -- and remained virginal”.

The contrasting pair “law/grace” (Old Testament/New Testament) dates back to *Rom. 7:1ff.*, where St. Paul addresses both the value and the worthlessness of the Old Testament 'law'.

From the higher – divine – world.

Contemporary theologians speak of 'vertical'. Many theologians stick to "horizontal Christianity," which reasons from our human existence. Not so the Bible. Not so the Byzantine liturgy!

AT59

Over you, 104. -- "By his will alone, the one who lent 'flesh' (being wretched man) from your womb, -- your spotless womb, worked out of the world: for he wished to recreate the 'flesh' from above. -- We exalt him above all in all ages".

Grace is the divine life for man! The pure gift! Pure gift!

Ueber dich, 103. -- "The law became powerless! The shadow passed by. For exalted above our spirit and understanding, Virgin, appeared to me the grace of the birth of Him who is God and Savior".

Once again: the Pauline doctrine regarding 'law' and 'grace'.

The birth of a monarch.

We know: the Magi (three kings) "from the east" arrived in Jerusalem with the words: "Where is the Prince of the Jews who is so recently born? We have indeed seen his star (...)" (*Matt. 2:1ff.*).

Over you, 101. -- "When the princes had vanished from the tribe of Judah, wholly and entirely pure, your son and God appeared as 'shepherd' (prince) and began in truth the dominion "over the borders of the earth".

Jesus is the prince not only of the Jews, but—as apocalypticists especially see—of the entire planet. -- Jesus confirms it before Pilate's judgment seat: "Are you the prince of the Jews?" -- Jesus answered: "You say so." (*Matthew 27:11*).

Rev. 22:16 -- "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to make known to you these revelations concerning the churches. I am the root of the lineage of David, -- the bright morning star".

Mary shares in that sovereignty: since she caused the sovereign to emerge radiantly from her womb, she proves in all truth to be the ruler over all creatures.

Ueber dich, 41. -- "Look: clearly the mother of God—as the holy mountain upon which the house of the Lord is built—is exalted above "the powers" (the high angels)".

Ueber dich, 57 .-- “Above the assemblies of spirits you are exalted as the mother of God and you stand in God’s presence. We praise, praised virgin, your child and exalt it throughout all ages”.

Mary is, together with Jesus, “the primal couple” of revelation: “Every one among the heavenly beings kneels, Virgin, before the one who became ‘flesh’ of you. With the earthly beings kneel, as is fitting, the inhabitants of the underworld. For he made himself known in a glorious way.” Cf. *Philippians 2:10* .

AT60

The mother of the prince.

We know from cultural history what profound role both the prince's mother and the princess, as the prince's wife, played in the life of the monarch in ancient times, when kingship and all authority were still 'sacred'—rooted in a higher world and responsible for that higher world: they were, as it were, the throne itself upon which the male monarch reigned. For her mysterious life force was the true foundation of his masculine conduct.

Something of that nature also applies to Mary. -- One need read, for example , *1 Kings 2:19/22* : the king's mother 'seats' at the king's right hand; -- the 'possession' of one of the prince's wives (deposed or dead) is a title of succession, as indicated by *2 Samuel 3:7, 16:22*). See also *Jeremiah 13:18* (the queen mother). - Compare *Psalms 110 (109):1* (seating at the right hand in general).

Luke 1:43 -- “By what means is it 'given' to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?” says Elizabeth to Mary during a visit. That expression, viewed against the background of contemporary and former views, is telling.

Over you, 47 .-- “You are a princess. For amidst wonders you have, bride.” Brought the prince and lord into the world who destroyed the realms of 'Hades' (the underworld). Turn to him as a suppliant with outstretched arms, so that he may deem all who sing you of praise worthy of the heavenly kingdom.”

Psalms 45 (44):10 (“At your right hand ... a consort, laden with the golden jewels from Ophir”) is cited (*Ueber dich, 44*): “According to the psalmist, Pure One, you came as a princess (consort) at the right hand of the prince who came forth from your womb shining. -- Turn to him, whoever is entirely spotless, as a suppliant, that I may stand at “his right hand” on the day of retribution”.

The expression “at the right hand on the day of retribution” refers to *Matthew 25:34* (“Then the prince will say to those on his right hand: ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’”).

With which – incidentally speaking – the end times explicitly come into view.

Ueber dich, 171 .- “I will open my mouth and be filled with the spirit (God's inspiration). I will sing a song in honor of the Queen Mother.

AT61

I will appear joyfully at that hymn of praise. With joy I will sing of her wondrous things.

The paradox of the Incarnation in Mary's womb.

'Paradox' is “anything that goes against the prevailing opinion” or, furthermore, “anything that is some kind of reversal into the opposite”.

Over you, 121. -- “Above the hosts of disembodied angels you have become exalted, virgin, for you have provided a body for God, the disembodied. -- Furthermore I beseech you, pure one: “Kill all uncontrolled passions of my body”.

'Body' here is to be understood in a Platonic sense, namely “all that is embodied and immediately shares in all the joys and sorrows of cosmic life”. This term does not entail a principled contempt for all that is corporeal in itself (just as, incidentally, ... neither did it for the Greek thinker Plato). But it certainly does entail a non-naive cult of the body.

The paradox is, therefore, that precisely by providing the second person of the Trinity with a body-in-the-world, Mary reaches out above even the disembodied angels. By providing the so-called 'lower,' she elevates herself above the so-called 'higher'!

The extremely high veneration for the event of embodiment and the reverence for all that is the body is immediately apparent.

Something analogous: *Ueber dich, 137.* -- “The laws of nature have been renewed, thanks to you. For in a way that transcends nature, you have received the Logos (Jesus as cosmic wisdom) into your womb. -- Hereby I beseech you, in faith: “Let the

one, exalted above every spot, who has acted unscrupulously 'above human nature' in many situations and immediately distanced himself from God, repent, -- be, thanks to your prayers, a savior for him”.

The term “above human nature” (being conscienceless) refers to the Ancient Greek term 'huper.anthropos', 'Übermensch' (the man exceeding the average). Whoever speaks in this way 'exaggerates' somewhat, of course, -- especially when doing so in connection with 'nature' and 'laws of nature'. But speaking in this way insinuates a far-reaching form of cynicism or shamelessness, -- as the parable of the (cynical) judge and the (troublesome widow) demonstrates, (*Luke 18:1/8; // 11:5/8*).

That Mary left the laws of nature behind in her motherhood is, incidentally, a recurring theme of the Byzantine liturgy.

AT62

3. Christmas completed (*Epiphany, Theophany*).

J. Tyciak, Die Liturgie als Quelle ostlicher Frömmigkeit, Freib.i.Br., 1937, 14ff..

It is good to know the Pauline doctrine of non-human nature—creation—in order to understand what follows.

Rom. 8:18/25 says the following. -- The 'creation' is good in itself. But, through the first sin of Eve and Adam, it was dragged along into the joys and sorrows of unscrupulous humanity. Through Jesus' incarnation, matters are reversed: humanity, or at least the believer, now awaits the “coming glory” (end-time expectation). With it, the 'creation' also awaits “the revelation of (the glory of) the children of God (those who are like God)”.

But since the first sin and original sin, “creation groans, as in birth pangs,” until liberation comes for her too—with that of mankind.

This is the cosmic dimension of Jesus' incarnation—so evident to Biblical and Byzantine humanity.

Here is what Tyciak says. -- Christmas is already 'Epiphany', that is, the joyful entry of God as prince who fills humanity and the cosmos with 'light' (= divine glory). The 'sealing' (completion, completion) of the Christmas season, however, is the celebration of Epiphany, which is also called the “Feast of the Theophany” (celebration of the manifestation of God).

“Today you make your princely entry into the world. Immediately we were marked, as with a seal, by your light, for having come to understanding we cry out to you in praise: “You have come. You made your princely entry, -- you, the unapproachable light”.

In other words: that which is unapproachable, God as all-transcending reality, comes, and makes itself approachable! The paradox.

J. Casper, Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche, Fr.i.Br., 1939, 40.

It concerns the “great sanctification of the water”. Just as the Lord descended into the waters of the Jordan at his baptism—not to sanctify himself but to sanctify the water and at the same time the entire creation through consecration—so too the Church—she is the mystical, the hidden, enduring Christ—carries out every year the great consecration of the Jordan which sanctifies the whole world.

The texts. -- “The voice of the Lord echoes over the water (*Gen. 1:1ff.* (Creation story); - *Matt. 14:24ff.* (Jesus walks on the lake),-- 8:23/27 (Jesus calms the storm)) : “Come, receive all the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of deep reverence for God which is characteristic of Christ, who accomplishes His entry”.

AT63

'Spirit' means first and foremost “life force that creates gifts”—immediately also “Holy Spirit, third person”. The cosmic event is therefore accompanied by a kind of 'Pentecost', a descent of the Spirit. The water, the entire cosmos—they breathe out with us the attitudes of wisdom, knowledge—the foundation of wisdom and knowledge, namely, deep reverence for God. Man and cosmos, Jesus' work in man and cosmos are not two separate domains.—This text refers to the 'wind'—the spirit—of Yahweh over the primordial waters (Gen. 1:2).

“Today—so the text continues—the nature of water (**note:** all that is water) is also sanctified by consecration: the water of the Jordan (**note:** at Jesus' baptism) (like the Red Sea once was) parts (...) as it is confronted with the prince.”

“Let us then, brothers and sisters, draw water with joy, for to those who do so in faith, the gift of grace of the Holy Spirit is visibly bestowed by Christ, our God and at the same time the Savior of our souls.”

“Deem us worthy, Lord God, to become radiant in the light of this brightly shining day. For today the Holy Trinity revealed itself over the Jordan water.” Always the

Holy Trinity. Jesus, yes! But not without the Father, from whom he proceeds as the son,

and not without the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of both! Always the totality.

4. Note: -- *The liturgical pre-Lent and Lent.*

Let us reread *Matthew 3:13/17* (Baptism of Jesus) and, following in its footsteps, *Matthew 4:1/11* (Jesus's stay in the desert).

As *Deut. 8:2/6* (The test of strength in the wilderness) indicates: the forty-year journey through the wilderness—to the “promised land”—is, in Yahweh’s eyes, a test aimed at “revealing the depths of the heart.” Yahweh will only know with certainty what—specifically he—has in “his people” when they are subjected to a test. And thus to temptations of all kinds. If that 'chosen' people abstains, mortifies themselves, then it will become apparent that what they confess with their mouths is meant in the deepest heart.

Thus Jesus follows suit: he too will go into the desert to be “put to the test”.

AT64

Matthias characterizes Jesus using Old Testament quotations.

1. *The aftermath of the abnormality.*

Numbers 14. -- Numbers relates the deviation - *Dan. 12:4* (“Many will turn aside here and there”) - of the Israelites, who rebel against Moses and Aaron. Until the glory of Yahweh (*14:10*) is revealed.

With an announcement of the nasty aftermath—toledôt, history of descent (*Gen. 2:4, 6:9, 25:19, 37:2* —of the revolt (*14:22/25*). Which leads to a segregation of judgment between those who were found good by Yahweh and those who were found evil (unscrupulous) by Yahweh.

“For forty years you will bear ‘the weight’ of your transgressions and you will come to the full realization of what it is to let me, Yahweh, go” (*14:34*).

Reread *Revelation 18* (Hell as a precondition): Jesus' appearance in the history of mankind preconditions the failure of humanity, in a grossly unscrupulous manner. See also *Revelation 38* .

The turnaround into the opposite. -- The model is Joseph, the patriarch (*Gen. 50:20*): “The evil that you intended to do to me, -- God’s plan turned it into good.” Thanks to God’s “great mercy” (*Rev. th. 57*), Jesus is sent to deviant humanity, -- to turn the evil done to him (his Easter on the cross is the culmination of this) into good (heavenly glory based on faith).

Indeed: Jesus, once baptized in the waters of the Jordan, is sent by the Father into the wilderness to be put to the test there, “for forty days”.

Matthew, for example, cites three types of it. Jesus shows Satan what is at work—precisely in the depths of his heart:

a/ outside his heavenly Father he does not seek “his food” (the will of his Father) (*Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4*);

b/ he does not compel a false miracle from his heavenly Father, -- out of 'vain' glory (*Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7*);

c/ Jesus does not become apostate from his heavenly Father to cling to the false god of this world, Satan, in order to acquire “all the riches of this world with their glory” (*Deut. 6:13* (No idols); *Matt. 4:10*).

Jesus, in other words, fasts, mortifies himself! Thus the aftermath of the deviation is undone and turned into the opposite.

2.-- The return from the Heavenly Father.

As promised in *Ps. 91 (90):11/12* , the Father assists Jesus through the angels (*Matt. 4:11* : “Then the devil leaves Jesus, and behold, the angels approach him and minister to him”).

AT65

As *Ps. 91 (90):13* says (“You shall set your foot on the wild beast and the adder; with your foot you shall trample the lion cub and the serpent”) and as *Deut. 8:15* says (“Yahweh your God, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness—a land of poisonous snakes, scorpions, and thirst—he who, in a waterless land, made water well up for you (Israel) out of the hardest rock”), so it was with Jesus, according to *Mark 1:13* : “And Jesus lived among the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.” Jesus was protected by his heavenly Father against the “wild beasts” (symbol of the demons).

The new Moses.

a. Just as *Deut. 9:18* says (“For forty days and forty nights without eating bread and without drinking water”) of Moses, so too Jesus: “He fasted for forty days and forty nights. After which he was hungry.”

As the end of *Deut. (34:1/4)* says: Moses ascends Mount Nebo (...) and Yahweh shows him the whole (promised) land. Analogous to Jesus: lifted onto a high mountain by Satan, Jesus is shown by him “all the kingdoms of the world with their glory.” The latter—just like Moses—not to be absorbed into them; quite the contrary. With “the depths of his heart,” Jesus was totally estranged from political-economic powers in Satan’s grip.

b. That too; as stated, 'fasting' is: abstaining from the world, -- world characterized - 1 *John 2:15/17* - by sensual desire, the lust of the eyes (i.e. the seductive nature of the world and its glory) and the pride of riches. Into which Jesus could not possibly be absorbed.

Let us keep this in mind when we now cite a few texts.

J. Casper, Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche, Fr.i.Br., 1939, 43/55 (*the four-week pre-Lent*), 55/64 (*the great forty-day Lent*).

The deification of man insofar as he comes to the 'seeing' of faith is the goal of 'fasting', that is, keeping oneself distanced from the unscrupulousness as it characterizes the 'world' in the pejorative sense.

Oc, 46 “Every tear, every word of penance spoken, -- they lead to 'enlightenment' (glorification) in the Lord, -- to the renewal of the 'spirit' in God. That is the meaning of the fasting of the Eastern Church as well as of every Eastern 'asceticism' (mortification)”.

AT66

Incidentally: that is also the correct meaning of the statement that “we, during Lent, ought to live like angels – “bios angelikos”, angelic life”. The angels here are the God-friendly higher beings who, just like man, must adhere to the code of conduct – the Ten Commandments – of creation. Anyone who interprets the expression as 'flight from the world' is misunderstanding.

The Pre-Lent period includes, according to P. Francis, **The Pre-Lent** (A time of preparation for Great Lent), in: **Apostle Andrew** (Ghent) 21 (1993) 2 (Feb.),

Zacchaeus Sunday, the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, and the Sunday of the Last Judgment.

Steller emphasizes that we, as believers in Christ, “have the Lord Jesus Christ before our eyes”, who “in all things except sin (understand: unscrupulous behavior) assumed human nature”.

And indeed *Ueber dich*, 174. -- “To save the world, the ruler over all—at the expense of himself—has appeared in the world. Since he, as God, is a shepherd (prince), he appeared, out of love for us, as a man who is equal to us. For, while he calls upon the equal (*note* : the model, in this case his own humanity) through the equal (*note* : the original, in this case fallen humanity), he hears 'allelujah' as God.”

The latter means, namely: while Jesus lives on earth as an ordinary mortal, he is welcomed as God in heaven with an enduring 'alleluia'. Which means “praise Yahweh”.

The term appears in the New Testament in *Revelation 19:1* . An innumerable multitude in heaven cries out: “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power be allotted to our God!” In the Psalms, the term appears multiple times.

Indeed, thanks to the “*unio hypostatica*”, the unity of one person in two natures, Jesus is both visible on earth and invisible in heaven. Jesus’ fasting fits the scheme “by means of the like (model), his fasting, he calls forth the like (original), our fasting”. His model is god-human; ours is merely human but aimed at deification, thanks to him.

Regret/ remorse/ repentance. -- We feel regret when we miscalculate. Remorse, when we experience regret in our conscience. Repentance, when we feel regret both as conscientious beings and to be conscientiously consistent: (want to) rectify the wrong committed.

AT67

Listen to the text from the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. (Casper, oc, 49) “As the (good) murderer I cry: ‘Remember me!’ As the tax collector I lift my eyes downward, beat my breast and cry ‘Have mercy’. As the prodigal son—God who is wholly and utterly merciful—save me from my entire sinfulness (lack of conscience),—you who control everything,—so that I sing of the far-reaching degree of your understanding of me in songs of praise.”

Always the Bible as a source of inspiration! Why? Because what Scripture recounts—the story of the good thief, the parables of the Pharisee and the tax collector, and of the Prodigal Son—is situated in God’s eternal present, so that we, even in 1993, are still invariably contemporaries of Biblical history.

“Mysterium iniquitatis”.

The mystery of unscrupulousness, the deviation committed here and there by many (*Dan. 12:4*). -- *J. Casper, oc, 50*. -- On the Saturday before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, Byzantine Christians commemorate the souls of the deceased (All Souls' Saturday).

In the prayers of All Souls' Day, the essence of the Eastern Church becomes visible once again: it does not cling, with its gaze, to the actions of man – *note* : horizontal theology – but to the power of the Lord – *note* : vertical theology –

a. Admittedly, she too fully realizes the “mysterium iniquitatis” and is conscious—wholly and completely—of human weakness and wretchedness—since Adam’s Fall.

b. But she places her trust in the blood of the Savior, Jesus, with which he redeems mortals, -- in the victory of Christ which 'is' our victory, -- in his resurrection which is also our resurrection”.

The latter rests on the unity regarding the destiny of the Incarnate Logos and sinful but repentant humanity (“corpus mysticum”, the believers are the 'mystical' or hidden 'body' of Christ).

Here, “positive thinking” is the glory upon which we base our sinfulness and repentance, placing it at the center.

Whoever cultivates too much of a kind of 'mysticism of suffering' (meaning: dwelling emotionally on suffering—even that of Jesus) falls all too easily into—sometimes very self-absorbed—negative thinking. That is what the Christian East avoids!

AT68

The actual fast.

J. Casper, oc, 55/64 . -- The “Great Forty Days”, -- Comprising five Sundays. -- The actual Cross Easter is already here!

Let us begin the holy start of Lent with repentance of the soul. Let us cry out: “Lord, -- Christ, you alone are readily willing to make atonement”.

“The Holy Lent.” -- Note the term “holy (Lent)”: “holy” in the sense of power-laden, -- “holy” also, indeed, especially, in the sense of “morally upright,” for the Decalogue or “Ten Commandments” remain the great stakes, -- together with the salvation-historical perspective (preparation for the end-time glory).

Note : -- Although very 'spiritual' and attuned to all that is 'higher', the Byzantine liturgy is nevertheless very 'material'! Matter, too—in the Platonic sense (the cosmos with its well-being but also its woes)—is drawn into the total deification.

The veneration of the cross.

Except on the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) and August 1, the material cross is particularly venerated during the third Sunday of Lent and the entire fourth week of Lent. In the West, this is the case on Good Friday.

Casper: the tree of knowledge (*Gen. 2:17; 3:1 ff.*) proved fatal to Eve and Adam (with physical death as the final act of life). Christ died on a tree trunk (with the transition to eternal, God-given life as the result).

Cypress, pine, and cedar—according to a legend, the wood of Christ's cross—are therefore included in the liturgy of Lent itself, for the entire non-human creation (*Rom. 8:18ff.*) shares—as an extension of the “corpus mysticum Christi”—in Jesus' suffering (Cross-Easter).

Cfr. oc, 61. -- On the third Sunday of Lent, the Exaltation of the Cross takes place: the priest lifts a cross resting on a key, decorated with flowers, -- carries it - accompanied by light, to the faithful, blesses them with it, places it on a raised platform, and allows it to be venerated.

“Come, you who believe, and let us adore the cross that establishes life! Christ voluntarily stretched out his hands on the cross, thereby raising us to the originally foreseen blessed life.”

Then follow—starting from the Friday before the fifth Sunday of Lent—Cross Easter and Resurrection Easter. This is the essential core of the work of redemption in the strict sense—the core of the Christ mystery.

Note: -- Apocalyptic theology.

Reread Ap.th. 63 (“revealing the depth of the heart”), 64 (“in his depth of the heart”), 65 (“With the deepest part of his heart Jesus was totally estranged (...”).

'Apokalupsis', -- we have said this often before: 'apokalupsis', Latin: revelatio, the removing of the 'velum' or veil, thus: unveiling, -- that is the drawing bare of what is “in the depths” of the heart, : “in heart and soul” (another Biblical expression), “the drawing bare of the intimate or hidden thoughts of (many) hearts” (*Luke 2:35* ; Symeon's prophecy), -- comparable to *John 3:19/21* (see also *John 2:25* : “Jesus knew what is in man”), *John 9:39* .

People all too often confuse 'apokalupsis' with merely:

literary genre (“apocalyptic literature”),

b . with end-time revelations of all kinds. But people forget, or respectively repress and/or suppress, the fact that both the genre and the end-time doctrine stand or fall with “(the deepest part of) the heart”! Our end times are already being decided based on what we truly 'are' “in the depths of our heart”.

That this is indeed the correct interpretation is evident from the standard expression, *Matt. 25:34* : “Come, blessed of my Father, receive as an inheritance the kingdom.”

Note : the exercise of God's princely power - which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

Let us reason now, just this once: the realm of the end times (commencement on the last day) is already here, prepared as it is, in the spirit of the Father (and the Son and the Holy Spirit), from the creation of the cosmos. The end has been here from the very beginning!

Incidentally: why? Because all that unfolds in time(s) comes from God's eternal 'now' or 'present'. It comes, literally, from the eternity of God into time, in which it reveals itself, spread out into past, present, and future—albeit in a veiled manner (the mysterious), and indeed first and foremost “in the deepest depths of the heart”.

There is no more beautiful summary of what apocalyptic theology is than Jesus' expression "what already was from before the beginning"! This while he is speaking about the end times.

So that the literary genre that speaks of end-time catastrophes and the mighty judgment can already be found "in Lent," in which fate is decided in that end time. Fate analysis, yes! Depth psychology, yes! End-time doctrine, yes! All rolled into one!

AT70

5. -- *The Easter Mystery.*

Let us begin with Scripture.

P. van Imschoot, Jesus Christus, Roermond/Maaseik, 1941, 63/75, discusses Jesus as the Messiah, 'christos' (ancient Greek), the one who is 'holy' and consecrated to God through anointing.

Jesus had to distance himself from misinterpretations. For example, the view that the Messiah is "the son of David" who will liberate Israel from foreign domination and even dominate other empires (the 'political' interpretation). The people who saw Jesus were deeply attached to that opinion. Likewise, the view of the "apocalyptic books"—Dan . 7:13/14 and following in its footsteps—which posit a pre-existing, 'heavenly' savior who carries out the sifting of judgment (the wicked are condemned by him; the good "he invites to his table" (Enoch, Ezra)). So much for two opinions.

"Only at the end of his life—when his own conception of the Messiah had become clear enough—did Jesus openly declare himself to be 'the Messiah.' This conception is contained in the mysterious designation 'son of man,' which Jesus gave himself." (Oc, 68ff.).

What is true, however—according to the author—is that in some circles the term 'Son of Man' was applied to the Messiah.

a. *Jesus, the Son of Man* .

Van Imschoot says the following. -- The contexts in which Jesus presents himself as the Son of Man are twofold.

a. When he speaks of his return as judge "on the clouds of heaven" (*Mark 13:26*) or of his coming "in glory" (*Matthew 10:23*).

In it, he confirms Jewish apocalypticism (Daniel).

b. When he speaks of his leading role as “servant of the Lord” (“Ebed Yahweh”; *Mark 2:10* (as one who forgives earthly sins); -- especially *Mark 10:45* (Jesus does not come to be served but to serve and to give up his life as a ransom for many); *Matt. 8:20* (Jesus has nothing to lay his head on); *Mark 8:31* (prediction of his suffering).-- “In this last series of words of Jesus, the allusions to the servant of Yahweh are clear.” (Oc., 70).

In other words: in Van Imschoot's interpretation, 'Son of Man' and 'Servant of Yahweh' partially overlap.

b. Jesus, the servant of God.

Jesus sees himself as the realizer of what is found in Isaiah's texts about the (suffering and glorified) servant of Yahweh.

AT171

Isaiah 42:1/17, 49:1/7, 50:4/11, 52:13/53:12 contain the four Songs of Yahweh. Not without emphasis on suffering as the gateway to glorification.

A. Gelin, **De hoofdlijnen van het oude testament**, Antwerp, Patmos, 1962, 52/54, cites, for example: -- “Like a formless twig it shoots up, -- Like a root from thirsty ground: -- Without form or splendor to look up at, -- Without grace to please us”.

Or again: “Despised and cast out by men, -- Man of sorrows, visited by suffering: before whom we cover our faces, -- Whom we scorn and despise.” (Oc, 52).

The teller immediately refers to *Ps. 22* (Suffering and expectations of the righteous). *Ps. 22:18/19* reads: “I can count all my bones. People see me, look at me. Among themselves they divide my clothes and cast lots for my cloak.” This is mentioned as a detail by *Matt. 27:35*.

In summary. -- Jesus himself gives us the summary, -- *Mark 14:62*. Standing before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, and questioned by the high priest (“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus says—in the midst of his suffering ministry—: “Yes, I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power—(note : participating in God’s (judgmental) power)—and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

We said it with van Imschoot: the two in one, -- suffering servant (leading role), glorified Son of Man (ending role). But that, -- that is Cross Easter and Resurrection Easter in the liturgy! As van Imschoot says, oc, 73: according to *Luke 24:26* it is so.

“The Christ, -- did he not have to (*note* : according to God’s plan) endure all that suffering in order to thus enter into glory?”

In doing so, Jesus sets forth the texts “from Moses and the Prophets” that concern him, in order to bring the disciples of Emmaus and us, moderns and/or postmoderns, to true insight.

We conclude with a prayer.

H. Franke, Uebers., Wartende Kirche (Die ältesten Adventsrufe der Christenheit), Paderborn/Wien/Zürich, 1937, 39.

“The ineffably mysterious policy of the great council decree—let us, faithful people, honor it in humility. Surprised, we see the miracle appear in the birth by the Virgin Mary: the Godhead unites with our humanity; the essence in Christ radiates twofold. The services of heaven serve Him! And be subject to Him the powers of the whole world.”