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THE ETHOS OF GOD AND MAN IN THE CHRISTOS YANNARAS' WORKS

Abstract. The revelation of the truth about God as Trinity has a direct impact on the identity and condition of the human person. Personhood implies relationship which is inseparably connected with ethos. This article examines the essence of the ethos of God, as He is understood in the Christian tradition, and the ethos of human person created in the image and likeness of God on the basis of the theological thought of the very famous Greek Orthodox religious thinker, Christos Yannaras (born in 1935). The truth that God acts in a personal manner is a very important presupposition for the understanding of the personal identity and ethos of human being. Solely in the relation to God Who is the Trinity of the Most Holy Persons our human ethos can be free from a deceptive vision of existential self-denial and individualistic ethics and morality.

Key words: ethos of God; ethos of man; creation in the image and likeness; freedom; fall of man; personhood; ethics; morality; communion (Gr. κοινῳνία [*koinōnia*]).

In the Christian tradition there is consistent teaching on human being in relation to God. It is evident from the Holy Scripture that God has been affirmed as a personal Existence, and man as created in the image of God.¹ The revelation of the truth about God is the point of departure to reflections on the identity and condition of human being. Already in the first chapters of the book of Genesis the initial relationship of man with God is depicted in a poetic and symbolic narrative. After the process of creation of everything that forms the world, God created man by a special expression of His decision: “Let us make man in our own image and likeness, and let them rule the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and the cattle and all the earth and all the reptiles which creep on the earth” (Gen 1:26). This distinct activity of God in the Christian hermeneutics has been interpreted as the first revelation

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¹ Cf. Vladimir LOSSKY, *Orthodox Theology. An Introduction*, transl. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 70–73.

of God as Trinity.² What are the consequence of the fact of man's creation in the image of the Triune God? This question is of great importance in the theological reflections of Christos Yannaras, "widely regarded as the most creative prophetic religious thinker [...] in Greece today."³ He starts his considerations with the general statement: "Created 'in the image' of God in Trinity, man himself is *one in essence* according to his nature, and in many hypostases according to his persons."⁴ It is impossible to answer the question what is relevant in the fact of creation of human being 'in the image' of God in Trinity without taking into account the Biblical testimony on God as Trinity.⁵

THE ETHOS OF GOD IN TRINITY

For Christians the God Who is revealed in historical experiences of the human race is the Trinitarian God. He is not a solitary existence, an autonomous monad or individual essence. He is not the God of theoretical speculations or abstract syllogisms.⁶ The God of the Church is "a Trinity of hypostases, three Persons with absolute existential difference, but as well a community of essence, will and activity."⁷ Since the fourth century Christians have been struggling with the problem of the understanding of the One God as three Persons. In order to clarify the truth of the One God, the philosophical concept of one Essence (Gr. οὐσία [*ousia*]) was used.⁸ The concept of three Hypostases or Persons was accepted as the most appropriate for better understanding of the three-fold state of God.⁹ Due to the difference

² Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, transl. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 53–54.

³ Bishop KALLISTOS OF DIOKLEIA (WARE), *Foreword*, in Christos YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, transl. Elisabeth Briere (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 9.

⁴ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19.

⁵ Cf. Joel B. GREEN, *Body, Soul, and Human Life. The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 61–65.

⁶ Cf. Boris BOBRINSKOY, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, transl. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 197–260.

⁷ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 20.

⁸ Christos YANNARAS, *Relational Ontology*, transl. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011), 50: "The Greek word for *essence* (*ousia*) is a derivative of the feminine form of the present participle of the verb *to be* (*einai*): the essence manifests the mode of participation in being, the mode that makes every existent thing what it is [...]."

⁹ Cf. Vladimir LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 44–66.

between Essence and Hypostases of Essence it was easier for the Church to describe the experience of the revelation of God.¹⁰ In spite of a Trinitarian declaration of the faith formulated by the Council in Constantinople in 381: “There is one Godhead, Power, and Substance of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit¹¹; the dignity being equal, and the majesty being equal in three hypostases, i.e., three perfect persons (Gr. *prosopois*)”¹² through the following centuries Christians had to explain that there are three Persons (Gr. πρόσωπα [*prosōpa*]) in the Divinity but there are not three Gods.¹³

It must be stressed, from the Christian point of view, that God reveals Himself as “the personal hypostasis of eternal life” and it follows from this that it is not the essence of God which constitutes His being, but “His personal *mode* of existence.”¹⁴ God is a person (Gr. πρόσωπον [*prosōpon*])¹⁵ and He associates with human being “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex 33:11). God reveals His identity identifying the truth of existence, the reality of being with His personal hypostasis, which is evidenced by the words spoken to Moses: “I am He who is” (Ex 3:14).¹⁶ Identifying His own identity in this way, God indicated that “He is not from the essence, but the essence is from Him who is.”¹⁷ According to Christos Yannaras the divine Name, revealed on Mount Horeb to Moses, is not a noun which would classify God among beings, nor an adjective presenting His

¹⁰ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 26–27.

¹¹ Cf. John MEYENDORFF, *The Holy Spirit, as God*, in IDEM, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 153–165.

¹² *Epistula Constantinopolitani Concilii ad papam Damasum et Occidentales Episcopos*, PG 13, 1199–1200.

¹³ Cf. ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Grecos*, PG 45, 175: “Εἰ τὸ Θεὸς τρία ὄνομα προσώπων δηλωτικὸν ὑπῆρχε, τρία προσώπα λέγοντες, ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν τρεῖς ἐλέγομεν θεοῦς” — „How It is that we say there are three persons in the Divinity but do not say there are three Gods.” See English translation by Daniel F. Stramara, Jr., in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 41 (1996), 4: 381–391. Cf. Cornelis P. VENEMA, “Gregory of Nyssa on the Trinity,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 8 (1992), 1: 78–84; Lewis AYRES, “On not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology as Seen in To Ablabius: On Not Three God,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002), 4: 445–474.

¹⁴ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 16.

¹⁵ The word *person* (Gr. πρόσωπον [*prosōpon*]) is defined as a referential reality, which is revealed by its grammatical construction and etymology. The composite word πρός-ωπον [*prosōpon*] consists of the preposition “towards” (Gr. πρός) and the noun “face”, “countenance” (Gr. ὄψ, gen. ὀπός [*ops, opos* in the genitive]). The word πρόσωπον was initially used as a term indicating an immediate reference or a relationship. Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *Person and Eros*, transl. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁶ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 31.

¹⁷ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 17.

characteristic feature, but it is a verb by which God defines Himself as existent, the only pre-eminent existent.¹⁸ This identification of being with the personal existence of God, who is one and at the same time Trinitarian, has had crucial consequences for the truth of man and human morality.¹⁹ In this context, one can pose a question: “What determines God as one, namely one nature/essence or one person?” In the consistent teaching of Eastern Christianity, since the times of the Cappadocian Fathers, the dogmatic statement has been commonly acknowledged, that God is one not of one God’s nature or essence, but because of one person²⁰: the person of God the Father. So the Father is “the sole source and ground of unity in the Godhead,”²¹ and permanently confirms through ‘being’ His free will to exist. John Zizioulas explains that “it is precisely His Trinitarian existence which constitutes this confirmation: the Father out of love—that is, freely begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit.”²² Thus, God as person—as the hypostasis of the Father—makes the one divine substance to be that which it is: the one God.²³ This explanation, based on the teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor, is developed by Yannaras, who states that “being stems on from the essence, which would make it an ontological necessity, but from the person and the freedom of its love which ‘hypostasizes’ being into a personal and Trinitarian communion.”²⁴ So it is evident that the mode of being of God the Father constitutes existence and life as love and personal *κοινωνία* [*koinōnia*].²⁵ The

¹⁸ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 31.

¹⁹ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 17.

²⁰ It is worth noticing that the term *person* (Gr. πρόσωπον [*prosōpon*]) first appears in the fourth century theologian St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394). See Klaus Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1969), 25–26: “Bei ihm [Gregor von Nyssa] wird ausdrücklich, was bei Basileios nur unausdrücklich gemeint ist: die nähere Eingrenzung des Hypostasebegriffs durch die Gleichsetzung mit dem Begriff Prosopon (*prosopon*, Person).”

²¹ Kallistos WARE, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood: NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 32.

²² Cf. Dumitru STANILOAE, “The Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love,” in IDEM, *Theology and the Church*, transl. Robert Barringer (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 73–108.

²³ John D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 41. It is worth noting that there is a different opinion of a Romanian-born Canadian professor of theology at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec—Lucian Turcescu: “The Cappadocians did not state a priority of the persons over the substance, but preferred to keep the two together when worshipping God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.” See Lucian TURCESCU, “The Concept of Divine Persons in Gregory of Nyssa’s ‘To His Brother Peter, on the Difference between Ousia and Hypostasis,’” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 42 (1997), 1–2: 82.

²⁴ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 17–18.

²⁵ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 18.

definition that “God is love” (1 John 4:9) means that the signifier “love” (Gr. ἀγάπη [*agapē*]) summarizes the absolute existential freedom of God without any limitations of beginning, end, space, time, change, mutation, decay, and death.²⁶ The Cappadocians introduced the idea of ‘cause’ (Gr. αἴτιον [*aition*]) into Trinitarian theology, because they wanted to emphasize that the ontological principle (Gr. ἀρχή [*archē*]) cannot be identified with substance (Gr. οὐσία [*ousia*]) but with the person (Gr. ὑπόστασις [*hypostasis*]) of God the Father. Apart from the idea of ‘cause’, the concept of περιχώρεσις [*perichōresis*]²⁷ was employed for the description of the unity of the Holy Trinity.²⁸ St. Basil the Great²⁹ and St. Gregory of Nazianzus³⁰ teach that each Person in God carries the full, undivided nature and co-inheres in the other Persons, thus showing substance to be commonly shared among the persons by each coinciding fully into one and the same nature, carried in its totality by each person.³¹

It is important to remember that our knowledge about God is very limited. We know nothing at all about what God is in His essence. God’s mode of being, or His mode of existence can be accessible for man only by the Divine energies.³² Our human participation and communion in the energies of God familiarizes us with the otherness of the three personal Hypostases. The energies of God are common to all three Divine Hypostases, as the energies of the unknowable and imparticipable Divine Essence.³³ God’s mode of being is manifested in His uncreated energies. The personal exi-

²⁶ Christos YANNARAS, “The Trinitarian God as the Causal Principle of Existential Freedom,” in IDEM, *The Meaning of Reality. Essays on Existence and Communion, Eros and History* (Los Angeles, CA: Sebastian Press & Indiktos, 2011), 13–19. Cf. IDEM, *Relational Ontology*, 49.

²⁷ Cf. Emmanuel DURAND, *La périchorèse des Personnes Divines : Immanence mutuelle. Réciprocité et communion* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2005), 19–103.

²⁸ Cf. YANNARAS, *Person and Eros*, 253–255.

²⁹ Cf. St. BASIL THE GREAT, *Epistle* 38.8, PG 32, 340.

³⁰ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 31.14, PG 36, 148–149. Cf. John Egan, “Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen’s Oration 31.14,” *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993), 21–28; John W. TRIGG, “Knowing God in the Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzus: The Heritage of Origen,” in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, ed. Andrew McGowan, Brian Daley and Timothy Gaden (Leiden, Boston: Brill 2009), 83–103; Nonna HARRISON, “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53–65.

³¹ Cf. John D. ZIZIOULAS, *Communion & Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 106–107.

³² Cf. Jean-Claude LARCHET, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2010), 141–448.

³³ Cf. Maximos AGHIORGOUSSIS, “Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 22 (1978), 1: 15–41.

stence and otherness of the living God can be accessible to human experience solely by the Divine uncreated energies. The personal mode of God's existence corresponds to the human personal experience. Each human being can be known only by participating in the energies that reveal his existential otherness, namely in thought, in imagination, in intention, in the capacity to create, as well as to believe, to hope, to love. . . Although all these energies are common to all human beings, each of them expresses himself, wills, imagines, thinks, creates and loves in a very unique, distinct and unrepeatable mode.³⁴ God wants to be in the personal relationship and loving *κοινωνία* [*koinōnia*] outside His existence. The energy of the Divine will calls to a loving relationship and erotic communion with human beings. The relationship between God and the human person is realized in the form of existential communion.³⁵ The Scriptures of the Church introduce the personal relationship with God and they are inseparable from the Eucharistic event (the participation in the body and blood of Christ).³⁶

Through the ecclesial experience in the Eucharist, already in early centuries of Christianity, it was discovered that the being of God could be known only through a personal relationship and personal love. On the Eucharistic basis, such Fathers of the Church as St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great,³⁷ St. Gregory of Nazianzus,³⁸ and St. Gregory of Nyssa³⁹ were able to formulate a very important dogmatic teaching, namely that the being of God is a relational being. From this teaching follows that the substance of God, 'God,' has no ontological content, no true being, apart

³⁴ Christopher L. FISHER, *Human Significance in Theology and the Natural Sciences: An Ecumenical Perspective with Reference to Pannenberg, Rahner, and Zizioulas* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 203–245.

³⁵ Cf. Michael WELKER, "Relation: Human and Divine," in *The Trinity and an Entangled World. Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 157–167.

³⁶ Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God. Heidegger and the Areopagite*, transl. Haralambos Ventis (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 83–97.

³⁷ Cf. Philip KARIATLIS, "St Basil's Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine: A Synthesis of Greek Paideia and the Scriptural Worldview," *Phronema* 25 (2010): 57–83; Stephen M. HILDEBRAND, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 30–186.

³⁸ Cf. Christopher A. BEELEY, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187–233; John A. MCGUCKIN, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light: The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 7–32.

³⁹ Cf. Morwenna LUDLOW, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82–94.

from communion (Gr. κοινωνία [*koinōnia*]).⁴⁰ Therefore, from the communion point of view one should interpret St. John the Theologian's statement that "God is love" as the only possibility (1 Jn 4:16). Yannaras explains that love is not one among many God's properties, but the indication of what God is as the fullness of Trinitarian and personal communion. It is through love that God gives substance to His essence, and constitutes His being. And therefore Divine love is the only possibility for existence.⁴¹ Each of the Divine Persons exists not for Himself, but He exists offering Himself in a community of love with the other Persons.⁴² In reference to the Gospel, according to St. John, one can state that the unity of the divine Being (the One God) constitutes a unity of freedom and love. This unity is a unity of wills (cf. Jn 5:30) and of activities (cf. Jn 5:17-20) of the Father and the Son, their co-inherence (cf. Jn 10:38; 14:10; 17:21), a reciprocal intimate relationship of knowledge and of love (Jn 12:28); 13:31; 17:4). The unique character of the fatherhood of God is not exhausted by the relation with the only Son, because the Father is also the one from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds.⁴³ God would be a transcendent Monad without the generation of the Son. At the same time, God would be a person 'hidden; in a strictly private relationship (a relationship unrelated to whatever but not God), without the procession of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is inseparably connected with the Word of God.⁴⁴ The role of the Holy Spirit is special, because He "effects in history of revelation of the Word of God, the incarnation of the Person of the Word, and the formation of the Body of the Person of the Word (which is the Church)."⁴⁵

In the dogmatic teaching of the Christian East the Person of God the Father precedes and defines His Essence. God exists, since He is the Father, the One who affirms freely his will to exist, giving birth to the Son and sending forth the Spirit. He exists, since He loves. God the Father hypostasizes timelessly and lovingly His Being in the form of a Triad of Persons, constituting the mode of His Existence as a community (Gr. κοινωνία [*koinō-*

⁴⁰ Cf. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, 17.

⁴¹ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 18.

⁴² YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 36. Cf. Aristotle PAPANIKOLAOU, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 129-142.

⁴³ Cf. A. Edward SIECIENSKI, *The Filioque. History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17-71.

⁴⁴ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 32.

⁴⁵ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 33. Cf. George JOHNSTON, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), *passim*.

nia]) of personal freedom and love.⁴⁶ The names Father, Son of the Father, and Spirit of the Father constitute “a definition of a mode of existence free from the restrictions and predeterminations of a given logos (i.e., of a given essence or nature), of the logos of a definite monad (i.e., of essence or nature as a whole), or of a definitive individual entity.”⁴⁷ Before we start reflecting on the ethos of the human person, it is worth asking the question about the meaning of the truth of God in the Trinity of Persons.⁴⁸ It is evident that this truth of the triadic God confessed in the Church is not one of many religious truths, but it is “the Church’s answer to life and death, the revelation of the possibility for real life, free from time and decay.”⁴⁹

2. THE ETHOS OF HUMAN BEING

God acts in a personal manner. He acts as a community of Persons.⁵⁰ He created man in the act of His love. Therefore the human existence derives its ontological substance from God’s love. Human being was created in order to participate in the personal mode of existence which is the life of God. Although man was created to become a partaker in the freedom of love, he does not cease to be a created being. And this means that his natural individuality is corruptible and mortal. Human nature possesses will, intellect, reason. . . . But these characteristics common to all human nature, to mankind as a whole, do not exhaust the mystery of man. Christos Yannaras indicates that “Each person is a sum of the characteristics common to all human nature, to mankind as a whole, and at the same time he transcends it inasmuch as he is an existential distinctiveness, a fact of existence which cannot be defined objectively”⁵¹. The exceptionality of the human person results from the creation of man by God Who is a community of Persons. It is God Who gave man the gift of being a person. Human personhood is un-

⁴⁶ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 35. Cf. Kallistos WARE, *The Holy Trinity: Model for Personhood-in-Relation*, in *The Trinity and an Entangled World. Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 107–129.

⁴⁷ YANNARAS, *Relational Ontology*, 102–103.

⁴⁸ Cf. Veli-Matti KÄRKKÄINEN, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 44–50.

⁴⁹ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 36.

⁵⁰ Cf. Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, *Persons in Communion. A Theology of Authentic Relationships* (Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2006), 9–22.

⁵¹ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 21.

thinkable without the reference to God Who exists in a personal way. The Trinity of Personal Hypostases makes up the divine Being, the Divine Nature or Essence, in a life of freedom from any necessity.⁵² God has imprinted the possibility of personal existence on created human nature. Although man's nature in general, as a biological species, can be defined objectively, it does not mean that all human beings have the same will, reason, and intellect. Every human person is not an individual, a part of human nature as a whole, but he or she exists in a very distinct way, and this means that he or she thinks, converses and exercises his or her will in a unique, distinct, and unrepeatable way.⁵³ A personal hypostasis of life is the only possibility for an existence of the created human nature. If we compare God with human being schematically, it is evident that God is a Nature and three Persons while man is a nature and "innumerable" persons.⁵⁴ The human person is not a part of human nature, but "the possibility of summing up the whole in a distinctiveness of relationship, in an act of self-transcendence"⁵⁵.

In the contemporary world, particularly in the field of social sciences, the human person is frequently identified with a social unit and an individual. Such treatment of human persons as individuals results in the identification of these two terms that have an opposite meaning. The term "individual" is an attempt to define human being in a way which neglects one's personal distinctiveness but concentrates on the objective properties of human nature, and quantitative comparisons and analogies. With such a treatment of man, the idea of numerical individuality is important. When the human person is reduced to a social unit with the characteristics, the needs and desires, which are common to all people, the quantitative differences are significant. However, a collection of individual attributes and natural characteristics is not enough to designate human being as a person who is unique and unrepeatable.⁵⁶ The creation of man in the image and likeness of God is the source of personal distinctiveness of every human hypostasis.⁵⁷ The Greek Fathers of the Church interpreting this "image" of God underlined that each human soul was endowed with three properties, namely rationality, free will, and dominion. In their opinion the image of God is present both in the soul and

⁵² Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 58–59.

⁵³ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 21.

⁵⁴ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 59.

⁵⁵ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 21.

⁵⁶ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 22–23.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ch. Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 48–50.

in the body of man.⁵⁸ They refused to define precisely what the content of the “image” is, because they wanted to avoid the danger of an intellectual schematization, the reality which is the mystery of imprinting the Divine Existence on human existence.⁵⁹ As stated by Yannaras personal distinctiveness forms the image of God in man. God imprinted the ethos of Trinitarian life upon the human being. That is why it became possible that the particular mode of existence is shared by God and man. In order to discover the special truth about man we have to take into account the revelation of the personal God in the history of humanity. Analyzing the revelation of God in the history of the world is essential for the theological reflection on man’s personal distinctiveness and freedom. The freedom of the human person is the greatest endowment from God,⁶⁰ and therefore it is the most exposed one to the danger of misuse with all the tragic consequences.⁶¹

For the Christian tradition the reference to the fall of man is important in order to understand man, the world and its history. The event of the creation and the fall of man, described on the first pages of the Old Testament, is full of archetypal symbolism.⁶² The image of the garden functions as a symbol of ideal happiness, while the image of the desert serves as a symbol of death. It is no coincidence that rivers flow in the garden of Eden because they symbolize the fullness of life. Man created by God is placed by his Creator within this wonderful “garden of luxury.” It is worth noting that initially, before the fall, the task of man in paradise was not a heavy slave labor, but “the organic continuation and extension of the creative work of God, the flowering of the creativity which characterizes man as an image of God, as a person.”⁶³ Man’s life in paradise, from the very beginning, is realized by taking nourishment offered to man by God (cf. Gen 1:29). Man lives in paradise only with the organic communion with the world. God Himself provides food for man, the presupposition of life. In paradise, food is a gift from God to man. Taking food by man is a realization of the relationship with his Creator.

⁵⁸ Vladimir LOSSKY, “The Theology of the Image,” in IDEM, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, transl. Thomas E. Bird, ed. John H. Erickson and John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 125–139.

⁵⁹ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 56.

⁶⁰ Cf. Nonna Verna HARRISON, *God’s Many-Splendored Image. Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2010), 11–17.

⁶¹ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 23–24.

⁶² Dumitru STANILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 2: *The World: Creation and Deification*, transl. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), 175–204.

⁶³ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 75.

What kind of relationship did man have with God in paradise? Yannaras is convinced that this relationship was not an ethical or religious relationship and therefore it did not depend on the keeping of some law or by offering of prayers and sacrifices. Its essence was the actualization of the relationship and communion (Gr. *koinonia*) of man with God, the direct realization of life by taking food and drink.⁶⁴ In this context, the reference to the Eucharist is evident, where the relationship of man with God is restored “in the flesh” of Christ within an event of eating and drinking. Like in paradise man again takes his nourishment (bread and wine) in an event of hypostatically Divine-human communion (Body and Blood of Christ). The Holy Communion is again a relationship of life by means of nourishment as God’s gift. The physical act of eating and drinking in the event of communion of man with God changes the mode of human existence and makes it possible for him to participate in the way of the Kingdom of God. For this reason, one of the images of the Kingdom of God is a feast where people “eat and drink at the table” which God has set for them (cf. Lk 22:30).⁶⁵ Although the first-formed human couple was blessed by God with incorruptibility and immortality, and with the possibility of choosing to be constantly with God in the event of communion, this endowment did not deprive them of the option of another use of freedom. They could choose between the relationship with God and drawing the existential power of themselves, from their created nature. This possibility of choosing between good and evil is illustrated in Genesis by the symbol of the tree “of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9.17). Taking food from this tree means making life without God, without His blessing, and therefore realizing one’s life in the way which is unrelated to God. Instead of being in communion with God man can decide to feed himself only for the preservation of his physical individuality. And then man exists “as an existential unit which draws the survival of its hypostasis from its own powers, its created energies and functions.”⁶⁶ The biblical terms “good” and “evil” should not be understood as categories of human conduct or the legal conception of realities socially useful and socially harmful. They should rather be treated as an indication of the possibility of life and the alienation from life leading to death.⁶⁷ It is no coincidence that in the book

⁶⁴ Cf. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁷ Cf. Philip SHERRARD, “The Presence of Evil: Christian and Neoplatonic Views,” in *IDEM, Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 158–179.

of Genesis there is a forecast and warning from God directed to the first people: “the day in which you eat from it [the tree of knowledge of good and evil], you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). “Good” and “evil” should not be considered as a conceptual antithesis, but as two options for human living: living with God or living without God. If man decides to live without God, he falls into the trap of the desire to be equal to God, and such a desire leads to death with all its tragic consequences.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the first people, despite the warning God directed to them, chose the path of “evil”, the path of death.⁶⁹ Their decision was influenced by the snake—the symbol of personal evil—the devil. What is the devil’s identity? Yannaras synthetically explains that the devil “is an existence in revolt, excluded from life, self-condemned to perpetuate the death which he first of all freely chose.”⁷⁰

In relation to the devil’s temptation of the first people in paradise, one can ask the question on motives for which the serpent⁷¹ first attacked the woman. What is the meaning of this symbolism? If we consider the archetypes of life, then the woman is an image of nature, and the man is a symbol of the essential principle (Gr. λόγος [*logos*]). Yannaras clarifies their interconnection in the following way: “Nature has a ‘famine; readiness to incarnate the event of life, but it needs the seed of the essential principle in order that this incarnation be realized. Without the intervention of the constitutive principle, nature is only a potential, not an existential event. And without its incarnation in nature, the existential principle is just an abstract concept, without substance.”⁷² The object of the devil’s temptation was to pervert the realization of life. The serpent addressed the woman with a question: “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” (Gen 3:1). In this question there was a falsification of the will of God, Who entrusted the garden of Eden to the first man (to till it and to keep it), and Who determined the limits of using the fruit of the trees growing in it: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge

⁶⁸ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 78.

⁶⁹ Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *The Enigma of Evil*, transl. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012), 127–142.

⁷⁰ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 79.

⁷¹ YANNARAS, *The Enigma of Evil*, 27: “The *serpent* is an archetypal image of *evil*; it is a treacherous and venomous wild animal, the sight of which alone provokes fear and aversion in people. [...] It is the archetypal *dragon* that gives shape to chaos in mythological cosmogonies, a summation of the nature that engenders life and then destroys it—a dark symbol of a strange mixture of god and demon.”

⁷² YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 79. Cf. *Person and Eros*, 151–155.

of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:16-17). The first woman entered into a dialogue with the serpent and told him what God’s will really is: to use the fruit of trees in paradise (cf. Gen 3:2-3).⁷³ In response to the words of the first woman, the snake uses a strategy of lying, in which he encourages to taste “the fruit of autonomy and existential self-sufficiency”⁷⁴: “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4–5). As a result of the fall of the first people, there was a change in the mode of existence, a decline from life. When their eyes were opened, they discovered the shame of nakedness, which was the manifestation of the change of human nature in the fall. An unbridgeable hostility between the woman and the snake, between human nature and the devil should be indicated as one of the most important consequences of the fall of the first people. In addition, the woman became sensitive and susceptible to suffering. Her original relation with her husband, which had revealed the triadic Original of life, was transformed into a rupture with him: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16).⁷⁵ This archetypal change experienced by the first people helps to understand the contemporary individualistic ethos of the human person.⁷⁶ Yannaras indicates that “the feeling of nakedness and the shame for nakedness begin from the moment when life ceases to have love in view, and aims only for the self-sufficiency of the individual—for individual need, for individual pleasure.”⁷⁷ The narrative of the fall of man in the Bible ends with the expulsion from the garden with the “tree of life,” which symbolizes the possibility of immortality. In spite of the tragic result this scriptural description of the fall reveals love of God which is stronger than evil in the image of the “coats of skin”: “And the Lord made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21).⁷⁸ According to Yannaras the “coats of skins” symbolize “the biological hypostasis which seals the personal otherness of man.” Before the fall the energies of the human nature revealed the divine image in man with his personal otherness, life as the communion of love and relationship. After the fall, the human hypostasis directs his

⁷³ Cf. YANNARAS, *The Enigma of Evil*, 29–37.

⁷⁴ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 80.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 87

⁷⁶ Cf. Paul W. KAHN, *Out of Eden: Adam and Eve and the Problem of Evil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 143–209.

⁷⁷ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 81.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 87

psychosomatic energies at the service of individual survival. Man became clothed with the “coat of skin” of absurdity, corruption and mortality. Human being as a biological individuality is subject to death. And death, the result of sin,⁷⁹ after the incarnation of God,⁸⁰ removes the false hypostasis of life and annuls “the covering of corruption, freeing from the existential possibilities of the human person.”⁸¹

Today personal freedom is often subordinated to individual needs for independence. Nevertheless, personal freedom connected with his rationality and dominion in creation defines the image of God in man.⁸² Although every human being possesses various potentialities and energies of human nature, one cannot treat people just as individuals or parts of the individual nature. Every human being is a person, which has a special importance in defining human morality and ethics.⁸³ The image of God cannot be related to the human nature, because in such a case morality and ethics are treated “as conformity by the individual to objective or natural requirements.”⁸⁴ Yet, we have to keep in mind that the created and mortal nature cannot constitute “a person of eternal life.” Thus the morality which is based on nature is far from the dynamic and existential realization of life in freedom and love directed to the other persons. Its precondition is the compliance of natural individuality, the psychological ego and free will of man with the natural requirements of “virtue.”⁸⁵ But this contemporary danger of understanding the human being, his rights, obligations, and behavior in an individualistic way ends up with the resignation of the treatment of human being as a person. And if it becomes a fact, man’s ethical problems cease to be

⁷⁹ Cf. YANNARAS, *Person and Eros*, 290-291. Cf. John BOOJAMRA, “Original Sin According to St. Maximus the Confessor,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 20 (1976): 19-30.

⁸⁰ YANNARAS, *Relational Ontology*, 50-51: “The fundamental starting point of the Christian gospel is the fact of *the incarnation of God*. If this refers to a true historical fact, then ancient Greek ontology is clearly overturned: if God can also exist as a human being without ceasing to be God—if he can really be human and not merely *appear* to be so—then the existence of God is demonstrated to be free from logical prescriptions of essence or nature. God is then existentially free from every necessity of mode of existence and can therefore also exist by the mode of human essence or nature (as a perfect human being) without ceasing to be God.” Cf. Georges FLOROVSKY, “*Cur Deus Homo?* The Motive for the Incarnation,” in IDEM, *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), 163-170.

⁸¹ YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith*, 88. Cf. John S. ROMANIDES, *The Ancestral Sin*, transl. George S. Gabriel (Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2008), 155-169.

⁸² Cf. KARIDOYANES FITZGERALD, *Persons in Communion*, 29-37.

⁸³ Cf. YANNARAS, *Person and Eros*, 275-278.

⁸⁴ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 26.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

existential problems and “morality is understood within the objective context of social coexistence, and constitutes an external and ultimately legal necessity.”⁸⁶ Therefore, modern morality, based on a self-centered individualism, is primarily legal and deontological. In the contemporary world morality is associated with obedience to legal precepts⁸⁷. From a theological point of view, it is sad to conclude that man loses the sense of his identity as a being created in the image of God and ceases to be interested in both his sinfulness and the desire to be saved. It seems that Christians are experiencing more and more what Christos Yannaras warned us against thirty-five years ago: “When intellectual and conventional categories replace ontological truth and revelation in Christian theology, then in the historical life of the Church, too, the problem of salvation⁸⁸ is obscured by a shadow that torments mankind, that of a ‘law’ which leads nowhere.”⁸⁹

At the end of the second decade of 21st century we should particularly remember that the ethos of human person has its definitive source in the ethos of God Who is the Trinity of the Holy Persons. Our human ethos of freedom cannot be reconciled with a deceptive vision of existential self-sufficiency, security or improvements in life, because it leads to an ethos of hopelessness and self-denial, and the voluntary loss of the soul. The ethos of the Church is in opposition to the ethos of any individualistic ethics and morality. The Church as the community of salvation “sees the universal realization of life in the framework of personal existence, and personal existence as a communal, not an individual event,”⁹⁰ which provides human person with the existential realization of true life in freedom given by God.

⁸⁶ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 26.

⁸⁷ Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, transl. Norman Russel (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 155.

⁸⁸ Cf. Christos YANNARAS, *Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*, transl. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013), 63–71; John MEYENDORFF, “New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 481–499.

⁸⁹ YANNARAS, *The Freedom of Morality*, 27.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

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ETOS BOGA I CZŁOWIEKA
W TWÓRCZOŚCI CHRISTOSA YANNARASA

Streszczenie

Objawienie prawdy o Bogu jako Trójcy ma bezpośredni wpływ na tożsamość i kondycję osoby ludzkiej. Bycie osobą jest nierozzerwalnie związane z etosem. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje istotę etosu Boga w odniesieniu do tradycji chrześcijańskiej i etosu osoby ludzkiej stworzonej na obraz i podobieństwo Boże na podstawie myśli teologicznej znanego prawosławnego myśliciela religijnego — Christosa Yannarasa (ur. 1935). Prawda o tym, że Bóg działa w sposób osobowy, jest bardzo ważnym założeniem dla zrozumienia osobowej tożsamości i etosu człowieka. Jedynie w relacji do Boga, który jest Trójcą Przenajświętszych Osób, nasz ludzki etos może być wolny od zwodniczej wizji egzystencjalnej samonegacji oraz indywidualistycznej etyki i moralności.

Słowa kluczowe: etos Boga; etos człowieka; stworzenie na obraz i podobieństwo Boże; wolność; upadek człowieka; bycie na sposób osobowy; etyka; moralność; komunია (gr. κοινωνία [*koinōnia*]).