Eikonic Soteriology from Paul to Augustine

A Forgotten Tradition?

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Playing a significant role in early Christian thought from Paul, to Athanasius, to Ephrem, to the Cappadocians, and to Augustine, a particular soteriological paradigm continues to remain notably absent in modern tracts of patrology and soteriology.¹ I would call it “eikonic soteriology” and, pointing out its roots in the Pauline epistles, I intend to draw a first map of its venerable patristic trajectory.² A first key element of this soteriological perspective is that it encompasses a vision about Christ as Creator of the world and of the human being or, at least, as co-agent of creation, therefore a Demiurge Christology. A second key element is that this paradigm envisions salvation as an eschatological recreation of the human being at a particular moment when God re-instantiates the demiurgic powers he used ab origine. Thus, human final destiny is to be recreated as imago Dei. The third key element of this paradigm regards its origins. I intend to show that Paul elaborates this doctrine in the context of Jewish Second Temple traditions and that the paradigm will frequently be expressed through various Platonic terminologies from image-copy to form, to archetype, to nature, to participation. In reference to Plato, there is no discussion in his writings about an eschatological reconstruction of the universe or of the human being. To the

¹ I thank Timothy Hegedus for reading the manuscript of this study and for all his precious editorial and stylistic suggestions.

² I prefer to spell the name of this soteriological doctrine as “eikonic” instead of “iconic” in order to separate this discussion from any connection with such notions as “icon,” “idol,” idolatry, veneration of icons and the debates around these terms. Rather, the present discussion will gravitate around the ontological constitution of the human being envisioned as imago Dei, its protological decay and its eschatological reconstruction.
contrary, one of the central speculations of the late Second Temple authors regarded the eschatological reconstruction of Israel and the eschatological and glorious reconstruction of the world and of the human being. I would therefore assess eikonic soteriology as primarily rooted in these Jewish and early Christian interests concerning the eschatological recreation, which some of the aforementioned Christian theologians articulated employing Platonic terminologies as well.

**Paul and the Invention of Eikonic Soteriology**

The investigation of the origins of this soteriological perspective should start with the Second Temple idea of eschatological “new creation.” As Pilchan Lee suggests in his monograph on the concept of the “new Jerusalem,” the source of the notion of “new creation” should be searched for in post-exilic time because of its strong connection with the reconstruction of the Temple. Such texts as Trito-Isaiah (65:16-25), *1 Enoch* (91:12-17; 72:1; etc.), the *Book of Jubilees* (1:28, 4:26 and 8:19), the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (21:1-4; 6 and 22:4-5), Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (3:10;17), the *Fourth Book of Ezra* (7:75), the *Second Book of Baruch* (32:1-6), the Epistle to the Galatians (6:15), the Book of Revelation (21:1-8) and the *Tractate Sanhedrin 97b* of the *Babylonian Talmud* delineate an eschatological glorious kingdom of heaven where the saved and righteous will live in the glory of God.

A second element directly connected with this tradition about the re-creation of the world is the emergence of a doctrine concerning the eschatological recreation of the human being. Such materials as *1 Enoch* (50:1, 58:3), the Book of Wisdom (3:7), the *Book of Jubilees* (1:18-25) and the Psalms of Solomon (17:43-50; 18:7-9) reflect this perspective. A different vital aspect of these speculations is present in several documents which portray the eschatological Adam covered in glory. Several texts – such as the Dead Sea scrolls 1QS, 4Q171, 4Q504, the *Damascus Document* iii, as well as the *Apocalypse of Moses* (20-21) and the *Testament of Abraham* (11:8-9) – assert that the eschatological human being will recover the lost glory of Adam.

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3 Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of Its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001)18-24. He also comments: “Therefore, it is possible to say that the New Jerusalem [in Isa 65:16-25] is the center of the New Creation. In the New Creation, the New Jerusalem is the place which reveals God’s sovereignty more gloriously than any place else, though the New Creation itself also reveals it. Therefore, without the New Jerusalem, the New Creation is meaningless. Accordingly, the restoration of Jerusalem results in the restoration of God’s sovereignty, and the restoration of God’s sovereignty in the restoration of creation” (21).
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Nevertheless, the author who connects the protological glory of Adam with the image of God, even before such texts as the _Life of Moses_ 15-16 and the _Apocalypse of Sedrah_ 5, is Paul of Tarsus. In his theology this eikonic anthropology of glory fuses with the idea of eschatological reconstruction of the human being according to the primeval model of the divine image. This image is now conceived as Christ. I submit, therefore, that the doctrine of eikonic soteriology, developed in all its essential features, can be encountered for the first time in the Pauline epistles. Such passages as Rom 8:29, 1 Cor 11:7, 15:45-49, 2 Cor 3:18 and Phil 3:29—as well as Eph 4:22-24 and Col 3:9-10, to the extent that they also reflect the thought of Paul—exemplify this credence.

According to the Pauline vision, human being is the image of God. He plainly states in 1 Corinthians the axiom of his anthropology: "A man (ὁ ἀνήρ) must not cover his head, because man is the image (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) of God and the mirror of his glory (ὁ θεός)." Moreover, humans must advance spiritually and be continuously renewed in the image of Christ:

You have discarded the old human nature (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and the conduct (τὰς κανάς) that goes with it, and have put on the new nature (τὸν νέον) which is constantly being renewed (τὸν ανακαινισθέντα) in the image (ὁ υἱὸς) of its Creator and brought to know God (Col 3:9-10).

According to eikonic soteriology, the destiny of the human being is that of becoming icons or copies of the heavenly image of the Demiurge:

It is in this sense that scripture says, "The first man (ὁ πρώτος ἄνθρωπος), Adam, became a living creature (φυσικὸς ψυχόν), and whereas the last Adam (ὁ νεότερος Ἄρσημ) has become a life-giving spirit (κατακείμενοι) ... The first man is from earth, made of dust; the second man (ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος) is from heaven. The man made of dust is the pattern of all who are made of dust, and the heavenly man is the pattern of all the heavenly. As we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust (ὁ τῆς φύσεως κοσμός), so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man (ὁ τῆς θεοῦ κοσμός) (1 Cor 15:45-49).

The human being as an icon or copy of the earthly man—i.e., Adam—has to change its status and become a copy of the heavenly one. In its essence endowed with a mimetic condition, the human being has to change the imitation of the earthly model (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) for the imitation of the divine one. 2 Corinthians also testifies to the same conception about human transformation, now described in terms of image (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and glory (ὁ θεός):

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And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου), and we are being transformed (μεταμορφοῦμαι) into his likeness (τὴν ομοιόμορφην εἰκόνα) with ever-increasing glory (ἀπὸ δόξης ἀπὸ δόξης), through the power of the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

In a similar fashion, Philippians 3:21 describes the eschatological human beings in terms of glory and form:

He [i.e., Jesus Christ] will transfigure (μετασχηματίζω) our humble bodies, and give them a form like that of his own glorious body (σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), by that power (ἐνεργεῖα) which enables him to make all things subject to himself.

In its first expression, therefore, eikonc soteriology seems to represent this change of mimetism from one type of icon or copy to the other. Unlike the Qumran theology where the human being changes into Adam's prelapsarian image, the telos of the Pauline process of transfiguration is the glorious image of Christ, the heavenly man.

Regarding the agents of salvation and recreation, Paul appears to conceive that both the Father and the Son are deeply involved in this event of eikonc shift. While the Son is the one who bears the Image, the Father is the one who assigns those who will share the form which imitates the Image of the Son: “For those whom God knew before ever they were, he also ordained to share the likeness of his Son (συμμόρφωσις τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ), so that he might be the eldest (τῶν πρωτότοκον) among a large family of brothers” (Rom 8:29).

In addition, incarnation and divine economy themselves are designed in eikonc vocabulary. Incarnation is conceived as a metamorphosis, a change of forms where Christ gives up the divine glory for the form of the corruptible human being:

He was in the form of God (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ); yet he laid no claim to equality with God, but made himself nothing (ἐκένωσεν), assuming the form of a slave (μορφήν δολοῦ ἑαυτοῦ). Bearing the human likeness (ἐν ἰματίαν ἀνθρώπου), sharing the human lot, he humbled himself, and was obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross. (Phil 2:6-7)

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5 Eph 4:22-24 should probably be mentioned as well for it emphasizes both ethical and ontological facets of this process: “Renouncing your former way of life, you must lay aside the old human nature (τῶν παλαιῶν ἀνθρώπων) which, defiled by its desires, is in the process of decay; you must be renewed in mind and spirit (πνευματικοὶ δὲ τῆς κατακαίριας τοῦ νους τυμάνων), and put on the new nature (ἐνδοξάσθη τῶν κανὼν ἀνθρώπων) created in God’s likeness (τὸν κατὸ θεόν κτισθέντα), which shows itself in the upright and devout life called for by the truth.”
In his classical study on Pauline glory Christology, Carey Newman understands Paul’s soteriology through the same eikonc notions. Concerning human anthropology, Adam’s fall can be envisioned as an alteration of ontological status, a change from the ontology of the glorious Adam to that of the temporal or historical one. While commenting on Rom 1:23 (“all have sinned and are falling short of the glory of God”), Newman avers: “Normally interpreted as a reference to the lost glory that Adam (supposedly) possessed at creation, this verse, however, refers to the relationship between God and humanity.” In his footnote to this commentary, Newman also affirms:

In early Jewish materials there is indeed a tradition which speaks of a restoration of (prelapsarian?) glory to Adam; see Bar. 4:16; 2 Bar. 54:13-16; CD iii 20; 1QS iv 23; 1QH xvii 15; 4QS54 fr. 8 recto; T. Abru. 11:8-9; Life of Adam and Eve 12:1; Apoc. Mos. 21:2, 6; 39:2; cf. 4QpPs 1-10 iii 2 (=4Q171); 1 En 89:44-45; Rom 3:23. 7

Newman undertakes as well a detailed analysis of the eschatological destiny of the human being. 8 He concludes that this destiny, according to Paul, has to be in the glory of Christ at the end of an imitatio Christi process, a reiteration of the death-resurrection event:

Paul’s autobiographical narrative presupposes that he has experienced the end, death/ resurrection, and that in the “middle” of his narration, i.e., the time between Christophany and parousia, Paul seeks a mastery of death through a re-enactment of Christophany—dying that he might rise. Paul patterns his Christian narrative after his own story: in the Christophany Paul died and was reborn. Though Paul acknowledges a threat of unnatural death, or end, he describes the eschatological goal of transformation as conformity to Jesus’ resurrection body of glory. 9

While commenting on the aforementioned 2 Cor 3:18, Newman expressly associates glory and image:

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξας: partake of the same paradigmatic field: by beholding the resurrected Glory of God in Christ (in the preaching of the gospel), one is transformed into the image of Christ. That is, the revelation of Christ as Glory (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξας) inaugurates a process of transformation which ultimately resolves into a final transformation in the Glory of Christ (τῶς δόξαν). 10

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7 Newman, Paul’s Glory Christology, 30.
9 Newman, Paul’s Glory Christology, 210. The classic Pauline expression referring to Jesus’ “body of glory” (τὸν ομοιόμορφον τὸς δόξαν) can be found in Phil 3:21.
The eschatological destiny of the human being, in conclusion, is that of being re-constructed, ontologically transformed and reformed according to the radiant Image of Christ. The main agent of salvation, according to this paradigm, is visibly Christ, and he saves by re-actualizing the demiurgic capacities he used when he created the world. Many Christian authors will embrace this soteriological perspective. I will include in this article only the most classic names between Paul and Augustine where I could find the paradigm noticeably developed, in order to show that this tradition was not a marginal phenomenon in early Christian times, but a major trend. Thus, I will present in the following pages the visions of Irenaeus, Origen, Methodius, Athanasius, Ephrem, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine.\textsuperscript{11}

**Irenaeus of Lyons**

Any investigation of Irenaeus’ soteriological perspective should necessarily include his idea that the image of God refers also to the flesh. It was most likely his conflict with the Gnostics that made him argue that the image of God cannot represent an immaterial entity, since a form can exist only in matter. The image of God resides therefore also in flesh: *carni quae est plasmata secundum imaginem Dei.*\textsuperscript{12} The idea is important for Irenaeus’ soteriological doctrine as long as he envisions human salvation as the work of the Logos and Spirit on the human being in its complete condition. It is there, in the visible part of the human being, that Irenaeus finds the weak and damaged element of our nature. Hence, this element becomes the target of the divine economy and soteriology. In *Haer. 5.9.1-4*, Irenaeus argues against a certain group of people whom he qualifies as “heretics,” since they maintain the opinion that the flesh does not partake in the resurrection. The ground of their position is 1 Cor 15:50: “Flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, the perishable cannot possess the imperishable.” Irenaeus’ response primarily involves an anthropologic doctrine which he expounds at the beginning of his argument: the human being is constituted

\textsuperscript{11} There are also other names that can be included in the list, for instance Melito of Sardis and Pseudo-Hippolytus, who elaborated a slightly modified version, where Jesus saves his image instead of recreating it, and also Pseudo-Macarian homilies, which developed the classic form we have in the authors mentioned in this study. Other names added to the list would strengthen my argument.

of flesh, soul and spirit, and the Spirit purifies, raises up humans to the life of God, saves and forms the body, therefore the image of God.\textsuperscript{13}

He further describes the way the Spirit of God gives life, transforms the living human being and makes the flesh conformable to the Word of God:

For when the infirmity of the flesh is absorbed, it exhibits the Spirit as powerful; and again, when the Spirit absorbs the weakness [of the flesh], it possesses the flesh as an inheritance in itself, and from both of these is formed a living man (ζῶν ἄνθρωπος)—living, indeed, because he partakes of the Spirit, but man, because of the substance of flesh. ... But where the Spirit of the Father is, there is a living man; [there is] the rational blood (ζύμα λογικὸν) preserved by God for the avenging [of those that shed it]; [there is] the flesh possessed by the Spirit, forgetful indeed of what belongs to it, and adopting the quality of the Spirit (πάντως πατήρ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐμπροσθένα), being made conformable to the Word of God (σύμμορφος γενομένη τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ).\textsuperscript{14}

The next lines assert that the flesh permeated by the Spirit of God does not inherit the Kingdom, but is inherited in the Kingdom with the Spirit.

A similar discussion about the three constituent elements of the human being and the perfect human as the unity of these elements occurs in \textit{Haer.} 5.6.1, a passage where he also emphasizes the demiurgic function of the Spirit. Irenaeus clearly states that, through the Spirit, the human being receives the image and inscription of the Father and the Son (διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος τῆς εἰκόνα καὶ τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς Πατρὸς καὶ καὶ Υἱοῦ λαβόντες).\textsuperscript{15}

The image of God in humans resides, therefore, in the perfect being, which is made out of the combination of flesh and soul permeated by spirit:

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\item\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Haer.} 5.9.1-2 (SC 153:107-09): "Among the other [truths] proclaimed by the apostle, there is also this one, 'That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' This is [the passage] which is adduced by all the heretics in support of their folly, with an attempt to an- noy us, and to point out that the hardwork of God is not saved. They do not take this fact into consideration, that there are three things out of which, as I have shown, the complete man is composed—flesh, soul, and spirit (οἱ τέλειοι ἄνθρωποι συνέστεκαν, σοφός τε καὶ νήσος καὶ Πνεῦμα). One of these does indeed preserve and fashion [the man]—this is the spirit (τοῦ μνὸς σοφοῦ καὶ μορφουόντος). δ. ὡς τὸ Πνεῦμα); while as to another it is united and formed—that is the flesh (τοῦ δὲ σώματος καὶ μορφουόντος, δ. ὡς τὸ σῶμα); then [comes] that which is between these two—that is the soul, which sometimes indeed, when it follows the spirit, is raised up by it, but sometimes it sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts. Those then, as many as they be, who have not that which saves and forms (τὸ σῶμα καὶ μορφοῦ) [us] into life [eternal], shall be, and shall be called, [mere] flesh and blood; for these are they who have not the Spirit of God in themselves." Alexander ROBERTS – James DONALDSON (eds.), \textit{The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325}, vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Co. 1885-1886) 534-35 [hereafter Trans. ANF].
\item\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Haer.} 5.9.2-3 (SC 153:113-15). Trans. ANF 1:535. For the perfection of the human being, see also \textit{Haer.} 4.37.7 and 5.6.1.
\item\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Haer.} 3.17.3 (SC 211:337).
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Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable (συμμορφωμαι) to, and modelled after, His own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a part of the man, but certainly not the man; for the perfect man (τέλειος ἄνθρωπος) consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God (τῇ κεφαλῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ προλαμβανετε σωματικῆ). ... For if any one take away the substance of flesh, that is, of the handiwork [of God], and understand that which is purely spiritual, such then would not be a spiritual man but would be the spirit of a man, or the Spirit of God. But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God’s] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit (διὰ τῆς ἑσύνεσιν τοῦ Πνεύματος πνευματικός καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος γεγένεται), and this [perfect man] is he who was made in the image and likeness of God (οὗτος εστι ο λεπτὸν ο κεφαλήν καὶ ομοιούσαν γενεσιν Θεοῦ). But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation (in plasmate), but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and this is this being imperfect (ἀκατάλληλος).  

In a different passage, Irenaeus even offers a description of the way the power of God, which is the spirit in the human being, recreates at the eschaton all the organs of the human body as in the sixth day of creation:

For He who in the beginning caused him to have being who as yet was not, just when He pleased, shall much more reinstate again those who had a former existence (τοίς ἥδει γεγονόσις ἂνοι κατασκαπτίσει), when it is His will (that they should inherit) the life granted by Him. And that flesh shall also be found fit for and capable of receiving the power of God, which at the beginning received the skilful touches of God; so that one part became the eye for seeing; another, the ear for hearing; another, the hand for feeling and working; another, the sinews stretched out everywhere, and holding the limbs together; another, arteries and veins, passages for the blood and the air; another, the various internal organs; another, the blood, which is the bond of union between soul and body.  

Another page of the same book describes the process of recreation as the work of the Logos in his eikonc soteriological plan to bring the human being to the original condition:

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14 Haer. 5.6.1 (SC 153:75-77). Trans. ANF 1:532. FANTINO also describes the advance to human perfection in terms of recreation: “As a creature, human being is already fashioned, but this is only the beginning. Human being has not been created perfect but created in view of becoming perfect, and it receives its perfection in the limits of economy.” See FANTINO, La théologie, 331. In Haer. 5.15.3-4 and 5.16.1. Irenaeus defends the thesis that it is the same Hand of God which fashioned Adam, each of us and the eyes of the blind man in the Bible, which fashions and adjusts its work from the beginning of the world to the end in order to perfect it according to the image and likeness of God. See Bernard SEBOUT, Tout récapituler dans le Christ: Chrétologie et soteriologie d’Irénée de Lyon (Paris: Desclée, 2000) 187-88; Matthew C. STERVENBURG, Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2008). See Haer. 4.36.3 for the common work of the Trinity and specific activity of each divine person.

15 Haer. 5.3.2 (SC 153:47). Trans. ANF 1:529.
For the Maker of all things, the Word of God, who did also from the beginning form man, when He found His handiwork impaired (σκληρυμένον τὸ ζώον πλάγια) by wickedness, performed upon it all kinds of healing. At one time [He did so], as regards each separate member, as it is found in His own handiwork (ὁς καὶ τὴν ἄρχην καλάσθην); and at another time He did once for all restore man (ἐποκαταστήσας τοῦ ἀνθρώπον) sound and whole in all points, preparing him perfect for Himself unto the resurrection. For what was His object in healing [different] portions of the flesh, and restoring them to their original condition (ἐποκαταστήσας αὐτὸ τοῦ πρώτου χαρακτῆρα), if those parts which had been healed by Him were not in a position to obtain salvation?  

Even more than the original condition, the passage mentions a few lines further that this time the eschatological humans will enjoy the condition of incorruptibility.

Another passage describes the whole course of human progress in seven steps from creation to glorification and visio Dei:

Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created (γενόμενος); and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered, should be glorified (δοξαζόμενος); and being glorified, should see his Lord (λεῖαν τὸν Κυρίον Ἀναποθήκην).  

The passage is important since it includes a recovery stage, a process which brings glorification, certainly a reference to the recovery of the prelapsarian human luminous condition. Another passage, Haer. 5.13.3, quoting and commenting on Phil 3:21, will express straightforwardly the idea that the eschatological human body will be conformed to Christ’s body of glory.

**Origen of Alexandria**

Several Origenian texts seem to reflect as well the paradigm of eikonc soteriology. For Origen, human being was created according to the heavenly Adam (Hom. Jer. 2.1.1) and it will be reshaped in the image of his or her Creator (Cels. 6.63), the image of the heavenly man (Hom. Gen. 9.2; Hom. Exod. 1; Hom. Ezek. 13.2; Hom. Ps. 38.2.1; Hom. Jer. 2.1.1; 8.2; 14.8, etc.), and be similar to the body of Christ’s glory.  

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18 Haer. 5.12.6 (SC 153:161). Trans. ANF 1:539. See also Haer. 5.15.2 (SC 153:205), a passage which clearly states the demiurgic function of the Logos-Son: “this hand of God [i.e. the Logos-Son] which formed us at the beginning (ἡ σκληρυμένη ἔνας ὡς ἄρχην), and which does form (πλάνανα) us in the womb, has in the last times sought us out who were lost, winning back His own, and taking up the lost sheep upon His shoulders, and with joy restoring it to the fold of life (ἐποκαταστήσας τῆς ἡμῶν).” Trans. ANF 1:543.

19 Haer. 4.38.3 (SC 100:957). Trans. ANF 1:522.

20 See Hom. Lk. 8.2-3; 2 Cor 3:18 (“But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face are transformed into the same image”) plays a central role in Origen’s anthropo-
the prelapsarian Adam as conformed to the heavenly image of the Logos, and the same image functioning, too, as the model of any future shaping of the human being. Thus, the Pauline expression "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29) plays a catalytic role in Origenian anthropology. Purified of its malice, the image which God inserted within the human being according to God's Image will shine brightly: "And when he has blotted out all those colors in you which have been taken up from the reddish hues of malice, then that image which was created by God shines brightly in you (resplendent in te imago illa, quae a Deo creat est)." A few lines before, Origen also affirmed that the heavenly image shines in the person in whom the Logos cleansed earthly impurities.

Several texts of the Alexandrian identify the terms of "image" and "form." The following one develops a remarkable vision of the eschatological destiny of the human being where humans will simply have the same form of God which Christ enjoys:

Moreover, I would like to investigate what he has said, "conformed to the image of his own Son (conformes imaginis Filii sui)." Into which form (formae) may they be said to be conformed? For we read that the Son of God was at one time in the form of God (in forma Dei), and at another time in the form of a slave (in forma servi). ... If these [virtues] are clearly formed in them [i.e., Christians] (in eis formentur) having become conformed into his image (conformes imaginis) they will be seen in that form (illa formam) in which [Christ] is in the form of God (in forma Dei).

Commentary on Matthew expresses in similar terms the same doctrine of conformity or symb-morphism with Christ's divine form. The book identifies as well divine image (εικόν), divine form (μορφή), and the figure of the

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21 See Hom. Gen. 13.4 (SC 7bis:328). Trans. HEINL, Homilies on Genesis and Exodus, 193-194. This image which God created according to God's Image seems to be either the soul (Hom. Gen. 13.3), the inner man (ibid., 1.13; Comm. Rom. 7.4.8), the reasoning capacity (Comm. Rom. 5.1.28), the logos (Comm. Jh. 2.20), or the nous (Cels. 7.38). Origen sometimes internalizes the original image of the heavenly man which Adam lost and the lost crown of glory, and sees them as belonging to the soul and intellect; see Hom. Ezek. 13.2.


Son of God in his eschatological glory. One of the chapters describes the whole economy of salvation as the coming of the Son of God to a status of dishonour, without form (αἴδος) and beauty, in order to restore human being to the conformity with the divine image (ἐικόνι) and form (μορφή). At the end of his earthly existence, the Son has also his constitution restored to the form of God:

But He also comes [i.e., at the end of time] in glory (ἐν δόξῃ), having prepared the disciples through that epiphany of His which has no form (αἴδος) nor beauty; and, having become as they that they might become as He, “conformed to the image of His glory” (συμμόρφωσις τῆς ἐικόνος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), since He formerly became conformed (συμμόρφωσις) to “the body of our humiliation,” when He “emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant” (μορφὴν δοῦλον), He is restored to the image of God (ἀποκατάστασις τε καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μορφῆς) and also makes them conformed unto it (καὶ αὐτοῖς συμμόρφωσις αὐτοῦ).  

The text also discloses the agent of this transformation, namely Christ, the Son of God. Origen ascribes to Christ similar demiurgic powers in a certain place in Contra Celsum, drawing a short story of Jesus’ divine economy:

He “was in the beginning with God”; but because of those who had cleaved to the flesh and become as flesh, he became flesh, that he might be received by those incapable of seeing him in his nature as the one who was the Logos (αὐτὸν βλέπον καθὸ λόγον), who was with God, who was God. And being spoken of under physical forms (σωματικῶς), and being proclaimed to be flesh, he calls to himself those who are flesh that he may make them first to be formed like the Logos (μορφοθηκαί καθ’ λόγον) who became flesh, and after that lead them up to see him (αναβλέπον τίς τὸ οὐκόν αὐτοῦ) as he was before he became flesh (ἐξήν ἐν πρὶν γενέσθαι φθείρᾳ).

The text discloses as well Origen’s beliefs about the purpose of human existence: that is to contemplate the Logos in the pre-incarnate condition, and eventually be transformed according to this form. This change of forms towards a greater congruency with the Logos may be seen as one of Origen’s formulations of the ancient doctrine of divinization.

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24 Comm. Mt. 12.29 (GCS 40:312-133). Trans. CROMBIE, ANF 9:465. The term “form” (μορφή) plays a central role in Origen’s Christology, particularly being employed in the recurrent phrase the “form of God.” This expression, based on Phil 2:6-7 (“was in the form of God and took the form of a slave”) and denoting a divine title, designates the pre-incarnate constitution of the Logos (e.g., Comm. Mt. 14:17). Rufinus translates μορφή through forma, as for instance De principiis 1.2.8 (erat in forma Dei) demonstrates.


26 See Princ. 3.6.4 and 8 for the spiritual and divinized bodies of the holy ones at the eschaton.
Methodius of Olympus

There is a passage in Methodius' discourse on the resurrection where he first describes an artist finding his work destroyed by an envious man. The artist melts down and recasts the image according to its previous condition. Methodius affirms afterwards that God does the same thing with the human being:

For seeing man, His fairest work, corrupted by envious treachery, He could not endure, with His love for man, to leave him in such a condition, lest he should be for ever faulty, and bear the blame to eternity, but dissolved him again into his original materials, in order that, by remodelling, all the blemishes in him might waste away and disappear. For the melting down of the statue in the former case corresponds to the death and dissolution of the body in the latter, and the re-moulding of the material in the former, to the resurrection after death in the latter.27

Another remarkable Methodian theory regards the eschatological status of the human being, which is not going to be angelic, in spite of the biblical Mat 22:30: "In the resurrection men and women do not marry: they are like angels in heaven." Methodius argues extensively in chapters 9-11 that God created the various creatures that populate the universe according to their specific category and realm. God neither regretted, as a mediocre artisan, that he created humans, nor intended humans to be angels, but wanted humans to be humans from the beginning to the end. Commenting on Matt 22:30, Methodius asserts that the small particle "like" actually shows the difference rather than the identity: humans will not replace angels or have their nature, but preserve their own nature and improve their status. The phrase "like angels" actually refers to incorruptibility and the crown of glory and honour.28 Following the Pauline distinction between the heavenly and earthly man, he calls Christ "heavenly man" and thinks that the image of the heavenly refers to the resurrection.29 He describes, in conclusion, the eschatological human being as recovering the primordial image and glory of Christ. Another Methodian fragment follows the same line of thought:

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The second fragment from Methodius' "Homily on the Cross and Resurrection" preserved by John of Damascus seems to have the following form: "For the Word suffered, being in the flesh affixed to the cross, that He might bring man, who had been deceived by error, to His supreme and godlike majesty, restoring him to that divine life from which he had become alienated" (ANF 6:400).
For the Word suffered, being in the flesh affixed to the cross, that He might bring man, who had been deceived by error, to His supreme and godlike majesty, restoring him to that divine life from which he had become alienated.\textsuperscript{30}

**Athanasius of Alexandria**

The notion of eschatological reconstruction of the human being according to the primordial \textit{imago Dei} finds one of its classic expressions in Athanasius, for instance in the next passage where \textit{εἰκὼν} and \textit{ἀνακτῖζο} (to rebuild, to recreate) play a central role:

What was then God to do, or what should have happened, except that he should renew again that which was in his image (τὸ κατ’ εἰκόνα παλιν ἀνακτίζει) in order that through it men might be able once more to know him? But how could this have been done, unless the very image of God were to come, our Saviour Jesus Christ? For neither by men was it possible, since they had been created in the image (κατ’ εἰκόνα γεγονοῦσιν), nor by the angels, for neither were they images (εἰκόνες). So the Word of God came in his own person, in order that, as he is the image of his Father, he might be able to restore man who is the image (τὸν κατ’ εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπον ἄνακτιζει διὰ κτησιν). In any other way it could not have been done, without the destruction of death and corruption. So he was justified in taking a mortal body, in order that in its death could be destroyed and men might be again renewed in the image (παλιν ἀνακτονοῦσαι ἄνθρωπον). For this, then, none other than the image of the Father was required.\textsuperscript{31}

The passage shows as well that the Son, as the Demiurge of creation \textit{ab origine}, was the only instance which was able to recreate human being anew. God’s very intention in the process of the Incarnation was, therefore, to recreate humankind conformed to God’s Image.

The metaphor about the refashioning of a destroyed work of art first present in Methodius appears as well in Athanasius and will also occur in Ephrem and Basil:

For as when a figure which has been painted on wood (τῆς γραφῆς καὶ σῶμα μορφῆς) is spoiled by dirt, it is necessary for him whose portrait (μορφῆς) it is to come again so that the picture can be renewed in the same material (ἀνακτονοῦσαι ἡ εἰκὼν διὰ κτησιν) for because of his portrait the material on which it is painted is not thrown

\textsuperscript{30} Fr. Homily on the Cross and Passion of Christ 2. Trans. ANF 6:400.

\textsuperscript{31} Inc. 13, in Robert W. THOMSON (ed. and trans.), Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 165-67. See also Inc. 20 (THOMSON, 183): “We have, therefore, mentioned above in part the cause of his corporeal manifestation, as far as it was possible and we were able to comprehend it: that no one else could bring what was corrupted to incorruptibility, except the Saviour himself, who also created the universe in the beginning from nothing; nor could any other recreate men in the image, save the image of the Father (τὸ κατ’ εἰκόνα παλιν ἀνακτῖζο τοῖς ἄνθρωποις, ἐκ μὴ τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ Πατρός); nor could another raise up what was mortal as immortal, save our Lord Jesus Christ, who is life itself; nor could another teach about the Father and overthrow the cult of idols, save the Word who orders the universe, and who alone is the true only-begotten Son of the Father.”
away, but the portrait is redone on it (ἐν οἴνοι ὄντων οὐκομοίους)—even so the all-holy Son of the Father, who is the image of the Father (ἐσχάτος τοῦ Πατρὸς), came to our realms to renew man who had been made in his likeness (τὸν λατρευτόν παρισκότερον διαφορον ἐναντιότοτον), and, as one lost, to find him through the forgiveness of sins; just as he said in the gospel: “I have come to save and find that which was lost.” Therefore he also said to the Jews: “Unless a man be born again,” not referring to the birth from women as they supposed, but indicating the soul which is born again and restored in being in the image (τὴν ἀνεγέννημένην καὶ ἀνακτήσομένην ψυχήν εν τῷ κτῶν διὰ τούτον διδάσκον), 32

While Athanasius regards the fall as the filth of sin covering the icon, the result of the process of purification, which implies as well a human cathartic effort, will be a luminous copy mirroring in its brightness the glory of the Logos-Son, the Image of God:

For it [i.e., the soul] was made in the image of God and created in his likeness, as the Holy Scripture indicates, speaking in God’s name: “Let us make man in our image and our likeness.” So when the soul has put off every stain of sin with which it is tainted, and keeps pure only what is in the image (μόνον τὸ τῆς ἐκδόσεως καθοδήσας οἶδεν), then when this shines forth (ἐκδιαμορφωσθεὶς τοῦτο), it can truly contemplate as in a mirror the Word, the image of the Father (ὅς ἐν κἀκεφαλή ζωῇ τῆς ἐκδοσῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς), and in him meditate on the Father, of whom the Saviour is the image. 33

In his insightful analysis of Athanasian theology, Thomas Weinandy points out a few times the idea of reconstruction. The commentator sees Athanasius articulating two soteriological reasons for the Incarnation of the Logos. While the first was the restoration of human incorruptibility, the second was the restoration of humankind’s filial image. 34 Weinandy also specifies the epistemological consequences of this restoration:

While the restoration of humankind to incorruption—the first reason for the Incarnation—equally restored humankind in God’s image, here, in the second reason for the Incarnation, Athanasius emphasizes that this image is also refurbished through a renewed knowledge of the truth of God. 35

Weinandy observes as well that the agent of recreation is the Son. 36 As a final note, I would mention that Athanasius regards the event of the

32 Inc. 14 (THOMSON, 167).
33 Gent. 34 (THOMSON, 95).
35 WEINANDY, Athanasius, 34-35.
36 WEINANDY, Athanasius, 35: “his present theme [Athanasius’ in De Incarnatione] is that only the Word can restore humankind to the image of God since, as the perfect divine
As this putting on the garments of light is not only a metaphor for Ephrem but also a real occurrence, an ontological transformation, Baptism and eschaton seem to represent, in fact, two steps in the general reconstruction of the human being. Salvation, again, is perceived as a human reconstruction. The process of renewal, however, is accomplished not at Baptism, but at the eschaton. It is a resurrectional moment taking place in the realm of Paradise.

**Basil of Caesarea**

The tractate *De baptismo*, which many scholars ascribe to Basil, compares the human being with the broken statue of a king. Having lost its original glorious shape (τὴν ἐνδοξοῦμον μορφήν), the royal statue has to be re-fashioned by the hands of a wise artisan and skilful creator able to restore the portrait to its former glory. A parallel process takes place with the human being who lost its original glory according to God's image and likeness, and needed to be restored to the former condition. Employing the imagery of "clothing" in a different chapter of the same tractate, Basil affirms that the blood of Christ took the old man off of the human being and re-clothed it in the new man in the Holy Spirit. God as Creator, therefore, re-shapes the human being according to God's image (κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν). The author follows the same line of thought in *De Spiritu sancto* where he portrays Christ as the Basilicus of heaven and also ponders that the human being has put on this royal image in a transformational event identified with divinization:

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41 Basil, *Bapt.* 1.2.7 (SC 357:124-26). For the discussion on the authenticity of this tractate, see Jeanne Ducatillon's introduction in SC 357:7-12. For a similar doctrine where the Baptism should be followed by the refashioning (ἐναντιούμενος) of the lost luminous face (πρὸς σωσίαν) of Adam and become perfect light (φῶς γενόμεθα τέλειον), see Gr. Naz., *Orat.* 39.1-2 (SC 358:150-52).

42 Basil, *Bapt.* 1.2.23 (SC 357:176). Cf. Col 3:9. Basil also quotes Paul's Rom 8:29 which states that God made those he knew conformable to the image (συμμορφούμενος τῆς εἰκόνος) of his Son. According to Basil, the ones re-clothed in the Son of God were considered worthy to participate in the perfect initiation (τὸν τέλειον ραφεῖν; *Bapt.* 1.2.24 [SC 357:176]). Basil inserts the doctrine of re-clothing Christ in the liturgical context of Baptism: Baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit has the spiritual meaning of being born from above, that in the name of the Son of being re-clothed in Christ and that in the name of the Father of becoming children of God (*Bapt.* 1.3.1 [SC 357:190]). In this context, putting on Christ refers to eating the divine body of Christ and drinking his divine blood (*Bapt.* 1.3.1-3 [SC 357:192-98]).
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Only when a man has been cleansed from the shame of his evil, and has returned to his natural beauty (τὸ ἐκ φόνου καλὸς ἐπενεκλήθη), and the original form of the Royal Image has been restored in him (εἰκόνι βασιλικῇ τὴν ἀρχαίαν μορφὴν διὰ καθαρσίας ἐπενεκλήθη), is it possible for him to approach the Paraclete. Then, like the sun, He will show you in Himself the image of the invisible (εἰκὼς εἰς ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἀκούσα τοῦ ἀρχηγοῦ), and with purified eyes you will see in this blessed image (τῇ εἰκόνι τεμάτι) the unspeakable beauty of its prototype (τὸ δικρίτων ὑμῖν τοῦ ἀρχηγοῦ καλὸς). Through Him hearts are lifted up, the infirm are held by the hand, and those who progress are brought to perfection (τελειώσεις). He shines upon those who are cleansed from every spot, and makes them spiritual men through fellowship with Himself. When a sunbeam falls on a transparent substance, the substance itself becomes brilliant (περιλαμπόμενος), and radiates light (ἀνάφω) from itself. So too Spirit-bearing souls, illuminated by Him (οὶ πνευματικοὶ ψυχὲς ἐλλαμβάνοντα παρὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος), finally become spiritual themselves, and their grace is sent forth to others. From this come knowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of hidden things, distribution of wonderful gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and, the highest of desires, becoming God (ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ δικρίτων τῶν ἐρημωτῶν, θην γενέσθαι).\[43\]

For Basil, therefore, the transformation is ontological, and he envisions this restoration to the glory of the prelapsarian Adam in similar lines with the Qumranite mystics and several Christian monastic authors of his time.\[44\] As in Paul and unlike the Qumranite mystics, Basil’s model of reconstruction is actually not Adam, but the archetypal heavenly Image of Christ. The new human being will be a new creature, luminous, spiritual, perfect, theophorm and, in addition to all, a genuine god.

Gregory of Nazianzus

In one of his orations, Gregory Nazianzen identifies Christ with the Demiurge of the world and the Demiurge of the human being. He conceives

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\[43\] See BASIL, Spir. 9.23 (SC 17bis:326-28). Trans. David Anderson, Saint Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980) 44. For the complex inter-connections between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and how they confer glory, knowledge, vision, image and likeness, see, for instance, BASIL, Spir. 18.46-19.49 (SC 17bis:408-22); cf. Spir. 21.52 (SC 17bis:436) for the comparison with the glorified Moses. The same tripartite work for giving the divine grace is confessed in BASIL, Bapt. 1.2.9 (SC 357:130); grace of God given through Jesus Christ our Lord in the Holy Spirit [τῇ οὖν Χριστῷ τῷ Υἱῷ ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι χάριν]; cf. Bapt. 1.2.21 (SC 357:170), an echo of Eph 3:14-17, Gal 5:25 and Rom 12:6-7.

that Christ the Logos has the power to decompose the human bodies at the
time of their death and recreate them at the time of the eschaton:

Mind then and sense (νοῦς καὶ αἰσθητική), thus distinguished from each other, had re-
mained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the
Creator-Word (τοῦ δημιουργοῦ λόγου), silent praisers and thrilling heralds of His mighty
work (τῆς μεγαλορεῖσες). [...] Now the Creator-Word (ὁ τεκνιτῆς λόγος), determining to
exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible
creation (οἰκονομεὶ καὶ ὁρατῆς φύσεως), I mean fashions (δημιουργεῖ) Man; [...] we should
both see and experience the Splendour of God, which is worthy of Him Who made (τοῦ
αὐτοῦ φυλάκου) us, and will dissolve (λύσοντας) us, and remake us after a looter fashion
(αὐτάρκους τινα τυχόνος).43

Nazianzen construes in this passage a soteriology in which he envisions
salvation as a process of re-creation of the human being. Christ here plays
the key role since he is the Image of God in itself and the archetype of the
eschatological re-creation of the human being. In a passage where Gregory
elaborates a short reflection on the history of salvation, he employs the same
terminology of "Royal Image" encountered in Basil:

That He lit a candle, His own flesh, and swept the house, by cleansing away the sin of
the world, and sought for the coin, the Royal Image (τὴν μανθανήσα νείκον) that was all
covered up with passions, and calls together His friends, the Angelic Powers, at the find-
ing of the coin, and makes them sharers of His joy, as He had before made them sharers
of the secret of His Incarnation?46

Another aspect of the event of human re-creation concerns the condi-
tions which make it possible. For Nazianzen, the whole development com-
prehends both a human and a divine condition. The Incarnation, on the one
hand—essentially consisting in kenosis (the divine emptying of greatness
and glory) and self-sacrifice—functions as a divine ontological condition

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43 GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Orat. 45.7. For the Greek text, see Claudio MORESCHINI,
Gregorio di Nazianzo: Tutte le orazioni (Milano: Bompiani, 2000) 1140-42. Trans. NPNF
2/08:425. He also refines this position in other passages by mentioning the function of all the
three divine persons, e.g., Orat. 45.5 (MORESCHINI, 1138): “He first conceived the Angelic and
Heavenly Powers. And this conception was a work fulfilled by His Word and perfected by His
Man contemplated, Who bestow all things, binding them by the Word of Your power.” Trans.
NPNF 2/08:433. Likewise, in his Orat. 41.14 (SC 358:344), the Son co-operates (δημιουργεῖ) with
the Spirit in Creation and Resurrection. For contemporary scholarship, see Peter BOUTENEFF,
“St Gregory Nazianzen and Two-Nature Christology,” St Vladimir Theological Quarterly
38:3 (1994) 255-270; Peter BOUTENEFF, “Soteriological Imagery in Gregory of Nyssa’s
Antirrhenticus,” Studia Patristica 32 (1997) 81-86; Brian E. DALEY, “Divine Transcendence and
Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology,” Modern Theology

46 GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Orat. 45.26 (Moreschini, 1164). Trans. NPNF 2/08:432.
which makes possible a second step. This is the transformation of the human being and the historico-eschatological course of salvation, which is the aim of the entire economy. The second condition which leads to this aim consists in a human mimetic effort. The human being must become a mirror of the divine self-sacrifice and kenosis, since this is the only way that may bring the human being to the participation in Christ's Godhead, Fullness and Image. Gregory imagines the soteriological itinerary as a divine undertaking for the salvation of the injured divine Image in the human being and its reconstruction in a form more wonderful than the primeval one:

And He who gives riches becomes poor; for He assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the riches of His Godhead. He that is full empties Himself; for He empties Himself of His Glory for a short while, that I may have a share in His Fullness. What is the riches of His Goodness? What is this mystery that is around me? I had a share in the Image and I did not keep it; He partakes of my flesh that He may both save the Image and make the flesh immortal. He communicates a Second Communion, far more marvelous than the first, inasmuch as then He imparted the better nature, but now He Himself assumes the worse. This is more godlike than the former action; it is loftier in the eyes of all men of understanding.67

A different passage depicts recreation as a genuine imitatio Christi: the process of self-sacrifice is in itself an image of the archetypal sacrifice and resides in imitating Christ in his passion and resurrection:

A Mystery anointed me (μανίτισαν ἐγραφή με); I withdrew (διέκλισα) a little while at a Mystery, as much as was needful to examine myself (ὅσον ξεκοίτηκα ἐκκοίτηκα); now I come in with a Mystery, bringing with me the Day as a good defender of my cowardice and weakness; that He Who today rose again from the dead may renew me also by His Spirit (κοινωνίας τού ισχύος); and, clothing me with the new Man (τὸν καινὸν ἐνότον ἐνότον), may give me to His New Creation (δότα τῇ καινῇ κτίσει), to those who are begotten after God (τοῖς κατὰ Θεὸν γεννημένοις), as a good modeller and teacher for Christ, willingly both dying with Him (κοινωνίας τοῦ κατά Θεὸν γεννημένου) and rising again with Him (κοινωνίας τοῦ κατά Θεὸν γεννημένου).68

Mystery terminology is the noticeable aspect of this passage where Gregory sees himself involved in a practice of incubation. Imitating Christ's passion in a mystical and mystery way, Nazianzen is anointed, withdraws into himself in a mystery and examines himself with the purpose of replicating Christ's death and resurrection. The great expectation of this experience,

67 Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. 45.9 (Moreschini, 1144). Trans. NPNF 2/08: 426. See also Orat. 1:4: "Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died." Trans. NPNF 2/08:203.

therefore, is to rise with Christ and clothe the ontological condition of the new man, the new creation. In a different passage, the author describes the endeavour to imitate Christ’s passion in the following terms:

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us — you will think perhaps that I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material of earth, that remains here below, and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world and of the Prince of the world. Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image (παράδειγμα τῆς κάτω τοῦ καιροῦ). Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died. Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us (γενόμενος ὡς Χριστός, ἐκαίνιος Χριστός ὡς ἡμεῖς). Let us become Gods for His sake, since He for ours became Man (γενόμενος ἡμῶν δι' αὐτὸν ἐκαίνιος κατ' ἡμᾶς ἡμῶν). ⁴⁸

Replicating Christ’s passion appears to be the act which triggers the unfolding of deification. As Christ offered himself to be sacrificed, human beings should sacrifice themselves in an effort of self-offering, which, in its essence, is giving honour to the archetype. Human beings imitate Christ’s drama and mystery of passion and death, and start becoming ontologically like him. The meaning of the mystery is that, by imitating the passion of God, human beings become, in a mysterious way, theophorph.

Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa also portrays Christ as the Saviour and the eschatological Demiurge of the human being:

I am absolutely astonished at the all-wise art of the master-artist God and Saviour (ὁ ἀρχιτέκτων θεός καὶ σωτήρ), considering how the copies (αἱ μορφαί) of the archetypes (τῶν ἀρχηγῶν) which are non-existent (μὴν ὄντος) and invisible (μὴν ἀρωνοῦντος) are created and fashioned (δημιουργοῦντας καὶ ἀναπλάσσοντας) by an inexpressible secret, resurrecting the deceased as different people through the activity of the replicas (δι' τῆς ἐνεργείας τῶν τέσσερα)⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Orat. 1.4f. (SC 247:76-78). Trans. NPNF 2/08: 203. See also Or. 45.28 (MORESCHINI, 1168): “We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him, that we might be cleansed; we rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him; we were glorified with Him, because we rose again with Him.” Trans. NPNF 2/08:433.

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Gregory proposes a vision of the resurrection as the eschatological re-creation of the world according to the model of the primordial creation of the visible universe. The eschatological creation becomes in this way a copy of the copy (the noetic world in God’s mind being the authentic archetype) without actually experiencing diminution in ontological value:

You [the over-curious] may rightly be perplexed and irritated at the fact that you know the explanation of the creation (τῆς γενεσίας τῶν λόγων αίδως) but do not know the reordering that comes with re-creation (τῆς πολυγενεσίας μετακοσμήματος). But if those things are to you as a dream and fantasy, and their knowledge unobtainable, do not complain if, unable to account for the construction (τῶν λόγων τῆς κατασκευῆς θεοῦ), you cannot conceive the restoration of what was destroyed (ἡ διόρθωσις τῶν φθορῶν τοῖς σωμαῖσι). It is the same craftsman (ὁ οίκος τεχνίτης) for the first creation (τῆς πρῶτης κτίσεως) and for the second remodeling (τῆς δεύτερης μετακοσμήματος). He knows how he will fit together again in its ancient design (εἰς τὴν ἀρχαῖαν κοσμίαν) the work of his which has suffered dissolution.51

Gregory deems that the moment where the process of salvation starts does not take place at the end of the world, but with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. With Christ, a new humanity, a new human genre (the new man) commences. In eschatological-paradisical tones, Gregory describes the new creation that begins with the Incarnation and the human being re-created according to the image of God. Eschatology, in this way, is viewed as a new creation and starts with Christ’s Nativity:

“This is the day which the Lord made” (Psalm 117:24), but different from the days made at the beginning of creation, by which time is measured, this is the beginning of another creation (διὰ τῆς κτίσεως κατεστάθη ὁ δῆμος ἡμῶν). For on this day God makes a new heaven and a new earth, as the prophet says. What heaven? The firmament of faith in Christ. What earth? I mean the good heart, as the Lord said, the earth which drinks the rain which comes on it and ripens plentiful grain. In this creation pure living is the sun, the virtues are stars, transparent conduct is the air, the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge is the sea, good teaching and divine doctrines are herbage and plants, which the people of his pasture, that is God’s flock, grazes on, the performance of the commandments is trees bearing fruit. In this is created also the true man who is made in the image and likeness of God (ἐπὶ τοῦτον κτίζεται καὶ ὁ ἀληθινός ἄνθρωπος ὁ κατ’ εἰκόνα γενόμενος θεόν καὶ θεολογισμόν).52

51 GREGORY OF NYSSA, In sanctum Pascha (GNO 9/1:256), trans. HALL, 13). See also In sanctum Pascha (GNO 9/1:258-259): “As then the seed, which in the early stages is shapeless, is formed into a pattern (εἰς σχήμα τυπωμένον) and ripens into bushy parts as it is built up by the ineffible skill of God (τῇ ἀπορρήτῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατασκευασμένῳ τέχνῃ), so it is not at all surprising, but follows naturally, that the matter in the tombs that once had shape should again be restored to its original formation (εἰς τὸν πεζὸν ὑποληφθέντα), and that dust should again become man, just as he originally came into existence from it (τὸ ἀρώματον κύθινον ἤσχε τῇ γενέσει)” (Trans. HALL, 15).

52 GREGORY OF NYSSA, De tridui spatio (GNO 9/1:279f), trans. HALL, 34-35.
Augustine of Hippo

Not only an Eastern theological feature, eikonc soteriology is present as well in the writings of one of the most representative Western theologians – Augustine himself. The fact shows obviously that this theological vision was generally spread and accepted in early Christian thought. While it is evident that there are specific differences among all the authors mentioned in this study, the key elements of eikonc soteriology remain a constant line: Christ is Demiurge and saves through re-creating the human being according to the glorious image of Christ.³³ Already in 1954, Gerhard B. Ladner observed that, according to Augustine, the eschatological re-formation of the human being will be according to the *imago Dei* and also a perfect recreation: “Not only was reform for Augustine more than return to the creational integrity of the paradisiac Adam, but creation itself, insofar as it was a process of formation.”³⁴

Augustine defends this position in one of his commentaries on the Psalms:

> In your soul is the image of God; the human mind contains that image. It received it and by stooping to sin defiled it. He comes to refashion (lit. as re-fashoner, re-designer: reformator) it who had first of all fashioned (formator) it; for by the Word all things were made, and by the Word this image was stamped on it (per Verbum impressa est haec imago). The Word Himself came, so that we might hear from the Apostle: “Be reformed (Reformamini) in the newness of your mind.”³⁵

Christ’s demiurgic capacity is obvious in this

³³ There is also a scholarly debate, which is not the object of this study, where such scholars as Gerhard B. Ladner and Victorino Capanaga found various differences between Augustine and the Greek Fathers, while John E. Sullivan critiqued them and the idea that some radical differences on this theme would exist between Augustine and the Eastern Fathers. For Ladner, see “Augustine’s Conception of the Reformation of Man to the Image of God,” in *Augustinus Magister 2* (Études augustiniennes) (1954) 867-78, 871; repr. in *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages: Selected Studies in History and Art*, 2 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura,1983) 2:595-608. For Capanaga, see “La deificazione en la soteriologia agustiniana,” in *Augustinus Magister 2* (Études augustiniennes) (1954) 745-54. For Sullivan, see *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque, IA: Priority Press, 1963) 55. Sullivan even affirms: “For Augustine, as for the eastern Fathers, man’s reassimilation to God, his re-formation is deification, and its beginnings are associated with the adopted sonship conferred at baptism” (Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 56).


³⁵ *Epist. 125.4 (PL 38:692): “So let us refashion ourselves to the image of God (reformemur ad imaginem Dei), because it was on the sixth day that man was made according to God’s image. What fashioning (formatio) did there, refashioning (reformatio) does in us; and what creating (creatio) did there, creating anew (recreatio) does in us.”* Trans. Edmund Hill in *Sermones III/4* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1992) 256.
text. John E. Sullivan also observes that “the principal role in creation and in re-creation is assigned to the Word by Augustine, but he also sees the Spirit playing some part in the process.” A passage from *De Trinitate*, where Augustine plays an intricate linguistic and philosophical game with the concepts of “image” and “form” and their correlatives, represents another appropriate illustration for our thesis:

But those who, when reminded, turn away from that disfigurement (*deformitate*), by which they were deformed (*conformabatur*) to this world by their worldly lusts, and turn to the Lord, are reformed (*reformatur*) by Him when they hear the Apostle say: “Be not conformed (*conformari*) to this world, but be reformed (*reformamini*) in the newness of your mind,” so that that image (*imago*) begins to be reformed (*reformari*) by Him by whom it was formed (*formata est*). For it cannot reform (*reformare*) itself as it could deform (*deformare*) itself. For he also says elsewhere: “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth.”... But by committing sin it has lost justice and the holiness of truth, and on account of it this image has become disfigured and discolored (*haec imago deformis et decolor facta est*); but it receives what it once had when it is reformed and renewed (*reformatur et renovatur*).  

*De Trinitate* 14.17.23 makes also very clear the fact that Augustine conceives of this re-formation as a gradual development (“gradually by making progress in the renewal of this image”), which starts with Baptism and will be accomplished with the participation in God’s nature and glory. The face-to-face vision of God and the transformation into an incorruptible body will be two essential features of human eschatological existence: “at the end of the world he [i.e., the one who made the progress] shall receive an incorruptible body, not for punishment but for glory. For the likeness to God in this image will then be perfect when the vision of God will be perfect.”

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Conclusion

The above lines lead us to several concluding remarks. Eikonico soteriology is a doctrine on salvation that envisions Christ as the primordial Demiurge who will re-enact his creative powers at the end of the world in order to re-create the human being according to his divine Image. The doctrine appears for the first time in Paul and is founded on Second Temple speculations regarding the eschatological reconstruction of Jerusalem, of the world and of the human being in their glorious forms.

While preserving the late Second Temple idea of eschatological reconstruction of the world, several Christian Hellenistic authors will re-express it through Platonic language. Such concepts as Demiurge, image, archetype and the vision of a sensible world mirroring a noetic world echo their meanings and functions from Plato's philosophy. In addition, the concept of the glorious status of the human being – whether an image of the luminous prelapsarian Adam or of the divine Image of Christ – shows as well similar interests with Second Temple speculations on the eschatological condition of the human being.

Eikonico soteriology opens as well a new perspective on the idea of deification, theosis. Usually understood as unification with or participation into the divine, deification is now represented as the re-creation of the image of God in the human being from its disfigured condition to the glorious similarity with Christ, the Image of the Father. In the new condition, human beings are explicitly described as gods.

Last but not least, it is not possible to discuss salvation without Demiurge Christology. Starting with Paul, Christ is usually seen as the primordial and also the eschatological fashioner of the divine Image within the human being. Several authors, however, for instance Irenaeus, Basil and Augustine, also maintain that the Holy Spirit and sometimes even the whole Trinity participate in the final reconstruction of the human being.