# Eastern Orthodox Theology and the Nexus Between the Body, Soul, and Spirit

*by Archbishop Chrysostomos*

This essay is the second chapter in His Eminence's most recent book, *A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science, Theology, and Spiritual Practice Behind It and Its Clinical Applications* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), written while he was the David B. Larson Fellow in Health and Spirituality at the John W. Kluge Center of the United States Library of Congress, in the Winter of 2006. It is reprinted here, for the benefit of our readers, by permission from the Rowman and Littlefield Publishing group, of which the UPA is a subsidiary. The book is available online from the publisher (University Press of America), Amazon Books, Barnes and Noble Books, or the Eastern Christian Supply Company. It can also be ordered through your local bookstore.

> "[I]f we understand ourselves to be organic creatures, then no part can be fully disaggregated . . . , and all elements of the self are interlocked." *Carolyn T. Brown*[1]

In the past three or four decades, philosophy, psychology, and medicine in the West have consciously embraced the idea that the body and the mind, or the body and soul, are inseparable parts of the whole human person. Holistic ideas have become part of the social discourse. Whether as a consequence of this trend or as part of whatever it is that ultimately sparked it, there is a renewed interest in spirituality, in the religions of the East (where the mind-body, or soul-body, dualism that has long reigned in Western thinking holds little sway), and in philosophies and ways of thought that address the person as a whole and aim at the restoration of that wholeness. It is, indisputably, at least partly in response to this trend that the rapprochement between religion and science—and specifically between religion and the health sciences—which we described in the previous chapter came about. However, an holistic view of the human being is nothing unique to Western intellectual

1. Carolyn T. Brown, *Footprints of the Soul: Uniting Spirit with Action in the World*, in *Dreaming the American Dream: Reflections on the Inner Life and Spirit of Democracy,* ed. Mark Nepo (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass [a Wiley Imprint], 2005), p. 53.

thought, even if the rise of rationalism and the decline in spiritual concerns that followed the Renaissance and, more strikingly, the Enlightenment have tended to separate matters of the mind from those of the body and, most certainly, of the spirit. The Greek ancients, to whom we attribute the rudimentary elements of our Western intellectual tradition, not only consistently called for an immediate engagement between philosophy and medicine,[2] but firmly believed that the human being was made up of body and soul. This was a fundamental feature of their world-view, shaping their anthropology and their highest social and political ideals: man the rational animal, engaged in fulfilling his physical and material needs, yet accommodating, in that effort, the lofty and more noble qualities and virtues of the soul.

As Constantine Cavarnos observes, this bipartite vision of man is one of the basic elements of the philosophy of life set forth by Pythagoras, who believed that the source of human illness was a state of disharmony between the body and the soul and that wellness lay in the "process of banishing disharmony and restoring harmony in the body and the psyche."[3] Plato, too, Cavarnos says, embraced this universal teaching of the ancients about the connection between body and soul, telling us—in positing a hierarchy in that relationship—that "in the last analysis, the condition of the body is a result of the condition of the psyche."[4] He points out that certain pathological mental conditions, in which an individual is "distraught" or "incapable of exercising reason," have, according to Plato, as their "proximate cause a bad bodily state." This state, nonetheless, derives from matters of the soul and is the result of "wrong education and a wrong mode of life."[5] In Aristotle, as well, we find clear evidence of the classical Greek belief in man as a composite of

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2. Professor Constantine Cavarnos cites, for example, Plutarch's "emphatic rejection of the view that the subjects of *philosophy* (*philosophía*) and *medical science* (*iatriké*) are 'separate.'" See Constantine Cavarnos, *Plutarch's Advice on Keeping Well* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2001), pp. 15-16.

3. Constantine Cavarnos, *Pythagoras on the Fine Arts as Therapy* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), p. 24.

4. Constantine Cavarnos, *Fine Arts as Therapy: Plato's Teaching Organized and Discussed* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1998), p. 14.

5. *Ibid.,* p. 29. At this juncture, it should also be said that there have been a few psychoanalysts who, though certainly rare exceptions, even early on in the development of the psychoanalytic movement held to a holistic view of the human being that included spiritual elements. One such example was the Venetian psychiatrist Robert Assagioli (1888-1974), a student of Freud and the father of so-called "psychosynthesis." His psychosynthetic system envisioned a "higher Self" that served to bring about harmony in the whole human being—mind, body, and spirit. See a synopsis of his ideas in *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965).

body and soul,[6] in which, as Cavarnos confirms (quoting Aristotle's *Politics*), "it is natural for the body to be governed by the soul."[7] All in all, then, in addition to believing that the human being is made up of body and soul and that the soul dominates the body, the Greek ancients also maintain that a proper and harmonious interaction between the body and soul is the source of human health and reflects a correct way of life; indeed, it is the stuff of that "wonder" that is man at his best and which Sophocles so eloquently praises in his *Antigone*: "Polla ta deina kouden anthropou deinoteron pelei (Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man)."[8]

## The Anthropology of the Greek Fathers

The Judeo-Christian tradition (if I may be allowed that somewhat imprecise and often misused designation), with its undeniable influence on the development of Western intellectual trends, also emphasizes, of course, the nexus between the body, soul, and mind, as evidenced by—if nothing else—the fact that it was the very object of the counter-trend of the rationalist tradition, which sought to separate the body from the mind and soul and, ultimately, to engender the Cartesian body-mind dualism, in its various forms, that has so long preoccupied Western philosophy. Within the Christian tradition, the writings of the Greek Fathers have always underscored the unity of body and soul with special emphasis. As Jean-Claude Larchet writes:

> [T]he Fathers strive constantly to defend a balance in understanding the constitution of the human being: the two substances which comprise him are distinct without being separated and united without being confused. 'The soul is united to the body,' St. Symeon the New Theologian writes, 'in an unutterable and indiscernible manner, in a fusion without admixture or confusion.'[9]

It is not by accident, of course, that the Patristic language which Larchet cites—nomenclature typical of that used by the Greek Fathers—is reminiscent of the language of the Christological controversies, which resulted, in the mid-fifth century, in a schism between the so-called "Chalcedonian" and "Non-Chalcedonian" Christian communities that persists to this day. The is-

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6. Constantine Cavarnos, *Aristotle's Theory of the Fine Arts: With Special Reference to Their Value in Education and Therapy (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 2001), pp. 15-16.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 23.
8. Sophocles, "Antigone," in *Fabulae,* ed. A.C. Pearson, reprint (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1975), ll. 332-333.
9. Larchet, *Thérapeutique des Maladies Mentales,* p. 29.

sues raised, in the attempt to describe the Nature of God, and that led to the Synod of Chalcedon (451), mirror Patristic concerns about the nature of man. While contemporary theologians often dismiss these controversies as meaningless academic arguments over "terminology" and inessentials, they were, in actuality, centered on complex, technical distinctions and refinements in language that touched on essential conceptual distinctions with immense soteriological importance. The vocabulary which the disputants used was designed to safeguard the integrity of the Christian understanding of God, the human being, and the image of God in man, in the light of the Incarnation.

The reduction of such vital concerns to supposed matters of terminology is no more intelligent or historically valid than the popular pseudo-intellectual and nescient penchant for portraying the Emperor Constantine as a non-believer who, out of political motivation, *dictated* to the assembly of Church Fathers the theological formulae that they sanctioned at the Nicene Synod in 325. According to the vapid popular myth of a Christianity created by imperial machination, rather than attempting to preserve the core of vital Christian experience in which Trinitarian and Christological doctrines were reified, "Roman Orthodoxy," this phantom of a post-Nicene Christianity serving the ends of theocratic imperialism, "transformed a large portion of the Christian East into heretics."[10] This is not unlike another absurdity peddled by purveyors of pulp fiction passing as historical fact: the contention, proffered with anserine consequences, that the orthodox Canon of Scripture adopted by the early Church deliberately obfuscated the genuine Christian tradition, rather than contain it and protect it (as it candidly purported to do)

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10. See Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 11. Referring to misapprehensions like those of Aslan, and reacting to what she sees as the literalism of Isaac Newton's approach to Trinitarian doctrine, Karen Armstrong makes some insightful statements about the actual *theological* principles underlying the "Roman Orthodoxy" of Constantinople: "The Greek Orthodox theologians of the fourth century," she argues, spoke of the Trinity "precisely as *mythos*, similar to that later created by the Jewish Kabbalists. As Gregory of Nyssa had explained, the three *hypostases* of Father, Son, and Spirit were not objective facts but simply 'terms that we use' to express the way in which the 'unnameable and unspeakable' divine nature (*ousia*) adapts itself to the limitations of our human minds. It made no sense outside the cultic context of prayer, contemplation, and liturgy" (Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism* [New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 2001], p. 69). Though one may perhaps rightly entertain some reservations about her sometimes bold assumptions in the realm of comparative religion, and while the reader must be careful to understand the words "myth" and "fact" in the classical sense in which she uses them, Armstrong's focus on doctrine formed in response to religious experience ("prayer, contemplation, and liturgy") effectively leads us away from just the kind of theological and historical superficiality which I have criticized here.

from extraneous influences. The fact is that, by closely defining the nature of the human soul, as we shall see, the Greek Fathers sought to preserve an understanding of human nature that was implicit in and, as I said above, of immense importance to the unique soteriological scheme of the Christian East. By envisioning Christ as the Divine *Archetypon,* for the Orthodox believer, an imprecise definition or description of His Nature directly impinges on how one sees and grasps Christ's role in the sanctification and deification of the human being. In becoming man, Christ "assumed a complete human nature, made up of soul and body, and it is the human in his entirety, body and soul," who is "saved and divinized," according to Orthodox soteriology.[11]

Aside from maintaining that the body and soul are united integrally and that, as Larchet observes (paraphrasing St. Maximos the Confessor [d. 662]), "every action and every movement of the human being is at once an act of his soul and of his body"[12] (a coincidence of action and movement, as St. Maximos elsewhere states, which is ideally achieved by "one who brings the body into harmony with the soul [ho harmosamenos to soma pros ten psychen]"[13]), the Greek Fathers also insist on the *exclusively* bipartite nature of man. That is, they reject the idea that the human being is comprised of three distinct elements—body, soul, and spirit (mind or intellect)—and insist that he is, as we have said, understood as a composite of body and soul alone. The

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11. Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur* (The divinization of man according to St. Maximos the Confessor) (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996), pp. 640-641.

12. *Ibid.,* p. 30.

13. St. Maximos the Confessor, "Peri Theologias kai tes Ensarkou Oikonomias tou Hyiou tou Theou, Pros Thalassion" (Regarding theology and the incarnate oeconomy of the Son of God, to Thalassios), in *Philokalia ton Hieron Neptikon* (Philokalia of the sacred neptic fathers) (Athens: Ekdotikos Oikos "Aster," 1975) [hereafter, *Philokalia*], Vol. 2, p. 90. This ideal spiritual goal of "harmony," I might observe, is what St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. *ca.* 385) considers the purpose of man's creation, "by conceiving man," as the historian John Cavarnos says, "as a link between the spiritual and sensible worlds." (See John Cavarnos, *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Human Soul: Its Nature, Origin, Relation to the Body, Faculties, and Destiny,* ed. and revised by Constantine Cavarnos [Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2000], p. 23.) St. Gregory, of course, also believed in the integration of the soul and body as "man's true being" (*ibid.*), even if certain Western scholars, whom Dr. Cavarnos skillfully refutes, have attributed to his psychology (i.e., his understanding of the soul) certain Platonic elements inconsistent with Christian doctrine. In that respect, Gregory, in using Greek philosophical terms and imagery, Cavarnos contends, "gave new meaning to old concepts, . . . choosing and appropriating for himself whatever portions of . . . [the classical Greek philosophical corpus that] . . . seemed to him to possess the essential qualities of reason, beauty, and form, and assimilability into Christian teaching" (p. 18). The issue of the relationship between classical Hellenistic thought and Greek Patristic wisdom is one to which we will return in this chapter.

tripartite concept of human composition can be found in two forms: in the rather crude and inchoate idea, so often expressed in contemporary thought, that the human being is made up of a body, a mind (or intellect), and a separate spiritual component, the soul; and at times, in the Christian East, in the teaching—officially condemned by the Orthodox Church as heretical or inconsistent with the Patristic consensus—that man is composed of body, soul, and a separate quality, the spirit, which is distinguishable from the soul. Those who argue in favor of this latter formulation frequently do so on the basis of their interpretation of certain Scriptural and Patristic passages that seem to support a tripartite understanding of human composition. Professor Constantine Cavarnos, quoting the Greek theologian Zikos Rossis (d. 1917), points out that, when properly understood, these Scriptural and Patristic sources

> in essence express one and the same teaching. For 'spirit' does not constitute a *substance* distinct from the soul and hence is *not a third element of man,* but is a higher *power* of one and the same immaterial substance, that is, of the soul, or signifies the *grace* and gift of the Divine Spirit, which does not constitute an element of man, but only illuminates and sanctifies his soul.[14]

In like manner, one may dismiss more incondite efforts to trichotomize human composition by observing that, for the Greek Fathers, the things of the mind or intellect, including reason, are considered faculties of the soul, endowed with the qualities of the soul. This is affirmed by St. Anthony the Great (d. 356), who asserts that, "[w]ith regard to the body, man is mortal, while, with regard to the intellect (*nous*) and reason (*logos*), he is immortal."[15] Thus, when they speak of body, soul, and spirit (or mind), Eastern Orthodox theologians inevitably do so with clear reference to, and in the context of, the dichotomous nature of the human being.

We should also note that in Orthodox anthropology, the integral union of

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14. Constantine Cavarnos, *Modern Greek Thought,* 2nd printing (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1986), pp. 63-64. See Zikos Rossis, *Systema Dogmatikes tes Orthodoxou Katholikes Ekklesias* (System of dogmatics of the orthodox catholic church) (Athens: 1893), pp. 397-398. Cavarnos also observes that those who point to Scriptural references which seem to make a distinction between the soul (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*) fail to understand that the word "spirit" is also used in the New Testament "to denote life," to refer to the soul, or "occasionally . . . to denote the highest faculty of the soul, the rational, usually spoken of in Scripture as 'mind.'" See Constantine Cavarnos, *Immortality of the Soul* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1993), pp. 14-15.

15. St. Anthony the Great, "Paraineseis Peri Ethous Anthropon kai Chrestes Politeias" (Exhortations regarding the character of men and the virtuous way of life), in *Philokalia*, Vol. 1, p. 19.

the body and soul is, despite the clear concinnity of the two, marked by a *hierarchy* of interaction, in which the soul is *superior* to the body *in that interaction.* This is because the soul is immortal and immaterial, while, in man's fallen state, the body is material and mortal. This Patristic teaching is one which popular contemporary Christian ideas of the body and soul fail to acknowledge. This is especially so in the West, where the soul is often thought of as something which exists within the human body, distinct and separate from it and unmarked by any *essential interaction* with the body. The Greek Fathers teach, instead, that the soul not only "pervades (*chorousa*)" the "entire body (*holou . . . tou somatos*)," as St. Maximos the Confessor writes, but that every member of the body responds to the presence of the soul, though it is incorporeal.[16] We should also note that, following St. Paul (I Corinthians 15:44), the Fathers very often make a distinction between the spiritual body and the physical body, or the *soma pneumatikon* and the *soma psychikon* (this latter term, literally the "psychic body," is a special term used by St. Paul to denote the physical body and does not suggest any connection with the spirit or soul, as some wrongly think). The spiritual body is the body which the human being will have in the afterlife, after the death of the physical body, when the soul and physical body are separated. It is a "resurrected" body that is both ethereal and delicate and untouched by the materiality, disease, corruption, and mortality of the fleshly body in the present life. With regard to the immortality of the soul itself, this is testified by both Scripture and the Patristic witness. Thus Professor Constantine Cavarnos has written that "the immortality of the soul is taught in the Old and the New Testaments, in the works of the Church Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers of the Orthodox Church, and in its iconography and hymnography."[17] Of the Old and New Testamental witness he says the following: "Although in neither the Old nor in the New Testament is it asserted, in so many words, that 'the soul of man is immortal,' its immortality is implicit in many things that are said in both."[18]

As we have observed, things of the intellect and reason have the immortal qualities of the soul. Dr. Cavarnos says that these powers, too, are mentioned in Scripture:

> [W]e find . . . the 'heart' (*kardia*), 'intellect' (*nous, dianoia*), 'conscience'

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16. St. Maximos the Confessor, "Peri Diaphoron Aporion" (Regarding various difficult texts [Ambigua]), in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus,* Series Graeca (Paris: 1857-1866) [hereafter, *Patrologia Graeca*], Vol. 91, col. 1100AB.

17. Cavarnos, *Immortality of the Soul,* p. 13.

18. *Ibid.,* pp. 18-19.

> (*syneidesis*), and 'will' (*thelema*). The activities that spring from these powers and are mentioned in Scripture are emotions, desires, dreams, cares, thoughts, reasoning, understanding, faith, attention, prayer, volition, self-control, remembering, and so on.[19]

These qualities, sometimes called the "powers of the soul (*dynameis tes psyches*)," are divided into three categories: a kind of basic principle of life or *élan vital* that belongs to all created things (whether plant, animal, or human); the lower and basic psychological attributes and motivations of sensation, perception, desire, instinctual drives, etc., which humans have in common with animals; and reason (*he logike dynamis*), an attribute which pertains solely to man and which he can employ, unlike animals, to control the lower and more basic psychological attributes and motivations.[20] Cavarnos observes that the power of reason, according to the Greek Fathers,

> has two distinct aspects, the contemplative or intuitive, generally called *nous,* and discursive, most often denoted by the term *dianoia*. Reason is the highest faculty in man. It is the governor (*kybernetes*) or master (*autokrator*) of the whole man, free in its activity. It is the faculty not only of knowledge, but also of inner attention or observation and of contemplation. It can observe itself as well as what is distinct from itself. Its power of attention renders it the guardian of the whole man.[21]

Citing the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas (d. 1359), he further explains that one must distinguish "between the essence (*ousia*) of the rational faculty and its 'energy' or operation (*energeia*). The energy consists of thoughts, while the essence is the power that produces these." He goes on to say, with regard to the function of the rational faculty, that

> [t]he highest activity of the rational faculty is pure prayer. In its truly natural state, reason can intuitively apprehend higher truth. . . . It is in its natural state when it is pure, free of bad or useless thoughts and feelings.[22]

Larchet says of the *nous,* or noetic faculty, in particular, that it "represents the contemplative possibilities of man. It is fundamentally, for the Fathers, that by which man is brought to God, directed towards Him, and united with

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19. *Ibid.,* p. 18.

20. These three "powers" of the soul are very clearly enumerated by St. Gregory of Nyssa in his "Peri Kataskeues Anthropou" (On the make-up of man), *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 44, col. 237C.

21. Constantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Thought and Art: A Collection of Essays,* 3rd printing (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1980), p. 51.

22. *Ibid.*

Him. . . . [I]t is, in effect, the image of God in man." Larchet pinpoints in the *nous* the "indelible mark" of man's "true nature."[23]

## The Human Condition and Eastern Orthodox Cosmology

It becomes immediately apparent from what we have said about the contrast between the mortal body and the immortal soul, as well as from Larchet's pithy portrayal of the noetic faculty as a mark of true human nature, that the Greek Fathers, in describing the constitution of man, distinguish between an ideal state and the prevailing human condition. Just as its anthropology reflects the general teaching of the Judeo-Christian tradition regarding the nexus between the body and soul, so Orthodox cosmology, in concord with mainstream Christian thought, posits that the human being, in his present state, is fallen; i.e., that men and women have sullied the image of God with which they were created and lead lives that are at odds with the Divinity with which they were originally endowed by their Creator. Following the creation story in Genesis, the Greek Fathers describe man, in the prototype of Adam and Eve,[24] as having deviated from the aim and goal for which he was originally created—as a "failed god," to rephrase the ancient Greek vision of man as a "fallen god" *in illo tempore*, or some past age. It is to "missing the mark," or having taken a path of folly in the place of the road set out by the Creator, that they refer when they speak of human sin or sinfulness. (One can see both the Hebrew and Greek roots of this idea of sin in

23. Larchet, *Thérapeutique des Maladies Mentales*, pp. 37-38.

24. The creation narrative in Genesis, according to Bishop Kallistos (Ware), while "concerned with certain *religious* truths, . . . [is] . . . not to be taken as literal history. Fifteen centuries before modern Biblical criticism, Greek Fathers were already interpreting the Creation and Paradise stories symbolically rather than literally" (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church,* 2nd ed. [London and New York: Penguin Books, 1993], p. 218, note 2). The Romanian theologian, Father Eugen Pentiuc, lends support to Bishop Kallistos' view when he argues that the Hebrew word "*adam,*" as it is used in the creation narrative, "connotes 'humanity' as a totality, not a particular person or individual gender. The original *adam* was, then, a single human *collective,* an undifferentiated aggregate of the male and female individuals created by God." (See Eugen J. Pentiuc, *Jesus the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible* [New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006], p. 1 [emphasis mine].) These observations argue persuasively for a non-literal or symbolic interpretation of the Genesis creation story. This is not to say, of course, that there are not Orthodox who follow a literal interpretation of the Genesis account of the creation of man. Citing a number of Patristic sources, though admittedly influenced by Protestant Evangelical commentaries on the subject, as well, a recent work by the late Father Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000), proffers just such an interpretation.

Proverbs 14:21. In the Greek *Septuaginta,* we read: "He that dishonors the needy [*penetas*] sins [*hamartanei*]."[25] The King James Version[26] of the Hebrew text of the same passage says that one "sins [*chata*]" thus, not against the needy, but against one's "neighbour [*rea*]." In the two readings, despite the variation in wording between "*penetas*" and "*rea,*" both the Greek "*hamartanei*" and the Hebrew "*chata*" derive from roots that denote a missing of the mark or target: *sin as a deviation from some aim or standard.*) The original *Lapsus,* or universal Fall of man from the Divine image and from pre-lapsarian Paradise through sin, had universal consequences, according to the Greek Fathers, for all human beings, who, though they do not share in the guilt of Adam and Eve, suffer from the consequences of the Fall. This suffering is beautifully expressed in several verses from the First Canticle of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which is recited in Thursday Matins of the fifth week of the Orthodox Great Lent (the fast before the Feast of Pascha[27]):

> I have rivaled in transgression Adam the first-formed man, and I have found myself stripped naked of God, of the eternal kingdom and its joy, because of my sins.
>
> Woe to thee, miserable soul! How like thou art to the first Eve! For thou hast looked in wickedness and wast grievously wounded; thou hast touched the tree and rashly tasted the deceptive food.
>
> Instead of the visible Eve, I have the Eve of the mind: the passionate thought in my flesh, shewing me what seems sweet; yet whenever I taste from it, I find it bitter.
>
> Adam was justly banished from Eden because he disobeyed one commandment of Thee, O Saviour. What then shall I suffer, for I am always rejecting Thy words of life?
>
> By my own free choice I have incurred the guilt of Cain's murder. I have killed my conscience, bringing the flesh to life and making war upon

25. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English,* trans. Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, 3rd printing (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), p. 801.

26. *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, Translated Out of the Original Tongues and With the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised (Authorized King James Version)* (New York: World Publishing, n.d.), p. 530.

27. The proper term for the Orthodox Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, commonly called "Easter" in Western Christendom. "Pascha" is the Greek word for "Passover," and the Orthodox Church celebrates the Resurrection as a Christian Passover: "*Pascha Kyriou,*" or the "Passover of the Lord." The Orthodox Church still celebrates Pascha according to the fourth-century formula appointed by the First Oecumenical Synod in Nicea (i.e., on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Vernal Equinox, and after the Jewish Passover), whereas Western Christians no longer follow this ancient dictum.

the soul by my wicked actions.[28]

Not only has all of mankind in some way been implicated in the degradation of humanity, in the Greek Patristic view, but as a result of the besmirching of the image of God in man, and as a consequence of this tragic change in the course of the human being's God-ordained spiritual and ontological evolution, the essence of life itself has been distorted. St. Gregory Palamas, in a homily on this subject, tells us that all of our "illnesses, infirmities, and other misfortunes," as well as "death," come "from our ancestral sin in Paradise (apo tes en to paradeiso . . . progonikes hemon hamartias)"; i.e., from the original disobedience of our Forebears, Adam and Eve, which resulted in our exile into a "corruptible world (*epikeron touton kosmon*)," to a "path" set by man's sin, resulting ultimately in the "final stop (*ho teleutaios stathmos*)": death. This errant course, St. Gregory points out, was not one willed by God; rather, it was one which He tried to impede by establishing a commandment that, should it be transgressed, would lead to death, thus assuring human beings the freedom to prevent their own destruction through obedience. However, the same freedom of will that provided for man's progress in the Divine path established by God also allowed him to choose the path of disobedience; and in deliberately abandoning God and His "life-giving counsel (*zoopoion symboulen*)," humankind suffered tragic consequences.

The first of these consequences, according to Palamas, was the spiritual death of the soul: separated from God, the soul is now, "as Paul says [I St. Timothy 5:6], dead yet still alive (*zosa tethneke*)," and "its life worse than death (thanatou cheiron autes he zoe)," having been moved away from the good and finding itself driven by "self-reviling evil (*autophthono kakia*)." Thereupon, St. Gregory says, there followed the death of the body. These consequences did not come from God, he avers, but "by reason of divine abandonment, which is precisely what sin is (ek tou aitiou tes theias enkataleipseos, hoper estin he hamartia)"; they follow on man's estrangement from God and the mark or target set for the human being by Him.[29] In falling to disobedience, man imitated the disobedience of Satan, "the spiritual serpent

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28. *The Lenten Triodion,* trans. Mother Mary and Archimandite Kallistos Ware (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp. 378-379.

29. St. Gregory Palamas, "Homilia XXXI: Ekphonetheisa en Lite Teloumene Kata ten Proten tou Augoustou" (Homily 31, delivered at the litany on the first day of August), in *Gregoriou tou Palama: Hapanta ta Erga* (Gregory Palamas: complete works), ed. Panagiotes Chrestou (Thessaloniki: Paterikai Ekdoseis "Gregorios ho Palamas," 1985) [hereafter, *Gregoriou tou Palama: Hapanta*], Vol. 10, pp. 276-282 *pass*.

and source of evil (*ho archekakos ophis*)," who first separated from God and who, St. Gregory tells us, is not dead, since death has "no essence," except through "the casting-off of true life (*apobolen ontos zoes*)." Bringing man to "partake in his own death (pros koinonian tes oikeias nekroseos tou)," Satan, "making himself a death-bestowing spirit (nekropoion heauton poiei pneuma)),"[30] ushered in, beyond the tragedy of spiritual death, man's fall to illness and, again, physical death. Thus, in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, man's Fall clothed him in the "flesh" (St. Gregory Palamas, following Gregory of Nyssa, remarks that lapsed humans assumed "coats of skin [*dermatinous chitonas*]"[31]), introducing him to sexuality, conception, birth, irrationality, and all of the debilities, foibles, and ills of fallen human nature.[32]

The Greek theologian Panayiotis Nellas writes that, because of the Fall, "the disruption which sin created in man brought with it the disruption of the cosmos." Since

> [i]n creating man in the image of the King of the ages, God made him, according to Nikitas Stithatos,[33] 'king of creation' and enabled him 'to possess within himself the inward essences, the natures and the knowledges of all things.' It was therefore unavoidable that the disruption of man should have brought about the disruption of the 'essences' and the 'natures' of beings, that is, the disruption also of creation.[34]

Father John Romanides also emphasizes, in his study of sin in the cosmology, anthropology, and soteriology of the early Greek Fathers (originally submitted, in 1957, as his doctoral thesis at the University of Athens[35]), the consequence of the *Lapsus* for the whole of creation: "The fall was not limited

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30. *Ibid.,* p. 292.
31. *Ibid.,* p. 276.
32. See St. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Making of Man," in Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Second Series, reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) [hereafter, *Select Library*], Vol. 5, pp. 407-408 *pass.*
33. Niketas Stethatos, an eleventh-century Greek monk and theological writer (d. *ca.* 1085), was a disciple of St. Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022).
34. Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russell (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), p. 85.
35. Presbyter John Sabbas Romanides, *To Propatorikon Hamartema: Etoi Symbolai eis ereunan ton proypotheseon tes didaskalias peri Propatorikou Hamartematos en te mechri tou Hag. Eirenaiou Archaia Ekklesia en antibole pros ten katholou kateuthynsin tes Orthodoxou kai tes Dytikes mechri Thoma tou Akinatou Theologias* (Ancestral sin: Namely, contributions to the study of presuppositions concerning the doctrine of ancestral sin in the ancient church to the time of St. Irenaeus vis-à-vis the general direction of Orthodox and Western theology to the time of Thomas Aquinas) (Athens: University Press, 1957).

to the human race but extended to reasonless animals and reasonless nature."[36] St. Basil the Great (d. 379), in his "Peri tes tou Anthropou Kataskeues (On the make-up of man)," illustrates these devastating effects of the Fall on the whole of creation, including the animal world, by observing that the snake—the "frightful serpent (*phriktos ophis*)" of fallen nature—was once an upright creature of "affable character (*prosenes*)" and "tame (*hemeros*)."[37] In effect, the degradation of the human condition by the power of Satan is also reflected in the degradation of the cosmos by decay (illness) and deterioration (death); the Satanic bacterium of sin, which led to the abasement of the "king of creation," has infected the universe, compromising its structure and thwarting its purpose. The human being's coöperation with, and subjugation by, Satan and his powers are at the root of imperfection in all of creation:

> Despite the fact that marvelous order and harmony prevail in the cosmos, clearly demonstrating that all things are governed by God, nevertheless, there exists in it a kind of parasite that is manifested by death and consequently by disharmony in the societal relations of man. The evils that are produced by death are not from God. . . . As a result, this world which is in subjection to death and corruption cannot be considered natural, if by natural we mean the world as God intended it to be. In other words, the world is abnormal, but this is not because of its own nature but because a parasitic force exists in it at present.
>
> According to the later testimonies of Judaism and the earliest ones of Christianity, the devil and his demons are not only the cause of death, they are also agents of illness. . . . As created by God, the visible and invisible world is very good . . . because that is how God wanted it. This is precisely why death is the tragic outcome of man and the work of the devil.[38]

In this description of the collapse of man and the cosmos to the power of Satan by the human sin of turning from the Divine path set out for men and women by God to that trail of tribulations which, in exercising free will,

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36. John S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin: A Comparative Study of the Sin of Our Ancestors Adam and Eve According to the Paradigms and Doctrines of the First- and Second-Century Church and the Augustinian Formulation of Original Sin,* trans. George S. Gabriel (Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr Publishing, 2002), p. 81. The original Greek text (see Romanides, *To Propatorikon Hamartema,* p. 72) reads, "He ptosis den perioristhe eis to anthropinon genos, alla epexetathe kai eis ten alogon physin," which might better be translated, in order to underscore the issues at hand, as follows: "The Fall was not limited to the human race but *spread* even to *dumb animals* and *inanimate nature*" (emphasis mine).

37. *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 30, col. 68A.

38. Romanides, *Ancestral Sin,* pp. 82-86 *pass.*

men and women embraced when they succumbed to the wiles of Satan, it is essential that we understand that mankind and the world were not made victims of Divine wrath and have not been abandoned by God. Such ideas are foreign to the Greek Patristic consensus; rather, that consensus holds that human beings were infected by sin and made slaves to a demonic power which challenges and works against Divine Providence. Humankind and the world were reduced, through the Fall, to dwelling in illness and imperfection (and this, again, by man's free choice); but they were still subject to God's Grace and were not wholly separated from Him. While they were *debased* to an abnormal, unhealthy state, man and the universe were not *deprived* of the potential for perfection and a return to normality. Moreover, before the Fall, as Bishop Kallistos writes, in the teachings of the Greek Fathers, "[h]umans . . . were perfect, not so much in an actual as in a potential sense." That is, "[e]ndowed with the image [of God] from the start"—namely, as "icons" of God and His "offspring"—, "they were called to acquire the likeness [of God] by their own efforts (assisted of course by the grace of God)."[39] This striving for perfection, then, was not erased by sin; rather, in many ways it took on an even greater significance, once man had deviated from the path towards ensured perfection appointed for him by God. Not only are these points important to keep in mind, but they stand in sharp contrast to human sin and degradation as they are often understood in Western Christianity.

Bishop Kallistos further notes that

> [t]his image of Adam before the fall is somewhat different from that presented by Augustine[40] and generally accepted in the west since his time. According to Augustine, humans in Paradise were endowed from the start with all possible wisdom and knowledge: theirs was a realized, and in no sense potential perfection.[41]

Romanides expands on this point, contrasting the earliest theological traditions of the Greek Fathers with the theology of Augustine and later Western thinkers:

> The first theologians of the Church who dealt with the subject of the fall took the New Testament's teachings about perfection very seriously. The fall for them was not at all a juridical matter but rather the failure of man to attain to perfection and *theosis* (divinization) because he fell into the hands of him who has the power of death. Thus, salvation for them was the

39. Ware, *The Orthodox Church,* p. 219.

40. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (d. 430).

41. Ware, *The Orthodox Church,* p. 220.

> destruction of the power of Satan and the restoration of creation to its original destiny through the perfecting and *theosis* of man. . . . That destiny is the basis of the theology of the fall and of salvation.[42]

Sickness and death, the separation of the mortal body from the immortal soul at the time of death, and every other imperfection in man and the universe, then, are not, for the Greek Fathers, punishments brought down on man by a wrathful God;[43] they are, as the Eastern Christian tradition emphasizes, the consequences of his having missed the mark, the stuff and substance of the "ancestral curse" (the circumstance of man's "unnatural" post-lapsarian nature) that befell him through the wiles of Satan, and a departure from his true nature—from the perfection, divinization, and participation in the Divine for which he was originally created. Only by grasping these cosmological principles can one properly understand, in turn, the anthropology of the Greek Fathers and, as we shall see, the unique soteriology of the Orthodox Church and the "great divergence between the way in which the Orthodox East and Roman Catholics (as well as Protestants) see man and his relationship with God."[44]

## Salvation and Restoration According to the Theological Consensus of the Greek Fathers

The teaching of the Greek Fathers on salvation cannot be understood

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42. Romanides, *Ancestral Sin,* p. 112.

43. Though it is not within the scope of my discussion here to develop this idea at great length, I should note that a number of the early Greek Fathers argued that the Fall of man facilitated his divinization. As Romanides summarizes this argument, drawing on the theology of Sts. Theophilos of Antioch (d. *ca.* 183-185) and Irenaeus of Lyons (d. at the end of the second or beginning of the third century), "the destiny of man was for him not to remain in the state in which God made him [*sic*] since he was made to become perfect and, thus, to be divinized. He was made needing to acquire perfection, not because he was made flawed in nature and morally deficient but because moral perfection is achieved only in total freedom" (*ibid.,* p. 126). God, respecting man's freedom, allowed him to be lured away by Satan and to fall to the illness of the ancestral curse. But the consequences of the curse were not wrathful punishments by God; rather, man's Fall through his own free will served to allow God to facilitate the human path towards divinization and perfection. This understanding—which Romanides says that Eastern Christianity holds in common with Judaism and, as we mentioned earlier, was distorted by the Augustinian tradition (*ibid.,* p. 123)—runs contrary, once more, to any idea of "original sin," the total depravation of human nature after the Fall, or some legalistic notion of man's need to justify his sin before a wrathful Creator.

44. Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Ortodoxia de Est si Crestinismul de Vest* (The orthodox east and the christian west), trans. Deacon Father George Balaban and Raluca Balaban (Bucharest, Romania: Editura Universitara "Ion Mincu," 2003), p. 44.

without reference to the *apokatastasis* or "restoration" of man and the universe which it encompasses. Man is not saved, according to the soteriology of the Orthodox Church, by the mere atonement of mankind for some juridical infraction against the Will of God. Though an expiatory model of salvation can be found in some of the writings of the Greek Fathers, even in such cases, the aim of atonement is not a juridical compensation paid to God in recognition of man's sin—of reparation; rather, this model speaks of the restoration of man's oneness with God through the repentant redirection of human actions and intention, facilitated as this effort is by the loving Grace of God. This restoration captures the inclination of post-lapsarian man to return to the course set out for him by the Creator, turning from evil (which was brought about by man's deviation from God and goodness, under the influence of Satan) to the spiritual path that leads to deification[45] and the restoration of both human nature and the world to the original state of Paradise in Eden—indeed, to a state of future perfection that will, in fact, *exceed* the glory of Eden. As Vladimir Lossky describes man's pre-lapsarian state and his state after restoration, while "man was created perfect," this "does not mean that his first state is identical with his last. . . . [B]oth the cosmology and the anthropology of the Eastern Church are dynamic in character."[46]

Briefly, in presenting the idea of *apokatastasis* as a rudimentary element in the soteriology of the Eastern Fathers, I must say something about the misunderstanding of this term that can be found in many Western commentaries on the Greek Fathers and in some Orthodox writers. According to the idea of *apokatastasis*, as I said above, evil has no existence in and of itself but is, instead, a distortion or perversion of good inspired by Satanic influence. Moreover, man and the world are subject to restoration and perfection in the salvific efforts of God to free man from the ancestral curse. A clear exposition of the idea can be found in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who also argues, however, that in the restoration of all things, "there will be thanksgiving with one accord on the part of all creation," and that both the righteous and those who have been purified by the fire of Hell will find them-

45. Or, according to St. John of Damascus (d. *ca.* 749), "participation in the Divine Radiance (metoche tes theias ellampseos)." See his "Ekdosis Akribes tes Orthodoxou Pisteos" (Exact exposition of the orthodox faith), *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 94, col. 924A. It is interesting to note that one finds, in this passage, an adumbration of the Essence-Energies distinction of St. Gregory Palamas (*vide infra,* Chap. 3). St. John thus contrasts "Divine Radiance," or deification, with "the Divine Essence (*ten theian ousian*)" (*ibid.*).

46. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* reprinted (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 126.

selves in this joint act of rejoicing.[47] In so arguing, St. Gregory seems be saying that both the virtuous and those cleansed by the fires of Hell will be restored to perfection. Thus, some authorities argue that he, along with the Orthodox who honor his theological sagacity, advocated the heresies of Origen (d. 254), who was condemned by the Church for a variety of unorthodox ideas, among them the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls,[48] or the assertion that all souls—including Satan and his minions—will eventually return to God, and the teaching that Hell, or alienation from God by a rejection of His will and deliberate acts of evil without repentance, is not an eternal state.[49]

In actuality, though he was profoundly influenced by Origen (as was his contemporary St. Gregory the Theologian [d. 389]), St. Gregory of Nyssa did not believe in the pre-existence of souls and was certainly not, as one of the first Orthodox divines to examine his writings on the restoration of man and the universe, St. Barsanouphios (d. *ca.* 540), implies (in the words of Father Florovsky), an "uncritical disciple" of Origen.[50] From a careful and critical

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47. St. Gregory of Nyssa, "Logos Katechetikos ho Megas (Great Catechetical Discourse)" Chapter XXVI, *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 45, col. 69B.

48. The doctrine that the human soul exists prior to its attachment to the human body. This teaching is rejected by Orthodox Christianity on the grounds that it violates the integrity of the human being as a composite of body and soul, rendering the body inferior to the soul. Orthodox Christian doctrine, in concord with the Old Testamental record, attests that the body was created by God and that it is inherently good: "[Y]our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which ye have from God (hou echete apo Theou)" (I Corinthians 6:19). So it is also that, according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church, with the General Resurrection of the dead, at the end of time, the body will be resurrected and reunited to the soul.

49. As a number of Orthodox writers have pointed out, in its doctrine of *apokatastasis* the Orthodox Church has never endorsed the supposition that all human beings will eventually be saved, regardless of their spiritual state. From a psychological standpoint, alone, it is obvious that such a deterministic idea would thwart the human striving for perfection. Hence, Protopresbyter George Metallinos, Professor of Theology at the University of Athens, in his comments on the pastoral theology of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite (d. 1809), tells us that images of the wrath of God and eternal punishment, and emphasis on acts of penitence and repentance, "more than anything else," help to maintain "the penitent in a state of constant vigilance" (Protopresbyter George Metallinos, "The *Exomologetarion* of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite," *Orthodox Tradition,* Vol. 19, No. 1 [2002], p. 16). Father Metallinos contends that it is in an effort to make the human being "aware of the essence of sin and its devastating power" that Nicodemos and other Church Fathers employ starkly punitive imagery and language, focusing our attention on the human "capacity for Divine sonship" and perfection (p. 21). If sin (or, for that matter, spiritual struggle) had no ultimate consequence, save that of the indiscriminate restoration of all things, human action and spiritual striving would not only lack any ultimate meaning, but, as Metallinos argues, religious imagery would come to lack any motivational power.

50. [Protopresbyter] Georges Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century,* Vol. 7 in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein:

reading of St. Gregory, one can in no way conclude that he argues against the necessity of repentance and forgiveness for the attainment of salvation; nor, to be sure, does he seem to think that everyone will ask for and receive forgiveness. Rather, he stresses that, in the face of the forgiving love of God, everyone will be given the *opportunity* to accept and follow the Will of God. Father Florovsky also points out that St. Maximos the Confessor, who undertook to study and defend the theology of St. Gregory,

> interpreted . . . [St. Gregory's] . . . doctrine of the universal restoration as the turn of every soul to the contemplation of God, which is the realization of the 'totality of the faculties of the soul.' . . . Maximus [also] distinguished between *epignosis,* the knowledge of Divine truth, and *methexis*, participation in the Divinity, which requires a definite movement of the will.[51]

Florovsky admits that St. Gregory does not, in fact, *clearly* make a "distinction between the consciousness of Good and the inclination of the will towards it," as does St. Maximos. But St. Maximos, in his interpretation of St. Gregory's theology, as Florovsky observes in another place, insists that "God will be everything, and in everything," but that this "deification . . . must be accepted and experienced in freedom and love."[52] Here we have a definition of *apokatastasis* which, in its carefully defined expression, confirms the orthodoxy of St. Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of restoration and certainly contains none of the overt heresies held by Origen. We also have a lucid statement about the fundamental element of Orthodox soteriology on which I would like to build: that salvation entails the restoration of man to his prelapsarian state, his eventual attainment to a greater state of perfection than that which he had in the Paradise of Eden, and his deification, as the crown of Divine creation, along with the world and universe around him.

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Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), p. 219. It should be noted that, despite Father Florovsky's assessment of St. Barsanouphios' comments on St. Gregory of Nyssa's views on this matter, the former nowhere suggests that the latter is a heretic. Barsanouphios concludes his considered observations with the following non-condemnatory remark: "Do not suppose that even the holy ones were able to grasp truly (*gnesios*) all of the profundities of God" (St. Barsanouphios, "Didaskalia peri ton Origenous, Evagriou, kai Didymou Phronematon [Instruction on the the opinions of Origen, Evagrios, and Didymos]," *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 86 [A], col. 901B).

51. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers,* p. 219. See St. Maximos the Confessor, "Peusis, kai Apokriseis kai Eroteseis (Questions, inquiries, and responses)," No. 13, *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 90, col. 796A-C.

52. [Protopresbyter] Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century*, Vol. 9 in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), p. 245.

If the soteriology of the Greek Fathers rests conceptually on a restorative model of man and the world, a *sui generis* quality of that model that cannot be overstated is its Christocentricity. The entire soteriological scheme of the Orthodox Church is formed around the Person of Christ, "in Whom we all dwell and find our true identities," being, as He is, the "source" of the restored man,[53] the *novus homo,* and the source of the transformed world—a "New World" and a "New Earth"—"in which he dwells."[54] As we observed earlier, Christ represents the *Archetypon,* the Divine Archetype, of the human being as he is restored to his proper and God-ordained path to perfection and divinization (deification). Speaking of Christ as the Archetype of restored man, St. Gregory the Theologian, for example, writes in a stirring Paschal oration: "[Today] I am glorified with Him . . . , today I am quickened with Him, . . . let us honor our Archetype."[55] Similarly, St. John of Damascus, speaking of the deification of man, refers to the Divine image in man as it is "mingled" with Christ the "Archetype."[56] As Metropolitan Cyprian states, Christ is the "Archetype, . . . Who will grant Grace and deification."[57] Christ the Savior and Christ the Redeemer, the focus of the Orthodox Church's ineluctably Christocentric soteriological teachings, also brings to those teachings a truly anthropocentric element, expressed in an intimate relationship between man and the Divine Archetype of man restored, perfected, and deified through Christ, Who, taking on human nature, perfected it, revealing, in His Person, God made man: God Incarnate, the *Theanthropos,* the God-Man, both Perfect Man (*teleios Anthropos*) *and* Perfect God (*teleios Theos*).

The idea of Christ as the restored human, the new or second Adam, taking on the flesh of man, effecting a new creation, and setting human beings once more on the path towards deification and perfection, is beautifully expressed in one of the *Theotokia* (hymns to the Virgin Mary, appointed in the *Octoechos*, the service book containing hymns for the eight modes [tones] of the weekly liturgical cycle of the Orthodox Church) for Sunday Matins in the

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53. Bishop [Archbishop] Chrysostomos and Reverend James Thornton, *Love,* Vol. 4 in *Themes in Orthodox Patristic Psychology* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1990), p. 49.

54. Archimandrite [Archbishop] Chrysostomos, Hieromonk Auxentios, and Hierodeacon Akakios, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Thought: The Traditionalist Voice* (Belmont, MA: Nordland House Publishers, 1982), p. 15.

55. St. Gregory the Theologian, "First Oration: On Easter and His Reluctance," Schaff and Wace, *A Select Library*, Vol. 7, p. 203.

56. St. John of Damascus, "Homilia in Transfigurationem Domini" (Homily on the transfiguration of the Lord) *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 96, col. 552C.

57. Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, "To Archetypon Mas kai He Diaphylaxis Apo Ta Eidola" (Our archetype and preservation from idols), *Hagios Kyprianos,* Vol. 14, no. 329 (2005), p. 235.

second mode: "Most blessed art thou, O Virgin Theotokos; for through Him Who was incarnate of thee . . . , Adam hath been restored (*anakekletai*, or, literally, 'recalled' [to new life])."[58] St. Gregory Palamas echoes this theme in the following passage from one of his sermons, in which he says that the Resurrection of Christ restored Adam to immortality:

> [W]e were taken by night and seized by the shadow of death, having fallen in sin and having lost the power of seeing, which was by the Grace of God ours and with which we perceived the light that grants true life. Night and death were poured upon our nature, not because the true light withdrew, but because we turned away, no longer having within our persons an inclination towards that light which bestows life. However, . . . the Giver of eternal light and the Source of true life had mercy on us, not only coming down for our sake, becoming a man like us, but enduring the Cross and death for us . . . , resurrecting on the third day, showing once more that the light of eternal and immortal life in our nature was for it the light of resurrection.[59]

Vladimir Lossky draws direct lines between the image of Christ as the restored Adam and the deification of man and the universe: "Since this task of deification . . . given to man [by God] was not fulfilled by Adam, it is in the work of Christ, the second Adam, that we see what it was meant to be."[60]

Many Church Fathers, it should be noted, extend the image of Christ as the new, or second, Adam to the Virgin Mary, making the Mother of God, in this expanded imagery, a symbol of the new or second Eve in her restoration to the path towards perfection. In this way, they emphasize that the abrogation, by Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection, of the ancestral curse that fell upon Adam and Eve and their descendants is universal. Thus, St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes:

> [F]or Adam had necessarily to be restored in Christ, that mortality be absorbed in immortality, and Eve in Mary, that a virgin, become the advocate of a virgin, should undo and destroy virginal disobedience by virginal obedience.[61]

St. Maximos the Confessor further clarifies this image of Eve, by asserting

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58. *Parakletike*, revised edition (Athens: Ekdoseis "Phos," 1987).

59. St. Gregory Palamas, "Homilia XXIII: Eis to Dekaton Heothinon Evangelion (Homily 23: On the tenth matins gospel)," in *Gregoriou tou Palama: Hapanta,* Vol. 10, pp. 74, 76.

60. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 110.

61. St. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching,* trans. Joseph P. Smith, S.J. (New York and Ramsey, NJ: Newman Press, 1952), p. 69.

that the souls of those who come to resemble God through deification participate in the bodily birthgiving of the Virgin Mary in a mystical way:

> Christ always desires to be born in a mystical way, becoming incarnate in those who attain salvation, and making the soul that gives birth to Him a Virgin Mother.[62]

This is an important clarification: whereas Christ, as the second Adam, *restored* humankind—men and women alike—by taking human form *as God,* the Virgin Mary *represents* the restoration and deification, by her birthgiving, of humankind (once more, *both* men and women) and is not considered, as one theological trend in the Roman Catholic Church would hold, in any sense a Co-Redemptrix with Christ or, like Christ (as the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception affirms), to have been Perfect Man, free from sin at her birth. The celebrated twentieth-century Orthodox churchman, St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, observes, in this regard, that

> [n]one of the ancient Holy Fathers say that God in miraculous fashion purified the Virgin Mary while yet in the womb; and many directly indicate that the Virgin Mary, just as all men, endured a battle with sinfulness, but was victorious over temptations and was saved by her Divine Son.[63]

In short, the image of a new Eve in the person of the Virgin Mary is wholly Christocentric and does not for the Greek Fathers—even if they praise her as the pure vehicle of the Incarnation, immaculate, ever-virgin (*aeiparthenos*), spotless and pure in her life and intentions, victorious over her battle with sin, a perfect image of deified man, "*He Platytera ton Ouranon*" ("She who is more spacious than the heavens"), and an effective intercessor for her fellow humans—contain even a hint of co-redemptive Mariological doctrine.

In presenting Christ as the Archetype of the *novus homo* and of Adam and Eve restored to the Divine course appointed by God, there is present everywhere in the writings of the early Greek Fathers an unmistakable soteriological leitmotif: that God—Christ—became man, so that man could achieve deification by Grace. Thus, St. Athanasios the Great (d. 373), tells us, in the characteristic wording of this universal Patristic axiom, that Christ "enenthropesen hina hemeis theopoiethomen (was made man, that we might

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62. *The Philokalia: The Complete Text,* trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, *et al.* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981) [hereafter, *Philokalia* (English text)], Vol. 2, p. 294.

63. Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch, *The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God,* trans. Fr. Seraphim Rose (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1987), pp. 38-39.

be made God)."[64] The importance of this aphoristic statement cannot be overemphasized. It contains within it two essential elements in the deification of man: first, an affirmation of the restoration of man by his Creator, God Himself; and, second, the indispensable affirmation of the humanity of Christ, Who, while remaining God, at the same time had to become a true man. This delicate balance between Christ's Divinity and humanity is a not a trifling matter.

With regard to the Divinity of Christ, the Fathers of the Church teach unequivocally that God is unknowable and beyond what is bodily or sensible. Thus, as one writer, drawing on the theological commentaries of St. John of Damascus, asserts,

> in Holy Scripture 'many things' are said 'concerning God' which are more applicable to what is 'corporeal'; but the Saints explain to us that these anthropomorphic expressions should not be taken literally or in their exact sense, but 'symbolically': 'Everything that is said of God as if He had a body is said symbolically, but has a higher meaning; for the Divine is simple and formless.'[65]

The same writer also cites the following words by St. Gregory of Nyssa on the unknowable nature of God:

> The Divine Word above all forbids that the Divine be likened to any of the things known by men, since every idea deriving from some conceptual image according to our understanding, which is the product of conjecture about the Divine Nature, makes an idol of God and does not proclaim God.[66]

Indeed, in the apophatic tradition of the Orthodox Church, which approaches God not solely by assertions about what He is, but in terms of His unknowable Nature, or what He is not (for He encompasses being and nonbeing alike), "the divine essence remains in all respects beyond comprehension and participation (*asylleptos kai ametochos*). Only the uncreated divine energies are accessible (*prositai*)."[67] About the technical distinction between the Divine Essence and Energies of God, we will have more to say in the fol-

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64. St. Athanasios the Great, "Logos Peri tes Enanthropeseos tou Logou (Discourse on the incarnation of the word)," *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 25, col. 192B.

65. [Archimandrite Cyprian (Agiokyprianites)], "On the Ascension of Our Lord," *Orthodox Tradition,* Vol. 19, no. 2 (2002), p. 2. See St. John of Damascus, *Ekdosis*, *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 94, col. 851AB.

66. *Ibid.* See St. Gregory of Nyssa, "Peri tou Biou Mo[y]seos" (Concerning the life of Moses), *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 44, col. 377B.

67. Romanides, *To Propatorikon Hamartema,* p. 99.

lowing chapter on Hesychasm. The point here is that,

> [t]o safeguard the doctrine of God's ultimate transcendence of human cognition, Orthodoxy makes a hierarchical distinction between 'cataphatic' and 'apophatic' theologies, which correspond in type to theological affirmations or denials, respectively. Cataphatically, God is an ultimate and eternal Being; on the higher and more 'truthful' apophatic level, however, God is not in essence understandable by terms like ultimate, eternal, or Being. God is, in the apophatic sense, beyond levels of gradation and beyond the categories of time and space themselves, since these are but categories appropriate to mere human thinking.[68]

St. Gregory Palamas thus insists that the Essence of God "is not a subject for speech or thought or even contemplation, for it is far removed from all that exists and is more than unknowable, . . . incomprehensible and ineffable."[69] Or, as St. Dionysios the Areopagite says of God, He "is above all affirmation . . . [and] . . . , being in His simplicity freed from all things and beyond everything, is above all denial."[70] Vladimir Lossky further contends that the apophatic understanding of God

> teaches us to see above all a negative meaning in the dogmas of the Church: it forbids us to follow natural ways of thought and to form concepts which would usurp the place of spiritual realities. For Christianity is not a philosophical school for speculating about abstract concepts but is essentially a communion with the living God.[71]

As Bishop Auxentios has also observed, in one of our co-authored theological collections, it is not just an understanding of the Essence of God that rests on "negative" theology; the very "doctrine of the Holy Trinity," of God the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit, is also "apophatic at heart."[72] Understood in superficial terms, Trinitarian doctrine leads to inane speculation about putative polytheistic tendencies in Christianity (if not, indeed, in some of its heterodox expressions, a subtle but perceptible deviation from the carefully-defined monotheism of Orthodox Christian Trinitarianism). From within the apophatic tradition, and as an experience of the revelation of the True

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68. Chrysostomos *et al.*, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Thought,* p. 3.

69. St. Gregory Palamas, "Peri Theotetos kai tou Kat' Auten Amethektou te kai Methektou (Concerning non-participation and participation in the Godhead itself)," in *Gregoriou tou Palama: Syngrammata,* ed. P. Chrestou (Thessaloniki: Royal Research Society, 1966), Vol. 2, p. 242.

70. St. Dionysios the Areopagite, "Peri Mystikes Theologias" (Concerning mystical theology), *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. 3, col. 1048B.

71. Quoted in Chrysostomos *et al.*, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Thought,* p. 4.

72. *Ibid.*

God—as a "theology of facts," to use the words of Father Georges Florovsky—,[73] the Trinity, too, defies mere conceptualization. Rather, it affirms that God in His Essence (and, in fact, in His Energies), is

> indivisibly divided or distinguished into three persons on the basis of origin. The Father is the unbegotten or ungenerated, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; yet, each of them bears the fullness of the divine nature. The 'how' of the Son's begottenness or of the Holy Spirit's procession is a mystery that is simply unavailable to human understanding. . . . The oneness of the Godhead is preserved by the monarchy of the Father, who is the sole source of [the] divine nature.[74] Yet, . . . the divine nature resides wholly in each of the three persons. . . . There is perfect balance in Orthodox dogma between the threeness and the oneness of God.[75]

At the core of this apophatic understanding of the Triune God is the human experience of God, which, though it involves a "spiritual fact" and a true revelation of God, at the same time insures the utter unknowability of that from which such experience, such facts, and such revelation come forth.

Concerning the humanity of the Divine Christ, the Greek Fathers sedulously point out that the *Theanthropos,* the God-Man Christ, while remaining Perfect God, one with the Unknowable Essence of God, was also Perfect Man, in every way genuinely human, though, by virtue of being God, untainted by the ancestral sin and thus free of the dominion of Satan. As Lossky expresses this quintessential Patristic teaching, God had to become a *true man*, taking on "all that was really human, such as it was after the fall, ex-

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73. [Protopresbyter] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View,* Vol. 1 in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky,* 2nd printing (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), p. 120.

74. This principle led to the rejection, by the Eastern Orthodox Church, of an addition to the Nicene Creed by the Western Church, as early as the fifth century, of the so-called *Filioque* Clause, or what its formulators considered a logical addendum to the Creed: that the Third Person (*Hypostasis*) of the Trinity proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (*Filioque*). From an Orthodox perspective, this addition seriously compromises the unitive monarchy of the Father, subordinating one Hypostasis of the single Trinity. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), drawing heavily on the writings of St. Augustine, gave strong support to the *Filioque* Clause in his teachings about the Trinity, in which he posits, among other things, that the Holy Spirit is the love which exists between the Father and the Son. This speculative theology has traditionally been rejected by the Christian East as well, not only on the grounds that love is a manifestation of the unitive monarchy of the Father and thus common to all Three Hypostases of the Triune God, but that the theology of Aquinas and the Latin Scholastics grew out of intellectual exercise and conjecture and not the apophatic theological tradition of spiritual experience and revelation. The theological ideas espoused by the Scholastics also lie outside the consensus of the Greek Fathers, as it is informed by the apophatic tradition.

75. Chrysostomos *et al.*, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Thought,* pp. 5-6.

cepting sin: He took on an individual nature liable to suffering and death." In so doing, He "has assumed also all the imperfections, all the limitations that proceed from sin."[76] The following is a simple but pithily accurate statement of the Patristic teachings on the humanity of Christ, capturing, at the same time, the inseparable Divinity of Christ in His Theanthropic unity:

> He was true God and true Man, or, more specifically, the Person [*Hypostasis*] and nature of God the Son united with the nature of man from His Mother, a daughter of Adam and Eve. As [*sic*] St. Paul confirms His [Christ's] manhood, saying, 'when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law [Gal. 4:4].'
>
> St. Athanasios (296-373) comments, 'Therefore what came forth from Mary, according to the divine Scriptures, was human and the Lord's body was real; real, I say, since it was the same as ours. For Mary is our sister, in that we are all sprung from Adam.'
>
> The two natures would be united without confusion or loss of identity as God or man. The humanity of Jesus was the same as our own and, according to His Divinity, He was of One Essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit.[77]

The perfect Divine and perfect human Natures of Christ, as Lossky further comments, are themselves expressed by the Church Fathers in apophatic terms. In contradistinction to Hellenistic thought, which "could not admit the union of two perfect principles," the Church Fathers understood the two Natures of Christ, "indivisibly and inseparably" united, to be a revealed "mystery" of the kind in which the three Hypostases of the Godhead exist in "one nature." In the apophatic spirit of their theologizing, they not only contained such a truth, but acknowledged that the "'how' of this union remains for us a mystery" that is ultimately "based on . . . [an] . . . incomprehensible distinction," in which "[t]he Divine Person, Christ, has in Him two principles which are different and united at the same time."[78]

The Divine and human Natures of Christ come into focus in the Incarnation and the Resurrection. In the one instance, Christ entered life through a Virgin, the *Theotokos* ("Bearer of God"), was conceived without seed, and came forth from her womb without violating her physical virginity.[79] In the other instance, He was crucified, suffered, died, and was buried, while at the

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76, Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 142.

77. [Mother Mariam], *The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos* (Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1989), p. 181.

78. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 142-144 *pass.*

79. The idea that the Virgin Mary not only gave seedless birth to Christ, but that she remained physically inviolate in birthgiving, is an ancient and established teach-

same time His death was life-bestowing, transforming both the living and the dead *and* earth and Hades by His Resurrection and victory over death. As was befitting God, Christ was born preternaturally and miraculously rose from the dead; as was befitting man, Christ took human form and was born in a human body, just as He genuinely suffered on the Cross and died. While this focus is of theological import, of course, its anthropological and soteriological significance is immense. By His Incarnation and Resurrection, in which He assumed and deified human flesh, Christ restored man; freed him from the ancestral curse of the pangs of physical birthgiving and (giving assurance that the body and soul would be reunited, after their temporary separation before the full renewal of creation at the end of time and the General Resurrection) the ignominy of bodily death; and provided for human participation in the Divine Energies through His own restorative and transforming participation in the life of the fallen human.

The Incarnation and Resurrection are not simply miraculous events that confirm the Divinity of Christ; they are ontological events that affirm the restoration of human nature. Christ "assumed human nature, gave it its existence, and deified it."[80] It was in recognition of this ontological dimension of the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ that the Oecumenical Synods that were convoked in the early centuries of Christianity were so assiduous in their efforts to define the theological, Christological, and soteriological precepts of the Church. These were not, for these Synods, matters of semantics or—again, as popular historical and theological prate would have it—the products of a would-be attempt to "create," for allegedly political and social gain, a new religion from the rudimentary moral teachings of various messianic Jewish sects. The Synods spoke to events that were central to human

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ing of the Orthodox Church, even though, in recent times, some writers have questioned it. For example, Father Thomas Hopko, in his *The Winter Pascha: Readings for the Christmas-Epiphany Season* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), asserts that, beyond doctrinal affirmations that Christ was born supernaturally to a virgin, "there is," in the Orthodox Church, "no teaching of any other sort of miracle in regard to His birth; certainly no idea that He came forth from His mother without opening her womb" (p. 175). As I have pointed out in a review of his book, the one hymnographic reference used by those who support Father Hopko's assertion, does not, when properly translated, actually support his view. In fact, it stands side-by-side with numerous other hymnographic references that clearly and without question attest to the preservation of the *Theotokos'* physical virginity at the birth of Christ. I also point out that, contrary to his counterclaim, numerous Church Fathers and writers, from Justin Martyr to St. John Damascus, uphold this teaching. See Bishop Chrysostomos, review of *The Winter Pascha: Readings for the Christmas-Epiphany Season*, by Thomas Hopko, *Orthodox Tradition,* Vol. 9, nos. 2&3 (1992), pp. 7, 22.

80. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 142.

restoration and transformation and to the reshaping of the world and the universe. They centered on mega-events that spoke to the convergence of the past, present, and future in the *eternal now* of revealed truth.

The language of the Oecumenical Synods, therefore, is the language of existentialism—striving to protect the lofty profundities of human union with God from the very superficies that are attributed to them by those who reduce Christianity to mere religion and subject it to simple-minded thoughts about human motivation and political and social determinism. The Church Fathers, and especially those who sought to express the teachings of the Orthodox Church about the *Theanthropos,* as Vladimir Lossky concurs, "never lost sight of the question concerning our union with God." That was the primary thrust of the "usual arguments which they bring up against unorthodox doctrines," since "the fullness of our union" with God, human salvation, and "our deification . . . become impossible,"[81] if one succumbs to the theology and Christology of those who deviated from the experiential theological revelation of the Patristic consensus ("heretics," in the Patristic lexicon, or those alienated from the genuine spiritual experience of Christianity and suffering from the pathology of mere religious belief).[82]

It is perhaps worth noting that Christ was born in the humblest circumstances and without the trappings of earthly royalty that some of the mes-

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81. *Ibid.,* p. 154.

82. Interestingly, as Father John Romanides points out, the idea of primacy in Orthodox ecclesiology is also inextricably bound up with the Church's primary task of uniting the faithful to God and assuring "that they may be one, as we are" (St. John 17:11-12). As Romanides asserts, the contemporary ecumenical interpretation of this phrase "is not part of the [Orthodox] Patristic tradition." He maintains that "Christ prays here that His disciples and their disciples may in this life become one in the vision of His Glory (which He has by nature from the Father)." This deifying vision "was part of the Old and New Testament Church's becoming the Body of Christ." Hence, the experience of deification "is the real core of Church history" and the criterion of ecclesial authenticity, and Christ's prayer is "certainly not a prayer for the union of churches." That it should be applied to "churches which have not the slightest understanding of glorification (*theosis*)," he remarks with some irony, "is very interesting, to say the least." Ecclesiastical primacy, in the purest Orthodox Patristic tradition, centers on fidelity to those teachings, doctrines, and observances which lead to holiness and "the cure of the human personality" through union with God "via the purification and illumination of the heart and glorification (*theosis*)." (See John S. Romanides, "Orthodox and Vatican Agreement: Balamand, Lebanon, June 1993," *Theologia,* Vol. 6, no. 4 [1993], pp. 570-580 *pass.*) In another place, Father Romanides even argues that "the abolition of Satan's power" and man's consequent deification and union with God form "the connecting link that gives unity to the Gospels," chastising "contemporary critics of the New Testament" for their preoccupation with the "inner unity of the Synoptic Gospels" at the cost of the core of the message which they relate in different depths and with divergent catechetical and pastoral aims. (Romanides, *Ancestral Sin,* pp. 71-72.)

sianic traditions of sectarian Judaism anticipated. To the extent that, disabused of a literal messianic royalty because of the ignobility of these circumstances, we pass beyond the image of "Royal Messianism" to that of "Ontological Messianism,"[83] we come to an understanding that, in the messianic tradition, too, there is a certain conceptual duality. On the one hand, Christians see Christ as the fulfillment of God's covenant with the Hebrew people in their earthly sojourn, extending this Royal Messianism to the messianic catholicity of a "New Israel" (that is, an Israel that includes the non-Jew[84]); on the other hand, the Church Fathers tell us that Christ is the fulfillment of an ontological promise to man, contained within His archetypical revelation of human perfection. Christ was not just the historical Messiah of the Hebrew Covenant, according to Patristic teaching. His Incarnation was, to quote St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, part of the Divine Oeconomy, "both foreknown and foreordained" by God the Father "prior to the foreknowledge and foreordination of all . . . creatures, both noetic and sensible," which were themselves "both foreknown and foreordained" by the Father "to be created for the sake of the great Mystery of the Incarnation of His Beloved Son." The mystery of the Incarnate Oeconomy, then, is the "foreordained Divine purpose of the origin of existing things."[85] It is "the final end of all things, higher than which there is nothing, . . . [entailing] . . . perfection, deification, glory, and blessedness for Angels, for mankind, and for the whole of creation, . . . the union of the Creator and His creation, and the glory of the unoriginate Father, . . . glorified by His Son and Word, Who clothed Himself in human nature."[86] We see here both the Royal Messiah of human expectation and the Ontological Messiah of Divine Oeconomy.

The human condition, as it is expressed in the anthropology and cosmology of the Greek Fathers, leads one directly to the soteriological scheme

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83. This is a distinction that I have borrowed, in part, from Father Eugen Pentiuc, though he uses it in a way that moves far beyond my point here. (See Pentiuc, *Jesus the Messiah,* p. xiii.)

84. St. Gregory Palamas underscores this messianic inclusiveness in his comments on the two blind men mentioned in St. Matthew 9:27, who followed Christ, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." They signify, he tells us, "the two [human] races, that of the Jews and that of the Gentiles (*ton ex ethnon*)," who were enlightened and thereby recognized Christ as "both God and man." St. Gregory Palamas, "Homilia XXX: Hypothesin Echoun Tous Kata ton Euangelisten Matthaion En Oikia Anablepsantas Typhlous (Homily 30: On the blind men who regained their sight in a house, according to the Evangelist Matthew)," in *Gregoriou tou Palama: Hapanta,* Vol. 10, pp. 263-264.

85. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, *Hermeneia eis tas Hepta Katholikas Epistolas* (Interpretation of the seven catholic epistles) (Venice: 1806), pp. 165-166.

86. *Ibid.,* p. 166, note 1.

which we have set forth in the Person of Christ as the Archetype of restored man, the Redeemer and Savior of the first Adam, and the Messiah Who, in His ontological dimensions, is the Creator, the Almighty, and the Ineffable One Who unites the Creator and His creation. Applied to our investigation of Orthodox psychotherapy, we find in this scheme, from the perspective of human physical and mental health, an operational definition of what it is that constitutes the "normal" or "natural" human being—using "natural," in this context, to speak not of fallen nature, but of the original nature meant by God for mankind. Such a one is he who, by union with God, restores the perfect connection between the body and soul, lost through the Fall. As Bishop Kallistos affirms, "since the human person is a single unified whole, the image of God embraces the entire person, body as well as soul."[87] The restoration of the image of God in human beings, as well as their attainment of likeness to God, is therefore directly associated with this connection. "[N]ot only the soul, but also the body of man shares" in this deification, as Lossky also says, "being created, as they are, in the image of God."[88] "Living . . . with temperance (*en metriopatheia*)" and "traversing in ease the period of the present life," the restored man is "delivered" from "the tribulations of both soul and body" by "Christ Himself, the Physician and God of our souls and of our bodies," as St. Gregory Palamas tells us.[89]

The normal, or natural and "healthy," state of the human being is also characterized by the Greek Fathers as one of mental deification, which, in turn, is considered a *sine qua non* for salvation. Hence, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite categorically states that, "[i]f your own mind is not deified (*theothe*) by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for you to be saved (*na sothes*)."[90] This notion of mental deification, of course, assumes a perfect harmony between body and soul, which share in salvation and immortality, and in the enlightenment of the *nous,* or the spiritual faculty of the mind. Once again, in his natural state, "man is a single totality of soul and body" and it is thus that his deification is accomplished.[91] To a great extent, because of their emphasis on the "eschatological now (*to eschatologikon nyn*)," or the notion that the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ restored human nature and the universe ontologically, the Greek Fathers hold that this process of de-

87. Ware, *The Orthodox Church,* p. 220.
88. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 116.
89. St. Gregory Palamas, "Homilia XXXI," p. 302.
90. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, *Nea Klimax* (The new ladder) (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis B. Regopoulou, 1976), p. 247.
91. Romanides, *To Propatorikon Hamartema,* p. 125.

ification begins here and now. Through the cleansing of the mind and body, men and women are lifted into a state of deification, such that they live partly, even in the present life, in the future glory of human perfection. In the next chapter, we will address the methodology of this deification: the ways in which the mind is cleansed and the proper relationship between the body and soul is restored. In so doing, we will come to a far clearer idea of what Orthodox psychotherapy is and what it entails.

## A Necessary Clarification

To the extent that Western Christians and scholars of religion are familiar with Eastern Orthodox thought—a familiarity varying between none and a great deal, represented by scholarship that ranges from excellent to deplorable—, they often associate the anthropological and cosmological teaching of the Greek Fathers with Platonic, Neo-Platonic, or Gnostic influences. This is partly because the Greek Fathers frequently employ the terminology of classical Greek philosophy. But such an association also too often stems from an inadequate understanding of the tenets and precepts of these classical philosophical schools themselves. For example, St. Gregory Palamas, who is identified with Hesychasm, which we will shortly examine, is incessantly accused of infusing Platonic or Neo-Platonic concepts (which are seldom distinguished from one another with any meticulosity) into his theological writings, when, in fact, a good deal of his philosophical allusions are more Aristotelian than Platonic. (Indeed, his philosophical forte as a student was Aristotelianism.[92]) In any event, the Greek Fathers knowingly and deliberately borrowed the nomenclature of, as well as certain cognitive structures from, Greek philosophy, though with constant declarations that what they had taken from the classical corpus of philosophy they had "baptized" and "transformed" to serve the precepts and tenets of Christianity.[93] Their

92. The story is told of St. Gregory that the Great Logothete of the Byzantine court, Theodore Metochites, when he heard the Saint, as a young student, discussing the logic of Aristotle in the presence of the Emperor, commented: "If Aristotle himself had been present to listen to this young man, he would, I believe, have praised him beyond measure. For the time being, I say that it is those with such a soul and of such nature as his who should be pursuing knowledge, and especially the omnifarious philosophical writings of Aristotle." See St. Philotheos (Kokkinos), Patriarch of Constantinople, "Logos Enkomiastikos eis ton Bion tou en Hagiois Patros Hemon Gregoriou tou Palama (Laudatory discourse on the life of our father among the saints, Gregory Palamas)," in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias* (Greek church fathers), ed. Panagiotes Chrestou (Thessaloniki: Paterikai Ekdoseis "Gregorios ho Palamas," 1984), Vol. 70, p. 5.

93. See Reverend Gregory Telepneff and Archbishop Chrysostomos, "Hellenistic and Patristic Thought on the *Kosmos* and Man in the Greek Fathers," *Orthodox Tra-*

purpose was not to construct a philosophy of Christianity, fitting it by some frantic Procrustean exercise into the framework of classical Greek philosophy; their stated task was to press the philosophical methods and vocabulary of the ancient Greeks—whom they at times characterized as pagans and bereft of true wisdom—into the service of Christian apologetics and theology. As such, in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Greek philosophy was as if "always in labor but never giving birth."[94]

The arguments that may be brought to bear on those who argue for the undue influence of Greek philosophy on the Fathers of the Eastern Church are many. One may begin with a rather basic observation about charges that the cosmology of the Church Fathers is dualistic. The Greeks Fathers, in concord with Old Testamental Jewish cosmology, as Father Romanides avers, rejected the notion of Hellenistic dualism, which "was wholly alien" to the Jews and to ancient Christian teaching.[95] Elaborating on this point, he writes that, for the Jews, as for the Greek Fathers,

> the world, visible and the invisible, is the only real world created by God for man. Death, for the Jew [and the Orthodox Christian], is not phenomenological but real and tragic. . . . The present world and the future age are not two different worlds. Salvation, therefore, is not salvation from the world but from the present evil. Conversely, for the Greek philosophers, the natural way of salvation is the flight of the soul from the body and matter to the transcendent reality.[96]

The anthropology of the Greek Fathers, too, is wholly at odds with the anthropology of the Platonists, who (along with the Neo-Platonists and Gnostics) would have equated the "resurrection of the body" and its oneness with the soul—anthropological principles basic to the Patristic tradition—"with the damnation of the soul, constituting its re-imprisonment [in the body]."[97]

In this vein, Father Georges Florovsky observes, therefore, that "Hellenistic philosophical terms" are "radically transformed in their Patristic" application. As for the alleged influence of Platonic thought on the "Greek Fathers," he argues that they "were actually closer to Aristotle than to Plato," since "Aristotle understood the unity of human existence, of the body and soul, at an intuitive level. . . . [E]mpirical existence and the human personality," for him, "took on an importance that could not be detached from the

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*dition,* Vol. 13, nos. 3&4 (1996), p. 12.

94. *Ibid.*

95. Romanides, *To Propatorikon Hamartema,* p. 41.

96. *Ibid.,* pp. 41-42.

97. *Ibid.,* p. 42.

eternal elements of the soul." Such a concept of human personhood is, of course, wholly foreign to Platonic and Neo-Platonic (not to mention Gnostic) anthropology.[98] Metropolitan John Zizioulas expands on Florovsky's observations with his contention that the Greek Fathers, in fact, synthesized from Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy a vocabulary for talking about the human person that is ultimately contained in neither philosophical tradition:

> Zizioulas observes that Aristotle's notion of man as a psychosomatic entity void of an eternal or permanent quality renders impossible the conceptual union of the 'person' . . . with the 'substance' of man. Thus, Aristotelian man has no true ontology. For Plato, the soul can be united with another physical body; through reincarnation, it can assume another 'individuality' and thus ensure a kind of human, but not unique, personal continuity.[99]

In the Greek Fathers, by contrast, human existence is given an ontological foundation, manifesting those qualities bestowed on it by the Divine Archetype, Christ; that is, the human exists in a unity of person and substance (*hypostasis*). The human being attains to genuine ontology by his participation (*metousia*) and sharing in Divine existence, taking on an eternal dimension for the self. Inarguably, then, the Orthodox Church's understanding of man (and, implicitly, of salvation) diverges essentially and categorically from that of classical Greek philosophy.[100]

Earlier in this chapter, I made reference to various myths about Christianity that have made their way from the entertaining speculation of historical pulp fiction to quasi-scholarly status. Many of these myths, as I noted, hold that the early Church fabricated a new religion, subservient to the body politic and bent on controlling man and society. Curiously entwined in this hodgepodge of fables are the foregoing misapprehensions about the influence of Greek philosophy on the Greek Fathers, along with a panoply of fantastic notions about a "shadow" Gnostic Christianity—supposedly suppressed by the Constantinian recognition of the Church—that generally denied the Divinity of Christ, had its own Gospels, preached a form of triumphal feminism, and embraced such Platonic novelties as the pre-existence of souls and reincarnation. These ideas have recently gained attention because of the popularity of such fictional works as *The Da Vinci Code*[101] by

98. See Telepneff and Chrysostomos, "Hellenistic and Patristic Thought," p. 16.
99. *Ibid.,* pp. 16-17.
100. This conclusion is given significant support by I.P. Sheldon-Williams, in his investigation of the relationship between Hellenistic and Christian thought. Of particular importance are his chapters in the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy,* ed. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 426ff.

Dan Brown, a private secondary school English teacher turned writer, or *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail,*[102] a wholly fictional work often touted as an "historical work," by Michael Baigent, a conspiracy theorist who holds a degree in psychology, Richard Leigh, a scholar with postgraduate degrees in comparative literature, and Henry Lincoln (né Henry Soskin), an actor and screenwriter. Both of these works try to invoke variant Gospels and arcane historical sources to lend an aura of historical authenticity to what are, in the eyes of some, inappropriate or insipid abuses of sacred personages and, to others, entertaining and, to some degree, clever plots penned by artful writers.

As I have pointed out, early Christianity *was* in many ways inimical to Platonic, Neo-Platonic, and Gnostic beliefs. But this is because Nicene Christianity expressed a consensus confession of the Divinity of Christ. The Nicene Synod was not convened to suppress the views of those who impugned or challenged His Divinity, but to consider disputes that had arisen over the *Nature* of Christ's Divinity vis-à-vis His humanity. Nor, of course, were the pronouncements of the Synod dictated verbatim by a putative non-believer, the Emperor Constantine. Moreover, the Gnostics, who, in this inaccurate scenario are often portrayed as representatives of a more genuine Christianity than that of Nicea, tended to portray Christ through the prism of Docetism;[103] thereby, they both denied His true humanity and considered His body—as well as His suffering on the Cross and death—to be illusions. As for speculation about some hidden feminist agendum in early Christianity, it should be remembered that the very idea of the equality of men and women—not to mention Jew and Gentile or master and slave—put forth by St. Paul[104] was in and of itself a revolutionary teaching. Strident feminism was as yet just a gleam in the lustful eye of intellectual trends.

Regarding the idea that Christ was married, or the corresponding claim that the Virgin Mary relinquished her virginal purity after giving birth to Christ, such thinking wholly violates the most primitive Christian beliefs,

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101. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

102. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2005). Published in Great Britain under the title *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*.

103. From the Greek word "*dokeo,*" "to seem" or "to appear." Docetism proclaimed Christ to be pure spirit and, therefore, without genuine physical traits.

104. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for all are one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28-29). Even in an apparent concession to the primacy of his forefathers, St. Paul extends to the Gentiles, in a radical departure from Jewish practice, the covenant of salvation: "[S]alvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16-17).

dating to the earliest years of the Church, which upheld a vision, as we have seen, of Christ as the New Adam and the Virgin Mary as the New Eve. The basic assumptions behind this imagery are that fallen man, cursed by the pangs of physical death and reduced, by his misdirected passions, to an act of procreation similar in form to that of an animal, has been potentially restored to a spiritual state, wherein he may transcend the corrupted flesh. Christ as the Archetype of restored humankind and the *Theotokos* as a model for the deification of human beings by their imitation, with the non-physical birth of Christ within them, of her seedless bodily bearing of God—these things are wholly inconsistent with a worldly vision of Christ or His Mother. Additionally, there is absolutely no support for such a vision in the canonical Gospels accepted by the early Church, which date to the first century of Christianity,[105] regardless of the fancies of the Gnostic Gospels, which—as many have forgotten in today's world of historical legerdemain for the sake of promulgating sensationalist conjecture in the service of procuring popular recognition—are later products of the second century.

In the final analysis, the teachings of the Greek Fathers and the pronouncements of the Oecumenical Synods which expressed and defended the spiritual experiences of the early Church are unique unto themselves; stand in contrast to the philosophy of the Greek ancients in whose language they often expressed their theology; and constitute a wholly separate religion from the mélange of Christianity, the various mystery cults, and ancient non-Hebrew religions from which Gnosticism emerged. To study the Orthodox tradition in a fair and punctilious way, one must acknowledge these truths.

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105. While many Biblical scholars would like to date the canonical Gospels to the second century, partially in support of the proposition that they have no more historical moment than later uncanonical and dubious texts, the Christian East has always held that the Gospels and the Epistles date to a much earlier period (the Apostolic Age) than Western scholars would admit. In recent times, more and more scholars have given serious attention to the Orthodox dating of Scripture. For example, in one of his more neglected works, John A.T. Robinson came to the astonishing conclusion that, taking all of the extant data into account, the New Testament in its entirety was written before A.D. 70, when Jerusalem fell. (See John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1976], pp. 336-358, esp.) Jean Carmignac, a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar and expert in Greek and Hebrew, makes a similar argument, through brilliant linguistic analyses, for the dating of the Gospels. (See Jean Carmignac, *The Birth of the Synoptics,* trans. Father Michael J. Wren [Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987].)