

Hesychia and the Vision of God in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul

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When one reads Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers carefully and with an open mind, without speculative and philosophical analyses, one realises that the theology that inspired the Apostles and the Fathers was a matter of revelation and experience, and that they themselves collaborated in this revelation, in the sense that they lived within the tradition of the Church. Hesychia, with its Orthodox meaning of inner stillness and peace of heart, leads without fail to empirical theology, and revelational theology propels the human being more deeply into sacred Orthodox hesychia.

When these issues are mentioned, contemporary theologians usually raise two objections. The first is that hesychasm, or what is termed sacred hesychia, is for very few people, mainly ascetics and hermits. The second objection is that the holy Fathers altered the words of Christ and the Apostles in some way. That is to say, they changed the words of the Apostles to accord more closely with ascetic teaching, or even linked these words with ontological categories and the world-view of their era, which means that the patristic message has to be ‘demythologised’, so that we can return to the message of the Apostles. Both these objections are mistaken.

The first is mistaken, because what the patristic tradition says about sacred hesychia does not simply concern the way of life of ascetics and hesychasts, but constitutes the spiritual life of all Christians, who ought to live in accordance with Christ’s commandments. Anyone who reads the Gospel carefully perceives this whole atmosphere of sacred hesychia, which is connected with vigilance of the nous, purification of the rational faculty from thoughts and of the heart from passionate desires. More generally, it is associated with the renewal and transformation of the human being, which is achieved through the Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church and the ascetic life. In reality, sacred hesychia is the experience of the mystery of Christ’s Cross and Resurrection, which all Christians must experience. This way of life is not the prerogative of a few monks or ascetics, but is the Christian life followed to varying degrees by all Christians.

The second objection is also mistaken, because the Fathers did not alter the message of the Gospel and the Apostles. They simply used new terms in certain places, in order to deal with heretics who expressed their views using the philosophical terminology of their age. The holy Fathers lived in the atmosphere of the Gospel word

and were distinguished by their apostolic way of life. They experienced the meaning of revelational truth. When necessary, however, they used contemporary words and expressions. The meaning does not change, but the words do.

In order to show that the hesychastic life is the evangelical way of life, we shall leave aside in this chapter the teaching of the holy Fathers, and concentrate on analysing the hesychastic teaching of the Apostle Paul, as it appears in his surviving Epistles. By so doing we shall ascertain that the great Apostle really was an empirical theologian, but also a great hesychast. All the teaching of the Fathers and the *Philokalia* is to be found in outline in St Paul's teaching or, to be more precise, all the ascetic and hesychastic teaching of the Fathers who practised spiritual vigilance (the 'neptic' Fathers) and the theology of the great Fathers of the Church is a development, through their own experience, of the teaching of the Apostles, exactly as we encounter it in their Epistles. All the saints have the same experience.

We find the word *hesychia* three times in the Greek text of St Paul's Epistles. The first time it refers generally to a way of life: "But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life [*hesychazein*], to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess. 4:10-11). The second time it refers to a way of working: "...that they work in quietness [*hesychia*] and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:12). The third time it refers to women conducting themselves "in silence [*hesychia*]" (1 Tim. 2:10-11). It is clear that the word *hesychia* is not used with the meaning that the neptic Fathers of the Church give it of the "science of thoughts", the mortification and transformation of the passions, noetic prayers, vigilance, the "art of peace", and so on. However, although the Apostle Paul does not use the phrase 'sacred hesychia' in the patristic sense of the term, the whole concept of his teaching describes the hesychastic life, as we shall discover below.

The analyses that follow should be read in this context.

a) Sin, Death and Life

Adam and Eve's sin was not of a moral or legalistic nature; it was the deprivation of the glory of God, the loss of divine life and departure from God.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

The glory of God is God's uncreated energy that shines as Light. God is the life and light of humankind, so the lack of God's Light is also the lack of spiritual life. Spiritual death befell human beings and physical death followed. On account of the fall, man lived with a darkened nous. Mortality and liability to suffering entered the human

body and are passed on at birth. The sin of Adam and Eve (ancestral sin) is inherited in this way.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because [literally ‘in which’] all sinned – (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him Who was to come)” (Rom. 5:12-14).

Through sin, the loss of divine life, and the “body of death” that entered human existence, man was a slave to sin and death. There was also confusion between human beings and the creation, so people worshipped created things. Man’s relationship with God, with other people and with creation was completely disrupted.

“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen (Rom. 1:21-25).

Being in this state, fallen human beings committed every sin. They were unable to distinguish between good and bad, between God’s will and the will of the devil. There was complete confusion between what is created and what is uncreated. Fallen man acquired “a debased mind [*nous*]”, which was darkened and incapable of making a distinction between created and uncreated things. This is how all sins should be interpreted, not on the basis of moral, psychological and social presuppositions.

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind [*nous*], to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practise such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practise them (Rom. 1:28-32).

Because God did not want those He had made to be tormented, He sent various Prophets to reveal His will and the way to be set free from sin. Eventually He gave His law to Moses, to enable man to distinguish between good and bad. By means of the law humankind realised what sin was. Thus, to those who were spiritually dead, sin seemed to exist through the law. Of course, the law was not sinful but holy, and it uncovered sin, but man perceived it as sinful, because it brought sin to light. At the same time, however, it was unable to free human beings from death and sin.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Rom. 7:7-20).

In the Old Testament man became aware of his state through the law and realised how far he was from God’s Light. He was unable, however, to free himself from the law of sin that existed within his nature and was connected with death. The Apostle Paul confesses this admirably.

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind [*nous*] I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. 7:24-25).

What the law was unable to do, namely, to set man free from death, sin and the devil, from the “body of death”, Christ achieved through His incarnation. The Word of God assumed human nature, which was completely pure but subject to suffering and

death, in order to suffer and to conquer death in Himself, and thus to become the New Adam Who will bring human beings into Paradise.

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

It is absolutely clear in this passage that there is a very close link between the devil, death and servitude to the passions. The devil has the power of death and by means of death he enslaved human beings, who were possessed by the fear of death. The fear of death makes man a slave to the passions of selfishness, love of possessions, love of money and love of praise. Liberation from death, the devil and sin came about through the incarnation, Cross, Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Thus, sin came into the world through the first Adam, and deliverance from sin and death was achieved through the New Adam, Christ.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because [literally ‘in which’] all sinned – (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him Who was to come) (Rom. 5:12-14).

The phrase “in which all sinned” means “in death”. In other words, all mortals, by reason of the existence of death, the “body of death”, within them, sinned: they amassed material goods, they were selfish and clung to life, they loved riches, and so on. Now the New Adam, Christ, has set man free from the devil, death and sin.

“For if by the one man’s offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:17-21).

Through His incarnation Christ did not merely teach people a few truths or work miracles. He conquered death, sin and the devil in His flesh and became the medicine

of immortality for humankind. Now we are united with Christ in the Church through the Mysteries; we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ, and we are victorious over death, which we inherited in our body. In this way we also conquer the passions that are connected with death. The Christian's victory over death, sin and the devil is achieved in Christ.

b) Life in Christ

The Apostle Paul was not simply an expert on the Old Testament law or a teacher of Christians, but a genuine Apostle of Jesus Christ. This means that he saw the risen Christ in the Holy Spirit, something that he continually repeats throughout his Epistles. He says characteristically:

“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead)” (Gal. 1:1).

St Paul was called to the rank of Apostle by means of a revelation, by Christ Himself appearing to him:

“But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15-16).

After God's revelation to him he went to Arabia (Gal. 1:17). There he gave himself over to weeping and repentance, because in his ignorance he had persecuted the Living God Himself, Who had, however, revealed Himself to him in His glory. St Paul realised that He was Yahweh, He Who Is, the unincarnate Word of God. The manifestation of God to him produced insatiable repentance within him. He lived something similar to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, which is why he described this prayer in detail.

“Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death” (Heb. 5:7).

His theoria (vision) of God provoked profound repentance in him for his former life. This repentance was not due to his having lived a godless life beforehand, as he had kept the Old Testament law. He repented of having been ignorant of Christ the living God and having fought against Him. Such ignorance of the true God, regardless of any religious convictions one may have, is actually atheism. This is also how the Apostle Paul interprets godlessness.

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God [literally ‘atheists’] in the world” (Eph. 2:11-12).

The Apostle Paul closely linked praxis with theoria. Praxis (practical virtue) is the crucifixion and mortification of the passions, and theoria is the revelation of the glory of the Light in the face of Jesus Christ. In St Paul’s case the revelation of God in the Light came first, followed by complete self-emptying repentance. For the rest of his life, as is clear from his Epistles, he repeatedly experienced the vision of God. He himself spoke about the first revelation of Christ to him.

“Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you are persecuting.’ And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him Who spoke to me. So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do’” (Acts 22:6-10).

The Light which shone around him was not an unsubstantial, impersonal light, but the glory of the God-man Christ. This is also clear from the dialogue that followed, as they spoke “face to face”. Something impersonal cannot speak, feel, or communicate like a person.

He describes the same experience in another address:

“...at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me...” (Acts 26:13).

It is obvious here that the divine Light pouring forth from the deified flesh of Christ is more brilliant than the sun. For this reason, at the moment of divine vision the Apostle Paul perceived two lights: the created light of the sun and the uncreated Light of Christ’s glory. He made a clear distinction between the two lights, speaking of a light that shone around him “from heaven, brighter than the sun”. He was, of course, unable to bear the exceeding glory of the uncreated Light of Christ.

This vision of God made Saul an Apostle of Jesus Christ and a genuine empirical theologian. To be sure, he had other experiences of beholding God in the course of his

life, but it should be noted that these experiences are experiences of eternal life and the life of Paradise. He ascended as far as the “third heaven” and from there “he was caught up into Paradise”.

“It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities” (2 Cor. 12:1-5).

In this revelational passage one can see the following points.

It mentions “visions and revelations of the Lord”. Visions are revelations, and revelations are visions of the Lord. These are not revelations of ideas, but the vision of divine realities in which the whole human being – body and soul – shares. The body is actually transformed by God’s grace so that it can behold these revelations.

Next, it was not one revelation but many: there were numerous appearances of God and divine things. The revelation is not a static image but a succession of experiences.

Also, during revelations there is ecstasy, but it is different from ‘Eastern’ types of ecstasy. The Apostle Paul confesses: “whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows”. Ecstasy is a spiritual event. It does not mean taking leave of one’s senses or the departure of the nous from the body. Someone who beholds God is neither outside the body nor within it, because his nous is in his body at that time, but it is “caught up” by God’s grace, so he perceives something different.

The man in Christ is caught up “to the third heaven”. There are not multiple heavens perceptible to the senses, nor can they be defined in terms of numbers and differing levels surrounding the earth, in accordance with the view of ancient Hebrew tradition. Rather, the word *heavens* denotes spiritual states connected with revelations of the Lord. Basically, we can assert, as we find in the interpretative tradition of the Fathers, which St Maximus the Confessor also preserved, that St Paul’s being caught up to three heavens means participation in the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God.

After the third heaven, which is the vision of God, the Apostle was caught up “into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” These ineffable words are uncreated utterances, and this signifies that St Paul was

initiated into uncreated reality, participation in the uncreated glory of God, and the uncreated Divine Liturgy of Paradise.

Through such revelations Saul-Paul became an Apostle, a God-seer and a theologian, and he transmitted all this experience to Christians using created words and concepts, as we see in his Epistles. It is clear that the Apostle Paul knew the hesychastic life of divine vision by experience.

All these revelations and occurrences are an experience of Christ's Resurrection. The Cross of Christ, however, is inseparably linked with the Resurrection, as is very evident in the life of the Apostle Paul:

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

There are two ways in which St Paul is crucified with Christ.

The first is expressed by the phrase “the world has been crucified to me”. The ‘world’ is the carnal way of thinking. Through the Cross the world was crucified for him. That is to say, the Apostle Paul was completely distanced from the atmosphere and mentality of this world. As soon as he came to know Christ, he was captivated by Him. He was enthralled by His love and the beauty of His face, and from then on absolutely nothing in the sensual and perceptible world moved him.

The second way he experienced the Cross is indicated in the phrase “and I to the world”. In other words, the Apostle himself was crucified with regard to the world, as all passionate desires for the world had been crucified and put to death, by being transformed and directed towards God. Physical withdrawal from the world represents the first phase of the crucified life, and withdrawal from the ways of the world, which is linked with the transfiguration of the passions, constitutes the second phase of this crucified life.

There is an implicit reference here to the example of the people of Israel, who, in spite of their physical departure from Egypt, still desired the Egyptian way of life. The first way of being crucified is by leaving behind the worldly and carnal way of thinking, although the inner desires of the passions may still be active; this is characterised as *praxis*. The second way of being crucified is by transforming all thoughts and desires and turning them towards God. This is described as *theoria*, with its different gradations.

It is from this perspective that the Apostle Paul declared:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

St Paul was crucified by the grace of God, and from then on the risen Christ lived within him and ruled his whole being, body and soul. Both his soul and body participated in deification, in the glory of God.

The Apostle Paul knew the hesychastic tradition in practice, as an experience of the Cross of Christ, and he also knew theoria, through which he tasted eternal life, as an experience of Christ’s Resurrection and theoria of the uncreated Light. By means of this empirical theology he guided all Christians, whether married or unmarried, members of the clergy or laypeople, the whole ecclesiastical community. His Epistles are full of hesychastic and visionary experience. This made him a theologian in the Church and a leading Apostle. He writes in one of his Epistles:

“...knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:4-5).

The Gospel that St Paul preached to Christians was the fruit of revelational experience of God. It was not empty words, but was offered with power, the Holy Spirit and conviction.

On reading this passage one realises that spiritual changes came about in those who heard the Apostle Paul speaking. Christians acquired experience and personal knowledge of the evangelical message, as is also clear in another of his Epistles:

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established – that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me” (Rom. 1:11-12).

Through his preaching the Apostle Paul passed on a spiritual gift, which brought steadfastness and consolation. His words were the outcome of this empirical theology, which is why they were so powerful. The life that he lived in Christ was manifested in all his actions and in his words.

c) Baptism as Experience of the Mystery of Christ’s Cross and Resurrection

Baptism is an introductory Sacrament because through it we are brought into the life of the Church. We become members of the Body of Christ and, of course, members

of the Church, as the Church is the Body of Christ. In addition, Holy Chrismation is the seal of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of rebirth in Christ. Our incorporation into Christ comes about in the Holy Spirit, and Christ is formed in our heart through the activation of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Since Christ is 'one of the Trinity', all the Holy Trinity shares in our regeneration, as the energy of the Triune God is shared.

The Apostle Paul refers in his Epistle to the Romans to the great value of Baptism. As we know, this passage is the Epistle appointed to be read at the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:1-14).

In this passage the Apostle Paul is not referring to the Mystery of Holy Baptism simply as a sacramental rite, but as the mystery of experiencing Christ's Cross and Resurrection. The imitation of Christ is not something ethical, but sacramental and real, since man's whole being is transformed in Christ. The Christian is called to live the Cross, the burial and the Resurrection of Christ. St Paul expounds this in the Epistle to the Romans, as cited above.

The one being baptised experiences the mystery of Christ's death on the Cross: “As many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death”; “We have been united together in the likeness of His death”; and “We died with Christ”. At

the same time, he lives the mystery of Christ's burial, which is connected with death: "We were buried with Him through baptism into death". Through Baptism, however, the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ is also experienced, because through Baptism we are "united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

Participation in the mystery of Christ's Cross, His death, burial and Resurrection, as described in this passage from the Epistles, is not something symbolical that goes no further than the triple immersion of the candidate in the water of the font. These are real spiritual experiences. The proof of this is the transformation and renewal of the life of the one who is baptised, which does not take place only on the day of his baptism, but continues for the rest of his life.

This is the perspective in which we should view the passage from St Paul that we are considering. Through Baptism, "our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." The 'old man' is the world of the passions, the human being without God, the state in which all the passions express themselves and desire to be satisfied according to the ways of this world. The human body is susceptible to death and suffering, which is the main reason why sin is committed. Through Baptism, however, the 'old man' is put to death and the passions are not active.

The mortification of the 'old man' is connected with the rejection of all impure actions, with putting off the old self and its deeds, and putting on the 'new man', who is being renewed "in knowledge according to the image of Him Who created him" (Col. 3:10-11). Those being baptised are deadened as regards this world; all the powers of man's body and soul are referred to God and directed by His grace.

Through Holy Baptism and Chrismation Christians were sealed by the Holy Spirit. Christians heard the word of God, they believed in the Gospel of salvation, and they were sealed, so that they belong completely to Christ: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

Living through the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, which follows the experience of the mystery of His Cross and His death, also has real consequences. The baptised Christian should "walk in newness of life", in other words, lead a new life. Instead of being a slave "of sin", he must be liberated from it and justified, which means deified, because "he who has died (through the glory of the Father) has been freed [literally 'justified'] from sin." Someone who has been baptised is dead with regard to sin, lives according to God and experiences deification. This is the theology of Baptism as experience of the mystery of Christ's Cross and Resurrection. Having been baptised,

the human being is completely renewed and lives another reality, freed from the consequences of fear of death.

The Apostle Paul urges baptised Christians to live free from sin. Sin ought not to rule over their mortal body by making their body give way to passions and subjecting them to its desires. Just as someone who is physically resurrected lives a new life, so someone who is spiritually resurrected should live a new life. The members of the body should fight against sin and be weapons of righteousness instead of unrighteousness. St Paul exhorts: “Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead”.

This means that the Sacrament of Baptism was preceded by a life of preparation (for those baptised as adults) and it is followed by a new life, which is not limited to virtuous desires and good thoughts, but includes the transformation of all the energies of soul and body. Inside the body subject to death and suffering are concealed the desires of fallen humankind, which relate to sensual pleasure, glory and the acquisition of wealth. These must all be transformed. The members of the body must be “instruments of righteousness”. Then the entire human being is “under grace”. This is deification of the soul and body, which is a matter of collaboration between God and man, as God acts and man co-operates through his efforts and his struggle against the devil, sin and death acting within him.

It follows that the Sacrament of Baptism is not an outward, formal rite, but a life of initiation into the mystery of Christ’s Cross, burial and Resurrection.

d) Life after Baptism

The Apostle Paul urged Christians: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Just as he imitated the crucified and risen Christ by living the mystery of Christ’s Cross and Resurrection, so Christians are called to live this mystery, which assists in their regeneration. The imitation of Christ is not something ethical or mechanical, but sacramental and ascetic. St Paul affirms:

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24).

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh and continue to do so. The word *flesh* does not simply mean the body. Christians have not physically ascended a cross to be crucified, imitating Christ externally. Their struggle, by God’s grace, consists in crucifying the carnal mentality, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the passions. That is why St Paul speaks of crucifixion “with [the] passions and desires”. When a desire arises that is contrary to God’s will, it has not been crucified, and it must be crucified, put to death and transformed. The same applies to thoughts. Those,

however, who do not wish to crucify their desires and passions are not united with Christ. They do not belong to the crucified and risen Christ.

The Apostle Paul speaks about this mortification of the passions in another of his Epistles:

“Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:10-12).

Baptism must be followed by a continuous struggle, which is asceticism according to Christ. Both death and life are active in those who have been baptised. Sin is put to death and they are freed from it. As a consequence, the baptised have a foretaste of their resurrection from the passions.

St Paul is well aware of the law of sin, which is connected with the law of death that exists within the body, its susceptibility to death and suffering. He writes:

“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind [*nous*], and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:22-24).

He is speaking here of “the inward man” present within the heart. There is a whole inner life underneath the world of the senses and reason. We shall look later on at what is meant by “the inward man”.

The two laws – God’s law, described as “the law of my mind [*nous*]”, and the law of sin and death, described as “this body of death” – do battle within the human being. Both these laws are present in the members of the body and fight with one another. Naturally, the one who has Christ alongside him in the struggle proves victorious, which is why St Paul declares: “I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:25). This victory was achieved through the deification of human nature in Christ, through Baptism and Chrismation, but also through the baptised Christian’s entire struggle against the “law of death”, which is connected with the mortality of the body and its liability to suffering that are the result of ancestral sin.

The baptised should bear in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Christ may be revealed in the same body. This is not an imaginary, rational or sentimental way of life, but crucified and risen life in Christ. It is expressed in both soul and body, as the body is deified as well. The passions are transformed as well as the soul and body, so that they act according to God. Baptised Christians do not show forth

Christ's life in their mortal body only occasionally, or at the time of their Baptism. Rather, they strive all their life long. That is why those who live in Christ are "always delivered to death for Jesus' sake." This phrase refers to the struggle to devote our whole selves fully to Christ. If necessary, it should even lead to martyrdom for Christ.

This whole way of life is the ascetic lifestyle linked with Baptism. Someone who is baptised puts his passions to death; his passions do not act in relation to this world, but are transformed and developed to love Christ. The mortification of the passions is mentioned in this perspective:

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience" (Col. 3:5-6).

Together with the deadening of the passions, which actually means their becoming dead to the world and their transformation according to God, one also experiences the life of the Resurrection.

"Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1:4-7).

The Christian's life after the Sacrament of Baptism is a life of sufferings and consolation, of the Cross and Resurrection. Tribulation is inseparable from the struggle to mortify the passions and put to death the 'old man', which acts "according to the inward man". Consolation from God is linked with the life of the Resurrection.

The words "as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation" is significant. We share in Christ's Resurrection to the extent that we participate in Christ's Cross, depending on how much we struggle against the passions. Otherwise there can be no consolation from God. What is more, this does not mean participating in sufferings on a small scale. It is necessary for us to strive to go through many sufferings and to share in Christ's Cross in all its depth: "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

The Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation are, therefore, connected with the crucified and risen life. They are not something that brings perfection, a social ceremony or a finished state, but an ongoing participation by the baptised Christian in the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ, which will last for the rest of his life. This comes about through keeping Christ's commandments, which is Christian asceticism, and, when necessary, it is also expressed by martyrdom. For that reason, the Martyrs of the Church are regarded as disciples of Christ in the highest sense.

Baptism and Chrismation are linked with the Divine Eucharist, with eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist is at the centre of the Church's life. The Apostle Paul writes:

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:23-30).

The Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist is a tradition that the Apostle Paul received from Christ and handed on to the Corinthians. Through this Sacrament Christians “proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.” One must put oneself to the test before participating in this great Mystery: “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” This is not an outward examination. The Christian examines to what extent he shares in the mystery of Christ's Cross, His death and His Resurrection, and to what extent the grace of God is active in the “the inward man”, as prayer, love, inspiration and thirst for God. Otherwise Holy Communion is taken “in an unworthy manner” with dreadful consequences.

e) Nous, Mind and Heart

The Christian's crucified and risen life is closely connected with the whole ascetic way of life that leads to the mortification of the ‘old man’ and the resurrection

of the ‘new man’. This takes place in the whole of the ‘inner man’ – in the mind, nous and heart – as the hesychastic tradition of the Church has ascertained. This is, of course, clearly apparent in the Apostle Paul’s Epistles, which mention these three aspects of the spiritual life.

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind [*nous*], having their understanding [*dianoia* ‘mind’] darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind [*nous*], and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:17-24).

The idolatrous Gentiles live “in the futility of their mind [*nous*]”, “having their understanding [*dianoia* ‘mind’] darkened” and in “the blindness [literally ‘hardness’] of their heart.” Nous, mind and heart and the three centres of the Christian’s struggle which are subject to attacks from the devil but also, of course, to the energies of God’s grace. This grace purifies them from all satanic action and leads them towards God.

The futility of the nous, the darkening of the mind and the hardening of the heart are characteristic features of idolaters and those outside the Church. They make people “alienated from the life of God,” and this has many consequences, including insensitivity, licentiousness, impure acts and greediness for gain. Impurity in the inner world (nous, mind and heart) spreads to the body as well.

What happens to unbaptised idolaters ought not to happen to baptised Christians. “But you have not so learned Christ.” Christians learnt and were taught to live in the opposite way to worldly idol-worshippers. Christians learnt that their nous ought to be occupied with what relates to Christ, that their mind should be illuminated by the Light of God, and that their heart should be sensitive to God’s grace. They also learnt and were taught to cast off the ‘old man’, which is corrupt through deceitful desires and is characterised by futility of the nous, darkening of the mind and hardening of the heart. At the same time, they learnt to be renewed in the spirit of their nous, and to strive to put on “the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

If we look closely at this passage, we find that the whole endeavour of the baptised Christian is to preserve purity of the heart, as well as illumination of the nous

and mind. This takes place in these three stages: the purification of the heart by putting of the ‘old man’; the illumination of the nous by its renewal “in the Spirit”; and deification, which means putting on the ‘new man’, as he was created by God before the fall.

The Apostle Paul refers to the nous, the mind and the heart in his Epistles, which were sent to all Christians, married and unmarried, clergy and laity. In any case, there were no monks in those days: there were virgins and married people. All Christians, of course, with some adaptation to circumstances, lived like monks. We shall look at a few passages that speak about the inner state of the regenerated human being.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments [*logismoi* ‘thoughts’] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

This passage speaks about the ascetic life, expressed in terms and images drawn from the art of war at that time. It emphasises that all thoughts and any kind of pretension that is placed above the knowledge of God must be removed – I think this means philosophy. After that, all one’s thoughts must be taken captive to obey Christ. This clearly refers to the liberation of the rational faculty, the mind, from all external influences, and the captivation of every thought to obedience to Christ. This is the essence of Christian obedience. The purification of thoughts and the transformation of the will are a major factor in ascetic life within the Orthodox tradition. Here, too, St Paul proves himself to be an absolute expert on the inner life of Christians. Elsewhere he writes:

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).

What happened to Adam and Eve in Paradise at the time of the fall is repeated in the life of Christians. Eve did not pay attention to the realm of thoughts and she was deceived by the serpent, the devil, who craftily presented God as a liar. Consequently it was the corruption of her mind that brought about the fall. Remembering this example, Christians should pay heed to the realm of their mind. They must check their thoughts and ideas lest they be corrupted and lose their simplicity, as well as their communion with Christ. St Paul stresses this in another of his Epistles: “We ask you...not to be soon shaken in mind [*nous*] or troubled” (2 Thess. 2:1-2). In those days, of course, the distinction had not yet been made between the nous and the mind (*dianoia*).

It is clear from many passages in St Paul's Epistles that he is familiar with the course of development followed by sin. It begins with thoughts (*logismoi*), goes on to corrupt the mind, and reaches the heart, where the desires act. Subsequently the sinful act is committed. Because this is the route by which sin is committed, Christians must concentrate their struggle on the heart. In any case, God's grace is established in the heart once it has been purified.

The heart is the place in which the grace of God acts. Essentially it is the passible part of the soul, where desire and anger act. The Apostle writes:

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

The Holy Spirit was given to man through the Sacrament of Baptism, and through the Sacrament of Chrismation they taste God's love, which is poured out within their hearts through the Holy Spirit. This is not simply an image or a matter of feelings. It is not something imaginary. There is a specific place where God's love is poured out. The passible part of the soul – its appetitive and incensive aspects – is transformed by the grace of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart appears as light, as the Apostle says in another Epistle:

“For it is the God Who commanded light to shine out of darkness, Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [*prosopon* in Greek means both ‘face’ and ‘person’] of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Previously the darkness of passions prevailed in the heart, just as the creation was in darkness before God created the light. This image also applies to the new creation, the spiritual rebirth that comes about in man's inner world. This is not something imaginary or psychological, as this outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the heart as Light is connected with the knowledge of God's glory. This passage links the knowledge of God (theology) with the glory of God, which is His uncreated Light, and this illumination is not unsubstantial, but is linked with the Light of Christ, which is experienced in the heart.

The structure and formulation of the empirical knowledge acquired by the Apostle, his theology based on experience, are completely obvious. God's love is abundantly poured out in the human heart through the Holy Spirit in the face or person of Jesus Christ. All the Holy Trinity participates in this offering of love. The presence of God appears as Light. The uncreated Light shines in the heart and offers knowledge of the glory of God. Then someone really becomes a God-seer and a theologian.

God's grace shines in the heart, and the heart beholds its glory with its own eyes. This is not the physical heart but the spiritual one, the place where God's grace enters and reveals the mystery of vocation. This comes about through the "the eyes of your heart being enlightened" (Eph. 1:18).

According to the Apostle Paul, the spiritual life is centred on the heart, which receives the energies of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the place of the heart is a heavenly realm.

"We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections" (2 Cor. 6:11-12).

With the presuppositions mentioned above, this whole inner world, which receives the Holy Spirit and is characterised as the heart, is enlarged. This comes about because the heart becomes capacious on account of the uncreated glory of the Triune God, and so it receives the entire creation and loves the whole world. St Paul, having this experience of a wide-open heart, can therefore ask the Corinthians, as his spiritual children to open their own hearts wide:

"Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open" (2 Cor. 6:13).

The widening and illumination of the heart do not come about through speculative, theological and intellectual knowledge, but through the experience of the grace of the Triune God in the heart, in the core of one's spiritual being. This should be experienced by all Christians who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, because this is the purpose of Baptism, Chrismation and the whole of ecclesiastical life. The heart must be enlarged by the grace of God and become 'heaven', where noetic worship will take place. This is the transformation of the one's inner world by God's grace, and the experience of the heavenly Divine Liturgy, through which the heart opens wide. Unless this enlargement takes place, one is narrow-hearted, selfish, individualistic and closed in on oneself.

f) Adoption according to Grace and Noetic Prayer

Spiritual life in the Church develops the spiritual organism of the human being. Just as man's physical organism goes through all the different ages and from being an infant becomes mature, at which point he inherits his father's wealth, the same happens with the spiritual life. From being an infant, man must be perfected and become spiritually mature.

The infant is still in subjection and has not acquired freedom:

“Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world” (Gal. 4:1-3).

The image in this passage is taken from the management of an inheritance of material goods left by a father to his infant son. In this case it is not possible for the child to manage his paternal inheritance, so according to the law it is committed to trustees. As long as the child is under the authority of the trustees and stewards, as determined by his natural father, he obviously “does not differ at all from a slave”, even if he owns everything. He will inherit the property when he reaches the appropriate age, and he will be freed from the trustees and stewards.

The same happens with regard to man’s spiritual age. The preparation began with the Old Testament, was completed with the coming of Christ, and continues with those who are baptised. People in the Old Testament, and Christians before their Baptism and their regeneration in Christ, were infants, which means that they were “in bondage under the elements of the world.” Their thinking was confused, their nous was darkened and they were enslaved to the passions of the flesh. With Christ’s incarnation and our spiritual rebirth, we received adoption and became sons of God according to grace. Through his creation, man is God’s handiwork, but he becomes the son of God through his regeneration in Christ Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. This is repeated in the spiritual life of Christians. St Paul writes about the adoption as sons by grace:

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ (Gal. 4:6)

The coming of the Holy Spirit into someone’s heart, through Whom the heart cries ‘Abba, Father’, is a reliable sign of adoption. Otherwise one is an infant, a servant, who is subject to trustees, and he is still carnal. When someone receives the Holy Spirit he is “no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7). He therefore inherits heavenly glory, shares in God’s Light, which is God’s wealth, and beholds the uncreated Light. In this case, this cry in the heart of ‘Abba, Father’, which is the prayer of the nous in the heart, is a proof of adoption and of the fact that one shares in God’s deifying energy.

What the Apostle Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans is connected with this, and shows the value and significance of this spiritual work in the “inner man”:

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage

again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together (Rom. 8:13-17).

A spiritual human being is someone who receives the energy of the Holy Spirit within him, and therefore lives spiritually. Otherwise he is carnal and will die spiritually, having no connection with Christ. Those who are led by the Holy Spirit, who are directed, not by various trustees, but by the Holy Spirit Himself, are sons of God. They have received adoption as sons of God through the Holy Spirit, and as a result they are not possessed by the fear of servitude.

This adoption as sons according to God is obvious from the prayer of the heart that is directed to the Father: “Abba, Father!” One is aware of God as Father, and experiences His paternal love. This is the Holy Spirit “bearing witness with” man’s spirit that he is a child of God, and therefore an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. This describes the noetic prayer in the heart, which comes about in the Holy Spirit and makes one’s whole inner world rejoice. Essentially, this is a ‘spiritual pregnancy’, which contains clear elements of one’s regeneration.

This state is not only a gift of God to the human being, but also the human being’s struggle. “If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” A struggle is required of man, but by the Holy Spirit he is “glorified together”: he participates in His glory, sees the divine Light and is deified. Man’s maturity, therefore is connected with adoption in Christ, and this adoption is expressed through noetic prayer and man’s deification. Consequently, adoption according to God is a charismatic state.

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

The Holy Spirit prays within man through the prayer of the nous in the heart, and this is also a matter of human longing.

The Holy Spirit “helps in our weaknesses”, strengthening man, and He prays within the heart “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” This phrase evidently expresses St Paul’s personal experience during noetic prayer in the heart. It is a movement of the Holy Spirit within one’s heart accompanied by inexpressible sighs, a spiritual experience full of activity. The Christian’s spiritual maturity and his adoption according to grace is not simply a matter of formal participation in the Sacraments. It is

participation in the Holy Spirit, which is confirmed by the prayer of the nous in the heart.

The Apostle Paul affirms: “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). Of course, someone can repeat the name of Jesus Christ with his mouth and in his mind without having the Holy Spirit in his heart. This passage, however, clearly refers to noetic prayer in the heart, which cannot be prayed without the Holy Spirit, because it is through the Holy Spirit that the nous descends into the heart. The Apostle refers to noetic prayer elsewhere as well. A classic passage is:

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding [*nous* in Greek]. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding [*nous*]” (1 Cor. 14:15).

The terms *spirit* and *nous* in this passage from the Epistles have not yet taken on the meanings that we find later in the patristic tradition. Here *nous* denotes the mind or reason, and *spirit* denotes the Holy Spirit, Who prays in man’s heart. The important thing is, however, that here the two ways of worship are defined: the worship that someone offers in his reason, and the worship offered by the Holy Spirit in the heart.

There is a close link between the mouth and the heart, and this is how salvation is accomplished. The heart and the mind and mouth are interconnected.

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Rom. 1:8).

It is in this context that God’s name is invoked and salvation is achieved.

“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Noetic prayer is being filled with the Holy Spirit; it is spiritual intoxication of another order. The Apostle Paul urges Christians:

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19).

The hesychast who practises noetic prayer of the heart prays in the depths of his heart with the energy of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives inspiration, and the human being uses psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to express his love for God. This is true noetic worship with hymns given by the Holy Spirit, which man listens to inwardly. This is a spiritual intoxication comparable with physical intoxication from drinking wine.

The prayer of the nous in the heart, which is the action of the Holy Spirit in the depths of the heart, is an authentic characteristic of all real Christians who have reached spiritual maturity.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:16-24).

The will of God is continuous joy, prayer without ceasing, and thanksgiving for everything. In this spiritual state prayer is not interrupted by physical movement or necessary work. It is also God’s will that we should not quench the charisma of the Holy Spirit that we received with the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation. There is an inner warmth of love, light that melts and illumines the heart and is expressed through noetic prayer in the heart. This spiritual gift should not be extinguished. This requires a struggle to abstain from every kind of evil, to distinguish between good and bad, and to keep only what is good.

Here we have a very clear definition of the ascetic life of baptised Christians, in order that the charisma they received may be activated. Noetic prayer in the heart is confirmation and verification of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the human being. It entails complete sanctification and a spiritual struggle to preserve “your whole spirit, soul, and body...blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This certainly does not mean that man is made up of three parts, as he is composed of soul and body, but the spirit is the charisma, the gift of the Holy Spirit that he received at Baptism and Chrismation. Soul, body and this gift must be kept “blameless” until the Second Coming of Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit must remain in man to sanctify his soul and body. Nothing is given by the Sacraments alone, without ascetic practice and the action of God’s grace.

Consequently, anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit activated within his heart – which is confirmed by noetic prayer – does not belong to Christ and is not really a member of Christ’s Body. St Paul’s words are clear:

“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Rom. 8:10).

By contrast, those who have the Holy Spirit within them are alive and belong to Christ.

“Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11).

g) Carnal and Spiritual Man

Through the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation the Christian becomes a member of the Body of the Christ, a member of the Church. This is accomplished through the energy of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, the energy of the Father, the energy of Christ and the energy of the Holy Spirit are not different things: the energy of the Holy Trinity is shared and is offered through the Three Persons. The Father sent His Son into the world, the Son became man, and His incarnation came about through the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit one is also incorporated into the Church, and through the Holy Spirit Christ is formed within him and the Father is glorified.

The Apostle Paul emphasises this truth in many passages, a few of which will be cited.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:9-10).

When Christ dwells in a human being, his body is unable to sin, because it shares in the deifying energy of God, and, on the other hand, his spirit or soul is alive through righteousness. This refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in man. The presence of the Holy Spirit in someone prevents him from living in a carnal way, according to the desires of the passions and the worldly and carnal mentality, and makes him live “in the Spirit”. This Spirit is called the “Spirit of Christ”, because He is sent by Christ. Consequently, “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” He does not belong to Christ and, by extension, he is not a living member of the Church of Christ. St Paul says this to baptised Christians, which means that, when a Christian does not have the Holy Spirit acting within him, which is expressed through noetic prayer in the heart, he is not a living member of the Church.

Christians, therefore, are divided into carnal and spiritual. These two terms are of major significance in the teaching of the Apostle Paul.

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

The Corinthians to whom he sent this Epistle, particularly those who were causing problems in the Church, were carnal and behaving like ordinary people,

according to the mentality and aspirations of carnal human beings. They are therefore characterised as “babes in Christ”, and were not spiritual people. Someone who is spiritual, who has the Holy Spirit, is a mature, perfect Christian; someone who is carnal is an infant, who needs milk and not solid foods. Signs of being carnal are the various passions that express themselves, such as envy, strife and divisions.

Someone who is carnal does not have the Holy Spirit within him. He thinks in a carnal way, and this is spiritual death and enmity towards God. On the contrary, someone who has the Holy Spirit within him, praying in His heart, is spiritual and thinks in a spiritual way.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:5-6).

Christians who are members of the Body of Christ are spiritual people, and they do not have carnal desires.

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

The Apostle Paul does not have a dualistic outlook, which distinguishes between the soul that is naturally immortal and the body that is naturally mortal. In his Epistles he makes the distinction between the carnal and spiritual human being. Someone who is carnal does not have the Holy Spirit. The carnal man is also referred to as ‘natural’ (*psychikos* in Greek, meaning ‘of the soul’).

“But the natural [*psychikos*] man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one” (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

The human body is both natural and spiritual.

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Cor. 15:44-49).

By the power of Christ, the natural human body becomes spiritual, and the human being is no longer earthy and natural, but spiritual and heavenly. His whole psychosomatic constitution is transformed. Starting from now he has a foretaste of this in Christ, but he will live it fully at Christ's Second Coming.

h) Purification, Illumination and Glorification

According to the Apostle Paul, the ascetic and hesychastic life is connected with the course of man's regeneration, which is characterised as purification, illumination and glorification (perfection). These concepts are found in the teaching of the Apostle Paul with the same, but also synonymous, words and meanings.

Purification is a precondition for holiness.

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

Defilement comes from distancing oneself from God, in which case both body and soul are defiled. Through purification man acquires holiness, and is characterised by the fear of God. However, the task of purification is accomplished by divine grace and man's collaboration.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Tit. 2:11-14).

Purification is something negative, the rejection of ungodliness and worldly desires, and it leads the human being to a positive course of action, the experience of chastity, righteousness and godliness. This stage is indispensable for the vision of the “glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is a vision of the glory of God, a vision of the uncreated Light, which the deified live indistinctly in this life and will behold in glory at the Second Coming of Christ.

After purification comes illumination of the heart, which chases away the darkness.

“For it is the God Who commanded light to shine out of darkness, Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [or person] of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Christians must offer “by the mercies of God...a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [their] reasonable service,” by offering their bodies. And they must “be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind [*nous* in Greek]” (Rom. 12:1-2).

The reference to illumination is not symbolic, sentimental or imaginary, but real. When man’s heart is purified, it is illuminated by the uncreated Light of God, which orientates man towards the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God. St Paul, having had this experience, speaks about the enlightened eyes of the heart.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding [‘heart’ in Greek] being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:17-18).

With these enlightened eyes man sees God’s glory, and then what is perfect comes and does away with what is “in part”.

“For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:9-10).

The human being becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Holy Spirit is in the hearts of those who have been baptised and chrismated as though on a Holy Table, and their bodies are His temple. In that temple, in both spirit and body, God should be glorified by purity and unceasing prayer. As a temple of the Holy Spirit, the human being does not belong to himself but to Christ, Who redeemed him with His blood. This is a matter of the complete dedication of the soul and body of the baptised and chrismated Christian to God.

The temple of the Holy Spirit is contrasted with the temple of idols.

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Cor. 6:16).

When someone has the Holy Spirit, he is a living temple of God in which God lives and walks, so he is different from Gentile idolaters. This expression “walk among”

denotes the inner movements of God's grace, the inner leaps of the reborn new man, the movement of man's love for God. This communion with God is called justification and glorification.

“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

The course of man's regeneration is connected with God's Light, and with the illumination of the heart by God's grace, whereas the course of man's fall is linked with darkness. The darkness of the passions and sin is the absence of God's Light: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Sin does not have a legal or ethical meaning, but it is the lack of God's grace, the failure to see God's Light. The illumination of the heart is the presence of God as Light. This is man's justification and deification, which brings peace without limit:

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2).

Justification is connected with faith in Christ and the hope of the glory of God, the Light of God. This state brings peace.

Purification, illumination and glorification show man's path towards communion with God. This is essential, because, if someone is not cleansed, he will experience God as fire. This is why Christ said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” and “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:4-8).

Inwardly, however, there is also another journey to God, which is the coming of divine grace, the withdrawal of divine grace, and its coming afresh. One sees the uncreated divine Light. God is revealed in all His glory, and then, on account of one's weakness and by God's dispensation, this divine grace reduces, to return at the right time. These fluctuations of divine grace are actually characterised as “the chastening of the Lord”. The Apostle Paul expounds this in his Epistle to the Hebrews, since the Christians of Jewish origin had tasted God's grace and believed in Christ, but, because they were facing temptations, they felt life was bereft of consolation. St Paul had experienced this in his own life, and it happens in Christian life.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to

renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6).

The Christians had been illumined through Baptism and Chrismation. They had seen, to varying degrees, the light of God, and they had tasted the gift of the Holy Spirit, the word of God and eternal life. The loss of this life is a fall, and a re-crucifixion of Christ. Of course, when this withdrawal of grace comes about on account of personal sin it is not the same as when it is due to the God’s dispensation. In any case, St Paul suggests to the Christians of Jewish origin that they should recall the days of illumination.

“But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings” (Heb. 10:32).

In such cases, God’s grace is not actually removed, but it is temporarily reduced in order that man’s freedom may express itself in action.

“‘For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Heb. 12:6-8).

God’s chastening is for our benefit, “that we may be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:10). Therefore, Christians should bear God’s chastening patiently, so that they may acquire greater grace. It is important, however, for Christians to take particular care not to fall into despair and despondency when they find themselves in this state of the lessening or withdrawal of God’s grace.

“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3).

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed” (Heb. 12:12-13).

Christians who have been united with Christ must continually grow in the Christian life. They must share in Christ’s holiness and bear the Lord’s chastening, in order to be shown in practice to be “sons” of God, and not “illegitimate”.

When the human being in Christ reaches glorification, deification and the vision of the divine Light, he acquires the faith that comes from theoria. Starting from the faith that comes from hearing he arrives at the faith that comes from theoria. This faith transcends death and is victorious over life’s difficulties. It is the vision of God and

communion with Him. St Paul's hymn of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to the faith that comes from theoria. It gives the definition of faith.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

The faith that comes from theoria is the substances of things hoped for; it is not something imaginary, sentimental or ethical, but Christ Himself. This can be confirmed and checked, because it is preceded by purification of the heart.

This substantial faith that comes from theoria helped the saints to face all difficulties, and even to overcome death.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:33-38).

Illumination and glorification are the heights of the spiritual life, and it is through this spiritual state that the new covenant, man's upward ascent to the “city that is to come”, can be interpreted.

i) Worship and Rest

Unceasing worship is offered to God in heaven, at the celestial altar, in the Church of the firstborn in heaven. This is true worship. Heavenly glory is the true festal gathering, which we savour within the Church.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb.12:22-23).

Old Testament worship was given by God to Moses. God determined how it should be performed, and the priests performed the sacrifices in accordance with God's instruction to Moses.

“There are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’” (Heb. 8:4-5).

Worship in the Old Testament, which was laid down by the law, was a shadow of the heavenly things, which are the true reality.

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect” (Heb. 10:1)

Worship on earth is a copy of heavenly things and a shadow of uncreated worship.

“Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:23-24).

Christ entered this heavenly tabernacle, the uncreated tabernacle, with the human nature that He took from His All-Holy Mother.

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11-12).

If on Mount Sinai the Word gave Moses the law and the commandment to construct the tabernacle that is made with hands and to organise worship, thus contracting the first covenant with man, the incarnate Word has now given a new kind of worship and contracted a new covenant with man, within his heart.

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Heb. 8:6).

The prophecy of Jeremiah the Prophet was fulfilled in Christ:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all

shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Heb. 8:10-12).

Now worship is offered in the place of the heart, in the purified conscience. The law of God is written there and unceasing service is offered to God. The living God is worshipped there, in the pure conscience.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:14-15).

We are urged to take part in such inner worship, which is an entry into the Holy of Holies. Under the old covenant the High Priest entered once a year into the Holy of Holies of the Temple, but now, under the new covenant, Christians enter the true Holy of Holies, which is the deification of man in the deified flesh of the Word.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

The new worship of the new covenant is inseparably linked with “rest”, sacred hesychia, and noetic worship and prayer. Just as God “rested from all His works” after creating the world, so we too must enter into the divine rest, sacred hesychia, which is connected with peace of thoughts and noetic prayer.

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11).

In the Old Testament God rested on the seventh day of creation, the Sabbath, and in the same way those who belong to God ought to keep the Sabbath, to rest from their own works. This refers to holy hesychasm, sacred hesychia, and peace of thoughts, so that prayer can be offered.

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His” (Heb. 4:9-10).

Worship and Sabbath rest, the entry into the Holy of Holies, sacred hesychia and holy rest are interconnected. This is spiritual worship, which is not a shadow of heavenly things, but the image of the true, uncreated tabernacle not made with hands, which is the glory of God and the uncreated Light.

j) The “Inner Man”

The Apostle Paul refers three times in his Epistles to the “inner man”. This refers to the spiritual movement and activity that takes place within the place of the heart, the birth of a new man in the depths of the human being. Apart from the senses and reason, which extend outwards, there is another life in the depth of man’s heart.

In his Epistle to the Romans St Paul refers to the inner delight that he feels in the law of God:

“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man” (Rom. 7:22).

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians the life of the outer man, which is connected with the body and creation, is contrasted with the life of the inner man, which relates to the heart and is constantly renewed:

“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he prays that the Christians may be perfected according to the inner man:

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:14-17).

It is clear here that the inner man is the place of the heart, where Christ should dwell through faith. This will come about through the riches of God’s glory and His Light, through the Holy Spirit.

The inner man is the man of grace, who rejoices, exults, leaps and glorifies God, and who becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, however, he may also feel desolate, empty and cold because God is not present.

Many changes and variations take place in “the inner man of the heart”, because it is there that the Christian’s spiritual progress develops, and there he senses his spiritual regeneration. The reason and the senses are usually described as the outward

man, the man of natural wisdom, which is often demonic. The inner man, by contrast, belongs to God, when someone gives himself wholly to Him. This renewal of the inner man of the heart is clearly visible in the first five chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

The Apostle Paul begins by referring to the seal of the Holy Spirit that Christians have received.

“Now He Who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee [*arrabon* ‘betrothal’ or ‘pledge’]” (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

This is a certainty of faith, which evidently came through the Sacrament of Chrismation, but certainly through the personal revelation of God to mankind. This sure faith is given to the hearts of Christians by Christ, Who is true, and is established “with you”, in other words, with the Christians’ response. It is an anointing and a seal of the pledge of the Holy Spirit. The human being communes with God in the place of the heart, and this is a prelude to the spiritual marriage that will follow. Consequently, this anointing and seal of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of the spiritual life. The fact that anointing and a seal are mentioned means that this is something visible to the human being, something that he perceives. It is the sense of God’s life that becomes certain through noetic prayer, as is clear from all the passages from St Paul cited earlier.

The Apostle Paul describes this life of the pledge of the Holy Spirit in the heart as a living letter.

“You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

The message from St Paul to the Corinthians is written through the Holy Spirit within their hearts; it is visible to all and is read by all. The word of God is not merely written on stone tablets, as it was in the Old Testament, but is written on tablets of flesh, in the very heart of man. St Paul is not speaking here about the reason, but the heart, because it is there that all love is expressed as a heartfelt experience and as intense longing for God. The heart is the living tablet, and the ink is the energy of the Holy Spirit. This inner life becomes known to everyone as a fragrance of knowledge.

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:14-15).

Because the Apostle Paul had referred to the law of the old covenant, which was given to Moses “on tablets of stone”, he reminds them that the Israelites were unable to see the glory of Moses’ face, when he came down from Mount Sinai, and they asked him to put a veil over his face. He asserts that this veil continues to exist to this day in the hearts of the Israelites when they read Moses, as they do not accept the incarnation of Christ, Who abolishes the veil. However, it is not the same with Christians. God triumphs in the regenerated human being. This is expressed in other ways as well.

“But we all, with unveiled face [*prosopon* ‘face’ or ‘person’], beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

This is a very significant passage. The Apostle Paul is speaking about the veil on the face and the unveiled face. The veil on the face of people today is linked with the covering over the heart, and consequently the removal of the veil is the illumination of the heart. This is the seal of the pledge of the Holy Spirit in the heart. An interpretation is given here of what the *prosopeion* ‘veil’ or ‘mask’ is, and what the *prosopon* ‘person’ or ‘face’ is according to St Paul. It concerns the difference between hardening of the heart and the seal of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The person here is not interpreted in philosophical terms or through social or philosophical speculations, but through the experience of the Holy Spirit in the heart. If the Holy Spirit is not in the heart, the veil or the mask is there.

The Apostle Paul also refers to another experience of the uncovered face or person, linking it to the reflection of God’s glory. Man is created in God’s image, and His image is the mirror in which God’s Light is reflected. The vision of the uncreated Light comes about from within, through the heart. This vision is man’s transfiguration, which is endless, because it continues “from glory to glory.”

In this spiritual state the Light shines in the heart, and the human being reaches deification and acquires true theology, which is the knowledge “of the glory of God in the face [*prosopon* ‘person’] of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The human being is a person, not simply because he has freedom and reason, and thinks freely, but because he activates the ‘hypostatic principle’ in his heart. The person is closely linked with the anointing and seal of the pledge of the Spirit in the heart, with ridding the heart of the veil of the passions, and with continuous transformation from glory to glory. It is connected with the vision of God’s Light. The person-hypostasis is man’s journey of regeneration from the pledge of the Spirit to the vision of God’s glory. The Epistle to the Hebrews writes:

“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence [*hypostasis* in Greek] steadfast to the end” (Heb. 3:14).

The “beginning of the hypostasis” must be preserved to the end, in order that we may share in Christ. This comes about through man’s rebirth, which is not something static but dynamic. Man’s journey of regeneration and divine vision is unending, which is why the Apostle writes: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). As long as we live in this world, our body still expresses mortality and liability to suffering, but the inner man is renewed and constantly regenerated.

In this context reference is made to “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”, to our sighs, because we still live in the mortal body, but also to our longing “to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven”, “that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” For this reason, “we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:1-8).

The renewal of the human being in God’s Light develops theological love, which is the uncreated energy of God that deifies man. St Paul feels so united with Christ that he proclaims:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

Nothing can separate the human being from Christ’s love. Ultimately, this love is divine love, God’s deifying energy, not emotional love. It is the love that “never fails” (1 Cor. 13:8), and has all the characteristics described by St Paul in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. All other human loves change, but God’s deifying love never fails.

Consequently, if we read the first five chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians carefully, we find that they begin with anointing, the seal and pledge of the Spirit in man’s heart, and they conclude with the vision of the glory of God, man’s deification – deification of body and soul – and the experience of heavenly reality. The Apostle Paul confesses:

“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, Who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 5:5).

This is St Paul's experience. This is how he sensed his own spiritual rebirth and how he guided the Christians of Corinth and the Christians of all the Churches. This was the basis of the ecclesiastical life of all Christians, unmarried and married, clergy and laity, in the first Church. St Paul had experience of beholding God, not fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12). In this context he spoke about the "new creation", which is man's reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, and he exhorts the Corinthians: "We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

k) Man's Appearance before Christ at His Second Coming

In all his Epistles, the Apostle Paul speaks about the coming of Christ and man's appearing before Him to be judged. It will be a day of glory, the "epiphany" of our Lord Jesus Christ. An important passage by the Apostle on this subject reads as follows:

"[This is] manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:5-10).

In this passage Christ's appearance at the Second Coming is described as a day, but also as a revelation. It will be a day in comparison with the darkness of the present life, and a revelation, because Christ will be revealed in glory, accompanied by angels. This manifestation of Christ in glory reveals Christ as true day. This light-filled state, the appearance of Christ in His Light, as also occurred at His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, is the Kingdom of God.

Mention is also made of the "righteous judgment of God", and recompense to human beings, depending on the struggle they waged in their lives. God's righteous judgement is meted out according to the human being's spiritual state, so people will see Christ in two ways. Those who did not know God in their lives and did not obey the gospel of Christ will see Him "in flaming fire" that will consume them, on account of their impure hearts. People in this category will suffer eternal destruction "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." On the contrary, those who knew God and obeyed the commandments and the gospel of Christ will be glorified

together with Christ, as it says, “when He comes...to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.” Being glorified together with Him means sharing in His glory, His uncreated Light, and His Kingdom.

At the Second Coming of Christ, therefore, people will perceive God either as “flaming fire” or as “glorious Light”, depending on their spiritual state when they were living their biological life. This is the aim of the ascetic and hesychastic tradition and of the sacramental life of the Church. Christians are not distinguished from other religions by different cultural factors, but by a life of regeneration. This clearly shows the great value of the sacramental and ascetic life and, of course, of the hesychastic tradition, which is an essential prerequisite for experiencing the mystery of Christ’s Cross and Resurrection, both in the Mysteries of the Church and in the whole ecclesiastical life.

Epilogue

In his Epistle to the Colossians the Apostle Paul, addressing those who have been baptised, advises:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-2).

Through Baptism and Chrismation Christians have died to the world, and Christ lives in the depths of their hearts:

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

They should, therefore, seek the things that are above, Christ in glory, Who is seated on the right hand of the Father, and should set their mind on heavenly, not earthly, things. Elsewhere St Paul says:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).

Those who live in God’s Light starting from this life, although for the present they have Christ hidden in their hearts, will be manifested then in His glory:

“When Christ Who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

At His Second Coming, Christ “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21).

Those who have been baptised, but who do not live in the perspective of this Sacrament, who feel that their citizenship is not in heaven but on earth, and who do not live within the ascetic and hesychastic tradition, which is experience of the mystery of the Christ's Cross and Resurrection, are enemies of Christ's Cross. Such people exist even among those who have been baptised. St Paul says bitterly:

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19).

The Christian senses the transience of this world, since all material things will pass away. God will shake the earth and the heaven, but the Kingdom of God, which is unshakable, will remain.

“‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb. 12:26-27).

Dwelling in this world, we ought to regard it as a gift from God to us, but above all we should look towards the Kingdom that cannot be shaken. And not only to look forward to it, but to enjoy it in advance through the true worship that takes place in the heart through God's uncreated grace.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29).

The search for this Kingdom, which is God's glory, and participation in the divine Light make the human being move towards God and depart from the things of this world, even if this brings reproach.

“Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13).

We live in this world and dwell in created homelands, but we look for the “city to come” not a “continuing” city.

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:14-15).

The human being in Christ ought not only to seek heavenly things above, but also to set his mind on heavenly things, to seek the glory of Christ. Our life is hidden in

Christ through Baptism and keeping Christ's commandments, and it will appear in His glory.

“When Christ Who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

The aspiration of Christians is for their life to be hidden in Christ's life, and for it to be revealed in Christ's glory, in the uncreated divine Light, during the experience of divine vision and at the Second Coming.

This is the Apostle Paul's teaching on the Christian ascetic and sacramental life of Christians. When we read his letters, we realise that St Paul was a great theologian, ascetic and hesychast. He lived the mystery of Christ's Cross and Resurrection, and he experienced and expressed the Church's hesychastic theology, which characterised all the members of the Church.

There are, nevertheless, some people who assert that hesychasm is a later movement within the Church. They refer to the “post-patristic era”, and allege that we must detach ourselves from the teachings of the Fathers, because they lived in an era that was different from our own. This is very dangerous for the Church, and could wreck the life and teaching of the Church. Those who support such theories ought to accept that they must also reach a “post-apostolic” era, and ignore the words of the holy Apostles, particularly of the Apostle Paul, for the sake of speculative and aesthetic theology.

Those, however, who have the Spirit of God and a sense of ecclesiastical life are well aware that, if they wish to be saved, they must belong to the saints who live within the Light. This is our own inheritance and our own goal.

“With joy giving thanks to the Father Who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col. 1:12).

All who live outside this reality not actually living on the path of salvation. They are byways off the main road, and they obviously put their own salvation at risk, as well as leading astray those wishing to be saved.