

# The Glory of the 'Byzantine'-Ottoman Continuum



# The Glory of the 'Byzantine'-Ottoman Continuum:

*Romanity, God's Neighbourhood  
on Earth*

By

Christos Retoulas

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*Nasche un greco, nasche un turco*  
(When a Greek is born, a Turk is born)  
—Corsair Proverb, 17<sup>th</sup> century AD Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>

Ὅπου πατεῖ Τουρκος εἶναι Ρωμιοσύνη  
(Wherever a Turk may step, there is Romanity<sup>2</sup>)  
[to understand this and Romanity in general, one must be]  
Ῥωμαῖος (a Roman<sup>3</sup>)  
—Greek MP Georgios Typaldos-Iakovatos (1814-1882 AD)

The best Greeks are the Turks<sup>4</sup>.  
—Professor Dimitris Kitsikis (1935-2021 AD)

The current Greek race is not the same as the ancient one. How could it even be that the Greeks of the time of the warriors against Persia were the same race as the pre-Homeric Greeks? With all its admixtures, the Greek soul was preserved quite similar to its original form... All in all, understand, O Romans!!!, that your race is new. Should this fact, i.e., that your race is new, give you strength? You have no one to blame if you do not realise that its admixture with other races is a good sign for its expected advancement. If your teachers pervert and make you weakly, smother them and open your eyes, O blind ones!  
See what is really taking place...<sup>5</sup>  
—Ion Dragoumis (1878-1920 AD)

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<sup>1</sup> A proverb circulating among Mediterranean corsairs in the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD. (In Kafadar 2007, 14, quoting from, Weiss, Gillian. “Back from Barbary: Captivity, Redemption and French Identity in the 17th- and 18th-Century Mediterranean.” PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Typaldos-Iakovatos 1982, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Typaldos-Iakovatos 1982, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Kitsikis 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In his 1911 book, *Ὅσοι Ζωντανοί* [*All Who are still Alive*], relating to his staying in İstanbul/Konstantiniyye/Constantinople.

Yet the Balkan and Asia Minor states enjoy great affinity with one another, more than our fanatical upbringing and education let us think. Generation after generation, our forefathers mixed and met in a way that, no matter how you classify us, [e.g.,] according to nations or states, [and] within each one of those classifications (there) are different anthropological types, yet you can easily distinguish us from the other Europeans or Asians. Generation after generation, our ancestors lived as subjects of the same state, the Byzantine one, for a thousand or more years; what is now the Ottoman one. So, we have so many common civilisational elements, that all together our different civilisations constitute a single civilisation type within the overall civilisation of the world.

—Greek Officer Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis, early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Souliotis-Nikolaidis 1984, 61.

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<sup>1</sup> “Yunan Profesör Dimitris Kitsikis ile Türk-Yunan Konfederasyonu ve Tarihi Hakkında Röportaj.” Wights of Salem. February 2, 2021. Accessed June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Video, 1:32:50, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLacvpaVdOI>.

gratitude goes to the late Professor Eustratios Zenginīs (1938-2020 AD) for all his critical support on the embarkation of my studies.

The foundations of what is novel in my approach to the subject, via the various *theorias* and concepts, had already been established by 2003. In 2011, they stood the test of scholarly approval by two of the most important persons in the field of Islam in general: the renowned scholar of Sufism, Professor Victoria Holbrook, someone who I hold pre-eminently and exceptionally dear, and, my second examiner at Oxford, the former President of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Professor Francis Robinson.

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Being a spiritual guide of enormous love and *diakrisis* (discernment of spiritual states), my love, submission and respect are also reserved for the late Protopresbyter Ioannis Keramitzis (1936-2021 AD) of the Church of Saint George and Saint Anargyroi of Makrygianni.

This is a book the core of which is occupied by my relevant DPhil thesis at the University of Oxford (1999-2003). Interestingly, in the very early 2000s, books concerning Akbarian theology and the presence of *tasavvuf* in the core Ottoman lands were in extreme scarcity, even in Turkish. And this

while the Roman Ottoman Empire was *the vahdet-i viücud tasavvuf* country par excellence for most of its existence!!! – that would be partially changed with the emergence of Ottoman Islamism from around 1750 AD onwards. The mechanics of this folly was a blinding essentially Western-imposed dichotomy of a (supposedly) anti-Islamic militantly secular Atatürkism vs. a (supposedly) all-comprehensively-religious Islamism as the sole monopolist representative of Islam – a conceptual schema imposed after Atatürk's death in 1938 when unconditional Westernisation and its concomitant Islamism had started to take official root in Turkey. It focused on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century image of the Ottoman Empire, a period of Frankish-afflicted de-Romanising semi-colonisation, external and internal. Indeed, the road of Roman epistemology in the study of Islam and Turkish secularism that I have come to take has been and still is a very steep and risky uphill struggle which nevertheless bore much fruit in the end – Thank God!!! It entailed the augmentation of perception by fulfilling the 'either... or...' relationship into a 'both... and...' one without exterminating the former. What this meant in the end, you will apprehend if you stay till the end, from its *archē* to its *telos*. Nowadays, I am pleased to see that about 15 years after my establishment of the 'Byzantine'-Ottoman Continuum of Ecumenical Romanity upon the large commensurability between Orthodox Christianity and *vahdet-i viücud* Islam in the early 2000s, specific research in the field of Ottoman Islam has - since the mid-2010s - been pointing to directions beyond mere epistemological instrumentality. A sign of such hope can be seen in the mainstreamisation of the term, *Rūmi* in reference to the Ottomans, especially in themes of identity (religious, geographical, cultural, etc.) For example, in his doctoral dissertation (2016), *The Road from Damascus: Circulation and the Redefinition of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, 1620-1720*, Nir Shafir talks about the religious and cultural exchange between the Rumis and the Arabs. May one day it will be translated as what it is: *Roman*!!!

Concerning publication, I would like to thank my publisher, Cambridge Scholars Publishing for the enormous patience and understanding in the long years for the actual preparation of this book. In this field, my thanks also go to Andromachi Vayena for her meticulous adaptation of an initial text to its present publishable form as well as to Nikolaos Katsatsos. Spyridon Melas of Kazan University proved instrumentally relentless in the downsizing an initial Bibliography of nearly 1800 entries to its present state (about half its original size) as well as in the complex task of selecting, harmonising and compiling the book's Index – his overall contribution included also few but worth-mentioning points pertaining to dogmatics. May God (ap)prove him a worthy researcher of Saint Dionysius the

Aeropagitis and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī al-Ḥātimī.

I left for the archical *telos*, Georgios Soupionis who has remained a constant and unshakable presence and interlocutor in my endeavours concerning Ecumenical Romanity and His Life *Supra*. May God bless him and all that is his in thought and deed.

May the ZOË keep aeonian·ly in HIS Memory  
the contribution of young Zoë,  
who has recently walked into HIS Realm.

Christos Retoulas  
October 28 & 29, 2023

## READING GUIDE

“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,<sup>1</sup>  
says the Lord.

Love the sinners but hate their works<sup>2</sup>;  
and do not look down upon them for their defects,  
lest you be tried in the same manner...  
Force yourself when you meet  
your fellow human being to honor them  
beyond their measure.  
Kiss their hands and feet, and hold them  
many times with much honor, and put them  
upon your eyes and praise them for the virtues they do not have.  
And when you go away from them, then say whatever good and honorable  
there is about them<sup>3</sup>.

Whoever asks you what you believe in,  
Kiss their hands and feet,  
Show them the answer.  
Yunus, a straight way seems right for you.  
Join with Truth now, resurrect with Truth<sup>4</sup>.

A perfected one in love, having reached the outmost/innermost of  
impassibility, knows no difference between what is of himself or another,  
or of herself or another, between a believer and an unbeliever, between a  
slave and a free man, or not at all between male and female; but having  
him/her become *supra* the tyranny of the passions and looking lovingly to

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 32:35. The majority of Old Testament quotes are primarily from *The Koren Jerusalem Bible*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers 1989 (KJB) (Hebrew/English). Otherwise, unless stated are from, *The Orthodox Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008 – as they are the New Testament ones (based on the New King James Version (TOSB) “Scripture taken from the New King James Version ®. Copyright© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”).

<sup>2</sup> Being them of the body, of the mind and/or of the human spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Isaac the Syrian (6<sup>th</sup> century AD) 2009, 178-179.

<sup>4</sup> Yunus Emre (c. 1240 – 1329 AD) 1989, 82.

the common human nature, he sees all people equally, and he/she makes himself/herself equally disposed to all. In him/her, there is neither Greek [(idolater)] nor Jew [(unbeliever)], neither male nor female, neither slave nor free man; but all is Christ and Christ is in all<sup>5</sup>.

When something goes wrong, accuse yourself first.  
Even the wisdom of Plato or Solomon can wobble and go blind.  
Listen when your crown reminds you of what makes you cold toward  
others, as you pamper the greedy energy inside<sup>6</sup>.

Let no one take and extract a bare part from our words,  
and, dividing it from the rest of what is written,  
he/she holds it in his/her hands foolishly<sup>7</sup>.

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662 AD), PG 90:993B.

<sup>6</sup> Rumi 2003, 191.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Isaac the Syrian in Saint Isaac the Syrian 1991, 304-305.

<sup>8</sup> Apostle John the Evangelist's *The Apocalypse/Uncovering* 6:9-11.



## PROLEGOMENOUS EPILOGUE

I am God,  
and there is no other besides me,  
declaring the last things first,  
before they happen, and at once they came to pass,  
and I said,  
“My whole plan shall stand, and I will do all the things I have planned,”  
calling a bird from the east and from a far country  
those concerning whom I have planned.  
I have spoken and brought it;  
I have created and made it.<sup>1</sup>

I am GOD,  
and there is none like me,  
declaring the end from the beginning,  
and from ancient times the things that  
are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall  
stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling  
an eagle from the east, the man that executes  
my counsel from a far country: I have spoken it,  
I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it.  
I will also do it.<sup>2</sup>

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by mighty power nor by strength, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘Who are you, O great mountain, to set this right [that thou shouldst stand erected (*τοῦ κατορθῶσαι*)] before the face of Zerubbabel? For I will bring forth the stone of the inheritance, its grace equaling My grace.’<sup>3</sup>

God is the Light of the heavens and earth. His Light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree from neither east nor west, whose

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<sup>1</sup> Esaias/Isaiah 46:9-11 (in Pietersma 2007, 860, translated by Moisés Silva).

<sup>2</sup> Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 46:9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Ζαχαρίας/Zachariah 4:6-7.

oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it – light upon light – God guides whoever He will to his Light<sup>4</sup>; God draws such comparisons for people; God has full knowledge of everything –shining out in houses of worship<sup>5</sup>.

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I *am* He who lives, and *was dead*, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”<sup>6</sup>

*Pseudomonas savastanoi* pv. *oleae* has been hitting the ecumenical olive groves for aeons - mercilessly. The noetic-cosmic altars of the world were not burning the golden virgin oil of the uncreated Being anymore: harlotrous smoky dazzle instead of feistily gladdening darkness, adulterous static-like movement instead of fidelious ever-moving stillness, repeatedly vacuous noise instead of all-encompassing sounding silence. To hear the fragrance, to see the voice, to touch the sweetness, to smell the caressing, to taste the light since

...all those who were deemed worthy in seeing with all their senses the All-Good [i.e., God affirmatively experienced via the uncreated *logoi*, the Divine Glory] and the *Supra*-All-Good [i.e., God negatively experienced (merely that He exists but not what He is at all)], the One Who is also Many, with the various senses as with one single sense, those who know the various goods of the One together as one in the various senses and by each one of them too, and they do not see them in [unbridgeable] separation, but they call the vision/*theoria*/seeing to be knowledge, and the knowledge they call

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<sup>4</sup> That Ligh is not a creature, not a created light for it is the uncreated divine Splendour/Glory/Energy.

<sup>5</sup> Koran 24:35 (in Haleem 2005, 223).

<sup>6</sup> Apostle John the Theologian, The Apocalypse/Unveiling 1:12-20, emphasis ours.

vision/*theoria*/seeing, and the hearing they call vision/theory/seeing and the vision/*theoria*/seeing they call hearing<sup>7</sup>

Was almost gone since gone almost was

“Stasis, or else, non-alterability in Christ [that] *supra*-natural state, the antechamber to and the steward within the uncreatedly energized Realm of God where exists “ever-moving stasis (for an unending enjoyment/receiving of things divine) and [ever-]resting motion (for an insatiable appetite for things divine)”<sup>8</sup> As such, it is a divine Gift. As uncreatedness begets uncreatedness energetically human nature does not leave its root as human – O! Great is the secret, the mystery of God's ways – but they are differentiatedly encompassed wholly as spirit, intellect, and body (the three ones), or else, as soul and body (the two ones) without contradictions and homogenization. The gift of adoption of createdness by Uncreatedness<sup>9</sup>.

Humanity lost inkling of all this – the adversary forces keep tumbling it in the mud of a proud mind and a peaking body. Yet

without the olive tree there can naturally be no genuine olive oil according to the truth. Without a vessel, the olive oil cannot be kept. And unless the lamp is fed with oil, its light will go out. ... without an inner state, like a vessel susceptible to it, no divine noetic meanings can be retained. Unless the Light of the Knowledge bestowed by God's Gifts is fed with [their] divine noetic meanings, it will go out!<sup>10</sup>.

Healing, then, has been as vitally urgent as it was poisonously salvific. For

Honey tastes bitter to the one who is sick<sup>11</sup>.

Death was crouching in all around but, through it, so was Life, if even only from a crack.

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006, in one of the hardest hit and most damaged hectares of the olive orchard, a former Professor of Theology addressed an audience at the University of Regensburg. He claimed to be – at least, by his own admission - a follower of the ‘*Anointed one, the One covered in olive oil*’, the *Κεχρισμένοσ Χριστός*, or else, the Christ. His *Lecture* was titled, *Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections*. Central

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<sup>7</sup> Saint Symeon the New Theologian 1988, 320-321 (Ethical Homily III:9).

<sup>8</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG 90:781C.

<sup>9</sup> Retoulas 2022, 185.

<sup>10</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG 90, 1340D.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Arabi (1165 -1240 AD) 1997, 164.

to his address was the theme of a destruction of a 'synthesis' which he called 'dehellenization':

The thesis that the critically purified Greek heritage forms an integral part of Christian faith has been countered by the call for a dehellenization of Christianity - a call which has more and more dominated theological discussions since the beginning of the modern age. Viewed more closely, three stages can be observed in the programme of dehellenization: although interconnected, they are clearly distinct from one another in their motivations and objectives.

According to this Frankish theologian, its first stage coincided with the Reformation and the late Western Middle Ages:

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which ultimately led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinate*.

For the German Professor, Protestant voluntarism essentially meant the ostracism of the Divine from human life:

God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as *logos* and, as *logos*, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf.

"The liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries", the theologian argued "ushered in a second stage in the process of dehellenization". As for its final third stage, it is still ongoing:

Before I draw the conclusions to which all this has been leading, I must briefly refer to the third stage of dehellenization, which is now in progress. In the light of our experience with cultural pluralism, it is often said nowadays that the synthesis with Hellenism achieved in the early Church was an initial inculturation which ought not to be binding on other cultures. The latter are said to have the right to return to the simple message of the New Testament prior to that inculturation, in order to inculturate it anew in their own particular milieux. This thesis is not simply false, but it is coarse and lacking in precision. The New Testament was written in Greek and bears the imprint of the Greek spirit, which had already come to maturity as the Old Testament developed. True, there are elements in the evolution of the early Church which do not have to be integrated into all cultures. Nonetheless, the fundamental decisions made about the relationship between

faith and the use of human reason are part of the faith itself; they are developments consonant with the nature of faith itself.

There is no doubt that the attempt to put Hellenity centre-stage in approaching Christianity was to a large degree refreshing – especially in the framework of the early 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western theology. Yet it would have been truly refreshing if it had not been internally and historically distorting as far as Christianity is concerned. The speaker: the head of *soi-disant* 'Roman Catholicism', Pope Benedict XVI – the German born, Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger (1927-1922 AD) - an expert on the thought-school of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD).

If, as the Pope of the Franks described it, this was roughly what could be said about the West's post-'dehellenization' theological quagmire, no doubt one should have to look at its (supposedly) 'Hellenized' period? For "dehellenization" to exist, it must have been preceded by some form of 'Hellenisation'. In the eyes of this preeminent Frankish theologian, Christianity, Hellenity, Romanity and their *Ecumene* were intrinsically interconnected in some form, albeit a specific one which incorporates secularity too:

This inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry was an event of decisive importance not only from the standpoint of the history of religions, but also from that of world history - it is an event which concerns us even today. Given this convergence, it is not surprising that *Christianity*, despite its origins and some significant developments in the East, *finally took on its historically decisive character in Europe*. We can also express this the other way around: this convergence, with the subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe.

And it is exactly at this critical point, i.e., circa 800 AD, where the West's apostasy from Christianity begins in earnest by way of that 'decisive character.'

The questions which emerge from the Pope's *Lecture* both in relation to his own creed as well as to its post-Reformation Western theological siblings are indeed multiple and inter-related. To begin with, was it that, as the Pope argues, while it initially emerged in the East, Christianity found its theological *telos* in the Pope's 'Europe', i.e., Western Frankish Europe? And, since 'Hellenisation' occupies such a central position in his argument, how true to the 'Hellenic-Roman heritage' was the character that Christianity took in the Frankish West later on? Did the Frankish West ever understand the Greek philosophers in this respect? In other words, to what

degree - if any – did the Pope’s argumentation correspond to the nature and history of Christianity in light of his own criteria?

At a more fundamental yet related level, can indeed Christianity be healthily subjected to thought categories like ‘development’ and ‘evolution’ in relation to the primordial dogmas of the ancient and ever-living Church? And, if yes, in what sense, and, most importantly, in what sense of ‘dogma’ as such? Under what meaning and to what degree is this mutuality between ‘HellenoRomanity’ and Christianity warranted? And finally, how can one deal with the question of Christianity and its enculturation with Hellenity in relation to other cultures? How is it even possible for a post-Reformation theologian to intellectually form the notion of the New Testament’s ‘simple message’ as such - let alone attempt to ‘retrieve’ its real meaning - without an antecedent to that enculturation with Hellenity? In other words, is the existence of the indeed essentialist notion of ‘a simple message’ in itself conditioned upon certain pre-existing categories present in modern Western (Frankish) thought? And if one sets out to enquire of Christianity and Hellenity in this perspective, what about that of Christianity in relation to Judaism as well? What about the enculturation vis-à-vis Judaism? In other words, what about the relation between Christianity and Judaic culture(s)? Does there likewise exist in Judaism this ‘simple message’ of the New Testament? For if post-Reformation Western theologians are entitled to form the notion of Christianity’s ‘simple message’ before and in counter-relation to Hellenity (which they perceive as an external factor to the former), undoubtedly the same question can be legitimately asked vis-a-vis Judaism (as an externality) as well. For if the participants themselves could do so unproblematically then no reason prevents us from doing likewise. No other than Apostle Paul sets both Judaism and Hellenity as being at odds with Christ – along with them both being concordant with Him:

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men<sup>12</sup>.

All these paths need to be walked upon before our journey reaches its *telos*... – alias, its true beginning, its real *archē*...

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

## Christianity: The Deep Heart of Romanity<sup>13</sup>

Apostasy (ἀποστασία, or ἀπόστασις) is a compound from Greek ἀπό- “apo, from, away from, far off” and ἵστημι (*istimi*, standing, standing still): a standing away from, a distancing. In its fullest theological meaning, apostasy means losing, standing away from, rejecting ontological *Stasis* (στάσις, standing still, stillness, *standing stone*). Without Stasis, you cannot proceed to that which comes μετά (*meta*, after), which results from ἐκ (*ek*, from) *Stasis*: Ἐκστασις (*Ec-Stasis*); Stasis, Silence/Hesychia, Stillness, Quietness, Rest, ἡσυχία, Κατάπαυση, Ἡσυχία: the prerequisite of all true being in the energetically uncreated *Supra* Realms of the Only Real Being; *Theosis*, or biblically, *Glorification*: you being with the only truly Uncreated One by nature, you as an uncreated one by uncreated energy/operation. Neither poisonous meditative ecstasy as theological *telos*, nor the fantasy of the mind and/or the body but true ecstasy in *theosis*:

A fantasy is a deceit of the eyes when the intellect is asleep.

A fantasy is an ecstasy of the *nous* when the body is awake.

A fantasy is a vision-*theoria* possessing no underlying reality<sup>14</sup>.

Neither nirvana-like pseudo-vacuums that are nothing but nests of the proudness-based created light of human created nature and energies and/or the dwelling of the demons appearing as light<sup>15</sup> nor the emptiness as they purposefully deceive by false appearance or stealth. For true ecstasy is not one outside the body but one moving towards the *nous*, i.e., the noetic heart in the body; without bodily Entrance into the Noetic/Intelligible Ocean, followed by noetic Entrance into the Cardiac Land of Silence, no one can proceed to the Cardiac Entrance into *Supraness*. From where human *autexousiotis* (αὐτεξουσιότης, not mere free-will but also free enactment) to right and wrong is a legitimate human prerogative by divine fiat, i.e., the Realm of physics and metaphysics, or else, the world of the knowledge of the Tree of Good and evil, to where human *autexousiotis* reigns supreme in the divine Realm of the Tree of Life that is the Theanthropos IC XC, the Realm of *Supraness*, the Domains of Uncreatedness. From physics and metaphysics, to *Supra* metaphysics and physics - the Life *supra*, Rumi (1207-1273 AD)'s “land beyond good and evil”.

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<sup>13</sup> Most of this section is a compilation from our work, *God's Gift, World's Deception: Dr Eben Alexander's Proof of Heaven in the Light of the Real*. Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Saint John Climacus (c. 579-649 AD) 2014, 63.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:14.

And what do we mean when we say “the *nous* in the heart”? Here we mean: According to the Fathers, we know that the heart is a natural, *supra*-natural<sup>16</sup>, and para-natural<sup>17</sup> centre. Thus, there exists the spiritual heart in the heart of the flesh, the soul, and in the soul, there exists the soul of our souls, the Divine Grace, the traveling together on the way of virtue and eternal life<sup>18</sup>.

Note here that, in many instances, the faculty of *nous* is used to designate the noeric heart as such as well. In fact, the human faculty of Union, or, the heart, or, uncreatedly/uncreated Imagination, is the faculty of Becoming, *supra*. “[A]s Saint Kallistos Aggelikoudes [(late 14th century AD)] writes – “...the all-embracing [organ, faculty, point] of all the powers [/energies/operations] of the soul”<sup>19</sup>: *the heart*. Indeed, the human heart constitutes the existential assembling point of the human whole (body-intelligible-spiritual), the entrance and distributive point of uncreated divine energy: the bridal chamber of the consummation of the marriage between the Divine and the human. More often than not (terminologically not exclusively<sup>20</sup>) in the writings of the arrived ones, this human faculty and power of the soul is described as the faculty of Union, the heart, the heart of the soul, or the *nous* (*νοῦς*): it is the inner human being. As the Prophet-King and Theofather David informs us:

...the inward of man, and the heart, is deep (קִּימָה לִבִּי וְקִימָה נַפְשִׁי)<sup>21</sup>.

Apostle Paul follows with the same line of being<sup>22</sup>.

This ‘deep heart’ is not to be conflated with the intellect, or, the contemplative mind, i.e., thoughts and/or emotions for:

...the [Christian] tradition does not attribute emotions to the heart [or *nous*; the human faculty which interfaces with the Divine]. The association of emotions with the heart is a literary invention that gained heightened popularity from the Romantic era onwards. It is interesting to note that

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6:21.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 15:19.

<sup>18</sup> Saint and Bishop, Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894 AD) in *Collective Work* (Noeric Athletics) 2007, 142.

<sup>19</sup> Saint Kallistos Aggelikoudes n.d., 95.

<sup>20</sup> For ontological reasons, sometimes the terms, *nous*, human spirit, and heart can be used interchangeably; other times the heart can be identified with the spirit of the *nous* (with *nous* equaling the soul) (Ephesians 4:23) and so on – see, Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Tehillim/Psalms 64:7.

<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 3:16-17.



modern neurophysiology locates [the centre of] emotions in the intellect of the brain – exactly where the Franks had been looking for divine knowledge. Contrary to the followers of [Frankish] scholasticism, the [Christian] ascetics warn that the confusion of emotions [as we know them] with the presence of God and of the saints constitutes a deception by the devil<sup>23</sup>.<sup>24</sup>

“In the constitution of the human being, the brain and its energy operation (thoughts, *logismos*-es) act as the intermediary between the senses, and the spiritual ‘thoughts’ (*noesis*-es) that are centered in the noetic heart - feeding and being fed by both. As long as the human being dualistically sees the *logimos*-part as the *telos* for divine life “when the *nous* remains in the brain and is made slack/in-void-space, darkened and in [destructive] ecstasy [towards the world] becoming loose in its prayer”<sup>25</sup>, he/she is doomed as they are also when he/she considers *noesis*-es that is energized according to human nature as *telos* too. To be with God in His Realm, all this must be uncreatedly energized through a deadening to be born *supra* anew”<sup>26</sup>. “Since there is an ontological ever-link between soul and body, any attempt for the soul as spirit, intellect, mind, etc. to ‘escape’ the body totally is a fantasy that, in reality, leads to the rebellion of the body against the soul, pushing the person into the abyss of inner ontological in-fighting of a Manichean nature – and the reverse is also true.

You are mainstream-ly taught that the body is the prison of the soul – a Gnostic precept. Notwithstanding that the soul is a higher existent than the body (as the latter ‘neighbors’ more to non-being), this teaching is wrong. Do not sleep with a blind one lest you wake up cross-eyed, as the Turco-Greek proverb says. Or else,

woe to the worthless shepherd who forsakes the flock! The sword<sup>27</sup> shall be upon his arm, and upon his right-eye: his arm shall be tied up, and his right eye shall be darkened<sup>28</sup>.

For if the body is the prison of the soul, the soul can equally – and even worse – be the prison of the body. For when the soul is drunken from its own natural created light, or from the deadly power-drink of hellish demons and their realm that deceitfully appears to it as light and/or– as,

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<sup>23</sup> Dounetas 2010 b., 15.

<sup>24</sup> Retoulas 2022, 45-46.

<sup>25</sup> Saint Gregory of Sinai (c. 1260s-1346 AD) in Saint Nicetas Stethatos *et al.* 1996, 492-493.

<sup>26</sup> Retoulas 2022, 218.

<sup>27</sup> The Apocalypse/Unveiling 1:16.

<sup>28</sup> Zekharya/Zechariah 11:17.

he said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”<sup>29</sup>

- then, the soul fantasizes itself of already being in the Realm of God, then the soul becomes the stumbling block of the body towards the uncreated Realm of God. For as the Psalmist attests:

And again, O GOD, thou art my GOD ; earnestly I seek thee : my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is<sup>30</sup>.

Not only the soul but also the flesh seeks God.

And after they live behind the non-reasonable opinion that the souls preexist from the bodies, they will believe with us the Lord who says that those who are risen in the resurrection cannot die due to the clearer unveiling and participation of that which is ultimately sought after. And again, “whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”<sup>31</sup> If that had already happened sometime in the past, it would have been impossible, as we have already proven, to them be subjected to any type of death according to any kind of alterability<sup>32</sup>.

So, this type of out-of-body ecstasy is ultimately a deception of either the mind, demons, or both.

No one who hears should hope to see the Glory of God visibly by the sense of the *nous*<sup>33</sup>.

And this is coupled with the following:

We should not doubt that when the *nous* begins to be energized densely by the [uncreated] divine Light, it becomes wholly transparent so that it sees [also] its own [natural created] light abundantly [its *logos*, and it is not in ecstasy (distance) from its true self]. This happens when the power of the soul totally conquers the passions [by the dynamic intercession of the Holy

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<sup>29</sup> Mark 7:20-23.

<sup>30</sup> Tehillim/Psalms 63:1-2.

<sup>31</sup> John 11:26.

<sup>32</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor 1992b. 108-109.

<sup>33</sup> Saint Diadochos of Photiki (400-500 AD) 1986, Gnostic (Knowledge) Chapters 36, 158-160 – nothing to do with Gnosticism here.

Spirit]... And that one who God energizes towards that by His Grace, *they are absent from the world even if they are in the world*<sup>34</sup>.

From the whole world, visible and invisible...

Saint and Metropolitan Theoleptus of Philadelphia (ca. 1250–1322 AD) in his, *On the Secret Work in Christ*, writes:

Struggle.... by casting forth from yourself even the meanings/thoughts/spiritual thoughts of things ... become a stranger and run away even from the [created] *logoi* [naturally belonging to your essence] and what is appropriate to your genus [of your nature]... When you cause the outer distractions to be idle and constrain the inner thoughts, then the *nous* is risen in the *logoi* and the works of the Spirit...<sup>35</sup>”<sup>36</sup>

“From the created *autexousiotis*-ly self-willed human silence to the divine Silence of Uncreatedness that befalls upon a human being as a divine gift that is true and absolute mortification to the physical and metaphysical world, thus bestowing the true and the real Ecstasy by the fall of the uncreated Breath of the Holy Spirit upon the createdness of human existence. Says Saint Isaac the Syrian:

Love silence above all things. It brings thee near the fruit which the tongue is too weak to interpret. At first we compel ourselves to be silent. Then from our silence something is born which draws us towards silence. May God grant thee to perceive that which is born from silence<sup>37</sup>.

This is the Birth into and the Dawn of the uncreated Realm of God while in this mortal world.

*Autexousiotis*-ly: because, as human beings are made in the image and according to the likeness of God, they not only possess self-will but, above all, *autexousiotis* (self-authority to materialize their free will)”<sup>38</sup>.

For God does not make Himself appear on account of exertions in themselves but due to simplicity and humility by way of faith, of *theoria*<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Saint Diadochos of Photiki 1986, Gnostic (Knowledge) Chapters 40, 164-167, emphasis ours.

<sup>35</sup> Saint and Metropolitan Theoleptus of Philadelphia, PG143:385BC.

<sup>36</sup> Retoulas 2022, 187-190.

<sup>37</sup> Saint Isaac the Syrian (in Wensinck 1923, 302).

<sup>38</sup> Retoulas 2022, 28.

<sup>39</sup> This does not mean that exertions and works are unnecessary and obsolete wholesale. Perish the thought. This is so only when they are erroneously performed as

... the Door of the Mysteries<sup>40</sup>.

“Vomiting the concocted sabbaths for the true Sabbath of your Life – in the presence of Life Himself.

Sabbath is the complete/perfect inaction of the passions and the universal stillness of the movements of the intellect ... the complete/perfect passing towards the divine, that reaches (as far as it is permitted) the one who practices virtue and knowledge, and when there [at the passing] one must neither feed its intellect with any material that lightens up the passions nor meditate at all upon the *logoi* of nature, so that we do not theorize as the Greeks do that God takes pleasure in the passions or that He is measured with the limits/rule of [human] nature [(by the human spirit and intellect)], Him Who only the complete/perfect silence cries Him aloud and Who is furnished by the utter *supralative* unknowability<sup>41</sup>.

And if this is so for the Greeks, the same [goes] for “the fleshly Jews, i.e., the corporeal manner or thought that rule over those who are governed only with the letter of the law”<sup>42</sup>. Like all exoterists who live only by the senses or only by a legal bodily disposition, these are unable to realize the famine for things spiritual<sup>43</sup>. And here we are still in the Biblical Judaism of the Roman Empire (‘Byzantium’). Babylonian Masoretic-Talmudic Gnostic Rabbinism as an intelligible food in its various recipes (Maimonides, Kabbalah, etc.) appeared in full force only with and after the rise of the Carolingian Franks. This food is nonetheless a diet even to the deadly aeonian intellect-based createdness....

True religious experience is not *via*, in, and by the intellect; it is not by acquiring a *super*-intellect. It is by being uncreatedly gifted a *supra* being. As Saint and Patriarch Kallistos II and Saint Ignatius Xanthopouloi (14<sup>th</sup> c.) attest,

this is precisely the stasis of the *nous* that is born to it by the divine grace, according to Saint John of Climacus, who says ‘the *stasis* of the *nous* is only of the Holy Spirit’<sup>44</sup>.

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a *telos* in themselves and/or when given an inner meaning by a spiritual/intelligible virtue that again finds its *telos* and does not point *supra* to virtues energized by and pointing to Uncreatedness.

<sup>40</sup> Saint Peter of Damascus 1996, 416-419.

<sup>41</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG 90:756C.

<sup>42</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG 90:737BC.

<sup>43</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG 90:745A.

<sup>44</sup> Kallistos II and Ignatius Xanthopouloi, PG 147:757BC.

In Rumi's poem about *the Lord's Breaths*:

Partial Intellect [(rational/emotive intellect)] is a love-denier  
It is never and knowing, but it not naught  
The angel is Ahriman [(satan-like spirit)] until it's naught  
Though it may be our friend in word and deed  
When it comes to inner states, it is nothing  
Nothing for it's not come to naught from being  
Many are naught by force, since they are not willing  
Spirit is perfect, and perfect is its call<sup>45</sup>.

And Kenan Rifai commends:

But this spirit is a divine spirit existing in the human being as a trust. It is not the human spirit, that is, the animal spirit [hayvanî can], which is affected by cold, heat, dryness and wetness, which eats and drinks and gains strength from food and drink or becomes weak without them. This spirit is a light which has no need of any of those things and which liberates with its being only the human body from human nature and directs it toward the heavens and divine oneness<sup>46</sup>.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed,

No one can keep the *nous* inalterable [towards the Divine Realm] unless it is kept so by the Spirit... when the energy of prayer arrives, it properly keeps the *nous* by its side, gladdens it, and debars it from captivity. But it may sometimes happen that [even when] the *nous* is in the heart praying, thinking, it roams around paying attention to other things; for thought does not subdue itself to anyone, except only in those who have been made perfect by the Holy Spirit and have reached a state of total unscatterability in Christ Jesus<sup>48</sup>.

This is the Hesychastic Prayer, the Jesus Prayer not only in the 14<sup>th</sup> century of Saint Gregory Palamas but even in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD – in fact even much earlier:

And this is captivity. For the enemy transfers the *nous* from place to place.  
...And pray to the holy name of God, saying, "Lord, Jesus Christ, bestow your steadfast love/mercy on me"<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Rumi in Rifai 2011, 247.

<sup>46</sup> Rifai 2011, 251.

<sup>47</sup> Retoulas 2022, 184-185.

<sup>48</sup> Saint Gregory of Sinai (in Saint Nicetas Stethatos 1996, 502-505).

<sup>49</sup> Saint Barsanouphious the Great and Saint John the Prophet 1996b, 92-93.

In repetition,

...and unceasingly pray, saying, “Lord Jesus Christ, save me from the despicable passions”. And God will bestow His steadfast love/mercy on you, and thus, you will be strengthened by the prayer of the Saints<sup>50</sup>.

Being in the *Supra* Realm of the Real Being is a reality that can be experienced, especially as a human goal in this present life in true humility. As Saint Colman mac Duagh (c. 560-632 AD) testifies:

‘My brothers, if you are willing to see the glory of the Realm of Heaven (*regni celestis*), you will see it now - in so far as mortals can see it’. And they answered: ‘Father, we want to see it for consolation’. And, the holy Colman lifted his hand blessing their eyes, and their eyes were opened, and they saw the glory of the Realm of Heaven - as far as that can be sustained. And Coleman ordered them that as long as he was alive, they could not say anything to anyone. However, they rejoiced with such exceedingly great joy from the vision as for the rest of their lives the spiritual and the heavenly fervor had been fulfilled, so that they could scarcely be restrained by the Abbot, belittling the labors of the present life for the ineffable glory that will follow, which they had partially seen<sup>51</sup>.

As to what the utter limits of being with God for a human being whether here or in the hereafter: these are the ontological confines of the human nature of the Theanthropic Jesus Christ; beyond this no human can pass since no mere human – nor an angelic being – can ever come into contact with the Divine Essence, i.e., God as He is in Himself.

Thus, as Saint Maximus says, when it is only in God, the *nous* receives openings/appearances of what pertains to God [i.e., the uncreated *logoi* round about God<sup>52</sup>] and becomes in the true sense a theologian having worthily received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When one hears about God, let them not think due to ignorance that what is named/said about God is God Himself such as [the names] goodness, bountifulness, justice, holiness, light, fire, essence, nature, power, wisdom, and the similar namings of which Saint Dionysius the Areopagitis speaks. God in Himself is not among any of the things that the *nous* is capable of circumscribing/grasping as He is indeterminate/indefinite and undeterminable. He cannot be theologized about in relation to Himself as such but only with regard to what

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<sup>50</sup> Saint Barsanouphious the Great and Saint John the Prophet 1996b, 366-367.

<sup>51</sup> Saint Colman mac Duagh, Vita S. Colmani Abbatis de Land Elo, 21, in Heist 1965, 216.

<sup>52</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, PG90:985AB.