

THE PROBLEM OF GENDER: PERSPECTIVE OF PATRISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The problem of gender in the 21st century is due to increased global awareness, activism, and a growing understanding of the economic and social costs. Today, we can see a dramatic shift in conventional gender roles as a result of changing cultural connections and the growth of worldwide ideological movements. The positions and roles of women and men in society have attracted scholarly attention.

The study investigates the “innovations from antiquity” (I. Wallerstein) regarding the issue, emphasising mutuality. Newer perspectives highlight Patristic anthropology and the New Testament principle of equality in Christ, and promote an idea of mutuality in relationships, in which both partners submit to each other. An old but innovative paradigm for the 21st century embraces marriage phenomena through LOGOS and Church Sacramentology.

Gregory of Nyssa (ca 335 – ca 395) was a Cappadocian father who argued the true human form created in God's image. Another Church Father, Maximus the Confessor (580 – 662), assigned the highest hierarchical priority to the hypostasis in the man that unifies the human body and soul. The key feature of human conformity to God is the hypostatic nature unity of the objective reality of a human.

Keywords: *Gender, Trinitarian structure of personality, gender as archetypal mark.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern issue of gender from a Patristic anthropology point of view is important today because it reveals the historical roots of persistent patriarchal views of male dominance and female subservience that shaped thought and continue to influence contemporary gender inequality and social power dynamics.

Examining these early Patristic debates on anthropology provides critical context for modern discussions of gender issues. A deeper look at the complex and modern ideological approaches leads us to more nuanced theological and social assumptions that go beyond simplistic interpretations and make place for a more inclusive understanding of human personality.

The Patristic fathers were influential intellectuals and theologians, writers from the early Church who established the intellectual, anthropological, and doctrinal foundations for understanding the wholeness of the anthropological approach to personality and the ethical teachings of the theology of the human body, soul, and spirit.

The Patristic era is associated with particular Church councils: Chalcedon (451) and Nicea II (787). Studying patristics – as C.S. Lewis wrote it, “it is much more intelligible than modern commentators.. It has always, therefore, been one of my main endeavours as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not merely worth acquiring more than second-hand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire.”

The motivation for choosing two patristic authors, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, as a source for hermeneutical interpretation of gender was to preserve

the lost classical anthropological fullness of patristic hermeneutics regarding gender issues and to find support for a particular view of humans in the image of God.

2. METHODOLOGY

To research Patristic anthropology for appreciation in modern times, a mixed-methods approach is needed, combining historical textual analysis of the Church fathers with hermeneutical interpretation. As a research method, the Open Network was created by two groups to provide a methodological advantage for understanding group members' views and behaviour on gender questions, as it captures interaction between people quite well.

The survey was conducted alongside focus groups as a pretest questionnaire within a cooperative, cross-demographic, and cross-cultural research perspective. The discussion – two groups of 10 persons in each was a miniature thinking society. Two focus group discussions gave participants opportunities to express their opinions, discuss their views with others, listen to others' opinions, and develop their thoughts by reasoning out loud – experiences similar to those in real life.

Open Network from different strata of society and *contextualization* were key steps for defining the anthropological problem in contemporary contexts, analysing Patristic texts in a hermeneutical perspective, using data to find connections and finding the results that come out from identifying key concepts: extract relevant theological and anthropological meanings from mentioned texts and offer solutions for a new framework for the contemporary problem of gender.

Open Network participants came from different strata of society in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Netherlands, Greece, and Germany: academics, intellectuals, administrative personnel, social entrepreneurs, teachers, social policy-makers, trade unionists, and master-level students in social work. 10 discussion sessions were held on Zoom. The discussion time was 2 x 45 minutes. All participants took a constructive role in discussions. Later, qualitative methods were used to analyse gender in the context of Patristic anthropology (4th-8th centuries).

Open Network increased the likelihood of finite resources for atypical knowledge combinations.

Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and fresh perspectives, offering unrestricted access to hermeneutical analysis of Patristic authors – for them a fresh source of forgotten knowledge elements offering the possibility to integrate innovative “ancient knowledge” in innovative ways for the solution of the “hot issue” of modern society – thereby increasing their likelihood of solving complex problems. By acting in this way, we focused solely on co-authorships when analysing the gathered data.

Our hermeneutical interpretations and results demonstrate a synergistic effect between the open network, providing specialised knowledge that helps overcome barriers to accessing the more diverse and unusual knowledge elements of the anthropology of personality. Qualitative data observation and participating in the open network sets a collection of new, innovative data results: creativity is possible in all areas of human life, to accommodate a methodological process that accepts the main resource of innovation, as system analyst Emmanuel Wallerstein wrote: traditional “expert knowledge” is in an age of transition. Innovative knowledge is not simply about discoveries, but about knowledge reshaped by historical trajectory – if we turn to ancient anthropological systems, to “ancient innovations”, we can discover innovative, truly forgotten understandings for today's development.

The hermeneutical perspective of the Patristic authors was revealed.

1. The most important insights are that gender is a social construct shaped by modern cultural context and that people do not know Biblical or Patristic anthropology or how gender has developed historically (68% of respondents). Patristic anthropology revelation was considered innovative (90%).

2. Many respondents (75%) hold gender stereotypes based on tradition or dictated by environments and societal needs.

3. Respondents (26%) state how gender roles are based on the historical and cultural background of a society, as well as Latvian ethnicity, but do not have any knowledge of human beings as created by God.

4. 80% of respondents state that “sex is an anatomical term, used to describe the physical characteristics of a person, while gender is a generalisation of how men and women should look and behave in society. These facts show the clear differences between sex and gender. Sex is anatomical, while gender is social and psychological.

5. Respondents (56%), mainly master students from European Christian Academy, agree that “Patristic anthropology, writings of early Church fathers reflecting a created order of male and female, that distinct roles and functions within family, church and society, based on divinely established order, are forgotten in the post-secular era”;

6. Some respondents “feel tired of the conversation about gender. And asking for “true theological and moral clarification of the question”.

After hermeneutical analysis, the research methodology was the *Anthropological Design Thinking Methodology (ADTM)*. The goal was to sketch a sufficiently complex Patristic anthropology framework within the problem question posed in the title and to demonstrate the truth of the two Church fathers’ anthropology culture code as a basic foundation and orientation in gender issues. Texts of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, contemporary views of people from different strata of society revealed can be the best intellectual of ancient times within their context of social realities who can advice to the 21st century intellectuals – this approach involves Christocentric theological lens that views LOGOS – the Incarnate Word of God-Christ as the *human archetype* applying contemporary issues through possibilities of caritative social work developed at European Christian Academy. Christocentric application to gender points to the humanity of Christ serving as an archetype of the potential completeness of human personality beyond ages.

The Anthropological Design Thinking Methodology includes interdisciplinary aspects: the hermeneutics of Patristic works is an innovation that reveals orientation criteria for gender issues on cultural, social, and life-existential levels for people today.

3. RESULTS

Our *methodological approach* opens a different horizon for engaging with the main problem of anthropology – the problem of “*human personality as an Event*” [1].

The main focus in Patristic anthropology is the emphasis on human paradox, expressed as two genders: man and woman. On the one hand, humans, as living beings, are created alongside other living beings; on the other hand, God, as Creator, has endowed humans with a special role within all creation. Human being as part of the created life differs from the rest of the creation as created in “God’s image” and seemingly functions naturally, but he is called to reach “God’s “likeness”. *He can reach it on the condition he receives Divine energy that transforms man from mere natural being into personality* or, using the Heidegger’s concept, ‘human as Event’.

The image of God was not given to any other creation on earth; however, the image is immanent in man because God can manifest Himself in man.

The context of the paradox of man as created by God prescribes the solution of the essence and meaning of sexuality of man.

God creates man; consequently, the transcendentality of the image of God is of value for his existence, since it comprises aspects of his necessity (Gregory Nazianz, Or. 38). The anthropology of the Eastern Church fathers is grounded in the concept of the Triune God and in Christology. Also, nine members of the Open Network focus group from both Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches pointed to that. Trinity consists of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and disparity and unity are described as “hypostasis” that permits us to see both the unified and different in the Three Persons. God the Son differs from God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit differs from God the Son. Difference should not be taken as “other essence” because then God would be a connection of several essences; otherness is not something radically different and other. Each hypostasis requires a personalised approach.

A categorised combination of hypostasis and person emerged from the historical dogma of the Holy Trinity, which strengthened the ontological content of the category “person” and guided a personalised approach to the category “hypostasis” and the Trinity dogma.

God the Word (Christ) incarnated into human nature but did not accept the human “I”, whereas the Ecumenical Church Council of Chalcedon (451) proved that two natures in Christ – Divine and human, which are inseparably joined in hypostasis, which is expressed in the Unity of Christ. From this, we can conclude that human personality is identical to the image of God in man, and it is not attributed to human nature as if the Divine image were not there.

“Human Personality as an Event” (Heidegger).

Personality is what distinguishes a man from his own *natural being*.

“To whom does human flesh belong?” – It is mine, but it does not express the wholeness of “I”.

“To whose human soul belongs? – It is mine, but it does not express my wholeness.

“To whom does my gender belong?” – It is mine, but it does not express the wholeness of “I”.

“All things counted above are mine, but that is not Me as *Personality*.”

Therefore, in understanding the problem of gender, we need to answer the question: are gender differences related to human personality, and is it enough to treat human beings as mere natural beings? – No, they are not related. Human personality is higher than the intrinsic bio-psychological nature, higher than gender [2]. Humans are not merely biological, but personalities whose existence is defined by “standing in the unique relationship to Being that nature lacks. Human personalities are to be placed above “nature” as a biological category [1].

Because every man is created in God’s image, God is infinite, and He provides a potentially infinite path to God. Whatever is achieved is always infinitely smaller than what could be achieved (Bulgakov).

Human personality is identical to the image of God; it is the highest level of being a Man, and this is why God has given a call to reach the likeness of God – the ideal of every man is to learn to overcome the limits of the flesh. To put it rationally and clearly: the expression of human personality is not just his being in flesh, albeit it is not separable from flesh, and it is manifested in the exactness of nature or flesh and through relationships with other people.

God is in communication between Three Persons. God begets the Son not because He is obliged to, but because of love. The very existence of God in Three Persons shows love. The essence of God is manifested in the communication of the Three Persons in love. It excludes self-limiting and self-sufficiency. It is giving of the Self to the Other without losing anything of identity. *Moreover, the reflection of this love is every God's creature, every human being.* God creates us not because He is obliged to, but because of His nature and essence – because of love. At the same time, God's creatures, every man as the crown of creation, are called to reflective love towards God. Man “has no duty to love God, but the very existence of man logically manifests itself as a reflection of the Divine existence once he responds to the seeking love of God.” [3].

Human existence in love is a creative meeting of two energies, both created and uncreated – synergy between the outgoing love of God and human love towards God. Human nature is dynamic in essence; it cannot manifest itself in a static, isolated, self-sufficient biological self, but rather through communication with God. Consequently, it promotes openness to other people, *the need for the other gender.*

From this perspective, the duality of genders was seen by the Church Father St. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335 – ca. 394) as a symbol of what brings humans closer to the animal world [4], but does not fully express it because man is not an animal. The essence of a human being cannot be compared to that of an animal since the gift of life given to man dynamically reflects communication with God.

In essence, the *duality of gender is a metaphysical mark of human incompleteness.* However, this mark should not be treated negatively. Christianity is optimistic in asserting that the created nature is not bad, since it offers the possibility of the likeness of God.

An inclination toward perfection was put into man in creation; it may be described as “unity of two” that tends toward “unity of three”. *Gender is a symbol of actual incompleteness.* Separateness which aspires for “the other half”, for the “other”. In this aspiration, man obtains himself, finds himself in the other in another human. Gender is both separating and, at the same time, connecting reality. Greek theologian Christos Yannaras, when discussing “the unity of two in marriage,” presents a view of marital unity as a covenantal “one flesh” union grounded in God's love. He interprets gender as a spiritual and existential joining rather than just a biological or legal contract. He expresses a Christocentric understanding of relationships, positioning the marital union as a path to real communion and spiritual fulfilment through self-emptying love. Ch. Yannaras references the Genesis command for the man and woman to become “one flesh” as a foundational theological basis for marital unity. This is not biological, but existential, the joining of two persons into a single indivisible entity, with divine love as its foundation.

Adam finds himself in Eve; he appraises himself in relation to other personalities with whom communication means “being one flesh” (Gen. 2:23-24). Womanhood is not something new for Adam. It is not the division of androgen into men and women. If womanhood were alien to man, he would not be able to understand and appreciate woman, and vice versa – if manhood were fully alien and incomprehensible to woman, she would not be able to see it in man. Natural differences between men and women are rooted in Adam's creation.

The well-known watchword “gender equality” has its roots in Christianity and speaks to the universal unity of human nature. However, at the same time, “gender equality” prescribes a hierarchy that says Eve was created from Adam and not vice versa. It does not mean that Eve is incomplete, Adam. Eve possesses the same human

perfection as Adam, whereas human perfection is realised only in a living unity of both. Similarly, the prime essence of God the Father does not reduce the manifestations of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; likewise, the prime essence of man does not reduce the dignity of woman. Unreasonable would be the inclination of God the Son to take overpowers of God the Father, and strange would be the request for woman to be equal to man in all aspects.

The differences the Church has nominated regarding the ministry of men and women in the Church directly reflect the gender hierarchy.

St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote about gender differences in the context of the fall [5]. When God created man, He did not conduct an experiment “will fall – will not fall”. Here we deal with incomprehensible *aprosia* (Greek “lack of thirst sensation”) when the omniscience of God and human freedom are juxtaposed. Nothing is evil or wrong by itself since evil is inadequate use of the given freedom and one's own nature.

Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of the human person is perceived as acting in both male and female ways. He argues for striving for divine love in marriage, and our gender identities are logically tied to being able to procreate after the Fall, which was a result of the first parents falling prey to the sensual side of their natures. They became enslaved to sensuality and would not have the spiritual state required for spiritual procreation.

The foundational insight of Gregory of Nyssa's theology and anthropology is that gender is accidental to human nature. Each person is spiritual in themselves. Humans do not need to find completion in another person; only in God. Both genders are spiritually equal, since the image of God is itself genderless.

Sexuality was designed for marriage and childbirth: it enables humanity to continue its forlorn attempt to step over the tide of death by producing progeny. This was not intended in God's first creation of the prototype of human nature. “Adam's physical body has been unimaginably different from our own. It has been a faithful mirror of soul which itself mirrored the utterly undivided, untouched simplicity of God.” [6].

After the fall, man became subject to passions. Passion as self-promotion and the subsequent suffering caused by the inability to satisfy the need often do not apply to rational control. Passion takes over when a man is passive towards the natural processes within him and lets them loose by ignoring creation in the image and likeness of God as a task.

Men are hierarchical creatures by nature. Their complex essence should be “interwoven with the Word” (Greek *Logos*), it should be influenced by the Logos and controlled by reason [5] so that both will and actions are submitted to reason. And then, as Orthodox theologian S. Bulgakov put it, passions will not win a man because everything that a man does will be submitted to the control of reason [7]. It is native for a man to strive for God, for the good, creatively manifesting himself in the world. Falling into sin means “mistake of reason” when reason turns to the illusion of good rather than the good itself. Reason turns away from God, and man becomes taken over by passions and sufferings [5]. A man who turns away from the main task of his life becomes animalistic by letting irrational impulses and instincts rule over him. After hierarchical regularity is destroyed, a man leaves the guidance of the Word or Logos, and the animalistic begins to rule over him. What is natural in the animal world becomes unnatural for man. A man, to a large extent, loses his royal position in his life and, from a wise leader, turns into a violent tyrant, also in gender relationships.

Sin leads to the destruction of the human structure, hierarchy and existential basics. Communicative, creative, collegial beginnings in man lacking God's rule are ruined, and culture and civilisation are impregnated with alienation. Also, 81% of

respondents point out that alienation is a key problem in communication. Another mentioned problem is individualism (86%), and the third is the predominance of the external, social regulations and conditionalities. Only 35% mention the spiritual potential of love, whereas only 20% mention the ability to sacrifice the self as the true foundation of love.

From this, we may conclude that human existence is both tragic and ambivalent. The God-founded native order for the continuation of the family has been radically undermined. Misunderstood gender roles of men and women are followed by irrationality, affects, nervousness, and suffering.

The question arises: is man, after all, in his undermined condition, capable of love? The answer is – yes! Marriage, as a specific institutional manifestation of both men's and women's potential, despite all kinds of distortions, has throughout history shown the experience of love and happiness. Marriage is a link between generations through which both ethical, moral, and religious values are transmitted to the next generation. In Israel, the country of God's Chosen nation, marriage is treated as the fulfilment of God's Promise and is seen as holy. The holiness of marriage is described from the perspective of the Covenant of God. Covenant (Mal. 2:14) is described in terms of Yahveh's marriage relationship with Israel. It personifies God's trust, will to keep and nourish relationships, even when men violate that trust, as well-known Orthodox theologian Chr. Yannaras puts it: "God's relationships with His nation and indeed with every man is a Sacrament of love and marriage: it is confirmed by the obviously erotic poetry of the Song of Songs accepted as part of the Old Testament Canon. By no doubt, relationships between God and Israel are an archetype for the unity of God and humanity, which comes true in the Person of Christ and His Bride in the Church." [8].

"That mystery is profound," writes AP. Paul in the Epistle to Ephesians (5:32). In the New Testament, Christ is called "Bridegroom of the Church" for every man's soul. For God, each soul is precious; it is His beloved. It should be added that the Christ-given life eternal in the Gospel of John is confirmed with the predicate "to acknowledge", "to know" that complies with the Hebrew word for marriage relationships between man and woman: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (Jn. 17:3).

Ap. Paul speaks about the work of Christ as a phenomenon of new humanity (2 Cor. 5:17) where Christians are "dressed up" (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:22-24) – through death and resurrection together with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12). Renewal of humanity in Christ is executed in communication with God and people in all aspects. The question arises: perhaps gender, marriage, and sexual desire are just attributes of the fallen humanity, eschatological atavism? Perhaps marriage is a "sinful" concession to the old, unredeemed, sinful man? Shouldn't *eros* be replaced by *agape* love in the Church? What is the connection between the passionate folly and the love full of responsibility of the Good Samaritan? Christ Himself was not married and lived without sexuality – didn't He show that the renewed man is foreign to lust, marriage and childbirth? What perfection of spiritual life can we speak about if Christians practice one of the most powerful passions?

These questions contradict the sinfulness of our world, as well as sexual desire, on the one hand, and some perfect ideal world, on the other, in an unacceptable manner. On behalf of the Kingdom, the content of the existing world is rigorously rejected – not only what is fallen and derelict but also what is incapable of renewal. The Church testifies to the possibility of redemption, salvation, and the transformation of the world in Christ.

The Church is a God-in-humanity organism; it is an indivisible, unbreakable connection between God and humanity. In the Church, both the eternal and the changeable manifest themselves in the secular and changing. The Church is simultaneously the Kingdom and the way to the Kingdom, holiness and guidance to this holiness, a school of Deification—beginning of radical transformation and renewal. The Church lives out the experience of the “future world”. Its existence in this world is radically paradoxical: it undergoes eschatological tension between “already” and “not yet”. Church as Christ's body is “the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23). Simultaneously, it has not yet reached fullness: all Christians are invited to grow in Christ (Eph. 4:15-16). The Spirit must take place in every man (Eph. 3:16).

Why is the actualisation of genders in marriage a Sacrament in the Church? – Because in the Church, we are independent beings preserving our own personal identity. Therefore, understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ is supplemented by the notion of “Bride of Christ”. The marriage metaphor is meaningful here because Christ encompasses many personalities who have found fullness of their existence in Him.

Gender is an archetypal marker for human beings as created, distinctive from God and incomplete. However, we see that the gap between the Creator and creation, God and human, heaven and earth, is surmounted by the unity of the Bride and Bridegroom – Christ and His Church. Consequently, the essence of human beings created is not in what he has been before or is now, but rather in the one he is called to be, his deification and transformation into personality. The essence of gender is in his TELOS (Greek “goal”) – goal.

Arche (in Greek) of humans, both men and women, is that we are created according to the Word (*Logos* in Greek); *the telos of our personality is hidden in the Word of Christ, who is both Alpha and Omega of human existence.* Just because the fullness in Christ is described as His marriage with the Church, the essence of gender, its *telos*, should be seen from the perspective of the execution of the image and likeness of God. Sacrament of marriage guides us in the unity of Christ and His Church, in renewed existence following the likeness of Christ. The Sacrament of Marriage points to a culture of relationships: to love one's wife as your own flesh; husband and wife – one flesh; to love your neighbour as yourself (Mat. 22:39; Eph. 5:25-26). Because of my nature, which was reborn in Christ – that is not “me” but rather the same being as I, albeit of a different gender next to me – he is not “other” and to love him is just natural because he is my flesh and also my nature. The fullness of Christ is regained in the Sacrament and process of marriage, which transforms it into the complete unity of two genders. In this way, marriage is a symbol and a real expression of the completeness of unity given by the Church to both genders.

The structure of marriage is *Catholic, i.e., conciliar, reflecting the Image of the Holy Trinity*. Therefore, family is a small church, and vice versa – the Church is our extended family. Marriage is not a one-time event – it lasts throughout the life spans of spouses. Unfortunately, *catholicity* of marriage is just an abstraction in too many cases. However, we can execute it in essence. It is possible if both sides accept Eucharist – Sacrament of the Church, which gives strength to overcome weaknesses and to grasp the true and God-given holy love by which two animals are transformed into “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Sacrament of marriage is, and it must be closely connected with Eucharist, which unites the “small church” with experience of the “big Church”. In this context, the problem of transforming passionate love between two genders *into sacrificial love* is solved. Marriage as a sacrament is carried out in everyday life as a school of morals and ethics through the unity of two genders – one

person does not live merely *together with*, but rather lives because of, the other, for life unfolding together because of one another. The Church abolishes the shackles of biological and social determinism of gender and offers the highest meaning – the existential expression of man for love.

4. DISCUSSION

Our study's hermeneutic findings in the Open Network discussions frame introduced the Method of Anthropological Design Thinking (ADTM), which aligns with Catholic theology, where it is tied to male and female as divine principles. It is seen that the dignity of both sexes as created in God's image, while others sometimes view it as a foundation for more restrictive gender roles and a gender – hierarchical Church structure.

Not only Orthodox, but modern Catholic anthropology was well linked to the concepts of sex and gender to the goodness of the human body, stating that a person is male or female by virtue of having a male or female body.

The Patristic authors' views on sexuality continue to be relevant in contemporary debates on gender identity, although the interpretations of these views in liberal ideology are highly contentious today. Our research extends ideological approaches, demonstrating that the gender problem is not the term but the anthropology behind it. Patristic anthropology texts share “light shine in the darkness” and offer critical dialogue. However, there is a lack of educators who know how to convey the message accurately to a post-secular society. The light means proposing the entire truth about the human personality, to point out ideas that affirm the dignity of the person and help attain their fullness.

These results suggest that the Patristic view can be an effective, holistic-focused source of human personality and could help bridge the gap in gender reduction, providing better support for the proposition of human personality in all its beauty and spiritual depth. It is also necessary to provide formation in a pastoral style that knows how to connect with the post-secular world and to propose the anthropological fullness of the personality, which is comprehensible to today's world.

Limitations of our study included a relatively small sample size. It provided personalised feedback, showing that the lack of “innovative knowledge from European antiquity” (E. Wallerstein) does not accord full privilege to the reduction of the full anthropological content of human personality.

Future research and studies should explore the long-term impact of approaching Patristic anthropology to assess its effectiveness across different studies of the subject. Such studies could provide deeper insights: without attractive role models, it is difficult to carry out the process of identifying with one's own sex that is necessary in adolescence. In addition, there is a deep crisis in families: many dysfunctional families with absent fathers and mothers. In social media, etc., there is certainly also a great need for a clear, single message that points to references to guide and propose, with the depth and beauty of human personality culture always in continuous change. However, there are moments in post-secular society when a true understanding of personality occurs – the Patristic anthropology provides the perspective and vision needed for each person to recognise the truth in the deepest longings of our hearts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

One of the most influential Church fathers of the early Church, central to developing Trinitarian orthodoxy recited until today in the Nicene Creed and being given the titles of the Father of Fathers” and “the Pillar of Orthodoxy” by the early Ecumenical

Councils was Gregory of Nyssa. He is considered authoritative because of theological anthropology. He viewed gender as a fallen state characteristic, arguing that the true human form created in God's image was neither male nor female. His concept of "Double creation" suggests an original incorporated, genderless human state that was later differentiated into male and female for reproductive purposes and not the essential nature of being human. He quotes Gal. 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

One of the most striking features of Gregory's understanding of gender, found in his early formulation "On the Making of Mankind," is that sexual difference is not to be found in the original creation; rather, it is the restoration of the original creation with which he ultimately seems to be concerned. A hierarchy between male as primary and superior and female as secondary and inferior is, therefore, difficult to establish.

Corresponding to the principal dichotomy between spirituality and materiality is the distance between soul and nature, which Gregory sees in the image of a lily. The lily is here as a symbol for the soul. "There is a good distance between the flower and the ground, for the reason ... that its beauty might remain pure up above and not defiled by contact with earth." Nevertheless, even in the spiritual realm, where the soul approaches God, Gregory makes a hierarchical distinction: the male bridegroom is described as "above" the female bride, who, in turn, with good desires, "looks up at Him". The bride is the one who is protected from the "violation by the power of Him Who commanded her". [9].

In the paper, we address the term "gender" as it is used by Maximus the Confessor, whose teaching about the theology of marriage and the creation of Christian identity is based not on sexual or gender roles, but on the uniqueness of human nature.

The problem is not the term but the anthropology behind it – to propose the entire truth about the human being. The article is not addressing the ideologies of our time; rather, it is necessary to provide formation in Christian anthropology.

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