ON

THE NATURE

OF MAN

(THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN VIEW

OF MAN)

by V.Rev. Dr. George Papademetriou

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PREFACE

In our modern context, we as Orthodox Christians are in great need of instruction in the Orthodox faith that we received from our ancestors - that is, our Holy Fathers. This knowledge has motivated me to publish this study, which is based on the traditional Orthodox understanding of the human person. I made every effort to clarify Christian anthropology as manifested in the writings of the Church Fathers and modern Orthodox theologians. My intention is to help our people better understand the doctrine of Orthodox anthropology. The original texts were printed in Theologia, a scholarly journal published by the Church of Greece and the theological faculty of the University of Athens, and the Greek Orthodox Theological Review. The present format is made available through the generosity of Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, for which I am grateful to him.

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Chapter 1: 
THE NATURE 
OF MAN

One of the most fundamental problems which every thinker is faced with is man's being, his destiny, his relation to the world and to God. Early Christianity was influenced by Jewish and Greek philosophical and theological understandings of man. The Greek view of man was expressed in Platonic and Neo-Platonic terms. Greek Philosophy makes a sharp distinction between body and soul, the immaterial rational and the irrational material realms of existence. The Jewish perspective is reflected in the sharp distinction made between God and creation, for the Hebrews carefully avoided philosophical dualism. These two traditions were simultaneously developed in early Christian thought. These two trends complement each other. It is evident that the Christian perspective of man is that he is a "being" and a creature of God capable to become "like God," that is, able to attain theosis.

The Orthodox Christian view of man is understood in terms of the New Testament and the Church Fathers. The Patristic
interpretation of man is the basis for Orthodox Theologians to expound the doctrine of man founded on the Holy Bible, and the experience of the Fathers. The meaning of Christ's revelation is closely connected to the life of the Church. Therefore, the Orthodox interpretation of man is that of the New Testament as expounded by the Holy Fathers.

The creation of man is a special act of God within His creation. Creation itself is an act of God resulting from His love. Z. Rhosse, a Greek theologian, states that "the result of the creative and providential energy of God is the world, an ordered whole ordained to a definite end."  

God created the world with a definite end and purpose. The "crown" of God's creation is the "rational" being, man. There is nothing un-Holy in the world.

According to a Greek Orthodox theologian: "Man consisting of body and soul, was created, between the natural and spiritual world, as the key and crown of creation."  Rhosse agrees with him, stating: "Man is the link joining the spiritual and material orders of the world ..." The body is related to the material world and the soul to the spiritual. In the words of Rhosse, [man is] "the capstone and end of the material creation, belonging in body to the physical order, and in the soul or spirit to the spiritual order."  

Creation does not mean "perfection"; it means that God made man with all the possibilities to become "perfect." God created
man and by Grace man attains Immortality. It is emphasized that "only God is by nature Eternal," and it is also pointed out that "man at creation was innocent but not perfect. He was created with certain potentialities which had to be developed and transformed into actualities in the course of time. He had to take part in his own creation by the use of his free will. Original goodness was innocence, not matured development and fully spiritual maturity."

Man is God's creation ex nihilo as is attested to in the first chapter of Genesis. The doctrine of Creation, ex nihilo, contradicts the classical Greek philosophical view that "nothing derives from nothing." Yet the Scriptures and Orthodox theology insist that man was created by God out of "nothing" to "become" like Him.

Another aspect of man is the soul, which is part of the whole human being. The Platonic influence on Augustine compelled him to regard the body and the material aspect of man as evil; thus salvation is to destroy the corporeal existence of man. Yet later he abandoned this view but could not free himself completely from his Platonism, and regarded the soul as the essence of man, as the vivifying principle.

St. Gregory of Nyssa agrees with Augustine that "the soul is a lifegiving principle," but St. Gregory of Nyssa insists that the soul and body were created at the same time to evolve toward perfection:
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The survival cause of our constitution is neither a soul without a body, nor a body without a soul but that from animated and living bodies it is generated at the first as a living and animate being, and that our humanity takes it and cherishes it like a nursling with the resources she herself possesses and it thus grows on both sides and makes its growth manifest correspondingly in either part.\(^{10}\)

This body and soul as understood in Orthodox theology are two aspects of the same "being." Androutsos rejects the two extremes of "spiritualism" and "materialism" as incompatible with the Orthodox Christian Faith.\(^ {11}\)

The definitions given by Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa express the attitudes of some Christians concerning the soul. The following definition of Augustine is closely related to that of Plato. He defines the soul as "to be a certain kind of substance sharing in reason, fitted to rule the body."\(^ {12}\) The human soul is a substance which participates in reason and is adapted to govern the human body. Also, St. Gregory of Nyssa defines the soul as a created essence has a peculiar nature which is spiritual, and in a sense, ineffable. He states that:

The soul is an essence created, living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body of the power of living and grasping objects of sense, as
long as there is a natural constitution capable of holding this together."^{13}

The definitions quoted above from the two representative thinkers tend towards the dualistic conception of man.

Orthodox Theologians, however, follow the traditional conception of man as both body and soul. John Papadopoulos in his Dogmatics argues that man consists of body and soul; and that the body is the "dwelling place" for the soul. The soul is the vivifying power of the body. The body and soul are inseparable in that "being which is called man."^{14} The prominent Greek Orthodox Theologian Androutsos rejects the doctrine of the Platonizing philosophers who claim that the body is a shadow of the soul, the enslavement of the spirit.\^{15}

Some theologians conceive man as being "tri-composite," that is, consisting of three elements: body, soul and spirit. An exponent of this theory is A. Makrakis. He argues "that two natures are generated in the soul, the carnal and the spiritual, as the result of its union with the flesh and spirit; this has been proved and confirmed by the testimony of consciousness and the corroboratory testimony of reason."^{16} In another article, he goes into grammatical and logical detail to prove that the statement in Genesis 2:7 supports the doctrine of the "tri-compositeness" of man.\^{17} But this position is rejected by the Orthodox theologians as being alien to the Orthodox Greek
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Patristic doctrine and to the true understanding of this doctrine by the Church. According to Rhosse and Androutsos (professors of Dogmatics, University of Athens), man is a unity of body and soul; not a dualistic being. They both reject the "tri-compositeness" of man, and point out that the "spirit" in man is the energy of the Holy Spirit which illuminates and sanctifies the intellectual and spiritual faculties of man. According to Gavin, the above-mentioned theologians "regard man as a unity consisting of body and soul, the latter called spirit in its higher aspects." John Papadopoulos refers to the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and to the Fathers to show that man consists of body and soul... He rejects the "tri-compositeness" of man as a misunderstanding of the terms "body, soul, and spirit" used by the Scriptures and the Fathers to describe the nature of man. John Romanides also rejects this doctrine and quotes P. Chrestou that Origen and Apollinaris of Laodicea "probably" were the only two ancient ecclesiastical writers to advocate this doctrine. The majority of Orthodox theologians follow the Patristic doctrine that man is a "unity" of body and soul. Man is a creature, created by God in His own "Image."

Concerning the origin of the individual soul Orthodox theologians have to choose between "traducianism" and "creationism." Augustine was troubled by the nature of the soul and confessed that the origin of the soul "is a profound mystery."
Now there are three theories concerning the origin of the soul. The first is that the soul pre-exists in God and that the body is an enclosure and enslavement. This theory was held by Plato and Origen in the Christian era, and is incompatible with Christian Orthodoxy. It was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

The second theory, called "traducianism," is that the offspring is a generative act of the parents. This theory was defended by Athanasios, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine with some reservations. The generation of the organism is originated in God, who creates through the cooperation (synergy) of man with God's Providence.

The third theory is of "creationism," that is, the soul is created by God in principle or as idea in the beginning. In other words, every soul that comes into being is a special act of God.

Orthodox theologians seem to be in disagreement as to which theory is acceptable since there is no dogmatic pronouncement concerning the origin of the soul. Papadopoulos accepts "traducianism" because the continuation of man's relation to Adam and Eve is not interrupted. Androutsos rejects this theory because the soul is a product of natural generation which is not compatible to the spirituality of man's soul and also leads to "determinism." Androutsos accepts a combination of the two theories, "creationism" and "traducianism", that is, man is a product of the Divine and human activity. In essence, the crea-
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tive power of God cooperates in the creative generation of each man. He states that:

*The right view of the origin of the soul lies rather in a combination of the theories of creationism and traducianism so that man would be a result of both Divine and human activity, and God's creative power be involved and exercised in the generation of each individual.*

It is obvious from the Scriptures that the soul has its origin in God. We must guard against the error that God created us by engendering the soul from His Essence. Man, being a "special creation" of God is the crown of creation, created in His Image and destined to become "like" God.

The "Image" and "likeness" of God in man was a special doctrine of the Church Fathers, and remains so with modern Orthodox theologians. The most accepted doctrine of the "Image" and "likeness" is that the "Image" is the "freedom" that man was endowed with and the "likeness" is the "moral perfection of man." According to St. Basil, the "Image" is the potential "likeness." This distinction between "Image" and "likeness" is attributed to St. Irenaeus, who influenced the Orthodox doctrine of man. He states that man was not created perfect from the beginning, but was endowed with all the gifts that were necessary to *become* perfect.
The perfection and maturity of man is not only a moral one but also physical and intellectual as well, because this is the will of God. The nature of man is his reason, his freedom and the potentiality to become perfect and participate in Immortality. It is a moral perfection in doing good.

Man is not the "Image" of the universe or only "microcosm" because the "macrocosm" is not Eternal. Man is the "Image of God." A great Father of the Church speaks the following words on this point:

_There is nothing remarkable in wishing to make of man the Image and likeness of the universe, for the earth passes away, the sky changes and all that they contain is as transitory as that which contains them. People said, man is a microcosm... and thinking to elevate human nature with this grandiloquent title, they did not notice that they had honoured man with the characteristics of the mosquito and the mouse._

Man - as a creature of God in His Image - is destined to attain His likeness. This was taught by the Fathers and is held by the Church. The "Image", as interpreted by some theologians, is the freedom and reason that man received at the time of creation. According to Father Romanides, in interpreting the Church Fathers it is suggested that "Immortality" is the
"Image" of God in man and this is what man lost in the fall.\textsuperscript{32} It is not Immortality of the soul as taught by the Ancient Greek philosophers, but the Hebrew concept of Immortality of the whole man.\textsuperscript{33}

It seems to me that the viewpoints mentioned above, that is, freedom and reason on one side and Immortality on the other, should be emphasized. Both freedom, reason and Immortality make up the "Image" of God. Those who stress the rational aspect of man point to the rational faculty as the element that gives superiority to man over the other creatures. This is summarized in the following statement: "Man alone of all creatures had the capacity for thinking, knows of reality of moral nature and enjoys the ideas of truth, beauty and righteousness, that few would deny."\textsuperscript{34}

The "Image" of God is not located in any particular part or aspect of man, but the whole man is the Image of God.\textsuperscript{35} St. Gregory Palamas said: "The word man (anthropos)" is not applied to either soul or body separately, but to both together, since they have been created in the Image of God."\textsuperscript{36}

ENDNOTES:


3. Z. Rhosse, op. cit., p. 398.
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4. J. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*. In Greek. Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1957, p. 57. This work has been translated into English by Dr. George Gabriel. In our text, all references refer to the Greek edition.


7. Ibid., p. 95. "From nothingness nothing becomes."

8. *De Quant. An.*., C. 3, 4. He also says that the soul is a substance, in *Confessions* IV, C. XVI

9. Migne, P.G., XLVI, 16B; 17B.


11. Chr. Androustsos, op. cit., p. 130.


13. *De An. et Res*. 189C.


15. Chr. Androustsos, op. cit., p. 130.


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18. Ibid.


20. Ibid., p. 68.


23. Ibid., p. 135.

24. John Papadopoulos, op. cit., p. 74; also Z. Rhosse accepts it because "it seems the most reasonable." The others are one-sided and incomplete. Frank Gavin, op. cit., p. 160.


26. J. Karmiris, op. cit., p. 29. See also John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodox*, 11, 12.


33. Ibid., p. 37.


35. V. Lossky, op. cit., p. 115.
36. Quoted by V. Lossky, ibid., p. 116.
Chapter 2: THE HUMAN CONDITION

The discussion of man in the "Image" of God brings us to the topic of the primitive "state" of humanity. According to the Greek Fathers, the "primitive" state of man was not a "state of perfection," as was the contention of the West, but a state of innocence attributed to the first humans. As Z. Xintaras says,

*It is interesting to note that although Irenaeus believed that the Image consists of man's endowment of reason and freedom, although he taught that Adam enjoyed a certain degree of blessedness in his primitive state, he did riot attribute to him any degree of perfection, as did Augustine and later, Roman Catholic Theology.*

Man was created in a state of innocence and was destined and endowed with the potentiality to grow to maturity. This was held by the Church Fathers and Orthodox theologians. Man
was created "with all physical and spiritual endowments necessary for the fulfilment of the end for which God foreordained him." An Orthodox theologian states that man was created by God "endowed with all the spiritual and physical qualities "to fulfil his destiny." The following statement reflects the Orthodox view on the subject:

*The original state of man was one of potential, but not completed or achieved perfection. Had man been absolutely or completely perfect, the fall would have been impossible.*

Man is, by nature, good, and by his cooperation - synergy - with God, can attain moral goodness.

In discussing the original state or righteousness and holiness as "relative" and not absolute perfection, Orthodox theologians state that the West, under the influence of Augustine, erred by accepting that man was originally given as a gift from God, in "absolute holiness, righteousness and Eternity."

Rhosse notes that "the Protestant view holds this primitive or original righteousness to be resident in the natural man, qua man, and independent of Grace." He further explains, that "the Roman theory would make it consist essentially and solely of the special super-added Grace."

Gavin describes in the following manner the Orthodox position as held by some theologians:
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The Orthodox view — for example, that of both Androutsos and Rhosse — is that man's original state was potentially perfect and "original righteousness was the result of the cooperation of the Spirit of God with the natural powers implanted in the human soul in Creation."

It is evident the Orthodox Church teaches that the primitive state of man was innocence and that he was endowed with the natural powers to cooperate with God to become perfect.

But man, unfortunately, did not abide in God's will and therefore perfection of Adam had need of trial and testing so as to become moral and ethical perfection, but by his own will he turned away from his own end, at the instigation of the evil one, to serve his own will in preference to that of his Creator. Thus the subject of the fall is explained as disobedience and rebellion against the Will of God.

The fall does not lie in the evil nature of the forbidden fruit, but rather in the act of disobedience. Opposition to and transgression of the Divine Will is the essence of the fall. It is the fact of the setting of their own will against God's Will.

Man's insubordination and disobedience was the act of choosing evil. Original or Ancestral Sin is interpreted as "egocentricity" and a free human act of disobeying of God's
Will. "Self love is a perversion of man's primary destiny to love God and his neighbour." Sin is "willingly" or "unwillingly" disobeying God's will. Original or Ancestral Sin is described by some as "sexual" concupiscence, a theory not accepted by the Orthodox Church. N. Berdyaev, one of the most profound modern philosophers, states that "egocentricity is, indeed, original sin." Another theologian points out that it is called original (ancestral) sin, not because a sin was committed by the first parents, but because of the destructive results and man's situation in a state of sin which was a reality after the fall.

The perversion of human nature is the direct consequence of the "free decision of man." The ability of man to come into Communion with God was obstructed, and the way by which Grace would have poured out through him into the whole of creation was removed by man himself in his disobedience of God's Will. But this must not, under any circumstances, be understood as meaning that this "physical" concept of sin and its results, as held in the teaching of the Orthodox Church, excluded the other elements: "the personal moral aspect, the aspect of fault and punishment." Vladimir Lossky points out that:

*The two aspects are inseparably connected because man is not only a nature, but also a person placed over against*
a personal God, and in a personal relationship with Him. If human nature disintegrates as a consequence of sin, if sin introduces death into the created universe, the reason for this is not only that human freedom has created a new status, a new mode of existence in evil, but also that God has placed a limit to sin, allowing it to end in death. The wages of sin is death.  

According to Orthodox teaching, God alone has Immortality; creation lives only by participation in the Divine Life. It is held by the Fathers, and the Church teaches that God alone is by "nature" Immortal, whereas man by Grace becomes Immortal.

Adam did not fulfil his mission; so he was unable to attain union with God and perfection of the created order. "That which he failed to realize when he used the fullness of his liberty became impossible to him from the moment in which he willingly became the slave of an external power." In the thought of some reformers human freedom is incompatible with God’s omnipotence and omniscience; thus it was that in the Reformation the concept of human freedom was restricted.

Personal sin is also noted in the free will of man. The first cause of sin, both original and personal, is the devil, who is working to divert the will of God (hamartia) and in this way to push man further away from God into death. God is not the
cause of death. The Fathers of the Church speak of both the "corporal" and "spiritual" death as separation from God; the cause of this separation is the devil, who is also the cause of death.\textsuperscript{22} Death, according to the Greek Fathers, is a necessary consequence of sin and the fall of the first parent, and all descendants of the first parents enter this state of sin and death.\textsuperscript{23} The Augustinian teaching that death is God's punishment, is alien to Orthodox theological thought. Now, the reality of death is in a sense the seeming triumph of Satan over God. Orthodoxy insists that here in this world we are struggling against the devil, and here in the world the "struggle" will end with the Resurrection of the bodies.\textsuperscript{24}

The positive aspect of human freedom is life by Grace. God created man to "have life Eternal." Man is restored to his potential by the Grace that flows from the cross of Christ. Freedom is that characteristic which makes man a being who can construct his own future. Says V. Lossky concerning freedom:

\textit{Only free beings can be capable of realizing moral good and other absolute values. Only free beings who willingly enter the path that leads to union with God as a living ideal of perfection deserve to be called children of God. Only free beings are capable of taking an independent part in God’s work or of entering into living council with}
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God. 25

The devil is the cause of apostasy and the falling away from God and he is the cause of our personal sin. This does not mean that man is not responsible for his sin, however. Man makes the "choice" and this freedom holds him responsible for his own sin. 26 The Fathers always emphasized the sinfulness of man but also recognized the hope in Christ. God is life, and separation from God means death. 27 Satan does not act only in the evil thoughts of man but influences the human will and actions. The acts of Satan are, by nature, ontologically evil. 28 Some Fathers teach that there was an Eternal descent towards non-being after the fall. 29

God permits death to prevent sin from becoming Eternal. 30 This is the teaching of the Church: that death is the consequence of sin and not guilt of concupiscence as was expounded in the West. 31 Father Romanides emphatically states that: "Man in the physical multiplication of the genus inherits the weakness of death and is in degrees under the power of the devil and sin." 32

And St. Irenaeus points out: "As in the first generation we inherit death, in the same manner in the new generation we are able to inherit life." 33

Christ came to overcome the power of sinfulness and death, and to restore the human potential to attain perfection.
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ENDNOTES:

1. Z. Xintaras, op. cit., p. 52.

2. Ibid.

3. Chr. Androutsos, p. 136; also see Frank Gavin, op. cit., p. 161.

4. John Papadopoulos, op. cit., p. 75.

5. Chr. Androutsos, quoted by Frank Gavin, op. cit., p. 164.

6. Chr. Androutsos, Dogmatics, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

7. John Papadopoulos, op. cit. p. 79.

8. Quoted by Frank Gavin, op. cit., p. 164.

9. Ibid.


13. J. Karmiris, op. cit., p. 34.


16. J. Papadopoulos, op. cit., p. 86.

17. V. Lossky, op. cit., p. 132.

19. V. Lossky, op. cit., p. 133.


21. *Hamartia* means to divert or prevent that which is intended.


27. Ibid., p. 71.

28. Ibid., p. 72.

29. V. Lossky, op. cit., p. 129.


31. Ibid., p. 81.

32. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

Chapter 3: THE SALVATION OF MAN

Salvation in the Orthodox Church is the work of God through Christ, the Divine Logos. It is because of God’s love toward His fallen creatures that the Divine Logos becomes man to restore the former position. Androutsos expresses this in the following words:

Man, having fallen under the power of sin and the Devil, was unable to be saved and to have fellowship with God, but was under condemnation to destruction and Eternal death. This destruction of the human race the Creator would not allow, and in His mercy, His love for men, and His Kindness (or by what other name His love for sinful man may be called) forced the deliverance from evil, and planned to send His Son into the world for the salvation of men. This plan of God was conceived before the foundation of the world, Eternally…¹
Concerning our Lord's Person, both Sacred Scripture and the Holy Church teach that Jesus Christ is God-man (*Theanthropos*) or "true God and true man." Christ became like man in every respect except "sin." Our Lord assumed human nature in its original perfection.² The Fourth Ecumenical Council teaches that:

> We confess one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known in two Natures [Which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved, and [both] concurring into the one Person [prosopon] and one hypostasis—not parted or divided into two Persons [prosopa], but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the Divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ.³

The primary purpose of the Incarnation is to destroy sin and the devil. Father Stephanou expresses it in this way:

> The death of Christ vanquished death by getting at Satan, who holds the power of death. He is the first-born of the dead opening the way for all men who seek redemption. By rising from the grave, Christ defeated Satan and
abolished his sway over man. As a result, the Communion of the Holy Spirit, which he lost at the fall, was restored to man.⁴

In Orthodoxy the destiny of man is not conceived as "ultimate happiness" as is the contention of Augustine and the West after him, but "perfection" and "deification" (theosis) in Christ. Eudemonistic ethics and the fulfilment of man's desire to unite man's mind with God are not accepted. Also, the theory of "satisfaction of Divine Justice" is alien to the spirit of Orthodoxy.⁵

To quote St. Gregory the Theologian:

_To whom was the blood of Christ that was shed for us on the Cross offered and why was it shed? I mean the precious and glorious blood of God, the blood of the High Priest and of the Sacrifice. We were in bondage to the devil and sold under sin, having become corrupt through our concupiscence. Now since a ransom is paid to him who holds us in his power, I ask to whom was such a price offered and why? If to the devil, it is outrageous! The robber receives the ransom, not only from God, but a ransom consisting of God Himself. He demands so exorbitant a payment for his tyranny that it would have been right for_
him to have freed us altogether. But if the price is offered to the Father, I ask first of all, how? For it was not the Father Who held us captive. Why, then, should the blood of His only-begotten Son please the Father, Who would not even receive Isaac when he was offered as a whole burnt offering by Abraham, but replaced him with a ram? Is it not evident that the Father accepts the sacrifice by the humanity of God, and God Himself must deliver us by overcoming the tyrant through His Own power, and drawing us to Himself by the mediation of the Son Who effects this all for the honour of God, to Whom He was obedient in everything...? What remains to be said shall be covered with a reverent silence ... We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death that we might live. Nothing can equal the miracle of my salvation: a few drops of blood recreate the whole world.6

The fact that Christ came to destroy death and the devil is expressed in the most beautiful Paschal hymn: "Christ hath risen from the dead, by death trampling upon death and to those in the tombs He has bestowed life."7

Man must struggle against evil in order to attain perfection. "... Each Christian must fight against Satan. He is free to do it, although the final victory comes from God.8 Salvation is not a personal achievement or the result of our good works, but the
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work of God... salvation is not a matter of doing good things by will as opposed to the necessities of nature, but rather a renewal of the natural freedom of human nature itself."

The fight against the devil is described as follows: "This struggle against evil is not a mere moral one but a real spiritual fight against Satan. It is not mere abstention from sin, but an extirpation of evil at its roots."

Perfection in Christ is attained by unselfish and unrewarded love which is greater than the desire of the instinct of self-preservation. In this type of unselfish love Christians are compelled to love even their enemies. Perfection is not a moral achievement; it is a gift from God in cooperation with man. According to St. Makarios of Egypt:

Mere abstention from evil things is not perfection. Perfection is only if you have entered into the mind and have slain the serpent that lies under the mind, beneath the surface of the thoughts, and burrows into what we call the secret chamber and storehouses of the soul and murders you— for the heart is a deep gulf—only, I say, if you killed him and cast out all the uncleanness that was in you.

Evil is not external temptation, it is hidden in nature. "Man alone is not able to achieve this radical extirpation of the evil
forces, which are so deeply hidden in our nature. Only Christ and the Grace of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ, give us the victory". Man has the power to forsake evil, if he wills to do so. This power does not belong to the few chosen by God to be saved, but belongs to all humanity.

The primary purpose of man is to love God and his fellow man as God loves the world. "Man's destiny is not happiness, but natural freedom and Eternal life." In Greek philosophical doctrine adopted by the Western eudemonistic ethics since the time of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Ritschel and others, the end of man is happiness. Thomas Aquinas makes a distinction in the ultimate end of man. First is the thing itself which is destined to be attained and the second is the attainment or the possession of the thing desired. In the first sense, mentioned above, man's end is God, the Uncreated God. In the second sense, man possesses the end as created being. As Aquinas states: "If, therefore, we consider man's happiness in its cause of object, then it is something Uncreated; but if we consider it as to the very essence of happiness, then it is something created." Thomas also insists that "final happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, which is the very essence of goodness." The Orthodox Fathers absolutely reject the creaturely Communion or vision of the Divine Essence before or after death. A distinction is made by the Fathers between the Essence of God and the Energies of God. The
Fathers make clear that contemplation of the Essence of God is impossible. They teach that the Divine Uncreated Light is accessible to man in his state of perfection. The ultimate end of man is the Resurrection of the bodies and in imitation of Christ Who ascended to Heaven with His "body", our bodies will be resurrected and be in God’s everlasting Presence. This will be the Eternal Kingdom of God. This state is expressed in the following words by N. Berdyaev: "The Kingdom of God is not a reward but the attainment of perfection, deification, beauty and spiritual wholeness." A Russian Orthodox thinker says that, "Christianity reveals to mankind not only the ideal of absolute perfection but also the way to attain it, and therefore it is essentially progressive."

ENDNOTES:
2. J. Karmiris, op. cit., p. 46.
3. J. Karmiris, op. cit., p. 47.
7. Orthodox Prayer Book, Paschal Hymns.


10. B. Krivoshein, op. cit., p. 35.


12. Quoted by B. Krivoshein op. cit., p. 35. In this quotation it is obvious that the Holy Fathers of the desert have a doctrine about the "subconscious" or "unconscious" of which modern psychology speaks. They gave directions to free it from sin and renew it with the Grace of Christ.


15. Ibid., p. 95.


18. Ibid., 4, 4.


The proper understanding of the Christian view of the human body would also clarify both anthropology and christology. The traditional patristic and Orthodox doctrine of man is based on the biblical understanding of creation and salvation. In the early Christian formation of doctrine there were two trends simultaneously impacting human thought: that of classical philosophy and the Hebrew biblical tradition.¹

The classical philosophers looked upon matter, including the human body, as evil or an admixture of good and evil.² For classical philosophy, all material phenomena were viewed as genesis and corruption. This is also true of man as well. For that reason Plato espoused the doctrine that the real man is the soul and that the body is a shadow. He states that, "the soul is in all respects superior to the body, and that even in life what makes each one of us to be what we are is only the soul," and
he continues to say that, "the body follows us about in likeness of each of us, and therefore...the bodies...[are] our shades or Images" and "the true and Immortal being of each one of us which is called the soul...".

For Plato and classical philosophers in general the physical human body is evil, corruptible, and temporary and even a tomb of the soul and a prison of the soul.

Contrary to Greek philosophical anthropology, the Old Testament views man as both body and soul. The Old Testament opposes the Greek dualistic view of the soul belonging intrinsically to a higher world and the body as its prison. The soul is the vital element for the body. The idea of Immortality of the soul is foreign to the Old Testament which teaches the belief in the Resurrection of the bodies.

The Christian understanding of man as body and soul is deeply rooted in biblical anthropology as it evolved in the Hebrew Old Testament. As in the Old Testament, New Testament Orthodox Christianity teaches that the whole man, body and soul, was created for Immortality. The Orthodox Christian doctrine of man as body and soul is also clearly indicated in the prayerbook where prayers are offered for the healing of the soul and body.  Using both Hellenic and Hebraic sources Saint Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian debated the issue in fourteenth century Byzantium. Palamas espoused the biblical
Orthodox Christian doctrine that man is body and soul and opposed the classical Greek philosophical view that the body is evil. He makes his arguments clear and uses biblical and patristic thought as evidence to support his position. Palamas' teaching on the human body will be discussed in the following pages.

Barlaam claimed that Greek philosophy had equal importance to revelation in the theological doctrines of the Church. So he claimed in a Platonic way that the body does not participate in ascendance toward God. The soul and mind is that which prays and is affected by prayer because the soul is immaterial. Perfect prayer for Barlaam means perfect liberation from matter. The participation of the body with the soul in the gifts of the Holy Spirit is absolutely unacceptable for him. Whatever detracts the soul from ascending and attaches it to the body, darkens the soul and prevents it from coming closer to God.⁹

Palamas, in answering the Barlaamite arguments from an Orthodox perspective, begins with the sacred Scriptures and also uses patristic and church tradition. On the basis of the biblical presupposition, Palamas refuted the philosophical approach of Barlaam and articulated the Orthodox doctrine of the human body.¹⁰

We may set forth the Palamite thesis that man as God's Image is body and soul and that they interact and ascend towards God. He rejects the philosophical view that the body is
a "tomb" or a "prison" of the soul. The body as well as the soul are created by God ex nihilo to attain the ultimate *theosis* in paradise. The coming of Christ to the world included the redemption of the body and ultimate Resurrection of both body and soul.\(^{11}\) This thesis of Palamas will be examined and documented in the present discussion.

Saint Gregory Palamas makes clear that the Holy Scriptures refer to man (\(\alpha νθροποιος\)) as a unique being which consists of body and soul. He rejects the idea that man is only a soul. This is not his personal opinion but the faith of the Church as is evident from the reference made to the Fathers. He specifically refers to Saint Maximos the Confessor who speaks of the whole man as body and soul who attains theosis through Divine Grace. He says: "The whole man consists of soul and body by nature, and the whole man becomes Divine, both soul and body, through Divine Grace."\(^ {12}\) God's Uncreated Grace sanctifies both body and soul.

No one can dispute the fact that there is a bond of union between body and soul, with no conflict between them. The soul has a strong love for the body which does not want to be separate from it.\(^ {13}\) Palamas strongly emphasized that the immaterial rational nature of the soul was co-created with the earthly body and received the life-giving spirit from God which continues to give life to the body. This is evident in the fact of the spiritual love of the human soul for the body. The
interaction is natural and the great love that the soul has for the body is evidenced in that it does not want to separate, except by force of interference, by great disease or external scourge.\textsuperscript{14}

The Holy Spirit influences both body and soul and transforms both. That which is spiritually enjoyed by the soul is transferred to the body and that which acts on the body is spiritual. The fellowship of the body and soul makes the mutual influence and interaction of both joy and sadness possible.\textsuperscript{15} The body becomes spiritual by the influence of the Holy Spirit that changes it and makes it spiritual.\textsuperscript{16}

Palamas rejects the notion that the body is evil. For him, as for the Scriptures and the Church, the "sin" that dwells in man is evil. Saint Paul says, "It is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me."\textsuperscript{17}

Saint Gregory insists that the heretics, such as the Gnostics, teach that the body is a creation of the evil god. The Orthodox view of the body is that it is good. Palamas quotes several Pauline statements which confirm his position that the body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit:

\begin{quote}
Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
We are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}
Papademetriou: *On the Nature of Man*

*For we are the temple of the Living God.* \(^{20}\)

Palamas insists that the body is not evil but that evil may dwell in the body; that the body must be purified by the Holy Spirit. \(^{21}\) Man seeks after God to be in the Divine Presence. David said: "O God, my God, unto Thee I rise at dawn. My soul hath thirsted for Thee; how often doth my flesh long after Thee in a land barren and untrodden and unwatered." \(^{22}\) And he also said: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." \(^{23}\) It is the evil dwelling in the flesh that moves man to do evil. For that reason man ought to have self-control and practice asceticism for the welfare of body and soul. \(^{24}\) Palamas also points out that both the body and the soul sin. The soul is not unrelated to the body; although the soul may sin without the body, sin affects both body and soul. Sin interacts between flesh and soul. Christ said, "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." \(^{25}\) Palamas interprets this to mean that although the body in this case did not actively participate in the sin of lust, yet the rational soul did. \(^{26}\) This does not indicate that soul and body are separate but does show that the soul can also sin and needs to be purified and sanctified as does the body.

The human body, according to Palamas, is created by God, and is by nature good; and by the sanctifying Uncreated Grace of Christ, it becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. This
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dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human body as God's temple is incompatible with the Platonic and Plotinian view of "ecstasis," that is, the view that the νοῦς (intellect) leaves the body to participate in Divine Grace. The Platonic view espoused by Barlaam was unacceptable to the great hesychast. He was deeply rooted in biblical tradition and patristic thought which emphasized that in prayer the νοῦς (intellect) must descend into the heart, that is, to the centre of the psychosomatic reality of the human being. There is need to be freed, however, from fleshly desires. The soul's exit from the body and unity with the Divine reality is a classical Greek philosophical error, in fact, the greatest of all errors, and its root and source is the devil himself.27

For Palamas and the other Fathers of the Church, the body participates in prayer and helps the mind to pray. Bodily acts such as fasting, vigils, prostrating, sitting down, or standing are ways in which the body participates in prayer. This is evident from Holy Scripture (Mt.17:21, Mk.9:29) and from Church Fathers such as Saint John Klimakos.28 Prayer does not deaden the body, nor is it the passive aspect of the soul. It is rather an activity and participation, and an offering of the whole man - body and soul - to God. Saint Paul urges, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."29 Palamas points out that the
offerings which the Scriptures refer to are common to body and soul. It is important to understand God's commandment to offer the human body as a sacrifice to God, but first it is to be purified and sanctified. The same holds true for the soul because the energies are common to both. As the offering to God is common to body and soul, so are the blessings bestowed upon them. This is one unique sign of the unity of man. The body participates with the soul in the spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts that come to the body and soul from the Holy Spirit even benefit the physical body which receives spiritual sensitivities and is able to perceive supernatural-spiritual visions. Furthermore, the body becomes a source of miracle working as is evident from numerous relics of Saints. This is an indication that the body participates in theosis. It is evident that in the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, Christ, both body and soul, were participants. The body may become slave to the fleshly desires of this world and be separated from Christ and His Grace. This leaves the flesh as dead matter without the life-giving spirit. The holiness of the body is evidenced by the virtue attained by the Saints of the Old Testament and of the Church after Christ.

The greatest argument that Palamas makes against Barlaam is that of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. How can one speak of the body as evil since God decided to take up the human body in Jesus Christ? Palamas says this is an ineffable
fellowship; Christ became our Brother, Who became body and blood.\textsuperscript{33} Christ, the Logos of God did not only become soul, not a different body from our own, but He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin as announced by the Archangel of God. He came to free the world from sin. He interacted with the world and ineffably cleansed the human race from sin.\textsuperscript{34} The Logos took up soul and body and deified them both. Palamas emphasized that the Incarnate Logos of God, through the deified soul, deified the body.\textsuperscript{35} The Logos honoured the body as a rejection of those who consider the immaterial spirits higher and deified because they do not possess a body.\textsuperscript{36}

Another aspect that Palamas emphasizes is that eucharistic union is received by the faithful in Holy Communion. Everyone who receives the Holy Eucharist becomes one with Christ’s Body and Spirit. He says that we not only become His followers, but we become One with the Body of Christ, through receiving the Divine Bread. Furthermore, we not only become One with His Body but we also become One with His Spirit.\textsuperscript{37} Christ unites with each human being through the reception of His Holy Body in the Eucharist. We become One with Him and also become the temple of God Who transforms us. This Divine Body also contains the soul.\textsuperscript{38}

Saint Gregory Palamas supports the thesis that the reality and goodness of the human body are based in the Holy Scriptures. The body is not separated from the soul but is helpful to the
soul in a real way. Together they work to attain salvation. Though the classical Greek philosophers and their successors, (including Barlaam) claimed Immortality of the soul apart from the body, it was considered to be an erroneous doctrine. The Orthodox Christian view is that the soul separate from the body (and vice versa) is not the total man. For that reason the Orthodox Christian faith opted for a Resurrection of the body and the Immortality of the total man as is evidenced in the biblical revelation of the Old and New Testaments. Palamas' view of man, body and soul, is like a pilgrim going through life walking on a road of this world guided by the Divine Light. There is no separation of the material from the immaterial world, and the light shines in the path of the believer in this world until one reaches the Creator God in Whom one participates and is united with.\textsuperscript{39}

In conclusion we may emphatically state that the Christian Orthodox understanding of the human body as articulated by Saint Gregory Palamas is scriptural and patristic. For Orthodoxy the ultimate end of man is theosis, participation of body and soul in the Divine Uncreated Grace.\textsuperscript{40} The glorification of the bodies of the Saints is the goal for all human beings.\textsuperscript{41}

In the proper Christian understanding of the material world and especially the human body, we become responsible as stewards and caretakers of our environment and our world, and
must work for the well-being of all human beings. All the ascetic efforts of Orthodox monasticism and the Christian life are not in vain but are to help increase the health of the body and soul (both physical and spiritual) and for man to become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Man must understand the material world and himself as God's creation and behave according to the Divine commandments. We must realize that only in the Presence of the Holy Spirit are we truly alive. Man as body and soul will ultimately rise as Christ did, to live in the Eternal Presence of God. In the present situation and existence, Christ made all things new. As committed Christians we cling to the 

*Logos*, the Christ, and nothing shall separate us from Him: "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."^{42}

This is the faith of the Church that is presented to all as a challenge and guide to live by in a confused and morally corrupt world. Orthodoxy calls all human beings to make a total commitment, both body and soul, to the Lord of Life, the *Logos* and Creator of the universe.

ENDNOTES:

^{42}


3. Laws12.959; 5.728 (That the body is inferior to the soul).

4. Phaedros 250; Gorgias 493.

5. Phaedros, 81, 82, 83.


7. J.S. Romanides, Το προπατορικον αμαρτημα, p.142.

8. Romanides, "Man and His True Life" p.65. Also Georges Florosky says, "Man's soul and body are two aspects of one single entity." See Nicholas O. Lossky, History of Russian Philosophy (NY, 1951), p.392.


10. Ibid.pp.344-45.

11. Ibid. Triads 1, 3.25. St Gregory says: "The word `man' is not applied to either soul or body separately, but to both together, since together they have been created in the image of God." "Prosopoppeiae," PG 150.1361C. Vladimir Lossky The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, (London, 1957), p.116. See also the significant criticism of Platonic anthropology by Claude Tresmontant, The Origins of Christian Philosophy, trans. Mark Pontifex (New York, 1963), pp.74 ff.

12. Triads, 3, 13. He says the "ολος ο ανθρωπος μενων κατα ψυχην και σωμα δια την φυσιν και ολος γινομενος θεος κατα ψυχη και σωμα δια την χαριν."
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14. PG 150.1148A. Romanides insists that the patristic tradition accepts man as body and soul. The separation of body and soul at death is a temporary condition until the time of the resurrection. See Το προπατορικον αμαρτημα, p.135. See also his "Man and His True Life," p.66 where he analyzes the funeral rite that sees the separation of body and soul as tragedy. See also my article, "The teaching of Gregory of Palamas on God," in N.M.Vaporis (ed.), The Byzantine Fellowship Lectures:Byzantine Ecclesiastical Personalities, No. 2, (Brookline, MA, 1975), p.102.


16. Ibid., 1, p.515. "μεταστοιχειο το σωμα και πνευματικον ποιει." The body is transformed and made spiritual. The body is freed from the human lower-animal-sinful desires in both body and soul. The Holy Spirit interacts in both body and soul (the entire man) and transforms the total man into spiritual being.

17. Romans 7.17.

18. 1Corinthians 6:19.


21. Triads 1,2.1.


24. Triad, 1.2.1.

25. Matthew 5.27.

26. PG 151.153C. Romanides, Το προπατωρικον αμαρτημα, p. 128. Man may become a slave to the desires of the flesh which leads to separation from the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is given to the faithful so that Christ may dwell in their hearts.

27. Triads 1,2.4. Ἕν οὗτος ὁ νόος, οὗ τοῦ σώματος τῆς φρονίματος ἀλλ' οὗτοι τοῦ σώματος, ως εκει νοεροι θεαμασιν εν τυχοι, της ελληνικης εστι πλανης αυτο το κρατιστον και πασις κακοδοξιας και πηγη, δαιμονων ευρημα και παδευμαγεγνητικων ανοιας και γεννημα απονως," Chrestou, Συγγραματα, p. 397.

28. Triads 2, 2.4; 2.6; 2.7.

29. Romans 12:1. He also refers to Psalm 102. See also Archimandrite Vasileios, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Stavronikita, "Συμμετοχη του σωματος στην προσευχη," Συναξη, 4 (Fall 1982) 61-62.

30. Triads 2.20.

31. Triads 2, 2.12. This is an important argument for the use of relics in the Orthodox Church. The sanctification of the body makes miracles possible and the faithful venerate relics. See also "Τὰ ἡγεμονευτανα," Συναξη, 4 (Fall 1982) 35-49. Also Andreas I. Phytrakes, Λειψανα και τα φιλο μαρτυρων κατα τους τρεις πρωτους αιωνας (Athens, 1955). See also Anestas G. Kaselopoulos, Παρεα και αρετες στη διδασκαλια του Αγιου Γρηγοριου του Παλαμα (Athens, 1982), p.182. Theosis is possible in this life as is evident from the experience of Mount Tabor by the Apostles.

32. Triads 1, 2.10. See also Romanides, Το προπατωρικον αμαρτημα, p.128. Also Monk Theokletos, Dionysiatou, Ο Αγιος Γρηγοριος ο Παλαμας: Ο Βιος και η Θεολογια, 1296-1359, (Thessalonike, 1976),p.109.

33. S. Oikonomou, Του εν αγιος πατρος ημων Γρηγοριου Αρχιεπισκοπου Θεσσαλονικης του Παλαμα ομηλιας κβ. (Athens, 1861), p.207.

34. Ibid. Homily 53,p.159.

35. Triads 2,2.12.

36. Homily 16, PG 151.202. Palamas considers man higher than the angels because man is created in the image and likeness. Homily 16, PG 150.1168 A-B.
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38. Triads 1, 3.38.

39. PG 150.1080D-81C.

40. Triads 1, 3.37, Chrestou, Συγγραμμάτα, 1,p.448. The Gospel of Matthew explicitly states the purpose of man as follows: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5.48).

41. Triads 3. 1.10. Chrestou, Συγγραμμάτα, 1, p.624.

42. Romans 8:38-39.
he question which our Lord directed to His Disciples at Caesarea is also directed to every one of us: "Who am I?"

Did not Christ know Who He was, or did He ask this because He wants us to think concerning His Person? He was certain of His Self-knowledge, but in order to establish correct belief in His followers, He asked them this question. The correct answer was given by Peter, that "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God" (John 6:69). It is not in vain that we call ourselves Christians, for by doing so, we are not only emphasizing our belief in Him, but we also proclaim our allegiance to Him. Christianity is not a system of ideas, statements or a system of morals. It is a way of life, a living body of Christ. There are many members; one body. Many people; One Christ.

We are engrafted to Him in the New Life - the Life in Christ. The decisive point for every one of us is a personal and
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existential commitment to the Living Lord, Who wants to Dwell in all of us, that we might become instruments of His redemptive mission.

In order to become engrafted into Jesus Christ, we must know Who He is, what His mission is, for only then will we be able to follow Him. The criteria and means of perceiving knowledge of our Lord is Divine Revelation. The message of the entire New Testament is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Divine Mission of man's salvation. Apostle Paul draws an original picture of the Redemptive mission of our Saviour. He makes a distinction between the "Old Adam" (the First Man), and the "New Adam" (that is, Jesus Christ). Adam and Christ summarize the two periods of humanity. They do not merely symbolize them; they realize them in their persons by a mysterious identification. The First Man misled humanity into destruction, whereas, the "New Adam" brought humanity into salvation.

In order to understand the mission of our Saviour, we must know the meaning of the words "Salvation" and "Redemption." The ancient Greek word "soteria" (salvation) meant "therapeia" (healing). The word redemption (or lytrosis - ransom) denotes freedom. Our Lord Jesus Christ is both Saviour and Redeemer, because He healed and freed us from sin, death, and most of all, from Satan. The "Logos became flesh" which, according to Apostle Paul, is the greatest mystery of Godliness: God was
manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). This manifestation of God in the flesh is to destroy sin, death, and primarily the power of the devil.

a) Sin or *Hamartia* is misdirection. The ancient Greek word *Hamartia* means "missing the mark". Man was created by God to become perfect, but due to man's disobedience, humanity missed the mark, that is, missed perfection. Sin, therefore, is failure of the original destiny of man to become perfect due to man's free will.

b) Death is separation of man from God due to sin. St. Paul says, "The sting of sin is death; this is the spiritual death." (The physical death is the separation of the soul from the body). When man is separated from God, he is dead, just as the plant is dead when deprived of the sun.

c) The devil is a fallen angel and is working against the plan of God. The Greek word "diavolos" (devil) implies *diversion*, and in this instance refers to the diversion of the plan of God, which is to have man become a perfect being. The devil works constantly to destroy God’s plan, but he lost all power over man when the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among men.

The Salvation of the world is God, the Father, through His Son. Apostle Paul is very explicit in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might
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receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, freed us from sin and made it possible for us to attain perfection, which was the original purpose of man. He also healed man who is now no longer dead, but is able to live in the Kingdom of God. God is no longer "remote," as Aristotle believed Him to be,¹ but is the God of Love that permeates the whole cosmos. Through His infinite love He became man, so that man should become One with God. By our Lord’s Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, we are assisted to combat the devil. True warfare of man with the devil is characteristic of Orthodox Theology. Jesus Christ destroyed the power of the devil by His sacrifice at Calvary. Apostle Paul confirms this when he says, "Giving thanks unto the Father…Who both delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14). The God-Man died because He accepted to die (physical death) in order to destroy death, whereas we die because we have to die. But, in order for the Divine Logos to die, He became flesh. St. Athanasios describes this truth in his treatise On the Incarnation. He says:

For the Logos, perceiving that not otherwise could the corruption of men be undone save by death as a necessary
condition, while it was impossible for the Logos to suffer death, being Immortal, and Son of the Father. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through partaking of the Logos who is above all, might be sufficient to die in the stead of all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through the indwelling of the Logos, and that thereafter put an end to corruption for all, by the Grace of the Resurrection.²

The Death of our Lord was Crowned by His Resurrection, by which He destroyed the power of sin, death, and Satan. Father Georges Florovsky, a modern Orthodox Theologian, puts it in the following manner: "Christ had to die in order to abrogate death and corruption by His death." The Paschal hymn of the Resurrection sung in the Orthodox Churches expresses the essence of the mission of Christ: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life." The *kenosis*, or the emptying and humility of our Lord, is a proof of the love of God, but His *Resurrection* is a proof of the Power of God. Jesus Christ, in our Orthodox Tradition, is the Redeemer of the world, the Lord of Glory, Whom we experience in the fellowship of His Holy Church, in the Holy Mysteries, and in the Communion of the Saints. St. Gregory the Theologian articulates his experience of Salvation in a most eloquent manner, saying:
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We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death that we might live. Nothing can equal the miracle of my salvation: a few drops of blood recreate the whole world.³

Christ assumed our nature and voluntarily submitted to all the consequences of sin. He took upon Himself the responsibility of our error, while remaining a stranger to sin, in order to restore human liberty, and in order to bridge the gulf between God and man, by leading Him into the Heart of His Person, where there is no room for any division or any interior conflict. According to St. Maximos the Confessor, Christ healed all that belonged to man, but particularly the will, which was the source of his sin.

I would like to conclude this brief word on the Redemptive mission of our Lord Jesus Christ by quoting a hymn to Christ by St. Gregory the Theologian describing the victory over death, which is proclaimed in the Resurrection of our Lord. He wrote the following:

On that day Christ was recalled from among the dead with Whom He had united. On that day He shattered the sting of death. He burst the lugubrious doors of gloomy hades,⁴ by delivering the souls therein. On that day, rising from the tomb, He appeared to men for whose sake He was born, died and rose from the dead.⁵

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In short, this is the Redemptive mission of our Lord in His Divine "ekonomia" or dispensation, as is described by the New Testament, the Holy Fathers, and is lived by the Holy Church.
ENDNOTES:

1. Aristotle taught that God is outside space and unconcerned of man. In fact, it has always been man who was remote from God, and not God Who was remote from man.

2. Chapter II, 9.

3. P.G.36, 653 A.D.

4. **Ed. Note**: We use the word "hades" and not "hell." Hades simply indicates the state or condition or "place" (used figuratively) where the souls of the departed reposed. Hell is the ultimate condition of the whole person, body and soul together, which will be manifested only after the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. P.G.37,1328.
Chapter 6:  
AN ORTHODOX VIEW OF CREATION

God, Who is all good, desired to give existence to non-being, in accordance with the prototype Existing in Himself to constitute other entities capable of sharing His Goodness. We may therefore state the Hierarchy of Being as follows: God the Father is the Primary Cause; God the Son, Effective Cause; and God the Holy Spirit, the Perfecting Cause.

Now we may declare that creation is a free act of God that brings into existence living beings from nothing. But the Orthodox doctrine of creation may be more explicitly stated in this manner:

(a) God created the world from nothing by the exercise of His Own Free Will;

(b) He created it in Time;

(c) with a definite purpose and end; and

(d) He continuously orders and guides it according to His
An Orthodox View of Creation

Own Almighty Will and Wisdom.

Of the order of creation we know that there was progressive creation

(1) from the simple to the more complex;

(2) from the general to the particular;

(3) from the imperfect to the more perfect;

(4) from the inorganic to the organic; and

(5) from the irrational to the rational, “with man as the link uniting visible and invisible nature, the microcosm embracing both matter and spirit.”

The Biblical account teaches us that each new species was a separate creation of God. Most Orthodox theologians do not spend time reconciling the six-day creation of Genesis with scientific investigation and findings. They claim that a right view of Holy Scripture helps clear away misconceptions, and that the “Holy Scripture is not a handbook on natural science, but presents its contents in a form and language agreeable to the ideas and comprehension of those for whom it was written. It
has in view the purpose of ascribing the genesis of the world to God” ². Genesis is “neither a book on nature, not on geology, nor on geography, but a religious text, exactly fulfilling the end for which it was designed”…it is certainly true, furthermore, that we cannot interpret everything in it literally.” ³

Man was created as a special being with the special intention to be lord of all creation. Man was created in God’s Image, the body first to be the basis of the spirit: God breathed into him His spirit and gave it life.

The theory of evolution is that the various plants and animal species evolved over several billions of years from lower organisms. From the one cell organisms evolved more complex organisms, from them more perfect ones and finally man emerges. Darwin was the main exponent of this theory.

Darwin (1809-1889) claimed that the plants and animals evolved in a mechanical way. The origin of the species according to Darwin is seen in the change of the individual species in its adaptability, heredity and natural selection that derives from the survival of the fittest. Before Darwin, Empedocles, according to tradition, had a similar theory of natural selection — the one destined to survive. Anaxagoras had a theory of evolution of animals; Epicuros explained a purpose for the animal evolution based on Empedocles; and Spencer, before Darwin, prepared the way by claiming the evolution of ideas or concepts.
An Orthodox View of Creation

As you see, only Darwin spoke of the evolution of man from lower animals. Thinkers and scientists before him spoke of evolution of plants, but not of man. Man has a Divine Origin. When this theory was spreading in the 19th century, the materialists took advantage of this world view because they found in it a backing for their views. They claimed that since one species derives from another, there is no need for a Creator - God. This event stirred excitement in some religious leaders who became very concerned about the validity of the biblical teaching of creation. In this manner began the struggle between the evolutionists and those who denied evolution. However, the discussion did not limit itself to the scientific level but took on a world view or philosophical approach and the struggle became acute.

As Orthodox Christians, we may declare that the theory of evolution does not weaken our religious beliefs. Some have attempted to reconcile the theory of evolution with the Mosaic six-day creation of organisms in Genesis. Genesis states that life appeared progressively in the following manner:

(1) plants;

(2) animals in the water;

(3) reptiles;
(4) large animals; and

(5) finally, man.

The Church Fathers such as St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom, and Western theologians such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas accepted some kind of evolution as directed by God. Many scientists who adopted this theory of evolution from the beginning support and confirm the belief in the Creator God. The prominent scientist Larmarck, who supported the theory, emphasized the variety of animals as the “scale” that is “the general and unchangeable order which the Supreme Creator created in everything.” Darwin - whom the materialists call upon to support their theories of atheism - clearly and categorically emphasized his faith in the Creator. In his work *On the Origin of Man* he wrote: “The issue of whether the Creator and Ruler of the universe exists is completely a different matter and in this question the great minds of the ages answer positively.” Both activities of origin - species and individual - occur completely in the same way as part of the great reasonable series of events, which we can by no means accept as a result of blind chance.

Today, those who speak seriously of evolution accept it not as pure chance but give it a theological or philosophical character. The prominent Russian biologist, Vaviloff, who was
Director of the Institute of Genetics at the Academy of Sciences in Russia, spoke of “directed evolution,” and later was dismissed as an enemy of dialectic materialism or Communism by the Soviet government.

According to most scientists today, evolution is not the result of blind chance - that is, blind mechanical forces - but is creation directed by the Creator. The plant and animal Kingdoms became realities as conceived by the plan of God. Some theologians are of the opinion that the human organism evolved from more advanced animal organisms, which are close to the human species that was directed by God, Who acted indirectly by using secondary causes. St. John Chrysostom said that “the clay was thin earth” from which the first human body was created. It was a living matter worked into a living organism, developed into animals, and from there to the human organism when the soul entered by God’s intervention. Man is a direct creation of God according to Genesis, because God “breathed in man’s face the living spirit and man became a living soul” (Gen.2:7).

Creation is a continuous Divine Act, as directed by the Mind of the Creator. Evolution as God’s creative act can be accepted by a Christian but the mechanical evolution of beings by blind chance must be denied as pure imagination.

Is the above position acceptable from the point of view of science or man’s evolution? There is no unanimous opinion of
scientists. Some believe that man is not descended from the ape or the pithecanthropus, but that the ape descended from some human species which is now extinct. Some believe that man and ape have a common ancestor. One thing which many scientists agree upon is that evolution is an hypothesis (or a collection of hypotheses) which cannot be ultimately proved. Obviously if there is no scientific proof, and no agreement as to the nature of man, no theory is infallible for the scientist. This point [the nature of man], therefore, becomes a philosophical question beyond the realm of scientific research.

However, we do see evolutions of civilizations, different species, art and ideas. But we do not see a mule become a horse even though it be of a mixed breed. We do not see a snake become a bird. And we do not see a butterfly become man. If, over generations, we try to mix breeds of different species, we do see extreme changes, but one species does not become another species. The question is, if this happened then, why not now? We have to have that answer before we can accept a mechanical blind evolution in nature. Recently a medical doctor wrote me:

Evolution...I can personally neither believe nor disbelieve. However, I am inclined to doubt its existence save within individual species. But most of us have had it taught to us as if it were a fact, not a theory (hypothesis). As a theory (hypothesis), evolution is wrongly presented for school, as a fact. Many
of its enthusiasts welcome its anti-religious effects.

Others, including Darwin himself, consider it [evolution] to show the marvellous work of God and the bulwark of Genesis. There is sound argument against (mechanical) evolution.

Science is a blessing, a gift. As Einstein said, it is good to investigate, to have a `Holy curiosity,' a healthy curiosity, but not a morbid or idle curiosity. We must not be fooled into supposing that the prevailing opinion of scientists can pronounce a verdict on the revelation of God. The reason of fallen, created man cannot encompass and make pronouncements about the Uncreated. Further, our experience itself shows us that the scientific vogue of today is superseded by that of tomorrow.

My own views are that we can accept evolution within a particular species. However, we must reject the theory of mechanical evolution or creation by blind chance. Evolution or creation is always directed by God.

**FINDINGS OF PALEONTOLOGY**

**Stages of Evolution:**

1. **Archaean Period:**
The earliest rocks can be shown (by means of radioactivity) and other methods, to be in the neighbourhood of two to three thousand million years old. These are called Pre—Cambrian or Archaean and show not the slightest trace of any living organism.

2. **Cambrian Period:**

   (560 million years B.C.) This is the first time we find clear and unbroken fossil remains. They are very simple forms of marine life only: small shell fish, small organisms known as graptolites and primitive sponges.

3. **Silurian Period:**

   Invertebrate life highly developed; first known air-breathing land animals: scorpions.

4. **Devonian Period:**

   (360 million years B.C.) Fishes are dominant, while amphibians make their appearance and the earliest plants which were abundant in some localities. (L. Hawkes, *Geology and Time*, University of Nottingham, Abbott Memorial Lectures, 1952) observes:
An Orthodox View of Creation

“If we accept the view that oxygen of the primeval atmosphere was produced by plants we carry the origin of life back some 3,000 million years.” (Devonian/Old Red Sandstone Period.)

5. **Carboniferous period:**

Reptiles and insects appeared—snakes; the land was covered with swamp forests.

6. **Permotrassic Period:**

First mammals make their appearance.

7. **Jurassic Period:**

150 million years—toothed birds, dinosaurs, sea living reptiles and other organisms came into being.

8. **Cretaceous Period:**

60 million years B.C. Mammals developed. Man made his primitive appearance on earth at the very end of the whole process, that is, much less than a million years ago.
GENESIS: STAGES OF CREATION

1. (Gen. 1:1-5): God created: Heaven and earth, the earth without form, void, darkness, God’s spirit upon the waters. God said, “let there be light.” Light derived from darkness: day and night.

2. (Gen. 1:6-8): The firmament (Heaven) divided the waters from the earth.


4. (Gen. 1:14-19): Greater light to rule the day, that is, the Sun; the lesser lights to rule the night, that is, the moon and stars.

5. (Gen. 1:20-23): Life in the waters, and birds. Great whales, etc.

6. (Gen. 1:24—31): Mammals; cattle, creeping things, beasts. Man was created in God’s Image and likeness, to have dominion over all the earth and every living thing. Man is the crown of creation. Man was given a special blessing. that came

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at the end of creation: God saw that it was very good.

7. (Gen. 2:1): God ended all of His creation on the sixth day. He "rested" on the seventh day from His work. Some Fathers say that the eighth day is the day of Redemption, that is, salvation came with the new creation that was brought by Christ’s Resurrection.

ENDNOTES:

1. Prof. Mesoloras and Prof. Androutsos.

2. Prof. Androutsos.

3. Prof. Masoloras.
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