

Liturgically Mediated Plurality

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Résumé: How is plurality mediated in Christian worship? There is a comparative dimension to this question. In the rituals of traditional societies custom is plurality; human diversity is invariably inscribed into a totality, a whole society through their cosmologies. The cosmos creates correspondences delineating a holism between the human and a “socialized” cosmos. Man’s anthropology, his place in society, was defined by his place in that cosmic morphology¹. In the so-called “modern” world where the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts, to simplify crudely, plurality becomes an *ersatz* for the whole². The Christian experience of the recapitulation in Christ, of salvation, entails a third and different experience of diversity. Beyond political morphology with its non-totalizing integration secularized modernity is articulated as if to integrate diversity around individualism while Christian experience of its own proper createdness leads on to the level of transcendence. To say the least, the co-existence of two opposing understandings of personhood, individual univocal ontologies on the one hand and, on the other, being through communion, is problematic.³

¹ Cf. S.C. Headley, “From Cosmos to Hierarchy in Dionysios the Areopagite (sixth century) & Maximus the Confessor (580-662)”, pp. 283-313 in *La cohérence. Volume en honneur de Daniel de Coppet*. Edited by André Itéanu. Paris : Les Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2010.

² St. Augustine already had identified the problem with ideologies of individualism when he said, “If all things were equal, nothing would exist; (*Quia non essent omnia, si essent aequalia...*)” Saint Augustine, *De diuersis questionibus octoginta tribus*, question 41, linea 3. For “modern” philosophy the classical definition of judgment, found in Kant, with its four functions, each possessing three moments, is summarized as: «Totality is nothing other than plurality considered as unity ». See Christian Godin, *La totalité vol. 2, Les pensées totalisantes*. (Sysesel: Champ Vallon, 1998).

³ Cf. the critique of John Milbank in his PDF paper (<http://theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/online-papers/>) “Faith, Reason and Imagination: the Study of Theology and Philosophy in the 21st century” p.17. Milbank questions the standard contemporary theory of knowledge on three grounds: in God, who is simple, intellect cannot follow on being; there exists a “harmonious continuity” between the way things exist in matter and in our minds; finally, such a

A Christian may deal with this dilemma by developing Eucharistic life in an effort to reach out to the surrounding humanity as Christ discreetly husbands it towards paradise. In this sense “churching” (*vosserkovlenie*) of God’s creation may take place in even the most adverse conditions. As the Patriarch of Moscow said to an Anglican bishop in 1956 who was urging him to stand up to the Communists and fight for the Church’s rights, “Your Grace,...the Church is the Body of Christ crucified for the world, and this freedom no one can take away from us.” This is possible since there exists a genuine personal whole, the Creator, where cosmology is not only replaced by a divine hierarchy of values, but also where the plurality and difference is experienced as the space of communion, of the care of the Creator for each of his creatures. In the context of Christian revelation, the parts are not identical, for *sicut* St. Augustine “if everything was equal, nothing would exist.” So there is a typically Christian view of human plurality, where everyone is unique, yet where the dissimilarity of the parts is not an alienating distance, but a healthy difference (*diaphorá*) creating the very condition for communion between persons. All this has been widely discussed recently by Greek and English theologians like Zizioulas (1985; 2006) and Milbank (2003; 2009). What lies in the background of these discussions is the liturgical

theory of knowledge by identity, as per Aquinas, allows knowledge to enhance reality and not just observe and try to predict.

Why is this important? The role of representation is essential to almost all aspects of sociability. We are all familiar with the concept of representative government. But when I use the term representation here I mean something more fundamental: how the other is imagined to be represented in the mind of a cultural agent and a citizen of a country. Is the isolated individual really the “privileged knower” of reality? Today nearly everywhere “representation” is understood as that process of making present an “absent” object or person as an image in one’s mind. This epistemology is so common as to go unnoticed. It is also the normative epistemology of political science. What few recognise is that this development of Western European political philosophy over the last three hundred years began in the XIIIth century scholastic theology. It spread from theology to political philosophy during the XVIIIth century, woven into the theories of “representative” government which in the XIXth and XXth centuries reached the entire world. In the history of political philosophy this epistemology goes by the catch phrase of the distinction between subject and object. This is what the theologians call a univocal ontology, by which they mean a vision of being, of personhood, devoid of any communion between self and other.

At the beginning of the XXIst century there spontaneously appeared a crisis of representation with individuals quietly doubting, challenging worldwide paradigms of democracy or fundamental human rights. These values are now criticized as not capable of encompassing the societal problems posed by representation. Sociability is jeopardized. This has arisen because of an unacceptable impoverishment in the way the individual finds himself represented by the state.

ascetical practice that realizes this communion. This coherence⁴ cannot simply be unpacked conceptually for it is a performative requiring endless prayer.

In order to address this issue not as a pious ideal, but as the regular Eucharistic experience of the people of God, I will treat plurality from the perspective of liturgical theology where Orthodox worship is the primary, indispensable locus of the re-centering of God's creation. Here the dogmatic formulas of the faith are expressed poetically in sacred chant and have a traction that their more abstract expression, however useful, lacks⁵. Through *ascesis* men return with all the other participants to face their Creator. The sacred chants evoke this return and manifest its pathways⁶. In the Divine Liturgy plurality appears less as a state of being, an ontological fact, than a movement of the many towards God, along a Christocentric dynamic, progressing through personal repentance and communal prayer. During the unfolding of the liturgical year in Orthodox parish life, one senses this recapitulation at work. People wait all year long to hear once again a given prayer and its chant that arises from the heart of the church only once in the annual liturgical cycle. The *exapostilarion* of the Transfiguration in the third tone is an example of this:

⁴ - « La cohérence d'une société se comprend [donc] au-delà de l'addition des relations interindividuelles, au-delà du dénombrement d'une population, d'une étendue territoriale, des propriétés immobilières, des possessions mobilières, et du tout trésor. La société se hisse ainsi à la dignité d'un tout, d'une communauté (*universitas* au Moyen-Age, *communitas* pour Oresme, *Gemeinschaft* pour Tönnies). » (de Coppel, 160 : 1998) cited by André Itéanu in the Introduction (p. 3) to the commemorative volume for Daniel de Coppel.

⁵ Well before taking form in ancient Greece (cf. Pulleyn 1997), the musical ethos of sacred chant comes to Christianity from the Middle East, where two millennia before the Psalms of King David it had taken on a form of cosmic evocation. There needs to be research on the appearance of the Rig Veda, the Avesta and the Psalms, for their genre has something in common. Akkadian and earlier Sumerian hymns need to be included in this research for there each musical formula had its own tonality appropriate for the particular invocation. (to call for aid, to invite for protection), which meant it could only be sung at certain moments (cf. Werner 1959 :315-316). It was these sets of correspondences that made the chant sacred, "a sacrifice of praise" (*logike thysia*), whether it was Sumerian, Jewish or Christian. For Christians it was the voice that carried the ritual; the Council of Laodicea (circa 365: canons 15 and 59) fought against the introduction of musical instruments into common prayer.

⁶ - St. Maximos in his *Mystagogy* (Sotiropoulos 2001: 245) says, "The sacred chants... produce/create in us a voluntary consent of the soul to the practice of the virtues, as well as spiritual pleasure and the joy that proceeds from that." He says that by the singing of the *Trisagion*, we become one with the angels whose unending symphonic melody is a sanctifying doxology addressed to God. Maximos calls this the "vigour of theological hymnography" (Sotiropoulos 2001: 261).

“Today on Tabor in the manifestation of Thy Light, O Word, Thou unaltered Light from the Light of the unbegotten Father, we have seen the Father as Light, and the Spirit as Light, guiding with light the whole creation.”

1) Christ the Mediator⁷ between plurality and totality: In the Old Testament God deals with the world through three main intermediary hypostases: *ἄγγελος* (a messenger like the one who struggled with Jacob in *Genesis* ch. 28), *πνεῦμα* (as outside the cave at Horeb in the story of Elijah, *3 Kings* ch. 19) and *σοφία* (as invoked in Solomon’s prayer, *Wisdom* ch. 9) (Oepke 1967: 611). The secular figure of the king as a human mediator is weakly developed: Moses as an absolute “royal” mediator and the servant (*ebed*) of God in the four songs of second Isaiah (chapters 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) actually combine the figures of prophet, priest and king.

In the Synoptic Gospels, on the other hand, although the term “mediator” (μεσίτης) is not often used the concept of such an agent in human form is very definitely present. Mediation may take the form of ransoming. Oepke (1967:621) writes that a comparison of Mt. 11:25 ff. (“I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes....”) and Sirach ch. 51 (Ben Sirach’s psalm of thanks for having been ransomed from death and his lifelong search for the gift of uncreated wisdom, the preincarnate Son of God) shows that “...Jesus realizes His oneness with divine wisdom.” Jesus expresses his confidence that God will acknowledge His mediatorship...” So St. Mark (10:45) “For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

For St. John there is no distinction between the earthly Jesus and the risen Lord. Only as the One who died and rose again is He in the full sense of the word the Mediator.....(expand).....;

In the epistle to the Hebrews (8:3-6) one finds a more comparative, Hellenistic sense of μεσίτης: “concerning the high priest ...He is also the Mediator of a better covenant....(8:6)” Oepke (1967:621) concludes by saying, “The main form of this sense of mediatorship is apocalyptic and messianic, divine and human sonship (“the son of man”). It seems to be His original and most proper act indissolubly to combine this ideal of power with the ideal of humility expressed in the suffering servant of God.”

⁷ Notes on “μεσίτης” from Oepke’s article in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, pp. 598-624

The theology of Mediatorship between the many and the One is still more fully developed by St. Paul. In I Tim 2:5-6 we hear, “For there is one God and one Mediator (μεσίτης = reconciler) between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Pauline Gnosis or wisdom (in the sense of Col 2:3: “...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”) raises Christ above the series of eons and gives His mediatorship an absolute character. For Paul Christ is always the last Adam (Rom 5:12; I Cor. 15:22, 45 ff.). This final Adam mediates between the first fallen Adam and the restored resemblance offered to mankind in the second and last Adam. The mediator is not a timeless heavenly man; He is the incarnate Son of God who came into history recapitulating it (Eph 1:19), and bringing peace by “reconciling all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross.” (Col. 1:20). He is also “He in whom the πλήρωμα dwells.” (Col 1:19). Here the fullness is not the cosmos, but the *ecclesia*. “Whereas pagan soteriological mediatorship proceeds from the cosmic, the relation is reversed in Christian gnosis. From the beginning the Saviour mediates creation as in (Col. 1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of all creation.”) and at the end of time the manifestation or cosmic glorification of Christ and His people is awaited” (Oepke 1967:623). This concerns us collectively, in our plurality, for St. Paul writes (Col. 3:4) “When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.” So history with all its paradoxes, distance from God and degenerations, nonetheless shows that the cosmos is the object of salvation. As in the famous definition of St Paul (Eph 1:22-3) “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Verbal Icons and plurality: Public worship is also structured by iconography. Léonide Ouspensky wrote, “Since the relationship is addressed to man, the image also addresses itself to him” (1980 :472). While revelation to mankind is balanced between its heard and seen dimensions, theologically speaking the image of the “unrepresentable” in which I was created but whose resemblance I have partially lost, remains antinomic, both indelible and to be recovered. So how does one search it out? Ouspensky writes “From the moment that an un-representable is conceived in the same categories as the representable, the language of realistic symbolism and the transcendence of the divine are debased to the notion of daily life. (1980:465)” Symbolisation in Christian art is

potentially a refusal of the incarnate, a misguided effort to keep God ethereal.

Empirically speaking, it is certainly easier to observe innovations in the public use of icons than in the private; still these representations may be just as secularized even while they continue to figure in worship in the Church. So it is that changes in cosmology such as occurred during the Western European Renaissance (the fashion for the Graeco-Roman; the cult of the body and not of its transfiguration, etc.) radically secularized Western Christianity and also slowly but surely penetrated the traditional world view of Orthodox peasants, via their aristocracy who rapidly adopted its fashions. In the liturgical life of the Church, hymnography was also affected but sacred chant resisted in some ways more successfully. Here the permanence of the word of God, if not its interpretation, helps maintain the fullness of revelation.

To begin with in all Christian communities the Psalms, Epistles and the Gospels are read aloud in the divine services by the gathered community of the faithful. In the second century AD prayer was not a matter of speaking about God, but to God. As much later Gregory Palamas, following Pseudo Dionysios, would say (*150 Chapters*, 78) God is not a being one speaks about for our concepts do not reach Him. The Christ event is more than a verbal one, and “Logos” itself is surely in some sense a visage, an image.

In the context of liturgy which we are going to discuss here, the Christ we address is a “verbal icon”, to be both heard and seen⁸. When as Christ and the apostles often say by way of introduction, “according to the Scriptures...” they evoke an iconological tropos, the “image (=icon) of the invisible God” “in whom the fullness of divinity dwelt bodily” (Col 1:15, 2:9). Such a confession of faith, a submission of praise, is above all theological. Where the *lex orandi* defines the *lex credendi*, the important distinction for describing public, as opposed to private prayer, was boldly enunciated in the fourth century by Ephrem the Syrian (+373), an ascetical writer still popular in Russia. He said, “hidden prayer is for the hidden ear of God, while faith is for the visible ear of Humanity.”⁹ In short, public prayer is normative and private prayer is personalized to such an extent as often to become incomprehensible outside the biography of the orant. Theology steps off from the norm, the ordo of

⁸ - On the icon of praise in Augustine, the critique of Derrida and Marion’s response to Derrida, cf. James Smith, *Speech and Theology* (2002:127-133).

⁹ From Brock’s translation of St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Faith*, XX.10 in *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, (1987), p. 34.

public prayers. During oral, vocalized prayer, as proposed for the faithful inside the walls of the church open to all, these public expressions of faith always have a human as well as a divine audience. Even if the former's depth of faith varies, as abuses in the veneration of icons may illustrate (magical sacralization, etc.), one intuitively feels that God the Creator believes in one's faith. In the Orthodox world it was the monasteries that best defended the modes of invocation through sacred chant. While in the imperial capital the choir of the imperial chapel veered off into spiritual concerts, in the long daily offices the monks sought to preserve the sobriety and clarity of a penitential clarification of one's epistemology. This was crucial for the mediation between the many and the one in Christ, for penitence is a collective effort: one stands before God both to save one's soul and to be saved by the prayers of one's brothers in the faith.

The famous passage on order in the *ecclesia* in the 12th chapter of First Corinthians deals with the diversity of spiritual gifts. Not only does one always live as a part of the living body of Christ, but what is more, this special kind of plurality, participative and synergetic, implicates us collectively in an ascent (*exstasis*) that can be cultivated in the inner sanctuary of the heart and lived out day by day once out of the church building. From the point of view of an anthropology of affect, it is love that is responsible for the coherence of the faithful around their Lord. The hymn on faith, hope and love (ch. 13) which immediately follows the 12th chapter of First Corinthians underscores that this recapitulation is maintained through such a work of love. Nonetheless description of this movement, this process, is infinitely discreet. It is true that from the time of St. Antony (?251-356) and St. Euthymios (377-473) the Judean hermit, down to the present day, anchorites have hidden from the world in order to maintain prayer for the world. So we may ask, do private prayers accomplish recapitulation in Christ in the same way as prayers pronounced by the different celebrants during the rites of the Church? Within a plurality, different people pray with different talents in different ways at different moments. Here the integrating factor is men's quest for their iconic resemblance to the Lord. The discovery of the lost image of God within us deepens whenever together we assemble in the same *qehal 'élohim*, the same *ecclesia*. Even the anchorites in Sketis did not pray and fast alone in the desert all the time. While the sense of belonging to God is shared, for it to be uninterrupted one must spend much time alone with God as the cenobitic monasteries' rules have always insisted. It is in deep solitude that one can realize that God is coming towards us creatures. The main distinction is not between the individual and the group. The creation of the universe as well as the formation of the human person is on-going; proceeding out of the first day of genesis. Like a ground swell that rises

through history, mankind is rising towards his Creator. He is an active participant in this movement from void to cosmos to the full goodness of personhood. (cf. Bouteneff, 2008, ch. 1).

*The souls of mankind in the “Hand of God”;
Stairwell, parish of St. Nikolai Klenniki, Kitai Gorod, Moscow*

PHOTOS ready ORI 028.tif

St Paul and, later, St. Irenaeus use the term “recapitulate” or “recapitulation” (ανακεφαλαίωσις cf. Ephesians 1:10) to describe the work accomplished by the person of Christ. Since this divine economy, the plan of God for his creatures, was revealed in Scripture there is no prayer without revelation. Eric Osborn in his book on Irenaeus of Lyons (OUP, 2001:97-98) defined the eleven aspects of this notion of ανακεφαλαίωσις¹⁰. He says that “everything that God does is part of his [saving] economy and every part of his economy is defined in relation to its recapitulation.” This is revealed liturgically in the Eucharist where, preceded by the Holy Spirit reposing on the Messiah and announcing his coming through the prophets, the Paraclete also conserves the experience of his Ascension when at Pentecost Christ sends His Spirit on the apostles and disciples realizing their missionary vocation. Kerygma arises from the experience of God’s continuing presence.

Below, this dynamism will appear in Maximos’ *Mystagogy*. As Toronen says (2007:151) citing Irénée-Henri Dalmais, Maximos’ interpretation of the Eucharist, “... is perhaps the most eschatologically tuned of all the Byzantine commentaries.” This remark could be broadened to include Maximos’ understanding of scripture where as in Ambigua 10 the ‘inscription’ of Christ in the words of ‘scripture’ expands in a tenfold manner:

1. time
2. place
3. genus
4. person
5. rank
6. practical philosophy
7. natural philosophy
8. theological philosophy
9. present (type)
10. future (archetype) Logos

So the transparency of the word (Λόγος) who accepted to become incarnate is expressed in words (logoi). Toronen (2007: 156-7) insists that Maximos’ logo-centrism is eschatological; indeed his entire understanding of Scripture, cosmos and man is turned towards their

¹⁰ -Expand on these ten aspects

eschatological fulfillment. For Maximos the unity of this multiplicity lies in the words of revelation, or as Toronen, reading *Ambigua* 21, puts it Scripture are the words of the Age to come. The words contained in the Bible are preparation for the uncontainable word; through these living images, truth is revealed to man and he is deified.

St. Maximos (580-662) in his exegetical treatise, the tenth *Ambigua*, describes another kind of recapitulation; the transfiguration of Christ as a symbol of himself, "...who becomes his own image and likeness in order to point from himself and through himself as incarnate to himself as he is in his eternal glory; the Christ who as the recapitulation of the mystery of love draws all to himself..." (Toronen 2007:5). While in his Trinitarian theology, "unity" describes the particular hypostasis and "differences" the universal natures, in Maximos' human anthropology the dynamic exceeds the opposition. As Toronen (2007:9) says "...simultaneous union and distinction is nothing less than the principle truth of all reality in Maximus' thought..."

St. Maximos in his forty first *Ambigua* comments on a sermon where St. Gregory of Nazianzus says, "Natures are renewed and God became man" expressing an understanding of recapitulation more philosophically (*Ambigua* 41, translation A. Louth, 1996:159) :

"Paradoxically, supernaturally, it is around that which is naturally moveable by nature that the immoveable one, if I can put it that way, He who is by nature absolutely immobile, moves [329]. God becomes man to save man who is perishing(223a), by sewing up in Himself all the wounds of universal nature by showing that the general logoi are superior to those of the parts. Having united in himself following the nature of all nature in its entirety. [Christ] consummated the great Council of God the Father by recapitulating in Himself all things, those of heaven and those on earth which were created in Him.]"

Dimitru Staniloae comments on this passage saying "The unity of creation is manifested first of all in the fact that all the existences that compose it are in relation to each other and with Him who is beyond any relationship or dependence." (Ponsoye 1994:491)

What is the liturgical expression of recapitulation? The hymnography of the Orthodox church found in the Eucharistic canon of St. Basil the Great of Caesarea, captures the affect of man's responses to God's presence. A movement of recapitulation is inscribed, where poetically these shared quests for the divine image (icon) are all expressed. It is time to examine these passages to see how plurality is

mediated liturgically. We will underscore the *iconological* dimensions of this process.

In the hymnography of the Orthodox Church found in the Eucharistic canon of St. Basil the Great of Caesarea, the responses of man to God's presence, the movement of recapitulation, this shared quest for the image is expressed poetically. It is time to examine these passages to see how plurality is mediated liturgically. We will underscore the *iconological* dimensions of this process.¹¹.

2) Iconology in the Eucharistic canon of St. Basil:

Under the terms of *penthos* (repentance), *prosochè* (attention) and *nèpsis* (vigilance), the repossessing of our souls by the Holy Spirit accomplished in Christ's incarnation is described in great detail by the ascetical fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries (Miquel 1986; Bunge 2002). The daily offices of the church ceaselessly recall that this cleansing of the mirror of our soul is the main dimension of repentance:

"People on earth, all of us, let us cleanse the doorstep of our hearts so that the glory and the grace of the threefold sun may come unto us." (Vespers, Aposticha, August 10th)

While it cannot be conceptually objectivized because of its being so discreet, this reconciliation taking form in us manifests an ever increasing confidence in prayer through sacred chant and before the icons of revelation. This conforming of our inner icon to that of Christ can be described as the "imprint of God Logos on the icon of our soul", what I have christened "iconology" because that neologism bypasses the problems created by the issue of the grasping quality (*begriff*) of human concepts discussed by so many authors dealing with phenomenology.

¹¹ - In the following manner, Marion (1991 :28-35) developed the theme of the icon in Colossians I:15 «He is the image (icon) of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation » : Only our gaze creates idols. That occurs when one invests in what one is looking at. Before fixing on the idol, the gaze pierces this visible to continue on to the invisible, the icon masks the mirror of the icon by filling up the gaze. Conversely, the icon of the invisible provokes a vision. The invisible proceeds on into the visible because the visible itself proceeds from the invisible. As St. John Damascene (circa 675-749) said, "all icons manifest a secret and indicate it". But even as presented by the icon, the invisible remains invisible, unenvisageable but present due to itself. "The icon renders visible by provoking an infinite gaze." The icon is founded on the hypostasis of Jesus Christ according to the Second Oecumenical Council of Nicea (787). The gaze no longer belongs to the one who is looking. In a "re-spectful" contemplation of the icon, it is the invisible that looks at man. One gazes on a face whose invisible intention is to gaze at oneself. As we gaze at an icon our gaze is invited into its depths. The face of the icon is open because the visible opens out onto the invisible.

John Milbank (2007:477) remarks that the Incarnation reconfigures our perception of both the finite and the infinite. Stepping off from St. Paul who first, “...spoke of God as giving the gift of his *energeia*, his activity, ...such that our acts are synergically fused with acts that go out from God, and yet are also God”...Milbank (2007: 498-499) claims that “*primacy of image also entails the primacy of actuality..., whereas any shift towards making law and will the most central considerations will tend also to favour the priority of the possible....*” Where the subject is representing rather than experiencing knowledge by identity one veers off into a philosophy of the possible. And Milbank concludes (2007:500), “*Hence to deny the primacy of the actual is to deny the primacy of the image and the exceeding of the law by the incarnate Christ...Scotism and nominalism are diminished Christian theologies.*”

For a Christian the first “liturgical” meaning of the word εἰκών, and the most important for the theology of his faith, is to be found in St. Basil’s (330-379) canon in the form of a verb, “to represent”¹². Man, mankind in his redeemed plurality, represents the angels celebrating the heavenly liturgy. So here our prayer participates in the reflectivity of an icon, albeit less continuous than the liturgy of the cherubim. So during the procession from the altar of the preparation to the high altar, while the priests and deacons bring in on the paten and in the chalice the as yet unconsecrated gifts, the choir sings repeatedly and solemnly¹³:

*We who in a mystery represent (εἰκονίζοντες) the Cherubim
and sing the thrice holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity
now lay aside all the cares of this life that we may receive the King of all.*

So man while praising God resembles the order of the angels; in that he is genuinely turned towards the Creator of all; he recovers his “apathic” (passionless) image. On the day of the Great Sabbath (Holy Saturday),

¹² - Before patristic Greek gave it Christian meaning, in classical Greek εἰκών had four earlier significations (Liddell & Scott 1897 :485) :

- (I) image, as in an image in a mirror, so a personal description or a metaphorical living image.
- (II) a semblance, i.e. an imaginary form, a ghost.
- (III) a comparison drawing attention to a similarity.
- (IV) an archetype or motif.

In the Latin equivalent, *speculum*, the images that appear in the mirror of the soul or the intellect were important in art and pre-Christian cosmology.

¹³ - Below, for the Greek text of the liturgy I have used the *IEPATIKON*, Rome, 1950. For a short sketch of the evolution of the liturgy attributed to St. Basil cf. Louis Bouyer, *L’Eucharistie* Desclée, Tournai, 1966:281-293.

without distraction, in a profound peace, the choir sings another hymn for the Great Entrance (*IEPATIKON*, 182-3; OCA translation 1973:318) :

«Let all mortal flesh keep silent,
and with fear and trembling stand,
and ponder nothing earthly within itself,
for the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords comes to be slain
and to give Himself to be the food of the faithful
And before Him also come the archangelic choirs with all principalities and powers...”

And once the holy gifts are placed upon the altar, the choir concludes its angelic song...

“covering their faces and crying aloud the song,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.”

This theme of the uniting of a human and angelic choir is portrayed in the dome of the church of the Holy Trinity next door to the campus of the PSTGU. One cannot underestimate the effect of the to and fro between sacred chant and frescoes/icons that surround those who stand in the temple at these moments. This point of view is found throughout the Patristic tradition of the Church. Saint Symeon the New Theologian wrote, “Only when man unites with God spiritually and corporally ... will God unite fully with man.”(Symeon the New Theologian, *Catéchèses 6–22*, (1964), pp. 228–229.) So an icon depicting a whole church at prayer is an icon of an icon: for instance, the icon of the Protection of the Mother of God or of the repentant sinner searching in prayer for his own person created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). Both become linked to the saint whose holiness shines forth in the icon. The common example of this is the icon of the “Unexpected Joy” (*necháynnaya radost’*), where a repentant thief (even if his prayer is full of ambiguities) kneels not before the Mother of God, but before Her generic icon (*odigitriya*, “the one who shows the way”). The Orthodox seeks a knowledge of creation, his place in the plans of God, one that arises from his faith. This is “recapitulation” in Christ evoked by St. Paul. (Eph. 1:10): “That is the dispensation of the fullness of times that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.”

Next, in the middle of the anamnesis when the celebrant has made memorialised the acts of the Father he continues, turning to the coming of the Son, saying (*IEPATIKON*: 190; OCA translation 1973:327 modified):

“...our hope who is the image (εἰκὼν) of Thy Goodness

the Seal faithfully reproducing Thee (σφραγίς ἰσοτύπος),
in Himself showing forth Thee the Father,
the life-giving Word, true God,
the Wisdom before the ages, the Life,
the Sanctification, Power, the true Light
through whom the Holy Spirit was revealed,
the Spirit of Truth , the Gift of adoption...”

This anamnesis ends with the chant of the angelic powers heard by Isaiah in the temple, and still today by us around the altar (Isaiah 6:3; Ap. 4:8). Since the days of the first temple, this is the exclamation before the Presence and Glory of God with us¹⁴.

«singing the hymn of victory, crying, calling and saying,
Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord of Hosts
Heaven and earth are filled with Thy Glory...»

Next while the angels again sing the holiness of the Master and Friend of mankind, mankind recalls his first presence amongst us: (ibid., 191):

« When Thou hadst fashioned man, taking dust from the earth, and hadst honored him with Thine own image, O God, Thou didst set him in a paradise of plenty, promising him life immortal and the enjoyment of eternal good things in the observance of Thy commandments.”

Acknowledging that our passions had slain us, St. Basil speaks of the Savior who comes towards us on behalf of the Father while we are lying like slaves in death on the earth that was supposed to be the land of the living...(ibid., 192):

“And when the fullness of time was come,
Thou didst speak unto us through Thy Son himself,
by whom also Thou madest the ages;
Who, being the brightness of Thy glory,
and the express image (εἰκόνοϛ) of Thy person...
(χαρακτηῖρ τῆς ὑποστάσεωϛ σου) ...
...yet appeared upon earth and sojourned among men;
and was incarnate of a holy Virgin and emptied Himself,
taking on the form of a servant,
and being conformed to the body of our humility,
that He might make us conformed to the image of His glory....”

¹⁴ - *IEPATIKON* : 191. Cf. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*. SPCK, London, 1991.

This gift to mankind of the very Word of God (in the form of words of revelation) is then shared in the Last Supper, that is to say in the memory of His body broken and His blood shed, announcing His Death and confessing His Resurrection. Thus after the prayer of the Oblation, during the offering of the “signs” of the Holy Body and Blood, the epiclesis is invoked on ourselves and on these gifts “shed for the life of the world”. The purpose of this gesture is further explained showing how God remakes man in His own Image:

«And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit.» (OCA translation 1977)

Clearly a transformative contemplation of the icon of the Word and Son of God is proposed to us in the Divine Liturgy in the form of a personal conversion accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Created from the dust of the earth in the image of God, we are united the Word incarnate in order to grow into His likeness. “In your light we see the Light”. What is more Christ is the icon of the Father, so it is all of creation that participates in its own manner in the cosmic re-entry into the Divine Liturgy.

St Basil presents the articulation of the visible world as the work of an industrious *logos* (τις τεκνικοῦς λόγος). In his homily on the six days of creation St. Basil says the following (trad. J. Giet; Sources Chrétiennes No. 26, 1949:110-1):

«The entire world composed of dissimilar parts, He bound tightly together by a law of indissoluble friendship, a communion such that the beings the furthest away one from another, due to the place that they occupy, can be united by the same sympathy (Homilies I, 7)

Approximately a century and a half later the notion of κόσμος in St. Dionysios corresponds to the world of intelligibles, a κόσμος νοητός, whose contemplation constitutes the life of the church. Here philosophy leads us up to theology and finally a negative θεωρία. It is important to note to what extent his theology is “iconographic”. Beginning from God, source of all coherence and harmony, a hierarchy is deployed. By the source of all love this “theoarchy” is instituted in the form of a divine norm with ascending and descending mediation responsible for the salvation and divinization of man. The double dynamic of the matrix takes its origin in the Divine Wisdom. Here is the definition that Dionysios gives of the hierarchy and the human values which it mobilizes (*Celestial Hierarchy* III, 1; translation Luibheid 1987:153-4)

“In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it. The beauty of God – so simple, so good, so much the source of perfection – is completely uncontaminated by dissimilarity. It reaches out to grant every being, according to merit¹⁵, a share of light and then through a divine sacrament, in harmony and in peace, it bestrewns on each of those being perfected its own form.”

So there is an organized prolongation of the contemplation wherein the Son of God, icon of the Father, occupies the central role. It is not extra-liturgical but is a mystagogical extension which is characterized by the passages taken from St. Maximos the Confessor (580-662) below.

3) The iconology of plurality in the *Mystagogy* of St. Maximos:

This *Mystagogy*¹⁶ is not a commentary on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of St. Dionysios¹⁷. Before St. Maximos (580-662) reflects on the Eucharistic canon (chapters 8-21), we are initially offered an original and creative description of the integration of the holy Church of God. The morphology of the kingdom is essential to man's salvation and constitutes the hierarchical path of his return to the Creator. Chapter 23 goes back over this progression highlighting the progress of the soul. The liturgical symbolism is shown to reveal truths. The practices of asceticism collectively constitute the coherence of the church around its Maker. This directly concerns our theme of the mediation and recapitulation of plurality¹⁸.

It is the Spirit of Truth, the Paraclete, who guides and comforts the soul on his way. In *Ambigua* 7¹⁹ St. Maximos writes: “He has harmonized us in Himself, co-articulating us with Himself in the Spirit.” and in *Ambigua* 42: “At the beginning, man came assuredly into existence in the image of God to be engendered by the Spirit through [his] choice.” Larchet (1996:397) commenting on this passage says that there is a real synergy between the grace of the Spirit and the freewill of the person.

¹⁵ This value (ἀξία) here means a personal merit according to René Roques, *Univers Dionysien* (1954/1983:61, note 2), and is simultaneously a natural reality, the image of substances receptive to light (*La Hierarchie Céleste* XIII,3 ; PG 301 a-b), a merit that is acquired and a generous gift which is transmitted by degrees.

¹⁶ - The references to the Greek text of Sotiropoulos (2001) are by folio no. recto/verso followed by the line no.

¹⁷ - Luibheid 1987:193-260, for English translation of the third chapter.

¹⁸ The issue of the relation of the material world to multiplicity (διαφόρως, as a dispersion) and temporality is separate question dealt with by Maximos in *Ambigua* 7 and discussed by Alain Riou (1973:49-54).

¹⁹ - quoted by Larchet 1996: 391

That recovery of our resemblance to the image in Christ mediated through revelations in both sound and sight. Sotiropoulos presents (2001: 17-18) Maximos' threefold division of salvation deriving from St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:1-2).

- (1) The Old Testament with its models or shadows of things to come;
- (2) the New Testament where the future is revealed in icons or images;
- (3) the eschatological period in which during the liturgy the faithful live by the divine goodness. While the type (τύπος) of the Old Testament is a prototype, the images or icons of the New Testament are more than models; they possess the energy of their model, as when Christ said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." In I Cor. 11:7 and James 3:9 the image of God in man refers back in time to the moment when the breathe of God was infused into Adam (Genesis 2:7): "Then God formed man out of the dust from the ground, breathed in his face the breath of life and man became a living soul."

On the other hand the divine and anthropological image of the celestial and earthly temple reflect back and forth revealing the nature of both man's body and soul in the perspective of full restoration. God's desire to restore man's body is imaged by the nave, his soul in the sanctuary, his spirit on the altar²⁰.

What do Maximos's descriptions say about verbal icons as reversals of perspectives? The church is portrayed fourfold as an icon of the invisible and perceptible world and of man, but why choose the word "icon" to express these inversions? For Maximos "icon" is appropriate to describe the on-going process of revelation because man is created in God's image not statically, but both indelibly and dynamically. Just as in the inverted perspective found in painted icons the distant becomes near and the near, distant, in the predications below, the referents, the objects of the "mundane" world designated by natural language, are replaced by the actualization of the promised future of a redemption that is on-going. The relation between the subject and the church is no longer reduced to what a subject says about it conceptually. The subject is integrated into a sliding time scale, a realized eschatology, so that one can call, for example, the church man, and man the church, thereby speaking about the transformation of humanity as it enters the kingdom.

Before entering the ascetical path of divinization, man must understand his place in the world, his relation to other creatures and to their Creator and that in the perspective of their future. Sotiropoulos

²⁰ - This usage of image or icon is a personal to Maximos. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catéchèse* 2,6 cf. *Sources Chrétiennes* no. 126, pp; 114-115) confounds the two terms: "If the imitation is only an image, salvation on the other hand is a reality."

comments that Maximos starts out from the awareness that holy Church is an icon of God, then he continues on to other correspondences²¹. Chapter 1-7 of the *Mystagogy* are dedicated to making these correspondences clear, before dealing with the six stages of the purification of man (chapters 8-13). In schematic form here are the correspondences of the first section of the *Mystagogy*, chapter 1-7:

- 1- The holy Church of God is also the icon of both the invisible world and the perceptible one (ch. 2 & 3)²²;
- 2- The holy Church of God is the icon of man, and man, on the other hand, the icon of the Holy Church (ch. 4);
- 3 - The holy Church is the icon of the visible world all by itself;
- 4 - The holy Church and holy Scripture can be called “man” (ch. 6-7).

Clearly both vertically and horizontally, God’s church is a privileged space of communication. If God is the creator, man is His principal creature; in God the visible and invisible world unite, as does the present and the past (Sotiropoulos 2001: 23). In this mirrored refraction of grace, man is not integrated only personally and individually. Our fellowship with God precedes our communion with other human beings. Through an awareness of the components of God’s creature, body and soul, as it ascends through a divine hierarchy, these icons provide guideposts for his return to paradise and, in that sense, these icons anticipate the truth in us. What follows is a series of quotations on these four themes with commentary to relate these contemplations to the theme of plurality. The sub-titles are those of St. Maximos.

First contemplation : *the icon of God is His Holy church*

“The holy church of God ...offers ...the figure and the image of God...(and) has the same function as Him on the level of imitation and figuration.”²³

St. Maximos meditating on the diversity and the coherence of the world admires its formal properties. Here what Maximos wants us to understand

²¹ -Chapter 24, the last of the *Mystagogy*, goes back over the same correspondences (Sotiropoulos 2001 250-287)

²² -The Patristic sources of this idea are to be found in Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa. Cf. Sotiropoulos 2001:14.

²³ - French translation in Sotiropoulos 2001:123; Greek text: 263 verso folio(v), lines 5-9

is that it is by God "...that all beings are led to an identical movement and an unalterable and unmixed existence...by the support of a unique cause and principle...which eclipses and effaces all particular relations between all these beings ... and so appears as a the totality over all the parts, as the cause of the totality itself." [Sotiropoulos 2001 : 124 ; 263v3]. The quality of the integration achieved by God is due not only to his sacrificial love for his creatures but also to the the full freedom he accords them to chose to return to their Creator.

The icon is a coherent unity between the different experiences of Christ:
"In the same way, the holy church of God, as the image of the archetype, works in us, as we will show, the same effects as God does. For men and women meet in the womb of the Church and are recreated by her in the Spirit;...the grace of being of Christ...by the fact of the universal reference of all to her (the Church), of their encounter in her." (Stavropoulos 2001:129; 264v5).

This is an icon of the unity between the believers : "Thus, as it is said, the holy Church is the image of God because she accomplishes the same unity amongst the believers as God does."²⁴ A non-believer in France commented to me that the single most impressive aspect of the Divine Liturgy for him was that we share and confess the same faith.

This is an icon of the unity between God and mankind :

« The holy Church is ...both the figure and the image of God because the union without confusion which it accomplished in uniting (beings) to itself...(resembles) that of the Creator." [Sotiropoulos 2001:251 ; 287v2]

Second contemplation : *The church is an icon of the universe.*

Since the church is as diverse as is the universe and "...because it presents the same unity and diversity", it presents a figure and an image of the universe [Sotiropoulos 2001:136 (265v7)]. St. Maximos calls the universe a church "not made by human hands".

The holy church is an icon of the world composed of visible and invisible essences: The space of the church is divided between the sanctuary, with

²⁴ - Stavropoulos 2001:135; 265v1

its clergy and the nave with its faithful without ever breaking into two separate parts, indeed freeing each of these two parts in their differences. "...the sanctuary is the nave in action because it is itself a mystagogical principle." [Sotiropoulos 2001 :139 (266r6)]

Third contemplation: *The church is an icon of the cosmos.*

The Church is also the image of the single perceptible (*αἰσθητοῦ*) world; Since the sanctuary of the holy Church of God is in heaven, and since it possesses as its nave the beauty of the earth, for St. Maximos, the whole world is a church.

« That the icon of the only perceptible world is also that of the holy Church of God.” Here St. Maximos cites St. Paul (Romans I :20-1) “For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, (so that they are without excuse because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful ...)” [Sotiropoulos 2001:143-5 (267r14)]

Fourth contemplation : *The church is an icon of man since reciprocally man is an icon of the Church.*

St. Maximos here meditates on the iconographic parallel where the reciprocity between God and his creatures is at its highest level, which may explain that we cannot intuit this immediately²⁵

“How and in what manner does the holy church of God symbolically figure man and how is she figured by him as a man?” The comparison is mutual because:
the sanctuary // the soul
the altar //the intellect
the nave // the body²⁶

« Man in this world is and is called principally man because of his reasonable (*λογικήν*) and spiritual soul. It is through her and by her that man is the image and the resemblance of God who created him...”
(Sotiropoulos 2001:182 ; 275v8)

²⁵ - Sotiropoulos 2001:145; 265v 8,15 ; cf. also p. 251 287v 15. Even more than Origen, the Patristic sources of these correspondences are to be found in Evagrius and Gregory the theologian. According to Sotiropoulos 2001: 14.

²⁶ - Origen had already made these correspondences (cf. Sotiropoulos 2001:14) and R. Bornert remarks that Origen was the first to have used Jewish methods of liturgical commentary for Christian rites

Next follows the well-known passage where the theologian effaces himself before the monk by silencing his discourse²⁷.

« ...man is a mystical church: thanks to the nave of his body, he illumines the active part of his soul by accomplishing the commandments...;through the sanctuary of his soul, he spiritually offers to God the reasons (*logoi*) of the perceptible world which are circumscribed into matter by the Spirit, following on from the contemplation of nature; and he invokes on the altar of his intellect, through another prolix and loquacious silence, the abyss of silence celebrated by many hymns by the invisible and unknowable voice of the divinity, which silence, as much as it is possible, man joins through mystical theology.”

St. Maximos then (ch. 8-21) engages in a rigorous reflection on what he calls the symbolic contemplation of the liturgy comprising: the entrance of the faithful into the temple; the antiphons, the proclamation of peace before the reading of the Holy Gospel; the Great Entrance into the sanctuary of the holy gifts; the kiss of peace; the Credo; the “Our Father”; the sacred chanting of “One is Holy...”.

To give just a single example²⁸ : the confession that,

“Only one is holy, only one is the Lord...” according to St; Maximos “...signifies the assembly and the union...in the secret unity of divine simplicity which will be accomplished in the incorruptible age of the intelligible world...During this *seculum* while contemplating the luminous glory, that never appeared and surpasses all words, they themselves [sc. the faithful] will receive...the blessed purity.”

In the next thirteen chapters, step by step, the Eucharist which St. Maximos presents to us is understandable only if one bears in mind the first part of his mystagogy which presents the mediations of plurality through verbal icons liturgically mediated. These present the cosmos as called the holy church of God because it is contemplated *sub specie aeternitatis*. There even death is transfigured as is seen in the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God as she seeks to confide Her breath and Her spirit to the Lord, returning to Her Creator. That is a death that makes sense, that is sanctified. The role of iconological theology is to understand the inherence of cosmology in the celebration of the holy supper of the Lord.

4) Conclusion :

²⁷ - Sotiropoulos 2001:147 (268r), English trans. SCH

²⁸ - Sotiropoulos 2001: 224; 281 v1

In the Eucharist we chant, « In order to receive the King of all things...” Who is coming? He who is seated on the throne of the cherubim, the Father’s Word, our Lord Jesus Christ:

« ...*He who is the ‘icon of your Goodness’
the seal faithfully reproducing you
manifesting you in Himself, you His Father.*”

Both in the Eucharist and in prayer in general, the creative moment, its groundswell, is not just of man God-wards but also of God coming towards man. But to enter into this movement man needs icons showing the way, the truth and the life. Preceded by the Holy Spirit who reposes on the Son before mankind from the Theophany onwards and whom the Son gives to us in Pentecost, such life in Christ is an iconological revelation. From this movement of man towards God emerges a fundamental change in the composition of diversity and plurality. Christ as the founding truth of humanity, the only icon of its Father, henceforth reveals to us the presence of God stewarding us towards a unity created by this presence.

Maximos famously identifies five mediations accomplished by Christ on our behalf (see *Ambigua* §41; PG 91, 221b; Ponsoye 1994:293). Between the sexes; between paradise and the inhabited earth; between heaven and earth; between intelligible and perceptible (or sensible) creation; between God and his creation. Many commentators are at pains to make clear that, as Thunberg says, (1995:416), “the innovation brought about by Christ with regard to fallen man does not therefore, pertain to the λόγος of human nature, but to its own mode (τρόπος).” Human nature in its λόγος is not violated, but fulfilled according to Chalcedonian theology. Man’s mode of being in Christ changes through this mode of existence “beyond nature”. The *communicatio idiomatum* in Christ’s two natures is an “ecstatic penetration” (Thunberg’s translation of *perichoresis*). As Thunberg puts it (1995:417), “ Christ’s human sufferings take place in a divine mode and his divine acts in a human mode.”

We are now in position to understand the iconology of the five predications presented above. The logic and reason of these successive correlations is not that of identification but of truthful representation. Put more simply these correlations attract one another since the icon of the soul resembles that of the Creator. Gilbert Dagron (2007 :9) claims that the icon is less concerned with faithful portraiture, with its preoccupations with resemblance, than it is possessed by a constant concern with the truth of its meaning. Dagron says, “...l’image de culte poussant seulement au paroxysme tous les elements de la definition par

une frontalité qui accentue le face-à-face, par un acte de foi qui le transforme en dialogue, prière et intercession... » Thus it is that :

1) Church of God	is an icon of	the invisible & the perceptible world
2) Church of God	of man
3) Man	of the church
4) Church of God	is an icon	of the soul
5) The church and Holy Scripture are man		

In the holy church of God the faithful are bound together into the body of Christ and are found worthy to be contemplated as such. Revitalised by God’s energies, they are returning to God. In the words of God heard in the temple, mankind finds his icon and his destiny. On the ladder of the scripture man’s ascent is stabilized for “My words will by no means pass away.” (Mt. 24:35). Plurality is no longer the issue, for the world is man and man is the world. Mediated by the intelligible world man, both soul and body, becomes integrated; man’s soul and the invisible world share in a common task through this integration as does the visible world and man’s body. Losing their old distance of separation, they are to become new. Distinct yet united, man’s body will die and the visible world will pass away, but only to become in Christ a new creation (Gal. 6:15); “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I will make all things new.’ And he said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’” (Apoc. 21:5)

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