

## Amsterdam Lectures 2011-12:

### Eastern Orthodox Theology: a Personal Introduction

#### Lecture VI: Being Human – Being in the Image of God – Becoming God.

##### **Human kind in the Image of God:**

(reference to article by Th. Camelot OP, 'La théologie de l'image de Dieu', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* XL (1956), 443 ff.)

Biblical references to the doctrine: Gen. 1:26–8; 5:1–2; Wisd. 2:23; Sir. 17:3; 1 Cor. 11:7. Christ as the Image of God: [Wisdom as image: Wisd. 7:26] 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15. Image used in relation to our transformation into Christ: Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:20. Cf. also: 1 John 3:2.

Image and Likeness: *eikon* and *homoiosis*. Both key terms in Greek philosophy, especially Platonic philosophy. Note: *homoiosis* suggests a process, a process of likening, assimilation. *Phyge de homoiosis theo kata to dynaton* – 'flight [from the world] is assimilation to God so far as is possible' (*Thaet.* 176a).

Image – something seen – role of sight as analogy of knowing – a 'contemplative' understanding of what it is to be human.

Meaning of being in the image:

- Being rational (*nous*) and possessing free will
- Reflecting in our rule over nature God's rule over the universe

More fundamentally, especially in the Greek Fathers:

- Christ is the Image
- Human beings are created *kat' eikona*, according to the image, which is Christ; we are models of the image, orientated towards Christ in accordance with whom we have been created
- Not simply a matter of the soul, or nous (intellect); for we only know Christ in the Incarnation, so in some way we were created in accordance with the Incarnate Christ. In some way the body is involved in what is meant by being in the image
- Parallel between *Eikon* (Christ) – *kat' eikona*, and *Logos* – *logikos* ('rational'). And remember the manifold meaning contained in the Greek word *logos*: reason, word, meaning, principle

Being *kat' eikona* is enshrined in the Byzantine Greek phrase 'the "according to the Image"': as in the apolytikion for St Mary of Egypt:

In you, Mother, was preserved unimpaired that which is according to the image (τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα); for you took up the Cross and followed Christ, and by your deeds you have taught us to despise the flesh, for it passes away, but to care for the soul, which is a thing immortal. And therefore your spirit, holy Mary, rejoices with the Angels.

**Fundamental meaning of being in the image:** being created to relate to God through Christ, his Image: it means being created with a *capacity for prayer*.

Gen. 1:27: 'And God made man, according to the image of God he made him; male and female he made them'

Him/them: one/many: person/community or communion

Both being persons and being in communion are fundamental to our Christian understanding of what it is to be human. We are neither human nature divided into individuals, nor individuals grouped together in a single human nature.

The 'archetypal cleft of sex' (Amy Clampitt).

The nature of human community/the nature of the Church, as the community of restored humanity.

*Sobornost* – togetherness. Notion (not term) developed by Slavophiles, Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky (early 19<sup>th</sup> century). *Soborny*: adjective used to translate 'catholic' in the Slavonic translation of the Creed; *sobor*: Slavonic/Russian word for council, [public] church (often misleadingly translated 'cathedral').

St Maximos the Confessor:

For many and of nearly boundless number are the men, women and children who are distinct from one another and vastly different by birth and appearance, by race and language, by way of life and age, by opinions and skills, by manners and customs, by pursuits and studies, and still again by reputation, fortune, characteristics and habits: all are born into the Church and through it are reborn and recreated in the Spirit. To all in equal measures it gives and bestows one divine form and designation: to be Christ's and to bear his name. (Mystagogy 1)

Khomiakov:

We know that those among us who fall, fall by themselves, but that no one is saved alone. Those who are saved are saved in the Church as her members and in unity with all her other members. (*The Church is One*)