

## 5.0 Orthodox Anthropology

– Good and very good

*[...nothing inferior with the created, the corporeal and material - it is good.]*

### MAN

**Elder Sophrony** says all the universe was created so you and I can experience the love of God. We are the high priests of the cosmos – the mediators of creation. It all comes together into man. It's a mystery – we really don't know why...God's options were literally infinite.

It wasn't a show of divine power, it was a condescension – particularly when considering what His creation would do to it's creator with the Cross. It's in the oneness of His energies – but they are one. It is one act. One energy, one activity and one operation...

– **St. Maximus:** We were created to be with Him – to be deified. (glorified, theosis)

He also teaches: don't know why He created us like this but what we do know is that our being is the perfect receptacle of his grace. Wherever God's glory is manifested is where the kingdom of God is, which explains why if we're not prepared for it (as with death) it will not be a radiating light but a fire.

Only in human subjects does meaning exist – those who can go outside our physical existence...In our ability to commune with God. **Each person is a hypostasis of the entire created nature – but only in solidarity with others. The impossibility of separating the person from the cosmic purpose is what sin does.** However, the opposite is true when we reach deification/theosis – we bring all of life back to God as mediator for the created world. Cosmic nature is common to all hypostasis although each one lives it in a way that is particular to itself and complimentary to others... depending of course on the choices we make.

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- ***Created not by necessity but by, and for, love***
  - ***Created in the Image and Likeness of God***

Fr. Georges Florovsky on the anthropology of *St. Ephrem the Syrian*:

**Man's likeness to God is revealed in his freedom.** Because man contains the image of God within himself, man's thought possesses a kind of omnipresence and is capable of embracing all places. The first man was adorned with a *“robe of glory”* and with *“heavenly garments”* and the bliss and grandeur of man's state before the fall surpass description. We lost these through the lust and

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arrogant disobedience of the first Eve, but they are returned to us through the second Eve, the Virgin Mary. Our first paradise is restored to us in the Church, and the tree of life is here replaced by the Eucharist.

...At the fall freedom was distorted but not destroyed. Man must make a choice, and “the nature of freedom is identical in all people,” so that if one man can be victorious, then this is possible for every one. Man is created in the image of God, and this is revealed in his freedom and in his capacity to accept God's gifts. At his creation man was endowed with immortality, wisdom, and knowledge, and he was clothed in light. At the fall he became mortal, and the first sin is still reverberating in us like an echo. Only Christ liberates men from this condemnation to death.

### **And St. Athanasius of Alexandria (+373):**

Athanasius distinguishes two logical (not chronological) stages in the creation of man: the creation of human nature from nothing, and the imprinting or anointing of creation with the image of God. This “genesis” or adoption is made possible by the Son in the Spirit. God through His grace became the Father of those whom He created. Creation, maintaining its created-ness, was adopted by the Father through its participation in the Son. At the moment of creation man, who had been led out of nonexistence, was anointed by the Spirit. The “breath of life” which God blew into Adam was not a soul but the holy and life-giving Spirit, and the first man was a “spiritual man” because he had the Spirit within him. By making him like Himself, God enabled man to contemplate and observe the true Divinity, and introduced him to the bliss of true life.

But the grace and gifts of the Spirit were given to the first man from outside. Therefore, it was possible for them to be lost, and indeed man did lose them at the Fall. Man turned away from the contemplation of God, ceased his intellectual striving toward Him, and became shut up in himself, giving himself over to “self-consideration.” It was then that passions and desires flared up in him, and his life disintegrated and became fragmented. People fell into “self-love” and the soul turned from the intellectual to the corporeal, forgetting that it had been made in the image of God, Who is good.

The soul “turned its thoughts to that which does not exist,” gave it form, and thus became the inventor of evil. For evil is nothingness. It has no example for itself in God and is derived by human reasoning. The multitude of corporeal desires which crowded together in the soul hid the mirror it contained by which it could and should have seen the image of the Father. The soul no longer saw or contemplated the God of the Word, in whose image it was created, but gave its thoughts to a variety of things and saw only what was subject to the senses. This was the intoxication and bewilderment of the mind. By breaking God's commandments, the first man was deprived of the light of intellect and was returned to his “natural condition.” He became the slave

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of the “natural” law of decay. Man's mind turned to vanities and was poisoned by sensual desires, and humanity was lost in the darkness of paganism.

Although it is condemned to decay, “*by its essence,*” human nature was created and called to immortality. Indirect participation in the Word, which had existed from the beginning, was insufficient to preserve creation from decay. Repentance and forgiveness would be adequate only if transgression were not followed by decay, for “*repentance does not lead man out of his natural condition, but only stops sin.*” Death, however, had become established in the body and had taken power over it.

God, of course, is omnipotent and could have driven death from the world with a single command, but this would not have healed man, who had become accustomed to disobedience. It would not have been in accord with divine justice. Such a complete forgiveness would show the power of the one who ordered it but man would remain the same as Adam, and once again grace would be given to him from outside. In that case the possibility of a new Fall would not be excluded. But through the Incarnation of the Word grace was given to humanity immutably. It became inalienable and remains with man constantly. The Word was clothed in a body in order to dress the body anew in life, in order to preserve it from decay not only externally but also to truly join the body to life. In this way “*the body is clothed in the incorporeal Word of God and thus no longer fears death or decay, for it has life as a robe and decay is destroyed in it.*”

*...God became man in order for man to become god.”*

### **On St. Basil the Great's (330-379) view of the triune nature of the soul of man**

He affirms the platonic distinction seen in Jesus' teaching of the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus. That is, the three powers of the soul: the intellectual, appetitive and incensive, (or thinking, desiring and willing). He repeats the words of Plato when he says that states:

*“Anger, desire, timidity and envy all confuse the soul's intuition. In the same way that a dull eye does not perceive visible objects, it is also impossible to attain a knowledge of truth with a troubled heart.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we should withdraw from worldly affairs and not introduce superfluous thoughts into our souls.”*

Physical continence and strict fasting are very important, for only a pure and peaceful mind (nous) can reach the knowledge and contemplation of the truth. It is necessary to achieve “*complete silence within the innermost temple of the heart,*” for every passion “*causes confusion and hinders the vision of the soul.*” It is impossible to know the truth unless the heart is at peace. The intellect power predominates within the soul.

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<sup>1</sup> The basis of Orthodoxy's problem with scholasticism

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*“Intellect is beautiful,”* writes Basil, *“for in it we possess that which makes us similar to the Creator.”* Lower than reason are incensive (will) and appetitive (desire) θυμος and επιθυμια or το επιθυητικον.

Incensive power, or the soul's capacity to will, must subordinate to reason. If this is not the case, it can become uncontrollable and can distort the soul by evolving into passion or anger. The *“internal storm of an agitated soul”* darkens and blinds the mind, making *“knowledge”* impossible. By itself, however, *“Incensive (irritability) is a spiritual nerve which gives the soul the strength for great deeds.”* As long as it does not hinder thought, the incensive power strengthens the soul and produces courage, patience and restraint. *“If the soul has become weak through voluptuousness, irritability (the incensive power, will) will temper it as iron is tempered by immersion in water, and will make a soft and feeble soul steadfast and firm.”* Righteous irritation (will), guided by reason, expresses itself in religious fervor. It is proper to love virtue and hate sin with equal intensity. *“There are times when it is good to show hatred,”* Basil writes, especially for the devil, the destroyer of men, the father of lies and the cause of sin. *“But be compassionate to your brother. If he is sinful, he will be given to the eternal fire with the devil.”*

*Appetitive power* (Desire) can also be useful to the soul if it is subordinate to reason and is directed to the love of God and the longing for eternal bliss. Basil considers that each faculty of the soul *“can be either good or bad, depending on the way it is used.”* Everything depends on *“concord” and proportionality, on the harmony or symmetry* of spiritual life. The source of this harmony is reason. Action in accordance with reason is virtue. It shows the integrity of the soul and it is crowned by loving communion with God.

Sin is movement away from God, that is, from Life. It is the *“loss of life”* and the beginning of death. The first sin is the preference of the material and sensual to the spiritual. The righteous path leads from matter to the spirit, to life. *“Whoever fixes his attention on the radiance and grace of this beauty,”* says Basil, *“will take something from it and will be marked by it, as though by a dye, when he exposes his own face to its colored rays. In this way the face of Moses, who participated in this Beauty, was glorified during his communion with God.”* ...The path of virtue is the path of reason and spiritual contemplation, θεωρια.

### ***Fr. G. Florovsky on the Anthropology of St. Ephrem the Syrian***

#### ***Garments of Skin***

In Genesis 3:21, it says: *For Adam and his wife the LORD God made garments of skin, and clothed them.* There are many interpretations among the Christian confessions and denominations of what *“garments of skin”* mean. The most pervasive is the Protestant interpretation that God, in

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order to cover the sin of Adam and Eve sacrificed the first animal (or animals) and covered them in their skins.

The Fathers of the Church however always saw the 'garments of skin' to be the fallen condition in which we exist physically and spiritually in this life. It is a corruption of our original enlightened beauty and purity of soul and body. It is the skin and corruption we are enfleshed with and the ill and darkened soul. Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos describes it this way in his very important book *Orthodox Psychotherapy*:

*In church we often speak of the fall of man and the death which came as a result of the fall. Spiritual death came first, and bodily death followed. The soul lost the uncreated grace of God, the nous ceased to have a relationship with God and was darkened. It transmitted this darkening and dying to the body. According to St. Gregory of Sinai, man's body was created incorruptible and "as such it will be resurrected", and the soul was created dispassionate. Since there was a very tenacious link between soul and body because of their interpenetration and communication, both were corrupted. "The soul acquired the qualities of the passions, or rather of the demons, and the body became like irrational beasts due to the condition into which it fell and the prevalence of corruption." Since the soul and body were corrupted, they formed "one animal being, unreasoning and senseless, subject to anger and lust". This is how, according to the Scriptures, man became "joined to the beasts and like them". Through the fall, man's soul filled with passions, his body became like the beasts. Man wore the skin garments of decay and mortality and became like irrational animals.*