

## **Course 8.8. Apocalyptic theology. 1992-1993**

**Content: see p. 72**

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

Fundamentally, 'theo.logy' is the bringing up of the hidden deity. And, thus, theology is essentially 'apokalupsis' or revelation of what God (deity) contains in hiddenness.

The theology of Byzantine liturgy (which means “consecrated service of the people”) is essentially apocalyptic theology. We want to clarify this in subsequent samples. We do not say “prove” in one scientific sense or another, because those who are not already at home in (as people open to) apocalypticism will not be convinced by any “proof” and will always avoid the obvious. Here we go.

### **1.-- The concept of God.**

Let us begin with the preposition par excellence of the Byzantine liturgy.

**Bibl.** : P. Kilian Kirchoff, OFM, *Osterjubiläum der Ostkirche (Hymnen aus der fünfzigstägigen Osterfeier der byzantinischen Kirche)*, (Easter Cheers of the Eastern Church (hymns from the fifty-day Easter celebration of the Byzantine Church)), Münster (Wf.), s.d..

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, supremely workable reality.

186: “He sees the one who is, - he is immediately initiated into the doctrine concerning the Spirit”. When the one who is, shows himself - apokalupsis, self-disclosure - , then the one who 'sees' him is immediately an initiate, a 'mustèrion', a 'myst' or initiate.

He/she, after all, has direct access to the 'mustèrion', the secret-intimate being, of God. To the 'mystery' that God is and ... remains, also for the initiate. This is called 'apophatic' theology, i.e. a type of speaking about God that respects the unspeakable.

### **Do we listen.**

“Hail, thou, Mary, seal of the prophets, thou, message of the apostles, of the proclaimers of God. For God - the truly being - you brought into the world for us - in an incomprehensible and unspeakable way - in “the flesh” (as an ordinary mortal). Thanks to him, we regained the “old” (originally willed by God) nobility and may enjoy the joy of paradise.

Therefore we praise you who give us such glory, in hymns, -- you, the beneficent mediatrix, -- you, the wholly holy : for we are so rich as to possess a mediatrix of eternal life, for your son distributes great mercy.”

***Explanation.***

**a. *Mary,***

the mother of God (of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity), is, seen from “the one who is”, central because thanks to her consent, “the one who is” became an ordinary mortal, “flesh” in, Biblical language.

**b. *The term “old.***

This is already present with Platon - does not mean - what we understand by it - “belonging to the past” or, even worse, “lived out”! It means “all that was present from the beginning thanks to the one who is” (and therefore 'old' after all these centuries).

**c. *“A mediator of eternal life”.***

'Eternal' means pretty much the same as 'old' of a moment ago! Century' means - as a translation of the ancient Greek 'aion', 'eon' - “a duration that is finished”. So e.g. a whole - note 'whole' - human life. Or an entire era. Not infrequently, the secret, apocalyptic emphasis is on the length of such an entire era. For example, the epochs of astrology are 'centuries', i.e. long-lasting, cosmic times that make up a whole.

But there is even more in the Biblical context: 'eternal' is the characteristic of the One who is! He is simply 'eternal', i.e. his era is so 'whole' (entire, all-encompassing) that there is neither beginning nor end!

Well, this of all things provides us as the Mediatrix and Mother Mary! share in the “eternal life” of the One who is eternal and inexhaustible. That is why Mary cannot be left out of any prayer (certainly not in the Byzantine liturgy). She is the gateway of eternal life.

**d. *“The great mercy”.***

God is not a terrifying deity. Unless for all those who cynically - sin against the Holy Spirit - reject him. He is essentially - not by accident - love in the sense of endearment. Tenderness to all that is paltry, sinful.

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

Thus that 'great' in the apocalyptic sense means both 'extensive' and 'eschatological' (bound to - the end times): the great mercy is, after all, provoked by the end-time degree of evil in the universe.

Something that is emphasized in the strictly apocalyptic texts of the Bible, e.g. (from Daniel onwards): the evil, ethical (lack of conscience) and physical (the damage to all that is), will be so 'great' that only a still 'greater' mercy from God's side will be able to save the universe and humanity (the flesh or poor humanity). That is then - in those end times - the great mercy. Understood "pre-eminently".

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

**e. 'Glory'.**

'Kebod', Greek 'doxa' (lat.: gloria). The radiance that emanates from a sovereign is glory. Since God invariably counts as the prince par excellence (as a transcendent or all-transcending being), his radiance is 'glory' in the all-transcending degree. Also source and origin of all possible glories in the context of the world created by him. The term 'glory', in the sense that it exceeds all possible forms of lordliness ('being lord'), is therefore one of God's constant characteristics.

**Note -- "Axiomatic prayer",**

Axiom," in ancient Greek, means "anything of such value that it elicits assent. The prayers of the Byzantine liturgy in particular are constructed in such a way that first what is of value" is mentioned in order to immediately mention the assent to that value.

Thus e.g. o.c., 27. -- "Since thy son hath put to death (preposition, value), he, Mary, whole and immaculate, hath given today the life which "endureth unto the ages of ages" (second part of value). He is therefore the God ( ....) who alone is praised and glorified above all things (assent)."

Reread the prayer, *Ap. th.* 01/02, and you will notice precisely the same structure: notice the two times recurring "therefore" expressing the assent to the value of what God did through Mary.

In other words: first the presupposition, then what follows from it, the appreciation: that is "axiomatic prayer".

This implies that prayer is 'situational': it is situated in a context or 'situation' to which it is a response. A response that responds to the value (or non-value) of the data. This is the very 'rationality' of prayer, its justification.

## **2. -- *The concept of 'glory'.***

A clear understanding of what 'glory' is, is necessary if one wants to understand something of the Byzantine liturgy. -- Therefore what follows.

We begin with a text, o.c., 7: “You are and you were and you have 'appeared' as a human being, God. Therefore have mercy on us”.

The term 'appearing', to be understood as 'showing itself', 'showing itself' (in more than one way, incidentally), occurs with clock-like regularity in the Byzantine liturgy. It is therefore important to understand it well.

### **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 'form' before their eyes: His clothes began to shine, -- white as no bleacher (follower) on earth can make white. -- Elias appeared to them, -- with Moses. They were conversing with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, here is a good place to stay: let us build three tents, -- one for you, one for Moses, one for Elias. He did not really know what he was saying. They were in for a surprise.

A cloud came over, -- like a shadow. Out of it came a voice: “This is my beloved son. Listen to him.

Suddenly, as they looked around, they saw no one. Unless only Jesus was near them. The Byzantine texts will mention the transformation or 'metamorphosis' as 'an appearance' of Jesus, as the secretly glorious Son of God.

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

***The scope.*** -- Jesus 'reveals' his deeper personality by showing (letting through, shining through) his 'aura' or radiance.

Psychics, today, know this very well as a - let us say - daily phenomenon: they see the colors that surround an object, a person, for example. One can interpret this as the ability to see “a vision” (“face”).

In the case of the transformation, this is different: Jesus secluded himself from everyday life, on a high mountain (mountains like hills were easily considered “sacred places” where revelations of hidden realities were easier to come by) in order to, through an exercise of power, “show” his deeper aura or brilliance. For the time of the 'metamorphosis' the three apostles then possess the ability to 'see' that very special aura.

This, of course, is 'apokalupsis', blotting out what is hidden, in a very defined sense.

An 'apparition'! It is interpreted by Matt. 7:1/8 as the fact that Jesus thus appears as a new Moses.

Through Luke 9:37/42 it is interpreted as the fact that Jesus strengthens the three apostles against the day when, as “the suffering servant of Yahweh” (Isaias), he will repel more than attract.

According to Mark, the event is the historically ascertainable fact - though there is a paranormal side to it, yet it “marks” Jesus' whole action - the whole salvation economy - in a very peculiar and “prognostic” (anticipating the end times) way: after all, this is what the angel of resurrection looks like; this is how the saved, in the end, will “appear” (look) at the resurrection.

Note: the three evangelical interpretations are by no means mutually exclusive. On the contrary. But the interpretation of Mark seems to us to be the most thorough: by such a splendor Jesus appears as the founder of the new covenant, the new Moses, and first of all he reassures all his apostles when “the hour of darkness” (of his suffering and death) will come. In this sense, an “apocalypse” always “marks” those who experience it.

## ***2.2. -- Peter's interpretation.***

This text is extremely interesting in that it is interpreted by Peter himself.

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

Indeed: from God the Father he received honor and glory when the glorious glory addressed him with these words, “This is my beloved son who is my overall preference.” This voice: we, we heard it! It came from heaven! For we were with him, -- on the holy mountain”.

So it is not claimed that people, at the time of Jesus, did not make a radical distinction between “invented myths” and “historical facts experienced by eyewitnesses”. All of Peter's argument hinges on this observation. Thus, we did not have to wait for the time of modern “criticism” to learn the distinction of “spirits” (invisible 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, strengthened their proclamations of doctrines by casting them in the form of one or another myth, i.e. sacred stories which were loaded with power. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:4/5; -- 1 Timoth. 1:4 (“myths and genealogies”); 1 Timoth. 6:20 (“gnosis or psychic knowledge”).

**b.** Peter, however, regards the content of his “doctrine” as something thoroughly distinct from such elaborate myths. He strengthens his proclamation by appealing to historical facts - experienced as an eyewitness.

***In this he is not alone:***

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

**2.** especially the resurrection is thus the object of proclaiming “stories” : Lu. 24:48; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 13:31. -- This shows that - think of the transformation (which is actually of the same order as the resurrection) thanks to such historical facts the son of man (Dan. 7:13/14) as a human being (and not an animal) belongs to a heavenly reality, but ... has 'appeared' on this earth, i.e. has shown himself experientially, perceptibly. Which in the strict sense is 'Apocalypse'.

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

(Matt. 13:35; -- Ps. 78 (77), i.e. the very object of every true Apocalypse, has been revealed in Jesus' glorification “on the high mountain.” “Because God is above and beyond time -- is 'eternal' -- his realm, the exercise of beyond time.

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

### 3. -- *Peter's 'hermeneusis'*,

'Hermèneusis', lat.: interpretatio, interpretation, the processing.

2 Pet. 1: 19/21. -- “It was precisely because of this (by attending as an eyewitness to the transformation) that the authority of the word of the prophets received a ratification (...).

It is especially clear that none of the prophecies of Scripture allow for a personal interpretation, because 'prophecy' never originated from a human intention.

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

*La Bible de Jérusalem* says in this regard: the way in which the inspiration of the holy books by the Spirit of God - 2 Timoth. 3:15/16 - is interpreted by Peter, it is clear that the meaningful interpretation of sacred texts also presupposes the Holy Spirit's own inspiration.

Otherwise one falls - instead of a meaningful interpretation that is true to reality - into purely Zen-inspiring, because self-willed, -- earthly, yes secularistic interpretations of all kinds.

This implies that modern biblical criticism -- she holds fundamentally, viz. as a methodical (or even ideological) premise, does not take into account the promptings of God's Spirit in reading and interpreting the scriptural texts; on the contrary, only what science can 'rationally' (viz: On the contrary: only and only what science is able to grasp 'rationally' (i.e., rationalistically) is real interpretation worthy of 'criticism' - that - we say - modern Bible criticism may well provide solid preliminary information for a correct understanding of the Bible (the historical-critical method is particularly valid here), but it is in danger of failing to grasp the actual message of God: where God speaks, Bible critics see 'only' cultural products from a pre-modern (primitive, classical), outdated period. That God can also be “of our time” there escapes them.

#### 4. -- *Theophany (epiphany).*

The terms “theo.fania, theophaneia” as well as the plural “ta theophania” mean, in ancient Greek, the fact that deity shows itself.

Liturgically speaking: the Christmas circle and the Easter circle - though distinct, yet inseparable - are the diptych of theophany, the object of the celebrations. - The celebration of the birth of Jesus and that of the coming 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 deified.”

Dr. Josef Casper, *Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche*, (World Transfiguration in the liturgical spirit of the Eastern Church), Freiburg i. Br., 1939, 31, says in this regard, “The Eastern Church does not cease to show in the celebration of Christmas the mystery of theophany.”

In addition to the celebration of circumcision, what we in the Christian West call 'Epiphany' (the arrival of the oriental magi) also belongs to the theophany, but this time not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles, “the nations”.

The term 'epiphania', epiphany (also the plural 'ta epiphania') is common here: “(...) The two main ideas of the Eastern Church (... ) : God appears as man, -- to deify man. Incarnatio/ deificatio (Manification/deification). Therefore also the Feast of theophany (our Epiphany) is among the highest celebrations of the year.” (Dr. J. Casper, o.c., 35).

Casper immediately adds, “The Eastern Church celebrates the feast of theophany one more time in the cycle of the year: (... ) on the feast of the transformation of the Savior (“hè metamorphosis tou sotèros”). (Ibid.). Like a prince, God makes his entrance into creation,--”epiphany.

“The Logos, Jesus as universe wisdom of God, became flesh and erected his tent among us. And we have seen 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 circle is but the full elaboration of the Christmas circle: the Son, Jesus, is born of Mary ... to deify us through cross passes and resurrection passes, i.e., to share in God's glory.

#### **4.1. -- Epiphany: appearing (showing up/seeing).**

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 if with a seal, because we have come to understand (your true being) and praise you: “You have come! Thou didst make thy royal entry. You, the unapproachable light!

Let us keep this well in mind throughout the whole time, because both Jesus' life and his action through the liturgy (if correctly understood) and his life in our individual and social life (if also 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) or 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 that is seen. Already in the Old Testament there is the couple “appearing / seeing”.

K. Kirchhoff, *Osterjubil, II*, 81: “God who appeared on Mount Sinai and immediately gave a law (the Ten Commandments) to God-seeing Moses, that God who ascended to heaven from Mount Olive, in the flesh (as a man-made person), let us all sing to him in honor. For as a glorious one she made herself known”.

Indeed: both on Mount Sinai and on the Mount of Olives, God makes Himself known in His “glory. He appears, is seen and acts dramatically. Theophany! Epiphany!

#### ***The Incarnation in Mary.***

“Immaculate mother of God, address yourself as supplicant to God who appeared from you in the flesh and yet did not leave the father's womb -- plead without ceasing that he may save those whom he has made from every danger.”

**Note** -- One may be familiar with the disputes concerning the two natures, divine and human, of Christ: here we grope for the Biblical-liturgical reason for that assertion:

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

**b.** man, made flesh, he remains what he was but became what he was not, i.e. in one and the same person at the same time God, what he was, and “flesh” (man).

The incarnation in Mary's womb is only the prelude to the whole work of redemption. -- O.c., 87: "As atonement, as salvation, Christ, you appeared to us, radiant, from the virgin., -- that, like the prophet Jonas out of the whale's innards, so also thou shalt wrest Adam whole and entire from destruction, who with all his generation had fallen (into sin)."

Yes, the incarnation is the prelude to the return in glory at the end of time: "In the flesh you appeared, while as God you remain unchanged. Thus you look forward to the goal, the consummation, since you will appear on earth to subject the whole world to your judgment." O.c., 83.

***Since the Ascension.***

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

O.c., 21. -- "Christ, whom thou, pure, hast brought into the world, mayst thou see: how he, shining in beauty, was risen from the dead. Thou, glorious, immaculate, beautiful among women, Mary, sing with the apostles this day (fifth Sunday after Easter) with joyful heart a hymn of praise to him, -- in view of the salvation of all."

Indeed: the term "radiant" parallels "appearing. Jesus appears as a radiant figure.

O.c., 21. -- "To give 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 "appearing" (so that "seeing" as an eyewitness becomes possible) signifies both the birth from Mary and the "appearances" after the resurrection.

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

E. Mercenier, *La prière des églises de rite byzantin, II (Les fêtes)*, (The prayer of the churches of the Byzantine rite, II (The festivals)), Chevetogne, 1948, 225. "What joys, what pleasures of soul are similar to those which thou, Christ, hast made the dead to live in the dungeon of the hades (underworld) by shining the light into their gloomy depths!?"

O.c., 237.-- "The whole formidable hell shuddered when it saw thee, immortal sun of glory: hastily it let loose its convicts."

Jesus' theophany extends to the underworld in which souls are enslaved, -- to appear there savingly, too, as S. Peter reports (1 Pet. 3:18/22).

The Petrine text actually involves the second half of Christ's "century" (aion): his death (1 Pe. 3:18), his ascension into heaven (3:19), his resurrection (3:21), his seated "at God's right hand" (as glorified) (3:22), his return in power as judge (4:5).

K. Kirchhoff, o.c., 82. -- "When the armies of angels, savior, saw how mortal nature went up to heaven with you, they were deeply impressed and sang hymns incessantly. - - The angels were horrified, Christ, when they saw how you ascended with the body (...). The nature of men, who had been given up to destruction, thou hast resurrected and exalted by thy Ascension and glorified us with thee."

Or still, o.c., 82: "Open the gates of heaven! Behold: Christ appeared as prince and lord, -- in an earthly body!". Thus said the lower heavenly spirits to the higher". This while the apostles looked on "below": "At your Ascension, the apostles saw you, God, the world's Redeemer, as godly spirits. In deep reverence they cheered and sang praises to you". Cfr. o.c., 91.

***The seated on the throne.***

O.c., 92. -- "In a clear manner, the regal highness of the One who appeared as a pauper in the flesh was exalted. With the Father our fallen nature is honored on the equal throne".

This recalls Matt. 25: 31 : "When the son of man shall come in his glory, surrounded by all his angels, then shall he sit upon his throne of glory."

Yet this co-sovereignty, as a glorified man on the throne of the Father, is not something slow. Jesus acts! "You who ascended into heaven and descended before in the Incarnation, do not leave us as orphans. Show unto men the works of thy power, -- thou who art a man-loving Lord." (O.c., 94).

This text shows that the glorified ascended One is not an inert figure but present, in a new theophany! In particular: Jesus acts through works (as during his earthly life). Works that show that he possesses "pneuma," "spirit," life force or power, with which he continuously "appears" (shows himself), at least to those who possess the sight of faith.

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

We are, salvation historically, between the Ascension with the seated at the right hand of the Father and the second coming. Let us now see how the Eastern liturgies - not only the Byzantine - interpret this glory.

***Let us return to the main motif.***

K. Kirchhoff, *Osterjubel*, (Easter cheer), I, 10.-- “With the body thou wast in the grave, -- with the soul in hades, the underworld, as God. Thou wast in paradise -- together with the robber (the converted crucifer). Thou workest all things, on the throne, Christ, as in thy being ('self') unbounded, -- with the Father and the Spirit.” This is how the liturgy summarizes. Cosmically broad, yes, limitless is Jesus' redemption. When Jesus reflects back on his earthly task, inevitably the charge comes.

E. Mercenier, *La prière d. égl. byz.*, II (Les fêtes), 202. -- “Lifted up on the cross -- which includes your glorification -- , Lord, you have voiced your denunciation: for what reason have you, Jews, decided to nail me to the cross? Was it because I restored the nervous system of the paralytic? Because I raised the dead from their/their sleep? Because I healed the woman who suffered from hemorrhage? Because I endeared myself to the Canaanese woman? For what cause will ye, Jews, kill me? -- Yet, yes, in the midst of your unscrupulousness you will look up (in time) to the one whom you pierced with a lance.”

***The end of Mark's gospel.***

Rationalistic Bible interpreters will probably grope endlessly for the end of the text as anticipated by the evangelist himself. After all, there are more than one traditions in this regard.

However, we read Mark. 16:9f, as the churches usually read the text. -- “Behold the signs which will accompany those who have come to faith: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak 'new' (unknown) languages; (without hindrance) they will take hold of serpents; if they drink some deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick: the sick will be healed.

Well, the Lord Jesus, having spoken thus, was taken up to heaven. He set Himself at God's right hand, -- They, -- they went everywhere as proclaimers.

This, while the Lord acted with them and reinforced “the word” - Jesus' message - through signs that accompanied it.” -- The Byzantine and other Eastern liturgical texts proclaim precisely the same teaching.

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

“Christ, 'mou dunamis', my life force, God and Lord”. Thus, with a loud voice, the exalted church sings as befits God in honor, from a godly heart, as she celebrates “in the Lord.”

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

As a result, she is “in the Lord,” i.e. bathed in one and the same life force with the Lord, on the throne of His glory since the Ascension.

One can say the same, with the Chaldean Church.

Jos. Molitor, *Chaldäisches Brevier*, (Chaldean Breviary) Düsseldorf, 1961, 88.-- The text of the Eastern Syrian hourly prayers read, among other things, as follows.

“Our Lord and God, strengthen our weakness by Your grace: Make, by Your goodness, the pooriness of our souls strong and undergird it.

Illuminate the darkness of our insights. Awaken us from the drowsiness of our thoughts. Take away the leaden load of our limbs.

Clean away the stain of our debts and sins and wash them off. Stretch out your mighty hand and lay it upon us for our shielding. So that, thanks to her, we may ...exalt ourselves. And confess and praise you, without ceasing, all the days of our lives.

Lord of the universe for all eternity.”

Note terms like “your grace” (which consists in the giving of the supernatural life force) and “your mighty hand” (metaphor for “power” or “life force”). Dynamism undergirds the text, but instead of natural or supernatural, it is conceived supernaturally.

### ***Mariological.***

Mary as the virgin mother of Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity, plays a curious role in New Testament dynamism.

K. Kirchoff, I, 87. -- “The joy of all who are in distress, the assistance of the poor, the comfort of strangers, the staff of the blind, the help of the sick, the protection and assistance of the overburdened, the refuge of orphans -- that is you, mother of the most high God, pure (... )”.

One observes: all kinds of earthly situations, preferably the difficult or even unbearable ones, belong to her 'sphere of power'! In this sense, the title “Coredemptrix” (fellow redeemer), is well justified. If anyone can say that “Christ is “*mou dunamis*”, my life force ,” surely it is the one thanks to whose pregnancy Jesus only became possible.

This is wonderfully expressed in the hymns of Mary (K. Kirchoff, o.c., 35): “You, immaculate one, carry within you the abyss of miracles and the fountain of healings. Wash away therefore from my soul all the filth of sin”.

### ***Sin.***

Modern and perhaps even more post-modern man does not like to hear of “sin” (since virtue, with all other values, has been devalued since Nietzsche's decay)!

And yet: where sin is the ethical (moral, conscientious) evil, there e.g. is sickness or distress (after all: everything which deviates from God's ideas about the cosmic course) the physical (or natural) evil which in the long run springs from sin (according to the explicit teaching of the Bible). Both forms of evil, the moral and the physical, are, in their hidden or even occult background, inseparable.

This is the reason why e.g. the Byzantine liturgy begs for forgiveness (ethical evil) where healings or salvations (physical evil) are at stake.

After all, sin with its aftermath of physical ailments amounts to a weakening of our natural, extra-natural and especially supernatural life force or power.

Oc., 37. -- “God, who appeared from you, delivered nature from her curse and healed the ills of all.”

***Indeed:*** the primal sin (first sin) of “Adam and Eve” and the original sin that sprang from it weigh as a curse of an ethical-physical nature on humanity, yes, on the whole of extra-human nature (as S. Paul says). This “mysterious” curse, in itself not so obvious, appears in “the ills of all.”

***A basic text.***

K. Kirchoff, *Ueber dich freut sich der Erdkreis (Marienhymnen der byzantinischen Kirche)*, (The world rejoices over you (Marian hymns of the Byzantine Church),), Munster (Wf.), s. d., 55, says it clearly: “Our diseased nature, Lord, thou hast healed. In the virgin, after all, you brought to her - as the most effective remedy - your immaculate Godhead, Logos (Wisdom of the Universe).”

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

***The two 'natures',***

Result of centuries of arguing within the churches! Jesus, on closer inspection, exhibits first of all a human nature - the “flesh”, i.e. the poor humanity, which he “assumed” (and which has been “glorified” since his death). However, those who delve deeper into the phenomenon of Jesus discover in time that he is God, second person of the Trinity.

K. Kirchoff, *Osterjubel*, 11, 91: “You, mother of God, who - elevated above (earthly) thoughts and (earthly) words - in time have given birth to the one who is timeless in an indescribable way, we praise in all unison”. Jesus is both “in time” (human, embodied nature) and at the same time “transcendent”, “timeless” (divine nature). In one person (personhood).

***O.c., 89.*** -- “What a surprising miracle number! How couldst thou, God-fearing (Mary), offer to God space which is enclosed by no space? Him who became poor in the flesh and with rich glory today (ascension day) ascended into heaven and gave life to men?”.

Again, the two natures in the same person: “poor in the flesh”/”rich glory” (“spirit”) and “space/no space”.

***O.c., 91 :*** “In the highest (at the Ascension) the angels saw your deified flesh. Turning to one another they said, 'Truly this man is our God'.” -- “This man” ('flesh')/”our God” ('deified'). -

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

### ***“Heavenly theology”.***

The well-known theologian Scheeben once maintained that true theology should be mystical, theology practiced from God, -- on pain of becoming “unreal” theology.

The expression “heavenly theology” appears in a kontakion (sixth Sunday after Easter) - K. Kirchhoff, *Osterjubiläum*, 11, 130 -. Its object is “the great mystery”. This is: that which, from the foundation of the cosmos, God has preserved as the secret - mystery - for the salvation of mankind and the cosmos, when, at the end of time, they are “bogged down in utter distress”. Hence the name “mystery theology. -- Well, let us see how “the great secret” is articulated.

K. Kirchhoff, *Osterjubiläum*, 11, 86. -- “The one who, after being brought into the world by you, preserved your virginity unchanged, Christ, ascends, mother of God, to the Father whom he never left. -- not even at the moment when, in unspeakable mercy, he took on flesh from you alive and gifted with reason.”

Or again, Mercenier, *La prière*, (Prayer), II, 236.-- “Without ceasing to dwell 'in the bosom of the Father', you, merciful Christ, decided to become human and descended to hell, as a fellow-sufferer.”

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

### ***“Similia similibus”.***

Those who are familiar with ancient magics know this basic motto very well. It means: “If one wants to get a grip on (natural and extraterrestrial) problems, one has to tune in to what the problem is”. In contemporary French: “être branché(e)”.

Traditional theology knew this law very well. - *Marian Hymns*, 174f. : “In order to save the world, the one who commands over all of us has appeared making himself available and, since he is God as shepherd - prince, he appeared - out of love for us - as a human being. For by means of the equal (model) - similibus - he calls forth the equal (original) - similia - (...)”.

In other words: the necessary reason for the personal unity of both natures in Jesus is that he, as God, wanted to attune himself thoroughly and definitively -- in the ages of ages -- to the problem to be solved, namely humanity -- in -- extreme -- distress, -- at once the Cosmos-in-every-extreme distress. By making both natures one in one and the same person, the divine nature becomes 'medicine' for all eternity.

At least if humanity wants to pray, live in that sense! Only when one 'knows' God (intimately praying with Him) and when God likewise 'knows' us (intimately interacts with us), does God's glory come through in Christ-on-the-throne-of-Glory. One becomes, with Christ, deified (as Eastern thinkers are so fond of saying).

***Religion as a solution to life's problems.***

Religion is often dismissed, by current thinkers of “rationalist” style, as outdated primitivism. At best, “secular belief” is then substituted.

Believing that then involves “engagement” in the world. Strongly politically colored, by the way (“political theology” in the recent, not in the ancient-Greek sense).

Rationally speaking, that is one of many possible interpretations of the Bible, of course. Yet from what goes before, it is abundantly clear that “heavenly” or “apocalyptic” theology is equally “earthly” committed, but from a mystical oneness with the glorified Christ on the throne of glory, as Mark 16 puts it.

“I who with reason confess you, pure one, as the immaculate mother of God - with soul and mouth - in faith, pray you: save me from uncanny dangers, from infirmities and lapses.” (*Marien Hymns*, 48).

Or: “May I -- thanks to your interventions -- escape whole and blameless bride, from every rage, from deadly drives, -- from unscrupulous men and evil adversaries, - from the barren glow of the gehenna (hell) (...)” (Ibid. 61).

He who prays in this way testifies that he knows “life”! That he is “committed” to it!

In other words, heavenly theology is everything ... except unworldly concoctions!

***Everyday life*** - this is how the Byzantine liturgy sees it - is the terrain within which Jesus' glorified existence can come through, if we take it seriously in faith.

### ***The mystery of salvation.***

To express what - precisely Jesus, in the Spirit, as sent on behalf of the Father, performed, the Byzantine liturgy - like the whole of patristics (33/800) - uses terms like “mystery” (“secret”) and “salvation economy” (“economy of salvation”). Since they are so summarizing and foundational, we will deal with them briefly now.

### ***Hell as a premise.***

Jesus acted in response to a well-defined situation. That situation is called 'hell' (sheol, underworld). Think of the 'going to hell' that always belongs to the creed of the apostles. It is situated between his death on the cross and his appearance as the risen one.

Says Peter, 1 Pe. 3:18vv, which follows: “Jesus was put to death, at least insofar as he was 'flesh' (poor man). He was made alive insofar as he was 'spirit' (divine life). In that 'spirit' he even went on to proclaim (the glad tidings) to the spirits in the dungeon, -- to those who at the time had refused to believe all the while God's patience was waiting on and on (...).”

In Matt 16:18 Jesus, through Matthew, situates the “church” -- the small group around him that will come to its full development in time -- in relation to “the gates of hell.

These are the power of evil spirits which, from the beginning of salvation history, tempted the earthly people, among other things. - Gen. 3 (The “serpent” tempts Eve (and Adam)) - to sin with as a consequence death and the stay in the 'dungeon' (underworld, 'hell').

We know: the evil spirits - Satan in the lead - are 'animal' (Dan. 7:1vv.). The Son of Man - who is not animal but human - will eliminate them in time.

***End result:*** a resurrection that, for some, ends in eternal divine life, while for others, it ends in eternal horror (Dan. 12:2/4). This in the perspective of the end times: “Many will - in the meantime - go astray here and there, and iniquity - unscrupulousness - will increase” (Dan. 12:4).

This unscrupulousness will culminate in “powerlessness” (“refaïm”) and residence in the dungeon (Ps. 88(87): 13 (*Darkness and forgetfulness*), -- in the depths of the dungeon (Deut. 32: 22; Isaias 14:15; Ps. 86(85) :13).

Now one does not think that “the dungeon” is a worldly thing: Proverbs 7: 1/27 (The Temptress) demonstrates: “Her dwelling is the way to the dungeon, -- the slope to the court of the dead”.

Thus the inspired writer concludes that “a night of sex in all taboo” ends up this way! In other words, there is “the gate of hell” precisely where unscrupulous behavior takes place. Only the present, earthly biological life covers - hides - the true situation. The ordained writer, reveals that true situation, -- 'apokalupsis'!

Many present-day people refuse to take “those fairy tales concerning hell” seriously, among other things, in the name of 'demythologization' (as if that demythologization represented the truth without question). Yet the Bible texts are formal! What scripture calls - at least in the strictly pejorative sense - 'world' (1 John 2:16/17) is the vestibule of the dungeon. Whoever enters that world, o.g. “the liberation from the bonds - taboos - of the ten commandments, enters ipso facto into the dungeon.

### ***The Paschal Mystery.***

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

Indeed: this day is the blessed “Sabbath,” -- the day of rest in the course of 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).

By his resurrection he allowed us eternal life -- Dan. 12:2/4. For he is the only 'good' (conscientious) and humane one”.

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

But in the opposite sense: he rose to eternal life and not to eternal horror! That is the surprising turn - the reversal - at least for those who want to believe in him as the one sent by the father.

After all, 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 reversal becomes possible.

*Note.*-- The Hebrew term for 'descent (history)' - tôledôt - means: a. descent, b. ancestral or genealogical history.

In Gen. 2:4a, the term is broadened -- as in many myths -- to include the 'descent history' of "the heavens and the earth" (a primal pairing found in many a myth), "inasmuch as they were created (by Yahweh)" (which is then typically Biblical corrective).

God, after all, creates, -- not like a maker of a pan, outside of himself "creates" an object, but "out of himself" (if only because God exists alone in the beginning and nothing exists outside of him). In this sense, "heaven and earth" came into being out of him, by a free act of creation, and there is an "origin story," similar to the descent histories in extra-Biblical myths.

Well, Jesus, by being "descended" from Mary - biologically this time - becomes a historically delineable part - a link - in the endless - in the ages of ages - genesis and creation history of the cosmos and humanity. But in his re-creationist way: he encounters death, the outworking of sin, that is, of unscrupulousness, but survives death splendidly. Thanks to his life force ('dynamis', lat.: virtus), which comes from his Father and is shared with the Spirit.

In passing there is mention of the history of descent from Noah (Gen. 6:9), -- from Isaac, the son of Abraham (Gen. 25:19), -- from Jacob (Gen. 37:2). Such was the ordained writer's thinking "in terms of tôledôt"!

Jesus' incarnation, incarnation, must certainly be remembered in those terms. The Bible reveals the true descent and history of "heaven and earth" and of humanity (and of the invisible spirits).

In that history of descent, sin, almost from the beginning, is interwoven with its aftermath, all possible 'physical' and 'moral' evils -- all ending fundamentally in the dungeon. In this sense, very accurately, the dungeon is the premise of Jesus' "appearance" (his theophany). With the works, miracles, that testify of his typical glory. Which invariably anticipate the end times (object, stricto sensu, of every Apocalypse or end time revelation).

***The key role of Mary, the virgin.***

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

“A song Mary, the virgin, in honor! She is all-embracing glory: daughter of men and mother of the Lord. The gate of heaven! By the invisible spirits she is sung, and of the faithful she is the showpiece.

After all, she appeared as a heaven, as the temple of the deity. The chasm of hatred she pulled down and brought peace in its place. She opened the royal abode of the king (Jesus).

In her we have the anchor of faith: for thanks to her we have the Lord - he was born of her - as our ally. So cherish confidence, cherish confidence, 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 premise of her motherhood: the gates of the dungeon! “Heaven” means, here, God's mysterious, transcendent life which, through her motherhood (“tôledôt”), becomes interwoven in the genesis of humanity and creative whole, cosmos.

“He was, after all, born of her” rightly says the text of the Byzantine liturgy. This is: he engaged himself in the “tôledôt” of cosmos and humanity.

Therein - we remember from a moment ago - is the order of Jesus' death; a comprehensive 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 virgin motherhood.

This marks the beginning of our exposition of “secret” (“mystery”) and “(salvation) order” (“salvation economy”)!

***Mystery as “sufficient reason” for God's or someone else's intervention.***

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

“Vienna must I and lament whenever I think of death,--when I see the beauty which thou hast created us, in divine tone, lying in the graves: formless, inglorious, ornamental!

What “mystery” was happening to us? How did it come about that we were given over to dying, that we are married to death? In all truth: because God imposed it (as punishment) (as written in scripture),

God, however, who provides the dead with deliverance from their fate.” --

“The concurrence of “fulfillment of a mystery” and of one came that” clearly shows that 'mystery' and 'explanation' (from mysterious factors) coincide.

'Mystery', then, is “mysterious presupposition” (which becomes knowable only through revelation, apokalupsis). In order to trace such a factor to explain a phenomenon, a fact ascertainable by everyone or at least by earthly people, it is appropriate - if one wants to do it oneself - to possess sufficient “observer/observer” (Isaias 21: 6/10), i.e. apocalyptic or bleeding capacity, situated in our deeper soul.

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

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

***Another example.***

K. Kirchoff, 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.

To her we sing songs of praise, -- to her we cry, “Hail, thou mother of God.” -- “The mystery of mothers” here, is clearly, the fact that motherhood arises from sexual intercourse with a man.

***This term still echoes***

**a.** the mystery of the fertilization event (for all those who do not know modern biology),

**b.** much more the respect for such an act of mating which is fundamentally experienced as sacred. This twofold characteristic content - the unprecedented and the respectful - is present - in passing - in all liturgical texts where 'mystery' is mentioned.

***“Apophatic theology”.***

Negative' (Lat.) or 'apophatic' (Gr.) theology has as its first object “the unprecedented which inspires reverence and trembling”.

One thinks of what Platon of Athens (-428/-347), who hangs over the Byzantine thinkers like a shadow, says about desire. It is like a hudra lernaia (the water snake of Lerna), a many-headed monster! Desire never lets itself be eradicated and never shows its true face!

For every head one cuts off, two come in its place! More scientifically, desire is “polymorphic. It is a 'mystery', something that by its mysteriousness is ambiguous, poly - interpretable.

### ***The 'mystical' deification.***

The term 'mystical', mystical, recurs with the regularity of a clock. It means 'mysterious' or 'that which is not so immediately clear or explicable'.

Thus in the following cathism (K. Kirchhoff, *Osterj.*, 11, 80): “The primordial and beginningless God, having mystically deified the nature of man which he assumed, today ascended into heaven (...)”.

Or (E. Mercenier, *La prière*, II, 274) still: “The women bearing the ointment, guided by divine wisdom, trace you: before you, whom they sought with tears in their eyes, believing you to be dead, they fell down joyfully,--worshipping the living God. Of this mystical Easter, Christ, they brought your disciples the glad tidings”.

In both texts the term “mystical” occurs: the work of redemption as a whole involves a “mystical” deification of humanity; Easter, the reversal, is a “mystical” Easter, -- the heart piece of the work of redemption. The most obvious translation reads 'mysterious', 'hidden', “escaping from the earthly, yes, from every created mind”.

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

### ***The 'mystical' designation and/ or description.***

**a.** Mercenier, o.c., 252. -- “The great Moses mystically designated the present day -- Easter Saturday -- when he said, 'And God blessed the seventh day.' (...).

**b.** Mercenier, o.c., 260. -- “The great Moses described in advance the present day -- Easter Sunday -- when he said, “And God blessed the seventh day.” (...)

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

### ***The paradox.***

One can speak of “concealingly revealing” in this case:

1. Moses - the ordained writer of the Old Testament text - reveals because he speaks a language concerning something;
2. he conceals because he speaks in such a way that one has to detect what exactly he means.

This is also true of God's entire performance, in the Old and New Testaments. Think of Matt. 13 (Mark 4:1/2; Luke 8:4). Jesus speaks a language but it is a parable language that reveals but in a veiled way. What Matt. 13:10/17, in the wake of Isaias 6:9/10 (quoted), clearly says.

Just as very explicitly John 9:39/41 (following the “seeing” in faith, of the blind man) links to the prophet Isaias, so too does Matthew 13:13/15.

“(…) Because it has been given to you 'ta mustèria tè̃s basileias', the secrets of the kingdom (of God), while it has not been given to them. For all who have, to them more shall be thrown; all who have not, to them what they have shall be taken away.”

As an aside: this is the so-called Matthew effect! -- “That is why I speak for them in parables (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 Isaias is fulfilled : “With the hearing you shall hear and not grasp, and, while you are watching, you shall see and not perceive. For the heart - the capacity to interpret - of this people has been hardened ('acculturated')”.

With the years and the periods of time - the 'ages' - (according to Daniel 12:4), many will stray here and there; immediately 'iniquity' (unscrupulousness) grows. When Jesus 'appears' on earth, this drift - and - unscrupulousness is already more advanced than in the time of Daniel.

The result is the Matthew effect: voluntarily, yes, shamelessly-cynically many have become 'astray' and 'unscrupulous'! When confronted with Jesus' 'mystical' performance, they run into it: they think they can correctly interpret him and his 'glory' (his works) (they think they 'see'), while they are - tragically to misinterpretation.

While “those who are like ungodly children,” (Matt. 11: 25), correctly interpret and come to faith, -- where they are dismissed by the “wise and prudent” -- the expert upper class among the Jews -- as being misled by Jesus. It is on this background that the term “mystical” must be interpreted and translated.

***“The mystery of your economy (salvation)”***

We begin to know the language of the Bible and immediately of the Byzantine liturgy. Do we now dwell on the coupling term 'order' (bikonomia').

E. Mercenier, *La prière*, 11, 58. -- We are “The Saturday of Lazarus”.

“Lord, I have understood the mystery of your salvation economy. I have pondered your works -- think of the resurrection of Lazarus. Your deity, therefore, I have accorded the glory it deserves”.

“Though thou couldst lack every assistance - but according to the inexpressible order willed by thyself ('oikonomia') - thou didst pray for the purpose of raising Lazarus who had been lying in the grave for four days, almighty. (...). Thy voice, savior, has razed to the ground the whole power of death, and, thanks to its divine power, has driven the foundations of the dungeon to destruction.

A song in honor of the Virgin Mary! Having given birth to a child, she remained a virgin and gave birth to Christ, the God who has delivered the world from its aberrations.” -- Behold, in context, the term “order”: Jesus, in virtue of the “*unio hypostatica*”, the unity in one and the same person of two natures, divine nature and human nature, was the one to whom the entire conscious universe prays and the one who, like the most ordinary man -- in -- need, prays to his heavenly Father. The one, in other words, who is as 'eternal' as the Father and the Spirit, prays as an 'incarnate' prayer “for an important work” (as our old catechism said).

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

### ***Divine wisdom (Logos).***

The sapiential or also 'sophiological' books and texts - the wisdom texts - revolve around this order. -- That divine universe wisdom or Logos which is Christ He shows himself to be one person with two natures:: “Someone among you will deliver me up by treason, having sold me this night to the Hebrews! (...).

For our sake thou hast humbled thyself, -- thou that hast all: thou rose up from table, took linen, and girded thyself. Thou hast, bowing thy head, washed the feet of thy disciples as well as those of the traitor (Judas)! Who - upon seeing the incomprehensibly high distinction of thy unspeakable wisdom - would not be struck with wonder?

Jesus, thou art the creator of all that exists and thou dost venture in the midst of “the mud”! Thou didst wash the feet of the traitor and dry them with the linen!”.

He who possesses everything and is 'rich', strips away his glory and bows his head in order to wash and dry even the feet of the one who is betraying him - astray (Daniel) and unscrupulous he does not realize what exactly he is doing!

You see: “paradox” is one of the characteristics of the behavior of divine universal wisdom (Logos)! Indeed: “By introducing into wisdom - concealed from the beginning of the universe - Christ, our Savior, you revealed it to all your apostles - including the traitor Judas - in the course of a last supper. That the godly - theoforo - apostles passed on to the later Church”. (E. Mercenier, *La prière*, II, 136 (Big Thursday”).

New Testament wisdom realizes the true order at work - God remaining god but becoming “flesh” to deify the “flesh” - and thoughtfully penetrates the mystery or “secret” being revealed.

These three concepts -- along with apocalyptic or apophatic theology -- form one logically coherent whole. -- which we will explain further in the following pages on the basis of liturgical texts.

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

“Who ever heard the news that a dead person who already gave off a disgusting odor was raised from the dead? Elias (1 Kings 17:17/24 (The widow's son)) wrought a resurrection as well as Elizeus (2 Kings 4: 8/37 (The son of the Shoenemse)) but not of a buried person, -- not of one who had been dead for four days.”

“We sing, Lord, your power. We sing of thy sufferings, Christ. Thanks to your power you work miracles, -- as one who is merciful. Thy sufferings thou hast endured, -- according to the divine order as a man, Thou art “God-and-man.” The truth of this name thou dost confirm by thy works.

Though Logos, universe wise, thou hast gone to Lazarus' grave in a body and, as a god, resurrected the one already buried for four days.” - Here we grope for the dynamist or power aspect!

Dynamist (lat.: virtus), power - thanks to - life force is pre-eminently property of Jesus as Logos, universe wisdom. Suffering is pre-eminently property of poor humanity - 'flesh' to put it in biblical language. - 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 - Ap. th. 12 -.

Elias and Elizeüs did prepare the way. But they were but a shadow, -- compared to the New Testament life force of Jesus!

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

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

“Do we all sing a song of victory in honor of the god who “with his mighty arm” (note: thanks to his life force) performed admirable acts of power and saved Israel (from the grip of the Egyptians). For he has “clothed himself with glory” (note: he has made himself shine as glory).

Thou didst resurrect Lazarus who had already died for four days, my savior, by withdrawing him, “with thy mighty arm” from the spoil. Immediately thou didst reveal thy power for mighty art thou!

To Lazarus thou didst address thyself and immediately raise him from the grave. Yet in the depths (A.th. 18) hell raised a grievous lament and - sighing - shuddered, savior, before thy power.

Wept thou, Lord, for Lazarus, -- at once displaying thy bodily existence according to thy order, -- to reveal that thou, God by nature, hast made thyself man, equal to us by nature. (...).

In accordance with your human nature, you, Lord, asked, “Where is Lazarus buried?” Thus thou hast revealed to all, savior, the true existence of thy order concerning us.

The gates of hell thou hast shattered when thou hast cried unto Lazarus. The power of the enemy thou hast shaken to its foundation. The fear and trembling before thee thou hast instilled in hell, -- even before thou, only savior, was exalted on the cross.

As a god thou hast gone to Lazarus, who was held captive in hell, Lord, and broken his chains. For at your command, mighty one, all things yield.

We 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 the above, this ode is abundantly clear:***

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

**b.** precisely in this is expressed the “glory,” -- the regal life force -- in -- power of Jesus, the Incarnate.

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

The little vespers of palm Sunday. -- The messianic entry -- Epiphany -- of Jesus (Matt. 21: 1/17 Jn. 12.:12) is celebrated -- as eternally present -- as. -- “Christ, of guiltless children (Ps. 8:3; Matt. 21:16; -- especially Matt. 11:25) thou hast accepted the song of victory when thou didst make thy entry on the back of a donkey's yoke, - - meeting thy sufferings, -- thou who art celebrated in the 'trisagion,' the three times holy, of angels.

Behold, thy prince, Zion, comes as a gentle rescuer on the back of a donkey's son (Isaias 62: 11; -- especially Zac. 9:9; -- 1 Kings 1:38; John 12:15), -- looking for his adversaries to strike with force. -- be glad and rejoice in this celebration with palms”.

One sees it: the judgmental shift -- for the ungodly children Jesus is “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, he is, on the other hand, the one seated on a donkey's back.

One noted: 'children' means a. unpretentious, b. living conscientiously, c. in view of the last judgment “at the last day.” Which Matth. 11:25 underscores.

“I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden “these things” (the mysteries of the kingdom of God, i.e., of God's action) from “the wise and prudent” (the intelligentsia) and have revealed them to “the very few.” These very small ones are the ones from whom he accepts the palm waving! The judgement shifting! The Matthew effect!

The text immediately following confirms what we say: “We, in unison, believers, wave the palms of our virtues (our conscientiousness). In turn, as the 'little ones,' we offer them to Christ. Let the sails of our good works (our conscientious behavior) flutter and we welcome him mystically.”

Indeed, the liturgy is the “mystical” (hidden-mystical) present-ness of the historical Jesus at his entry into Zion.

The text, a bit further, concludes, “I sing in deep reverence of your chilling order; I sing the 'hosanna' (Ps. 118 (117): 25v.: “Grant salvation”) for you come to save me, blessed Lord.”

With the dungeon as a front, Jesus shows up to pass judgment.

**4. -- K. Kirchoff, Osterjubil, 11, 19.**

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

“Jesus, hearing that they had cast him out, met him and said 'Believe ye in “the son of man.”’“ (Dan. 7:9/14) ? He: “And who is that, Lord, such that I can believe in him?” Jesus “Thou seest him: the one who speaks to thee, -- it is he”. He thereupon: “I believe, Lord”. He threw himself down before Jesus.

Jesus thereupon: “For the purpose of a shifting, I have come into this world (1 John 2:16/17): that those who do not see may see, and those who see may be blind.” (... ). Again: the shifting of judgment!

Let us listen for a moment to the Byzantine text: “At the time, as a God who is completely merciful, you healed a blind man who came to you -- him who praised your order of salvation and your admirable works”.

One sees it: the order of Jesus' action includes a. his two natures in one person, b. expressing itself in his admiring works, -- his “miracle works,” -- signs of his all-transcending glory. The acts of salvation -- the small ones (his miracles, -- healings and exorcisms) and the large ones (his crucifixion and his resurrection) -- are an inseparable part of the scheme of salvation.

**5. -- K. Kirchoff, Osterjubil, 11, 88.**

Ascension Day. -- “After thou, Lord, hadst worked out the scheme of salvation for us, -- made the earthly one with the heavenly, thou, Christ, -- thou, our God, ledest in glory into heaven. Yet thou hast by no means removed thyself from us: thou hast remained unseparated! To those who love you, you cry out, “I am with you and no one is against you.”

Here the term “order” is limited to everything that took place before the Ascension. What is called a part is for the whole (metonymic language). However, there is the reason for it: Jesus' Easter was the turning point to the contrary! From the dungeon to the divine glory of resurrection to eternal life (Dan. 12:2/4). The 'part' identified with the order is indeed the decisive part that can stand for the whole. Easter is therefore, liturgically, the core feast of the whole year.

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

Pentecost Sunday. -- “Since he had accomplished the goal, the true Logos (universe wisdom) bestows the fullness of peace of heart. For, since he had accomplished the work, Christ made his friends glad by, as he had promised, dispensing the spirit in the midst of a great blowing in tongues of fire.”

If we compare this with the previous text, we see a striking analogy: “after you have worked out the plan of salvation” and “since he had finished the work”! The scheme of salvation - the programming that governs God's salvation - is worked out through the work, the work of salvation or redemption.

Here 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 the salvific work of Jesus. Matter of wording.

O.c., 217. -- Tuesday of Pentecost. -- “Today, from the Father, your Spirit, the Almighty who is your likeness, is sent down to earth in tongues of fire. Spread over every one of those present, he equipped your apostles for the proclamation of your great deeds. -- Therefore we praise your saving salvation, Jesus, the almighty, the savior of our souls. -- Here the term “salvation economy” seems to encompass Pentecostalism.

***The summary.***

Let us summarize this first section. -- K.Kirchhoff, *Osterj.*, II, 78.-- Ascension Day. -- “As thou hast decided thyself, thou wast brought into the world. As thou hast decided thyself, thou hast “appeared” on earth. Thou hast suffered “in the flesh” (as a poor man). After thou hast trampled on death, thou hast risen from the dead. Thou hast ascended into heaven in glory as the one who “fills” the universe (permeates it with thy life force). Thou sendest us the divine spirit that we may sing and praise thy deity in songs of praise.”

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

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

The liturgy is in fact a prayerful theology and biblical interpretation. Instead of reasoning 'critically' or 'rationally' the liturgist prays! Thus and only thus - according to the New Testament - does one understand God's message.

### ***The mystery.***

We already know more or less what “mystery” means. Yet let us, prayerfully, go deeper into this mystery.

#### ***1. -- The old testament and the mystery.***

E. Mercenier, *La pr.*, 11, 97. -- “The One who was glorified on the holy mountain (Sinai) and revealed in the flame of fire of the bush before Moses the mystery of the virgin, Mary, the Lord, -- we sing to him and exalt him in all ages.”

Other texts show that just as the bramble did not burn, so also the virgin Mary “did not burn” (remained a virgin). Hence the analogy (partial resemblance) between the two “mysteries” or mysterious events. The burning bush is a 'model' for the original indicated by it, Mary's bringing into the world of “the fire”, the deity, whom she left unscathed.

One encounters such analogical reasoning several times: the Old Testament is seen as a body of data that, in a “mystical” (mysterious) way, provides information regarding the New Testament. Among other things, this takes the form of analogical reasoning. An Old Testament 'mystery' is regarded as a light thrown on a New Testament 'mystery' -- on the basis of some parable.

#### ***2. -- The rock.***

E. Mercenier, o.c., 82. -- “The Israelite people drank from the hard rock (Numbers 20:1/13 (The waters of Meribah), -- opened at thy command that they made water flow. Thou art, Christ, this rock and the life. Upon that rock was founded the church that cries out, “Hosanna! Thou that comest! Thou art blessed!”.

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

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

The historical Jesus is the same mysterious rock on which the Church community was established (i.e. from which it derives its life force).

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

### 3. -- *Seeing touchingly into a distant future.*

E. Mercenier, *La pr.*, II, 141. -- Great or White Thursday. -- “In a distant future the prophet gropingly saw thy chilling mystery, Christ, and he prophesied, 'Thy mighty and strong love hast thou shown, compassionate Father, for in thy goodness thou hast sent, as an atoning sacrifice, thy only son into the world.'”

The context speaks of the suffering for which Jesus is directly preparing. Presumably the liturgist is referring to Isaias 42:1/9, 49:1/7, 50:4/11, 52:13/53:12 (the ebed Yahweh songs), where the (suffering) servant of Yahweh is discussed. Indeed: Matt. 12:15/21 confirms: the evangelist quotes Isaias 42:1/4, applied to Jesus as a discrete figure.

Suffering - cross passes - is integral to Jesus' mystery. The Old Testament predicted this groping in a distant future.

E. Mercenier, *La pr.*, 11, 96. -- “As a foreshadowing of the Master, Jesus, Joseph was stored away in a well. Meanwhile, he is sold by his brothers. Joseph -- he deserves our songs -- suffers all this in such a way that he in truth prefigures Christ.”

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

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

This lesson on providence, along with the element of “being sold by next of kin” is the parable that shows in, Joseph a foreshadowing -- an image -- of Jesus.

**Note:** -- Seeking such previews, groping predictions etc. is only one application of 1 Pet. 10/12.

There the first pope explains that the role of the prophets -- the Old Testament figures -- was to announce (foreshadow) the mystery that is Christ. The salvation of souls in a distant age that they vaguely suspected was their main concern. By the way: they were already inspired by the spirit of Christ.

### ***The Trinity Mystery.***

1 Pet. 1:2 talks about “the knowing beforehand 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 Three - Unity” is the premise - par excellence of all that the Bible, new and even old testament, reveals. -- Let us look at that for a moment.

#### **1. -- *The seraphic tris.hagion as a prefiguration.***

K. Kirchoff, *Osterjubel*, I, 163. -- “When Isaias saw in a foreshadowing the matchless Lord -- the God praised in three persons by the pure voices of the seraphim -- he received as his immediate task the proclamation of the threefold radiant being, the three-sun unity.”

Get used to the many - sometimes seemingly poetic - terms with which the Greek-Eastern theologians refer to the Holy Trinity!

The text referred to is Isaias 6: 1/13. -- “(The divine calling of the prophet). -- In the dying year (-740) of King Ozias (Uzziah), I saw the Lord seated on a grand and supremely exalted throne. His mantle drag filled the sanctuary.

Seraphim (seraphs) 'burning' - held themselves above him, each with six wings (...). One to another they cried out, “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaot (the Lord of hosts). Of his glory the earth is full”. (...).”

Referring to 1 Sam. 1:3 (4:4): the expression “Yahweh Sabaot” perhaps refers to “armies” of either cosmic forces (including celestial bodies) or “angels” (whether or not associated with those forces; cf. Ps. 58 (57) and 82 (81), where earthly judges are associated with supernatural entities).

Again: the three times holy (Greek: tris.hagion or still trisagion) is hinted at from the Trinity belief in the later New Testament, -- for the reason of a similarity: the deity is called 'holy' in three times. In which one sees a 'mysterious' (retrospective) indication of the Trinity dogma.

#### **2.-- *Abraham and the three angels***

K. Kirchoff, *Ost.*, I, 164. -- “Abraham, -- when he was in the stranger, was deemed worthy to receive in a picture the one Lord in three persons as guests, -- the Lord who is above every being, -- in human appearances.”

This ties in with Gen. 18:1vv. (The appearance at the oak of Mambre).

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

The scene is world famous thanks to Rublev's beautiful Trinity icon. -- Assuming 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 “preview” of the Trinity that only makes itself known in the New Covenant.

Meanwhile, it appears that the Byzantine liturgists clearly foreground the profound unity of the two covenants.

### **3. -- *The mystery of the Trinity.***

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, I, 163. -- Sunday Of The Paralytic. -- “Thou hast bewitched us to thy love, God's compassionate Logos (universe wisdom). Thou hast appeared in “the flesh” (poor humanity) out of love for us - without becoming anything else - and hast initiated us into the mystery of the threefold radiant deity. Therefore we praise thee”.

E. Mercenier, *La pr.*, 11, 80. Palm Sunday. -- “Thanks to the Holy Spirit, every soul lives. Thanks to the cleansing, it exalts itself. Its nobility it acquires thanks to the threefold unity (the Trinity) in a consecrated mystery.” This “consecrated 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, thou hast created the nature of invisible and visible beings out of nothing, and delivered from manifold dangers those who praise thee in faith as the one God. - Therefore deem them worthy of thy glory”.

### **4. -- *The Primal Couple “Jesus/ Mary”.***

Jesus is inseparably united with his virgin mother, Mary. These two people, one the God-man, the other his mother, bear the revelation of the Trinity mystery. Let us consider for a moment.

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, I, 162. -- “Being naturally human, thou hast assumed the mode of being of men, God's Logos (universe wisdom) and thus let the triple unlimited ruling light of the only deity shine forth. In so doing, you have shown to the universe the pure virgin who brought you into the world as the praised one.”

Or still (K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, I, 163f.) “As the one who became God's light-bringing pure bride-chamber, we lovingly sing to you, virgin Mary, in songs of praise and blessedly praise you. For of thee Christ was born in two natures and wills, -- he, the one of the Trinity, the Lord of glory.”

**Note:**-- Jesus is thought by great tradition to be gifted with two faculties of will, -- his divine will and his will as a human being. Again, one of the expressions of the unity of the person in two natures (human and divine nature includes the “ability to will”) in Christ, the basis of his saving incarnation.

Or again (K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, I, 93): “Fallen was our nature once, when it lapsed into delusion and slipped into corruption, immaculate. Now, however, he who became from you an earthly man, God, the Logos (wisdom of the universe), has humanly restored our nature and initiated us into the mystery of the threefold light of the primordial deity.”

One noted: no self-willed thinking or consciousness expansion leads into the Trinity mystery! Rather, God's initiative that exposes itself, -- reveals itself,-- initiates us. This is a real initiation or 'initatio', in which Jesus and Mary, each in his own way, play a key role. Hence the enormous veneration of Jesus, as the second person incarnate, and of Mary, which 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 teaches us K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.* II, 114.

“Form me with deifying rays, and unceasingly show me the way in which I delight in your triune deity, sun of glory, and make me partakers of the divine kingdom.”

The kingdom of God, main premise of Old and New Testament, gets off the ground in us, who have been given up to delusion (unreality) and destruction, thanks to constant illumination by the Trinity in ourselves.

***Man, 'image' of God.***

K. Kirchhoff, 11, 159. -- “Honored have you, savior, the making of your hands in that you have, in the form of a body, portrayed alive an 'image' (likeness, representation) of your spiritual existence.

You made me part of your spiritual existence by appointing me, thanks to your free plenitude of power, as ruler(s) over earthly things, Logos (wisdom of the universe).”

The way in which man is an image of God - by virtue of creation by God - shows the task of that man! Shows the realm where he must be constantly shaped and guided by God Himself. The earthly things, -- that is what we are supposed to deal with. According to the Ten Commandments (Sinai Theophany). the code of conduct of the universe in summarized and vernacular form.

***This refers to Gen. 1:26f.*** -- “God said, 'Make man as an image of us, as a likeness of us. That men may rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the domesticated animals, all wild beasts, and all the beasts that creep over the ground.’” God created man as his image. As the image of God he created him. As man and woman he created them. -- God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful. Become numerous. 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 begot a son as a likeness of him, as an image of him.”

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

In the terms of the Byzantine liturgy, this comes from the “spiritual” nature of man that he owes to God's spiritual being, of which he is a model.

***As an aside,*** Daniel 7: 9/28 tells us that the “son of man” (with whom Jesus identifies himself) rises above the animals. “The kingdom of God resembles a man as the empires resemble animals” (A. Bertholet, *Die Religion des alten Testaments*, (The Religion of the Old Testament) Tübingen, 1932, 131).

***Conclusion.***-- Man as an image, resp. likeness, of the deity who rules (the “kingdom” or princely exercise of God's power) is apparently a theme present from the beginning to the end of the Bible (of salvation history).

*Note* -- We note in passing that the 'tôledôt' or lineage history - *Ap. th.* 20 - , apart from the spirit aspect that elevates man, as the descendant of Adam and Eve, above the animals, includes the first sin. (Gen. 3:1/24).

The Fall also belongs to what Adam and Eve pass on in 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 9:29v. says, “And if I have committed evil, to what purpose would it serve for me to tire myself? That I wash myself with soapwort? That I cleanse my hands with lye herb?” A little further (Job 14:3/4), “This creature (man as he is) thou starest at. Thou dost challenge it before thee: in judgment! But who shall bring out of that unclean (sinful) the pure? No one!”.

The Book of Job, in the wake of Genesis 3:23, sees the profound sinfulness ('uncleanness') (although it still articulates them very incompletely - strongly ritualistic - (we think of Leviticus 15 (The sexual uncleanness)). Yet for Book Job, man is from his conception and immediately his birth 'unclean', -- the prelude to, an ethical or conscientious uncleanness, i.e. sinfulness, wickedness, unscrupulousness.

Which Ps. 51(50: Miserere) states as follows, “Look: evil creature am I born, -- as sinful creature did my mother receive me” (v. 7).

Until when S. Paul, Rom. 5:12 articulates the so-called “original sin dogma”: “As by one man sin “came into the world” -- and, through sin, death -- and as in that way death passed on to all men, since all have sinned ...

Death reigned - according to some further S. Paul - since Adam (and Eve)! One cannot say it more clearly: the 'tôledôt' or lineage history contains, besides the element “spirit of God”, the element sin (unscrupulous behavior with all its consequences). Both “elements” are passed on through the lineage history. Hence the duality of actual human beings as we are :

- a. image, likeness of the (triune) God,
- b. caricature (warped image or likeness) of the same (three-one) God! Good and evil in “harmony” (interpenetration).

“Knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17), -- as in deities (Gen. 3:5: “You shall be like deities who are at home ('knowing') good and evil”).

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

“Vienna must I and lament when I think of death and look intently at the beauty which thou hast assigned to us - creating according to divine image, lying in graves : formless, inglorious, ornamental. What a miracle! What mystery happened to us? How did it come to pass that we are ready to die -- that we are married to death? The truth (to the point): God commanded it, as it is written (Gen. 3:19), -- he who also gives chastisement to those who have passed away.”

**Gen. 3:19** is prefaced here “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread, until thou return to the ground, -- since thou hast been drawn out of it. For 'clay earth' thou art, and to 'clay earth' thou shalt return.”.

The man (man) called his wife 'Eve' because she was 'the mother of all living'“. -- Behold “the commandment” of Yahweh God concerning the doomed unconscionable situation of man since the first sin (except Jesus and Mary as 'immaculate', i.e. original sinless, recipients).

We said - *Ap. th.* 18 - that “hell (underworld, dungeon) functions as a presupposition (in a negative way, of course)” when one wants to understand the mystery or mysterious process of salvation (God's counsel) from what it presupposes.

So we listen to K. Kirchoff, *Ost.*, 11, 158. -- “Since you, Christ, have risen from the dead, death no longer exercises power over all those who have died in faith.

Therefore, with outspread arms, we implore “Give refreshment to your servants/servants in your paradises and “in the bosom of Abraham” (in the paradisiacal company of Abraham) to those/those who - from Adam to the present - have served you purely (conscientiously). (...). God, consider them worthy of your heavenly kingdom”.

One sees it: the (triune) God left man to his autonomy or self-will (Ecclesiasticus 15:14 (“He left man to his own deliberation”); Galat. 6:7/8 (“What one sows, that shall one also reap”)) but the mystery of his incarnation in Jesus, through Mary, the virgin mother, is the counter-process that (tôledôt) co-rules human history,--from Adam and Eve to the present.

**And this:** -- To enter more deeply into what the Byzantine liturgy offers us concerning paradise story.

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, II, 160. -- “Thou hast creatively given the universe its radiance. As a mixed living being thou hast situated me, man, between littleness and greatness. Therefore bestow upon the souls of thy servants/servants idleness”.

*Ibid.*, 159. -- “Commencement and existence bestowed upon me thy creative word. For, since you wished to compose me out of what is invisible and what is visible, you “out of earth” formed my body and through your “divine and life-creating breath” gave me a soul. (... )”.

This ties in with Gen. 2:4b/25 (The Paradise Story). Gen. 2:7. -- “Then Yahweh God modelled man with the 'clay earth' of the ground. Into the nose he breathed a breath of life, and immediately man - 'adam' - became a living being.” -- The term “man” ('adam') becomes, with this story, the collective name for “what is man.” Yet the meaning runs in tandem with the first man, Adam.

K. Kirchhoff, *o.c.*, 159. -- “Thou hast conceived “my dignity” as distinct from the life of other creatures. Therefore thou hast planted in Eden a garden made lustrous by a motley profusion of trees, -- free from grief and care. Immediately you placed me on the earth as a mixed creature resembling angels, sharing the divine life”.

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

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

*Ibid.*, 163. -- “The source of life thou art. The captives thou dost deliver, Lord, with thy divine power”.

In other words, God, the triune one, is the only utter premise of “all that lives,” including man.

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, II, 160. -- “In the beginning thou didst employ me as a citizen and caretaker of paradise. Yet, when I transgressed thy commandment, thou didst send me into exile”.

*Ibid.*, 163. -- “To earth we returned since we flouted God's divine rule of conduct. But thanks to you, virgin, as we shook off the corruption of death, we were raised from earth to heaven.”

### ***The Angel Mystery.***

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

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

Job 5:1 says, “Cry out now! Will you be answered? To whom among the 'saints' will ye turn?”. 'Saints' is, here, another name for 'angels'.

Job 4:17/18. -- “Even in his 'servants' God puts no trust. His 'angels' he catches deviating”. -- 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 mortals, human beings! This text teaches us not to be naive about 'angels'. Everything that is not God is fallible! Even if it is “higher” or, so to speak, “closer to God”.

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

#### ***With this shading that 'sons of God' might emphasize:***

- a.** the fact that they are higher than man, in rank, and
- b.** the fact that they belong to “the counsel of God” (and co-rule the universe with God).

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

According to scripture scholars, 'Satan' is only a proper name, designation for precisely one person, in Chron., b. 1, 21:1 (“Satan took up against Israel and induced David to count the Israelites”), -- where it represents “the anger of Yahweh.”

Satan or satan (some evil accuser) is one type of “angel,” an “unclean” or alienated angel from God, apparently.

1 Kings 22:19.-- "I saw Yahweh, seated on his throne. All the 'army' (= 'heir' or 'lord') of heaven was present, to the left and right of God."

The "angels" - "heavenly spirits" apparently, again, make up God's council or court. That is : they are involved in ruling with Him in the universe.

See also Ps. 82 (81):1 ("the divine council"), where the angels are called "deities. Compare with Ps. 58 (57):2 ("deities" or "divine beings"). Also Ps. 82(81 ):6.

Whereby it appears that the angels differ in a very high degree! They act, alongside God, in His name even, as "judges" (Ps. 82(81):2; Ps. 58(57):2) or "princes" (Ps. 82(81):7), but do not do well, -- to the extent that God threatens to destroy them.

Thus seen, they join "the many who will depart here and there," while in the process, "iniquity" (unscrupulousness) will increase (Daniel 12:4).

A. Bertholet, *Die Religion des alten Testaments*, Tübingen, 1932, 130, e, adds, "The ones addressed in Ps. 82 and 58 are the ancient pagan deities, -- in a circumscription from Jewish monotheism (one-god faith)."

*Note* -- Here reference may be made to O. Keel/Chr. Uehlinger, *Gottinnen, Gotter und Gottessymbole (Neue Erkenntnis zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels)*, (Goddesses, Gods and God Symbols (New Insight into the Religious History of Canaan and Israel)), 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 own deities in family, clan, village, town.

See also M.-Th. Wacker/ E. Zenger, Hrsg., *Der eine Gott und die Göttin (Gottesvorstellungen des biblischen Israel im Horizont feministischer Theologie)*, (The One God and the Goddess (Biblical Israel's conceptions of God in the horizon of feminist theology)), Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 1991, which speaks of the typically female religious conception and the 'mother goddess'.

Dan. 10:13vv. -- "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 do battle with the prince of Persia. When this work is finished, then comes the prince of Yavan (Ionia, Greece)".

Reading Matth. 4:8/9 (Jesus' temptation).-- "Again the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain,--shows him all the empires of the world with their glory and says 'All this I will give you, if (...)'".

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

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 consisting of Jesus' death (cross passes) and glorification (resurrection passes).

Dan. 12:1. -- “At that time (note: a time when God reveals his glory in curious ways) Michael, the great prince, who keeps track of the children of your people, will rise (to protect). It will be a time of fear,-- such as there has not been since the existence of nations.” In that time” your people will be saved: all those, at least, who are recorded in “the book”“.

*As an aside*, “the book” is the book of predestination or the book of (eternal) life (Exod. 32: 30 vv. : the book in which the deeds of men are “recorded” by which their fate is determined, as Ps. 69 (68):29 says).

***Final sum concerning the angels of the people.***

Deut. 32:8. -- “When the Most High allotted to the nations their inheritance,-- when he classified the sons of men ('children of men' is 'people'), he laid down the territories of the nations according to the number of the sons of God.” But -- the text continues -- Yahweh's portion was his people. So the pagan nations, with Yahweh, are controlled 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 girl of Sarai, at a certain well in the desert.”

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

*Note* -- “The elements of the(them) world.” -- Galat. 4:3; 4:9;-- Col. 2:8; 2:20. -- 'Stoicheion', lat.: elementum, meant, in antiquity, all that governs and thus makes intelligible, explains something.

Thus 'stoicheiosis', lat. elementatio, factor analysis, is the fact of looking up and dissecting the factors, internal and external, that make up, control something. Something that one must put first in order to understand something, -- behold what 'element' is.

So the expression, in Paul's case, means “the things which one must put first in order to understand the(them) world. And this is “the(them) world” in its good/evil aspects! In Paul's case this is more limited: e.g. the law of the Jews! The system of the Law regulated Jewish life in every detail, insofar as this life involved dealing with “this world”.

Thus Galat. 4:8/10. -- “At the time, for the reason of your ignorance of 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 (taken you into his intimacy) -- : how can you return to those 'elements' without power or value? To which you want to submit again - as ever before! Fearfully take into account 'days', 'months', 'seasons', 'years!'”.

So much for the Galatians regarding their pagan deities.

**Galat. 3:19.** -- “Wherefore then “the law” (of the Jews)? It was added for the purpose of deviations. Until the coming of the posterity for whom the promise was intended. It was enacted through the ministration of angels and the mediation of a mediator”. Jewish lore maintained the presence of angels at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:16f.), where Moses, the mediator, received the law from Yahweh 's hands.

The New Testament, on the other hand, knows God Himself, without a Moses-style mediator, as 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, slid between God and men (the worship of angels shows it, as Col. 2:18 says).

That abuse of power was overturned by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The law which they -- according to one tradition -- imposed on men “from God's hand,” they themselves failed, at least in part, to keep! Which naivete regarding “angels” again demonstrates as misguided!

Whoever still harbors doubts about the pagan deities - whether they really apply double standards like that - can read W.B. Kristensen, *Verzamelde bijdragen tot kennis der antieke godsdiensten* (Collected contributions to the knowledge of ancient religions), Amsterdam, 1947 - Kringloop en totaliteit, o.c., 231/290!

**An excerpt:** “In Anu, the Babylonian universe god, all divine energies were united. He was the universal destroyer: salvation and calamity emanated From him. Thus Labartu, the demon of disease, was called “the daughter of Anu.” Human ideals and desires were not “law” for the world leader! His nature was 'demonic' - in the religious sense of that word - : i.e. inscrutable and incalculable, super-rational and super-ethical”. The latter implies that, when it came down to it, Anu did not bother with reason and conscience.

(O.c., 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 exhibit -- as sovereign determiners of destiny -- the nature of the Babylonian Anu. Salvation and calamity came from them, -- downfalls and upfalls, -- the opposites which make up the permanent life of the world (...). The will of these deities was destiny, the 'moira', divine but inhuman”. (O.c., 273).

Kristensen, a connoisseur, speaks plainly! -- “Righteous in the ordinary sense of that word, the deities were not. In so doing they denied “the laws” which they had nevertheless established for men. And the ancients were perfectly aware of this contradiction in the 'divine' being.” (Ibid.).

Not without reason does the Bible begin with: “The day that thou shalt eat (of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), thine eyes shall be opened, and thou shalt be as deities that know good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Where “knowing” means “intimately associating with,” “being at home with”!

As Bertholet notes, the Bible identifies the pagan deities as “angels” who make up God's court, i.e., help govern the universe with him, possibly against him. Because they help determine the universe and our fate in it, they are “the elements of the universe.” Two-faced!

### ***Tobias' "traveling companion."***

Actually, the book of Tobit (Tobias) is the story of Sar(r)a and Tobias.-- However, the angelic history concerns Tobias first of all, while a demonic history concerns Sar(r)a.

The story shows the influence of the invisible ones. -- we dwell on the essential. Tobias' traveling companion. -- 5:4vv. -- "Tobias, son of Tobit, went out of the house in search of a good travel guide who was able to get with him as far as Media.

As soon as he was out of the house, he found Raphael, the angel, standing before him, -- not suspecting that it was "an angel of God." He said, "Whence art thou, friend?" The angel: "I am an Israelite, one of your 'brethren! I have come here seeking work".

Tobias: "Do ye know the way to get to Media?". The other: "Of course! I have been there several times (...)" -- Perhaps it would be better to translate - instead of "an angel of God" - "an angel of God" (because it is not an appearance of God, but a truly independent being who does fulfill a divine mission).

From Tob. 5:14/21 it appears that Raphael "will experience the journey with Tobias in such a way that, just as the beginning is safe, the return will be equally safe.

### ***The angel Raphael as destiny's agent.***

Tob. 3:16/17. -- "This time both their prayers, that of Sarra and that of Tobias (Tobit), were deemed acceptable before the glory of God. Immediately Raphael was sent to 'heal' both.

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

**b.** Sarra, Raguel's daughter, he was to deliver to Tobias, Tobit's son, as a wife and immediately deliver them from Asmodee, the most evil among the demons."

The healing, one physical (the blindness caused by dung in Tobias' eyes), the other soulful (the matrimonial possessions of Sarra), is simultaneously curing their negative fate. Without this twofold intervention of the powerful angel that is Raphael, the fate of those involved was but sad.

### ***"At that time"***

Traditional religions are familiar with the concept of "holy time." Here God, through his angel as destroyer, shows his glory by having the two destined for each other physically meet, as it were, "at that moment.

Whereby 'meeting' is more than just seeing each other: a deep encounter implies a change of destiny! It is an acquaintance but with a more than ordinary involvement of both.

Well, Sarra and Tobias meet “at that time”: just as “in those days”, “at that time”, yes, “in the beginning” indicate holy, i.e. power-laden times, so too “at that time”.

Matt. 11:25/27, a “wisdom text” according to some scholars, says, “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden (“those things”) (the mysteries of God's “kingdom,” i.e., God's intervention) from “the wise” and “the intelligent” and have revealed (“revealed”) them to “the very small.”

This wisdom or apocalyptic text applies here.

**a.** The critical rationalist, typically modern and postmodern representative of “wise and intelligent,” will call “at that time” mere coincidence.

**b.** The apocalyptic thinker will call it a “coincidence” though a “striking” or “remarkable” one! Especially if one takes the whole context into account.

***In other words:*** wise and intelligent people “don't see”; “very small ones” see! Invariably the same phenomenon when it comes to sacred and occult matters. It is not without reason that, in scripture, God's 'counsel' (which also determines our fate) is called “unfathomable by anyone”. Unless one opens oneself up to its unveiling and comes to “believe”, i.e. see clearly in its miracles.

Immediately it is abundantly clear that Raphael plays the role of 'assistance', 'helper', -- knowledgeable companion. And in marriage matters at that! Another one of those “day-to-day” things! In which “God's glory” source of miracles, directly intervenes, -- at least if one prays, i.e. lives in intimate contact with that glorious God.

Let us reread Gen. 24:1/67 (The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah). The servant of Abraham must find for his son a wife according to the will of God: “Yahweh, with whom I, Abraham, have always been intimate, will send 'his angel' with you”.

Even then, people lived in such a way that they expected companions from God, especially in important life issues. Like marriage is one.

In this the companion is also “paraklete,” someone who provides (legal) assistance, as Tob. 12:12 it says: “Know therefore that when you were praying, you and Sarra, it was I who brought your supplications before the glory of the Lord (...)”.

So when we pray - for each of us has, in principle, an attendant - there is at least our personal angel (usually, among the more Christian people, indicated by the term "guardian angel") who prays with us.

Even if the thought and knowledge content of the book of Tobias were to be limited to this one basic truth - if we pray truly and sincerely, we will never be alone - this would mean that the so-called (post)modern 'loneliness' would be gone for good! Lonely' and 'alone' we are, in the system of Biblical, correctly understood revelation - revelation or apokalupsis - never!

*Note* -- Before we close this little chapter, just this: Ezek. 40:1/4 (Face and interpretation of face) teaches us that, in revelation activities ("prophecies," "revelations," "unveilings" ), the angel or angels sometimes play a key role. What Dan. 8:16,-- 9:20/23,-- 10:5/12; -- Zakar. 1:7/9,-- 2:1vv; -- Apokal. 1:1,-- 10:1vv, confirm.

Which is not so surprising, because the godly prophets pray incessantly and so have at least one co-praying power, -- angel power with them.

*Conclusion.* -- Eph. 1:20/21 teaches us that the glorified Christ subdues all things to Himself -- that He reaches beyond the dominions, powers, forces, lofties (all then names for those who control the cosmos as "elements" (controlling factors))!

Coloss. 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, high places, dominions, powers, -- all were created (out of nothing) by Christ and for him."

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

Philpp. 2:10 summarizes, "All, in Jesus' name (i.e., in His being), kneel, -- from the highest peak of the heavens, on earth, and in the nether regions (dungeons)." This is the "three-story worldview" (which the critical-rationalist mindset rejects).

“Heaven, earth, underworld” represents the dimensions of the entire cosmos! This is: all of creation! Beneath our feet is reality. Around the earth lives all that deserves the name 'life'. Around our atmosphere is situated the sidereal world with its 'aura' or emanating belt.

The critical-rationalist has never produced any proof - a decisive proof then - of the fact that these three to four dimensions (the aura we take as something separate) are occultly and sacredly reducible to nothing. Not even a semblance of proof. Yet “wise and intelligent” think they have to ridicule this classification as “belonging to an outdated or outdated mythical stage.

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

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

Eph. 6:12 says it more than clearly, “For it is not against adversaries of blood and flesh that we have to contend! But rather against the dominions, against the powers, against the universe-controllers-in-the-darkness, against the spirits of evil who “inhabit the heavenly spaces.”

This shows that what Gen. 3:5 says-the knowledge of good and evil, peculiar to the (evil) spirits-is still valid and will be valid in Paul's eyes. Which Gen. 3:15 indicates in a vaguely groping way.

As Job 4:18 says, “God catches (even) his 'angels' (performers of tasks) at variance.”

Daniel 12:4 says that “many will go astray here and there, while unscrupulousness increases.” “Then the end will come when Christ will turn over the dominion to God the father, -- having destroyed every rule, dominion and power” (1 Cor. 15:24). -

**Conclusion.** -- We are moving toward the bitterest final battle! Like Paul: be we not naive!

### ***The Byzantine liturgy on the subject.***

The angels -1. good (conscientious), 2. good - and - evil, 3. evil - accompany the whole sacred history from the serpent in the beginning to the very evil one at the end of time.

### ***See here a few texts.***

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, 11, 113. -- "Once formed thou, God, an idea, and, with wisdom, didst thou bring into being the assemblies of angels that they might serve thy goodness, triune deity."

One sees it: the radical-Biblical teaching! What is striking is the emphasis on us as substance - or matter-bound as opposed to the matter-free spirits.

"Father, Son, together with the Holy Spirit, look down on us who, in faith, ... praise You and Your power, mercy. Look down with your fire spirits upon us who are created from the dust of the earth. For another deity besides you we know not, and cry 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."

No question, in the Byzantine liturgy, of false deification, -- idolization, of angels,-- however incorporeal and spiritual, how close to God they may be (in power and ability)! On the contrary: "I am" with you and no one -- not even the fire or divine energy spirits -- is against you! Cfr. K. Kirchhoff, o.c., 115.

### ***"The enemy".***

Just now we saw it: Eph. 2:2 : "the prince of the kingdom of the air" at work in all who oppose Christ's message, is "the enemy".

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, 11, 246. -- "Since my youth "the enemy" has charmed me and set me on fire by his lust. Yet, when I put my trust in you, Lord, I drive him to flight." -- In this sentence, the liturgist sums up an entire experience of temptation.

Indeed, woe betide him who thinks that the demonic-satanic "lusts" which arise in his unconscious and subconscious soul can be overcome by purely created forces!

Are we not naïve concerning the invisible ones! The Bible is not. Even the pagan mythologists and theologians were not it.

### ***The final battle.***

K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, II, 246. -- "The one whose hope is in the Lord will not fear him even then when in the fire he will judge the universe and subject it to 'vengeance' (rectification of injustice)." -- One thinks one hears Paul speaking!

***Mary and the angelic world.***

The angel Gabriel, already named Dan. 8:16,-- 9:21/23, reports to the virgin Mary “the glad tidings” (Lu. 1: 19).

K. Kirchhoff, *Ueber dich freut sich der Erdkreis (Marienhymnen)*, (The world rejoices over you, (Marian hymns)), Münster (Wf.), s.d., 27. -- “Gabriel was given the honor of knowing the all realities transcending counsel (of God), whole and immaculate virgin. He brought you unusually joyful news. It clearly revealed the reception of the Logos (Jesus as universe wisdom) in your womb and reported your unutterable bringing into the world.”

The high angel is at the service of God and of the Virgin Mary. K. Kirchhoff, *ibid.*, 28. -- “In songs of praise we sing of your great and chilling mystery. For in a way hidden even from the choirs of supernatural angels, “the one who is” (Exod. 3:14: “I am”) has come down upon you as dew upon the fleece, so that, universally celebrated in songs of praise, we may be saved and have a new way of being”.

One sees it: Mary's maternal mystery exceeds even the high intelligence of angels! Gabriel was therefore first initiated by a divine intervention (pure grace) before he could convey the glad tidings.

Once the secret got through to the choirs of angels, the mood of life changed: “Rejoice because they know -- that is what the heavenly powers do! Rejoicing with those heavenly powers,-- that is what the armies of mortals do! For in thy child, virgin and mother of God, they were made one. As it is fitting, we praise thy child”. (*Ibid.*).

“Serving approach the heavenly powers to bring thy into the world, -- marveling with reason at the miracle of thy virgin motherhood, ever virgin. For pure art thou before thy bringing into the world, and pure art thou after Jesus' birth.” (*O.c.*, 28f.).

Also “the enemy” and “his dungeon” go! *O.c.*, 29 .-- “Slain by thy life-giving fruit, Jesus, is the enemy, godly, and crushed, at once, is before all eyes the underworld. We, prisoners, were therefore set free. That is why I cry out, “Destroy the urges in my heart!”

We know: the hell experience teaches that the urges in the depths of our hearts can be the entry point of “the enemy” and “the dungeon.” Yet in that area too, Mary's motherhood mystery is the saving power.

***The Marian Mystery.***

We have already established it several times: Mary, by virtue of having “brought into the world” (made “appear”) Jesus, the Logos, the all-embracing divine wisdom, is at the center.

***E. Mercenier, La pr., II, 97.*** -- “The one who, on the holy mountain (Sinai), was glorified and who, in the flaming bramble, made known the mystery of the virgin, the Lord,-- we sing to him and exalt him in all ages.”

What analogy, i.e. partial resemblance, does the Byzantine liturgist find between the burning bush and Mary's mystery? The fact that the burning bush did not burn up,--yes, did not even burn up. Similarly, the Logos “appearing” in Mary's womb did not burn up his mother: even her virginity remained radically intact. The unblemished in the bush is a model for the unblemished in Mary's bringing into the world.

On Holy - 'Great' - Thursday (E. Mercenier, o.c., 137) the liturgy explains this in more detail. “When, during the last supper in the course of which you rested with yourselves, you revealed the great mystery of your Incarnation to the initiates - 'mystics,' - of the Spirit, you said, 'Eat the bread of life - this is my body - and the blood of imperishable life.'

In other words, the final effect, at that moment, of what happened in the womb of the pristine Mary was the fact that Jesus embodied himself, as it were, in the bread and wine.

The embodiment in Mary is the model for the real embodiment in the Eucharist, which is the extension of it. Again, one example of analogical thinking.

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

This includes that the birth of God makes all nature new. -- Therefore we, all races, praise you great as the mother and also the bride of God, -- according to the rightly believed doctrine”.

***The “nature” here is:***

**a.** human nature, which, in Mary, knows a member who brings virgin into the world (which is truly 'new'),

**b.** the whole cosmic nature which is involved in it. The mystery of the virgin renews the whole cosmos.

Whoever would still have doubts about this, listen (K. Kirchhoff, *Ost.*, II, 245):

“For thy sake, gifted one, Mary, all creation rejoices, -- the army of angels and the race of men. For thou art the sanctified temple and the spiritual paradise, -- thou, the glory of the virgins from thee after all God “appeared in the flesh” and our God who is for the ages became a babe. For thy womb hath he made the throne, -- thy body made wider than the heavens. -- For thy sake, gifted one, all creation rejoices. To thee be glory.”

One senses, in the repetition of “for your sake, the gifted one, all creation rejoices,” the unmeasured and immeasurable biblical reverence for that girl, that woman who once was Mary. If ever there could be a 'cosmic' figure, then first of all in the case of Mary. That, yes that is her mystery. Her mystery. In its entire width, length, -- depth and height.

***Mary's beauty.*** -- 'Beautiful' in the ancient Greek language means “all that commands admiration and astonishment”.

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

O.c., 44: “As delightful” as supremely beautiful, as wholly unspoiled among women, God has chosen you and dwelt in your immaculate womb. (...)”.

O.c., 78. -- “As above all the beauty of angels, -- so were thou beheld, since thou, bride, hast brought into the world their maker and lord out of thy immaculate blood in the flesh, him who saves all who praise him.”

***The reason.***

Mary's mystery is her son.

O.c., 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 womb, above all stain, as reaching its realization.”

O. c., 118. -- “As chosen and supremely beautiful thou shalt appear before God, before creation, thou omnipresent in songs of praise, -- in the splendor of thy stream of light. -- Let in joy shine those who sing to thee in praise”.

In other words, Mary, -- long before the creation of the universe -- was an idea of the Trinity.

***After idolization the true deification.***

K. Kirchoff, *Ueber dich*, 163f ... -- "The mystery of the primal beginning, -- today it is revealed : God's Son becomes the child of a human being in order - by participating in our poorness - to share with us his glory.

Once Adam was deceived: though he desired it, he did not become 'god'! God, however, becomes man so that Adam becomes 'god'.

Jubilation is the duty of creation, and nature fits a chord as the archangel, Gabriel, appears in deep reverence before the virgin and brings her the "rejoice" that removes the sadness. -- Thou hast appeared out of the deepest compassion, our God, in the garment of a man. Glory be to thee". --

In the liturgy, the "present" (emphasized here) continues. By what means? Because the Incarnation, with all that it entails (the work of redemption), comes from God's eternity, existing before all ages, accompanying all ages, continuing after all ages,

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

One sees it: God's pre-existing idea before every creation, viz. the second person becomes man in order to deify man, dominates the whole of Biblical and Byzantine liturgical thought and life.

Note that this pre-existing or pre-existing in God's mind is at once present and future.

It is the source of past, present, and future: thereby it is an eternal present that encompasses and founds our temporal past, present, future.

This is the proper meaning of the term "primal beginning" better true "eternal origin" (in which past/present/future as we, mortals-in-a-time, experience it, are at once encompassed).

***Queen of the Universe.***

K. Kirchoff, *Ueber dich*, 144. -- "Ruler and governess of the universe we call thee. For he who is truly God thou hast brought into the world in an indiscernible manner,--he who created the universe and controls it and sustains it,--thou art the one above every stain."

O.c., 49. -- "The maker of the universe thou bearest upon thy arms, pure. By thy intercessions vote him favorably upon us,--us who with full conviction take refuge in thee."

***Mediatrice of all graces.***

Problem solving is the essence of God's counsel before all ages, during all ages, after all ages.

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

O.c., 57. -- "Thou hast given us as a mediatrice who never disappoints, thy mother, Christ. Thanks to her pray share with us graciously the 'goodness' (op.: all that is truly valuable) dispensing Spirit who emerges from the Father through you."

Mary, as mediatrice, is the gate through which the triune God - Father, Son, Spirit - enters into this world and into our lives.

This being a mediatrice amounts to very practical problem solving. O.c., 182.- "Alive were the dead thanks to you, for life-less you have received in your womb. Spoken were those who were dumb. Lepers were healed. Diseases subsided. The hosts of spirits in the skies were overcome, -- virgin, thou, the salvation of mortals".

In other words: the miraculous works of her divine Son became possible through her motherhood. If one will: the incarnation of the virgin created the necessary condition for the miraculous action of Jesus. In this sense, Mary is truly "mediatrice of all graces".

***Actualization.***

Not only in the "evangelical" past was Mary Mediatrice!

O.c., 151. -- "Will the frailty of the body and the powerlessness of the soul, mother of God, take from those who in love take refuge in you who brought Christ, the savior, into the world."

O.c., 148. -- "By severe powerlessness, by morbid temper, I am put to the test, virgin. Be my 'helper'! For as a treasure of salvation that never perishes, I know you, wholly pure, -- a treasure that one never exhausts.

Or even more vividly: o.c., 150 -- "On the bed of the sick I lie now, beaten! For my 'flesh' (note : poor humanity) there is no more salvation in prospect. -- You, who received God in your womb, the savior of the world, the deliverer from sickness -- you, the 'good', I beg: 'Save me from the destruction of sickness' Even what we now call 'burnt out' (literally: 'burned out, totally despondent') falls under Mary's jurisdiction.

**O.c., 147.** -- “The storms of the drift life are rushing around me. With great despondency it overwhelms my soul. -- Grant peace, bride, thanks to the deep tranquility of your son, your God, -- you, the one above every stain.”

**O.c., 148** .-- “Put to rest the confusion of my drifting life and the back and forth of my missteps, -- you, the bride of God, who brought into the world Christ, the one who is essentially the companion.”

**O.c., 148.** -- “As supplicant(s) I turn to thee, virgin: 'My confused state of soul, the storms of despondency, -- drive them away!' For thou, bride of God, hast received Christ, the prince of peace, in thy womb, -- thou, the only immaculate”. “Refuge of sinners/sinners”.

**O. c., 138.**-- “As the good murderer, I cry out to you, 'Friend of man, remember me!' As the sinner, I have tears in my eyes and cry, “I have sinned, -- as the prodigal son, ever. Accept me, the one given up to despair, in my repentance,-- thanks be to the Mother of God. So that I sing joyful songs (...)”.

**O.c., 139.** -- “In carelessness I spent my life: to your holy laws and your high commandments I did not trouble myself! But now have mercy on me and save me -- thanks to the one who brought you into the world, -- as a merciful and compassionate God.”

**O. c., 139.** -- “As a frivolous one I have squandered my life, -- remained a tree without fruit. Immediately I become anxious for the reason of the (final) judgment, for the reason of the unquenchable blaze of the gehenna (hell). -- But thou hast brought the unquenched “fire” (op.: divine life energy) into the world! Preserve me therefore from the glow of hell,-- thanks to thy mediation”.

As o.c., 137 puts it: even those who, “in foolishness” (i.e., lack of divine insight), distanced themselves from God very far, -- even such people are not without prospects! Mary is the salvation of the hopeless! Of those who are mentioned in the parable about the workers “of the eleventh hour” (who lived a careless life). Absolute despair, in Marian terms, does not exist. Absolute despairers do that accursed soul state to themselves.

### ***The Christ Mystery.***

We will first deal with the individual parts of the mystery or mysterious event that represent person and work of salvation of Jesus, the Christ.

#### **1. March 25. -- *The glad tidings. -- The reception 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' (poor humanity) from you, immaculate, and lived with mortals. For that power and wisdom made themselves known in her glory”. -- This language is that of the wisdom books: Jesus as the power and wisdom of God, on a universe scale by the way, becomes man - among - men.

**Note** -- Julius Tyciak, *Die Liturgie als Quelle ostlicher Frommigkeit*, (The liturgy as a source of Eastern piety), Freiburg i. Br., 1937, 17f., explains. -- “Today the mystery foreseen from all eternity is revealed (...). God becomes man so that he deifies Adam (note: metonymic for “mankind”). Yet also the (op.: non-human) creation has immediate cause for joy and the (op.: non-human) nature may rejoice. Indeed, the Archangel (Gabriel) enters the Virgin, full of trembling, and brings her the greeting which is the opposite of sadness.”

One can see it: this excellent connoisseur and sensitizer of Eastern piety and liturgy that Tyciak is, emphasizes it! This is a turning point in the opposite direction of a cosmically broad nature. As the Old Testament wisdom books think cosmically wide, so do the Byzantine liturgists.

***Ueber dich, 183.*** -- “The hidden mystery -- which even the angels did not know -- was entrusted to the archangel Gabriel.-- And now he will come to you, the only immaculate and glorious one (...), -- to you, the recreation of the generation (of men). And saying he will say to you “Rejoice, whole and holy! Prepare to receive -- through the (yes) word -- God, the Logos (universe 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 glad tidings. -- Accepting in faith the “rejoice” she received into her womb you, the God for the ages.

Immediately we too rejoice and cry out to you, “God, you have - without changing - taken on 'flesh' (= poor humanity) from her. Grant peace to the world and to our souls great mercy”.

***Two comments.***

**a.** Note the 'present' or 'now': the divine council decision or 'programming') concerning the problem of the degeneration of creation enters into Mary's history from the eternal now of divinity itself.

The actualization which the text displays is therefore anything but a literal artifice! This actualization is 'mythical' or 'apocalyptic': what neither angels knew nor Mary understood immediately, enters (sacred) history by complete 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”), -- Nehemias 13:22 (“have mercy on me according to your great mercy”).

***The parable of the workers of the eleventh hour,***

This one expresses pre-eminently that great, end-time mercy: even ... those who, throughout sacred history, “did nothing” (“they stood there idly”), still receive, just before the end of “the day” - before “the night” (of the full end-time) sets in - “the same reward”, i.e. a share in end-time happiness.

With the glad tidings, the great prelude to the complete end of time indeed breaks through. And thus also “the great mercy” -- of which we -- Ap. th. 55 (“the workers of the eleventh hour”) -- have seen the Marian, far-reaching degree. Any utter despair -- so typical of some contemporaries -- the people involved do to themselves! God's offer remains valid.

***Ueber dich, 103.*** -- “The fierce horde of such wickedness that they do not, in plain words, confess thee as the pure mother of God, stand weeping.-- For to us, at least, thou art the gate of the divine light that drives out 'the night' of unscrupulous life.”

**Ibid., 108.** -- “Show me, virgin, the right way so that I may -- along that way -- find the gate that provides access to the heavenly realms,-- to the divine dwelling tents of paradise, -- to the true, eternal blissful life.”

This text recalls the “late” faith of the - precisely because of that late faith - good murderer.

## **2. Christmas. December 25.**

K. Kirchhoff, *ost.*, 11, 136. -- “To the dead, resurrection is now given through your unspeakable and unspeakable motherhood, mother of God, ruler. For life -- shrouded in 'flesh' (earthly humanity) -- has emerged from you radiantly and has visibly expelled the night of death.”

This shows the radical unity of the whole Christ mystery: Christmas, Jesus' birth, is already Easter -- and -- resurrection! The “dead,” -- that is us! We as alienated from God, due to original sin, are 'dead' before God, i.e. deprived of divine glory and life. Life in the radical sense only reveals itself in Mary's child. Only then can we truly think of life in the true sense.

*Ueber dich*, 105. -- “In an unspeakable and unspeakable way you have given birth this day to a son, a pure mother of God. Through which to the dead is given resurrection. For life, surrounded by 'flesh' (earthly humanity) from you, has radiantly emerged for all and has visibly destroyed the fear of death.”

One sees it: in endless variations the same theme!

### ***Virginity.***

A great many modern and postmodern contemporaries cannot believe that Mary was a virgin mother! Of that opinion they never give any decisive proof,-- but biological indications of which they never prove to be perfectly applicable to Mary's motherhood.

**Ost., II**, 84.-- “The virgin gave birth to her child while she did not know the mystery of mothers. And yet: she is mother and remained a virgin! To her we sing songs of praise! To her we cry, “Mother of God, joy be unto you!”

Again, a theme that recurs in endless prayerful variations.

*Ueber dich*, 102. -- “Grace has blossomed open. Sworn thanks to thee is the law, whole and holy. For thou, pure, hast brought into the world the Lord who gives us the forgiveness of sins, -- virgin.”

The contrasting pair of “law/grace” (Old Testament/New Testament) dates back to, among other places, Romans 7: 1f, where St. Paul discusses both the value and the unworthiness of the Old Testament “law”.

### ***From the higher - divine - world.***

Current theologians speak of 'vertical'. Many a theologian sticks to “horizontal Christianity” that reasons from our humanity. Not so the Bible. Not so the Byzantine liturgy!

*Ueber dich*, 104.-- “By his will alone did the one who lent from your womb, -- your spotless womb, 'flesh' (poor man -being), work out the world: for he wanted to recreate from above the 'flesh'.-- Him we exalt above all in all ages.”

Grace is the divine life for man! I.e. pure gift! Pure gift!

*Ueber dich*, 103. -- “Powerless became the law! Beyond drew the shadow. For above our mind and understanding, virgin, appeared to me the grace of the birth of the one who is God and savior.”

Again: the Pauline teaching on 'law' and 'grace'.

***The birth of a sovereign.***

We know it: the magi (three kings) “from the east” arrived in Jerusalem saying, “Where is the prince of the Jews who has so recently been born? We have, indeed, seen his star (...)” (Matt. 2:1vv.).

*Ueber dich*, 101. -- “When out of the tribe of Judah the princes were swallowed up, whole and pure, as 'shepherd' (prince) your son and God stepped up and began in truth the rule “over the borders of the earth.”

Not only of the Jews, but -- as apocalyptists especially see -- of the whole planet, Jesus is the prince.-- Jesus affirms it before Pilate's judgment seat: “Art thou the prince of the Jews?” -- Jesus replied, “Thou sayest.” (Matthew 27:11).

*Apok. 22:16.* -- “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to make known to you these revelations concerning the churches. I am the root from the lineage of David,-- the shining morning star”.

Mary shares in that sovereignty: since she let the sovereign shine forth from her womb, she appears in all truth to be the ruler over all creatures.

*Ueber dich*, 41. -- “See: manifestly the mother of God -- as the holy mountain on which the house of the Lord is built -- is exalted above 'the powers' (the high angels).”

*Ueber dich*, 57.-- “Above the collections of spirits thou art exalted as the mother of God, and in God's presence thou standest. We praise, acclaimed virgin, thy child and exalt it in all ages”.

Mary is with Jesus “the primal couple” of revelation: “Every one of the inhabitants of heaven kneels down, virgin, before the one who became 'flesh' from you. With the earthlings kneel, as it is fitting, the underworlders. For he made himself known in a glorious way”. Cf. Philippians 2:10.

***The mother of the sovereign.***

We know from cultural history what a profound role, in the life of the monarch, played in ancient times, when kingship and all authority were still 'sacred', i.e. rooted in a higher world and responsible to that higher world, both the mother of the monarch and the monarchess, as the wife of the monarch: they were, as it were, the very throne on which the male monarch ruled. Her mysterious life force was the true basis of his masculine action.

Something similar is true of Mary. -- One reads e.g. 1 Kings 2:19/22: the king's mother 'sits' at the king's right hand; -- the 'possession' of one of the prince's wives (deposed or dead) is a title of succession, as e.g. 2 Sam. 3:7, -16:22 indicates). See also Jerem. 13:18 (the queen mother).- Compare Ps. 110 (109):1 (seated at the right hand generally).

***Luk. 1:43.*** -- “Wherefore is it 'given' to me that to me comes the mother of my Lord?” says Elisabeth to Mary on a visit. That expression, seen in the background of then and former attitudes, is significant.

***Ueber dich, 47.***-- “Princess art thou. For in the midst of wonders thou hast, Bride”. Brought into the world the prince and lord who destroyed the realms of the “hades” (underworld). As a supplicant, turn to him with spread arms that he may deem all who sing to you in praise worthy of the heavenly kingdom.”

***Psalms 45 (44):10*** (“At thy right hand ... a consort, laden with the golden jewels from Ofir”) is brought in (*Ueber dich, 44*): “According to the psalmist, pure one, thou art treading as a princess (consort) at the right hand of the prince who emerged from thy womb radiant. -- Address thyself, whole and immaculate, as supplicant to him that I may stand at “his right hand” in the day of retribution.”

The phrase “at his right hand on the day of retribution” refers to Matt. 25:34 (“Then the prince will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, and receive the kingdom which, from the foundation of the world, has been prepared for you'”).

With which - in passing - the end times are explicitly in the offing.

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

Gladly will I appear at that praise. With joy I will sing of wondrous things from her”.

***The paradox of the Incarnation in Mary's womb.***

'Paradox' is “all that is contrary to common opinion” or, still, “all that is some reversal to the contrary.”

*Ueber dich, 121.* -- “Above the armies of the disembodied angels thou hast become exalted, virgin, since thou hast delivered a body to God, the disembodied. -- Thereby I beseech thee, pure one: 'Slay all the uncontrolled urges of my body.'

'Body' here is to be understood in a platonic sense, namely, “all that is embodied and shares at once in all the ups and downs of cosmic life.” This term does not imply a principled contempt for all that is corporeal in itself (as, incidentally ... in the case of the Greek thinker Platon, neither). But it does encompass a non-naive cult of the body.

So the paradox is 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”!

Immediately apparent is the extremely high reverence for the embodiment event and the reverence for all that is body.

Something analogous: *Ueber dich, 137.* -- “The laws of nature, thanks to you, have been renewed. For in a way that transcends nature, you have received the Logos (Jesus as universe wisdom) into your womb. -- Hereby I beg of you, in faith: “Let the one, above every stain, who has acted 'above human nature' in many situations unscrupulously and immediately removed himself from God, repent, -- be, thanks to your prayers, for him a savior.”

The term “above human nature” (being unscrupulous) refers to the Ancient Greek term 'huper.anthropos', 'Uebermensch' (man beyond the average person). Those who speak in this way 'exaggerate' somewhat, of course, -- especially when they do so in connection with 'nature' and 'laws of nature'. But to speak this way insinuates a far-reaching form of cynicism or impudence, -- as the parable of the (cynical) judge and the (troublesome widow) demonstrates, (Lu 18:1/8;// 11:5/8).

That Mary left natural laws behind in her motherhood is, by the way, a regular theme of the Byzantine liturgy.

### **3. Completed Christmas (epiphany, theophany).**

J. Tyciak, *Die Liturgie als Quelle ostlicher Frömmigkeit*, (The liturgy as a source of Eastern piety), Freib.i.Br., 1937, 14ff..

It is good to know the Pauline teaching concerning non-human nature - creation - in order to understand what follows.

Rom. 8:18/25 says what follows. -- The “creation” is good in itself. But it has been dragged, by the first sin of Eve and Adam, into the ups and downs of unscrupulous humanity. Through Jesus' incarnation, things turn around: humanity, at least the believer, is now waiting for the “coming glory” (end-time expectation). With it, “creation” also awaits “the unveiling 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 labor pains,” until deliverance comes for it too,--with that of humanity.

This is the -- for Biblical and Byzantine humanity so evident --cosmic dimension of Jesus' Incarnation.

Now see here what Tyciak says. -- Christmas is already 'epiphany', i.e. the joyful entry of God as sovereign who fills humanity and cosmos with 'light' (= divine glory). The 'sealing' (completion) of the Christmas season, however, is the celebration of epiphany, which is also called the “feast of theophany” (celebration of God showing himself).

“Today you make your royal entry into the world. Immediately we were marked by your light, as if with a seal, in that we came to understand and praised you: 'You have come. Thou didst make thy royal entry -- thou, the unapproachable light’”.

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

J. Casper, *Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche*, (World Enlightenment in the Liturgical Spirit of the Eastern Church), Fr.i.Br., 1939, 40.

It is about the “great water sanctification”. Just as the Lord descended into the waters of the Jordan at his baptism -- not in order to sanctify himself but in order to sanctify the water and immediately the whole creation through consecration, so too the Church -- she is the mystically, i.e., hidden, living Christ -- performs the great Jordanian consecration every year which sanctifies the whole world.

***The texts.*** -- “The voice of the Lord resounds over the waters (Gen. 1 :1vv. (Creation story); -- Matt. 14:24vv. (Jesus walks on the lake),-- 8:23/27 (Jesus stills the storm)) : “Come, all receive the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of deep reverence for God which is His entrance fulfilling Christ's own.”

'Spirit' means, first of all, 'life force that creates gifts' -- at the same time, 'Holy Spirit, third person'. Thus a kind of 'Pentecost', a lowering of the spirit, accompanies the cosmic event. The water, the whole cosmos, -- they breathe with us the attitudes of wisdom, knowledge, -- the basis of wisdom and knowledge, namely, the deep reverence for God. Man and cosmos, Jesus' action 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 (op.: all that is water) is also sanctified by consecration: the waters of the Jordan (op.: at Jesus' baptism) (as once the Red Sea) diverge (...) as they face the prince."

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us joyfully spoon water, for to those at least who do so in faith, the gift of grace of the Holy Spirit is visibly given through Christ our God and at the same time the savior of our souls".

"For today the Holy Trinity revealed itself above 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 both Spirit! Always the totality.

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

Reread Matth. 3:13/17 (Baptism of Jesus) and in the wake of that Matth. 4:1/11 (Jesus' sojourn in the desert).

As Deut. 8:2/6 (The Test of Strength in the Desert) indicates: the forty-year passage through the desert - to the "promised land" - is, in Yahweh's eyes, an on-the-trial test for the purpose of "revealing the depth of the heart." Yahweh will only know for certain what - exactly what he has on "his people" when they are subjected to a test. And thus to temptations of all kinds. If that "chosen" people abstain, if they become mortified, then it will appear that what they confess with their mouths is meant with their hearts.

Jesus imitates this: he too will go into the desert to be "put to the test".

Matthias typifies Jesus using Old Testament quotations.

**1.-- *The aftermath of the deviation.***

Num. 14. -- Numbers recounts the deviation -- Dan. 12:4 (“Many shall deviate here and there”) -- of Israelites, who rebel against Moses and Aaron. Until the glory of Yahweh (14:10) shows itself.

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 judgmental division between those found good by Yahweh and those found evil (unscrupulous) by Yahweh.

“For forty years you shall 'bear the weight' of your misdeeds, and you shall come to the full realization of what it is to fail me, Yahweh” (14:34).

Reread for a moment Ap.th. 18 (Hell as Premise): Jesus' appearance in human history puts the failure, in a grossly unscrupulous way, of humanity first. See also Ap.th. 38.

***The turnaround to the contrary.*** -- Model is Joseph, the patriarch (Gen. 50:20): “The evil which thou wouldest do unto me, -- God's plan hath turned it into good.” Thanks to God's “great mercy” (Ap.th. 57), Jesus is sent to deviant humanity, -- to turn the evil done to him (his cross passes is the epitome of it), into good (heavenly glory based on faith).

Indeed, Jesus, once baptized in the waters of the Jordan, is sent by the Father into the desert to be tested “for forty days.”

Matthew, for example, quotes three types of it. Jesus shows Satan what - right in his depth of heart is at work:

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

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

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

Jesus, in other words, fasts, mortifies! Thus the aftermath of the deviation is undone and turned to the contrary. -

**2.-- *Heavenly Father's consideration.***

As promised in Ps. 91 (90): 11/12, the Father assists Jesus through the angels (Matt. 4:11: “Thereupon the devil leaves Jesus, and look the angels approached him and served him”).

As Ps. 91 (90):13 says (“Upon the wild beast and the adder shalt thou set thy foot; with the foot shalt thou trample the lion's cub and the serpent”) and as Deut. 8:15 says (“Yahweh your God who caused you to pass through the great and terrifying desert, -- a land of poisonous serpents, scorpions and of thirst, -- he who, in a waterless land, caused water to bubble up for you (Israel) from the hardest rock), so also did Jesus, according to Mark. 1:13: “And Jesus lived in the midst of the wild beasts, and the angels served him.” Jesus was protected by his heavenly Father from the “wild beasts” (symbol of the demons).

***The new Moses.***

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

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

**b.** That too; as stated, “fasting is: abstaining from the world,--world characterized -- 1 Jn. 2:15/17 -- by sensual desire, the lust of the eyes (i.e., the seductiveness of the world and its glory) and the pride of wealth. In which Jesus could not possibly merge.

Let us keep this in mind when we now quote some texts.

J. Casper, *Weltverklärung im liturgischen Geiste der Ostkirche*, (World Enlightenment in the Liturgical Spirit of the Eastern Church), Fr.i.Br., 1939, 43/55 (the four-week preliminary fast), 55/64 (the great forty-day fast).

The deification of man insofar as he comes to the “seeing” of faith is the goal of “fasting,” i.e., to keep oneself away from unscrupulousness as it characterizes the “world” in the pejorative sense.

O.c., 46 “Every tear, every word of penitence spoken,-- they lead to 'enlightenment' (glorification) in the Lord, -- to renewal of the 'spirit' in God. This is the meaning of Lent in the Eastern Church as well as of every Eastern 'asceticism'.”

As an aside, that is also the correct meaning of the statement that “we, in Lent, should live as angels - “bios angelikos”, angelic life.” The angels here are the God-fearing higher beings, who, like human beings, have to abide by the code of conduct - the ten commandments - of creation. Anyone who understands the expression as “world flight” misunderstands.

The pre-fasting includes, according to P. Francis, *De voorvasten (Een voorbereidingstijd op de grote vasten)*, (The pre-fasting (A time of preparation for the great fast)), in: Apostle Andrew (Gent) 21 (1993) 2 (Feb.), Zacheüs Sunday, the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Toller, the Sunday of the Lost Son, the Sunday of the Last Judgment.

The author emphasizes that we, as Christ believers, “have before us the Lord Jesus Christ,” who “assumed human nature in everything apart from sin (understand: unscrupulous behavior).”

And indeed *Ueber dich, 174*. -- “To save the world, the ruler over all -- with the commitment of himself -- appeared in the world. Since, as God, he is shepherd (prince), he appeared, out of love for us, as a human being equal to us. For, while through the like (note: the model, in this case his own humanity) he calls the like (note: the original, in this case fallen humanity), as God he hears 'alleluia'“.

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

The term occurs, in the *New Testament*, in Apok. 19:1. A countless crowd in heaven cries out, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power be unto our God!”. In the psalms, the phrase occurs several times.

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

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

Listen to the text from the Sunday of the Lost Son. (Casper, o.c., 49) “Like the (good) murderer I cry out, “Remember me!” Like the tax collector, I turn my eyes downward, beat my chest, and cry “Embrace me!” As the prodigal son -- wholly and utterly compassionate God -- rescue me from all my sinfulness (unscrupulousness), - - you who control all,-- so that I sing in praise the far-reaching degree of your understanding for me.”

Always the Bible as the source of inspiration! Why? Because what scripture recounts -- the fact of the good murderer, the parables of the Pharisee and the tax collector and of the prodigal son --is situated in the eternal present of God, -- such that, even in 1993, we are still invariably the contemporaries of biblical history.

***“Mysterium iniquitatis”.***

The mystery of unconscionability, the deviation committed here and there by many (Dan. 12:4).-- J. Casper, o.c., 50. -- The Saturday before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, Byzantine Christians commemorate the souls of the departed (All Souls Saturday).

“In the prayers of All Souls' Day, the essence of the Eastern Church becomes visible, once again: she does not cling, with her gaze, to the doings of man -- note: horizontal theology -- but to the power of the Lord -- note: vertical theology --

**a.** It is true that she also fully realizes the “mysterium iniquitatis” and is aware - fully and completely - of human weakness and poverty -- since Adam's fall.

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

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

“Positive thinking” here is called focusing on the glory on which our sinfulness and repentance spend.

Those who cultivate too much a kind of “suffering mysticism” (understand: emotional dwelling on suffering,-- even that of Jesus), all too easily fall into -- sometimes very navel-gazing -- negative thinking. That is what the Christian East avoids!

### ***The actual fast.***

J. Casper, o.c., 55/64.-- The “Great Fortnight”, -- Includes five Sundays. -- The actual cross Passover is already there!

“Do we take up the holy beginning of Lent by repentance of soul. Let us cry out, Lord, -- Christ, thou alone art readily prepared for reconciliation.

“The holy season of Lent”. -- Note the term “holy (Lent)”: “holy” in the sense of power-laden, -- “holy” also, yes, especially, in the sense of “morally lofty” for the Decalogue or “ten commandments” remain the great stakes, -- along with the salvation-historical perspective (preparation for the end-time glory).

**Note:** -- Although very “spiritual” and attuned to all that is “higher”, yet the Byzantine liturgy is very “material”! Matter too - in the Platonic sense (the cosmos with its ups and downs but also its downs) is included in the overall deification.

### ***The veneration of the cross.***

Except on Ascension of the Cross (Sept. 14) and on Aug. 1, the material cross is especially venerated in the course of 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; 3:1ff) became fatal to Eve and Adam (with physical death as the last act of life). Christ died on a tree trunk (with the change to eternal, God-given life as the effect).

Cypress, fir and cedar,-according to legend-the wood of Christ's cross, are therefore included in the liturgy of Lent proper, for the entire extra-human creation (Rom. 8:18vv.) shares-as an extension of the “corpus mysticum Christi”-in Jesus' suffering (cross passes).

Cfr. o.c., 61.-- On the third Sunday of Lent, the elevation of the cross takes place: the priest raises a cross decorated with flowers, lying on a key, -- carries it -- under light accompaniment, to the faithful, blesses them with it, lays it on a platform, allows it to be venerated.

“Come, ye who believe, and adore the cross that gives life! Voluntarily Christ stretched out his hands on the cross, raising us to the blissful life originally envisioned.”

Follow then - from the Friday before the fifth Sunday of Lent - cross passes and resurrection passes. This is the essence of the work of redemption in the strict sense, -- the essence of the mystery of Christ.

**Note: -- Apocalyptic theology.**

Reread Ap.th. 63 (“revealing the depths of the heart”), 64 (“in his depths of the heart”), 65 (“With the depths of his heart Jesus was totally alien (...”).

'Apokalupsis', -- we have said this before: 'apokalupsis', lat.: re. velatio, the removal of the 'velum' or veil, i.e.: unveiling, -- that is the blotting out of what is “in the depths” of the heart, : “in heart and mind” (other Biblical expression), “the blotting out of the intimate or hidden thoughts of (many) hearts” (Luk. 2:35; Symeon's prophecy), -- similar to Jn. 3:19/21 (see also Jn. 2:25: “Jesus knew what is in man”), Jn. 9:39.

**One too often confuses “apokalupsis” with merely:**

**a.** a literary genre (“the apocalyptic”),

**b.** with end-time revelations of all kinds. But one forgets, resp. suppresses and/or covers up the fact that and the genre and the end-time doctrine stand or fall with “(the deepest of) the heart”! Already now our end times are being decided on the basis of what we really 'are' “in the depths of our hearts”.

That this is really the correct interpretation is shown by the standard expression, Matt. 25:34: “Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom as an inheritance.

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

Now, for once, one reasons: the kingdom of the end times (beginning on the last day) is already there, 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 is already there from the beginning!

**In passing:** by what? Because all that proceeds in time(s) comes from God's eternal 'now' or 'present'. It comes, literally, from the eternity of God in time, in which it shows itself, spread out in past, present and future, -- in a veiled way admittedly (the mysterious), and first of all “in the deepest depths of the heart.”

There is no finer summary of what apocalyptic theology is than Jesus' phrase “what was already there from before the beginning”! This while he is talking about the end times.

So that the literary genre that talks about the end-time catastrophes and the awesome judgment can already be found “in the fasting,” in which the fate in that end-time is decided. Fate analysis, yes! Depth psychology, yes! End-time doctrine, yes! All in one!

### **5.-- The Paschal Mystery.**

Let us begin with the Scriptures.

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

Jesus had to defend himself against misconceptions. For example, the view that the Messiah is "the son of David" who will free Israel from foreign domination and even dominate the other empires (the 'political' interpretation). The people who saw Jesus were very much of that opinion. So too was the view of the "apocalyptic books" - Dan. 7:13/14 and in its wake - which put forward a pre-existent, "heavenly" savior, who carries out the judgmental separation (the wicked are condemned by him; the good "he invites to his table" (Enoch, Esdras)). Up to there two opinions.

"Only at the end of his life-when his own conception of the Messiah had proved clear enough-did Jesus openly declare himself to be "the Messiah." This conception is contained in the mysterious appellation 'person of man,' which Jesus gave himself." (O.c., 68v.).

What is true - according to the proposer - is that in some circles the term 'son of man' was applied to the Messiah.

#### **a. Jesus, the son of man.**

Van Imschoot says what follows. -- The contexts in which Jesus portrays 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" (Matt 10:23).

In these he confirms the Jewish apocalypticism (Daniel).

**b.** When he speaks of his pre-role as "servant of the Lord" ("Ebed Yahweh"; Mark. 2:10 (as earthly sinner); -- especially Mark. 10:45 (Jesus comes not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many); Matt. 8:20 (Jesus has nothing to lay his head on); Mark. 8:31 (suffering prophecy).-- "In this last set of words of Jesus, the allusions to Yahweh's servant are obvious." (O.c ., 70).

In other words, in Van Imschoot's interpretation, "son of man" and "Yahweh's servant" partially run together.

#### **b. Jesus, the Servant of God.**

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

Is. 42:1/17,-- 49:1/7,-- 50:4/11,-- 52:13/53:12, contain the four ebed-Jahweh songs. Not without emphasis on suffering as an entrance to glorification.

A.Gelin, *De hoofdlijnen van het oude testament* (The Outlines of the Old Testament), Antwerp, Patmos,1962, 52/54, quotes e.g.. -- “Like a shapeless rice he shoots up, -- Like a root out of thirsty ground : -- Without stature or splendor that we look up to, -- Without grace that pleases us.”

Or still: “Despised and rejected by men, -- Man of sorrows, visited by suffering: before whom we cover our faces, -- Whom we despise and despise.” (O.c., 52).

The author 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 draw lots for my cloak”. This is mentioned as a detail by Matt. 27:35.

**To summarize.** -- Jesus himself gives us the summary, -- Mark. 14:62. Before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, standing and being questioned by the high priest (“Are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed?” says Jesus -- 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 -- (op.: partaking of God's (judicial) power) -- and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

We said it with van Imschoot: the two in one, -- suffering servant (pre-roll), glorified son of man (final roll). But that, -- that is cross pass and resurrection pass in the liturgy! As van Imschoot says, o.c., 73 : according to Luk. 24:26 it is so. “The Christ, -- did he not (note: according to God's plan) have to endure all that suffering so as to enter into glory?”

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

***We end with a prayer.***

H. Franke, Uebers, *Wartende Kirche (Die ältesten Adventsrufe der Christenheit)*, (Waiting Church (The Oldest Advent Calls of Christianity)), Paderborn/ Wien/ Zürich, 1937, 39.

“The unutterable-secret policy of the great council decree,--let us, faithful people, honor it in humility. Surprised, we see the miracle in the birthing by the virgin, Mary, show up: the deity unites with our humanity; the being in Christ radiates twofold. The services of heaven serve him! And subject to him are the powers of the whole world”.

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