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Protopresbyter John Romanides's Teaching on Creation

Abstract

This essay opens with a sketch of the Christological and Trinitarian aspects of Father John Romanides's presentation of Orthodox spirituality, all in an effort to grasp more fully the relevance of Father John Romanides' formulation of Orthodox creationism. First we will consider the problem of understanding creation as it existed before the Fall from our fallen present; it is this problem that union with Christ in His Church solves. What is the fall of man, and what is within man that makes possible his redemption from corruption? We will close out our study by outlining the Orthodox view of the relation of the created to the uncreated.



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Keywords

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1 Introduction

Father John Romanides (1927-2001), from his earliest publications in the 1950's to his final postings to the website romanity.org in the early 2000's, never ceased to speak of the Orthodox doctrines about creation as essential to understanding Orthodox Tradition. The core of this Tradition, for Father John, is the healing of man's dissipated noetic energy through the "way free of error": the threefold path of purification, illumination, and glorification.¹ His presentation of the Orthodox faith, undoubtedly unique in its organization and in some of its applications, is nonetheless not *new*, but rather remains, in essence, identical to what the Orthodox have taught at all times. This being the case, our discourse can be read as a general presentation of the Orthodox teaching concerning creation, though it also serves to introduce Father John's rich and enduring oeuvre.

The Eastern Orthodox Church teaches that God created all things, not from His essence, but out of non-existence by His

1 On the path of glorification as the "way free of error," see St. Gregory Palamas, *On behalf of the Hesychasts*, I,B,5; cited in Father John S. Romanides, "The Cure of the Neurobiological Sickness of Religion, Part Three" accessed 30 July, 2016, http://romanity.org/htm/rom.02.en.the_cure_of_the_neurobiological_sickness_of_rel.03.htm.

will and energy. This Orthodox doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* explicitly denies that created beings are derived either from God's essence, or from a super-divine ground of being. The origin of created beings from nothingness is not to be taken as a basis for analogy with an imagined process or composition inside the divine essence. Only God is perfect and immutable; all other beings have as their natural mode of existence the property of constantly changing. However, this does not mean that created beings are inherently sinful since man is free to cooperate with God in choosing an unending sequence of goods that correspond to the inexhaustible divine energies. God creates all that is out of "things that were not," ("ἐκ οὐκ ὄντων," II Maccabees 7.28 LXX) in the sense that all beings are dependent on God's uncreated and sustaining grace, not only for their very existence but also for the possibility of salvation through union with Him. Indeed, God designed creation to be changeable so that it could be united to Him through a movement "from glory to glory" (II Cor. 3.18 KJV) in the ascended human nature of Christ, the latter being bearer of the Trinitarian energies.

In the Augustinian tradition of Western Christianity, forms or archetypes of created beings exist in God such that the world emerged as a copy of an unchanging, and thus more perfect, level of reality. If this is the case, however, Christ's human body is a defective copy of a beginningless ideal entity, and, further, Christ's Incarnation, far from supplying salvation to the fallen, is itself a fall into carnality.

The Orthodox reject this Augustinian view of creation, along with the tradition of Hellenistic or Greek philosophy that lies beneath its surface. Creation, for the Orthodox, is from its inception perfective and "exceedingly good" (Gen. 1:31). Indeed, St. John's "God so loved the world" (John 3.16 KJV) is distorted by the Augustinian doctrine into something like: *God*

so loved the nonhypostatic pre-existent forms in His essence that he proclaimed these universals to be “very good”; thus, God's love moves only toward the universals directly and neither toward man immediately in his real hypostatic existence, nor toward the contingent cosmos.² The Orthodox dogma of creation avoids

² “Perfective” is the author's term, first appearing in James L. Kelley, *Anatomyzing Divinity: Studies in Science, Esotericism and Political Theology* (Walterville, OR: TrineDay, 2011), p. 56; Cf. Father John S. Romanides, *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*, translated by George Dion. Dragas (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004), p. 9. The term refers to the Orthodox conception of man (and, by extension, all of creation, which fell along with Adam and which awaits deliverance from corruption) as being created mutable but not on that account deficient or flawed.

More apropos than the Greek philosophical dichotomy “perfect/imperfect” is the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated, which is the basis for the Orthodox teaching of salvation through glorification or *theosis*. At the lowest stage, seekers after salvation in Christ engage in intense prayer and bodily *asceticism*; as the seeker's noetic energy at the core of his soul is progressively purified from demonic energies and influences (mainly in the form of thoughts saturated with distorted emotional force), the seeker's prayer becomes an unceasing “Abba, Father” by the power of the Holy Spirit that actually does the praying with the heart. This second stage is illumination, in which the uncreated energy of the Holy Trinity is active in man's inner core. Man's spirit, soul, mind, and finally his body are more-and-more imbued with the divine resplendence, which guides him into further and further depths of the divine life, which is seen as an unseeing and known as an unknowing, since it cannot be replaced or otherwise brought down to the level of concepts. The highest revelation of God to man is glorification, which is not sought after by the illuminated seer, but rather is granted if and when God sees fit to bestow it. Glorification is direct vision of the uncreated glory of the Holy Trinity, which replaces sacred writings, dogmas, ideas, and indeed all discursive thought and prayer. All that remains after all these are surpassed is the non-self-seeking love of God, which “never fails” (I Corinthians 13.8 KJV). The glorified knower of God sees all of creation suffused with divine light, but he does not see the essence of God, in which creation cannot participate.

these errors because it is based on the correct doctrine about Christ: God brought all things into existence freely, and God's freedom in creation means that He is not limited or constrained by forms or patterns in His mind. God loves the world he created, and so He sent His Son that all of creation might be united by experiencing His Trinitarian glory both in this world and in the age to come.

God's willed creation is completely free and is thus a wholly positive and self-originated movement.³ Though God's decision to create is not precipitated by any force, reason or consideration aside from His good pleasure, the Orthodox do not hesitate to affirm also that God is moved toward His creation. His purpose in creating the world is that all created beings be united to him through His Son in His Spirit. Distinct but not separate from God's creating energy and His sustaining energy is His saving, deifying energy, which meets man in his contingency and calls him from within to share in His love for all of creation. This eternal salvific purpose of creation is the context for the Incarnation and the divinization of man in Christ. Mortal man becomes immortal by grace through Christ the Lord

Glorified Saints are inspired to compose Holy Writings in order to guide others through the stages of *ascesis* toward illumination and glorification. This differs from the Augustinian West, for whom revelation is (1) in this life: the Bible and/or Church dogmas that are believed on "faith" and which become unfolded to the reasoning power of the baptized person who seeks to comprehend more about them, and (2) in the next life: continuous vision of the uncreated archetypes in the divine essence. As Father John Romanides stresses, this teaching, besides being polytheistic (archetypes and human souls are considered coessential with the Holy Trinity), is also the basis for the *filioque*, since according to this dogma the only movement inside God's essence is self-directed, either to universals or to other divine hypostases (Father John S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, translated by George S. Gabriel [Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2002], p. 104, footnote).

³ John S. Romanides, *Ancestral Sin*, p. 61.

of Glory who enters into man's purified heart by the Holy Spirit and makes of him a Son of God the Father by adoption.

Now that we have sketched its Christological and Trinitarian bases, we will try to grasp more fully the relevance of Father John Romanides' formulation of Orthodox creationism. First, we will consider the problem of understanding creation as it existed before the Fall from our fallen present; it is this problem that union with Christ in His Church solves. What is the fall of man, and what is within man that makes possible his redemption from corruption? Next, we will outline the Orthodox view of the relation of the created to the uncreated. Here the main question addressed might be formulated as "how can the mighty Hand of God come down to the heart of man?" Lastly, a word will be said about the Orthodox doctrine of divine energies and the distinction between created and uncreated that Father John follows the Fathers in seeing as the foundation of God's revelation to man.

2 Fallen Man: Worldly and Heavenly Knowledge

For the Orthodox, there are two completely different types of knowledge available to man: *natural knowledge* is centered in the brain and the nervous system; *noetic knowledge* is proper to man's *nous*, and is centered in the heart. As Father John explains, "the [faculty of] reason can only know material phenomena. (...). [I]t cannot know anything uncreated."⁴ Man's *nous*, on the other hand, is his unique organ of communion with

⁴ Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church According to the Spoken Teaching of Father John Romanides, Volume Two*, translated by Sister Pelagia Selfe (Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2013), p. 47.

God. Only God is uncreated; the gulf is so complete between God's essence and created essences that not only is there no similarity between them, but neither is there any dissimilarity or opposition between them that could serve as a basis for comparing them. In a sense, there is no gulf because there is no conceivable material or immaterial interval between the created and the uncreated. Even the angels are material compared to God. The prime implication for man is that his reason is not capable of forming or discovering concepts about God, there being (as we have said) no collection of forms, species, or universals between the created and the uncreated that can serve as a bridge between man and God. If and when man acquires knowledge of God, it is not of the divine essence, but rather of the uncreated divine energies, which man can know not according to concepts of discursive reason, but only by becoming an "eye" that sees divinity by means of the selfsame divine glory. Therefore, the vision of God in Orthodoxy means being "known of God" by His grant of an "uncreated, self-revealing eye" by which God is seen through God, that is, through His energies.⁵

Indeed, if and when God grants *theoria* or vision of His energy, the illumined seeker's conscious knowledge of the Trinitarian energy active in his heart is surpassed by an *unknowing* of the uncreated energies, the experience of which is non-discursive and supra-rational. It bears repeating: in glorification *one knows the non-self-seeking love of God through God Himself*, through the uncreated energy of the Holy Trinity. This

⁵ John S. Romanides, in Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church According to the Spoken Teaching of Father John Romanides, Volume Two*, translated by Sister Pelagia Selfe (Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2013), p. 49.

glorification is a crucifixion, because the outpouring of deifying energy from Christ's human nature, present to the saint inwardly in illumination, is manifested bodily in those to whom it is granted. The glorified saint's body shares in the incorruption of Christ's body; thus it overcomes certain of the boundaries and limits of fallen creation. Yet, the body of the saint also shares in the sufferings of Christ; the saint obeys God unto death either at the hands of men, or through a bloodless martyrdom of self-denial and triumph over the devil and his minions. In either case, glorification is not granted to the saint for his own sake merely; rather, the lover of God is raised to such spiritual heights in order that those in contact with the saint be saved. Man in the state of glorification is not subject to the power of death; his spiritual charges are transformed similarly by their propinquity to such a source of divine grace. In well-known cases, even those who violently oppose the saints become pierced to the heart and are inspired to follow Christ. The bonds of death are weakened vis-à-vis the natural world as well. Orthodox hagiography bears witness to the power of glorification to spread outward from the soul to the body and thence to the created world, where natural disasters have been curtailed, and vicious animals have been rendered harmless.

The fall of man in the Garden was the disconnection of Adam's *nous* from the state of illumination. Adam's fall, in this sense, was the first time that a human being's unceasing memory of God was interrupted.⁶ As St. Symeon the New Theologian avers,

⁶ As the biblical, patristic, and modern references to the Orthodox notion of "unceasing memory of God" are innumerable, what follows is one from each rubric: "I thank God (...) that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers day and night" (2 Timothy 1.3 [KJV]); "We ought to think of God even more often than we draw our breath; and if the expression is permissible, we ought to do nothing

only God is unchangeable and unalterable. God created Adam and commanded him not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This commandment was God's revelation that Adam was changeable and alterable, but that, being in a state of illumination, it was within his power to remain free from *harmful* change and alteration by preserving his grace-centeredness.⁷ However, Adam was deceived by Satan; his noetic energy became confused and mixed with the energies

else. (...) [I]t is not the continual remembrance of God I would hinder, but only the talking about God." (St. Gregory Nazianzen, *First Theological Oration 5 [Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 7: S. Cyril of Jerusalem. S. Gregory Nazianzen, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995 [1899]), pp. 286]*; "Prayer in the heart can become unceasing, whereas prayer lodged in the intellect or brain operates by decision of the one praying and at times chosen by him," (Father John S. Romanides, "Jesus Christ—The Life of the World," http://www.romanity.org/htm/rom.19.en.jesus_christ_the_life_of_the_world.01.htm, accessed 21 March, 2016).

⁷ See Homily II, section 1 in St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The First-Created Man: Seven Homilies by St. Symeon the New Theologian*, translated by Father Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1994), pp. 51-52. We note that when St. Symeon says that the man who lives according to God's commandment remains unalterable and unchangeable, he is not referring to any metaphysical notion of stasis, but rather the purity of the worshiper's heart that allows a permanent (though not immune to willful forfeit) indwelling of the Holy Spirit therein. For the Orthodox, man's life in Christ is an unbounded growth into the "likeness of God" through communion with divine energies. On this side of death, this holy life is repentance, or a lifelong effort to turn toward Christ; in the next life, it is a never-ending series of real choices between a plurality of goods. These goods are the energies of the Holy Trinity, which are undividedly divided. That is, the energies are not divided from each other or from the Holy Trinity itself (though they do not communicate the divine essence), but descend to creatures according to the latter's ability to receive them. This descent of the divine energies, in an ineffable manner, does not result in a division within the Holy Trinity, which remains unchanged.

and concepts from his rational faculty. From then until today, both man and his environment typically have existed in what can best be described as a survival mode.

The selfless love made possible by the inner man's unbroken communion with the Creator is replaced with a diseased love for self that, if not combated through returning to God's grace, leads men to believe that they are becoming slowly and subtly imbued with divine attributes when in actuality they are leeching the life out of those around them. The natural world mirrors this catastrophe as it "travails and groans" (Rom. 8:22) in anticipation of being restored to grace.⁸

When Adam fell, he died spiritually, his *nous* being flooded with thoughts not proper to itself, thoughts from his rational center. Adam's body began to sweat, to suffer, to long no more for the spiritual Manna that is life in God, but rather began anxiously seeking material food.

Henceforth, the human mode of existence was altered; a new economy sprang into being, one geared toward the avoidance of the inevitable death of the body. Living in accord with God now became more difficult, since man, who found himself possessed suddenly by anxiety over the future, responded by developing

8 "The sickness of human personality consists of the weakening of the heart's communion with the glory of God (Rom 3.23), by its being swamped by the thoughts of the environment (Rom 1.21, 24, 2.5). In such a state one imagines God to be in the image of one's sick self or even of animals (Rom 1.22). The inner person (*eso anthropos*) suffers spiritual death 'because of which (*eph' ho*) all have sinned' (Rom 5.12) by becoming enslaved to the instinct for self-preservation which deforms love by its bondage to the self-centered search for security and happiness" (Father John S. Romanides, "Faith and Culture: A Historical Approach," in *Rightly Teaching the Work of Your Truth: Studies in Faith and Culture, Church and Scriptures, Fathers and Worship...*, edited by N.M. Vapouris and Archbsp. Iakovos [Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1995], pp. 99-111, at p. 103).

social and technological buffers. Granaries were erected, and walls were built up. The accompanying human diaspora led to the formation of *ethnoi*, of tribes and nations, which developed in relative isolation from their counterparts.

Man's key existential mode became fear - fear of beasts and other men, fear of "going to the ancestors," of passing over into another world, or even of reverting to his original nothingness. In order to alleviate the fear of death, man fashioned rites and beliefs based around the idea that man can achieve *eudaemonia* (a state of complete self-sufficiency and dispassionate equilibrium) either in this life or in a spectral world of tribal ancestors.⁹

Man's fall did not plunge him into non-existence outside of God's love, however. Man, along with the cosmos as a whole, continues to be preserved by divine energies. As Father John explains: The "uncreated glory (...) is everywhere present saturating all of creation. Like the rest of creation all humans are already in communion with this glory's creating, providential, ruling and even purifying energy at various levels."¹⁰ Abraham, Moses, and the Holy Prophets of Israel (among numberless others), kept alive the Tradition that man's heart must be cleansed of thoughts (*logismoi*) so that God's

⁹ From the Orthodox viewpoint, happiness is the illusory hope for absolute security from pain and death outside of the cure of the *nous*. Happiness is merely the highest mental image of life in God that the human brain can achieve *according to its own power*, that is, apart from the *nous*. But when one's heart or *nous* is separated from all *logismoi* or thoughts, happiness is banished along with all other concepts.

¹⁰ John S. Romanides, "The Cure of the Neurobiological Sickness of Religion, The Hellenic Civilization of the Roman Empire, Charlemagne's Lie of 794, and His Lie Today, Part Two," accessed 30 July, 2016, http://romanity.org/htm/rom.02.en.the_cure_of_the_neurobiological_sickness_of_rel.02.htm#k73.

Spirit pray “Abba Father” in the name of Jesus Christ therein without ceasing. The Patriarchs and Prophets among the Jews achieved illumination of the *nous*, and some were given a vision of God's glory. During Moses's lengthy period of glorification on Mt. Sinai, the corruption of body he inherited from Adam was suspended while God instructed him. Moses needed no food or drink for forty days and nights while he viewed “the back parts of God” (Ex. 33:23).¹¹

Moses and the Prophets did not encounter an impersonal Absolute; they saw the divine resplendence of God the Father through the Logos-Angel Christ in the Holy Spirit.¹² The Logos-Angel or the Angel of Great Council is the disincarnate Word of God, Christ Jesus, who became Incarnate for the salvation of man. The Orthodox teach that the Church of Christ is founded upon the exact experience of the Holy Trinity shared in by the Prophets, only now the Angel of Great Council has become Incarnate and has established an even more intimate communion through the Church's Sacraments. Holy Sacraments such as Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist—far from being magical operations—bestow the level of grace that corresponds to the communicant's effort at inner purification. All patristic writers, except Augustine of Hippo and his followers, presupposed that the experience of illumination and glorification of the Old Testament prophets and saints was

¹¹ On Moses' glorification, see St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, 319 (English translation: Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, translated by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson [New York: Paulist Press, 1978], pp. 136-137) and St. Symeon the New Theologian, Discourse XV (English translation: St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses, Volume Two: On Virtue and Christian Life*, translated by Alexander Golitzin [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996], pp. 176-177).

¹² John S. Romanides, “The Christological Teaching of John of Damascus,” *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 58 (1976), pp. 232-269, here p. 235.

identical to that of the Apostles and holy ones who followed Christ. Indeed, the biblical and patristic writers were aware that they themselves shared in the same experience as Moses and the prophets, which is Pentecost. The only difference is that the Old Testament saints were unjustly held under the power of corruption after they reposed (until the Incarnation, which works “backwards and forwards,” delivered them), and their glorification did not have the *human* nature of Christ as its source.

In the final analysis, however, man cannot “earn” his salvation, he can only co-operate with God's grace to purify the *nous*'s spiritual, perichoretic energy from the influence of the materially-directed energy centered in gray matter and in nerves. But the sensory energy of the rational faculty is neither evil nor bad *per sé*. When the *nous* or noetic energy is free of all thoughts, the Holy Spirit prays within it continuously. The worshiper goes about his daily tasks, working and interacting with others via his rational faculty.

Parallel with this brain functioning, which is geared to the outside world, the Holy Spirit prays within the heart, even while the body sleeps. This is the state of illumination according to Orthodox Church Fathers, which can be followed by glorification of short or long duration for the salvation of others, as we have stressed. In this highest state of glorification the uninterrupted prayer of the heart ceases, since the Holy Trinity Itself grants its own uncreated Light or grace to man's heart (“In Your light we shall see the light,”¹³); the glorified human being's “blameless passions” of hunger, sleep and fear

¹³ Psalms 35[36]:10. Cited in Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 97.

are suspended, and the believer sees the all of creation bathed in the ineffable glory of God.¹⁴

This teaching of the Orthodox about the “blameless passions” has immense import for Christology, since Christ *willed* to bear the cup of hunger, pain, sleep, fear of death, and the rest in order to purify human nature from unjust bondage to them—a yoke from which the Old Testament prophets prayed to be delivered—and to turn these manifestations of the Fall into so many victories over Satan.

The Saints appropriate these marks of Adam's curse and wield them as somatic anti-demonic weapons through their likeness to the Ascended humanity of Christ in glorification. Those Christians outside of this Orthodox tradition of glorification mainly follow Augustine, who showed his incomprehension of the true meaning of the blameless passions by teaching that since children exhibit passions such as temper-tantrums, they need Holy Baptism to avoid going to hell should they die before they are old enough to go to Confession.

Non-Orthodox Christian scholars see the “Eastern Orthodox” teaching (read: non-Augustinian) about Christ's blameless passions as Monophysite in tendency. Why? Because, they think, if Christ is truly man, he would not have to constantly “re-will” to exhibit blameless passions that would be active automatically once the Incarnational ball was set in motion. But we should not be surprised at this confusion, since the body always has been a particularly thorny problem for Western theology, with its beatific vision of God's immaterial yet

¹⁴ On the natural or blameless passions, see St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, XX (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 9: Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995 (1899)], pp. 68-69).

participable essence. We simply have to take on faith the need (or even the relevance) the human body has for the afterlife, though we cannot explain or justify it fully, so Thomas Aquinas seems to suggest.¹⁵

The notion that Orthodox Christology is quasi-Monophysite reminds one of the most recent developments of Augustinian theology over the last three centuries, coeval with the origin and expansion of secularism. Though we cannot fit a full consideration of the phenomenon into these pages, suffice to say that secularism began in the West as Deistic squeamishness over God's continuous sustaining act of creation, and ended with today's scientific reductionism, which has thrown out of consideration any telic reality outside *or even inside* of the material.

In any case, this false Western dilemma over God's action in the world is dissolved, Father John is assured, if we understand creation from the vantage point of man's unity with God in glory: "God remains (...) unknown from the philosophical point of view, [even as He is] known in the experience of glorification."¹⁶ During glorification, one puts away childish things and enters into manhood and prophethood, which is, *inter alia*, to know that God lovingly supports all created being, not through the mediation of laws of nature (that are supposed to hold the cosmos together through their inherent rational integrity), but rather directly through His own energy, which is His love. The love of God is expressed *par excellence* through Christ's Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, after which the uncreated energies of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

¹⁵ See my *Orthodoxy, History, and Esotericism: New Studies* (Dewdney, B.C.: Synaxis Press, 2016), pp. 62ff.

¹⁶ John S. Romanides, in Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 73.

suffuse the hearts, minds, and bodies of the glorified. It goes without saying that the divine will or energy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not in conflict with the human will of Christ. It follows that *the blameless passions of Christ are real and not a series of recurring adjustments of an initial divine decision to become Incarnate*. The same realism at work in Orthodox Christology is at the basis of Orthodox cosmogony: the sustaining creative energies of God do not operate (as they do in the Christian West) by first setting up a static architecture of ontological principles and then waiting to see if man can reason his way into salvation.

3 God and the World

According to Orthodox Fathers, the key distinction is between uncreated and created. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are uncreated—there was no time when the Holy Trinity did not exist, and there is no essence or Abyss out of which the Holy Trinity sprang. The angels and all other material beings are created—they have their origin, not in God *per sé*, but in God's goodness.¹⁷

As we noted above, God creates all beings out of non-existence, not out of the divine essence and not out of some pre-existent, ingenerate void or *ungrund*. As Father John elaborates:

¹⁷ "Bounteous and full of goodness by nature, [God] willed that the world should be made and it was made. And it was made for man and his salvation" (St. Anthony the Great, *On the Character of Men* 123, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Volume One*, translated by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallitos Ware [London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979], p. 348).

“Creation is unique as a construction in itself, just as what is uncreated is unique in itself.”¹⁸

A significant influence on Father John, Father Georges Florovsky, emphasizes that the Holy Trinity's acts of creation are always free and are always acts of the divine will and not of the divine essence.¹⁹

The Creator was not constrained to create the world in order to claim for Himself the title of Creator: “The true *reality* of the Universe is secured, in a startling way, precisely by its being *unnecessary* to God's own being. Otherwise, it would have been but a *shadow*.”²⁰ In response to Origen's notion that creation must be eternal in order to truly exist as being from God, Father Georges notes that “The omnipotence of God must be defined not only as the supreme power to create but also as an absolute power not to create at all.”²¹

The Gnostics and other enemies of the early Church, by contrast, used categories and terms from Greek philosophy to speak of the uncreated essence of God as knowable by the human reason, since man's reason was—so they claimed—designed to know immutable realities or forms of lower, created beings. Many Gnostics and later the Neoplatonists viewed the world as being *ex Deo*—as an overflow of lesser realities from a divine essence that was, in a real sense, finding Itself. These views were mocked and rejected by all of the Church Fathers, especially St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Athanasius the Great, and St. Irenaeus of Lyon.

¹⁸ John S. Romanides, in Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 105.

¹⁹ Georges Florovsky, “The Idea of Creation in Christian Philosophy,” *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8.3 (1949), pp. 53-77, at p. 60.

²⁰ Idem, p. 55.

²¹ Idem, p. 62.

However, how was this difference between created and uncreated revealed to man? Christ granted to his followers noetic illumination at Pentecost, an event recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (2.1-31).

Each person heard the Holy Spirit praying in his heart in their own language; each was conscious that their heart was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and they knew that this glory or Light was from three Lights: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²² When St. Paul was taken up to the third heaven, he heard “ineffable words that are unlawful for man to utter” (II Cor. 12:4).

This means that St. Paul was granted direct experience of the uncreated glory of the Holy Trinity. St. Paul is describing glorification, by which one knows that the Holy Trinity is uncreated because he sees God's energies or Light *by means of this Light*, or to put it more precisely, “it is the uncreated glory which sees itself by means of the glorified”²³; as we mentioned in the previous section, the grace-filled one becomes uncreated by grace, with an “uncreated eye.”²⁴

The saint knows from within his heart that the glory is uncreated; it follows that his purified *nous* is not fooled by

²² St. Dionysius the Areopagite, in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, speaks of the angels' vision of God—understood as the model for human illumination and glorification—as a “triplly luminous contemplation” (208C; English translation by Colm Luibheid in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], p. 163).

²³ John S. Romanides, “The Cure of the Neurobiological Sickness of Religion, The Hellenic Civilization of the Roman Empire, Charlemagne's Lie of 794, and His Lie Today, Part Two,” accessed 30 July, 2016, http://romanity.org/htm/rom.02.en.the_cure_of_the_neurobiological_sickness_of_rel.02.htm#k73.

²⁴ John S. Romanides, in Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 211.

created energies or forces that pretend to be from God. Such knowledge is what allows one to, in St. Paul's words, "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). What do we conclude? That "Created truth cannot be the means by which we know the uncreated truth. The only 'reconciliation' between the two truths is the one who is glorified, who (...) through glorification knows the uncreated truth."²⁵

4 Divine Energies

As we have stressed, Orthodox seers-of-God—the Prophets, Apostles, Saints, and Fathers—never achieve knowledge of the essence of the Holy Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have knowledge of their own essence, and the glorified worshiper experiences the energies of the Holy Trinity.

However, though "a distinction is made between essence and energy, this distinction is not real [in the sense that divine essence and energies are opposed], as there is a relationship between essence and energy and the energy is called essential energy. This distinction (...) comes about from our own experience, as we can participate in the energy-glory of God and not in His essence."²⁶

The state of illumination is accompanied by the "gift of discernment of spirits, which means the discernment of energies. Then someone learns (...) to distinguish between the uncreated energies of God and created energies, mainly of the devil."²⁷

²⁵ John S. Romanides, in: Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. One*, p. 186.

²⁶ Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 74.

²⁷ John S. Romanides, in: Met. Hierotheos, *Empirical Dogmatics, Vol. Two*, p. 75.

When one's *nous* is illuminated, he is able to distinguish between suggestions from the Holy Spirit, which have an uncreated source, and suggestions that come from the created realm. *Anyone who does not know this distinction from experience (that is, from the vantage point of an illumined nous) inevitably mistakes eudaemonia for the glorification of the nous.*

Let us conclude our brief discourse on Father John Romanides and the Orthodox dogma of creation with the following summation: God is present in creation only through divine energies. The divine essence is discontinuous with created essences. This radical difference between the created and the uncreated—far from indicating a constraint upon God—is rather the revelation that God is a Creator *truly*, and that creation is created *truly*.

Most essentially, this revelation of the difference between uncreated God and creation is known by those whose healed noetic faculties see God's uncreated energies and know that their source is the glorified human body of Christ. The alternative Western view of Christian creation comes in many guises, but all can be traced back to Augustine's Platonizing system of religious knowledge, with its application of abstract philosophical categories to the uncreated, that is, precisely where they lead to the most grievous errors about the highest things.